Welcome to STRIPES (Seeking Tigers of Remarkable Intellect, Passion, Excellence, and Service)!
Thank you for your interest in becoming an alumni interviewer for Colorado College.

We understand that your time is valuable; please read this section before you attend the interview training session with the admission director. There are other materials available on the website for your review and reference. If it has been a while since you have been in touch with Colorado College, please review the general college website.

Why We Interview

Prospective student interviews are a mutually enjoyable and beneficial process for the student, the interviewer, and the Admission Office. At Colorado College, interviews are conducted as conversations, giving the Admission Committee personal context about applicants that may not be obvious in their application. For students, the interview is an opportunity to learn more about Colorado College. The interview is a conversation, a way to get to know the student in more dynamic way than what we can see on paper.

The Admission Office looks for capable, competitive, and compelling students who will contribute to our campus. The holistic admission process at Colorado College allows applicants to shine in many unique ways, rather than relying exclusively on academic profiles and test scores. While it is not always the deciding factor, the interview provides dimension to each application, ensuring the shaping and molding of a more cohesive and unique class by taking an individual look at each applicant and their skills, abilities, talents and potential.

With over 20,000 prospects and 7,600 applications last year – and only thirteen full-time Admission Directors – STRIPES volunteers are critical in implementing quality interviews to supplement the admission process. Alumni volunteers thoroughly enjoy interviewing prospective students because it reminds them of their experiences at Colorado College and connects them to the process that brings the next generation of Tigers to campus.
In your training with a director, you will go over the documents in this packet and learn more about the interview process. You will be able to observe what kinds of questions to ask during an interview and what types of information students and the admission committee are looking for. Please review the list of questions included in this packet, but feel free to develop your own style.

As you can guess, the write up is the crucial portion of the process for the admission committee. Please come to the training prepared to ask questions about the write up! There are four examples of interview write ups included at the end of this packet – feel free to read them over to get an idea of what a write up looks like. Once you have completed your write up, please submit it via email to stripes@coloradocollege.edu.

After the admission committee admits students, you will receive information about the students you interviewed and will have the opportunity to call and congratulate those who were admitted. There is nothing more rewarding than seeing a student you interviewed enroll at Colorado College. Except, of course, seeing them graduate.

Again, thank you, and welcome to STRIPES.

The Colorado College STRIPES Team

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To update your volunteer profile (address, phone number, preferences), please email stripes@coloradocollege.edu.
Goals of Interviewing Prospective Students

Interviews are a personal way for the student to learn more about the college and vice versa. The information that you gather from your interview adds dimension and personality to the application and allows us to assess how well he or she will “fit” at CC. Because of the subjectivity involved in evaluating interviews, the write-up you submit following your interview will be used as corroborating information to allow the admission committee to make a more informed decision. Other functions of prospective student interviews are as follows:

1) Give information about the College
   - Highlight what is special/unique about CC (without being negative or condescending about other institutions)
   - Help the student picture him/herself on campus by giving specific information related to particular interests and talents that are mentioned
   - Discuss what a small, private liberal arts college offers, perhaps in comparison to other types of higher education institutions (e.g., public universities, larger colleges)
   - Discuss the quality of teaching and courses at CC
   - Provide contacts for candidates with appropriate faculty members or coaches

2) Gather useful information about the applicant to convey in the write up
   - Comment on the student’s enthusiasm for ideas, particular academic passions, attitudes towards learning, motivation, brightness, etc.
   - Provide qualitative information, especially regarding situations that are unlikely to appear in the students’ application (e.g., an illness during the junior year, personal/peer problems, unusual course selections)
   - Describe the student’s expression of ideas or use of language
   - Comment on his/her intellectual curiosity
   - Comment on the candidate’s potential to participate in the non-academic life of the college (i.e., where do you see this person emerging on campus?)

3) Assess fit and/or match for Colorado College
   - Learn about the student’s academic background and preparedness for Colorado College
   - Explain the holistic admission process
   - Give information about the academic preparation and testing requirements
   - Answer questions about the application process in general

4) Maintain good public relations for the Admission Office and the College
   - Provide a personal contact with the College, thereby extending to students the kind of experience we hope they’ll have at CC
   - Try to leave every student with a positive feeling about herself/himself and CC
   - Always be courteous to the student and any guests who accompany him/her
   - Remember that students and parents are equally important - they both feel the stress of the application process
Anatomy of an Interview

The interview should be a 45-minute to one hour process. Some people have traveled great distances, and will be disappointed with a brief session.

Introductions in the lobby (3-4 minutes)
- Introduce yourself as an alumna/us volunteer to the student and parent(s)
- Frame the interview for parents and students

Small talk (3-4 minutes)
- Put the student at ease on the way back to the interview space
- Ask about their trip to the interview space, their plans for the weekend, or another easy topic

Frame the interview for the student
- Talk about you & your interests…think of it more as a conversation
- Forum to ask questions at the end

Conversation (20-30 minutes)
- Questions to get at BOTH academic and non-academic qualities
- See the file “Sample Questions” within this folder for a list of suggested questions

Closing with the student (5 minutes)
- Anything else we should talk about before I ask your parents to join us?
- What questions can I answer for you?

Closing with the family (10 minutes)
- Let them know that you’ve had a good conversation with their student
- When you return to the student, acknowledge that you talked about whatever was especially important to the student to reassure the parents
- Ask the parents if they have any questions
- Thank student and parents for taking the time to meet with you; encourage them to be in contact with you if they have any questions
- Encourage a campus visit if the student hasn’t already visited

Evaluative write-up
See the document entitled “Interview Write Ups” within this packet for details about how to document your interview.

If you are unable to write up an interview immediately, please jot down key topics and comments of interest. It can be challenging to remember at a later date, particularly if you are interviewing more than one student in a session.
General Tips

◊ In general, it’s best to start asking questions about school, favorite courses from junior and senior year, academic interests, extra-curricular interests and summer activities. Mentally generate a list of questions that you could ask the student over the course of your conversation. Hopefully it will be a mutual exchange. Conversation topics should ebb and flow naturally.

◊ Students will look to you for both verbal and physical cues. Try to match the student’s energy level. If they are excited, respond in a high-energy fashion. If they are thoughtful and quiet, lower your voice and speak calmly. Encourage them to expand on any and all areas of interest. Don’t feel like you have to do each interview the same way. If the student wants to talk about their exchange program to Russia for 15 minutes - let them.

◊ Try to help the student imagine the transition from their current academic and extra-curricular interests to Colorado College. This can help the student understand whether CC is a good fit for them.

◊ Encourage the student to ask you questions about your experience at Colorado College. Suggest further investigation of CC in the form of a campus visit, overnight stay, or class visit during the school year.

◊ Enjoy each person. You can and will make a difference in a prospective student applying to Colorado College and enrolling at the College if he/she is accepted.

◊ At the end of the interview, ask the student if there is anything else they hoped to address or share. This gives the student an opportunity to tell you all they want to say. “Is there anything else you would like to talk about that we haven’t covered?” or “Is there anything else you would like the Admission Committee to know about you?”
Sample Questions

Hopefully you’ll only need to ask a few questions to get started. Remember, an interview should be a conversation and topics should flow naturally.

Conversation Starters
- How did you learn about CC?
- Are there two or three things you are looking for in a college?
- Any ideas about what you hope to study in college? Ideas for a possible major?
- How is your senior year going? What does it feel like to finally be a senior?
- How would you describe your school community? What are the strengths and weaknesses? What is the faculty like? What changes would you make given the opportunity?

Academic Questions
- What classes are you most looking forward to as a senior? Why?
- Tell me about your junior year. Favorite class? Most challenging class?
- How would you describe yourself as a student?
- Have you been pleased with your academic performance the last three years?
- Is there an issue about which you are passionate?
- Can you describe an assignment or project that was memorable or of which you are particularly proud? Please describe this to me.
- Describe a discussion or debate that may have changed the way you think about an issue?

Extracurricular Questions
- What are your favorite and most significant extracurricular activities? Why?
- What do you do for fun or to relax?
- If a friend could describe you, what words would they use?
- What do you think your friends don’t see in you?
- What have you done during your summers? (jobs, programs, volunteer)
- What event or accomplishment are you most proud of?
- Favorite reading? Novel, author, etc?

The BEST Concluding Question
- Is there anything that I haven’t asked you that you would like the admission committee to know? Do you have any questions for me?
Possible Challenges

◊ Be careful with how you frame questions. Asking “yes/no” questions or a large list of questions doesn’t promote conversation.

◊ Do not ask essay questions such as: “If you could be President for a day, what bill would you pass?” or “How have you grown and changed in the past 4 years?” Do not ask any essay questions already on the Common application or the CC supplement such as: “Design your own block.”

◊ Do not ask a student about their grades or test scores. We will receive this information on the student profile sheet or the student’s transcript, so don’t feel obligated to ask for it. Instead, you can ask questions like: “Do your grades/test scores reflect your abilities?”

◊ If a student asks a question that you do not know the answer to, do not make one up. Encourage the student to call the Admission Office at (800) 542-7214 or write the questions down and ensure the student that you will get back to them with an answer.

◊ Do not allow an interview to be interrupted by a phone call or a visitor; it makes a bad impression.

◊ Do not say bad things about another school, compare two schools, or give information about another school.

◊ Do not guess about a student’s chance of admission to CC. If a student or parent asks if they will be admitted, remind them the admission committee uses a holistic process to examine a student’s application. It would be impossible for you to evaluate a student’s overall fit because you do not have access to the rest of their file. We do not admit or deny students on the basis of a single application item. If a student has poor test scores it does not automatically deny them admission to CC.

◊ Do not base your impression or rating on whether or not you personally liked the student. Remember, we are looking to enroll the most talented and diverse class and want to increase our intellectual engagement on campus.
Difficult Interviews

Not all interviews flow as smoothly as planned. The following are some difficult scenarios that you might encounter. Please review this list and think about how you might respond appropriately in each scenario.

Student is unfamiliar with CC
- General sense that student is visiting CC “because it’s there”
- Unfamiliar with the block program; “Is it hard?”
- Unfamiliar with the academic departments, resources, etc.
- Generally uninformed, and no sense that the student has done any research

*In this situation, you should spend a fair amount of your time in the interview giving information about CC while still trying to get a sense of the student’s ability to think in a deep and reflective way.*

Yes/no or two-word answers
- Answers most questions with “I don’t know”
- Does not expound on yes or no answers
- Does not explain statements such as “my school sucks”
- Silent if interviewer pauses to allow for more explanation

*Try to ask open-ended questions and engage the student in what they care about like their favorite movie or favorite food. Once they become comfortable with a topic, it is most likely that they will begin talking more.*

Student challenges CC
- Flippant responses
- Bored with questions
- Challenges the effectiveness of the block plan
- Challenges the reputation of academics at CC

*Do not become defensive. Listen to what the student is saying and then try to allay their fears by talking about your own experience at CC. Sometimes a personal story will educate and excite the student.*

Negative attitude
- Only negative comments about hometown, high school, teachers, family, etc.
- “I can’t wait to get out of there”
- “My high school sucks”
- Negative attitude

*Try to help the student realize that they are at a point in their life where they can make a change for the better and have a fresh start. You do not have to change their attitude about past experiences, but you should note this negative attitude in your write-up.*
Overly nervous

- Fidgeting in chair
- No eye contact
- Sweating
- Short answers

Help the student relax so that a meaningful conversation can occur. Take the initiative to lead with your body language. Sit back in your chair. Talk calmly. Ask them if they would like a drink of water, etc. Remind them that this is just a conversation and that they need not be nervous.

Too talkative

- Student talks over you
- Student answers one question for 15-20 minutes
- Student interrupts you
- Student doesn’t listen to your questions and goes off on tangents

Try to turn this situation into a two-way conversation and jump in whenever you can. Gently try to bring the student back to the topic at hand if they wander. Use tact, but be firm and direct.

Overbearing parents

- Student won’t speak in front of his/her parents
- Parents want to sit in on interview
- Parents want to retell you everything the student has already told you
- Parents don’t understand the block plan, or don’t believe in it

This shouldn’t be a common issue as our interviews take place one-on-one with the student and the parents come in after to ask their questions. Do note on your interview write-up whether the student shut down and became reticent when his/her parents were present. When the parents come back to ask questions, tell them that you had a wonderful conversation with the student and mention something personal so they won’t feel the need to retell you everything the student already told you. Try to answer all parent questions to the best of your ability and direct them to the Admission Office if you can’t answer a question. Also, use your personal experiences and stories to answer questions.
Interview Write Ups

The interview write up is essential to the admissions committee because it is the only aspect of the interview that becomes a part of a student’s application. It consists of two parts: write up and rank. There are four sample interview write ups and ranking included in this packet.

Write up

The application file will tell us whether or not a student is competitive in our pool. The interview can help us determine whether they are capable, especially of thinking in a critical or deep and reflective way, and/or compelling. The write up should not be a laundry list of activities that the student participates in – we will get that on their application.

Considering the above, your write up should address the following:

1. Intellectual Add
   What about your conversation implied or demonstrated the student’s ability to think critically, deeply or in a reflective way? How did they demonstrate intellectual curiosity?

2. Community Contributions
   How will this student contribute to community at Colorado College in the classroom, regarding diversity, through experience, a unique story, extracurricular activities, jobs, community service, etc?

3. Fit/Compelling Elements/Red Flags
   Describe anything else from the conversation that makes the student compelling or not compelling as a candidate, such as red flags or discipline issues. Justify your rank.

Rank

The rank given to a student should reflect the extent to which the student engaged, analyzed, and articulated their life and learning experiences. Rank students on a scale between 1 and 5, with a five being the most desirable. Most students will fall around the 3 (“average”) mark, with few receiving a one or a five.

1. Questionable. Glaring red flags; the student is a weak candidate for admission.
2. Marginal. The student was less than average student. No red-flags but not an obvious candidate for admission.
3. Solid. They have what it takes and will contribute to campus, but there is nothing exceptionally extraordinary about them.
4. Good. The student is someone who excites you. They are clearly capable and will contribute to campus life in a meaningful way.
5. Exceptional. They are capable, compelling, and can engage with their life and academics in a meaningful and deep way.

Please note that the ranking and impression are not based on the opportunities a student has been afforded. Rather, the ranking is based on their reflection and critical analysis of their life events.

Corresponding with the student

Please take a minute to write a post card or email to each student you interview within 48 hours. Including text such as “Dear [student first name], Thank you for taking the time to sit down with me and talk about Colorado College. Good luck with your college search,” is perfectly adequate. Feel free to elaborate using details of the interview.
John Smith  
Rating: 1.5  

**Intellectual Add:**

John was by far one of the toughest interviews I’ve had and I do not think he would do well here. He wants to be an actor and is looking for a BFA program in acting. He likes to be on stage and enjoyed his acting class. I had a very hard time getting at what exactly he liked but part of it is because he is good at it. He also directs one act shows for younger students, which is easy because he “just blocks and stuff.” His hardest class was Advanced Algebra but he said that he got B’s and C’s, which was good enough for him because he passed. I asked to describe himself as a student and he said that he always tries to become friends with the teacher because when he performs poorly, they bump his grade up. He admitted that he is not a hard-working student and only will work if he needs to pass the class. As for classes that come more easily to John, he does “the minimum to get by”. I was shocked by how honestly he answered the questions when they were so off the mark of what we are looking for. He does not care about his studies and I think he would struggle to keep up with any class at CC.

**Community Contribution:**

John is involved outside of the classroom but was full of himself and seemed ‘too cool’ to be at a college interview. He plays guitar and likes to play on the sidewalks with his friends. He said that they get drunk adults to give them money as they leave restaurants on the weekends and it is very profitable. He also sings in the school choir but does not like it and only sings because “[he] is good at it.” John plays lacrosse for his high school and seems to be a stand-out player on the team. He would be interested in joining the team at CC because it is DIII. When I asked John questions like “Why do you enjoy it?” he usually responded with “I don’t know” and I would be forced to move on. John had a hard time focusing and would often look around the office or out the window when he was speaking. I am not sure how he would contribute to the community at CC.

**Fit/Compelling/Red Flags:**

John would be a terrible fit for CC. He is arrogant and disregards his studies. He said that he came to CC because he is visiting Boulder but actually likes it after the info session and tour. I do not think that CC will end up on John’s list because I do not think it is a good fit from either perspective.
Jane Smith  
Rating: 3

Intellectual Add:

Jane was fairly quiet and reserved but easy to have a conversation with. It sounds like she is taking a rigorous course load and is a science-oriented person. She considers herself a well-rounded student and does well in most subjects. Her favorite class was AP Chemistry. While it was difficult at first, Jane liked diving in and seeing the connections within the subject. She liked the lab component but did not think it was the most productive way to learn. She prefers to listen to her teacher and study the textbook in addition to the hands-on aspect. While she likes the hard sciences, AP Biology was her hardest course. Much of her critiques on the difficult classes were placed on the teachers and I was hoping for more insight into what was difficult and what she liked. She hopes to continue with science but is somewhat worried about choosing a major because she often changes her mind. She admitted that she sometimes procrastinates but only when she is bored or uninterested in a subject. While she did not ‘Wow’ me, I have no doubt that Jane is a capable student that could succeed in a CC classroom.

Community Contribution:

Jane did not seem particularly curious and even when she was talking about her favorite activities, she was sort of lackluster. At school, she does mock trial and likes playing the role as the witness because she enjoys embodying the role and getting into the character. She also loves to be outdoors. She recently went on a backpacking trip with her friends and is excited about CC’s outdoor opportunities. She also loves to ski and rock climb. I think she would definitely get involved in the ORC and take advantage of the resources that CC has to offer. She has played volleyball for the past three years but is not sure if she wants to play senior year. While she likes the sport, she is unsure whether she enjoys the competitive nature of the team enough to continue. We both agreed that IM sports might be a better fit for her. She also mentioned that she does community service but I got the sense that it was more for her Honors Society requirement than for her own enjoyment. I think Jane would do just fine here but she did not blow me away.

Compelling/Fit/Red Flags:

Jane is looking at several other liberal arts schools but thinks that she wants a bigger college. But, the block plan at CC has drawn her in and looks very appealing to Jane. She wants to explore Colorado as well as study abroad and is well aware of the ways the block plan makes that possible. She likes how active the student body is and hopes to come back for a visit during the school year to sit in on a class to get a sense of what a three hour class feels like. Jane was a solid 3.
John Smith  
Rating: 4

**Intellectual Add:**

The first thing John excitedly said during the tour was that he wants to be a high school history teacher. He said his passion for history stemmed from the great professors he has had and the idea that a slight change can alter history forever. His way of putting it was, “If Cleopatra’s nose had been bigger and she did not look the way she looked, so many things could have occurred differently.” What struck me the most was how genuinely excited he was about his classes. He mentioned that he took a Russian Lit elective last year and loved it. He went into it thinking it was going to be easy and while it ended up being the most time-intensive class he had, he was so fascinated by the course that he was happy to do the work. The class read *War and Peace* and *Crime and Punishment*, and the latter is now his favorite book. Next year, he is taking a class geared toward feminist thought. He said that he is very passionate about women’s rights and not afraid to share those views. John is the type of student that loves learning and is willing to question people and discuss his opinions. He is someone that I would love to take a class with because I find his excitement for learning to be contagious.

**Community Contributions:**

John first mentioned that he has been going to summer camp as a camper and counselor for many years. He said that the community and relationships that he has made over the years are what keep him going back. Despite the fact that many friends question him about going to summer camp at the age of 17, he was very articulate about why it is so important to him. He mentioned that he had a 9-year-old camper in his cabin last summer who did not speak English. John said that overcoming the language barrier and getting to know the camper was one of the most rewarding things he had to do as a counselor. In terms of extracurricular activities, John is hoping to become the Football captain for the upcoming year. While he mentioned that football is a big commitment, he said he loved the fact that his theater friends can support him at his games, and he can bring his football friends to watch a theater production. When he first started high school, he embraced ‘being a jock’ but he says that toward the end of the year he realized that it was much more rewarding to meet all sorts of people and not be limited to one identity. He is an independent thinker and it sounds like he has made some really great relationships with the people around him.

**Fit/Compelling/Red Flags:**

John had a certain excited nervousness about him that was very endearing. He said that he has gotten very excited about the prospect of attending CC over the past month. For his summer vacation, he had time to fly to one place for a school visit and he chose CC. His school has a modified block schedule that has a regular semester followed by a short intensive, ‘block-like’ course. He said Science and Math are more challenging for him but because of his school’s system, taking a Chemistry lab class for a ‘block’ was much easier for him to absorb it. He loves the idea of the block plan and said it fits his learning style very well. He also thinks that going abroad for a block would be perfect for him because he wants to travel but does not want to give up a whole semester. He is especially excited about the ‘Yachtyssey’ summer course. He was a little nervous about his freshmen year grades and wanted to note that he has grown a lot since then. Overall, John is a great candidate for CC because he recognizes the importance of getting involved in many different areas and integrating those experiences into education and relationships with peers. I think he would be a dynamic and passionate CC student who would contribute greatly to campus.
Jane Smith
Rating: 5

**Intellectual Add:**

Jane is amazing! It was by far the best interview I have had all summer and every new detail she mentioned made her that much more compelling. At school, she is an ‘overachiever’ and takes much more than the minimum requirements at her school. She mentioned how much the school system in Western Texas is lacking and how she was lucky to leave public school in 7th grade. She loves her private school but it still faces issues of teacher retention, which can be challenging at times. She loved her AP English class and attributes the 5 she received on her exam to her outstanding teacher, which shows how humble and appreciative she is of her education. Jane told me that she thinks “study halls are a waste of time” and she always has her head in a book at school. Jane likes to study for the sake of learning and says that it is frustrating when her peers only focus on studying what is on the exam. She said that while she does not receive the highest grades in the class (even though she is ranked 3rd out of 50 students) she is able to see the broader connections. She referenced her Renaissance class and how while she might not know every specific detail about a Michelangelo painting, she can talk about the more general themes that link the time period together. She values her education and sees the greater worth than just the grade she gets on an exam. Jane analyzed and synthesized her thoughts without being prompted and I did not even have to ask questions like “Tell me more” or “Why?” in order to dive deeper. She would be a thought-provoking and studious person that I wish I could take a class with at CC because I think she would lead discussions and bring a new perspective to the class.

**Community Contribution:**

Jane is as stellar outside of the classroom as she is inside of it. She is about the travel to Belgium for a scholarship exchange program. She will be living with a student from Italy and a student from Finland. She is excited to learn about Belgium with them and to see their perspective as well. She recently hosted several exchange students in Texas and said that they pointed out things to her that she had never thought of before. She saw her ordinary world in a whole new light. Jane is involved in Teen Court, which helps students who have committed a crime to do community service and other programs to get the offense taken off of their permanent record. She is an attorney but enjoys working with prosecution more because she gives tough sentences to make sure that the students see the consequences of their actions and to minimize second offenders. She said that working with these students, who are often minorities or illegal immigrants who have to fend for themselves in the public schools, has helped her realize the injustice that they face. It has opened her eyes to the social stigmas in Texas and as a result she is very interested in working with Social Justice. Outside of teen court, Jane writes as a teen columnist in the local newspaper. She said that it is challenging because unlike school papers, she has to come up with her own topic to write about. She loves to read and write for pleasure. She reads sci-fi and has been writing novels since childhood. She just published her first novel last year and likes that she can always have that as a side hobby in addition to her career. Jane was a superstar in every aspect and I think she could do amazing things at CC.

**Compelling/Fit/Red Flags:**

Jane is set on a small liberal arts school due to the academic freedom it allows. She is looking at three in the central region of the US because the east coast is too far from home and feels slightly foreign to her. We would be lucky to snag Jane from any school and I think she would be a great fit! She had many insightful questions and has enjoyed her campus visit immensely. If I haven’t made it clear enough: We want Jane at CC!