# TABLE OF CONTENTS

College Planning Calendar .............................................................................................................. 3

Emma Willard School’s College Counseling Program .................................................................... 11
  Overview ..................................................................................................................................... 11
  The College Counselors ............................................................................................................. 13
  Rules and Responsibilities .......................................................................................................... 14
  College Representatives ........................................................................................................... 15

College Search Materials .............................................................................................................. 15
  Naviance .................................................................................................................................... 15
  College Counseling Web Page .................................................................................................... 15
  Printed Material .......................................................................................................................... 16
  Internet Resources ..................................................................................................................... 16

Evaluating Colleges ...................................................................................................................... 17
  Academic Programs ................................................................................................................... 17
  Type of Institutions .................................................................................................................. 17
  Single Gender vs. Coeducational ............................................................................................... 17
  Public vs. Private ...................................................................................................................... 18
  Size of Institution ..................................................................................................................... 18
  Location ...................................................................................................................................... 18
  Facilities ...................................................................................................................................... 18
  Selectivity .................................................................................................................................... 18
  The College Visit ...................................................................................................................... 20

College Applications and the Admission Process ......................................................................... 22
  The Application Form ................................................................................................................ 22
  Types of Applications ................................................................................................................. 23
  The Secondary School Report ................................................................................................... 23
  Policy on Reporting Discipline .................................................................................................. 24
  Transcripts ................................................................................................................................... 24
  Policy on Reporting GPA and Rank .......................................................................................... 24
  Teacher Recommendations ........................................................................................................ 25
  Other Recommendations .......................................................................................................... 25
  Admission Testing ..................................................................................................................... 25
  Test Preparation ....................................................................................................................... 28
  The Interview ............................................................................................................................. 29
  Financial Aid and Scholarships ................................................................................................. 32
  Admissions Decisions ................................................................................................................. 33

Seven Factors Colleges Consider ................................................................................................. 34

Taking a Year Off .......................................................................................................................... 36

Reading: A Good Use of Your Spare Time .................................................................................. 36

College Enrollment – Class of 2018 .............................................................................................. 37

College: A Good Match ................................................................................................................. 38
COLLEGE PLANNING CALENDAR

FRESHMAN YEAR:

Fall

• Talk with your parents, advisor, teachers, coaches, and other adults about your values, interests, and skills as they might someday relate to the kind of college you would like to attend.
• Join activities, try new things, explore your interests, remain open to new possibilities.
• Start a college journal in which you write down your thoughts about your interests, values, skills, and future plans. Develop a four-year college plan and note questions and information about colleges and the college admissions process. Continuously update your journal and share your thoughts with your parents.
• Seek academic guidance and support as needed. Don’t be shy about asking your teachers and advisor for help. Build your organizational and study skills.
• Read for pleasure as often as you can.

January

• Beginning with your goals in mind, talk with your advisor about your course choices for your sophomore year. High achievement is important, so seek a balance in your schedule between challenge and success.

March

• Begin researching summer options. Talk with your parents about what you would like to do over the summer vacation.
• Talk with your advisor about the Practicum program and possibilities for next year.

Summer

• Attend an information session and take a tour of a large university and a small college just to see the differences between the two types.
• Buy the Fiske Guide to Colleges or similar college guide and begin reading about different options.
• Relax and refresh.

SOPHOMORE YEAR:

September

• Review freshman year and summer activities with your advisor and revise goals.
• Receive access to Naviance, Emma Willard’s web-based college counseling program.
• Keep updating your college journal and reading about colleges.
• Review materials for October PSAT.
• Continue to explore extracurricular interests with your advisor and keep trying new things. Think about leadership opportunities that might interest you.
• Continue to read for pleasure as much as you can.

October

• Take PSAT on Wednesday, October 10, 2018

December

• Receive results of PSAT. Review them with your parents and advisor and seek direction on how to work on areas that may need extra attention.

March

• Begin researching sophomore summer options; consider community service, internships, work, etc.

Summer

• Do volunteer service, travel, read, work, and continue to read about colleges.
• Attend an information session and take a tour of a large university and a small college just to see the differences between the two types.
• Continue to read for pleasure.

JUNIOR YEAR

September

• Juniors continue to explore Naviance.

October

• Take the PSAT/NMSQT on Wednesday, October 10, 2018.
• Explore test preparation program at Khan Academy, https://www.khanacademy.org/sat

December

• Juniors receive college counselor assignment and begin college questionnaire and autobiography in Naviance.
• Parents receive Naviance account registration codes and complete online parent questionnaire.
• Continue to work with test preparation program at Khan Academy, https://www.khanacademy.org/sat
January

- Begin researching summer internships, study programs, service opportunities and jobs.
- Make course selections for senior year in consultation with your advisor.
- Deadline for juniors to complete college questionnaire and autobiography in Naviance is January 24.
- Schedule an individual meeting with your college counselor after completing the college questionnaire and autobiography. Parents are welcome to attend all meetings.
- Participate in the Junior Admissions Retreat Friday, January 25 – Saturday, January 26, 2019. *Attendance is mandatory on both days.

February

- Emma Willard recommends that students take the SAT in March and May of the junior year and in October of the senior year. Register for the March 9, 2019 SAT by February 8, 2019.
- Read the College Handbook, located on MyEmma’s College Resource Board.
- Once you have had your initial meeting with your college counselor and received a list of suggested colleges, begin using Naviance and other resources to start your college research.
- Continue to meet with your college counselor.
- Continue to work with test preparation program at Khan Academy, www.khanacademy.org/sat
- As you research colleges on your list, note your interest in each college as high, medium, or low.
- Register online as an inquiry at colleges of interest.

March

- Take SAT on March 9, 2019
- If advised, register for the April 13, 2019 ACT at: www.actstudent.org. The registration deadline is March 8, 2019.
- International students for whom English is their second language should register to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) either at home over the summer or in Albany in the early fall. Sign up at http://www.ets.org/toefl.
- During spring vacation, begin visiting colleges (optional).
- Continue to research colleges on your list, meet with your college counselor, and work on SAT/ACT prep.
- Talk with your college advisor about registering for the on-campus eight-hour SAT prep program in April.

April

- Register for May 4, 2018 SAT or Subject Tests by April 5, 2019 at: http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/reg.html
- If advised, take the ACT examination on April 13, 2019.
- Begin brainstorming topics for your college essay.
May

- Take SAT or Subject Tests on May 4, 2019.
- Register by May 3, 2018 for June 1, 2019 SAT (or Subject Tests in two or three different subjects) at: http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/reg.html.
- If appropriate, take AP examinations (first two weeks of May).
- Complete first draft of college essay.
- Take on-campus SAT Prep program (optional).

June

- Take SAT Subject Tests or SAT on June 1, 2019.
- If advised, take ACT on June 8, 2019.
- If you plan to take the ACT on July 13, 2019 at home, register by June 14, 2019.

Summer

- Prepare for your senior SAT. Emma Willard strongly recommends that students take the SAT in March and May of the junior year and in October of the senior year. We also recommend that students take two Subject Tests in June. Rising seniors should therefore plan to take the SAT on October 5, 2019 (registration by September 5, 2019). If advised by your college counselor to take the August 24, 2019 SAT, register by July 24, 2019. Students should understand that Emma Willard is not a test site for the August SAT and that the school will not be open. With residence halls, staff, and services not available, the school cannot accommodate requests to return early in order to take the test locally. If you decide that taking the SAT in August is the best plan, you should register to take it at your home high school or at an alternate location before returning to Emma Willard.
- If you plan to take the ACT on September 7, 2019, register by August 9, 2019.
- Update your college questionnaire in Naviance.
- Research the colleges on your list in Naviance in depth. Explore the information Naviance provides on each college as well as that provided by college websites. Read college guides such as the Fiske Guide to Colleges, and talk to alumni/ae you might know.
- Go to the websites of each of the colleges in which you are interested and complete the online inquiry form so that you are on their mailing lists.
- Reflect on your high school career, review and update your college counseling questionnaire, and create a resume. Click on “my resume” in Naviance and you will find a tutorial and a template.
- Develop a travel plan with your parents and college counselor to visit as many colleges as you can. Make it a priority to see different types of colleges (large vs. small, urban vs. rural, etc.).
- Schedule tours, information sessions, and interviews at colleges of high interest to you (review "The College Interview" and “The College Visit” on the college counseling website). Because interview schedules fill up quickly, you should call admission offices to schedule interviews as early as possible. You may also do this online at most college websites. As you plan your college trips, allow a morning or an afternoon on each campus (two to three hours per visit).
- If you have an interview at a college, take along your resume and an unofficial transcript, which will be available for you to download from Naviance.
• Maintain a journal. Write down the three to five most important things you will use to measure a college and evaluate each visit in terms of those measures. Record your impressions of each college visit as soon after the visit as possible. Also, use your journal to record essay ideas, goals, questions to ask, to-do lists, contact information of people you meet at colleges, etc.

• Continue to work on your college essay and plan to return with a second draft completed.

• The new version of the Common Application is available each year on August 1 at: www.commonapp.org. We recommend that you begin working on it. Your goal should be to complete all but your essay by the time you return in the fall.

• As you explore the Common Application, go to "Download Forms" and click on "Requirements Grid." Highlight the deadlines, test and teacher recommendation requirements, and early application options for each of your colleges. Make a spreadsheet with this and other pertinent information on it. This will help you feel organized and on top of things.

• As you look at the Common Application for each college on your list, check to see what supplemental essays are required. Look at the supplemental essay questions and begin thinking about how you will respond to them.

• Taking a SAT prep course may be helpful to some (but not all) students. However, we encourage all students to practice in areas where they need to improve. You can do this by working with the online resources available through Khan Academy or by working with an SAT review book. One of the best ways to improve your Critical Reading and Writing SAT scores is to read as much as you can. Classical literature, current novels, newspapers, magazines—they are all good. Discipline yourself to do this daily. Evidence suggests a correlation between a steady habit of reading and verbal/writing SAT scores.

• If you have not already done so, think about which teachers you will ask to write recommendations for you next fall. Ideally, you should choose two teachers from different academic areas (i.e. English/history and math/science) who have taught you in junior year courses. While we insist that you ask your teachers for recommendations in person, a heads-up email over the summer might be appreciated. If you have questions about teacher recommendations, contact your college counselor.

• Make sure to keep communicating with your parents and your college counselor over the summer. Effective communication with all parties involved in your college process is essential. You don't want to get excited about colleges in California now only to find out next November that your parents will not support your going that far away from home.

• If you are an athlete intending to be recruited by colleges and compete at the Division I or II level, register with the NCAA Eligibility Center at: www.eligibilitycenter.org.

• If you are an international student for whom English is not your first language, register to take the TOEFL here in Albany as early in the fall as possible. You can do so at: http://www.ets.org/toefl.

• Most importantly, take time to relax and let your tired mind breathe. You've had a demanding junior year, and your senior year will be a busy one. You need to return in the fall refreshed, focused, and enthusiastic.
SENIOR YEAR

August

- Complete first draft of your Common Application and college essay.
- If you are planning to take the September 8, 2018 ACT, register by August 10, 2018.
- Continue to update your college questionnaire in Naviance.
- Check the schedule of college representative visits in Naviance and begin to sign up to attend appropriate presentations.
- Attend “nuts and bolts” meeting regarding application policies and procedures.

September

- Make appointment(s) with your college counselor immediately upon your return to campus. Sit down with everyone who has a stake in your college decision and solicit their input. Listen to what everyone has to say, but most importantly, listen to yourself.
- Ensure that your college questionnaire is updated in Naviance.
- Monitor the schedule of college representative visits in Naviance and sign up to attend appropriate presentations. See page 14 of the College Handbook for more information about being excused from class for this purpose.
- Register by September 6, 2018 for October 6, 2018 SAT or Subject Tests at: https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register.
- Continue to work on college essay(s) and Common Application. Begin work on supplements.
- International students for whom English is their second language should register to take the TOEFL at www.ets.org/toefl.
- Visit The Common Application Web site at www.commonapp.org to see which of your colleges participate in this program. If not, find college application forms online. Speak with your college counselor before using alternate application platforms such as the Coalition for Access, Affordability, and Success or the Universal College Application.
- Make a list of all college application and financial aid deadlines and place them in your calendar or organize them in a college planning spreadsheet.
- Visit (or re-visit) colleges of strong interest for admission interviews (review carefully the rules governing college visits in Fine Print).
- If you have not done so, ask no more than two teachers in person if they will write teacher recommendations for you. Then invite them to do so via the Common Application or other online forms system.
- Invite your college counselor to write your recommendation and complete your secondary school report form in the same manner.
October

- Continue consultations with your college counselor. Explore ED/EA options with your counselor. Narrow down your list to about 10-12 colleges.
- If appropriate, register by October 3, 2018 for November 3, 2018 SAT or Subject Tests at: www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/reg.html.
- Take the SAT or Subject Tests on October 6, 2018 and/or the ACT on October 27, 2018. Continue to visit (or re-visit) colleges of strong interest for admission interviews (review carefully the rules governing college visits in Fine Print).
- Continue to monitor the schedule of college representative visits in Naviance and sign up to attend appropriate presentations.
- Go to College Board and/or ACT Web sites and send score reports directly to colleges, especially to colleges with November deadlines.
- Register by November 1, 2018 for December 1, 2018 SAT or Subject Tests (if necessary) at: http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/reg.html.
- Confirm that your recommenders have what they need to write for you.
- Continue to work on college applications. Complete college essays and have them reviewed by your English teacher and your college counselor. Complete November ED I/EA/Priority applications.
- If you are applying for financial aid, have your parent(s) begin working on the FAFSA (Free Application for Financial Aid) at https://fafsa.ed.gov/. If any of the colleges to which you will be applying require the CSS Profile form in addition to the FAFSA, go to https://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile. The FAFSA and CSS Profile applications will be available online by October 1, 2018. The sooner your parents complete these the better.
- College Office sends out first-quarter grades for ED I/EA/Priority applicants.

November

- Submit November ED I/EA/Priority applications.
- Ensure that appropriate standardized test scores have been sent to your November deadline colleges.
- Continue to meet with your college counselor.
- Register by November 2, 2018 for December 8, 2018 ACT examination at: www.actstudent.org.
- Finalize your list of colleges with your college counselor by the Thanksgiving break.
- Continue to monitor the schedule of college representative visits in Naviance and sign up to attend appropriate presentations.
- Take November 3, 2018 SAT or Subject Tests if appropriate.
- Continue working on applications and essays.
- Arrange for SAT/ACT scores to be sent from the appropriate testing agency to colleges with December and January deadlines.
- Begin work on applications with December and January deadlines.
December

- Take December 1, 2018 SAT or SAT Subject Tests if appropriate.
- Take December 8, 2018 ACT examination if advised to do so.
- Receive ED I/EA decisions and report them to your college counselor. Adjust your college list with your college counselor based on ED/EA/Priority results.
- File ED II and January regular-decision applications.
- Submit your final college list to the college office no later than December 15.

January

- Complete January 15 and later applications.
- College Office sends mid-year grades to the colleges to which you have applied.
- Financial aid applicants complete submission of FAFSA and CSS Profile. Investigate outside scholarship options.

February

- Schedule meeting with your college counselor to review application status and college list.
- Receive ED II decisions. Notify your college counselor of all decisions as they come in.

March

- Continue to work hard academically—third quarter grades can make a difference!
- Receive decisions from all colleges.

April

- Re-visit high-interest colleges at which you have been accepted. Attend accepted student programs.
- Confirm all college decisions received with your college advisor to ensure your final lists match.
- Work with your family and college counselor to decide which college to attend. Discuss your final choice with your college counselor.
- **Notify all colleges of your enrollment intentions no later than May 1, 2019 and confirm that you have done this with the college office.**

May and June

- May 1, 2019 – Deadline for enrollment deposit. Decline acceptances promptly by email or in writing. (Remember: depositing at more than one college is forbidden.)
- Complete your senior year in as strong a position as possible so as not to jeopardize your college acceptance.
- Attend Commencement – June 2, 2019!
EMMA WILLARD SCHOOL’S COLLEGE COUNSELING PROGRAM

“College is a match to be made, not a prize to be won.”

- Frank Sachs

OVERVIEW

The mission of the college counseling program is to help you gain admission to colleges and universities that fit your intellectual and personal abilities, your interests, and your aspirations. In its efforts to educate, counsel, guide, support, and advocate for you throughout the college process, the college counseling team is guided by the philosophy that “college is a match to be made, not a prize to be won” (Frank Sachs). Fit is therefore emphasized over perceived prestige. As an institutional member of the National Association of College Admission Counseling, Emma Willard subscribes to the NACAC Statement of Principles of Good Practice. This statement delineates the professional and ethical standards, policies, practices, and procedures that guide and govern the activities of the secondary, post-secondary, and third-party participants in the college admission process.

The guidance and support provided by the college office is integral to the educational mission of the school. We see ourselves as educators who are responsible for guiding you knowledgeably, professionally, and ethically. Our work is grounded in a deep respect for the worth, individuality, dignity, and dreams of each student. Our highest priority is to help you clarify your values, assess your strengths, and identify your goals for post-secondary education and then provide you (and your parents) with accurate information and realistic guidance about colleges and the college admission process. In addition, we provide colleges with information about Emma Willard’s academic policies, profile, and the students applying to their institutions. We also provide input on discussions and decisions related to academic policy and curriculum development. Finally, we dispense information about colleges, college admission, and the students involved in the process to a wide range of constituencies, including trustees, faculty, administrators, alumnae, and prospective students.

The college process encompasses standardized testing and individualized college counseling. The college counseling office oversees and administers all standardized testing related to the college admission process. The practice of taking the PSAT in your sophomore year gave you your first taste of the college process. We first meet with the sophomore class early in the fall term in preparation for the PSAT in October and then again to explain results and provide strategies for improvement. Similarly in the fall of the junior year, the college counseling team meets with your class in early October to review strategies for re-taking the PSAT. When results come in, we meet with your class to review your scores and advise you on how best to prepare for the upcoming SAT. In January of the junior year, the process begins in earnest as you receive your college counselor assignment, along with this handbook (an important reference as you go through the college process). Your parents are encouraged to read the college handbook, which is available to them (and to you) on the college counseling page of the Emma Willard website. As a junior, you will be advised to take the SAT in March and again in May or June. You will also be advised to take at least two Subject Tests, usually in May or June of your junior year. In the senior year, you will take the SAT in October and, if necessary, one more time in November. You may be further advised to take additional Subject Tests in November or December. Approximately 45 percent of each senior class also takes the ACT examination, usually in June of the junior year and/or in the Fall (September or October) of the senior year. All standardized testing should be completed by December of the senior year.

In late January of the junior year, you will participate in a retreat at Skidmore College that provides information about college life and the college admission process. Topics include “Making the Match: Understanding Your Values, Strengths and Goals”; “The Dynamics of the Selective College Admission
Process”; “Researching and Evaluating Colleges”; “Writing the College Essay”; “Conquering the Admission Interview”; lunch in the college dining hall; campus tours; a student panel on the college experience; a film with discussion; and a mock admission exercise.

The most important facet of Emma Willard’s college counseling program is individualized advising about colleges. In January of the junior year, you are required to complete a college counseling questionnaire and a 500 word autobiographical essay in Naviance, our web-based college counseling resource. At the same time, your parents are invited to complete a questionnaire (also in Naviance) in order to gain their input and assess their expectations for your college search. Once these documents are submitted, you and your parents (if possible) are invited to begin meeting with your college counselor.

At the initial meeting, we review courses, grades, extracurricular activities, standardized test scores, summer plans, and most importantly, academic and personal interests and goals. Together, we develop an initial list of colleges that fit the student’s profile and preferences. In addition, we review the next steps in your college process, including researching colleges, visiting campuses, interviewing, and preparing to write the college essay. You will be expected to schedule follow-up visits and stay in communication with your college counselor during the remainder of the spring semester and over the summer. You are also encouraged to visit colleges over spring break and summer vacation.

During the fall of the senior year, you should meet regularly with your college counselor to refine your college list, finalize plans for standardized testing and submitting applications, and select teacher references. You are also expected to continue to visit college campuses and participate in relevant information sessions given annually by college representatives who visit Emma Willard. In support of your applications, your college counselor will write a letter of recommendation based on interviews, essays, parent observations, teacher evaluations, grades, and comments from your houseparents, advisors, coaches, and other adults in the school community. Following the submission of your applications, your college counselor will monitor the progress of your candidacy and work closely with college admission offices to ensure that your unique qualities and accomplishments are noted. As decisions arrive in during late March, the college counseling team will assist you and your parents in understanding and processing admission and financial aid decisions and in selecting the option best that seems best suited to you.

Throughout the college process, experts are invited to campus to give presentations in support of the goals and objectives of the college counseling program. For example, an admission dean is invited to speak to the faculty about the current landscape of college admission and to assist them in preparing to write teacher recommendations. As part of the junior retreat program, college admission representatives are invited to speak to the junior class on how selective colleges make decisions. As part of the senior retreat in May, seniors hear panels and presentations that prepare them for the impending transition to college.
THE COLLEGE COUNSELORS

The college counseling team includes Kent Jones, director of college counseling; Alysia Decker-Majeran, associate director of College Counseling; and Cheryl Ackner, administrative assistant for college counseling and academic services.

Kent Jones
Director of College Counseling

Alysia Decker-Majeran
Associate Director of College Counseling

Cheryl Ackner
Administrative Assistant for College Counseling and Academic Services

The college counselors are your most accessible source of information on colleges and college admission. In your junior year they will begin individual conferences with you after you have completed the College Questionnaire and submitted an autobiography. During these conferences, they will help you define your goals and interests, suggest colleges that meet your requirements, guide you in a calendar of college planning and assist you in understanding the application procedures.

The college counselors are also the people who serve as your liaisons with college admission offices. Although it is the school’s responsibility to forward your records to colleges, it is your responsibility to request that the college office do this. Be sure to keep your counselor informed of any new activities and accomplishments so they can be shared with your colleges.

In the course of your college investigations, your college counselor will assist you in assessing how realistic your college choices are. His or her experience with admission decisions, records of decisions on past Emma Willard applicants in Naviance, and college profiles are all available to you. In assessing your chances of admission at a specific college, your counselor can only offer educated estimates and advice, not assurances. Where you apply is ultimately your decision; whether you are accepted is the college's decision. Your college counselor will guide you so that when admission decisions are received, you will not be completely surprised and you will be assured of at least one acceptance.

News about colleges and scholarships will be sent to you throughout the year via email and posted in Naviance.
Your college counselor will also write a confidential school recommendation, required by most colleges as part of the “Secondary School Report.” This is not to be confused with teacher recommendations. It is important that you work closely with your college counselor so that she/he knows you well both as a student and as an individual. The counselor recommendation is based on personal knowledge and contact with you, comments from teachers and others who work closely with you, and your school record.

**RULES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**


Everyone involved in the college admission process has responsibilities. The School's job is to help you get started, to help you build an initial college list, to provide you with resources, and to make educated guesses about your prospects at certain institutions. In addition, we aim to help you and the colleges to which you apply evaluate accurately your accomplishments, talents, and potential. The nature and competitiveness of college admission have changed significantly in recent years, and sometimes our estimates of your chances of admission at a particular school will not square with your or your parents’ expectations. We will always do our best to be honest and direct, to provide you with the best information possible, and to ensure that the admission process is as transparent as we can make it.

We expect you to take initiative, do research, visit colleges, and meet deadlines. We will also expect you to ask questions (it is impossible for us to anticipate all of them!), to tell us about the challenges you encounter, and to keep us abreast of your progress. As far as possible, you should track and respond to all college correspondence and keep your college counselor informed of important communications you receive from colleges.

Emma Willard also believes that your parents have responsibilities in this process. They should be objective sounding boards for you and help you think out loud about your options. They should be honest with you in discussing their expectations and parameters and be supportive (as well as instructive) during this difficult and sometimes emotional process. Remember that your parents may have a high emotional as well as financial stake in your college plans, and it is certainly understandable that they will have feelings about one school or another. The roles of coach, consultant, confidant, cheerleader, realist, and executive secretary are all important ones for parents to play in the college process. But just as Emma Willard does not ultimately "select" a college for you, neither should your parents. In the end, your college decision must be your own.

In the beginning, you may feel overwhelmed by the amount of information and the number of college options. There are, for instance, about 2,500 four-year colleges and universities in the United States (25% public), a number of which would probably offer an acceptable fit. We will encourage you to consider many options at the beginning of the process and then, with our help, gradually narrow the field based on factors you consider most important. During the process, you should remember that college literature, websites, and Naviance are only a few of the information sources available; you need to visit college campuses, have interviews, meet with representatives who visit Emma Willard, and converse with many individuals, including your college counselor, teachers, friends, alumni, students at the colleges, and parents. While others' views should always be considered, they should also be taken with a grain of salt; only you can judge what advice is useful and what suggestions are best for you.
Finally, few students can safely apply to only one college. We encourage you to apply to approximately ten colleges and to ensure that your final list includes schools of varying selectivity. A good balance of “reaches,” “possibles,” and “likelies” is essential. We want you to aim high, but we will also insist that you remain realistic about your college choices and prospects for admission.

COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES VISITING EMMA WILLARD

Each year more than 100 college representatives visit Emma Willard to talk with seniors. The majority of these visits occur between September and November. Seniors are excused from class to attend these meetings; juniors are welcome if they have a free period.

Not only is the representative able to provide up-to-date information about his/her institution and its admission policies, but he/she is another contact for you with the admission office. The interest you demonstrate in a particular college can play a role in your candidacy, so if you are seriously interested in a college, we encourage you to attend the meeting. The representative with whom you talk at Emma is often the same person who will review your application and participate in your decision. If you are unable to visit a college’s campus, meeting with the representative from that institution will be particularly helpful.

The schedule of college visitors can be found in Naviance under “Colleges/Upcoming College Visits.” You will be notified by e-mail of visits scheduled and reminded of the meeting 48 hours in advance. Visiting colleges are also announced weekly at Morning Reports. Seniors are excused from class for this purpose if they have received prior permission from their college counselor and their teacher(s). To obtain permission to attend a meeting with a college representative, you must complete a yellow “College Representative Visit Form” (available in the college office), have it signed by your college counselor, and give it to the teacher of the class you will miss at least one day in advance of the meeting. In the event of a conflict with an announced test, it is your responsibility to be in class unless you can make alternate arrangements with your teacher. You are always responsible for any work that you miss.

COLLEGE SEARCH MATERIALS

NAVIANE

The most helpful tool in your college search will be Emma Willard’s web-based college counseling resource, Naviance. Here you can find a vast amount of information about colleges and the admission process. For example, you can learn about your strengths and interests, prepare for the SAT or ACT, see results of recent Emma Willard applications to any college in the United States, have at your fingertips a convenient and streamlined method to research colleges and monitor your applications, find a wealth of scholarship information, and much more. During sophomore year, you will receive a user name and password and be directed to the Naviance website through our website. Your access to Naviance will begin in your sophomore year and continue through to your graduation.

EMMA WILLARD’S COLLEGE COUNSELING HANDBOOK

Along with Naviance, one of the most important tools available to you and your parents here is this College Handbook. You are expected to read this handbook carefully and be responsible for the information it contains. You may also access the College Handbook online on MyEmma’s College Resource Board.
PRINTED MATERIAL

College resource materials are available in the Academic Office. Among the resources available are:

- College catalogues
- College viewbooks and pamphlets
- Alumni/ae magazines and newspapers
- College guides
- College profiles
- Scholarship and financial aid information and forms
- Testing information and registration materials

You may also wish to accumulate your own collection of college material. The following are helpful college guides which can be purchased online and at most bookstores:

- Barron’s Profiles of American Colleges, Barron’s
- The College Handbook, College Board
- Peterson's Annual Guide to Undergraduate Study, Peterson's Guides
- Princeton Review’s Complete Book of Colleges, Princeton Review
- The Fiske Guide to Colleges, Edward Fiske
- The Best 379 Colleges, Princeton Review
- Colleges that Change Lives, Loren Pope
- The Index of Majors and Graduate Degrees, College Board
- Rugg’s Recommendations on the Colleges, Frederick Rugg
- The College Finder, Steven Antonoff

INTERNET RESOURCES

The Internet provides valuable, timely guides to colleges. Some of the most popular sites are:

- http://connection.naviance.com/emmawillard
- http://www.collegeboard.com
- http://www.act.org
- http://www.commonapp.org
- http://www.collegeconfidential.com/
- http://www.petersons.com
- http://collegeapps.about.com
- http://www.princetonreview.com
- http://www.fairtest.org
- http://www.finaid.org
EVALUATING COLLEGES

In making college decisions, one of the most important tasks is determining what you are looking for in a college. The process of college selection becomes considerably less perplexing once your criteria have been defined. While a college counselor is likely to go through the following issues, you should take time to think about them independently and discuss them with your family and other trusted advisors.

**You should never apply to a college you would not like to attend.** A "likely" college becomes meaningless if you would not, under any circumstances, attend. Likewise, it is thoughtless for you to apply to a far-reach college just to see if you can be accepted when your acceptance might eliminate someone who would truly like to enroll. Here are some factors you should consider when researching colleges to find the best fit:

**ACADEMIC PROGRAMS**

Your first concern should be whether or not a college has the academic program you seek. It is not sufficient that the college simply offers it; you must evaluate the strength of the program and the department (courses, faculty, placement of graduates, facilities, research and internship opportunities, etc.). You should also learn about the core requirements for all graduates and any other programs that might relate to your goals and interests.

If you are undecided about a college major, do not worry! Many students entering liberal arts programs share your indecision, and many more change their minds about their major during their first two years in college. In imagining what might be a good major for you, consider your academic strengths and interests, your aptitudes, and your ideas about what you might like to do after college. If you are undecided, you will want to explore a wide range of academic possibilities and flexibility in a college’s curriculum and co-curricular programs will be important. For example, can anyone have a part in a play or do all roles go to drama majors? College websites are invaluable resources for researching majors. Most colleges post their catalogues on their websites, and those documents will normally outline requirements for the major (and minor), possibilities for interdisciplinary study and self-determined majors, distribution requirements, and faculty credentials.

**TYPE OF INSTITUTION**

Large or small? Rural or urban? Public or private? Religiously affiliated or not? Research institution or liberal arts? Graduate programs or not? Coeducational or a women's college? These are just some of the questions you will want to answer before you begin your college search.

**SINGLE GENDER vs. COEDUCATIONAL**

The advantages of coeducational institutions are obvious, and a majority of Emma Willard students opt for a co-ed environment. But it is also important to consider the advantages of the other alternative before making a final choice. For example, at a woman's college the institution's energy, resources, and facilities are devoted entirely to women. Career counseling is committed to placing women in the job market. Student leadership positions are all assumed by females. Research assistant positions with faculty go to women. All financial aid is assigned to women.
PUBLIC vs. PRIVATE

Although tuition at public universities is generally lower than at private institutions, financial aid may equalize this difference. Size, diversity of students and offerings, campus culture, residential programs, study abroad opportunities, administrative control, four-year graduation rates, and admission criteria are therefore important factors to consider when deciding between a public and a private college.

SIZE OF THE INSTITUTION

There are colleges with 500 students and others with 50,000. While the quality of a college is not determined by its size, your enjoyment of it may be. Here are some of the factors that may be affected by the size of the institution:

- Extent of course and program offerings; including study abroad
- Diversity of student body and faculty
- Faculty/Student ratio
- Class size, particularly in introductory courses
- Dependence on graduate teaching assistants
- Academic and social contact with students and faculty
- Availability and accessibility of facilities
- Involvement in leadership and extracurricular activities
- Campus culture and dependence on social structures (fraternities, sororities, etc.)
- Degree of personal discipline, independence, and initiative required of a student
- Classroom interaction or academic support
- Range of residential options

LOCATION

Another factor is location. What setting fits your best - urban, suburban, or rural? What part of the country? How far from home? Attending a college in another part of the country or even abroad can significantly add to an educational experience, yet there may be important reasons to stay closer to home. Make your decision, but in the process do not overlook an outstanding college (whether it is in New York City or a mid-western farm town) just because of its setting or location.

FACILITIES

The availability and condition of campus facilities should also be considered. The extensiveness of facilities in a particular academic area may reflect the strength of the program and the college's commitment to it. There are also practical considerations: an astronomy major will want an observatory; adequate practice rooms will be a must for the music major; if living in a single-sex dorm is important, the college should have one. Looking at the libraries, information technology resources, the condition of the dorms and classrooms, and even the grounds will tell you much about a school’s resources, priorities, and management.

SELECTIVITY

Understanding a college’s selectivity relative to your own qualifications will be very important in making a realistic assessment of that college. Yet, it is equally important that you do research beyond the numbers to know if a college is right for you in terms of overall fit. While some college guides explicitly categorize colleges by their selectivity, rankings are most often based on average test scores, GPA information, and the acceptance rate (the percent of applicants admitted out of those who apply). These rankings do not tell
everything about the quality of either the college or its applicants. When using such guides, try to understand how they evaluate and compare candidates and what each college is looking for in addition to academic qualifications.

The guidelines below may be helpful in determining selectivity in general:

1. **Highly Selective** - In this group, about four-fifths are independent (private) colleges. In the past several years, however, more and more state-supported institutions are falling into this category. For instance, the Universities of Michigan, Virginia, and North Carolina are highly selective, particularly for out-of-state applicants. (Most public colleges and universities have a different and more selective admission criteria for out-of-state students.)

   Because colleges in this group are well known and have more qualified applications than spaces, they are difficult to enter. Sheer numbers of applications can result in restricting admission to top academic students only. To be considered for admission, an applicant must meet the following requirements:

   • Have a well-balanced program of at least 20 academic courses. Colleges in this category expect students to pursue at least four of the five traditional academic disciplines - science, mathematics, English, history/social studies and foreign languages – through senior year and to be advanced in two or three areas.
   • Earn grades in the A range in most subjects.
   • Have good recommendations and a thoughtful, well-presented application.
   • Give evidence of maturity, purpose, and desire to learn. Internships, independent study, employment, travel, and summer study are often evidence of these traits.
   • Have test scores to support the classroom record.
   • Show evidence of something other than study. A student may have a special interest in one or more extracurricular activities, have done volunteer work, or have an unusual talent or interest in an area that might intrigue the admission committee or benefit the college.

   Within this category, there is a wide range of selectivity, from those institutions that accept fewer than 50 percent of their applicants to those that accept fewer than 10 percent. Schools that fall in the most highly competitive range (i.e., they accept under 20 percent of the applicant pool) are in the luxurious position of rejecting most of their applicants for seemingly trivial reasons. They annually reject applicants whose scores are perfect, whose grades have never fallen below an A- and who have a wealth of extracurricular activities and interests. For most colleges the best guide to measure the chance of being accepted is the profile of the past two or three years for Emma Willard students applying to that college. This information is available from your college counselor and Naviance.

2. **Selective** - This includes a number of four-year institutions, 40 percent of which are public universities. The majority of private colleges in this group range from having from 1,000 to 10,000 students. Although some of these universities and colleges are less demanding in their admission requirements, they may be stiff about weeding out students during the freshman year. For admission a student should:

   • Have earned good grades in at least 90 percent of all academic courses with no D’s or failures. All colleges expect higher grades in the junior and senior years.
   • Earn grades in the A and B range.
• Demonstrate a serious desire to learn.
• Have test scores which place her in the middle range of college-bound seniors.
• Have contributed to some voluntary extracurricular activity.

3. **Less Selective** - This group includes four-year and two-year colleges, many of which have exciting programs to offer in liberal arts or in career-oriented programs. For admission a student should:

• Have a particular talent or desire to pursue a specific area along with, or instead of, liberal arts.
• Have at least a C average. Colleges in this category are most interested in the applicant’s qualifications for the specific area of interest to which she is applying.

These colleges draw able, well-prepared students, many of whom continue study at the graduate level. However, these colleges are willing to give students with a strong desire and a reasonable record an opportunity to learn. Often colleges in this group provide strong guidance in selecting courses, making decisions, and adjusting to college demands.

4. **Specialized Colleges or Programs** - For some students who have a specific talent and a strong desire to spend most of their waking hours developing this ability, it might be worthwhile to investigate special schools or colleges, such as Rhode Island School of Design, Juilliard, or North Carolina School for the Arts.

**THE COLLEGE VISIT**

A campus visit for a tour, information session, and an interview is one of the most helpful ways of learning about a college. Not only does the visit enable you to see the physical setting and the facilities of the college, but it exposes you to its students, faculty, and staff.

Although many college admission offices argue that the best time to visit a college is when it is in session, try to schedule summer visits. This is a good time to participate in campus tours and information sessions. It is also a more relaxed time to interview if such opportunities are available. Fall visits and open house programs can then be used for more in-depth explorations of colleges. Absences for fall college visits must be kept to a minimum; ordinarily, seniors will be permitted to miss no more than five class days, and then only with permission from your college counselor and your advisor via the Request for Absence Form available on Emma Willard’s Intranet, from the Attendance Office, or from the College Office. This form must be completed and submitted to the attendance office at least seven days in advance of your intended absence. For specific information about permissions for college visits, see Fine Print.

If you wish to visit a college, you should make every effort to do so during vacations or long weekends to avoid conflicts with school commitments. Approval to miss school commitments for college tours, interviews, and open houses is granted only to seniors and given only when travel forms have been filed on time and permission has been granted by your parent, houseparent, advisor, and college counselor. If you are a boarder who will be away overnight, you will need to submit a travel form to your houseparent in addition to submitting the Request for Absence Form to the Attendance Office. While away from campus for a college visit, your parents assume full responsibility for you and you remain subject to school rules and expectations for appropriate conduct. If you are a boarding student who will be unchaperoned during an overnight visit, your travel forms must include a contact at the college. If you are a day or boarding student who will be visiting colleges only for a day (i.e. not overnight), you must submit a Request for Absence Form to Student Services at least seven days in advance. It is always your responsibility to inform your teachers and coaches of any intended absence and to make up any missed
work. Absences for college visits for non-seniors will not be excused and will be considered discretionary absences.

College visits should be planned judiciously. Because college admission office appointment calendars fill up fast, you should make fall appointments during the summer. Here are some tips on getting the most out of your campus visit:

- Discuss the visit with your college counselor. She/he can help in planning and sometimes provide the names of Emma graduates who attend a particular institution. Contacting the college is solely the student’s responsibility, however.
- Call or email the admission office to request an interview and a tour of the campus. Many colleges will allow you to sign up for an interview on their website.
- There may be times, particularly when the admission office is making admission decisions in February and March, that appointments are not granted. In this case, the opportunity for a tour and a group information session is usually still possible.
- Visit classes if the college is in session.
- To spend the night in the dorm, make arrangements through the admission office at the college. Not all colleges offer overnight visits, and those that do tend to offer them only on weeknights.
- Students with a special talent—e.g., in music, athletics, visual arts or dance—should arrange in advance to see faculty or coaches involved in your particular area(s) of interest.
- In touring the campus, pay special attention to the library, campus bookstore, housing units, dining facilities, grounds, recreational facilities, classrooms and laboratories, and any other areas that are of particular interest to you.
- Read the student newspaper. Try to find other student publications—department newsletters, alternative newspapers, literary reviews.
- Scan bulletin boards to see what day-to-day student life is like.
- Eat a meal in a cafeteria.
- Visit the student center. Talk with as many people as possible to get their impressions of the institution. Ask a student what he/she does on weekends. Listen to the college's radio station. Caution: One person's view is not the college's view nor is the weather that day necessarily the norm. The immediate conditions encountered on the visit should not overly prejudice your reaction to the college.
- Walk or drive around the community surrounding the campus.
COLLEGE APPLICATIONS AND THE ADMISSION PROCESS

Please keep your own file of all college correspondence, interview dates and names, SAT scores, ACT scores, etc. Naviance and your Common Application account can be very useful in this regard.

THE APPLICATION FORM

The application form is the initial, but not the only, step in applying to college. Virtually all applications are now submitted electronically. To determine which schools use the Common Application, visit each college’s website, check Naviance, or refer to the Common Application Deadlines and Requirements Grid (under download forms) at http://www.commonapp.org. All admission and application requirements for Common Application schools are conveniently listed in the Common Application Deadlines and Requirements Grid, and you will find this chart a very helpful resource in organizing your applications.

The application form requests demographic data, information about your family, information about your academic background and standardized test results, extracurricular involvements, work experiences, future plans, and academic and career interests. Most selective colleges also require an application essay of no more than 650 words and a supplement that may require one or more additional essays. These essays are read both for content and for spelling, grammar, voice, organization, etc. Almost without exception, colleges require an application fee ranging from $25-$75.

Since colleges want the application to reflect you; your interests, voice, and values; your ability to write; and your ability to think, completing applications requires significant time and energy. You should "put your best foot forward" without being boastful. Throughout the application, it is important to be honest, thorough, concise, neat, and attentive to directions. Make a copy of the application before submitting it and review it with your college counselor. Leave plenty of time for revision.

Application Fee Waivers: Emma Willard provides a very limited number of waivers for application fees. All fee waivers are based on high demonstrated financial need as determined by Emma Willard’s director of financial aid. To obtain fee waivers for your college applications, you must complete the student portion of the National Association of College Admissions Counseling’s Request for Admission Application Fee Waiver, and submit it to Cheryl Ackner. If approved, the college office will send the completed form to your colleges and you will indicate on your college application that your fee is being covered via the NACAC Fee Waiver.

Remember that your college applications are your responsibility. It is your responsibility to file your applications completely and on time. Make a spreadsheet or chart to stay organized. Set your own preliminary deadlines in advance of official deadlines. It goes without saying that your application and essays should reflect your own work. The Buckley Amendment requires that you or your parents authorize Emma Willard to send your transcript to colleges. When you reach 18, you will be asked to sign an authorization to this effect. Until then, your parents’ authorization to release this information is necessary.

NOTE: If you are considering applying to one of the service academies (i.e. West Point or Annapolis), you should inform your college counselor and be in contact with your congressperson’s or senator’s office no later than January of your junior year. This application requires earlier attention than regular college applications.
TYPES OF APPLICATIONS

Early Decision (ED): If you would like to apply to your first-choice college via a binding ED plan and if it is a realistic choice based on your record at Emma Willard, we encourage you to do so. Approximately 40 percent of our senior class has done this over the past few years. You may apply to only one school under ED I, but if you are deferred or rejected under an ED I plan, you may apply to another school under ED II. If accepted to a school under ED I or ED II, you must enroll. If your ED application is deferred, it will be reconsidered in the college’s regular applicant pool at a later date and you are released from the binding commitment to enroll if subsequently accepted. You may apply to other colleges (either Early Action or Regular Decision) while your ED application is pending, but once admitted under ED, you must withdraw all other applications immediately. Most ED I deadlines fall on November 1 or 15, and colleges notify candidates by mid-December. Most ED II deadlines are in early to mid-January, and notifications are sent in mid-February.

Early Action (EA): Early Action works just like Early Decision with the significant exception that it does not require a binding commitment to enroll if accepted. EA application deadlines are similar to ED deadlines, but accepted students have until May 1 to enroll. One or two very highly selective institutions have instituted Single Choice Early Action or Restricted Early Action (REA), a plan that limits you to just one early action application. Emma Willard’s policy is to encourage you to treat a Single Choice Early Action acceptance the same way you would an ED acceptance. Even though EA is not binding, we assume that when you apply to a school EA, you are indicating a very strong interest in attending that school.

Priority: Some colleges (mostly large public universities) have early deadlines for regular application. Students who apply by the priority deadline receive first consideration for admission and housing.

Regular Decision: This is the application round in which most students apply to colleges. While most regular decision deadlines range from January 1 to February 15, application dates may vary. Most regular decision application programs notify students in late March or early April and require a commitment from accepted students on or before May 1.

Rolling Admission: Some colleges notify applicants on an ongoing basis shortly after receiving the application (4-6 weeks). There is no enrollment commitment required before May 1 under such a plan.

THE SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT

Most applications include a secondary school report, which must be completed by your college counselor.

The secondary school report includes:

1. The student’s waiver of right of access to the information provided.
2. A brief identification of the student and the school and a description of the grading system.
3. Although colleges that have traditionally attracted Emma Willard students are aware of the demands of our curriculum and the competitiveness of our students and take these factors into consideration, the College Office provides a school profile with each transcript to ensure that admission officers fully understand Emma Willard’s academic program and environment.
4. Courses taken (grades 9-12) either at EWS or at previous high schools.
5. Grades earned in each course. In most cases, the transcript that goes with the secondary school report will include grades earned through the first quarter of the senior year.
6. In accordance with Emma Willard School policy, grade point average and rank in class are not reported to students or colleges.
7. In lieu of completing the personal qualities rating grid on the secondary school report form, your college counselor will write a letter of recommendation for you.
Read the instructions on the secondary school report form(s) carefully. If applying via paper application, be sure to give the hard copy of the secondary school report form to Cheryl Ackner in the College Office. You should complete the student information section of this and all other forms handed over to others to be completed. Also, be sure to sign the waiver of access option.

**POLICY ON REPORTING DISCIPLINE**

Making mistakes is a natural, even necessary, part of a student’s personal growth and educational development, particularly in the early years of her secondary education. This is especially true in a boarding school environment such as Emma Willard’s where student behavior is monitored closely and consistently. While we acknowledge the need to report significant disciplinary events to colleges, we also believe that routine discipline is a developmentally appropriate tool to be used without fear of long-term consequences. Emma Willard therefore shares with colleges only disciplinary information about a student’s probation, suspension, or expulsion. Reports of disciplinary action are made by answering “yes” to the appropriate statement(s) on the Secondary School Report and by inviting admission officers to call the director of college counseling for an explanation of the circumstances. Your response to this question on your common application should conform to this policy.

**TRANSCRIPTS**

The College Office will send a transcript reflecting all grades earned through the first quarter of your senior year to all the colleges listed in your Common Application account and on the transcript request form you submit to the College Office in December. In early to mid-February, the College Office will also send a mid-year report reflecting your senior grades through the end of the first semester to each college to which you have applied. While the College Office does not routinely send third quarter grades to colleges, it will provide them either upon your request or that of a college considering your application. At the end of the academic year, one final transcript will be sent to the college at which you have enrolled.

**POLICY ON REPORTING GPA AND RANK**

Letter grades are used with plus and minus notations to refine the passing grades of A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), D (63-66), and D- (60-62). There is no grade of A+ and “NC” (No Credit) represents a failing grade. Students entering Emma Willard’s ninth grade are graded on a Credit/No Credit basis for the fall semester. In the second semester, freshmen receive letter grades that are reported on transcripts. Comprehensive final exams may be included in this second semester grade. There is no year grade recorded for ninth grade. All arts courses may be taken Credit/No Credit. A student customarily carries 5–6 units per year or 2.5–3 units per semester and must carry a minimum of 2.5 units per semester. Emma Willard does not rank students or provide a cumulative grade point average as part of a student’s credentials. This practice is consistent with our founder’s belief that “education should seek to bring its subjects to the perfection of their moral, intellectual, and physical nature.” Believing that her vision encourages students to measure their strengths against their own potential, rather than in competition against others, we do not report information that invites invidious comparison of students with others.
TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Most selective colleges, seeking information on your motivation, abilities, attitudes, self-discipline, determination, creativity, and mastery of individual subjects, request one or two confidential teacher recommendations. In selecting teachers to write them, choose teachers from your junior or senior year in different disciplines (i.e. English/history and science/math). You should ask each teacher you have selected in person (not by email or telephone) to write a recommendation for you by October 1 of the senior year. You should ask the same teachers to write recommendations for all colleges that request them. Remember that it takes a great deal of time, thought, and effort to craft a recommendation. After a teacher has written a recommendation for you, it is customary to send him/her a handwritten thank you note. As a courtesy, you should also keep your recommending teachers apprised of college decisions when they are received.

When you create an account in the Common Application online, you must first identify your high school. When this is done, you can access the School Forms section of the application where you may add a teacher(s) to your list of school officials. As you do this, an email is automatically sent to the teacher(s) with instructions about using the online teacher recommendation system. You will then be able to monitor when your teacher has submitted his or her recommendation and when it was received by each college.

When applying to non-common application colleges, you must provide your teachers and college counselor with links to the appropriate online recommendation form(s).

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

You may also wish to request additional recommendations, either from a third teacher or advisor or from an individual outside of school. In most cases, an additional recommendation is useful only if the person writing it can provide a perspective that is not be reflected in your other recommendations. You should consult with your college counselor about the advisability of including additional recommendations; too many can hinder rather than help your chances, and some colleges will even discard recommendations other than those requested in the instructions.

ADMISSION TESTING

Emma Willard's CEEB school code is 335600 and our test center code is 33930. The school code number must be placed on all application forms. Your name must be recorded identically each time. The test company’s computer will catch even the omission of a middle initial, causing the creation of two or more accounts for you in their database. When this happens, your scores will not all appear in one place or on one report, and you will need the assistance of the test company’s customer service to resolve the problem.

The most frequently used admission tests are the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the test administered by the American College Testing program (ACT). These tests, given on national Saturday test dates, are the only common factor among the applicants to a college (high school programs, rigor, missions, etc. vary immensely). The extent to which colleges weigh these results in admission decisions also varies. Few colleges, if any, have an absolute minimum test score; for most, admission test results are but one of a number of factors considered in the admission decision. Nevertheless, test scores are important. The more selective the college, the more important the scores become as discriminators among otherwise qualified candidates.

SAT Reasoning Test (SAT) and Subject Tests: The SAT with Essay is 3 hours and 50 minutes long. It is a test of verbal, quantitative, and writing abilities. You should take the SAT in March and May of your junior year and in either October or November of your senior year. Many colleges also ask you to submit Subject Test results. These are one-hour, multiple-choice, subject-specific tests also offered by the College Board. They are frequently used in admission, but they may also be required for course placement (for
example, placement at the beginning or intermediate level of a required writing, language, or math course). There are currently 20 Subject Tests from which to choose. You may begin taking Subject Tests as early as June of freshman year. As a general rule, you should have taken Subject Tests in two different subject areas by June of your junior year.

Most students take two Subject Tests in June of their junior year. The most common exception to this is when a junior AP student decides to flip her SAT and Subject Tests so that she takes her Subject Tests in May and her second SAT in June in order to more closely align her Subject Test preparation with her AP preparation. We leave this choice up to you, but as a rule, we recommend that you plan to take the SAT in March and May and your Subject Tests in June, right at the end of your final exam week.

If you are thinking about taking a Subject Test(s) before your junior year, we recommend that you do so only when you are completing at least a third year math or language course or a full-year science course. For example, it is ok for a freshman or sophomore in Algebra II & Trig (and who has already taken Geometry) to take Math Level I, or for a tenth grader completing Chemistry to take the Chemistry Subject Test, or for a student completing the third year of a foreign language to take the appropriate Subject Test, but in general, we advise students to wait until their junior year and take Subject Tests in their two best and most advanced subjects.

Almost all colleges limit the number of Subject Tests they require to two, and many require none or only one. Although you may take up to three Subject Tests on one day (and there is no limit on the total number of tests you may take during high school) we recommend that you take a conservative approach and not take more tests than required and that you take only two Subject Tests in one day; three take a lot of stamina and mental focus and students often do less well on the third test of the morning because of the fatigue factor.

Students who do take three Subject Tests do so with the belief that they will only have to submit two or less -- in other words, submit the best two scores from among the three or more Subject Tests they have taken. While this is sometimes true, many colleges will ask to see all testing (SAT and Subject Tests) with the understanding that they will pick your best scores for you. Because of this, taking an extra Subject Test in an area in which you are not confident just to see how you may come back to haunt you. We therefore recommend that you give careful thought to this and discuss your testing plan with your college counselor.

If you are thinking about retaking a Subject Test to improve your score, we recommend that you take it when you are as much in command of the material as you were when you just finished the course. Many students who take or retake a Subject Test sometime after they finish the course tend not to do as well as they had hoped because they lose mastery of the material over time.

**American College Testing Program (ACT):** Most colleges accept the results of the ACT examination (either with or without writing) in lieu of the SAT and Subject Tests. This is a three-hour examination with sections in English, math, reading, and science reasoning. Some colleges require that students take the ACT with Writing. The ACT with Writing takes an additional thirty minutes and is available on all national test dates. We recommend that you take the ACT with Writing test.

**Cost:** The cost for the SAT with Essay is $64.50; the basic registration fee for the Subject Tests is $26.00 plus each Subject Test costs $22. The ACT with Writing is $62.50.

**Waiver of Test Registration Fees:** Both the College Board and the American College Testing Program provide test registration fee waivers for low-income students who meet specified eligibility guidelines. The College Board provides up to four SAT/Subject Test waivers per student and the ACT provides a maximum of two. For assistance in determining eligibility and obtaining a fee waiver for testing, please see Cheryl Ackner in the College Office. More information about obtaining a fee waiver is available at [https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register/fees/fee-waivers](https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register/fees/fee-waivers) or [http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/FeeWaiver.pdf](http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/FeeWaiver.pdf)
Score Choice: Score Choice is a score reporting option provided by the College Board that lets you choose which scores (by test date for the SAT and by individual test for the SAT Subject Tests) you send to colleges. Your decision must be in accordance with each college’s stated score use practice. You may choose from one, several, or all SAT test dates. The College Board has worked with colleges and universities to help you understand which scores they would like you to send. Different colleges have made different decisions as to how they want you to report SAT scores. Not all have elected to go with score choice, and many that have ask for scores in different ways. Please note the score reporting requirements for each of the colleges to which you are applying at: https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/scores/sending-scores/score-choice. Colleges will only receive the scores you send them; your scores will not be released for admission purposes without your specific consent. If you choose not to use Score Choice, all of your scores will be sent automatically with each report. Score Choice applies only to the score reports that you send to colleges; you and Emma Willard will still receive scores from all your test dates in one report. Since ACT scores are reported only by the test date and previous scores do not appear on ACT score reports, the score choice option for this test is already built in.

Testing Accommodations for Students with Documented Learning Differences or Medical Needs: Students approved for learning or medical accommodations who wish to use those accommodations on standardized tests such as the PSAT, SAT, Subject Tests, or ACT should contact Maureen Harrison, Learning Support Coordinator, at least one semester prior to the test for which accommodations are requested. Applications for accommodations often require a current assessment from a learning specialist or a doctor’s diagnosis and directive.

Getting Your Test Results: Your SAT scores will generally be available to view online in your College Board account two to three weeks from the date of the test. For a table showing when you can view your scores after each test date, go to https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/scores. ACT scores are available online at your student account page within the same timeframe following the test date. A schedule of when ACT scores are available can be found at http://www.actstudent.org/scores/early.

Sending Your Scores to Colleges: It is your responsibility to report your official scores in a timely manner. To send your scores to colleges, go to “Send your Scores” on the College Board or ACT Web site. Although most students wait to see their scores before sending them to colleges, you may wish to list colleges to receive your scores at the time that you register for the SAT or ACT. If you do so, the first four score reports will be sent free of charge. You have up to nine days after the test to add, change, or remove a college from your score report. If you choose to list more than four colleges to receive your score report at the time you register, or if you request scores to be sent to colleges after you register for the test, the cost is $11.25 per report for the SAT and $13 for the ACT.

Score Optional Colleges: The National Center for Fair and Open Testing, or “Fair Test,” provides a list of the more than 800 colleges and universities that deemphasize the use of standardized tests by making admission decisions about substantial numbers of applicants without using the SAT or ACT. Some schools exempt students who meet grade-point average or class rank criteria while others require SAT or ACT scores but use them only for placement purposes or to conduct research studies. Check each school’s website to learn more about specific admission requirements, particularly for international students.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL): Students for whom a language other than English is the native language should register to take the TOEFL in the spring of the junior year and the fall of the senior year at www.ets.org. The cost of the TOEFL (if taken in New York) is $195.

Advanced Placement (AP) Tests: The AP program enables high school students to experience college-level coursework and earn college credit. Emma Willard offers AP courses in nineteen subjects. Evidence of AP courses on a transcript can enhance the perception of the rigor of your academic program in eyes of a college admission committee. While junior year AP results can have a bearing on your admission, the results of AP examinations taken in May of the senior year have no impact since the scores are not available until July, long after you have enrolled at a particular college. AP test scores of 4 or 5 on
the 1-5 grading scale are normally considered for credit toward graduation at selective colleges, although they may not exempt students from prerequisites in a college major. While each AP examination costs $94, this investment may represent a considerable savings relative to the cost of a college course. Information about sending AP results to colleges is available at: https://apscore.collegeboard.org/scores. Colleges do not require official AP score reports in the admissions process; it is sufficient just to report AP results on your college applications. We recommend that you send an official report only to the college at which you ultimately enroll.

TEST PREPARATION

The College Board, in partnership with Khan Academy offers an online, interactive SAT/ACT preparation program at no cost. In addition, we bring in a specialist to offer an optional four-week test prep program for juniors in April leading up to the May SAT. The cost of this program is $395. If you wish to pursue more extensive test preparation, you may do so outside Emma Willard either (through courses offered by test prep companies such as Kaplan or Princeton Review) or through individualized test or subject tutoring. As a rule, you will take the SAT in March and May of the junior year and once more in October of your senior year. For the ACT, it is usually in April or June of the junior year and again in September or October of the senior year. We advise you not to jump into test preparation in the fall of the junior year. Instead, we recommend that you take the March SAT without preparation and see how you do. With the results of this test, your college counselor can then help you decide what kind of test preparation would make the most sense as you gear up for the May SAT.

As you might expect, much of what we do to prepare students for the SAT or ACT is already embedded in our curriculum. For example, we incorporate actual SAT and ACT questions and instruction in our English, math, and science courses. Our long-standing position has been that familiarity with the SAT format can help you do your best, and we encourage you to develop this familiarity through Naviance, the PSAT, personal reading, and practice using commercial test preparation and grammar books. Faculty and student tutors are always available to assist you with questions related to your self-study. If additional SAT test preparation is warranted, our feeling has been that every effort should be made to avoid pursuing it at the expense of your primary academic obligations. Over time, we have found that students who use their free time pursuing a rigorous diet of good literature experience significant improvement on the critical reading section of the SAT. As you know, critical reading and effective writing are the hallmarks of an Emma Willard education, and this is reflected in the excellent results most of our students receive on the writing section of the SAT. In addition, students who take their math test results to our math learning center for specific help in areas where they lost points are better served in our view than those who learn who learn short cuts and gimmicks promoted by many test prep companies. While all of this does not constitute formal test preparation, we have long argued that a good deal of what a student does at Emma Willard actually does prepare you to do your best on the SAT or ACT.

Having said this, we understand the hyper-selective nature of the college admissions environment, and we agree that test preparation can increase most student’s scores and therefore your chances of admission to a highly selective college or university. However, experience tells us that there is a significant regression factor in test preparation. In other words, the closer the test preparation is to the actual test, the greater the impact of the preparation. We would therefore recommend that you not jump into test preparation too quickly and that you take the March SAT without preparation. This allows us to establish a testing baseline and determine what kind of test preparation is needed. As you know, colleges will often "superscore" your SAT results, meaning that they determine your composite SAT score by considering your best Evidence Based Reading, Math, and Writing scores from your overall testing results. This allows us to see where you need to direct your energies vis-a-vis improving your scores and it informs our thinking about whether specialized work in a particular area or general test preparation is the best way to go. And this will ultimately guide you in deciding whether to engage a tutor/specialist or to take a more generalized test prep course. This would apply to your preparation for both the May and the October SAT.

Finally, it is important to remember that standardized testing is but one piece of a much larger admissions puzzle and we encourage you and your parents to embrace this perspective in your approach to the college process. College admission officers will tell you that your academic program and performance is the most important factor, and that recommendations, personal qualities, extracurricular activities, and the strength of your writing will
figure prominently in their decision on your application. This is why nearly 900 colleges and universities in this country are either test-optional or test-flexible. But there is no question that standardized testing is used as a discriminating factor at the most highly selective colleges and universities, and if this is the type of school to which you will be applying, some kind of test preparation makes good sense.

THE INTERVIEW

The admission interview can improve your chances at a particular school by personalizing your application and conveying your interest in that college. Many schools are now so overwhelmed by applications that the interview is no longer required or even recommended; some colleges no longer grant interviews. It is important that you find out the interview policy at each of your colleges. Whenever possible, you should take advantage of any opportunities to interview. When college representatives come to Emma Willard you should meet with them if you are considering the college, even if you have already visited the campus. Some colleges will also offer the option of meeting with an area alumnus/a for an interview.

The interview provides an opportunity to:

- Ask questions of the college concerning academic programs, study abroad, the social landscape, etc.
- Explain an academic challenge that your transcript reveals.
- Speak with enthusiasm about your greatest passions.
- Provide context for various choices you’ve made (such as changing schools, dropping a core class, adding a particular extracurricular activity, etc.).
- Showcase your delightful personality.
- Make a memorable, favorable impression.

General Rules of Thumb:

- Call colleges at least a few weeks in advance of your visit to inquire about interviewing. Many colleges fill their interview slots early, especially in the fall. Ask if it is possible to schedule your interview with the admission officer who reads files from Emma Willard. If there are no on-campus interviews available, ask about alumni/ae interviews.
- Even if you cannot interview, be sure to stop by the admission office to pick up information, take a tour, and give your name to the receptionist; this is a simple way of “demonstrating interest.”
- Allow plenty of extra time to get to the interview. Tardiness detracts from your ability to make a good first impression.
- Try to schedule your first interview at a safety school (but not a school where you know you'd never apply). This will enable you to get some practice where the stakes are perhaps not as high.
- Bring copies of your transcript and resume. Your interviewer may or may not want to look at them, but she/he may find them helpful in recording impressions after the interview.

Making a Good Impression:

- Be yourself!
- In most cases, formal dress is not expected; your dress should be similar to or slightly better than what you might wear on a normal school day, and your appearance should be comfortable, authentic, and respectful both of your interviewer and of the importance of the occasion. It goes without saying that your clothing and appearance should not be sloppy, revealing, distracting, or provocative.
• Maintain good eye contact.
• Be conscious of your posture; sit up straight.
• Turn off your cell phone.
• Listen actively; try not to fidget, play with your hair, chew gum, look out the window, etc.
• Smile and show enthusiasm about yourself, the conversation, and the college.
• Answer with openness and honesty. Do not talk too much in response to a simple question, but also do not give one word or phrase answers to questions that call for a more thoughtful response.
• Most interviews last about half hour to forty-five minutes, and most will cover in that time period your interest in the college, your academic background and interests, your extracurricular involvement in school, and how you use your time outside school. Time will be left at the end of the interview to cover any questions you may have that have not already been answered. This is a lot to cover in a half hour, so manage your time and gauge the length of your responses with this in mind. Do not be disconcerted if the interview is shorter than expected; sometimes this is more a reflection of the interviewer’s style than of her/his judgment of you as a candidate.
• Frame your responses positively. If you are describing a challenging situation, focus on your growth and how much you learned from the experience rather than on the bad decision you made.
• Speak with economy, specificity, and confidence; try to avoid slang such as “like,” “you know,” “cool,” “umm”…
• Have ready two or three specific, intelligent questions about the college that cover information not readily available to you on the school’s website or in its view book. Avoid obvious questions such as “Do you have a math requirement here?” Instead, look at current news and program information on their website and ask specific questions such as “What is the relationship between the students and faculty here?” or “I noticed that Dr. Bang just received a grant from NASA for his rocket fuel project; will there be an opportunity for undergraduates to work on this project?” or “In general, how are undergraduates chosen for research projects in the physics department?”
• Students who control the direction of the conversation stand out. Before you even get to the interview, think about what aspects of your candidacy you want to highlight; try to move the conversation in those directions.
• Again, be yourself!

A Word for Parents:

College admission officers believe that where a student goes to college is mostly her own decision; they are generally not interested in speaking with parents beyond a quick hello and answering your questions at the end of the interview. You should not expect to be invited in to the interviewer’s office with your daughter, and you should remain in the waiting area during the interview. As your child’s coach, your place is on the sidelines, not in the game.
Sample Interview Questions:

1. Why are you considering this college?
2. What makes you think that this college would be a good match?
3. Where else are you applying and why?
4. What do you hope to major in?
5. What do you expect to be doing ten years from now?
6. How do you define “success?”
7. What have you liked or disliked about your school? What would you change?
8. How would you describe yourself to someone who did not know you?
9. What newspapers and magazines do you read?
10. What books not required for school have you read recently?
11. What television shows do you watch?
12. Tell us about your family.
13. How do you spend a typical afternoon after school? Evening? Weekend?
14. What extracurricular activities have you found most satisfying?
15. What are your strengths? Weaknesses? What has been your proudest achievement so far?
16. If you could talk with anyone living (or deceased) person, whom would it be and why?
17. What events have been crucial in your life?
18. What is the most important thing you’ve learned in high school?
19. What mark do you feel you’ve left on your school?
20. What do you want to get out of your college experience?
21. What about you is unique? What could you contribute to our college community?
22. Talk about a significant challenge you have encountered.
23. Is there anything you’d like to tell us about your transcript?
24. What is your greatest passion?
25. How would your friends describe you?
26. If you had high school to do over again, what might you have done differently?
27. What are your goals for your senior year?

After the Interview:

You should try to gather as complete an impression as possible during your campus visit. Either before or after the interview, wander around the campus and absorb it’s “feel.”

- Pay special attention to the library, campus bookstore, housing units, and any facilities that fit your special area of academic and extracurricular interest.
- Read the student newspaper. Try to find other student publications—department newsletters, alternative newspapers, literary reviews.
- Scan bulletin boards to see what day-to-day student life is like.
- Eat in the cafeteria.
- Visit the student union. Approach students and ask them about their experiences at the school; most students are pleased to be able to talk about their colleges.
- Explore the community surrounding the campus.

A Final Word: When you get home, send a personal note or email to the interviewer thanking him or her for meeting with you. Do the same to your tour guide if you have his or her contact information. You should also give positive feedback on your visit, citing things about the college that impressed you.
FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Financial Aid is based solely on demonstrated financial need (your family's ability to pay for college expenses based on an analysis of income and assets) versus the cost of attending a college (tuition, fees, room, board, books, travel, and personal expenses). If there is a gap between the expected family contribution and the cost of attending the college, it is referred to as “demonstrated financial need.” Since college costs vary, the financial aid package is also likely to vary from college to college. The only constant is usually the amount a family is expected to contribute. To determine a family’s expected financial contribution (EFC) and the amount of demonstrated need, colleges require your parents to submit a financial statement called the FAFSA. This form is available online at https://fafsa.ed.gov/. Many colleges also require the CSS: Profile, also available online at https://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile. These forms should be completed by parents and submitted as soon after October 1 as possible. In cases where your parents are divorced or separated, most colleges will still require information from both parents.

Families may also use the Net Price Calculator found on every college’s Web site to determine eligibility for aid.

Need-based financial aid typically comes in the form of a “financial aid package” that includes grants (gift aid that does not have to be paid back), loans (money that has to be repaid), and student employment (money that is paid directly to you for work on campus). Grants can come from the federal and state governments, the college, and private endowments. Loans are available to students and parents from the federal government, private lending agencies or banks, or the college itself. Employment (or “work-study”) comes through the college as compensation for an assigned job. For more information about the types and sources of financial aid, visit http://www.nasfaa.org/

In contrast to financial aid, scholarships are not based on need but are awards made in recognition of academic merit and/or outstanding talents. Areas such as leadership, academics, music, and athletics are frequently among those singled out for scholarship awards. Students who will be applicants for financial aid/scholarship should indicate their intentions on their admission applications and obtain the required financial aid application forms in January of the application year. Applications for financial aid should be processed as early as possible after October 1 of the senior year. Consult each college’s admission and financial aid Web sites for specific instructions on how to apply for financial aid as an ED or EA candidate.

There are a number of websites and search engines that allow you to search for scholarship and grant funds. Of the ones we have previewed, we suggest you start with these:

http://www.nasfaa.org/
https://fafsa.ed.gov/
http://www.finaid.org/
https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/
https://www2.ed.gov/finaid/landing.jhtml
https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college?excmpid=VT-00019
www.studentaid.ed.gov
https://www.fastweb.com/
ADMISSION DECISIONS

Acceptance: When you receive an admission decision from a college, you should advise your counselor or Cheryl Ackner in the College Office at once. Make careful note of the reply date for responding to an acceptance. When you accept or decline an offer of admission, you should notify the college (and the College Office) as soon as possible, and certainly no later than May 1. You may enroll at only one college, and a final transcript will be sent in June only to the college at which you have enrolled. If you accept an offer of admission from a waiting list, you must withdraw in writing from the college at which you were earlier enrolled at the same time you enroll at the school that accepted you from its waiting list.

Deferral Under Early Decision: If your ED application is deferred, it will be reconsidered in the regular applicant pool, and you will receive a decision at the same time that regular applicants are notified. While it is possible that the outcome of an ED deferral could be a waiting list decision, most colleges try to make a decisive decision (accept or deny) and avoid putting you off yet one more time. If you are deferred under ED, the binding commitment is lifted, and you are free to consider other offers of admission.

Waiting List: If you have been placed on a college’s waiting list, you should discuss the advisability of staying on that waiting list with your college counselor and, if appropriate, with the college, itself, before signaling your intention to remain on the waiting list. In most cases, colleges will not move to their waiting lists until after responses to their initial offers of admission are received on or shortly after May 1. They normally complete waiting list action prior to June 1.

Denial: If you have been denied admission to a college, the decision is, unfortunately, final and not subject to appeal.

Deferring Enrollment: Most colleges will allow you to defer your enrollment for a year for the purpose of pursuing a special interest or experience. In general, you will be expected to honor your commitment to matriculate at the college at the end of the gap year and not use the year to apply to other colleges. Some schools will require that you request deferral (always in writing) at the time of enrollment (May 1); others will allow you to defer up to the beginning of the school year. In all cases, if you are receiving financial aid, you must reapply for aid for the following year by the appropriate deadlines.

Remember: You will be expected both by the college at which you enroll and by Emma Willard to keep up your academic work through the spring semester of your senior year. All college acceptances are contingent on the completion of your senior year at the same level on which the offer of admission was made. Colleges may rescind an offer of admission if your final transcript (sent by the College Office in June) reflects significant deterioration of academic performance. You and the College Office may also be obligated to notify your college of any significant disciplinary action during the spring semester.
SEVEN FACTORS COLLEGES CONSIDER
WHEN MAKING DECISIONS

The college admission process is a complex one, but here are some points that may be valuable to you and your parents as you try to unravel its mysteries.

1. The single most important credential in your application file is your academic record, particularly that of the junior year and the first half of the senior year. In many cases you can help your college chances by making a strong effort to improve during this time, thereby billing yourself as a student "on the way up." It is important to keep in mind, however, that college admission officers scrutinize your entire academic record. As they do, they will consider the strength of your academic program as well as your grades.

2. College admission examinations are important, even though an increasing number of colleges are making them an optional requirement. Catalogue and interview rhetoric notwithstanding, the vast majority of schools pay real attention to the SAT and Subject Test or ACT scores because they constitute one way of comparing students from a wide range of high schools and backgrounds. In addition, at highly competitive colleges the tests become an additional discriminator among many highly qualified candidates.

Each year about three million high school seniors apply to accredited colleges and universities in the country. Being in the top half of the group of 3 million students, while certainly good enough for the majority of colleges, is not good enough for the most competitive colleges. For example, the eight "Ivy League" colleges received a total of 253,457 applications for the class of 2018, and acceptances went to only 22,597 students (8.9 percent).

These 22,597 students are, in theory, among the most outstanding of the three million who take the SAT. They are said to represent more or less the top one half of one percent of high school seniors. When a highly selective university processes 20,000 to 30,000 applications, scores take on added importance because the great majority of applicants already offer excellent grades and excellent extracurricular activities. Scores thus become a tool to differentiate among similarly and highly qualified students. This is true to a greater or lesser degree at all competitive colleges that are not score-optimal.

While evidence indicates that it is not possible to "beat" the examination by "cramming," and while we do not want to suggest distorting curriculum by priming for one test, we also do not discourage those who seek extra help in particularly troublesome areas. For instance, it is inevitable that if you spend a week reviewing geometry, you will feel more comfortable on that section of the SAT, and perhaps that lessening of apprehension by itself is enough to warrant the extra time and effort. Free online and interactive SAT tutoring is available from The College Board, in partnership with Khan Academy. Emma Willard also contracts with a test preparation specialist to work with interested juniors preparing to take the May or June SAT.
3. Extracurricular activities both at school and at home play a role in the admission process. Colleges frequently state they look for the unusual student who will make a significant contribution to the college’s classrooms and community (the “angular” student who helps to make a “well-rounded class”). Because 70 percent to 80 percent of all the candidates at competitive colleges can handle the academic side of things, colleges are often looking for that extra dimension--musicians, editors, actors, photographers, athletes and others with a developed and usable talent. If you have superior ability in a specialized area, you can expect to receive careful consideration by the admission committee and possibly by the relevant department(s) at the college.

4. The application and supplemental essays are the most difficult aspects of applying to a college, yet they can be a critical factor in the admission decision. Colleges read student essays very carefully. Essays that are bland, overwrought, sloppy, poorly organized, poorly written, or pretentious can hurt even a strong candidate’s chances. Good essays bring an application to life through engaging topics, lively and lean writing, a strong and clear sense of voice, keen observation, and perceptive self-reflection.

5. For most colleges, recommendations are an essential part of each applicant's file. The exception to this rule may be large public universities where written recommendations are either not required or not given as much weight as they are at smaller, highly selective private colleges. Recommendations describe not only achievement and skills, but also character, integrity, and patterns of growth. In addition, teachers' reports play an important role in the selection process, particularly when the teachers know the student well and are willing to underscore in detail her potential in specific areas.

6. Children of alumni/ae receive careful consideration at most colleges. The obvious reason is that any institution benefits immeasurably by having some students who represent a continuing tradition of loyalty and understanding. A legacy (child of a graduate) or family tie does not guarantee admission, but a legacy is insured an extra "look." If there is such a thing as two equal candidates, the legacy will probably have the edge. Remember, however, that if you are a legacy, you must still meet high academic and personal standards, and you must compete against other legacies in the admission process.

7. At many colleges, on-campus interviews are very helpful to both to you and the college. They are essentially informative conversations in which both parties are trying to put their best foot forward and, at the same time, gain information that might not be otherwise available in the application or selection processes. For more information about interviews, see the section of this handbook on this topic.
TAKING A YEAR OFF

Not yet ready to settle down to life at a university or college? One option is to take a year off, which is known as a “gap year.” If you wish to take a year off, you should still apply to colleges during your senior year while you explore potential gap year activities. Most colleges will be interested in knowing what plans you have for your year off. There are numerous ways to spend a year off such as volunteer work, educational opportunities, and work options. You are encouraged to make an appointment with your college counselor or Ms. Mossop, the Director of Practicum & Independent Studies, to discuss gap year options.

READING: A GOOD USE OF YOUR SPARE TIME

It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of reading. What you read and the amount you read have implications throughout the college admission process. Reading well, reading sensitively, just reading—this is what college and university academic life is all about, even for students who pursue majors in the visual arts, in mathematics or in science. It is no accident that the National Merit Corporation weights verbal areas twice as heavily as math skills to determine the winners in their scholarship competition. By doing this for a program that is accepted by every accredited institution of higher learning in the country, the National Merit Corporation signals to you what colleges and universities think is most important.

On a more practical level, reading increases your vocabulary, your reading comprehension, and your facility to write well. Either on your application or in your interviews you will be asked to discuss recent books you have read. College admission people want to hear that your reading extends well beyond the assigned book list.

Whenever you are "bored," have "nothing to do," or want to "chill," think again. Reading a good book will help your peace of mind--and may very well aid you in the college admission process. If you have a choice between joining another club that meets one hour per week or reading one extra hour a week, consider the latter!
## College Enrollment by College, Class of 2018

- American University (2)
- University of Arizona
- Bard College
- Barnard College (2)
- Bates College
- Boston University
- Bowdoin College
- Brandeis University
- Brown University (2)
- Bryn Mawr College
- Bucknell University
- University of California, Berkeley
- Carleton College
- Carnegie Mellon University (3)
- Case Western Reserve University
- University of Chicago
- Colby College
- University of Colorado
- Columbia University (2)
- Cornell University (3)
- Dartmouth College
- Eckerd College
- Elon University (2)
- Franklin & Marshall College (2)
- Georgetown University
- Lehigh University
- University of Massachusetts, Lowell
- McGill University
- University of Michigan
- Middlebury College (2)
- University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- New York University (2)
- Northeastern University (6)
- Occidental College
- Olin College of Engineering
- Orange Coast College
- University of Pennsylvania (2)
- University of Pittsburgh
- Princeton University
- Providence College
- University of Puget Sound
- Queen Mary, University of London
- Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (2)
- University of Rochester
- Roger Williams University
- Skidmore College
- University of Southern California
- St. Lawrence University
- Stanford University
- SUNY Plattsburgh
- Susquehanna University
- Syracuse University
- The New School (2)
- Union College (2)
- Universidad Panamericana
- University of London
- University of Kent
- University of St. Andrews (2)
- University of Warwick
- Vassar College (2)
- University of Vermont
- University of Virginia (2)
- College of William & Mary
- Williams College
- Worcester Polytechnic Institute
- Yale-NUS College

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As of August 2018
COLLEGE: A GOOD MATCH, NOT A PRIZE

By Frank D. Sachs

I believe it began ten years ago in April with a phone call. The father of a student I had been counseling called me. The student had just been accepted to Dartmouth, Georgetown, Northwestern, and Stanford. I thought he was calling to thank me for my help and guidance. What occurred next shocked me. He began our conversation by saying, "What did you do wrong? Why didn't my child get into Harvard?" What should have been a joyous celebration suddenly turned ugly by focusing on what was not achieved.

More recently, a college admission director from a highly selective university shared this story with me. A parent called and confessed that he had opened his daughter's decision letter. He was calling to ask how an institution could reject his child when she so obviously wanted to attend the school. He went on to say that his child's room was filled with symbols of this particular college, including posters, sweatshirts, coffee mugs, and hats. How could he possibly tell his daughter she did not get in? Would they not reverse their decision now that they had this information? Certainly, they could understand that he could not tell his child she had failed to gain entry. My colleague first asked the father if the child had gained admission into any other schools. The parent replied, "Yes several other schools, but." My colleague advised, "When your child gets home, you must show that you love and accept her more now than ever. He added, "Reassure her that she is loved and don't cheapen what she has achieved by focusing on what she has not achieved." Sage advice from a seasoned professional.

Why am I sharing this? Because each spring, and again in the fall, college admission hysteria begins. That hysteria is heightened by the media's desire to sensationalize the college process. It is also exacerbated by American parents' obsession to obtain the perceived most valuable brand name when it comes to the education of their children. What has caused this dilemma faced by millions each year? The answers are plentiful and the responsibility is shared.

Last year, James Fallows wrote an insightful article in *Atlantic Monthly* shedding light on how many colleges and universities manipulate the early decision process to their advantage by admitting more students in order to look more selective overall. One result of this manipulation is that schools may look better in the "rankings," a highly suspect measure of excellence produced each fall by *U.S. News & World Report*. I have often asked myself if this issue offers sound advice or is just sensationalism that creates sales for the magazine akin to the Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue. (I think I know the answer.)

Last spring, a ray of hope appeared. Yale's President Richard Levin was quoted in the *New York Times* asserting that it would be "a good thing to abandon early decision admission programs at the nation's select colleges." Is Levin a prophet to be followed, or is he Moses crying out in the wilderness? Either way, he makes sense to me.

Today, early decision programs abound (over two hundred colleges and universities have them), and many students (more and more each year) avail themselves of this opportunity. Again, this trend begs the question, "Is early decision for the student's benefit or the college's?" Ostensibly, it is for the student, but more and more it appears to benefit the colleges that offer them. The end result is fewer spaces available during the regular decision round when the majority of students apply, a tactic which allows colleges to appear more selective. I admit that more and more of my students apply under early decision because they believe it will enhance their chances of getting into one of their favorite schools. (Who can argue with them, the facts support this conclusion.). Yet many of these same students willingly admit that they might
have applied to another school or two that they were, in fact, interested in attending had there not been such a clear advantage in applying early elsewhere. Certainly, for students, their families, their counselors, and many college admission directors, there is less joy in this process. Today, record numbers of students are applying to college (some fifteen million). With more on the way, as many as twenty million by 2010, the process is bound to get worse. Does the application process have to operate this way?

At my school, since that fateful phone call 10 years ago, we have taken a different approach. To some degree, I believe we have been successful. We believe and stress that "college should be a match to be made, not a prize to be won." No one college is a "perfect fit" for anyone. Rather, there are several wonderful matches for each student. We emphasize to our students that they should only apply to colleges which they would be pleased to attend. Parents and students need to realize that a "match made in academic heaven" might be the school they just discovered during their exploration. We stress that they should not to get too "hung up" on one school or think of college as a prize. Instead, they should establish and identify a unique set of criteria for selecting a college, then carefully research a range of schools that fit those criteria.

We explain to students that falling in love with only one college is a lot like dating exclusively. If that one school denies you admission, it is like having a steady beau break up with you. It means you will not be going to the prom. On the other hand, if a student has several good friends and half say no and half say yes, the student will still have someone to go to the dance with on Saturday night. The same principle holds when applying to more than one college. Our students and their parents understand this approach, and this helps promote a greater degree of satisfaction with their choices. But this can only be accomplished if students and their parents, supported by the school administration, are educated about and buy in to this approach.

I began by relating some painful experiences, but I conclude with some hopeful ones. Last year, two of our very top students found themselves deferred under Early Decision. Though they initially struggled, both eventually articulated that they were sure they would find great matches in the regular admission process. One parent even called and stated that he had told his child, "Your first choice school should now be your first choice from among those schools that accepted you."

Here is a parent who gets it, who understands that his child was the prize, not the college she would be attending. The other student and his parents agreed. Rather than shooting the messenger, they remained engaged in the process. Both students had numerous regular acceptances. One actually was accepted by his early decision school, but decided to attend another college. The other student became very excited about her new choices. For both students, rejection only meant new, interesting opportunities elsewhere. Recently a group of kindergartners toured our high school. Many wore sweatshirts sporting college logos. I stepped out of my office and asked them if any knew what the words on their shirts represented. None did. Was this a sad or happy event? Some may say it was a missed opportunity to set them on the road to college. Others might say it is a good thing. After all, there is plenty of time to worry about college. Let children enjoy their childhood.

I fall into the latter category. If a college is a match rather than a prize, then there is plenty of time to find the right fit. All too often, students and parents are romanced by a name rather than looking for the best matches. In the end, the best fit should be what the student determines, and there should be several fits, not just one. If we do our jobs as counselors and parents, we can trust students to make and assume ownership of their decisions. It then becomes our job to support their decisions and feel good about their accomplishments.
Frank D. Sachs is director of college counseling at The Blake School (MN). Sachs graduated with a bachelor's of science in education from the University of Missouri-Columbia, and earned a master's of science in guidance and counseling from Central Missouri State University. He is a past president of both the Minnesota Association of College Admission Counseling and the National Association of College Admission Counseling. This article appeared in the Spring, 2003 issue of the Journal of College Admission. Copyright, National Association of College Admission Counselors. Provided by ProQuest Information and Learning Company. All rights reserved.