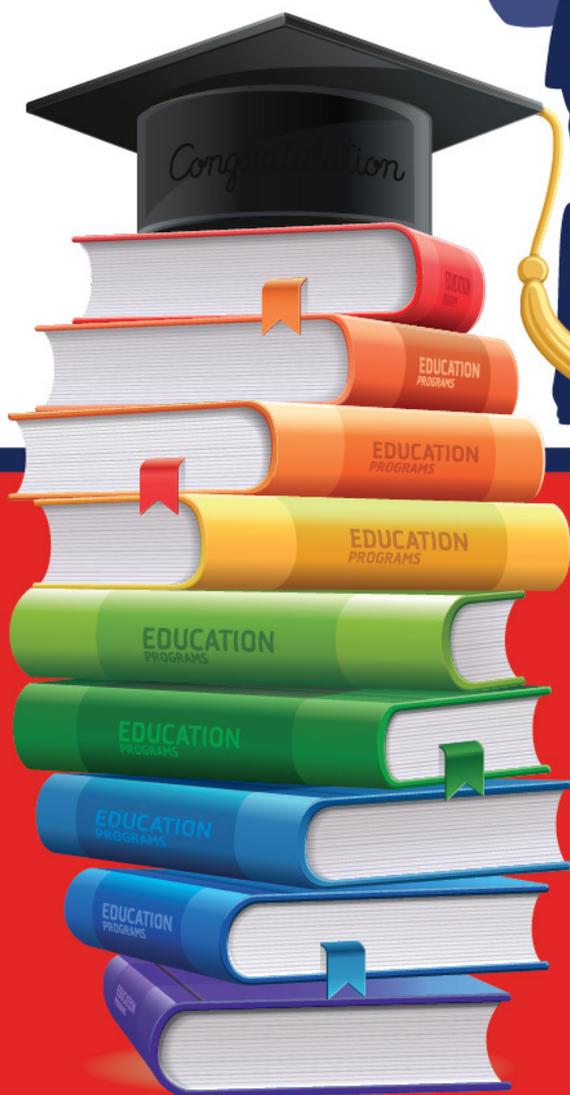


DEERFIELD-WINDSOR

College Counseling



COLLEGE
COUNSELING

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Greetings from the College Office!

I am looking forward to working with you and your family during your high school years. The College Office formally meets with juniors and seniors, but I am happy to meet with you and/or answer your questions at any point in your Deerfield-Windsor career. By design, the College Office seeks to advise, empower, and nurture students in preparation for their transition into higher education. My goal is to give individualized attention in the navigation of the college admission process.

Deerfield-Windsor's College Office provides the following.

- An open door policy for every DWS student
- Touch points throughout a student's DWS career regarding standardized testing and course selection
- Regular individual and class meetings for juniors and seniors to keep them on target during the college search and application process and update them on impending deadlines
- Feedback and support on college essays, applications, and application credentials
- Extensive resources to help students and parents prepare to make appropriate choices for post-DWS plans
- Arrangements for college admission officers to meet with our students in small groups throughout the year
- Advising for DWS courses for high school students
- Access to information on specific schools and current trends in college admission
- SAT/ACT test preparation advice
- Monthly class meetings for freshmen and sophomores

I am honored to share in the excitement of your future and hope to provide ample resources to aid you in developing the best plan for what lies ahead. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to come by my office or contact me at (229) 435-1301, ext 256.

Sincerely,

DeeDee R. Willcox
College Counselor

deedee.willcox@deerfieldwindsor.c

DWS College Counseling Philosophy

- *Students should find the college that “fits” them best and gives them the best experience and the best chance to be successful in college.*
- *The college search process should be a student-driven process where the students lead their own college searches with parents and counselor in a supporting role. It is an extension of school culture and intentional effort to require the student to take the lead in this process, for a student-led process is most likely to lead to the best possible outcome. In addition, there are numerous valuable lessons learned -- setting a goal and making it happen, writing a formal email, talking to another adult on the phone, etc. The student will learn through the process, if parents and counselor let them.*
- *DWS college counseling program is personalized and reliant on individual counseling customized for each student’s needs.*
- *The DWS college counseling program serves a wide range of aspirations and wide range of financial needs. Every year our college counselor helps students be admitted to the most selective colleges in the country and universities all across the country. Our program possesses the experience and knowledge to help with the most daunting or the most obscure searches. At the same time, our college counselor also serves those who wish to be admitted to local and regional public universities with great academic preparation and as much financial aid as possible.*
- *DWS parents are overwhelmingly positive influences throughout the process. The parent serves as an active listener and supporter of the student in the college search, allowing their student(s) to lead their own process.*

INTRODUCTION

“Get action. Do things; be sane; don’t fritter away your time; create, act, take a place wherever you are and be somebody; get action.”

This quote from Teddy Roosevelt is a very helpful one for the college application process. At times, for juniors and especially seniors, it is a reminder that the best way to avoid stress and anxiety is to begin tackling the tasks at hand. Anxiety is caused by not knowing what to do or not doing what you know you should be doing. Thus, getting action and doing things equals “*be sane.*” For ninth and tenth graders, this is true as well, but in a slightly different way. Don’t worry about doing things for college applications. Make the most of the DWS experience, and you’ll be in a good shape.

In that spirit, this handbook is designed to be used to understand and “*get action.*” Sometimes, that may mean to “*do things*” like take standardized tests or write college essays -- important parts of the admission process. For younger students, hopefully it will be information that reassures and frees them from any college-related worry and instead “*do things*” like focus on classes, get involved, discover interests and get to know teachers. In summary, this handbook will provide a basic outline of the college search timeline and an explanation of the major concepts and terminology.

TIMELINE

FRESHMAN YEAR

This is the year to figure out what high school is all about. How do you study best? How do you effectively communicate with teachers and coaches? What resources are available to you? What long-term goals depend on doing your best in the moment? Thinking about such questions will help you develop self-awareness and understanding that will serve you well for the remainder of your academic career. The following tips will aid greatly in your growth as a high school student.

- Attend class meetings (held during Common Work Period once a month).
- If you haven't already mastered time-management skills, practice those! Balancing your classes and the many ways to be involved in activities can be a challenge, and finding the right mix is a great help.
- Learn how and where to find help, and never be afraid to seek it out. Take advantage of the wonderful resource that is our faculty. The ability to approach teachers with questions and concerns, to contribute to classroom discussions, and to continue these dialogues outside of the classroom are all skills that will serve you well throughout high school and college. Office Hours provide a wonderful opportunity to learn how to approach and communicate with your teachers and to build important and lasting relationships with them. Teachers at DWS want you to do well, make significant connections, and help you develop your strengths. If you hit a bump in the road, our teachers will help you over it!
- Work hard in your classes! It is important to put forth your best effort throughout your academic year.
- Read. Read a lot. There is no better way to learn vocabulary and writing skills.
- Start an informal resume. Keep a list of activities, honors, special projects, etc. This will come in handy when you are a senior completing the application process.

SUMMER AFTER FRESHMAN YEAR

Rest, recharge, and do something meaningful to you. There is no particular path of action that colleges value more than another. Get a job; work at a summer camp; connect and volunteer with an organization; play sports; work on art or writing--there are countless ways to spend your summer. In general, colleges like to see your authentic commitment to your activities. Look for ways to be engaged, dedicated, and responsible. Consistent volunteer work may seem ordinary compared to an expensive trip abroad, but colleges will value your passionate involvement in activities that matter to you. Colleges appreciate steady commitment rather than superficial involvement. That said, this is still a great time to explore new things and make a change if there's something that speaks to your authentic self.

SOPHOMORE YEAR

College is still on the distant horizon, and it's much too early to think about a college list. But you must continue to build a strong academic foundation by pursuing a college preparatory curriculum and taking classes that challenge you to be your best. Hard work in the classroom will help you achieve your college goals later.

- Continue to attend class meetings (held during Common Work Period once a month).
- Continue to improve those skills learned as a freshman (review list above) and to grow as a student.
- Add to your informal resume, continuing your list of activities, honors, special projects, etc.

SUMMER AFTER SOPHOMORE YEAR

Approach this summer as you did your last, pursuing the things you love. If there is a way to build on a project or activity you did last summer or during the school year, that's a great way to sustain your commitment. If you're ready for something new and exciting, that's great too. Make time for focusing on your health and wellness. Junior year can be a step up in many ways, and returning in August fully recharged will help you meet the challenges ahead.

When it comes to thinking about specific colleges, keep in mind that each DWS family goes through the process with timing that makes sense for their own unique circumstances. Some students are thinking about the process, and others would prefer to start in earnest midway through junior year. If you decide to start exploring colleges, keep it low-key. Check out some college websites or browse a guidebook. It's a bit early for official college visits, but if family travel finds you near a college town, you could attend an event or check out a campus landmark, maybe register for a tour. At this point in the process, it may be most helpful to see different types of colleges, checking out large/medium/small or urban/suburban/rural or research university/liberal arts college. Experiencing some different types of schools could offer insight into what kind of school would be a good fit for you.

JUNIOR YEAR

Junior year is a transitional year. It is the time when the college search process kicks into gear with meetings with the college counselor, standardized testing, college visits, etc. The grades appearing during junior year can certainly hold more weight than the previous years; junior year grades, after all, are the final set of complete marks included in an application submitted in the senior year. (Also, keep in mind that the first semester senior year will be very important for most students as well.) All other college-y things can be done at other times- the only thing that can't be done any other time is making the best junior year grades possible. That's the number one priority!

Beyond that, juniors are in the fun part of the college process--exploring colleges, doing research, taking initial visits. It's a fun adventure to begin thinking about all the different possibilities, all the different paths available. It's also the time in the process when there is flexibility. Students aren't subject to deadlines; they just need to think about things and get some tasks completed when they are in the right mood. Thus, the timeline below should be seen as a very general guide, not an absolute prescription.

➤ **September/October/November**

What students should be doing:

- Attend class meetings (held during Common Work Period once a month) to offer a broad overview of the college search process. A different focus will be presented each month.
- Browse widely and investigate new schools.
- Demonstrate interest by talking to college representatives that visit our campus, getting on the mailing list, and establishing a personal relationship with our local admission representative.
- Take the PSAT in October during the school day.

How parents can help:

- Encourage your student to take the PSAT seriously.
- Encourage your student to attend meetings held by college representatives. Parents are welcome, too.
- Add on a campus visit to other family travel.
- Encourage activity involvement and maximum academic effort.

➤ **January/February**

What students should be doing:

- Attend class meetings (held during Common Work Period once a month) to offer a broad overview of the college search process. A different focus will be presented each month.
- Schedule an individual meeting with the college counselor. This is an important time for the counselor to get to know you better. This will be helpful throughout the process but especially during recommendation writing time.
- Discuss preferences and interests regarding colleges and construct an initial list of schools to investigate. (Begin prospective college list on Naviance.)
- Discuss financial constraints with your parents. (A net price calculator is available on each college website.)
- Take the SAT and the ACT at least once during the junior year. (Sign-up is online.)

How parents can help:

- Remind your student to register for the SAT and ACT at least once during the spring.
 - <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register>
 - <https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration.html>
- Encourage test preparation after first round of testing, accounting for weaknesses and trouble spots.
- Be on the lookout for the follow-up letter to the individual meeting.
- Encourage your student to begin researching the schools on his/her prospective list more extensively.

➤ **March/April/May**

What students should be doing:

- Research and investigate colleges.
- Visit a college campus. Spring is a great time to visit. It's when one sees the campus while classes are meeting and college life is evident. A trip to visit "types" of schools is beneficial to some. Visits are easy to arrange on websites or sometimes through a phone call. Do a tour and information session, not just a drive-through. Summer is not a bad time to visit. Even though the number of students on campus is less, a summer visit allows for a more relaxed schedule.
- Take one or two SAT Subject tests if highly selective colleges are on your list.
 - <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat-subject-tests/register>

How parents can help:

- Plan campus visits. Spring break is an ideal time; long weekends are good, too.
- Make sure your student is signed up for SAT Subject tests *if needed*.
- Encourage a strong finish to the year.
- Have an honest discussion concerning any financial constraints.
- Encourage more reading and research about prospective colleges.

Students and parents, remember to

- Utilize Deerfield-Windsor's resources, including the college counseling office
- Keep a sense of adventure and fun about the process
- Make sure the student takes the lead in the search
- Spread the net widely at first
- Keep an open and honest dialogue about financial, geographic and/or other constraints

SUMMER AFTER JUNIOR YEAR

The summer after junior year is a great time to continue pursuing interests and activities that are meaningful to you. This could mean travel, mission trips, volunteer work, academic study or a job. Anything that shows passion, commitment and responsibility will help you develop as a person and be valuable on your college applications. It's also a great time to relax and enjoy yourself. Even if you have a busy and productive summer, remember to rest and recharge yourself in preparation for a busy senior year. In that vein, getting started on college application activities now will remove stress and help you manage the many tasks you'll need to complete during your senior year. Here are helpful tips to assist with this.

- Research your schools. Make the decision to actively research all of your college options now. This will provide the knowledge-base and confidence to ensure that next year's application process will be easier and more effective.
- Plan to visit those colleges in which you have a high level of interest.
- Work on your college list. Through your research and visits, begin to narrow down your prospective list on Naviance, a process we will continue in the fall.

- Talk about paying for college. *Have an honest conversation with your parents about the financial parameters of your college search.* Use the cost calculators (Net Price Calculators) that can be found on every college's financial aid webpage, and investigate their scholarship opportunities and deadlines. Determine if you are going to be primarily focused on need-based or merit-based aid.
- Sign up for Fastweb (<https://www.fastweb.com>) to search a national database of scholarships. Also, check the scholarship list on Naviance for additional scholarship opportunities.
- Register for fall testing. Make sure you are registered to take the SAT or ACT if you plan to retake them again in early fall.
 - <https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration.html>
 - <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register>
- Create your Common Application Account and prepare for applications and essays. Go to The Common Application's web page at <https://app.commonapp.org/createaccount> and begin to look at the essay questions and any supplements a college may require. Colleges continue to finalize their supplements throughout the summer and should be completed by August. Check this page regularly. Begin to brainstorm and draft your ideas. A completed draft of your Common Application essay will ease the stress and time constraints of the application process.
- If you plan to participate in intercollegiate athletics, contact college coaches, identify yourself as a potential varsity athlete, and request information about the specific athletic program. If you plan on participating on the Division I or II levels you must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center (<https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/register/CERTIFICATION>) before you can be invited on official college recruiting visits.

SENIOR YEAR

Senior year is, of course, a lot of fun. There's also a lot to do--challenging classes and grades that colleges will see, leadership positions and responsibilities, athletic practices and competitions, social life and...college applications. Balancing all of these is difficult but not impossible. The key to maintaining your equilibrium is to start early and plan ahead. Talk to the college counselor often! The counselor has been through this many times before. She will enable you to feel confident in the process and ensure you are doing all you need to do. You will feel better when you leave the counselor's office than when you came in!

Also, remember that you are going through this process in a supportive, collaborative environment. Encourage your friends and classmates. Learn from each other. Help each other. Celebrate each other's successes. DWS seniors always do a great job of this.

A more specific timeline follows, but keep in mind that every student's timeline will look slightly different. Your timeline depends on where you are applying and when. You and the college counselor will determine the right schedule for you.

➤ September/October

What students should be doing:

- Attend ALL senior meetings. These meetings will emphasize applications, processes and procedures as well as deadlines.
- Research in pursuit of finalizing your application list. This research may include campus visits and meeting with admission representatives.
- Schedule and complete standardized testing (SAT/ACT/Subject tests)
 - <https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration.html>
 - <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register>
- Complete college essays with help from college counselor and English teachers.

How parents can help:

- Continue discussions about the schools on your student's list. Use Naviance to aid tracking.
- Complete net price calculators on colleges' websites.
- Plan visits during fall break or other times. (Seniors are allowed 2 excused absences for college visits.)
- Remind your student to register for standardized tests(s).

➤ October/November/December

What students should be doing:

- Refine final application list.
- Finalize decisions about the timing of applications (Early Decision/Early Action/Rolling Admissions/Scholarship deadlines). Note all deadlines for submissions and plan accordingly.
- Request transcripts and teacher/counselor recommendations through the proper channels and with proper advanced notice. A two week notice is required for all recommendation letters request.
- Complete applications, including essays and short answers. Seek help from counselor and teacher(s) for suggestions and proofreading.
- Send standardized test scores to colleges through the testing websites (www.collegeboard.org, www.actstudent.org).
- Explore merit-based scholarships and need-based financial aid requirements.
- Work hard to have the best possible semester in the classroom.

How parents can help:

- Help keep track of deadlines and submissions, especially test results.
- Help with proofing of essays and applications.
- Encourage your student not to procrastinate.
- Have honest conversations about financial constraints.
- Begin the financial aid application process on October 1 when FAFSA is available. (Note: FAFSA or GaFutures is required for the Hope/Zell Miller scholarship.)
(<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa>)

➤ **January/February**

What students should be doing:

- Complete any remaining applications.
- Continue contacts with admission office and coaches (demonstrated interest).
- Continue to work hard in the classroom. Colleges sometimes ask me about second semester grades!
- Use the scholarship list and websites like www.fastweb.com to apply for scholarships.
- Wait for decisions to start coming in but know that colleges cannot force a commitment (except for housing deposits) until May 1.

How parents can help:

- Encourage your student to keep up grades and finish strong. Colleges will require final transcript.
- Complete all financial aid forms before the deadlines, which vary by college.

➤ **March/April**

What students should be doing:

- Check portals, emails and mailboxes for decisions by April 1 at the latest. Financial aid packages will be sent soon after.
- Look at schools again and possibly make visits to your finalists.
- Complete competitive scholarship competitions with interviews and candidate weekends.

How parents can help:

- Examine financial aid packages. Call the financial aid offices for answers to your questions.
- Help your student work through the final decision-making process.

➤ **May 1/June**

What students should be doing:

- Make a final decision by May 1 to choose one of the acceptances by submitting a deposit. Have open and frank discussions with your parent(s) and the college counselor .
- Decide whether to stay on any waitlist(s), if offered.

How parents can help:

- Participate in making a final decision by May 1.
- Ensure deposit has been submitted.

SELF-REFLECTION

Choosing a college is a very personal decision. The primary question should be “*Which college is the best fit for me to do well?*” Another important question, “*What opportunities exist that will aid in me having an enjoyable and rewarding college experience?*” Finding this fit is somewhat like balancing an equation. You are on one side of the equation, and the potential college is on the other. It makes sense that to balance this equation you need to know about the college, but you also need to know about you! During your high school career, you’ll have several seminars to aid with this self-reflection. The college search process is also a great vehicle for self-discovery.

Consider these questions as you begin pondering your future college experience. The better you know yourself, the better you’ll be able to assess what you are looking for in a college as well as the type of environment in which you will thrive.

- Do you want to go to college? Do you want to go immediately after high school or have a gap year?
- Why do you want to go to college? What are you hoping to gain from it?
- What are your academic interests and strengths? Are there any subjects that interest you that haven’t been taught in school so far?
- How do you learn best? What styles of teaching and classroom environments are best suited for you?
- What activities do you hope to continue or pick up when you are in college?
- What are you looking forward to in college? Is there anything you are worried about?
- How do you want to grow and change in the next few years? What kind of environment would stimulate or inhibit the growth you would like to see?
- Are you leaning more towards a pre-professional college experience or a broad-based liberal arts curriculum?
- What degree of academic challenge is best for you? What balance of study, activities and social life suits you best? Do you want an academic program where you must work and think hard? How well do you respond to academic pressure and competition from others? Do you like being motivated by the work of others around you?
- How would you feel about going to college where you were rarely told what to do? How much structure and direction do you need?
- How would you enjoy living in a different part of the country? How often do you want to be able to go home? What kind of change in your lifestyle and perspective might be exciting or distressing and overwhelming?
- What kind of surroundings are essential to your well-being? Are there certain places, activities, countryside terrain, weather or pace of life which may make you happy? Do you prefer a fast-paced environment where something is happening most of the time or an organized environment where you can join a wide variety of planned activities? Would a more serene and relaxed environment where you can go your own way be a better fit? Etc. etc...
- How would you feel about going to college where other students were quite different from you? Would you find it an exciting or intimidating environment? Would you prefer to be with people who share your viewpoints and lifestyles or who challenge and make you question your values?

Test Yourself: Personality, Preferences and Career Possibilities

There are a number of tests available online to help you learn about your personality, your preferences, and your potential career paths. All personality tests should be taken with a grain of salt and proper perspective. That said, here are some common assessments that may interest you. These tests may allow you to learn something new about yourself as well as give you the ability to describe yourself to others with new vocabulary.

NAVIANCE OFFERINGS

- **Strengths Explorer:** This is a personality test that will help you assess your personal strengths and weaknesses, which may help you figure out how to accomplish the goals you set for yourself.
- **Do What You Are:** This is also a personality test but it is designed to help you figure out some career ideas that might dovetail with your personality traits and interests.

MEYERS-BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) assessment is a psychometric questionnaire designed to measure psychological preferences in how people perceive the world and make decisions. This can help you learn about yourself and how you might approach different life situations, including school and career choices. (Try <http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes2.asp>. This is not the official MBTI assessment, but it is a reasonable approximation.)

THE SAPA PROJECT

This survey will give you feedback about your personality relative to others of your age and gender. Your responses are completely anonymous and it is free. Plus, you get a very cool looking graph at the end. (<https://sapa-project.org/>)

COLLEGE BOARD

The College Board website (<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>) has several interesting career exploratory features.

COLLEGE CRITERIA TO CONSIDER

This is a general discussion of some of the characteristics that students often consider when choosing potential colleges. There are certainly all kinds of pros and cons to each characteristic, and what you think about each one is very personal to you. Some factors may be very important to you, and some not at all. Many are interrelated, as well. For example, a small college in a big city might feel bigger, while a large college in a rural area might feel a bit smaller. These are just generalizations to help you start thinking about what might be important to you personally.

Size: Small (under 2,500) vs. medium (2,500-10,000) vs. large (over 10000)

Small colleges are often highly residential with a social life focused on campus. There are usually no or few graduate students, meaning professors are focused on teaching, not research. Usually class sizes are small and resources and professors are very available for students. Small colleges

often have fewer majors from which to choose but more flexibility in their curriculum. Small colleges may or may not be diverse, depending on the kind of institution and the ability of the college to attract students from different geographic, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds. Without graduate students to compete with, students can easily get involved in research, though it may not be as “cutting edge” as at larger schools.

Medium-sized colleges may offer the “best of both worlds,” especially if it is a well-resourced institution. On the other hand, by compromising, it may not offer any of the advantages as strongly as a large or small institution.

Large universities offer a wide range of majors and often have incredible resources. Some of the majors, professors and resources may not be available to every student, or may require an assertive person to gain access to them. Often there is more “excitement” like Greek systems, major athletic events, concerts, etc. Large universities can be more diverse, depending on location, but may not have the cohesion of smaller campuses. There is often a large, well-developed alumni support to help with networking, employment, etc. Lots of research is always going on at large schools, but students often need to be assertive to get involved in it.

Required core vs. distribution curriculum vs. open curriculum

A few colleges like St. Johns and Columbia have required core courses. These provide a great base of common knowledge and experience for their students. Most colleges have some degree of distribution requirements, though the flexibility can vary and is worth looking into. A few colleges like Amherst, Vassar, Hampshire, Hamilton and Grinnell have open curriculums, meaning there are no requirements other than those to fulfill a student’s major. Required courses can be great to help students explore broadly and discover new interests. On the other hand, open curriculum schools mean students choose to take every course they schedule.

Lecture classes vs. discussion seminars

This is closely related to size of institution. Small colleges will have mostly discussion-oriented seminars and small classes, with just a few larger (50-100 students) lectures in popular introductory classes. Large universities will often have very large lectures for intro courses (several hundred students), which are frequently broken into smaller sections taught by teaching assistants. Small colleges will not have TAs. Even at larger schools, students have smaller classes as they move into higher-level classes and their major. It’s wise to consider the style that you find most helpful and enjoyable.

Location

Close to home or far away? There are, of course, advantages to both. Closer to home may be less expensive (at least in terms of travel costs) and less of a hassle. It offers the comforts of familiarity and easy maintenance of family and friend relationships. It can also be beneficial for networking if you plan to live and work nearby after college. The advantages of going away can be greater independence, the opportunity to discover a new environment and meet new people with different views and experiences. And, of course, all these things depend on your state of mind. You can stay near home but dedicate yourself to new experiences and meeting different types of people -- it just

requires a little effort. You can also go far from home with a closed mind and not learn or experience anything new. As with most of these considerations, the outcome is an intersection of mindset, effort and situation.

Student-Body Considerations

- Greek-dominated social scene vs. dorm-oriented
- Exclusively undergraduate vs. graduate intensive
- Predominantly commuter vs. residential
- Coeducational vs. single sex vs. predominantly male or female
- Politically and socially liberal vs. moderate vs. conservative
- Academically curious vs. career driven vs. party-oriented
- Team sports oriented vs. recreational sports oriented vs. non-athletic

Selectivity

This is important for two reasons. The first is whether or not you can realistically be admitted. The other is, once admitted, can you handle the curriculum and the competitiveness of the student body. While going to a college with a “good name” may be a goal, remember that it’s what you do there that really counts. Going to a highly selective school that isn’t a good fit for you or where you’ll be unhappy is a recipe for poor performance. The right fit for you is more important than the right name on a rankings list!

Public vs. Private

In general public universities cost less, especially your in-state public option. However, many public universities are very expensive for out-of-state students, especially if they are very attractive institutions. Private colleges tend to have a higher price tag but are often able to offer more merit aid as well as more need-based aid (if you qualify). For some, then, a private university may cost less than your in-state public university and more often less than out-of-state public universities.

Liberal arts vs. Pre-professional/career training

Liberal arts colleges and majors are best for exploration during the college years and allow greater freedom of choice in your studies. Many professions can still be entered with liberal arts degrees because companies want people who can read, write and think. Pre-professional-oriented colleges and majors are good for those who know what they want to do. Programs like architecture and engineering often require students to start in those majors. Programs like pre-med, pre-dental or pre-law aren’t actually majors. They are advising programs. Student can choose any major as long as they fulfill the requirements to apply to those graduate schools.

THE COLLEGE VISIT

A critical component of the college search process is visiting college campuses. There is no substitute for a first-hand look at a college's facilities, grounds, and surrounding community. You may choose to apply to a college you haven't yet seen, but it is quite risky to choose to attend a college without having made a thorough campus visit. The following sections will provide you a general framework to help organize and maximize your college visit experience.

Note: Juniors have 2 excused absences for college visits. Seniors also have 2 excused absences. However, if the 2 junior year visits are not utilized, they are not rolled over to the senior year.

TIMING OF YOUR VISIT

Think about the time of year when you want to visit colleges. The summer can be useful for a wide-ranging college tour, such as five to ten colleges. You and your family will have more time to travel as well as more flexibility -- and you won't have to miss school. But there is a downside to summer visits: you won't get the best idea of what the college looks and feels like during the school year. Since you won't be seeing the full complement of students, it may be hard to judge the student body and campus life. The best idea is to do your general college tours in the summer, and then use school-year visits to see colleges you are most interested in applying to and/or attending. It is also worthwhile to stay alert for your colleges' open house weekends or special interest days.

SCHEDULING YOUR VISIT

It is best to schedule your campus visits at least two weeks ahead of time. The most productive way to plan a visit is to get the necessary information from the college's website. Just click on "admission" or "prospective students," and look for campus visit information. The college will include the times for group sessions and tours, the admission office hours, and the directions to the campus. Some include names of nearby hotels, some of which may offer a discount to the college's visitors. Oftentimes you can sign up for the group session and tour online; if you need to make arrangements or seek further information by telephone, the phone number will be on the website, as well.

You may also be able to arrange a class visit or a session with a faculty member or coach. If an interview is a required or recommended part of the admission process, try to arrange for one while you're on campus. Some colleges will host you overnight (usually once you are accepted) so that you can get a feel for dormitory life and the food service, or perhaps you can arrange a stay with a DWS alumnus in their dorm room. A good campus visit can be done in a half day, and you might even visit two colleges in one day, if they are close together. Make your visit thorough enough to get past initial impressions and closely examine the college, its facilities, people, and general atmosphere.

If you are visiting colleges with your family, it is important to come up with a game plan and communicate this to each other prior to the visit. Parents should note that it is important (and

impressive to Admission Offices) for students to make appointments on their own, sign in at the reception area on their own, and take the opportunity to ask their own questions on the tour and information session. Students have different methods of determining if the school is a good fit for them. It is important for parents and students to give each other room to explore the campus from their own vantage point. Each visitor (family member and student) should keep a journal and, after each visit, write down their impressions BEFORE talking with each other about their perspectives. By having time to reflect on, a student may be able to better articulate why or why not the college is a “fit.”

Finally, before you visit a college, thoroughly investigate it. You will find your visit far more worthwhile if you are well informed before your planned trip!

COMPONENTS OF A COLLEGE VISIT

Information Session - This is your opportunity to hear about the school and its programs from a member of the admission staff. Have some pertinent questions ready about the application process, student body statistics, campus life, AP credit available, and/or other concerns that you may have.

Campus Tour - Usually led by a current student, the typical tour will include a dormitory room, the library, academic and athletic facilities, the student center or popular places on campus where students typically congregate to study or relax. Don't be shy on the tour—ask questions about student activities, dorm life, classes, weekend activities -- anything that interests you. How's the food? How accessible are professors? The student guiding your tour can often give you a more accurate look at campus life than an admission officer. (See campus visit questions at the end of this section.)

Interview - There are very few colleges that require interviews. Some colleges recommend interviews and others will offer them as an optional component of the application process. If a college or university that you are seriously considering requires or recommends an interview, try to include one in your campus visit. Don't let your interview intimidate you; a good interview will be a two-way exchange. Come prepared to talk about yourself and to ask questions. Be an active participant, and be yourself. A thank you note to your interviewer once you return home is always a great idea.

Class visit - Ask the Admission Office if they can schedule a visit to a typical freshman class. If you are interested in a specific field of study, see if you can attend a class in that area. If the professor is particularly dynamic, write down his or her name and department in case you want to call later in the year and ask about academic life or study in that field. Keep in mind, however, that one class cannot be expected to present the full range of faculty and teaching at any college.

Meeting with Faculty Members and/or Coaches - If you have decided on a major or want to be involved with college athletics, ask the Admission Office if they can schedule a meeting for you with a professor in your department of interest or with the appropriate coach. If that's not possible, ask for

names and phone numbers or e-mail addresses of people you can contact with questions you may have. Phone numbers and e-mail links can often be found on the website as well.

Lunch in the Cafeteria - You may be able to sample the food with a current student. If not, ask if you will have access to the student center or dining hall where you could buy your lunch. This will give you an idea of the quality of the food and what meal times are like.

Your Individualized Tour - After your tour or interview, thank your tour guide or admission officer and then wander around the campus by yourself. If there is a building that is important to you that wasn't part of the campus tour, such as the facility for an academic program you're interested in, seek it out and get a good look at it. Poke around the campus and discover what you want to learn about the college. Pick up the student newspaper; read the bulletin boards; sit in a place where students gather and listen in on conversations. You may want to visit the bookstore for a souvenir of your visit. Talk to students and ask them what they like and dislike about the college.

Remember, one real goal of a campus visit is to discover the "personality" of the college and to see if it is compatible with yours.

At the end of the visit, jot down your impressions in a notebook or on your phone. If you are seeing several colleges on your trip, the colleges will very likely blend together in your mind. Write down what you feel while you're still on campus, rather than relying on memory weeks or months later.

WHAT TO BRING HOME

Before you end your campus visit, be sure you pick up a viewbook and course catalog, a campus map, and any literature concerning specific academic programs or campus activities that interest you. Write down names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of anyone you might want to contact again.

After your visit to a campus, you should have a pretty good idea of whether you and the college are a good "match." If it wasn't what you thought it would be, perhaps you won't apply. But if your visit was a success, look at the college's application more carefully, for you might soon be filling it out. Come by and tell the college counselor about your visit -- always keep the counselor in the loop!

Need additional information about colleges and campus visits? See the college counselor! The college counselor is there to assist with your college visit journeys!

GENERAL QUESTIONS FOR A COLLEGE VISIT

Student Life Questions:

- Why did you select this school?
- What do students do in their free time?
- How are freshmen advised?
- What academic support services are available?
- Is there an honor code? Is it effective?
- How difficult is it to get the classes I want to take?
- How safe is the campus?
- What religious, cultural, ethnic, or special interest programs or opportunities are available?
- How competitive are athletic teams and other programs? How difficult is it to make a varsity team? Do the students support the teams?
- Do people stay on campus over weekends?
- Describe a typical weekend.
- What are housing options? (Single-sex, coed, theme housing, substance free, etc.)
- Where do freshmen live? What is the most popular housing and why?
- How is the food? What are the meal plan options?
- Do students feel safe? How is campus security?

Academic Related Questions:

- Are classes stimulating and are students prepared?
- Do people talk about ideas outside the classroom?
- Why are the most popular majors or departments considered strong?
- What are required courses?
- How large is a typical first-year class?
- Are faculty members accessible? Do all professors teach undergraduates?
- What is the grading system?
- Describe the academic pressure or competition.
- Do most students graduate in four years?
- Are internships, study abroad programs, and independent studies available?
- What percentage of the students graduate in four years?
- What is the academic calendar? Quarters, semesters, or alternative calendars?
- What percentages of students get jobs upon graduation?
- Is there an honors program? If so, how do I apply for the program?
- How accessible is the faculty to students?

CAMPUS VISIT EVALUATION

College/University: _____ Date of Visit: _____

Activities (circle): Campus Tour Info Session Classroom Visit Open House Overnight Other

Names of people to remember (admissions rep, tour guide, etc.): _____

What was your first impression of the school? Be descriptive. _____

What is the mission of the school? How is this different from other schools? What is this school most proud of?

Comment on academic programs, curriculum, intellectual life. _____

If asked why you might apply here, how would you respond? _____

What is your impression of the physical appearance of the campus and facilities? _____

Describe the students you met during your visit. Do they seem happy? Do you see yourself wanting to be friends with them? Would you fit into the community? _____

Comment on extracurricular life on campus. Are there special clubs, athletic teams, arts programs, etc. that spark your interest? _____

How is the quality of life? (residence halls, dining, social outlets, etc.) _____

What do students do when they graduate? How is job placement, graduate/professional school acceptance, career counseling, etc.? _____

How are my chances of being admitted? _____

Are there any plans for changes on campus, in the programs, etc.? _____

THE COLLEGE APPLICATION

The college application consists of information sections, essays, extracurricular components, standardized test scores, official transcript, school profile, college counselor recommendation, and teacher recommendations. A few colleges require or recommend an interview, but this is increasingly rare. The first four items are submitted by the student, and the last four by Deerfield-Windsor School.

ESSAYS

The personal essay offers something that grades, test scores, and lists of activities cannot show: your personality. It is an opportunity to show the reader your best qualities, demonstrate your writing skills, and offer an interesting and likable window into who you are.

Some students will use the Common Application, which requires a main essay of no more than 650 words. There are a variety of prompts, but keep in mind that these prompts are designed to capture almost any theme or topic you wish to address.

The bottom line: It is your essay, and it *MUST* be your work! Your essay must reflect YOUR voice.

Remember, the college counselor interacts with college admission officers frequently and hears about (and sees) many examples of what works and what doesn't work. Ask the college counselor for guidance when writing your essays!

Here are a few tips regarding the essay that may help you craft a strong personal statement.

- **Be your BEST self.** Your statement should be truthful, but sometimes it is not what you say but how you say it that makes an impact.
- **Make connections.** Choose a topic that excites you and, most likely, the energy surrounding your interest will be conveyed in words. Showcasing original thought is huge when writing your essay.
- **Show what you can contribute.** Colleges want to know how you will contribute to their campus.
- **Show empathy.** Use your essay to show your maturity and ability to have empathy for others.
- **Show independence.** Again, show your maturity and your preparedness to be on your own.
- **Show resilience and have perspective.** If your family background, personal history, or health has greatly shaped who you are today, there is probably an essay there. Perspective is everything. If you have led a life with few obstacles, be happy about that and choose a topic that is about you.
- **Answer the question being asked.** It's remarkable how often applicants forget to answer the actual question or respond to the given prompt!

It is impossible to do all of these things in one essay, but a good essay or personal statement will achieve at least some, if not many, of these goals. Your writing style, grammar, spelling sentence variety, and word choice is critical in writing a strong personal statement.

SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAYS

All schools to which you apply using the Common Application system will view your Common Application essay. There are a few exceptions. For example, the University of Tennessee doesn't require the Common App essay but instead substitutes their own. These exceptions are rare. Much more common, however, are colleges that also require their own supplemental essays. Often, these essays or personal statements are much more specific and practical in nature compared to the main Common App essay. Prompts such as "Why Davidson?" or "Tell us about your interest in USC" are common. The purpose in asking such questions is two-fold: 1) to determine if your interest in the school is genuine and based on actual knowledge of the school; and 2) as always, to find out more about your specific college goals and plans. Talking specifically about the intersection of your goals and the college's offerings is usually best here. Along the same lines, supplemental essays may directly ask about academic interests. Sometimes, colleges use these questions to elicit personal responses. Although these supplements are often shorter, don't take them any less seriously. Colleges have chosen these specific questions for a reason and thus, are very interested in your answers. View each as an opportunity to convince the reader that he/she wants you at their college.

EXTRACURRICULAR INFORMATION

Colleges love to recruit active, engaged students. Students who possess a wide variety of personal interests and experiences can be very competitive through the admission process. College admission counselors consider school leadership positions, sustained and consistent community service, athletics, theater, music, dance, academic clubs, and even personal hobbies in a very positive light. Employment and personal travel can positively influence your file, as well. The key to extracurricular involvement is that it is more important to be deeply involved in a few things rather than be peripherally involved in many activities. If your list of Upper School activities is long, organize and prepare them in a resume format. The college counselor can assist you with the preparation of your resume.

There is no secret formula for what you *should* do with your free time. There is no *right* answer. So do not join clubs or participate in activities unless you have a genuine interest in them. Colleges can smell a resume building activity a mile away. They are truly looking for what motivates you and what you find meaningful. Pursue YOUR interest with gusto! Beyond formal activities, colleges also want to know about your interest and hobbies. A hobby may turn into a potential major or career; an interesting hobby may make you stand out as an applicant. Examples of activities may showcase a side of your personality that admission officers don't see often.

Remember, the key to being involved is substance over show! Therefore, pursue activities that you love, then do them with great vigor and enthusiasm. It is much easier to write or talk about all the

things you genuinely love to do in an essay or interview. Ultimately, colleges are looking to enroll students who will further enrich their campus communities.

Get involved. Seek out leadership opportunities. Work hard to break out of your comfort zone, and try something new -- You might just discover new skills and talents!

STANDARDIZED TESTING

As mentioned in the timelines, all students will take the PSAT in grades 9, 10 and 11. The college counselor recommends taking the ACT and the SAT for the first time during the junior year. For most, that falls between December and April: December or March for the SAT; February or April for the ACT.

Colleges in the United States that require testing will accept either test score and will not require you to submit both. Some students continue to take both tests, while others may choose to focus on the one that presents a better opportunity for them.

There are great free resources online for preparing for both the SAT and ACT.

The PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) is a two-hour forty-five minute test with two main sections: Evidence-Based Reading & Writing and Math. Deerfield-Windsor will pre-register all students in grades 9, 10, and 11 to take the test, which will be administered on the Deerfield-Windsor campus in October. For students in grades 9 and 10, the PSAT is considered a practice test for the SAT; it also may be used for course placement in AC and AP courses at our school. For juniors, the PSAT scores are used to determine eligibility for the National Merit Scholarship Program. Colleges do not see PSAT scores as part of a college application.

The ACT is 2 hours 55 minutes (with writing, 3 hours 55 minutes) long and composed of four multiple choice tests that test the core subjects of English, Math, Reading, and Science, with an optional writing component. Very few colleges require the writing component. However, check each college's website for guidance in registering for writing. For more information and to register, go to www.act.org.

The SAT is a 3 hour test (3 hours 50 minutes with essay) composed of two sections, math and evidence-based reading and writing, with an optional essay section. Again, some colleges may require the writing component. Determine if you need to register by checking the policies on the college's website. For more information and to register, go to the College Board website www.collegeboard.org.

SAT Subject Tests allow students to demonstrate knowledge within a certain discipline of study. Each test is one hour long, and you may take up to three tests at one test administration. Keep in mind that the SAT and the SAT Subject Tests are offered simultaneously, so you can only sit for one or the other on a particular test day. Although more and more colleges consider the Subject Tests now optional, some still require or strongly recommend them. Not all Subject Tests are offered on all of the

SAT test dates, so remember to check the College Board website (www.collegeboard.org) for more information and registration.

Advanced Placement (AP) Exams are given in May each year upon the completion of a designated AP course. Reporting results of AP Exams is not required in the college application process, but it is recommended that you self-report scores of 3 or better on your applications. Once you finalize your college decision, send an official report of your scores to your college to earn credit or placement.

Colleges use AP credit in various ways. Some grant credit for scores of 3, 4, and 5; some offer credit only for scores of 4 and 5; some use the score to place a student in a higher-level course. Some colleges do not give credit or advanced placement for AP scores. Each college (and often, each academic department within a college) will have their own policies. Go to the college's website (often located in the section for the college Registrar's office) to find their AP score policy.

Testing Accommodations - Both the ACT and the College Board offer testing accommodations to students with demonstrated learning differences and/or medical conditions. Because the process can be lengthy and require additional documentation, students and families seeking accommodations for standardized testing - including those who already have extended time for assessments at DWS - should meet with our Learning Support Center specialist as early as possible.

Test Optional - There is a growing movement to diminish the importance of standardized testing in the admission process as colleges seek more "authentic" ways of evaluating students. (A complete list of colleges that are a part of this movement can be found at <http://www.fairtest.org/>). However, most public universities and many private universities still require standardized testing. For that reason, we encourage students to take the tests and do their best. If their scores simply do not represent the student well, we can explore test-optional possibilities.

THE TRANSCRIPT

A student's transcript includes the high school courses taken, the semester grades earned in each course, the cumulative weighted GPA and volunteer hours. Deerfield-Windsor School does not report class rank or test scores on the official transcript.

So what happens when the transcript is reviewed in the college Admission Office? It's not only about the GPA. Colleges are interested in whether you chose rigorous courses that challenged you. That doesn't mean that you should take every AC or AP class, but it does mean that it's good to think about your academic interests and look for ways to seek advancement in the areas where you have both interest and aptitude. Consistency and overall improvement in grades over time are generally positive. Some colleges have specific entrance requirements or recommended courses of study. Many colleges recalculate the GPA--subtracting and adding weight according to their own guidelines.

Most colleges do not make decisions based on the GPA in the abstract. They take into account the courses and rigor of curriculum that comprise it. They account for the rigor of the school where it was earned. The job of the college admission office is to admit the best students, so it makes sense that they would attempt to understand what GPAs from different high schools would mean. They have years of data from students matriculating from each high school to their college with which to interpret what each high school's GPA really means.

Prospective applicants can find very detailed information on each individual college's admission web pages. It's not a bad idea to become familiar with the requirements or recommendations of the public institutions and major scholarship programs in your state of residence.

SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT

Most colleges and universities require a secondary school report. This report is comprised of your transcript, a school profile (which provides information and context about the Deerfield-Windsor School curriculum and community), a personalized, written recommendation by your college counselor, and any other additional documents that may be required and/or are unique to your file.

TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Not all students will need teacher recommendations. Please double check each application. Think about which teacher is best suited to speak to your strengths as a student in the context of a specific course - not just who knows you really well from extracurricular activities - although it can be a nice bonus if the teacher can speak to those things, too. Think first about your junior year teachers, and speak with your college counselor if you're not sure who to ask. Before getting a second teacher recommendation, research the colleges you're considering and discuss the additional recommendations with the college counselor.

You should always ask for a recommendation in a face-to-face conversation and provide the yellow form to that teacher. (Yellow forms can be found in college counselor's office.) The teacher may ask for your resume as well.

Letters written by counselors or teachers are regarded as confidential correspondence between the author and college admission personnel; thus, when completing the application, you should waive your right to view these written recommendations. It is not appropriate to ask a recommender for a copy of the letter. It is, however, always appropriate to write your recommenders a handwritten thank-you note in the spring of your senior year!

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Many colleges have strict limits on the number of recommendations they will accept, usually one counselor recommendation and either one or two teacher recommendations. Others allow an additional one or two recommendations. Sometimes an extra teacher recommendation can help, if the teacher offers a different perspective--maybe someone who knows you very personally but doesn't

teach a core subject or taught you early in your high school career; maybe a counselor or administrator or pastor or boss who knows you in another context. If you are thinking about any of these, talk to your college counselor who can advise you if it would be helpful and the best way to include it. Some families want to include recommendations from friends or relatives who are alumni or donors for particular institution. Before taking this step, talk to the college counselor to determine whether or not to do this and if so, what is the best approach. If you don't have these sort of connections, don't worry! Most people don't, and they are less important than ever at most colleges. For the most part, applicants will be judged on the merits of their application, not who they know.

INTERVIEWS

Although most schools do not give formal interviews as a specific component of your application process, some of the more highly-selective colleges do. Some small, private liberal arts institutions may conduct interviews as an additional feature of their application process. In general, if a college offers you the opportunity to interview, you should make every effort to find a way to do it (especially if it is a college you are seriously considering attending). The interview is generally a chance to exchange information, for the college to put a face with a name, and for you to get any additional questions answered.

These interviews are usually conducted by an admission counselor or a trained alumni of the institution. Regardless of who conducts the interview, your answers to questions provide an impression of you, and you should prepare adequately. Familiarize yourself with the school and your specific areas of interests; prepare questions of your own to demonstrate you are a serious applicant. The best advice is to showcase your "best self." Remember, the college is trying to determine if you are a good match intellectually and socially in their community. Make sure your answers reflect who you are. They should not only highlight the positive aspects of your experience and personality but by genuine and authentic.

Notify the college counselor if you are scheduled to interview at a college. In addition to providing you prep questions and tips, the counselor will set up a mock interview to simulate the more competitive interview setting.

Special Note: It is always a good idea to write a personalized thank you note to the person who conducts your interview!

ATHLETIC RECRUITING

There are many options for students to remain physically active in college. Intramural sports and club teams are popular ways for students to continue participating in the sports they love in college (or great ways to try something new). However, if you desire to compete at the intercollegiate level, this section offers specific advice and details for competing at the Division I, II, III, or NAIA levels. We encourage you to speak with your respective coaches and the college counselor to assess which college level is a good match academically and athletically. Each sport has its own timetables and procedures for recruiting, so talk to your coaches early and often about what you should be doing as your high school career unfolds.

In order to play Division I or Division II sports, you must graduate from high school, complete 16 NCAA approved core courses, earn a minimum GPA, and earn an ACT or SAT score that matches your core course GPA. Students who wish to play NCAA Division I or II sports need to register with the NCAA Eligibility Center at www.eligibilitycenter.org. Once you are registered, you will need to work with the college counselor to release your transcript to the NCAA Eligibility Center portal. Upon graduation, Deerfield-Windsor will send a final transcript to the NCAA confirming your graduation.

Division I - Complete 10 NCAA core courses, including seven in English, math or natural/physical science, before your seventh semester.

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of Math (Algebra 1 or higher)
- 2 years of Natural/Physical Science (including one year of lab if offered)
- 1 year of Additional (English, Math, or Natural/Physical Science)
- 2 years of Social Science
- 4 years of Additional Courses (Any area listed above, foreign language or comparative religion/philosophy)

Division II - Complete 16 core courses in the following areas:

- 3 years of English
- 2 years of Math (Algebra 1 or higher)
- 2 years of Natural/Physical Science (including 1 year of lab if offered)
- 3 years of Additional (English, Math, or Natural/Physical Science)
- 2 years of Social Science
- 4 years of Additional Courses (Any area listed above, foreign language or comparative religion/philosophy)

Division III - D-III schools offer an integrated environment focusing on academic success while offering a competitive athletic environment. D-III schools do not offer athletic scholarships, but qualified, prospective students can be eligible to receive merit or need-based financial aid.

NAIA - High school students have three academic eligibility criteria to focus on. If a student meets two of the criteria, then the student is eligible upon high school graduation:

- Cumulative GPA of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale
- Class rank in top 50% of graduating class
- ACT of 16 or SAT of 860 Critical Reading and Math

Students who want to play NAIA-level sports must register with the NAIA at www.naia.org.

FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Financial aid refers to the funds provided to the students and parents to help pay for postsecondary, or college, educational expenses (tuition, housing, meals, books, etc.). Financial aid is determined by evaluating the family's current financial condition; the family's ability to pay for college considers special circumstances that affect their ability to pay. The primary sources of financial aid funds include the U.S. federal government, state governments, specific institutions (the college or university), and private entities (churches, employers, non-profit agencies). Below is an introduction to the four basic types of financial aid, the two basic categories of financial aid (merit-based and need-based), and a description of the necessary forms required to determine eligibility for the appropriate forms of financial aid. Additionally, you will find details and criteria for Georgia state scholarship programs.

If you anticipate paying for college will be a significant concern (which it is for many families), talk with the college counselor early in the process. Doing so will provide a deeper understanding of all financial options available to you and will allow us to establish a list of colleges that reflect your family's personal financial situation. All families should use the Cost Calculators and Estimated Family Contribution calculators, for they will enable you to determine whether need or merit-based aid will be available to your student.

BASIC FINANCIAL AID TERMINOLOGY

FAFSA, Free Application for Federal Student Aid, is a detailed form and the first step in applying for federal aid offered by the U.S. Department of Education. A FAFSA form is available in October and needs to be completed each year, even if you are considering several different colleges. You may be able to use the FAFSA to apply for state and college aid as well. Pay close attention to each college's financial aid deadline to ensure consideration for any eligible aid. Access the form at <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa>.

CSS PROFILE is a supplemental need analysis document used by some colleges and private scholarship programs to award their non-federal aid funds. Early in the senior year, participating colleges may ask an applicant to file a PROFILE so that a predetermination can be made of the student's financial aid eligibility at that school. The PROFILE does *not* replace the FAFSA - you *must* file a FAFSA to be considered for federal student aid. Only submit the PROFILE to those colleges and programs that request it. PROFILE registration forms are processed by the College Scholarship Service (CSS) and available at <https://profileonline.collegeboard.com/prf/index.jsp>.

Institutional Forms, college or university specific financial aid forms, are generally short and very specific to the needs of that institution. Typically, the institution will make the requirement for this form clear when the application for financial aid is submitted, but it is always a good idea to check with the financial aid office to make sure ALL required forms are completed. Some institutions also require students applying for merit awards to complete a FAFSA or other disclosure forms.

Need-Based Aid constitutes the major portion of assistance available for post secondary education and is determined by the applicant's and parents' finances and living situation. Factors considered include the student income, parent income, parent and student assets and savings, number of people in household, and number from household enrolled in college.

Merit-Based Aid is given in recognition of a student's accomplishments and/or special skills, talents or academic accomplishments (GPA, standardized test scores, extracurricular activities, etc.)

Scholarships are awarded on the basis of merit, specific skills, or a unique characteristic. Repayment is not required. Most scholarships require that you maintain a certain level of achievement (e.g., a required GPA).

Grants are awarded on the basis of financial need. Repayment or service commitment is not required.

Loans, both federal and other, allow students and parents to borrow money to pay educational expenses. Think of loans as an investment in your future. Loans must be repaid with interest, usually after your education is completed.

Work-Study Programs provide jobs for undergraduate students who need financial aid. The student earns a paycheck for working a limited number of hours throughout the school year at the college or university.

Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) Programs are sponsored by each branch of the military. In exchange for a certain number of years on active duty, a student's college education is paid (up to a certain amount) by the armed forces.

Net Price Calculators enable the student to estimate the financial aid options for a specific institution. All colleges are federally required to post this calculator, usually located on the financial aid page of the college website. It is very important to complete the entire process as accurately as possible to ensure the most accurate results.

Georgia HOPE Scholarship is a merit-based award available to Georgia residents who have demonstrated academic achievement. A HOPE Scholarship recipient must graduate from high school with a minimum 3.0 grade point average (as calculated by the HOPE program) as well as meet the academic rigor requirement. Students must maintain a minimum 3.0 cumulative postsecondary grade point average to remain eligible for the scholarship. The scholarship provides tuition assistance to students pursuing an undergraduate degree at a HOPE Scholarship eligible college or university in Georgia and is available at both public and private universities.

Zell Miller Scholarship is a merit-based award available to Georgia residents, similar to the HOPE Scholarship but with more stringent academic requirements and a higher level of tuition assistance.

Students must graduate high school with a minimum 3.7 grade point average (as calculated by the HOPE program) combined with a minimum SAT score of 1200 on the math and reading portions of the test or a minimum composite score of 26 on a single national or state/district administration of the ACT as well as meet the academic rigor requirement. Students must maintain a minimum 3.3 cumulative postsecondary grade point average to remain eligible for the scholarship.

SOURCES FOR MERIT SCHOLARSHIPS

- Universities and Colleges -- By far the most significant are those offered by the universities themselves. It's important to check each college's financial aid and scholarships website for deadlines (which might be different than application deadlines) and for information on whether a special application is needed.
- Naviance -- Check Naviance frequently for the updated scholarship list compiled by the college counselor. The list includes all scholarship information received through the college counselor's office. Browse the list to determine what might be applicable. Some attract many applicants and are therefore more competitive, but some are less so.
- Website Databases -- There are quite a few website databases that attempt to match the student profile with scholarships. It's worth trying a couple of them! Websites include fastweb.com, scholarships.com, scholarshipexperts.com, scholarshipsandgrants.us and cappex.com. They aren't perfect in matching, but they do provide access to more possibilities.
- The Public Library -- The public library often compiles a folder of local scholarships. These typically don't get as many applicants and are worth investigating.

A GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Rolling admissions - Rolling admissions programs read applications and make admission decisions in the order that applications are received. For colleges with rolling admissions, it is often--but not always--beneficial to apply early before too many spots are filled.

Regular Decision - Most colleges accept applications within the regular decision time frame, with deadlines falling sometime between early December and late February of senior year. Typically, students will receive decisions on or before April 1 and will have until May 1 to respond. Decision options include admit, deny, or wait list.

Early Decision - Students with serious interest in one college may elect to apply to that college under its *Early Decision* plan. If admitted, the student agrees that they will enroll at that institution and must withdraw any applications submitted to other institutions. *Early Decision* deadlines are typically in November, and decisions are released in mid-December. Decisions include admit, defer, or deny. A student who is deferred will be reconsidered in the overall regular admission pool; a student who is denied will not be reconsidered for that admission cycle.

A student may apply to only one college under *Early Decision* and must be ready to file other applications if deferred or denied. Students must be sure that the school they have chosen for *Early Decision* is absolutely their first choice as this is a binding commitment.

In recent years, a number of colleges have created additional, later *Early Decision 2* deadlines. Typically, these deadlines are in January with decisions released a month later. As in *Early Decision*, *Early Decision 2* admits have binding commitments.

Applying *Early Decision* is a big commitment, one not to be taken lightly. While it is often a big advantage for a student's chances of admission, there are also downsides, including losing the ability to compare financial packages and the need to commit so early in the process.

Early Action - Early action programs allow students to apply to colleges in November and receive a decision by mid-December, like early decision. If admitted, however, students are not bound to attend and have until May 1 to make a decision about enrollment. Students are free to submit applications to other colleges and may apply to more than one non-restrictive early action program.

Some colleges use early action as a means of demonstrating interest and thus provide an admission benefit. Other colleges apply higher standards for their early action pool and defer qualified but "on-the-bubble" students to regular decision. Talking to the college counselor is wise to decide if early plans are a good idea for you.

National Candidates Reply Date - The common reply date for accepting a college's offer of admission is May 1, and no college may ask for a response before that date. Students typically need to

submit a non-refundable enrollment deposit along with a commitment letter. Students may deposit at only one college to secure a place in the first year class. Colleges learning that a student has double-deposited are free to revoke the admission decision. A student may remain on another college's wait list, however.

Admission Decisions -

Admit - You are in! You are being offered admission to the college to which you applied.

Deny - You are not in. The decision is made by the admissions committee and forwarded to you.

Wait lists - You are not in yet but have been placed on a waiting list in case an opening becomes available. Colleges may maintain a wait list in the event that they do not enroll enough students in their first-year class. Usually a college that has not met its enrollment goals shortly after May 1 will offer admission to students on its wait list. Most colleges release their wait lists by mid-June, although some may continue to pull candidates in later in the summer. Some colleges intentionally under-admit and plan to go to their wait lists every year as an enrollment strategy.

Defer - You applied *Early Decision* or *Early Action*, but a final decision on your file is being postponed and considered with the *Regular Decision* pool. Perhaps the college wants to see your first semester senior year grades and/or to reassess your candidacy in the context of their entire applicant pool.

Common Application - The Common Application (informally known as the Common App) is an undergraduate college admission application accepted by nearly 700 member colleges and universities in 48 states and the District of Columbia, as well as Canada, China, and many European countries. Member colleges and universities that accept the Common App include over 100 public universities and over 250 institutions that do not require an application fee.

The Common App form can save hours of work. The student completes the information on the form and submits it to any of the colleges or universities accepting the Common App. Some colleges require an additional supplementary application consisting of school-specific questions and/or essays.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Naviance (found on the DWS website under Quicklinks) is a valuable resource for both parents and students. The program enables students to research college possibilities, match to best-fit colleges, and identify ideal college majors. It is a great source of information about colleges, especially DWS specific application history, for the student and parent. Available tools and resources will be introduced at monthly grade-level meetings. Naviance college planning tools provide invaluable information to the student and parent for making informed decisions.

It is also the program used to track student applications and send support materials. The student has access to an application manager, transcript and teacher recommendation request forms, scholarship application manager, etc. It will be the primary tool used by all seniors.

One of the most valuable components of this resource is the Naviance Test Prep, an online ACT and SAT prep course. The program uses “adaptive learning technology to evaluate a student’s skill profile and generate a personalized study plan.”

Ninth grade students will receive account information and set up their student account. Parents may set up a Naviance account as well. (Email the college counselor to set up a parent account.) Also, contact the college counselor to reset passwords or to address any issues with your account.

Niche.com does a nice job of presenting information about day to day life at each college. It’s not the resource to use for academic programs, but it is a great resource about social life, parking, food, etc.

Campustours.com provides a very good sense of a college before potentially scheduling an on-campus visit.

The Fiske Guide to College and ***The Insider’s Guide to Colleges*** provide short summaries of about two pages that are great for getting a sense of a college before delving deeper into it. Both books are sold on Amazon inexpensively.

Colleges That Change Lives is a college educational guide that provides a wealth of information on 40 colleges that are amazing, transformational institutions and not impossible to get into.

The Alumni Factor provides a newer ranking system that purports to measure outputs rather than inputs. The program measures how much students grow academically, socially, morally during their four years at a school rather than how smart they are when they are admitted. *The Alumni Factor* researches and ranks colleges based on responses from graduates in 15 key areas. Information and rankings can be found at <https://www.alumnifactor.com/>.