



MARVELWOOD

**2023 - 2024
COLLEGE GUIDE**

**THE MARVELWOOD SCHOOL
KENT, CT**

Marvelwood College Guide
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Welcome!

Welcome to the college admissions process! At this moment, it may seem impossible to imagine yourself in college, and impossible to imagine what sort of college you hope to find, but don't worry. It takes time and effort and we are here, ready to support you along the way. Our office is open and we are always available to discuss ideas as well as the nuts and bolts. All ideas are valid; it is *your* future, so don't be timid about the possibilities. We encourage you to read this guide thoroughly, even more than once. A lot of time and experience has been put into these pages, and there are answers to most questions within.

This is a time of great reflection, a time to be honest with yourself about your expectations and desires. This is *your* process and these are *your* applications. It is important that you examine your strengths and weaknesses, and lend serious thought to your interests. Success in college often comes down to simple factors like size and location. Some of you will have specific interests and will be looking for specialized programs. Discuss these ideas with your parents and with us, and possibilities will emerge.

Applying to college should not be an overwhelming process and remember, most people find their way into one of their top choice schools. While filling out applications requires some work and attention to detail, technology has certainly streamlined the process in recent years. When asked how to manage the anxiety brought on by the application process, Wylie Mitchell, Dean of Admissions at Bates College, answered, "Control that which you *can* control."

What can you control? You can control deadlines. You can be organized. You can be informed. You can be prepared. If you ask any matriculated senior what they did to improve the process, you will surely hear the resounding chorus of, "Start early! Start early! Start early!"

Remember to use this time wisely and take advantage of the support we offer. This is an exciting milestone in your life, one to celebrate and appreciate. Give yourself and the process the respect and work they deserve and you will find that you get back as much as you put in. By this time next year you will be breathing easy having done the research, made the visits, taken the tests, written the essays and filed out the applications. Many of you will already know where you are headed. So let's get started and, rest assured, you will find your school.

We look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

William Bingham
Director of College Guidance

Spring Family Weekend College Session

An Overview

What we do

- Explore academic and career interests with each student.
- Suggest a tentative list of colleges to visit over the summer.
- Update prospective lists and personal data for each student in *Naviance*.
- Remain available during the summer for consultation and advice.
- Schedule visits from colleges and universities in the fall.
- Assist students through all phases of the application process.
- Write school reports (*SR*) and counselor recommendations.
- Collect all supporting documents as necessary, including updated transcripts, teacher recommendations, school reports, essays, resumes, portfolios and other materials. Mail packages by their published deadlines to those colleges that do not accept electronic submissions.
- Send updated grade reports to colleges throughout the winter term. Follow-up with material missing or lost in the vast application system.
- Send final transcripts to all selected schools in June.

What parents should do

- Be proactive and supportive from the get-go!
- Be as knowledgeable as you can about the list of schools your son or daughter is considering. Use the internet; it is a wonderful resource.
- Use your *Family Connection* page on the school's *Naviance* website to add or delete schools from the *Colleges I'm Thinking About* list
<http://student.naviance.com/marvelwood>
- Over the summer, visit colleges and encourage SAT or ACT prep and completion of the first draft of the essay.
- Help fill out applications as needed, especially the all-important *Common Application*.
- Think through financial constraints or issues early and submit financial aid forms (FAFSA, CSS Profile) when required and on time.
- Stay on top of correspondence with colleges during the spring and summer prior to matriculating.
- Be sure to make that deposit by May 1st.

Countdown To College Planning

Success in the college exploration, decision-making and admission process requires that certain tasks be performed at specific times during the high school years. You can greatly reduce the anxiety associated with these responsibilities by exercising personal control over the entire process. The following timeline will help to keep you organized.

Junior Year *Begin your college search process!*

DECEMBER-MARCH

- Attend initial orientation meetings with the college counselors. Intro to the class *Google Classroom* page where counselors make important and timely announcements.
- **Register for the *Common Application* and *Naviance* early & match them.**
- Register for the April ACT.
- Request information from colleges on your list and start organizing materials.
- Visit the college counseling office to help you in the selection process.
- When selecting your senior courses, continue to challenge yourself.
- Visit colleges over spring break

APRIL

- Attend the Kent School spring college fair (date TBD).
- Take the ACT (if appropriate).
- Register for the May and/or June SAT I and the SAT II Subject Tests.
- Look into summer employment. (this looks good on your CA “Activities” list or resume!)
- Continue to evaluate colleges and start narrowing down your choices.

MAY/JUNE

- Attend the college counseling presentation during Spring Family Weekend
- Take SATs and AP exams (if appropriate).
- Consider enrolling in an academic summer course at a local college, pursuing a summer school program or working as a volunteer.
- Plan college visits with your family.

JULY/AUGUST

- Visit colleges, take tours, set up interviews, etc.
- Register for the *Common Application* in August and begin adding schools. If you register before August 1st be sure to roll over your account to the current year.
- Pick an essay topic and do a first draft of the all-important personal essay.
- Continue to refine your list and separate reach, middle and safety schools.

Senior Year ***Apply to Colleges – Make Decisions!***

SEPTEMBER

- Register for the *Common Application* if you haven't already.
- Sign the FERPA agreement on the *Common Application* and match it with your *Naviance* account. (See *Naviance*, page 8) Your counselors will walk you through this easy process.
- Review the materials you receive from the College Counseling office during Senior College Seminars.
- Register for fall SATs and/or ACTs.
- Meet with your college counselor to review your college list and discuss your academic and personal record.
- Plan visits to colleges for Open House sessions and/or personal interviews.

OCTOBER

- Attend the Fall Family Weekend college counseling presentation.
- Take the SAT I.
- Starting October 1st complete the FAFSA to be eligible for financial aid. Individual school deadlines vary.
- Gather the information necessary for applications and get them done.
- Request letters of recommendation through *Naviance*.
- **CHECK DEADLINES!! Early EA and ED applications must be completed now.**

NOVEMBER

- Take SAT I or II and remember to have your scores sent to colleges on your list.
- Keep your grades up!
- Your college essay and the *Common Application* should be done by now.
- Access online the new copy of the FAFSA if needed.

DECEMBER

- Take SAT I, SAT II, or ACT. Remember to have copies of your scores sent to the colleges on your list. **Many Early Action (EA) deadlines are in Nov/Dec.**

JANUARY

- Keep working hard! Senior grades are important.
- We will send mid-year grades to those schools that request them. If you receive letters or emails with this request be sure to forward them to college counseling.
-

FEBRUARY/MARCH

- Monitor your applications making sure all materials have been sent and received.

APRIL/MAY

- Watch out for senioritis!
- Notify all schools by May 1st concerning your final decision.
- Share your decision with your college counselor and the school Registrar so that your final transcript and proof of graduation can be sent.
- Enjoy graduation!



Naviance WorkspaceK12 is a valuable organizational tool that when used properly allows counselors, parents, and students to coordinate vast amounts of information and stay abreast of each student's progress as he or she moves through the application process. Naviance is an interactive web-based program that can help you research prospective colleges, organize your options and documents and keep track of what you have and have not done. Like all tools, it must be used correctly in order to be effective. We have already uploaded personal and demographic data and, if available, test scores for the class of 2024, and below are some tips for making *Naviance* work for you.

The following are instructions guiding you to the *Family Connection* page on our *Naviance* website.

- **To access the *Naviance* platform, click on link:**
<http://student.naviance.com/marvelwood>
- **On the right side of the page you will see, “Are you new here?” Below that, click on the link that says, “I’m new and need to register.”**
- **In the box, type in your registration code which you will find in the letter sent directly to parents from *Naviance*.**
- **Follow the instructions to establish your own discreet login and password, and to access your student information. Once there, you can edit the personal information page (*About Me*).**
- Next, click the *Colleges* tab and then under the *My Colleges* heading, click *Colleges I’m Thinking About* and begin to add prospective colleges to this list. Now is a good time to add as many colleges to this list as you would like, even if you are only marginally interested and plan to investigate the school further. We will have time to fine-tune your selections over the coming months with a goal of trimming the list to a manageable number (usually 8-10 schools). Remember also that many colleges and universities visit the Marvelwood campus in the fall as well.
- Lastly, click the *Colleges I’m Applying To* link. It is here that you need to match your *Naviance* account with your *Common Application* by entering your CA username in the space provided. Matching is only successful after you have signed the FERPA agreement on the *Common Application* after August 1st.

**An important word about the FERPA (Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act) agreement. By digitally signing the FERPA agreement you are allowing us to send transcripts

and other supporting documents to all *Common Application* schools as well as those schools that allow for electronic submission on your list via *Naviance's* secure *eDocs* option.

The Common Application
<https://www.commonapp.org/>

The *Common Application* (or Common App) is one of the most useful tools available for streamlining the undergraduate application process. The Common App is a non-profit membership organization providing reliable services that promote equity, access, and integrity in



the college application process. It serves students, member institutions and secondary schools by providing a single application – online or in print – that can be submitted to more than 1000 schools in all fifty states and many foreign institutions. Member colleges and universities range from small, relatively non-competitive colleges to big universities

and the Ivy League. The Common App is accepted by public and private institutions in every region of the country and by a growing number of international schools as well.

Registering for the Common App is easy and free. Go to *commonapp.org* and follow the instructions for new applicants to create an account. Once you have your username and password, email or give them to your college counselor for safe keeping. **Do not develop more than one account.** This creates mayhem later. *Commonapp.org* and *Naviance* work hand-in-hand with great efficiency, and a single username and password for each applicant is critical to the success of that process. You may register and fill out all sections of the Common App anytime now with the exception of the individual college supplemental questions. Those should be addressed after the CA “rolls over” to the new version on August 1st.

After several recent overhauls, the Common App is easier to navigate and to fill out than ever before. Early in the process, applicants must complete the FERPA waiver in their Common App by clicking the *Assign Recommenders* tab for any college within *My Colleges*. The FERPA waiver is only completed once and covers all current and future colleges and recommenders. Please keep in mind that you can only see the *Assign Recommenders* tab once you add at least one school to your account. For students using *Naviance*: the FERPA section locks as soon as the applicants match their Common App and *Naviance* accounts.

The main body of the application, including the essay, need only be filled out once. This includes *Profile*, *Family*, *Education*, *Testing*, *Activities*, and *Writing*, which is addressed in detail later in this manual. The *Family* section causes the most problems as students usually need help from parents or guardians in order to complete it. Many colleges, and especially universities, require a supplemental essay. These offer an opportunity to shine, and range in length from 100-500 words. Clicking on each college on your list will reveal the additional requirements pertaining to that school. As in all parts of the Common App, you’ll see a **green check** when each section is completed properly.

Finally, there is the **preview, payment, and submission** of the application. When the application is ready, click on *preview and submission –common app*, and have a credit card ready. You will print preview your application for errors and omissions. The Common Application will then take you to the payment page. Once the payment is complete you will be guided to the submission page and voila! You may apply to any number of schools on your list at any time, but once you have submitted the Common App to a school, you cannot change the information or the essay. The best words in the world are, “You have successfully submitted your application.”

Common Application: *Bullet Points*

Important points to review and remember about the *Common Application*:

- **One account only**, especially for students using outside consultants.
- Give your username and password to your College Counselor for safe keeping.
- Marvelwood’s CEEB (College Entrance Examination Board) number is **070117**. You will need this frequently for applications and testing.
- Review each section for errors. The program will not let you submit unless all required fields are completed correctly.
- Ask parents to assist in filling in the *Family* section.
- Only check Athletic and Art supplements if you have the required supporting documents.
- Use Marvelwood as your mailing address.
- Colleges are looking for well-rounded students. In the activities section, include as many activities as you can: sports (12 hours/week, 10 weeks/season), community service (3 hours/week, 30 hours/year), student government, prefect, tour guide, arts, music, volunteer and paid jobs. A new feature this year allows you to prioritize your activities as you list them.
- Get your teacher recommendation requests in early (through Naviance not the CA).
- Spend time on the essay – it’s often the only way college admissions counselors get to know the real you and what makes you tick!
- **PAY ATTENTION TO DEADLINES AND DON’T MISS THEM!**
- **APPLY EARLY!**

Writing Your College Essay

The new Common App asks for only one personal statement but if you have a significant talent or interest, you can add a second essay or resume in the additional information section. Regardless of the type of essay you write, the following principles of composition remain the same:

- Use specific examples from your own life and avoid generalizations
- Depth is more important than breadth
- Be honest
- Be yourself

The most difficult questions to respond to are the ones that ask, in a general way, to say something about yourself. Colleges are less interested in name, rank, and serial number than in the kind of human being you are. The experiences you've had and what they have meant to you define you as a person. (NOTE: see page twelve for the latest Common Application Essay Prompts).

Writing Tips

- Allow yourself plenty of time. Draft your essay as soon as possible (the summer before your senior year is not too early to start).
- Before you begin, jot down your goals and how you feel college will help you reach them.
- Develop a theme that reveals something about you, or choose a single experience that could become a vehicle for describing yourself. It helps to look back at your list of school, community and travel experiences.
- Write a draft. Put it away for twenty-four hours, and then re-read it. Is it focused? Interesting? Would *you* respond favorably to the person it describes?
- Rewrite it.
- Repeat the two previous steps until you like what you have written and are satisfied that it tells your story well, and reflects the person you are.
- Conference with someone you respect. Have this person comment candidly on your essay. Your English teacher is an excellent resource as well as your college counselor.
- Check carefully for grammar and spelling errors.
- Read the essay aloud to hear how it sounds.
- Edit your final essay *carefully*.
- Proofread it again before submitting your final copy.

2021-2022 Common Application Essay Prompts (word limit 650)

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

Choosing a College

If you're excited about choosing a college, the admission process will be more interesting. Also, your enthusiasm will be reflected in your college applications, essays, and interviews. In any case, choosing a college involves selecting a strategy based on your interests, your school records, the college selectivity, and cost.

- **Talk to your college counselor:** Your counselor will have information and advice about which colleges may be good matches for you.
- **Use the *Naviance* “Supermatch College Search”:** This is located in your *Family Connection* page on *Naviance* under the *College Research* tab. This search resource allows you to find your best fit by ranking certain criteria.
- **Consult your parents often:** The most successful college choices are made when students and parents work as a team to explore the possibilities and make the best selection. It involves good communication and shared decision making.
- **College Admissions Reps:** Take advantage of meeting with the college representatives that visit the Marvelwood campus or connect on Zoom. The dates and times of these visits are posted outside of the College Counseling office, are listed on your *Family Connection* page in *Naviance*, and are announced at morning meetings.
- **College Fairs:** Admissions representatives from many colleges gather in one place or on Zoom to talk to high school students and their parents. Typically, there are several fairs held each fall and spring. Attendance is free. Dates and times announced on the *Classroom* page.
- **Research the college websites:** As you compile a list of colleges and universities you may contact the colleges to arrange visits, or learn about the colleges through their websites. Mail and email addresses, phone numbers and websites are available online, in *Naviance*, or in the College Counseling office.
- **College Applications:** Marvelwood School strongly encourages each student to register for and use the *Common Application* which is accepted by over 1000 schools and is available online at www.commonapp.org. (See page 6)
- **Reach, realistic (middle) and safety schools.** Consider applying to schools that fit into these categories based on your transcript and SAT/ACT scores. Compare your scores to those of recently admitted classes to see how you measure up. It stands to reason that the more popular and selective a school gets, the harder it is to be admitted there.
 - **Reach schools** – These are schools where it will be a stretch for you to be admitted. They are schools where you have a 20% or less chance of acceptance.
 - **Realistic schools** – These are the mid-range schools where, all things considered, you stand a reasonable chance (50-50) of admission.
 - **Safety schools** – These are schools to which you will likely be admitted (80% chance) based on your academic record, the school's criteria, and past history.
- **Get organized.** Keep good records throughout the college selection process. Did you speak with an admission representative? Jot down the person's name, the date, and what you talked about. When you visit a college, write down the details for future reference.

Be sure to log any changes such as submitted applications and recommendation requests into your *Family Connection* page on *Naviance*.

The College Visit

Visit the schools you are serious about. You are making a major decision involving time and money. It is important to select the college that best satisfies your needs, interests, lifestyle and personal and professional goals. Finding the right match is never an easy task, but it can be fun! One of the best ways to narrow down your choices is to gain an informed perspective by taking campus tours and attending an information session and/or interview. Summer is the time when most students visit colleges. Remember, however, that over the summer, some colleges are not in session. Without students on campus, it can be difficult to get a true sense of what the school is like. Therefore, we recommend that you visit college over March break during your junior year and during late August or early September of your senior year, if possible.

Important tips to remember during your visit

- **Talk to students:** The tour guides are usually students who are not involved in the admission process. Feel free to ask questions you may not want to ask during an interview. Students can tell you about the dorm life, social events, quality of food, etc. Suggested questions to ask:
 - How many hours a week do you study? Is that typical of students here?
 - Are faculty members available to meet with students outside of class?
 - Do many students go home on weekends?
 - Is the food good?
 - Is it possible to study in your dorm room?
 - What do you like most about this school? ...least?
 - How easy is it to register for the classes you want?
- **Tour the library:** How extensive are the holdings? Are there comfortable places to study? How current is the technology?
- **Attend a campus event if possible.**
- **Read the student newspaper,** or other student publications if possible.
- **Check the facilities:** Classrooms, labs, computer access, athletic facilities, dorms, bookstore, etc.
- Attend a class and/or meet with professors, if possible. When you attend a class ask yourself:
 - Do students seem interested in the material?
 - Is there time for questions and discussion? Do students participate?
 - Am I intellectually challenged by what is taking place in the class?
 - Is there a good rapport between professors and students?
 - Would I feel comfortable as a student in this setting?

Find out from your tour guide whether the school has a program for prospective students to stay on campus overnight with a student in the dormitory. Check to see if any Marvelwood

students attend the school you are visiting. Our students are usually more than happy to show prospective freshmen the campus.

The Campus Interview

Campus interviews vary from one college to another. The interview can be an important factor in the admissions process and can often improve your chances of being accepted to a school. Usually, schools will give you an indication of how important the interview is to them. If the school requires a meeting, definitely schedule one. If the interview is recommended or optional, it is to your advantage to arrange one, even if it is for informational purposes only. The interview gives you the opportunity to make your transcript personal and bring your application to life! If you plan an interview, keep these guidelines in mind:

- Call the admissions office to schedule your interview. In some cases, when the college is far away the school may arrange an interview with a school representative living in your area or even a Zoom interview.
- Dress for the occasion: Give thought to your grooming and attire.
- Be on time: Try to get to your interview a little early. If you have time to walk around and check out the college first it may help you ask more relevant questions.
- Prepare for the interview by reading all you can about the college. Study the brochure and catalog as well as the website. Make a list of your questions, and be sure to ask them.
- Bring an unofficial copy of your transcript with you. It should list the courses you have taken in the past, your grades and the courses in which you are presently enrolled. Your SAT/ACT scores should also be listed on the back of your transcript. It also helps to have a resume-style activity sheet that lists your extracurricular activities, school and community service, work experience and any honors or awards you have earned.

Keep in mind that the interview is not an exam – there are no right or wrong answers. Think of the interview as a conversation in which you have the opportunity to share information about yourself while learning more about the college. Deciding where to go to college is a long, thoughtful process. Visiting the schools on your list and having an interview can help you considerably when making your final decision.

The most important thing to remember is that the campus visit and interview give you the chance to determine which college suits you best. Relax and enjoy the exchange with the interviewer. Be positive about yourself and listen to what the interviewer is saying. Be prepared to answer some of the following questions.

Sample questions commonly asked in the college interview

- Why are you interested in this particular college?
- What fields of study are you interested in pursuing? (It's all right to say you are undecided, but know what your general interests and strengths are.)
- Name some of your strengths and weaknesses.

- What do you do in your spare time?
- What extracurricular activities have you participated in? Do you plan to continue in college?
- Describe any work experiences you may have had.
- In what ways have you served your community?
- Who is your favorite author and why?
- What do you see yourself doing ten years from now?

Suggested questions to ask the admissions representative

- What is distinctive about this college?
- Will I need my own computer (desktop or laptop)?
- If I don't have my own computer, will I have easy access to a computer lab, etc.? Where are the terminals located? Is there a fee?
- Will I have access to special equipment (such as electron microscopes) as a freshman?
- Do you have freshman advisors? How easy is it to make an appointment?
- What extracurricular activities are there on campus? What are the facilities like? Do most students stay on campus during the weekend?
- What kinds of campus jobs are available? Are they only for work-study students?
- Can freshmen have cars on campus?
- Is housing guaranteed for all four years?
- When I am accepted at this college, does it also mean that I am accepted to the specific program (major) to which I applied?
- What new programs or facilities will become available while I am here?
- What are recent graduates doing now? What type of career counseling do you offer? Are there internship opportunities?

When you return home, it is always a wise decision to send the interviewer a thank-you note by email. It reinforces the interview and keeps the admissions representative thinking about you in a positive way.

Sample email to an interviewer:

Dear (Dr., Mr., Mrs., or Ms.) _____:

Thank you very much for spending time with me on (date). I enjoyed meeting you and appreciated the chance to see (name of college). I especially enjoyed the opportunity to (mention a specific part of the interview that was meaningful to you).

Once again, thank you for your time. It will help me in the rest of my application process to (name of college).

Sincerely,

On Campus Visits from College Representatives

Each fall, Marvelwood brings to campus representatives from colleges and universities all over the country. We post notices of which colleges will be visiting on *Family Connection* and on the bulletin board in the College Counseling office. We also announce upcoming visits during morning meetings on Mondays and Thursdays. (Note: until otherwise noted, all college visits are conducted on Zoom.)

Talking to college representatives is a great way for you to connect with the admissions staff who actually read applications (perhaps yours). These visits also give you a chance to make face-to-face contact with admissions officers. If you are really interested in a particular college, then you will want to meet with that college representative, especially if it is your top choice school or if you are applying early. Remember, this is also their opportunity to meet you which adds personality and depth to your application.

Some tips for meeting with college representatives:

- Personal interviews are not offered by college representatives when they visit Marvelwood in the fall. These are information sessions only.
- You may miss class for a meeting with a college representative, but you must have permission from your teacher and a pass from the College Counseling office. You are still responsible for class work, and under no circumstance should you ever miss a test.
- If you sign up for a meeting with a college representative, be sure you keep the appointment. Colleges cannot always visit when it is most convenient for you. Sometimes they visit on Wednesdays or they might come on a Head Day.
- Have questions ready to ask!
- Do some research ahead of time. Make yourself look good by knowing something about the school before the representative visits. This will also improve the quality of your questions and the representative's answers.
- Relax and enjoy the conversation. These meetings can be informative and fun.

Letters of Recommendation

Colleges request recommendations as a way of getting additional insight into who you are, how you have gotten to this point, and where you may be headed in the future. The information included in a recommendation should go beyond what is provided on your transcript. For that reason, choose people who know you well, and be sure to ask them in advance how they feel about recommending you to college.

How many recommendations should I request? Colleges do not want to be flooded with dozens of letters on your behalf. Recommendations from a college counselor and one or two teachers will generally do unless the college specifically asks for something different. It is better if you solicit letters from teachers of different subjects or a person who knows you in a different way (for example An English teacher and a coach). Community members from organizations you have participated in or employers are also good choices as “outside” recommendations.

Make sure to give the people who are writing recommendations plenty of time before the letters are due. Consider asking them in September of your senior year as soon after summer vacation as possible.

At Marvelwood, we ask that the recommendation be returned directly to the College Counseling office where the written evaluation and other portions are uploaded to the *eDocs* portal in *Naviance*. In fact, we ask that the evaluations be emailed to us to help speed up the process.

The School Report – Your college counselor will prepare your *School Report (SR)*. This is essentially an overview of your academic and extra-curricular performance in high school from the perspective of the college counseling office. Schools rely on the *SR* to provide them with a candid appraisal of a student’s ability to do college level work.

Early Decision and Early Action

There is a real mystique surrounding the notion of applying early. The feeling is that if you apply to a college early, you have a better chance of getting in. The truth is that sometimes applying early increases your chances, but sometimes it does not. There are good reasons to apply early, but there are also good reasons not to. Give the matter due consideration before jumping in.

Early Decision (ED)

Early Decision is a binding agreement between a college and a student. Students who apply ED are indicating that they are sure that they will attend that college if accepted. Most ED deadlines are in early November (usually Nov. 1 or Nov. 15), and students are notified in mid-to-late December whether they have been accepted, denied or deferred to the regular admissions pool. You may only apply Early Decision to one college. If you are accepted, then you must attend that college. If you have applied regular decision to other schools, you must withdraw all those applications.

The advantage to applying ED is that you enter a smaller applicant pool. Also, because of the binding nature of the agreement, colleges are more inclined to accept ED students because they know you will attend which takes some of the guesswork out of the enrollment process. However, the applicant pool tends to be stronger and more competitive. So if your record falls below the college's average applicant, you won't help yourself by applying ED. You will, however, help yourself by doing the best you can in the fall term of your senior year.

Apply ED only to a school you love. If you get in you will probably spend the next four years of your life there, and that's a pretty big commitment.

Early Action (EA)

Early Action usually follows the same timeline as ED, especially since many EA deadlines now occur in early November as well. The major difference is that the decision is not binding. You may, therefore, apply to several schools with EA plans. The only real advantage to this is that you get your decisions earlier from the colleges, which lightens the anxiety of waiting. However, as with ED, if you are hoping to improve your grades or test scores, it might be wise to wait and join the regular admissions pool.

Priority Applications

A growing number of colleges and universities are offering something called a "priority application." Using a priority application typically means that your application is fast-tracked through the review process and you are guaranteed to receive your admissions decision within a set length of time, usually in 2-3 weeks. Colleges also frequently waive the application fee and sometimes even the essay requirement on priority applications.

While these benefits sound appealing, and in some cases they are just the ticket, there are a

number of things to consider. Priority applications are basically sales pitches. If you have no essay or recommendations, then you will be judged on your grades and test scores only.

Standardized Testing Information

Most colleges require that students submit scores from standardized entrance examinations as part of the admissions process. The tests most frequently used are those administered by the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB), the American College Testing Program (ACT), and Educational Testing Services (ETS).

SAT, PSAT (CEEB Testing Program)

- PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test / National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test): Measures critical reading, math reasoning, and writing skills you have developed over many years, both in and out of school. Scores are not reported to colleges unless you wish. The PSAT is given annually in the fall and is recommended for juniors. By taking this test as a junior, you will be eligible for scholarships provided by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation.
- SAT I (Scholastic Aptitude Test): a 3 hour exam measuring evidence-based reading, writing & language, and math skills. The optional essay is no longer offered as of June 2021. Many colleges require the SAT for admission. Scholarship applicants must also submit SAT scores to be eligible for many awards. Scores are reported through the Educational Testing Center in Princeton, NJ directly to you, your high school and the colleges you designate when you take the test or later in the application process. Scoring is on a 200-800 scale with a possible maximum total of 1600.
- SAT II (Subject Area Tests): one-hour, multiple choice exams designed to test proficiency in specific subject areas. A maximum of three tests may be taken on any one testing date. Only certain colleges, most often selective private schools, require the SAT II. Scoring is on a 200-800 scale.
- For information about test and registration dates, go to:
<http://sat.collegeboard.com/register>

ACT Assessment

- Four multiple choice exams of 35-60 minutes in length that measure skills in English, mathematics, reading and science reasoning. There is also an optional writing section. Scoring is on a 1-36 scale. Increasingly, students around the country prefer this format.
- Many colleges require either the ACT or SAT. Some schools specifically ask for the ACT which is becoming more widely accepted every year. This test is recommended for juniors and seniors.
- For information about test and registration dates, go to:
<http://www.actstudent.org/regist/dates.html>

TOEFL (Test OF English as a Foreign Language)

- The TOEFL is administered at Marvelwood several times a year. This is an internet based test (IBT) for international students, and it is required for college admissions. Most college and university programs look for a minimum score of 80 (of a possible 120) as an indicator of English fluency, although some programs require a higher score for admittance.
- Dr. Heather Hunt is Marvelwood's TOEFL coordinator and specific inquiries should be directed to her at heather.hunt@marvelwood.org.
- For more information about test and registration dates, go to: <http://www.ets.org/toefl>

Test Optional Schools

- The list of colleges and universities that do not consider standardized test scores in their admissions decisions is growing, especially since the onset of the pandemic. For more information and the current list, go to: <http://www.fairtest.org/university/optional>

Reporting Scores

- The student is responsible for reporting your SAT, ACT and TOEFL scores to colleges. We can send unofficial scores by email, but most schools demand official records sent directly from College Board, ACT or ETS.
- In order to send your test scores, you will need your login information (username and password) and a form of payment (credit card).
- When you register to take either the SAT or ACT, you can have your scores automatically sent to a number of colleges (eight for SAT, six for the ACT) and, in each case, the first four are free. Despite the savings, many students prefer to wait to see the results before sending scores, especially if they have taken the test more than once.

Bullet Points to remember:

- Register early. Test dates are set and published well in advance of the administration date.
- The SAT tests are usually administered at Kent School. The ACT was offered at Kent in October last year. Other dates and alternate sites are available in the college counseling office and online.
- The college counseling and academic offices can help you register for all of these tests. They can also help students with proper documentation receive appropriate accommodations. You can email Dr. Hunt with any questions you may have.
- A student may take the SAT exams as often as he/she chooses; however, the chance of significantly improving scores with multiple registrations is remote. Two testings normally meet the needs of most students. Students who score well as juniors may not elect to take the exam during senior year. Most, but not all, colleges will accept junior scores. The October, November and December test dates are best for senior SATs.
- Colleges requiring the SAT II most often request tests in English and Mathematics, plus one related to an anticipated major. Decisions on specific tests to be taken do not have to be made until the day of the tests. If you plan on taking the SAT II in a subject you will

not study as a senior, register for the June testing date after completing the coursework (may be freshman, sophomore or junior year). If required by your college, plan to have the SAT II completed at the latest by December of senior year.

- Take advantage of the SAT prep courses that are offered at Marvelwood usually in the fall and spring terms of junior and senior years.
- Suggestion: Use the exact same identification information each time you register for the CEEB tests. It is good to use the same username and password for the College Board, Common App and Naviance. The process does not last long, and you won't forget them.

Special Requirements for International Students

Applying to American colleges and universities takes a little extra effort on the part of international students (that is, students who are not US citizens and non-permanent residents who do not hold a green card).

The TOEFL

The TOEFL is the Test of English as a Foreign Language. This test should be taken by students who did not grow up speaking English as a native language. If you grew up in another country, you may have taken the TOEFL before coming to Marvelwood. The test scores are good for two years so you will probably want to take it again. Your score should improve significantly after studying in the U.S. and being immersed in the language.

The test is meant to assess fluency in English, and the internet-based test we offer has four sections: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Colleges look at the TOEFL in conjunction with the critical reading and writing sections of the SAT Reasoning Test to assess a student's ability to succeed using college-level academic English. For more about the TOEFL refer to "Standardized Testing Information" on page 16.

Financial Support Forms

Some colleges have special applications or a special supplement on the *Common App* for international students. Most often these special applications or supplements consist of a *Certification of Finances* form and an *Affidavit of Support*. The first form certifies there are sufficient funds available to pay for college and the second declares who is the party responsible for providing those funds (usually parents or in some cases, a sponsor). Colleges must have these forms in order to issue an I-20 *Certificate of Eligibility* for the F-1 Visa, which further certifies the amount and source of income the student has available to study in the US.

The *Certification of Finances* (also called the Financial Affidavit) requires the signature of the student, the parent, and a bank official. Because this form requires several signatures, international students should either send it to their parents, or take the form with them during the Thanksgiving or winter holidays. Bank statements should have original signatures and bank seals as copies are rarely accepted.

Financial Aid → Meeting College Costs

All colleges and universities expect you and your parents to contribute as much as you can to the cost of your education. They realize that college costs may strain your family budget, and therefore do the best they can to bridge the gap between actual college costs and what you can afford to pay. Students eligible for financial aid will find that assistance comes from four different sources: The Federal Government, the State Government, institutions of higher education and private organizations. Aid is usually offered in a “package” involving three types of assistance:

- **Grants and scholarships** are outright gifts of money. Most of the time they are based upon need. Sometimes they are awarded for academic excellence and promise, or for special achievements or abilities.
- **Loans** are a significant part of most aid packages. They must be repaid, but most often not until after you graduate. Interest rates are competitive with other types of loans.
- **Work-study** is a part-time job on campus. You might work in the library, or as a resident assistant, or food-service worker, to name a few. These jobs are arranged through the college financial aid office.

It is important to carefully read the financial aid instructions that your colleges send you. It can be confusing since different colleges ask for different information. Pay close attention to deadlines. The general rule is “the earlier, the better” when applying for financial aid, as decisions are made on a rolling basis.

The **FAFSA** (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) continues to be required by virtually all colleges for need-based financial aid. Some colleges will supplement it with their own forms and/or the CSS Profile. The FAFSA can now be filed anytime after October 1st of a student’s senior year. In addition, applicants no longer need to estimate income and tax information and are able to retrieve their data directly from the IRS, right from the first day the FAFSA is available. Students also now have information about their Expected Family Contributions earlier, helping them as they’re going through the college application and selection process. The FAFSA is the basis for determining eligibility for the following Federal programs:

- Pell Grants: maximum award \$6,550
<https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/grants/pell>
- Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants: Maximum \$4,000/year
<https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/grants/fseog>
- Perkins Loans: low-interest, need-based loans, repayment and interest begin nine months after leaving school. Up to \$5500 per year.
<https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/loans/perkins>
- Stafford Loans: dependent students can borrow a maximum of \$5,500 for the first year; \$6,500 for the second year, and up to \$7,500 for each remaining year. With a *subsidized* loan, the government pays the interest while the student is in school; with *unsubsidized* loans, the student is responsible for the interest from the date of disbursement. Rates and payment options have changed recently. Please refer to links below for up-to-date

information. <https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/loans/subsidized-unsubsidized>
<https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/loans/interest-rates>

The federal government also offers PLUS Loans for parents of dependent students. They are not based on financial need, and a credit-eligible parent can borrow as much as the cost of education minus the financial aid; repayment and interest begin 60 days after the loan is fully disbursed, with repayment terms differing between repayment programs. Usually, the college financial aid office will assist parents in applying for a PLUS loan.

<https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/loans/plus>

Many schools will also require the College Scholarship Service's **CSS Profile** (College Board) to help them award private and non-federal student aid funds. Registration and applications can be completed at www.collegeboard.com under *Pay for College* on the student home page.

Be wary of promotions by companies that charge a fee to search for scholarships. You may want to check out the following sources of information. Free scholarship searches are available online at the following sites:

- <http://www.finaid.org> (calculate your expected family contribution)
- <http://www.salliemae.com> (call toll-free: 1-888-888-3460)
- <http://www.collegeboard.com>
- <http://www.fastweb.com> (the largest free reputable database online)
- Toll-free phone number for financial aid info: 1-800-4FEDAID (8am – 8 pm)

Myths About College Selection

Before beginning the application process, it is important to realize that there are a number of myths that have developed around selecting a school and being admitted. Here is what the myth-busters say:

Myth 1: “There is a perfect college for each student.”

Understanding that there is no perfect college will make the application process more exciting and less stressful. The founders of these institutions did not have you in mind. While a program may seem perfect, focusing on only one college can be detrimental. A student who spends too much time worrying about getting into one particular school may miss out on opportunities to explore other schools. If a student has decided that there is a perfect school, he or she might be disappointed. We urge the student to look at a variety of colleges and universities and see for themselves the wealth of opportunity that exists.

Myth 2: “Students need to decide on a career before they can choose a college.”

While it is important to have goals, or at least be aware of one’s major interests, students do not have to know what major or career they intend to pursue. Most young adults are still unaware of the options and often discover their interests once in college, and 50% of students change their majors anyway. College is a time of discovery!

Myth 3: “We’ve never heard of this college, so it can’t be any good.”

There are over 3,000 colleges and universities in the United States; it is impossible to know about them all. The average well-educated adult can probably name about 100 colleges or universities, and they tend to be the older eastern colleges or big state universities with outstanding athletic programs. There are many excellent schools in the country that may not be well known to the general public, but that offer outstanding educational opportunities. The best way to find out if a college is a good fit is to visit the campus and spend some time there.

Myth 4: “Standardized test scores are the most important factor in college admission.”

While it is true that test scores are considered by many colleges and universities, admissions officers look at many other factors when making their decisions. The high school transcript, including the rigor of the course load, is the most important. Colleges generally look for a healthy balance of academic performance, test scores, extracurricular activities, work experience and strong recommendations. It is also important to note that there are a number of test optional schools that includes many extremely selective colleges. In general, any “fact” that sounds either too good or too bad to be true, probably isn’t. Getting accurate information will help ease the application process.

The Top Ten Things that Parents Should Remember About the College Search Process

It is good, of course, that students and parents approach this process jointly, but we all know that at it's best, the process itself can prepare students for the independence that they will experience in college. The following list contains some possible symptoms of parental over-involvement.

- 10. Remember that this process is not about you.** No matter how similar your children may be to you, they need to make their own decisions and observations.
- 9. Support and encouragement are more appropriate than pressure and unsolicited advice.** Allow your children to seek you out and restrain yourself from imposing our viewpoint upon them.
- 8. Do not use the words 'we' or 'our' when referring to your children's application process.** Those little pronouns are surefire indicators that you have become too involved.
- 7. Help them prepare but let them perform.** Encourage them to sleep well and put thought into a college visit, but once on campus, step back and let them drive the experience. This is good practice for the next phase of their lives- adulthood.
- 6. Encourage your children to make their own college appointments, phone calls and emails.** When a family arrives at an admission office, it's important that the student approach the front desk, not the parents. They notice! Having control over those details gives them a sense of ownership. Don't be tempted by the excuse that 'I'm just saving them time' or 'they are too busy'; students will learn to appreciate all the steps it takes to make big things happen if *they* do them.
- 5. Allow your children to ask the questions.** They have their own set of issues that are important to them.
- 4. Prepare your children for disappointment.** For many students this is the first time they could face bad news. Remind them there is no perfect school and that admission decisions do not reflect on their worth as people or your worth as parents.
- 3. Never complete any portion of the college application.** That also goes for friends, siblings, counselor, and assistants. For many colleges, that overstep would be viewed as a violation of the honor policy at the school
- 2. Do not let stereotypes or outdated information steer your children away from schools in which they would otherwise have an interest.** Times have changed and so have colleges.

And the #1 Thing for Parents to Remember about the College Search Process is:

I. Never, ever, during a college visit, buy a sweatshirt or t-shirt from the school bookstore in *your* size; it's a dead giveaway!

The Gap Year

The Marvelwood College Counseling office fully supports a student's decision to take a gap year after high school to engage in meaningful and productive activity that will better prepare him or her for college. The decision to take a gap year can not only alleviate the anxiety associated with the college application process, but also motivate a student who needs extra time to make some important decisions.

As a general rule, we encourage a student to go through with the application process even if the plan is to take a gap year. In the event a student is accepted to a first-choice school, the process of deferring that acceptance to the following year is usually easy, requiring only a letter (email) of intent. In this and in all cases, open and candid communication with the admissions office is key to guaranteeing a smooth, post-gap year transition to college.

Some common factors that often lead a student to decide on a gap year include:

- Time to mature – college is a place for young adults.
- The cost – an important factor to consider with parents or guardians.
- Career path – choosing “undecided” when asked to declare a degree path on college applications is okay, but some students prefer to take time away from school to explore interests and choose a major.
- See the world while working – a popular option offered by scores of companies that specialize in sponsoring gap year programs that visit virtually every continent on the planet (see more information on this below).

There are scores of soft cover and online resources offering extensive guides to gap year programs. One of the most comprehensive is *The Complete Guide to the Gap Year*, originally published ten years ago but still topical. This resource lists 200 of the world's best gap year programs and is described as “the go-to book for anyone considering a year to re-charge, to follow a passion, to become immersed in another culture, or to find their love of learning again.”

The directory includes several excellent programs that have visited Marvelwood over the years, notably *Rustic Pathways* and *Where There Be Dragons*. General categories of programs listed include:

- Volunteer Programs (in Africa, United States, & Multiple Countries)
- Cultural Immersion Programs (largest category)
- Adventure Programs
- Language Study Programs
- Art, Music, Theater, and Media Programs
- Sailing and Tall Ship Programs
- Conservation, Environment, and Marine Life Programs
- Outdoor and Wilderness Programs
- Sport Programs

While thorough and readily available

(<https://www.amazon.com/Complete-Guide-Gap-Year-Between/dp/0470425261>), this guide is by no means the only resource, as a quick Google search for gap year literature will confirm. In fact, the popularity of the gap year has spawned regional fairs around the country, and an up-to-date listing can be found at: <https://usagapyearfairs.org/fairs/>.

Finally, it's important to note that, in the event a student decides not to apply to college before taking a gap year, Marvelwood's College Counseling office will still provide the necessary supporting documents and other assistance when they are needed. We share a common goal with every Marvelwood graduate: to matriculate at a college or university of choice and be successful there.

Alternative Paths to Success

Attending a traditional, four-year college is not always the right path for every high school graduate. There are legions of successful people, some quite celebrated – Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Henry Ford, Walt Disney, Frank Lloyd Wright, to name a few – who either never attended college or dropped out to follow a passion or take a different journey. Of the many alternative paths to success, these are the most commonly followed:

- Get a job while taking online courses or attending community college at night. Hundreds of colleges and universities around the country offer online degree programs and lists are readily available online (see <https://www.guidetoonlineschools.com/online-schools>). And chances are there is a nearby community college in every city and town in the country. The schools will ask

for a high school transcript and we'll be happy to forward the document when requested.

- Attend a vocational or skilled trade school. There are scores of accredited trade schools in the U.S. that teach a vast array of skills in a wide range of professions. Here's a sample of the many courses offered: Automotive Technology and Repair, Plumbing and Heating, Electrical, Welding, Aviation Maintenance, Marine Mechanics, Commercial Diving, Refrigeration Technologies, Professional Truck Driving. Again, the online resources are many, but the following link is a good place to start:
<https://www.trade-schools.net/trades/>
- Start a business. If you've got a great idea, unusual talent or particular skill that can generate income and has promise, why not? The entrepreneurial spirit can be a powerful, motivating force and, as the saying goes, nothing ventured, nothing gained. If it doesn't pan out in the end, at least the attempt was made!

The key to success when a student decides to take an alternative path after high school is to have a plan and take affirmative action to follow it. Complacency and lack of direction will only generate roadblocks and delay that success.

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

3-2 Program: Degree program in which a student begins his/her studies at one institution, generally a small liberal arts college, and after three years, transfers to another larger institution to complete his or her studies. Most of these programs are in engineering. Three-two programs can be either single or dual undergraduate degree programs; others are undergraduate and graduate B.A. / M.S. combinations.

4-1-4 Plan: A college academic calendar usually including a fall term with four courses, a shortened winter or January term with one course, and a spring term with four courses.

Accelerated Programs: Exceptionally selective admission programs that offer admission to undergraduate and graduate programs, generally for medical school, to freshman applicants. Program length can vary from seven to eight years, often including summer coursework.

ACT: American College Test. This is a standardized college admission test that is accepted in place of (or in addition to) the SAT by almost all colleges. The test measures a student's abilities in English, mathematics, science reasoning and reading, and includes an optional writing section. Students receive a score in each of the four areas that ranges from 0-36, with a composite score that is the average of each of the four sub-scores.

Admissions Committee: The group of admissions officers and some combination of faculty members and administrators who review each candidate's application and make decisions regarding admissions.

Advanced Placement (AP) Exams: Tests sponsored by the College Board for students who have taken college-level (AP) courses. Some colleges may allow students to receive college credit for high scores on these exams; still others will place students out of introductory-level courses into higher levels.

Bachelor of Arts (B.A. or A.B.): Traditional four-year degree awarded by a liberal arts college or university following successful completion of a course of study. These degrees may be granted in any number of fields in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences or fine/performing arts.

Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.): Four-year degree offered by fine arts, design, theater, dance and other visual and performing arts programs. Admission to B.F.A. programs can be based to a large extent upon artistic talent, determined through an audition or portfolio review, and to a lesser extent upon standardized testing and academic performance.

Bachelor of Science (B.S.): Four-year degree usually awarded for successful completion of requirements in the natural and physical sciences, or for more professionally oriented programs, such as engineering or business.

Class Rank: A student's academic standing based on his or her academic records as compared with that of the other members of the class.

College Board: The organization which sponsors educational testing (the SAT, AP exams) as well as the CSS Profile (College Scholarship Service) form. They also produce much other college-related information and material.

College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB): Another name for the College Board. In filling out applications and other college forms, students are frequently asked for their high school's CEEB code.

Common Application: Allows a student to complete one application form ("The Common Application") which can be photocopied or sent electronically to more than once college. Colleges and universities participate in the Common Application Program on a volunteer basis and agree not to discriminate against students in their review process on the basis of the application submitted (i.e., they do not judge whether the student submits the college's own application or the Common Application).

Consortium: Several colleges and universities in a particular geographic area sometimes join together in a consortium, which gives students the opportunity to take courses at all member institutions.

Cooperative Education (Co-op): College-sponsored programs designed to help undergraduates meet college expenses and gain work experience, alternating periods of study with periods of work in a field related to a student's academic or professional interests. Traditionally, but not exclusively, used by students in such pre-professional programs as engineering, computer science and business. Many schools award college credit for work outside the classroom.

Core Curriculum: College courses required for graduation, consisting of a comprehensive selection from such fields as the humanities, social sciences, natural and physical sciences, the fine arts, etc. Depending on the college, core curricula can range from a handful of courses to well over half the required courses necessary for graduation.

CSS Profile: Used by many selective colleges in addition to FAFSA to award financial aid funds. The CSS profile is similar to the FAFSA, but is customized by the colleges to supply additional financial information.

Deferral: This is an admissions decision which may be received if a student has applied under Early Decision or Early Action plan. A "deferral" means that the student has not yet been admitted or denied; the application will be placed in the pool of "regular decision" applicants for another review, and an admission decision will be sent in last March or early April. (Students who apply Early Decision and are deferred are no longer bound by the ED agreement and can apply to other schools).

Deferred Admission: This option, initiated at the student's request, allows the student to

postpone enrollment at a college where he or she has been admitted. The student may take a year for travel, work, or other projects before attending college. Most colleges will grant deferrals to students who present a well thought-out plan for what they will do for the semester or year.

Demonstrated Financial Need: Amount, as determined through federal, private and/or institutional financial aid forms, which is the difference between the total cost of attendance at a college and the estimated family contribution to the college board.

Double Deposit: Accepting two colleges' offers of admission by submitting a deposit to secure a spot in the freshman class at both schools. This practice is prohibited by the regulations of the National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC), and is vehemently discouraged by the College Counseling Office.

Dual Degree: Also called a "Joint Degree." Academic program of study which allows students to either major in two separate undergraduate fields in completely distinct disciplines (such as engineering and business, or business and foreign language) or to pursue a joint undergraduate-graduate degree program (such as joint BA/MBA, BA/JD, or BA/MD programs).

Early Action (EA): A non-binding admission program in which the student applies by a stated early deadline and receives a decision early (usually mid-December). If admitted EA, students are under no obligation to enroll at the college. Typically, students who are not offered admission under early action are deferred; however, it is possible for an applicant to be denied outright and not automatically deferred for later consideration.

Early Action Single Choice: See "Single Choice Early Action."

Early Decision (ED): A binding admission program in which the student applies usually by November 1st or November 15th and receives a decision by Christmas. If accepted ED, the student must enroll. Some schools have a second but later ED date, called ED2.

Early Decision 2 (ED2): A binding admission program with a January deadline. Students submit multiple applications but apply to one college under an ED2 plan. Usually decisions are received within a month of receipt of the ED2 application. If offered admission under the ED2 plan, the student is required to enroll and then withdraw all other college applications.

Early Evaluation: A non-binding admission process in which a student is tentatively notified of their admission decision in January or February, receives their official offer in late March. Yet does not need to respond to the college until May 1st. Offered by very few colleges (Wellesley is one of them).

Educational Testing Services: The company that produces standardized tests for the College Board. They also produce, and own, the TOEFL.

Estimated Family Contribution (EFC): The amount of money, determined through

information submitted with federal and institutional financial aid forms that, according to the college, a family can afford to spend for college. This figure will appear on your Student Aid Report (SAR).

Extra-Curriculars: Activities in which students participate outside of the classroom, such as athletics, student organizations and clubs, volunteer work and community service, music lessons or groups, or part-time jobs.

FAFSA: Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Required of all applicants for financial aid for every U.S. college and university. Determines eligibility for any financial aid monies supported by federal money (Pell Grant, Stafford Loans, Perkins Loans and Work Study).

Fee Waivers: Forms which document a student's inability to pay for college admission-related fees, such as SAT's and college applications. Students must meet the guidelines for eligibility as determined by the College Board. Fee waivers are available through the College Counseling Office.

The Gap Year and Alternative Paths to Success: Both plans offer opportunities for students who are not ready to transition immediately to college after high school. Please refer to pages 28-30 of this guide for more details.

Grade-Point Average (GPA): Numerical conversion of letter grades into a cumulative average, by term, year or academic career.

Grants: Financial aid money from the federal/state government or matriculating college which does not require repayment, like a loan. This is money that is "granted" to you and that you don't have to pay back.

Hook: A subjective factor in the admissions decision-making process which can influence, to varying degrees, a student's admission decision. Examples include legacy status, athletic recruitment, exceptional artistic talent, or membership in an underrepresented population.

Humanities: Fields of study including English, literature, foreign languages, philosophy, classics, history, music, fine arts, theater and religion.

Internship: A part or full-time paid, volunteer, and/or for-college-credit position offering hands-on experience in a student's academic or professional field of interest. Internships are undertaken either while enrolled during the academic year or in the summer.

Ivy League: While its eight members (Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Penn, Princeton and Yale) are highly selective colleges for admission, the designation "Ivy League" only refers to their membership in a common athletic conference.

Joint Degree: Also may be known as a "Dual Degree" program. Academic program of study which allows students to either major in two separate undergraduate fields in completely distinct disciplines (such as engineering and business, or business and foreign language), or to pursue a joint undergraduate-graduate degree program (such as joint BA/MBA, BA/JD, or BA/MD programs).

Language Proficiency Examination: An examination in a foreign language used to determine whether a student has satisfied a college's foreign language requirement and, if not, which level of foreign language course is appropriate for the student.

Legacy: Having an immediate family member, generally a parent or sibling, and occasionally a grandparent, as an alumna/us of a college to which the student is applying.

Liberal Arts: A broad-based introduction to a wide variety of subjects, including the social sciences, humanities and natural sciences. Generally does not include professional programs, such as business, engineering or nursing, although these programs may contain some coursework in the liberal arts.

Loans: Financial assistance which must be repaid, with interest, over an extended period of time, generally after a student completes an undergraduate degree.

Major: Concentrated field of collegiate study in one academic discipline, requiring a set number of required courses for completion beyond any required core curriculum requirements. Students concentrate in two academic fields by "double-majoring."

Minor: A secondary field of concentrated study during the final two years of college, similar to a major yet with fewer requirements.

Matriculate: Academic term meaning to "enroll at" or "attend" a college or university.

Mid-Year Report: A form required by colleges requesting a copy of the student's first semester grades from senior year.

National Merit Commended Student: A designation given to students by the National Merit Corporation for students who score high on the PSAT/NMSQT examination, but do not pass the state-specific threshold score to become a semifinalist.

National Merit Finalist: A designation for students who are eligible for merit-based academic scholarship (that is, eligible to be named a National Merit Scholar), based upon the student's strong PSAT/NMSQT scores, high school record and counselor recommendation.

National Merit Scholar: A National Merit Finalist who receives a merit-based academic scholarship, sponsored by a member organization or college, or the National Merit Corporation.

National Merit Semifinalist: The initial designation by the National Merit Corporation for students who pass a state-specific threshold score on the PSAT/NMSQT examination.

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA): National organization which supervises and regulates most intercollegiate athletic programs. Based upon size of institution and level of competition, these programs are divided into three divisions: Division I, II and III. Division I and II schools generally award athletic scholarships; Division III colleges do not.

Need Blind: The practice of admitting students purely on the strength of their academic records without taking into account ability to pay.

Need Aware or Need Sensitive: The practice of taking into account an applicant's ability to pay before admitting him or her to college.

Pell Grant: Named in honor of the late Sen. Claibourne Pell (RI), a Pell Grant is a federally-funded grant designed to help students with the lowest Estimated Family Contribution (EFC). Eligibility is determined through the information provided through the FAFSA. The yearly maximum amount of a Pell Grant is currently \$6495.

Perkins Loans: Federally-funded college loan with traditionally the lowest interest rate of educational loans, with repayment deferred until nine months after a student leaves school. Students may borrow up to a total of \$27,500 for an undergraduate degree (max of \$5500 annually), and eligibility is determined through the information provided through the FAFSA.

Pre-Law/Pre-Med: Not a major or academic discipline, per se, but an intended direction for graduate school allowing a student to concentrate in many different fields of study. Law and medical schools offer basic guidelines on undergraduate courses for students interested in gaining admission to these graduate programs. However, students can generally integrate these basic requirements into many diverse majors, including business, engineering and other non-traditional pre-professional majors.

PSAT/NMSQT: A two-hour and ten-minute standardized exam that mimics, in many respects, the SAT. It contains verbal sections, math sections and a writing skills section. This is many students' first chance to see how their skills compare with those of college-bound students across the country in their age group. Students also compete for national scholarships (Merit Scholarships, Achievement Scholarships, National Hispanic Scholar Recognition Program) and are placed on college mailing lists.

Rate of Attrition: Percentage of students who do not return to college, due to academic, financial or personal reasons, usually after their freshman year.

Regular Decision: A term used to describe the application process in which an institution reviews most of its applicants prior to notifying the majority of its candidates. Regular decision deadlines fall in January or February for most colleges.

Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC): U.S. military program offering one-, two-, and four-year scholarships at select colleges and universities, covering tuition, books and fees in addition to a living stipend, in exchange for committing a set number of years of service in a branch of the military.

Rolling Admissions: A term used to describe the application process in which a university or college reviews applications as they are received and offers decisions to students as applications are reviewed. NOTE: Some rolling admission institutions may defer students initially. This does not mean that the student has been denied or placed on a wait list. A deferral simply means that the admission committee will review the student again later on in the cycle once new grades and standardized test scores are available.

SAT Reasoning Test: Originally called the Scholastic Assessment Test (hence the acronym SAT), the SAT Reasoning Test is owned and produced by The College Board and is required by most colleges in the U.S. to assess verbal and mathematical reasoning abilities and writing skills. There are three scores of 200-800, one for critical reading, math and writing. From these three areas a cumulative score is calculated, using a 2400-point scale.

SAT Subject Tests: The College Board's standardized tests in specific academic subjects (e.g., U.S. History, English Literature, Spanish Literature, Math, Biology, etc.) Used by some highly selective colleges to help with admission decisions, and by other colleges for course placement purposes.

Selective Service: U.S. Department of Defense bureau which requires registration by all eighteen-year-old male U.S. citizens. Confirmation of registration with the Selective Service is required for eligibility for federally-funded financial aid money.

Self-Help: Money, in addition to non-repayable grants, which colleges ask students to contribute to their education through college work-study or loans.

Semester: The most common academic calendar, dividing the year into two equal terms.

Single Choice Early Action: Same as Early Action, but students may not apply to any other schools early. In other words, schools with Single Choice Early Action ask students to apply to one school EA, and do not allow them to apply anywhere else ED or EA. If admitted, however, students do not have to attend their Single Choice Early Action school.

Social Sciences: Academic fields of study which focus on human behavior and societal interactions, such as psychology, sociology, political science, anthropology and economics.

Stafford Loan: Formerly known as “Guaranteed Student Loans” and renamed in honor of former Sen. Robert Stafford (VT), Stafford Loans are low-interest loans sponsored by the federal government for students enrolled at least part-time in college. Loans can be both subsidized (for students with demonstrated financial need) and unsubsidized (for students who do not qualify for need-based financial aid) and vary widely depending on need. While the U.S. government will pay interest on the subsidized Stafford Loans until six months following a student’s final full-time semester enrolled, students pay the interest on unsubsidized Stafford loans.

Student-Faculty Ratio: The ratio determined by dividing the number of students by the number of professors. Thus, an 11:1 student-faculty ratio means there are 11 students for every 1 faculty member; “Average class size” frequently provides more useful information about faculty-student interaction in a college.

Student Aid Report (SAR): The form returned to a student following evaluation of the FAFSA by the U.S. Government’s Central Processing Agency. Copies of the SAR are frequently required by colleges, and are necessary for sending additional copies of the FAFSA information to colleges. Read the SAR carefully when you receive it, since it will tell you if information is incorrect or missing (in which case, you need to supply the proper information).

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL): Examination administered by ETS that assesses the fluency of English of a non-native English speaker. The TOEFL tests reading, writing, speaking and listening to English.

Transcript: A student’s official school record of grades and courses.

Trimester: Academic calendar divided into three roughly equal terms per year.

Waitlist: A limited number of freshman applicants who are neither admitted nor denied admission are placed on a waitlist and told they will be notified after May 1st if spaces within the freshman class become available. Waitlists are utilized by most selective institutions to ensure that they will meet their target enrollment numbers.

Work-Study Program: A federally sponsored program that allows students to pay for part of

their educational expenses through part-time work on campus. A portion of the work-study salary comes from the college employer; most is through federal subsidies. Only students with demonstrated financial need are eligible for work-study jobs.

Yield: The number of students admitted to a college who matriculate.