**Elon Academy Questions about College**  
Compiled by Mr. John Pickett, Fall 2013

**College Questions:**

1. **How do we decide what college is right for us?**  
   a. The best way is to 1) think carefully about what qualities you desire in a college and what majors you are interested in. 2) Then research online and talk to people who work in your desired field. Ask them about their experiences in college. 3) Finally, visit the top choices from your online research in person.

2. **Do you recommend going out of state?**  
   a. Going to college out of state can be an excellent choice, however, it will usually be more expensive than attending a college or university that is in North Carolina.

3. **When is an appropriate time to start narrowing down your school choices?**  
   a. Once you are entering your sophomore year of high school, you need to begin to do research. The Elon Academy recommends spending your sophomore year of high school researching NC schools with the goal of having 8-10 schools you are very interested in by the end of your sophomore year of high school. Then, continue to narrow that list down during your junior year while also looking at out of state schools. By the end of your junior year of high school, the Elon Academy advises that you have a final list of around 6-8 schools (combo of in-state and out-of-state) to which you will apply.

4. **When are applications due?**  
   a. This depends on the university/college. This is an important thing to research once you have narrowed down your list of schools. All applications will be due your senior year of high school with some of the universities/colleges accepting applications as early as September. In order to be considered for merit-based aid (money given to you based on your grades/leadership), most colleges require that you meet a specific deadline in early fall of your senior year.

5. **What do colleges look at most on applications?**  
   a. Different colleges value different things. The “College Handbook” that the CAT Mentors have lists the “basis for selection” for each college and these are listed in order of importance.
6. **How many hours of volunteering do you need for colleges?**
   a. Most colleges do not require a specific number of hours. However, volunteer and service experience is extremely valued and necessary to be a competitive candidate for both college admittance and scholarships.

7. **How many schools should you apply to?**
   a. The Elon Academy recommends that you apply to anywhere between 4 to 6 colleges. There should be a mix of safety, match, and dream schools.

8. **Should I go to a college where I am the minority or majority?**
   a. Only you can decide the answer to this question.

9. **Where can you find the applications?**
   a. Application processes are outlined on each college or university website.

10. **In college, do we still have access to tutors from Elon Academy or any other school?**
   a. Unless you are attending a college or university close to Elon University the answer is probably “no”. However, during the summer, if you are living in Alamance County it may be possible to provide you with an Elon Academy Academic Coach.

11. **What course do we need to take for whatever we want to major or minor in? (OBGYN, Anesthesiology, Diplomacy, Musician, Writer)**
   a. Your first few years of college will be filled with courses in the general areas of math, science, English, and history. The specific general requirements vary depending on the college or university that you attend. Then, once you decide your major you will begin to take courses that are required in order to achieve the desired degree in that particular major field.

12. **Major, minor, bachelor, masters, PhD., MD?**
   a. A **major** is the main area of concentration that you specialize in during your time at a university. Your major will be listed on your bachelor’s degree upon graduation from your college or university.
   b. A **minor** is a secondary area of concentration that you become knowledgeable about through your studies at a college or university. However, a college graduate will usually seek work in the area of his or her major rather than his or her minor.
   c. A **bachelor’s degree** states that you have studied anywhere from 3 to 4 years with a focus in one particular major. The most common of these degrees is the Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degrees. Upon graduation from a college or university this is what is also
known as your diploma. This is also sometimes called your “undergraduate degree” or your “undergrad”.

d. **A master’s degree** goes beyond the bachelor’s degree experience into greater detail and depth. It requires a deeper understanding of the field of study as well as theoretical and critical thinking skills not required for the bachelor’s degree. It generally takes full time graduate students anywhere from 2-3 years to earn a master’s degree. When you are someone who has earned a bachelor’s degree and are working on your master’s degree then you are known as a “graduate student”.

e. **PhD** stands for “doctor of philosophy” and is the next ‘level up’ from a master’s degree. This does not refer solely to the field of philosophy but rather means that you are an expert in your field area to the point that you a “lover of wisdom” as the Greeks originally used the term “philosophy”. For example, one could achieve their PhD in math, education, or business. This is the highest level of education available and can take anywhere from 4 to 10 years in addition to the time spent achieving your bachelor’s degree.

f. **MD** stands for ‘medical degree’ which means that you have a degree which allows you to practice in a medical setting. You will choose a specialty area as well within the medical field such as anesthesiology or pharmacy. This typically requires 90 to 120 hours of credit and a bachelor’s degree before entering a MD program. Then you will need approximately 4 years of medical school as well as 3 to 8 years of interning in your specialty area.

13. **What is an under-graduate?**
   a. An “undergraduate” is any person who is enrolled in a college or university whom is attempting to achieve their bachelor’s degree in an area of study.

14. **What is retention?**
   a. “Retention” refers to how many undergraduates come back to the college or university after each summer. An important “retention” number to look at is how many freshmen students return for their sophomore year at an institution.

15. **How do you choose which college you want to go to?**
   a. There are many factors to consider when choosing your college. Some of these factors include: cost, location, majors/minors offered.

16. **Is it hard to change majors while you are already in one?**
   a. No. However when you change a major you may also be lengthening the amount of time that you will be in college because you have to take a certain number of hours of courses within that area of study.
17. What is a Union Board?
   a. A Union Board is most often known as a “Student Union Board” and it is a group of students who desire to take on leadership and decision-making within the college or university. Student Union Boards make decisions mostly in regards to events and entertainment offered to the campus and paid for with university funds.

18. What is the difference between weighted and unweighted GPA?
   a. Weighted GPAs allow for classes to count for an extra grade point. For example, an AP class often counts as a weighted class. Usually, on a 4.0 scale, an A counts as a 4, a B as a 3, a C as a 2, and a D as a 1. Weighted classes are one grade point higher (A counts as a 5, B as a 4, etc.) and raise your GPA. A weighted GPA allows classes designated as weighted to count for more points and therefore your weighted GPA is higher than your unweighted GPA. An unweighted GPA treats all classes as unweighted classes (aka A=4, B=3) and a weighted GPA allows for some weighted classes (A=5).
   
   b. Example: you got an A, a B, and a C as your final grades. The class you got an A in was a weighted class like AP English. Your unweighted GPA would be 4+3+2 divided by 3 = 3.00. Your weighted GPA would be 5+3+2 divided by 3 = 3.33.

19. Do some colleges/universities not take attendance?
   a. Many do not ‘check’ daily attendance. You are an adult and, remember, you are PAYING for this experience. However, some professors factor attendance into their grading practices and in smaller institutions with smaller classes your professors will most likely notice that you are not in class and contact you to determine the reason why you were not in class.

20. What happens if you miss a certain amount of class periods?
   a. This varies per institution but the effects range from failing the class to simply not knowing the content covered and failing exams.

21. What college is right for me?
   a. Only you can know!

22. How many years do we have to go to college?
   a. This varies depending on your major and career path. To obtain the ‘first’ degree (your undergraduate degree) you will mostly likely go to college for four years.
23. What major do I need to look into?
   a. When choosing a major think about
      i. What are your talents and strengths?...
      ii. What are your interests and passions?...
      iii. What fields have many job openings?...
      iv. What salary am I hoping to achieve and what fields would have
          salaries that match this?...

24. What exactly is a “Liberal Arts College”?
   a. Students in a liberal arts college or university generally major in a
      particular subject while receiving exposure to a wide range of
      academic subjects, including sciences as well as the traditional
      humanities subjects known as the liberal arts.

25. If you are interested in Pre-med do you have to be in a specific program, or can you just take some classes/ just go to medical school?
   a. The answer to this varies. Many schools offer a pre-med track in
      students are involved in activities that prepare them for medical
      school such as pre-med coursework, volunteer activities, clinical
      experience, research, and the application process. However, you do
      not have to be pre-med during your undergraduate years in order to
      apply for medical school. For example, many biology or chemistry
      majors may go on to apply to medical school after receiving degrees in
      these areas.

26. What are the traditions, social life, and dorms like?
   a. This depends entirely on the university or college and varies
      tremendously from school to school.

27. What colleges will be the most helpful in finding jobs after you graduate?
   a. This varies but is a great question to ask when touring a college
      campus. Ask about what resources are available for students to help
      assist them in starting their careers post-college.

28. How many hours is involved with being a full time student?
   A full time student takes 12 or more hours of class each semester. This
   translates to roughly four classes per semester. If you are taking less than 12
   hours of class per semester then you are considered a part-time student.

29. Is it easy to get tutors?
   a. This depends on the college/university and is a great question to ask
      when visiting a college campus.
30. How do you study abroad?
   a. This varies depending on the college or university. Some colleges and universities do not have study abroad programs. Some have extensive study abroad programs and others have smaller programs. If study abroad is something that interests you, then this is an important piece to research (as well as the cost and types of financial assistance available to help with study abroad costs).

31. How difficult is it to double major? What colleges allow it?
   a. This depends on the major or major. Most colleges will allow you to double-major if you can fit in all of the required classes. Oftentimes, colleges will allow you to “opt out” of having a minor if you choose to double major.

32. How long are classes in college?
   a. This depends on the class but most classes range from around an hour to three hours.

33. What are the benefits of going to a community college?
   a. Attending a community college is often less expensive than attending a residential college or university. This is due to the fact that the tuition is less expensive and there is no cost for room and board.

34. Are phones not allowed in classes?
   a. This depends on the college/university as well as the professor teaching the course.

35. When can you transfer colleges?
   a. This depends on a wide number of factors including the policy of the school you would be leaving and the school you would be transferring to attend. Generally, you can transfer whenever you would like providing you follow the appropriate process as outlined by the university.

36. Will colleges allow you to create your own major?
   a. Many colleges will allow you to create a major so this is something to research when looking at colleges and universities.

**While still in High School:**

37. What classes should we take in high school to prepare for college and help us get in?
   a. Take your core curriculum classes as required by the State of North Carolina
i. 4 English Credits
ii. 4 Math Credits (Usually Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II and an additional class)
iii. 3 Science Credits (Physical Science, Biology, Environmental Science)
iv. 3 Social Studies Credit (Civics and Economics, U.S. History, World History)
v. 1 Physical Education Credit
vi. 6 Elective Credits

b. For your electives choose
   i. Foreign Languages (at least 2 are required for entrance to most colleges/universities)
   ii. Classes in the cultural arts (such as Art, Dance, Theatre, Band)
   iii. Additional academic courses such as AP classes

38. What classes in high school will give us college credit?
   a. A.P. classes are known as “Advanced Placement” courses. These classes are very rigorous but are in place to prepare you to take and pass an Advanced Placement exam. AP courses can help you acquire the skills and habits you’ll need to be successful in college. You’ll improve your writing skills, sharpen your problem-solving abilities, and develop time management skills, discipline, and study habits. More than 90 percent of four-year colleges in the United States and colleges in more than 60 other countries give students credit, advanced placement or both on the basis of AP Exam scores. By entering college with AP credits, you’ll have the time to move into upper level courses, pursue a double-major or study abroad.

39. When is the perfect time to take the SAT/ACT?
   a. Once you have successfully completed Algebra II then you are likely to have covered all of the content that will be present on the SAT. Most students take the SAT and ACT for the first time in the fall of the junior year of high school. You can take the SAT/ACT many times and add your best scores together to submit to colleges. Research shows that taking the SAT or ACT more than three times is usually ineffective but that scores typically increase the second and third times.

40. What if your SAT scores aren’t that good? What are the average scores?
   a. The most recent national average scores for the SAT are a combined score of 1550. If your scores are weak, then you may wish to apply to some colleges and universities that do not require the SAT or ACT. These schools are few, but they do exist.

41. What test scores should I aim for?
   a. For the SAT you should aim for at least a 500 on each section (reading, writing, and math). For the ACT, the national average scores for the
math, reading, writing, and science sections are around 21 or 22 for each so you should shoot for at least these scores.

42. How much foreign language is ideal for college?
   a. Many colleges (UNC system schools for example) require at least two years of foreign language in the same language. It is recommended that you take as much foreign language in high school as possible.

43. Do all colleges require essays? How long are the essays?
   a. Most colleges require college essays and the length depends on the school. Most essays are no longer than two pages.

Finances:

44. How will finances affect me?
   a. Everyone has to limit their college search to the institutions that they can afford. All prospective college students need to know about the FAFSA form. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (known as the FAFSA) is a form that can be prepared annually by current and prospective college students (undergraduate and graduate) in the United States to determine their eligibility for student financial aid. The U.S. Department of Education begins accepting the application beginning January 1 of each year for the upcoming academic year. Each application period is 18 months; most federal, state, and institutional aid is provided on a first come, first served basis. Students are advised to submit a FAFSA as early as possible for consideration for maximum financial assistance. Completing the FAFSA lets colleges know more about your ability to pay and determines your eligibility for scholarships and financial assistance. This is a VERY important form; not to be forgotten!

45. Financial aid: how do we get it and how do they decide how much we get?
   a. The first step in this process is to focus on your classes. Get excellent grades and sign up for classes that are challenging and will assist in raising your GPA.
   b. Fill out your FAFSA form January of your Senior Year.
   c. The amount of money that is either given or loaned to you is related to your performance in high school and/or your financial needs.

46. Where can you find scholarships?
   a. A great place to start educating yourself on scholarships is CFNC.org. On this site, click on the ‘pay’ banner. From here you can click on ‘grants and scholarships’ to see financial assistance options and a link to a list of scholarships. Start looking over this list to determine what
scholarships you may be a good candidate for receiving. On this site are more than 50 different scholarships available to NC students.

47. How do you apply for a scholarship specifically?
   a. Start searching for scholarships early! The more time you can put into your scholarship search, the more options you have. You need time to research scholarships, request information and application materials, and complete your application — and remember, some scholarships have deadlines early in the fall of senior year. Most scholarships require the following information...
      i. Transcript
      ii. Standardized test scores
      iii. Financial aid forms, such as the FAFSA
      iv. Parents’ financial information, including tax returns
      v. One or more essays
      vi. One or more letters of recommendation
      vii. Proof of eligibility (e.g., membership credentials)
      viii. You may also need to prepare for a personal interview. For students competing for talent-based scholarships, an audition, performance or portfolio may be required.

48. When do we start applying for college and financial aid?
   a. Start researching now and start applying for scholarships you’re the start of your Senior Year.

49. Do you pay more for college if you go out of state/country?
   a. Yes. Reason being is that state taxes that are paid from your parents and your paychecks go to fund these in state colleges. If you're from Maryland and decide to go to Virginia Tech, you're going to be paying more because your family doesn't pay those state taxes that help fund the school. Now if you're moving, you have to have 6-12 months of living in that state before you get in state tuition. The time period depends on the college, so you’ll have to contact them for details. They’ll ask you to prove the amount of time you’ve been living there. Either by records of rent, gas bills, etc. Just ask your college what is necessary. You may have to pay for out of state tuition before you can live there long enough to get the in-state tuition.

50. If you receive a scholarship can you still apply for financial-aid?
   a. Yes

51. Can you use more than one scholarship at one time?
   a. Yes

52. Are there scholarships based on specific majors?
   a. Yes
53. Do you have to pay anything for study abroad programs?
   a. Yes. Most study abroad programs incur additional costs to tuition and room and board.

54. What is the median amount of money I might have to pay for college?
   a. This varies depending on the university and amount of both financial aid and/or scholarship you receive.

55. Does it cost to apply to colleges?
   a. Many colleges require that you pay a fee. However, there are fee-waivers for this so that you do not have to pay if you are on free or reduced lunch. Additionally, each fall there is a special week when many colleges waive the application fees.

56. Are there scholarship scams?
   a. Yes, so be very discerning about the scholarships to which you apply.

57. Why do private colleges have more scholarships?
   a. Private colleges often have more scholarships to give because they are not supported by taxpayers and may have more money due to the fact that they raise their own funds.

**Personal Life in College:**

58. How do we deal with stress?
   a. The way you will deal with stress will be unique to you. Some great ways are to use the support network of friends and family that you already have in place, exercise, make time for fun with friends, join organizations such as student religious groups, intramural sports, or others.

59. Do you pick roommate?
   a. You do not. This will be assigned by the college/university your freshman year. After your freshman year you may be able to request a particular student to be your roommate.

60. What do they do in Frats and Sororities exactly?
   a. Typically, Greek letters organizations are single-sex, initiatory organizations with membership considered active during the undergraduate years only. Community service is usually made a part of any Greek letter organization’s program and supported by all active members. The process of joining a Greek letter organization varies from organization to organization. Organizations governed by the
National Panhellenic Conference or the North-American Interfraternity Conference commonly begin their process with a formal recruitment period, often called "rush week," or formal recruitment, which usually consists of events and activities designed for members and potential members to learn about each other and the organization. At the end of the formal recruitment period, organizations give "bids", or invitations to membership. Most organizations have a period of "pledgeship" before extending full membership. Some organizations have changed the name of pledgeship due to negative connotations to the process (such as calling pledges "Zobes" or "new members"), or have given up the process in favor of other joining requirements. Upon completion of the pledgeship and all its requirements, the active members will invite the pledges to be initiated and become full members.

61. Is it smart to bring your car?
   a. Some colleges/universities do not allow freshmen to have a car on campus. Others do allow this. Whether or not you have/bring an automobile, most campuses offer various modes of transportation to get you wherever you need to be on or near campus.

62. Do you have classes all week long?
   a. Your class schedule depends on the courses in which you enroll. A typical college course would be offered either on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays or on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The M-W-F classes are shorter and the T-Th classes are slightly longer. There are always exceptions to these rules however. For example, some labs or classes may meet one day a week. Your courses could be as early as 8am or they may be evening classes. Again, your schedule varies depending on how many and which classes you enroll in.

63. How do clubs help during college?
   a. Just like in high school, clubs in college can help you because they allow you to develop your leadership and organizational skills. Additionally, clubs are a fun way to de-stress and meet new friends across campus.

64. What are the eating options like? Does every school have a meal plan?
   What does having a meal plan do for you?
   a. Pretty much all residential schools have a meal plan. This allows you to access multiple dining options across campus without having to leave campus to pay for food. This is also helpful because you do not often have a kitchen in your dorm so cooking your own food can be challenging.
65. Is it easy to manage having a social life, making good grades, and having enough sleep?
   a. This depends on your ability to prioritize and manage your time.

66. Do you have to live on campus?
   a. This varies depending on the college or university. Some campuses are residential (meaning they have dorms) while others are commuter campuses (meaning they do not have dorms and you must drive to campus for class). Just because a college is residential doesn’t mean that you HAVE to live on campus. You can be a commuter student to a residential campus. However, many residential campuses require that students live on campus for the first year or two of college.

67. Do colleges have dress codes?
   a. This depends on the college or university.

68. What kind and at what level (Varsity, Club, Intramural) are sports offered?
   a. This depends on the college or university.

69. What kind of diversity is at a school?
   a. This depends on the college or university.

70. How hard is it to play a sport and be in college?
   a. It is extremely difficult to be both a student and an athlete. It requires intense dedication to both of your identities with little time left for family, friends, relationship, or other activities.

71. What job opportunities are available in college?
   a. Many colleges and universities offer a wide array of student worker positions. Some of these positions even allow you to work and have the income go directly towards paying your tuition or room and board.

72. What clubs can you get involved in?
   a. This depends on the college or university.

73. What are the different sports divisions and what do they mean?
   a. The NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) organizes the athletic programs of many (but not all) colleges and universities in the USA and Canada. These schools are divided into Division I, II, or III schools. Division I and II schools can offer scholarships to athletes to play sports. Division III schools are not allowed to offer scholarships to student athletes. Larger colleges and universities tend to be Division I schools and smaller schools are Division II or III schools.