

### **GET STARTED EARLY!**

- The first thing you should do is list how many essays you need to write and their deadlines.
  - It's a good idea to start in the spring of your junior year or summer before senior year so you have plenty of time to think through potential topics and brainstorm writing points.
- Talk with your School Counselor or College Advisor about essay prompts and ask if they are willing to read your essay before you submit your application.

### **CREATE AN OUTLINE**

- Take the prompt (the question asked) of each essay and break down its parts.
  - Think about why an admissions official would ask this and what they are hoping to learn about you that makes you a good fit for their institution.
- Pair personal stories or experiences that illustrate your answers. Organize your thesis along with these anecdotes, in bullet-point format, into a clear beginning, middle, and end. This is your outline!

### **READ EXAMPLE ESSAYS**

- Some colleges will publish essay examples on their website. See if the college you're applying to does this and, if so, check them out. It's a great opportunity to get a feel for what that college identifies as a strong essay and what it doesn't.
- If they do not publish examples, you can search online for "sample college essays," many examples will pop up, giving you an idea of what a strong essay might look like.
  - Just remember to not follow them so closely that you would be plagiarizing their content!

### **ADDRESS WHAT'S NOT ON YOUR TRANSCRIPT**

- Think of your essay as an in-person interview.
  - As you write your essay, imagine you're sitting in the room with the admissions official. You've given this person your transcript and resume. The question he or she keeps asking you is, "What else should I know?" Keep this question in mind as you are forming your essay.
    - How could you expand upon the information presented in the other parts of the application or bring to light new facts and traits about yourself?

### **BE SPECIFIC IN YOUR WRITING**

- While considering your anecdotes, focus on specific details and really flesh out the scene. You might not have enough space to tell your entire life story, but if you focus on a couple of examples, it can make your essay vivid and make it come to life.

### **ASK SOME PEOPLE TO REVIEW YOUR WORK**

- After you've finished a draft of your essay, have someone you trust (a parent, counselor, or teacher) review it. Check for grammatical and spelling errors.