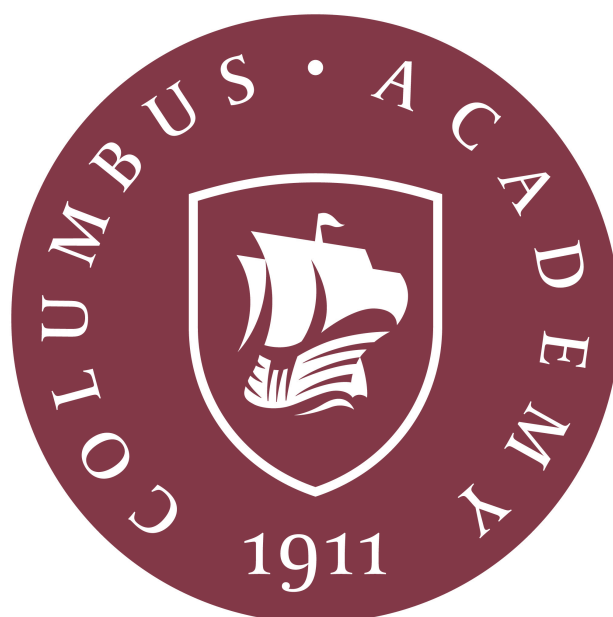


# **COLUMBUS ACADEMY**

## **COLLEGE COUNSELING HANDBOOK**



## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1. Introduction
2. A Note to Students and Parents
3. Understanding the College Search
4. Six Points to Keep in Mind
5. Using the College Counselors and Office Resources
6. What Are Colleges Really Looking for?
7. Visiting Colleges
8. What is Early Action? Rolling Admission? Early Decision?
9. What about Standardized Tests?
10. What Does a College Application Contain?
11. Preparing and Submitting Your Applications
12. Application Ethics
13. Financial Aid
14. Misleading Myths about College Admissions
15. Students with Learning Differences
16. Glossary of College Terms
17. Reference Books and Guides
18. Internet Resources
19. Conclusion

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The process of applying to colleges has changed dramatically in the last fifteen to twenty years. With heightened media attention on rising tuition costs and increased competition at the most selective schools, it is hard to know what to think or where to start. There are many guides to finding colleges and many manuals and books giving advice (much of it good) about how to go about finding and being admitted to colleges. There are also many guidebooks that describe colleges. The fact is that college admission has become a big-time business with major publishers investing heavily in preparing, publishing, and selling guidebooks, books of advice, manuals to improve students' essay writing, and everything else from how to work with a counselor to how to get ready to move onto campus.

In the midst of this, it is important for Columbus Academy students and their parents to know that help is available, that the school is heavily invested in helping its students investigate, apply to, and prepare for success in college.

This handbook will not attempt to cover every topic or even specify all procedures used in the college counseling office. The handbook and the college counselors together provide virtually all the resources students and their parents might need to negotiate their way through a successful college search.

Although this handbook is addressed to Columbus Academy's students (the "you" referred to on many pages), parents may find it useful in understanding how the process is designed and who is responsible for what in the process. Applying to college is, in a sense, an educational journey of its own. We hope this handbook will serve as a guide to help you along that journey to a successful outcome. Along the way, you might experience a type of roller coaster of expectations, highs, lows, questions, stumbling blocks, and successes. We hope you take the journey seriously, and although it may seem a daunting task at times, the system **does** work and students **do get accepted** at colleges, and they **do have success** in college and in the life that follows.

## 2. A NOTE TO STUDENTS AND PARENTS

### STUDENTS

*You are the one in the driver's seat.* Though you will get input from parents, faculty, friends, relatives and admission officers, remember that the person going to the college in the end is you. You are not going through all this to please other people, so make decisions that feel good and make sense to you.

*Keep an open mind and be an informed consumer.* Do not dismiss a college just because you have never heard of it. Do not jump to conclusions based on any single source of information. Do not be unduly influenced by a person who loves or hates a school, the number of stars next to a name in a guidebook, or a particularly enthusiastic, good-looking, or funny tour guide.

*Do your research.* Use all the resources available to gather information and impressions and process the information wisely before making definitive choices.

*Do not let the college process affect your self-esteem.* The admission process is not an assessment of your self-worth. Admission officers admit and deny applications (pieces of paper), not applicants.

*Focus on your needs.* Remember that this is an individualized process. This is not a competition between you and your friends. What may be appropriate for your friends may not be right for you and vice versa. Keep a focus on what this process is all about: finding the right match for you.

*Visit colleges and pay attention to your gut instincts and feelings.* There is no formula for finding the right school. Often it comes down to the right feeling or chemistry with a school. Even if you do not want to go on an extensive trip, there are several colleges in the Columbus area that can give you a “flavor” of a small liberal arts college, a large public school, etc.

*Initiate conversations about the process with your parents.* The more you share with them on your own terms (when you want and where you want), the more they will feel included in the process and the less they will nag you about it (when and where you do not want). A terrific piece of advice implemented successfully by several Columbus Academy families is to limit conversations about college to one day per week.

*Do not get sucked into the rumor mill.* It is most often inaccurate. When in doubt, check with us!

You are not alone in this process. Keep in touch with your college counselor. We are here to help guide you through the process.

## PARENTS

Let us begin by acknowledging that the entire process of choosing colleges, applying, being admitted, and all that goes with it is difficult. It can try everyone's patience and good humor. It can sometimes strain the relationship between parents and students. Parents sometimes find themselves frustrated and confused, wondering what they should be doing to help their children. It is difficult to know when to step back and let the student take the next step on his or her own terms. There are times when parents have the feeling that their children's decisions are not based on the best available information or logic. Students sometimes feel that way about their parents' decisions as well.

At Columbus Academy, we believe that parents are major partners in the process of choosing, applying, and going to college. We like to explain it like driver's education. Your child is the driver, we are the driver's education teacher, and you are in the backseat reading directions. Although your student may not acknowledge it, your opinion matters (and there are studies which show that it does). That is why we encourage parent participation in the college selection and application process.

Having said that, it is necessary to be reminded that going to college is about the student, not about the parents. Stepping back from one's own needs, concerns, anxieties, and hopes and looking at what is best for the student are paramount. Not everyone is a scholar; not everyone ought to go to a highly competitive college; not everybody can play college sports; not everyone thrives under pressure and competition. What really is best for your student?

We all want our children to do well, even if we have some trouble explaining exactly what that means. We all want our children to achieve at the top of their abilities. The trick here is to recognize that it is their needs that should be met, not ours.

Because parents are important in their children's lives (even though the children might not admit it), how parents respond is significant. The off-handed remark disparaging a college suggestion often leads a student to the conclusion that the college is not worth investigating, and it drops immediately from the student's list even if it represents a viable choice.

The college counselors' top priority is to work with students. Though they place most of the responsibility on the student, our program and procedures are carefully designed to provide checkpoints along the way that help students meet their deadlines and make informed choices.

Your opinions, questions, and support are critical to the success of the process. If you have questions or want to talk about how things are going, please call us.

One of the major parts of the process is the list of colleges that the college counselors prepare with the student in the junior year. It is important to

understand that the list should not be seen as containing the implicit suggestion that the student should go to one of the colleges on the list. It is, rather, a place to start. As students research the colleges on the list, they can begin to refine their interests and choices. There will be a variety of schools on the list. Some of them are there to test boundaries and some are there because you or your student wants them to be on the list.

How parents react to the list is important. Dismissing colleges on the list simply as unacceptable is not helpful. Indeed, it can be damaging to the process. Our suggestions are not made without forethought. They are made on the basis of years of experience with colleges and students and with the idea that by investigating different colleges, students will become more aware of their own criteria and thereby make good, informed decisions. If you have questions or do not understand our suggestions, please tell us so we can discuss the reason for the suggestion. Colleges continually change and few colleges are the same as they were twenty-five or even five years ago.

Despite the preparation a Columbus Academy education provides and all of our combined efforts, some students will not be admitted to the college of their choice. When a college admits 6% of its applicants and when over 80% of those applicants are in the top 10% of their graduating classes, it is very likely that even some of the very best students will not gain admission. If your student is one of them, that does not represent failure; it represents the quality and quantity of all of the other applicants out there. Even the strongest applicants must use care and spread their risk by applying to colleges with a range of selectivity.

It is important to remember that students must be seen for whom they are and not where they go to college. For most students, the college search and application process is the first time they may be denied in a system they cannot control. This is a difficult reality to deal with and to absorb. We all should strive not to add to the burden by making students feel that they have failed themselves or us. Many parents ask if there are guides or books about the process we recommend. While there are many fine reference works available, some of the ones we routinely recommend are *The College Admissions Mystique* by Bill Mayher (New York, Noonday Press, 1999), *Colleges That Change Lives* by Lauren Pope (New York, Penguin, various dates), and *The Fiske Guide to Colleges* (Illinois, Sourcebooks, Inc., many editions). The New York Times also has a great blog called “The Choice” which we encourage you to follow.

We look forward to working with you and with your son or daughter. The process is a learning experience, and we thank you in advance for your support.

### 3. UNDERSTANDING THE COLLEGE SEARCH

The college search process begins with self-assessment; until you have spent time thinking about your own needs (academic, social, emotional, etc.) and your own strengths/weaknesses, you are not ready to answer the question about whether a school is a good fit or not. That is why we must understand that, in spite of all the guidebooks, each of which presents its own system, there is no one ideal system and method. Before laying out an ideal planning calendar, it is important to remember that each college search is as unique as the student who is going through it. But there are better and worse approaches and there are more and less efficient ways to proceed. That is why so many of the guidebooks have college planning and search calendars that essentially are variations of each other.

The college counseling process at Columbus Academy begins with the student's selection of classes for each academic year. The more formal elements of the program are mentioned below; however, counseling is available throughout the Upper School years. See the College Counseling document *Suggested Timeline for the College Process* for additional details.

#### **GRADE 9**

##### **October**

- All students take the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT) for practice.

##### **March**

- Student/Parent College Counseling Preview Night for Grade 9 and 10 families to discuss counseling program

##### **May**

- Some students take SAT Subject Tests and/or Advanced Placement (AP) exams.

##### **June**

- Some students take SAT Subject Tests.

#### **GRADE 10**

##### **October**

- All students take the PSAT for practice and counseling purposes.

##### **March**

- Student/Parent College Counseling Preview Night for Grade 9 and 10 families to discuss counseling program

##### **May**

- Some students take SAT Subject Tests and/or AP exams.

## **June**

- Some students take SAT Subject Tests.
- Optional visits to local colleges/universities with college counselors.

## **GRADE 11**

### **August**

- Fill in the dates for the PSAT, SAT Reasoning Test, SAT Subject Tests, ACT, and AP exams on your personal calendars. These test dates appear on the test agencies' web pages. Bookmark [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) and [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) on your favorites' list.

### **September–November**

- Students may attend group information sessions led by visiting college representatives. Most current and up-to-date list is always available on Naviance Family Connections.

### **October**

- All students take the PSAT, which also serves as the qualifying test for National Merit and Achievement Scholarship competitions.

### **November**

- College Counseling Night for Grade 11 families to discuss the counseling process in great detail. This is the big kick-off event and the formal beginning of the college process.

### **Winter/Spring**

- Juniors are encouraged to take the SAT and ACT with Writing.
- All juniors are also enrolled in college counseling class and meet individually with college counselors.

### **February–May**

- Individual meetings continue with students and parents to explore college possibilities based on the student's academic profile, extracurricular achievements, and other interests. Plan for college visits over spring break, if possible.

### **May**

- Many students take SAT Subject Tests and AP exams.

### **June**

- Many students take SAT Subject Tests, the SAT Reasoning Test, and/or the ACT with Writing.

### **Summer**

- Continue college visits and keep accurate notes. Narrow list of prospective colleges, preferably to between six and eight, including



colleges in each category of admissibility (Reach, Possibility, Sleep at Night). Write your college essay in July and e-mail it to your counselor.

## **GRADE 12**

### **All Year**

- Keep your grades up! *Remember that college officials review final transcripts.*
- Inform your college counselor of college decisions.

### **August**

- College Application Workshops at Academy– complete the Common Application with your college counselors in the room.
- Parent Night, late August, for Grade 12 families.

### **Fall**

- Fill out and submit Transcript Release Form (requires parent signature)
- Meet with your college counselor to review progress, check strategy, finalize your college list, and decide on teacher references.
- Formalize the request of teacher references (sheet with their signature).
- Attend college information programs (fairs and regional college-sponsored receptions) and meetings (“school visits”) held at Columbus Academy with college representatives.
- Register for and take the SAT Reasoning Test, SAT Subject Tests, and/or ACT with Writing.
- Attend the Financing College Night. Obtain information on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) and the CSS PROFILE form, if needed, at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com). Complete the FAFSA4caster at [www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov).

### **By October 1**

- Make decisions about whether you will be applying to any college under the Early Decision (ED) or Early Action (EA) plan and finish the applications. Release test scores for ED/EA colleges no later than October 1. As soon as you know, formally notify your college counselor of your decision to apply ED/EA with due dates.
- If you are still working on an essay, finalize this with your counselor.
- Begin preparation of Regular Decision applications to colleges.

### **November**

- Finalize your list of colleges and fill out and submit Transcript Release Form.
- Release test scores to Regular Decision colleges as soon as possible. Allow 3-4 weeks for official scores to reach colleges from College Board and/or ACT.

**December**

- Final date (December 1) to request that transcripts and Secondary School Report forms be sent to all colleges with application due dates earlier than January 15.
- If applying for financial aid you can find the FAFSA form on the web.

**January**

- Request that transcripts and Secondary School Report forms be sent to all colleges with application due dates due after January 15.
- If applying for financial aid, complete and submit the FAFSA and CSS PROFILE.

**April**

- Send a deposit to the college of your choice prior to May 1 (Candidate's Reply Date). You may only deposit at one college. Double depositing is strictly forbidden.
- Inform your teacher recommenders of your college choice and thank them for their support.

**May**

- Take AP exams as appropriate.
- Request that a final transcript be sent to the college that you will be attending.

**NOTES ABOUT THE JUNIOR YEAR**

College admissions officers are quick to tell you that the single most important part of a student's application is the transcript. Now is the time to pay particular attention to it. The junior year contains two of the most important semesters in your high school career. While a good junior year will not erase problems you may have had earlier, colleges pay serious attention to trends in your grades and this is the time to see improvement if it is going to happen. At the same time, if you have a strong record in 9th and 10th grade, you need to continue it. When college admissions officers look at a transcript, they look for transcript quality. There are three parts to transcript quality: breadth, depth, and performance.

**Breadth**

This is shown through a combination of continued study in the basic areas of English, history, mathematics, science, and foreign language. Students handicap themselves by focusing only on minimum graduation requirements – competitive colleges are interested in students who maximize their academic studies.

This does not mean that students should not take electives in courses that focus on their interests, whether in math, science, the arts, or computer science. Conversely, colleges expect students to demonstrate interest in particular subject areas through such electives.

**Depth**

Colleges want to see that students have challenged themselves in some area(s) and have taken advantage of opportunities to challenge themselves in Honors and Advanced courses.

**Performance**

In most cases, higher grades are preferable to lower grades. It is important to realize that a lower grade does not necessarily keep a student out of a college, but if a student's grades are average within the school or if there is a downward trend, that will be taken seriously by colleges. Upward trends, on the other hand, are noted, and often, slow starts can be overcome by improvement over time.

Students should consult with their advisors and the college counselors about their course selections for their junior and senior years. Course choices are important and students should seek guidance about balancing the ideal pre-college curriculum and following their own interests.

It is important for students to continue activities outside of class, whether that involves sports, music, theater, school clubs, working, service, or any other activity you enjoy and from which you receive satisfaction. Remember, an in-depth focus on a limited number of things is better than a scatter-shot attempt to participate in everything. Colleges want to see what interests you and how deep that interest goes, so sticking with something is important, as is attaining positions of leadership. Consider some kind of summer experience, perhaps something different from the experiences of previous summers. An internship, an extended community service, a summer program, or something that shows initiative on your part is an indication to a college that you are a person with interests and the initiative to pursue them.

## NOTES ABOUT THE SENIOR YEAR

Seniors are beginning the most important year of their careers at Columbus Academy. Do not make the mistake of thinking it is over except for the application process. Quite the contrary, this is the time when you must give your best effort to school and to balancing school demands with all the other demands that choosing and applying to college will place on your time, energy, and patience. First-quarter grades are often requested from colleges, and Academy will send first semester grades to every college on your application list.

Even after you have been accepted, remember that offers of admission are contingent on completing the year at about the level you were when you applied. If you have been wait-listed, a drop in performance between the time when you applied and the time the college goes to its wait-list can be fatal.

What about your potential major? Do you really know what you want to study? Here are two interesting facts:

1. More than half of the students who enter college do so with an undeclared or undecided major.
2. Most (over 75%) students who enroll in college will change their major – and many more than once.

So, if you do not know what you want to study, do not be afraid to say so – and do not pick a major just because someone says you should be interested in it. If you really are interested in a specific major such as electrical engineering or computer science or business, use the catalogs of the colleges you are considering to find out exactly what is required for that major. You may be surprised. You may discover that you really do not want the major you thought you did or you may discover that colleges you are considering have very different requirements for completing the same major. You can find this information in college catalogs in the College Counseling Office and online at the colleges' web sites. Look under the heading "Academic Program."

## **4. SIX POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND**

There are lots of things to consider and lots of things to do when investigating, applying to, and choosing a college. It is easy to get lost in all the questions, problems, decisions, procedures, and pressure to get into just the right college. One way of not getting overwhelmed is to keep your mind clear about some of the larger things which can be a type of guidepost as you deal with classes, activities, applications, essays, interviews, campus visits, publications, telemarketing, e-mail and direct mail, and parental concerns. Here are six major points to keep in mind. Remember them; they will help you stay on course.

### **1. KEEP ASKING YOURSELF, “WHAT DO I WANT FROM COLLEGE?”**

- Why am I going?                      - Whom do I need to please?
- Do I know what I want?       - Does this college offer what I want?
- Do your homework. What credentials does the average freshman have?
- Do I meet or exceed requirements and average GPA/SAT for acceptance?

### **2. QUALITY VERSUS SELECTIVITY**

There is a big difference between Quality and Selectivity. Selectivity is the ratio of applications to students admitted. Some lesser-known colleges have selectivity ratios similar to the better-known colleges, and they may actually be the better choice or “fit” for a particular student. Just because a college has more applicants than spaces available does not mean that it is the best college for you. Loren Pope, author of Colleges that Change Lives, is famous for saying, “Judging a college by the grades and scores of the freshmen it selects is like judging the quality of a hospital by the health of the patients it admits. What happens during the stay is what counts.”

Selectivity is not the only mark of quality. Many selective colleges, for instance, have large classes and use teaching assistants (normally graduate students, some in their first year of graduate school) to conduct the discussion sessions of large lecture classes. Also, do not be fooled by low student-to-faculty ratios. It is much more important to know the average class size of Freshman English, Introduction to Psychology, and Biology or Chemistry. High rankings and low student-to-faculty ratios do not ensure quality of instruction or availability of faculty or even that classes are small enough for you to get your questions answered.

### **3. DO YOUR BEST WORK IN SCHOOL.**

The single most important thing in your application is your transcript. Work with the college counselors and your advisor to develop a curriculum plan that will help you to explore and to show off your strengths. Colleges want students who have challenged themselves and who have succeeded.

### **4. UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU BRING TO THE COLLEGE.**

You are all special, with different interests, backgrounds and experiences. Each one of the 1.3 million students who will apply to college next year is special, too.

#### **5. CONCENTRATE ON WHAT IS REALLY IMPORTANT IN LIFE.**

Do not worry about trying to prove your superiority by doing everything. Colleges want students who are:

- Interested in something
- Good at something
- Have a passion and follow it
- Involved and engaging people

#### **6. PRESENT YOURSELF APPROPRIATELY.**

Set up an email address that is appropriate for use when contacting colleges (we suggest your Academy account). Make it a part of your daily routine to check for email at that address until you enter college. Many colleges continue to send important information to their students in the summer after senior year before they enroll at the college with housing and orientation information.

- Demonstrate interest (request information, meet with rep when the visit Columbus Academy in the fall or at a college fair)
- Visit the campus, if possible
- Does your application reflect well on you or is it completed with a minimum of care and effort? Did you hit submit 2 minutes before it was due?
- What does your essay tell people about you?
- Have you followed the application guidelines and instructions?
- Don't treat your safety school like a safety.

## **5. USING THE COLLEGE COUNSELORS AND OFFICE RESOURCES**

The college counselors are here to help students (and parents) through the maze of finding the right college, getting through the application process, and selecting the college that meets your goals. To do this, students and parents are encouraged to think of the college counselors as a resource, consultants who can help you through the process in a number of ways:

- Helping students clarify what they are looking for when investigating colleges
- Helping students understand how to search for a college
- Providing suggestions about possible schools to investigate
- Helping students understand and complete the application process
- Helping students with essays, applications, and preparing for campus visits
- Preparing the school recommendation which accompanies applications
- Reviewing curricular and course decisions with students to help them be as well-prepared and as competitive as possible
- Arranging for college representatives to visit Columbus Academy to meet with students
- Providing information for financial aid and scholarship searches
- Suggesting, urging, explaining, and supporting

The college counselors consider each student an individual with a particular set of goals, needs, strengths, desires, and wishes. The college counseling program is designed to help students arrive at their goals as much as is possible. While no one can guarantee a particular outcome, the goal of the program is to help students make good selections, to go through the process, and to have choices.

The actual college search and application process begins with junior parents and students completing their respective college information forms, which will be distributed before winter break. They should be returned promptly when we return from break in January. When they are received, we will begin to meet with individual students and use the information to begin our conversations.

During that meeting, goals and aspirations are reviewed, general criteria and particular colleges are discussed, standardized test results are reviewed, the student's transcript is reviewed, special circumstances are discussed, and a general plan for conducting an effective college search is outlined.

At that time, the college counselors normally prepare with the student a list of colleges that meet the search criteria agreed on at that meeting. The list is

refined over subsequent meetings and we also provide suggestions on how to do the necessary research on those colleges.

As soon as the student has met with his or her college counselor, parents are encouraged to make appointments to talk with the counselor about any questions on the college process.

The Columbus Academy library the College Counseling Office have a wide array of materials available to help you learn more about colleges in general and about your college choices in particular. The college counselors are available to help students learn to use the resources for their research.

Representatives from college admissions offices visit campus, most often during their primary travel season, September through mid-November. Students are encouraged to meet with visiting colleges, usually in the College Counseling Conference Room.



## COLLEGE RESEARCH WORKSHEET

College Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Possible Areas of Study: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### GENERAL INFORMATION:

How many undergraduates are enrolled? \_\_\_\_\_

How many graduate students? \_\_\_\_\_

What city/town and state is the college located in?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What is the population of that city/town? \_\_\_\_\_

Where is the nearest airport, and how far is it from campus?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of enrolled students is in-state? \_\_\_\_\_ Out of state? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the male-to-female ratio? \_\_\_\_\_% male \_\_\_\_\_% female

### STUDENT LIFE:

If interested in playing a sport, is that sport available here? \_\_\_\_\_

Is the sport offered at a level at which you could participate? \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of students is in fraternities or sororities? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there a formal community service organization on campus? \_\_\_\_\_

Find and list three student activities you might like to join:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is on-campus housing available? \_\_\_\_\_ For how many years? \_\_\_\_\_

What support systems are offered on campus? (Tutoring, writing center,  
learning support, health services, etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### ACADEMICS:

Which of your possible areas of study are offered as degree programs?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What is the average class size? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the average size of a large lecture class? \_\_\_\_\_

Who teaches the classes? (Circle appropriate response)

Faculty

Teaching Assistants

Some combination of both

Is an honors program offered? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the requirements for selection?

---

#### ADMISSIONS:

What is the published admit profile?

Average GPA: \_\_\_\_\_ SAT range: \_\_\_\_\_ ACT range: \_\_\_\_\_

In Naviance Family Connection, click on “college lookup” and enter your college name. Click on “school stats.” What is the average profile of admitted students from Columbus Academy?

Average GPA: \_\_\_\_\_ Average SAT: \_\_\_\_\_ Average ACT: \_\_\_\_\_

Are SAT Subject Tests required for admission? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

In what subjects? \_\_\_\_\_

Do they offer credit for AP Exams? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what is the lowest score for which credit is given? \_\_\_\_\_

#### FINANCIAL AID:

What is the full cost of attendance? \_\_\_\_\_

Are any of the following financial aid forms required? (Circle appropriate response)

FAFSA

CSS/PROFILE

College’s own form

Must you submit your application by a certain deadline to be considered for merit scholarships? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, what is that deadline? \_\_\_\_\_

Are students required to be nominated or complete additional application materials in order to be considered for scholarships, or are they automatically considered based on their application?

---

#### STUDENT FEEDBACK:

What do current students generally comment on when interviewed about the campus?

---

---

## 6. WHAT ARE COLLEGES REALLY LOOKING FOR?

It used to be simple: Everyone knew that colleges were looking for good students who were well-rounded people and who may have had a special talent the college was looking for.

It is not simple any more. Colleges, selective colleges in particular, do not admit students; they build classes. Admissions officers are increasingly interested in helping to build a community of students who make up the college. Therefore, they look for students who bring a variety of gifts and interests and experiences to their institutions. Most selective colleges could fill their freshman classes with straight-A students and still not admit everyone who is qualified. (Some of the most selective colleges and universities admit only 6-9% of applicants.) In this situation, admissions officers look for students who not only have great academic credentials but also will make the college a more interesting place. This is what it means to say that colleges do not just admit students; they build classes.

Primarily, colleges are looking for diversity. Diversity does not mean a single emphasis on ethnicity but refers to a wide variety of factors students bring with them: academic interests, geographical balance, ethnicity, economic backgrounds, religious beliefs, special interests (from sports to arts to website creation), lifestyles (city, country, suburban), place of origin (international students), political interests and beliefs, accomplishments, commitment to community service, and many other categories and factors. The reason colleges value diversity is that they believe (and research suggests the belief is well-founded) that a diverse community provides greater opportunities for all students, including the opportunity to expand their awareness and interests and to learn from each other.

In general, all admission officers look for students from the following seven primary categories, whether these are stated explicitly or not:

1. **The Academic Star:** No matter what else an admission officer is looking for, an outstanding student always has an edge. Faculty like academic stars, especially if the student has a demonstrated passion for a particular subject.
2. **Special Talents:** Special talents come in a lot of forms. Athletic talent may come to mind first, but equally important are other talents such as excellence in music or drama or visual arts. This category also might include students with particular commitments to community building and service.
3. **Legacies:** It is still true that being the son or daughter of an alumnus or alumna can be important, especially if the college is a private college. Significant family involvement with the school's fund-raising activities will probably be noticed and appreciated as well.

4. **Special Backgrounds:** Most colleges pay attention to under-represented minorities and students from different cultural, ethnic, economic, and religious backgrounds. They also pay attention to applications from students from other areas of the world.
5. **Regional Diversity:** Most colleges are interested in enrolling students who are not from their own backyards. Thus, being from Ohio could be a plus at a college in Oregon or Maine.
6. **Academic Interests:** College admissions committees are asked to fill classrooms. Depending on the size and relative strength of the applicant pool in engineering, chemistry, or classics, a student's academic interest may provide a boost in any given year.
7. There is a seventh, almost overlooked, category as well. It represents **good students who bring an interest in life and engagement in activities to campus**. Since most students fall into that category, it may be the most competitive. Nonetheless, it does make up the largest category of students on campus.

## **7. VISITING COLLEGES: CAMPUS VISITS AND INTERVIEWS**

### **When to visit?**

It is customary to visit colleges during the last half of your junior year, the following summer and during the first half of your senior year. Since the real purpose of visiting is to learn enough about the college to know whether or not it is right for you, a visit when school is in session is desirable. This might mean missing some school, but careful planning should minimize any issues.

- Juniors can use spring break to visit colleges.
- Seniors can use Columbus Day and other fall holidays to visit colleges.
- Seniors also are permitted to miss school for college days, but they are responsible for all work missed and they must provide a written request from their parents to be absent from school and complete the required paperwork at least two academic days before they visit.

What about summer visits? Even though you may not see the college as it really is when it is alive with students, it still is better to visit during the summer than not to visit at all. You can always return in the fall or winter to talk with students and/or to stay overnight.

One major piece of advice: Do not enroll at any college if you have not visited it. While there are occasionally exceptions to this, it is vastly preferable to spend the time and money to visit before making a commitment so significant. It is very difficult to know that a college is right for you if you have not seen it in person.

Colleges have different procedures about visiting. Some (mostly smaller colleges) offer personal interviews, some only use alumni to do regional interviews. Some give large group tours at specific times during the day with general information sessions before or after the tour. Some give tours as often as needed. Check the college's website to be sure of its procedures call the admissions office and ask what they suggest for a junior who is visiting campus. It is a good idea to schedule at least 2-3 weeks in advance to be sure of the college's procedures and to register if there is a limit on the number of visitors the college can handle on a given day. It is not a good idea to just show up. You might be disappointed.

### **What kinds of colleges should I visit?**

Select a group of 8-10 that represents a variety of sizes and types, i.e. large/small, private/public, expensive/reasonable, liberal arts/pre-professional, city/suburban/rural, etc. Doing this will reveal the different kinds of experiences and environments that are available to you. You may wish to target a geographic area (i.e. northeast, west coast, southern states) and plan your visits accordingly.

**Where do I stay on the trip?**

Reasonably priced hotels are located near most colleges or college towns. You might ask the college admission office for information on places to stay. Some hotels offer discounts for families who are visiting the college.

**How and when should I contact the colleges?**

Once you know how many days you will need and which dates you would like to visit, set up an appointment online or call in advance to let them know when you will be arriving. Sign up for information sessions, tours, and interviews if they are offered.

**What do I need to take on the tour?**

Keeping in mind that the main objective is to learn about the college, take a notebook in case you want to record your thoughts, impressions, or certain facts that are not in the materials they give you.

**What should I wear?**

Wear what is comfortable, casual, neat, clean, and takes into consideration the climate you will encounter (i.e. heat, cold, humidity, sun, rain, air conditioning, etc.). The Academy dress code is probably your best option. Leave your flip-flops and baseball hats at home. Leave your cell phone in your pocket.

**How should I prepare before each visit?**

First, make sure you know the basic facts about the college – the population of undergraduates, that it has majors and activities you are interested in, and other facts of a general nature. The more you know about the place, the more impressed an admissions officer will be with your level of knowledge and interest. Second, make sure that you know in advance how to get to the admissions office, where you will park, and how much time you will need to get to the receptionist's desk by the appointed hour. Punctuality is important in the college admissions process.

**What usually happens while on campus?**

Because colleges, especially large universities, often deal with vast numbers of visitors, they frequently conduct information sessions followed by student-led tours. Tours typically include visits to classrooms, dorms, cafeterias, athletic and fine arts performance facilities, libraries, and sites of interest peculiar to the college. If possible, spend time in the student center, observe and/or talk with current students, and collect a campus newspaper (to get a sense of the “hot” issues on campus). At smaller colleges, a personal interview may be available. Interviews can be evaluative (a write-up will be included in your file) or informative. We will do practice interview in College Counseling class during junior year and also provide a Campus Visit Checklist.

**If I interview on campus, what do I need to know or have with me?**

The goal of an interview is for the admissions officer to get to know you and for you to have your questions answered about the college. We will prepare résumés in College Counseling class, which will be helpful to bring to colleges. They provide a quick profile of who you are and of your potential admissibility to the college.

**What kinds of questions might I be asked?**

You might be asked what classes you like best, what books you have read recently, what kind of school you attend, what you do for fun, what service activities you have done, what your personal goals are, why you are interested in the particular college, what activities you would like to pursue in college, and what other colleges you are thinking of visiting. Be yourself, answer questions honestly, and expect honest answers to your questions. You do not want to end up someplace that is not a good fit for you, so your answers, and the ones you receive in return, will be important in helping you assess your fit at each college. Again, we will practice interviewing in College Counseling class.

**What questions should I ask?**

Do not ask questions that are available in any college guide (e.g. how many students attend here? Do you have a Biology major? How much does it cost to attend?). More importantly, ask questions like these: How accessible are the professors? Will any of my classes be taught by teaching assistants or graduate students; and if so, which ones? Is science lab equipment available for all undergraduate students or just those in certain majors and years? What do students regard as the biggest problems on campus? How does the college handle issues of underage drinking? What services does the career office provide when it comes time to enter the job market? Is it best to bring my own computer or are special discounts offered to incoming freshmen? How are roommates assigned? Will I need a car on campus and/or what is the policy on freshmen owning cars? Are students required to live on campus for a certain number of years? Are freshmen guaranteed on-campus housing? What are the hours the library is open?

**What else should I look for while on campus?**

Your impressions of each college will be shaped by what is happening when you happen to be there. For example, renovation and construction frequently occur during the summer, and students may not be around. The weather on a particular day may be either beautiful or horrible, but that may not be representative of the climate generally. Your particular tour guide will also influence how you perceive the school. Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

- ✓ Do the dorm rooms and halls look well kept or beat up?
- ✓ Are there plans to upgrade any facilities?
- ✓ What do students say about the food?
- ✓ Are there other options for getting meals on campus when the cafeteria is closed?

- ✓ Are there safety issues on campus?
- ✓ What is the college's security record?
- ✓ Is there a student escort system?
- ✓ Do students use key cards to enter dorms and other buildings?
- ✓ How far is it from the dorms to classrooms, the student union, and other buildings you are likely to frequent?
- ✓ Do trains come through or near the campus?

### **How should I follow up after the visits?**

It is important to send a brief note or e-mail to the admissions office (or a specific admission officer, if you met with one), thanking them for their time and attention. You might want to comment on one or two positive things you especially enjoyed or noticed while at each college. Following up this way is a courtesy that is appreciated and will put you in a good light if you decide to apply there later.



## 8. WHAT IS EARLY ACTION? ROLLING ADMISSION? EARLY DECISION?

Many colleges offer the opportunity to apply before the regular deadline. Consult individual college application materials to find out about specific plans and deadlines. However, here is a brief overview:

**Early Action (EA), Restrictive Early Action (REA), Early Notification, and Priority** plans require neither a commitment nor the withdrawal of other applications. These plans offer the opportunity to apply before regular decision and to hear before regular decision applicants. If admitted, you do not have to respond until May 1. Students apply on a given date before the normal application date and receive a quick decision (usually within four to eight weeks). However, it is important to note that early action plans vary widely in terms of admissions selectivity. For some colleges, this is their most competitive round of admissions. At other places, applying early action gives students a boost.

**Rolling Admissions** plans allow students to apply by a certain date and colleges make admissions decisions as the applications arrive.

**Early Decision (ED)** is a program which allows a student to apply on a given date before the Regular Decision deadline date and receive a quick decision (usually within four to eight weeks). Unlike Early Action programs, Early Decision programs are binding. What this means is that students who apply ED are making a commitment to that college, and if accepted, they will enroll. Since this is a commitment, only one ED application can be active. *The only exception to accepting admission under Early Decision is financial aid complications.* Early Decision can offer a boost in the admissions process and admissions officers usually are very candid about this issue. However, ED is not a means of boosting your chances if you are not particularly competitive at that college. There is a great deal of pressure to go Early Decision, especially at a very selective college or university. Our advice is simple: Think about Early Decision only if you would really like to go to that college. Do not apply using the Early Decision option unless you are totally prepared to go to that college since it is binding.

## 9. WHAT ABOUT STANDARDIZED TESTS?

Standardized tests are an important part of the college admissions process. The exact weight is somewhat difficult to determine. Some colleges, including selective colleges such as Bates and Wake Forest, no longer require them. (For a complete listing of test optional schools visit [www.fairtest.org](http://www.fairtest.org)). For the vast majority of colleges, however, tests are still required and play an integral part in the admissions process.

Colleges and universities use tests differently. Some very large universities use test scores in combination with other statistical factors to create an admissions index. At colleges that use that system (largely because they have too many applications to deal with individually), tests may count more heavily than at colleges which use tests as a way of validating other information.

How important are scores? If a college asks for them, they will use them. But colleges do use them differently. Almost all college admissions officers will say that scores are used to verify what the transcript says or to help them spot an over-achiever or an under-achiever. In general, the larger the school, the more mechanical the process is and the more important the scores. At large universities that do not request letters of reference or essays, scores certainly are important.

At very selective schools, scores play a different role, usually confirming what the application, essay, transcript, and recommendations tell the admissions officer. To quote the Dean of Admissions of one Ivy League university, “High scores alone won’t get you in but low scores are a flag we cannot ignore.”

### DEFINITION OF COMMON STANDARDIZED TEST TERMS

#### **PSAT**

The PSAT is a mini-SAT Reasoning Test and takes 2 hours and 10 minutes. **This is not a test that will be used for college admission.** It consists of two 25-minute critical reading sections, two 25-minute math sections and a 30-minute writing skills section. The PSAT mirrors the SAT Reasoning Test with some differences (i.e. no essay).

Each section of the PSAT is scored on a scale of 20-80. Colleges may purchase the names and addresses of students based upon certain information that the student has provided (scores in certain ranges, major interest, gender) so they can begin the process of identifying potential applicants and mail information to those students. If a student does not want to participate in that process, permission does not have to be given. It makes no difference in calculating your scores.

The PSAT is taken in October of a student's freshman, sophomore, and junior years. The PSAT is used as the qualifying exam for the National Merit Scholarship program in the student's junior year. Taking the test in ninth and tenth grade provides an opportunity to practice taking standardized tests and become familiar with the testing situation. Students are allowed to use calculators on the mathematics sections of the PSAT.

Because the PSAT is a practice test, opinion about preparing for it is divided. Certainly, a good night's sleep and a good breakfast before the exam are essential. The College Board provides a practice test that all students taking the test should use to be more comfortable with the test and the type of questions that are asked on the actual PSAT.

### **NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP QUALIFYING TEST (NMSQT)**

The NMSQT is the same test as the PSAT. Only the PSAT taken in the student's junior year counts as the NMSQT. The results of the PSAT are used to select entrants for the National Merit Scholarship, National Achievement Scholarship, and National Hispanic Scholarship programs. More information about the NMSQT is found in the PSAT information flyers given to all freshmen, sophomores and juniors. The information is also available at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

### **SAT REASONING TEST**

The SAT Reasoning Test is a 3 hour and 45 minute examination given seven times each year. The SAT Reasoning Test is composed of three sections: Critical Reading, Mathematics (use of approved calculators is allowed) and Writing. Scores range from 200-800 in each area.

### **ACT**

The ACT is a standardized test that is universally accepted by colleges and universities. All colleges that require standardized tests accept the ACT or SAT Reasoning Test. It is a four-part test of English, mathematics, reading proficiency, and science reasoning. The ACT does not penalize for incorrect responses, while the SAT deducts a fraction of a point for wrong answers. Scores range from 1-36.

#### **ACT WITH WRITING**

This is the ACT test with an essay writing section. **We recommend that all students take the ACT with Writing. Most colleges require the Writing section.**

### **COMPARISON OF SAT REASONING TEST TO ACT**

Unlike the SAT Reasoning Test, the ACT is more like a subject test. Students who perform at a high level in the classroom but whose SAT Reasoning Test scores are low may find that their scores improve by comparison when they take the ACT. In fact, research shows that 1/3 of students earn a higher score

on the SAT Reasoning Test than the ACT, 1/3 earn a higher score on the ACT than the SAT Reasoning Test, and 1/3 perform about the same on both. (For a table of score comparisons, visit [www.act.org/aap/concordance/index.html](http://www.act.org/aap/concordance/index.html).)

Additionally, some colleges accept the ACT in lieu of SAT Subject Tests. ACT also offers an optional Writing section. **If you plan to take the ACT, you should check with each college in which you are interested to learn whether they require the ACT with Writing exam.** You can learn more about this test at [www.act.org](http://www.act.org).

## SAT SUBJECT TESTS

### ***WHAT ARE THEY?***

Tests in individual subjects that show your mastery of the subject.

### ***WHY SHOULD I TAKE THEM?***

Some highly selective colleges **may** use them as an important determinant to evaluate your achievement in the particular subject area and, therefore, your ability to handle demanding college-level work. The end of a course is the best time to take the test.

### ***WILL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITIES SEE THESE SCORES?***

Yes. These scores will be part of your permanent College Board score report. (Your score report includes dates and scores of all SAT and SAT Subject Tests you take.) However, please note some colleges and universities will not be able to see the scores if you take advantage of the Score Choice feature (but do not bank on this)

### ***HOW CAN I TELL IF I SHOULD TAKE A SAT SUBJECT TEST IN A SPECIFIC SUBJECT?***

Some highly selective colleges and universities require or recommend that you take two subject tests in different subjects (please visit [www.compassprep.com](http://www.compassprep.com) the college admissions requirements section). You do not need to take one in every subject. **Remember, this is your time to highlight your strengths!** If you are a strong history and English student, but struggle in Math, take one in US History and/or English Literature, but not math.

Consult with your teacher, but here are some **general guidelines**:

You should take the SAT SUBJECT TEST if:

- You have a high B or A average in the course, and/or
- You are preparing to take the AP in this subject area
- You want to apply to highly selective colleges, and/or

### ***WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO TAKE THEM THIS YEAR?***

At the end of your course: **May or June SAT dates**

Deadlines are typically one month before the exam date.

***HOW DO I REGISTER FOR A SAT SUBJECT TEST?***

On-line at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) Our school code is 361525.

***HOW MANY CAN I TAKE ON EACH TEST DATE?***

Up to three on one day; each test is one hour in length

***WHICH ONE(S) SHOULD I CONSIDER TAKING?***

**US History:** After Studies in US History or Honors US History (Grade 11)

**Biology:** After Biology or Honors Biology (Grade 9)

**Chemistry:** After Chemistry or Advanced Chemistry (Grade 10)

**Physics:** After Physics or Honors Physics I (Grade 11)

**English Lit:** After Brit Literature or Honors Brit Literature (Grade 11)

**Spanish:** After Honors Spanish 4 (Grade 11 or Grade 12)

**Chinese:** After Chinese 4 (Grade 11 or Grade 12)

**Latin:** After Latin 4 (Grade 11 or Grade 12)

**Math I:** After Algebra II, Advanced Algebra II or Pre-Calculus (Grade 10/11)

**Math II:** After Honors Algebra II w/Honors Pre-Calculus, Advanced Pre-Calculus, or Honors Calculus I (Grade 10 or 11)

**COMPLETING THE REGISTRATION FORM**

*THE REGISTRATION FORM WILL TAKE 30 TO 45 MINUTES TO COMPLETE THE FIRST TIME. PLEASE REGISTER EARLY FOR THESE TESTS SO YOU DO NOT GET CLOSED OUT OF A PREFERRED LOCATION.*

***WHAT IS ACADEMY'S SCHOOL CODE?     361525***

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO INCLUDE OUR SCHOOL CODE

***SHOULD I SEND MY SCORE REPORTS TO COLLEGES AND SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS?***

NO, YOU WILL DO THAT IN YOUR SENIOR YEAR.

***ARE FEE WAIVERS AVAILABLE?***

YES, PLEASE SEE THE COLLEGE COUNSELORS.

***WHERE CAN I GET ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?***

FROM THE TEACHER OF THE SUBJECT AREA OR FROM THE COLLEGE COUNSELORS. THERE IS ALSO A GREAT DEAL OF INFORMATION ON [WWW.COLLEGEBOARD.COM](http://WWW.COLLEGEBOARD.COM)

## **AP (ADVANCED PLACEMENT) EXAMS**

AP exams are given in May at Columbus Academy and each test lasts about three hours. Registration forms are sent home before Spring Break.

Scores range from 1-5, with 5 being the highest score. Colleges often award credit for scores of 3 or higher, but credit policies vary widely among colleges. Sometimes a score of 3 will exempt a student from taking a required course but not exempt the student from the credit-hour requirement in a subject area. Sometimes a score of 5 will be counted for college credit, reducing the number of courses a student must take to graduate. Students are responsible for understanding and investigating a particular college's policy.

## **TOEFL**

The Test of English as a Foreign Language is designed for international students whose first language is not English and who have not been in English-speaking schools for more than a few years. If you fit these criteria, see your college counselor for advice about taking this examination. The TOEFL is meant to help colleges assess whether the student's English skills are adequate to understand college-level texts.

## **ACT/SAT TEST DATES AND REGISTRATION**

### **ACT**

Please visit [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) for test dates and registration.

### **SAT**

Please visit <http://sat.collegeboard.org> for test dates and registration.

**Please recognize that it is the responsibility of each student to create an account and sign up for test dates by visiting the websites listed above. It is important to keep track of usernames and passwords, as you will need them throughout your high school career.**

## **SENDING TEST SCORES TO COLLEGES**

It is the student's responsibility to send official test scores from the testing agencies to colleges. Columbus Academy cannot do that for you. You may do this by entering the college's code at the time you register or at the time of testing. You avoid charges for sending scores to up to four colleges if you use this method, but we recommend waiting to see your scores before sending it off to any college. If you release scores to colleges after the examination date, there is an extra charge for each SAT Reasoning Test and SAT Subject Test

score or ACT score that is sent. To send scores to colleges, log on to your account and look for the VIEW AND SEND SCORES button.

### **TESTS AND EARLY ACTION/EARLY DECISION APPLICATIONS**

If you think you might be a candidate for an Early Decision or Early Action application (normally an application which is sent to a college by a specified deadline, usually by November 1), you will want to plan your program of testing to allow for that change in the normal calendar of events.

## **SPECIAL SECTION FOR JUNIORS: QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE TO STANDARDIZED TESTING and Q&A**

### **AUGUST/SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER**

- Fill in the dates for the PSAT, SAT Reasoning Test, SAT Subject Tests, ACT, and AP exams on your personal calendars. These test dates appear on the school's master calendar and also on the test agencies' web pages. Bookmark [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) and [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) on your favorites' list. Visit these sites for information about testing dates and registration deadlines. **YOU MUST REGISTER TO TAKE TESTS 4-5 WEEKS BEFORE THE ACTUAL TEST DATE.**

### **OCTOBER**

- All students take the PSAT, which also serves as the qualifying test for National Merit and Achievement Scholarship competitions.

### **WINTER/SPRING**

- Juniors are encouraged to take the SAT Reasoning Test and ACT with Writing.

### **MAY**

- Many students take SAT Subject Tests and AP exams.

### **JUNE**

- Many students take SAT Subject Tests, the SAT Reasoning test, and/or the ACT with Writing.

### **WHEN SHOULD I TAKE THE SAT REASONING TEST OR ACT? HOW MANY TIMES SHOULD I TAKE EACH?**

We recommend that students take both the SAT Reasoning Test and ACT with Writing at least once and 3-4 times total between the two exams. Research indicates that scores tend to plateau after the 3rd testing, so we rarely advise a student to take either test more than 3 times. Almost all students, however, will take the SAT Reasoning Test or ACT with Writing twice, as most students see an improvement on at least one section between first and second testing. As many colleges indicate that they like to see a senior year score, it is generally advisable to take the SAT Reasoning Test or ACT with Writing at least once during the junior year and a final time in the fall of 12th grade.

### **WHEN SHOULD I TAKE THE SAT REASONING TEST AND ACT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 11TH GRADE?**

That depends on your schedule and commitments. Our advice, in general, is to sit for the SAT Reasoning Test for the first time in January or March (March is a particularly good test date because it is usually the first Saturday of Spring Break). For the ACT, we recommend either the December, February, or April



test date. (Again, consider athletic commitments, performing arts events etc.) Please note some students like to take the December or February ACT so they have an early ACT test score to compare to their PSAT. By comparing PSAT and/or SAT scores, students will have a sense of whether one test (SAT or ACT) will demonstrate strengths. Review the test dates and decide which dates work best for you and which dates give you the best opportunity to prepare.

**HOW SHOULD I PREPARE FOR THE SAT REASONING TEST AND/OR ACT?  
SHOULD I TAKE A PREP COURSE?**

All students should take some time to prepare. However, test prep is an individual decision for families based on time, expense and personal preferences. Some students want a structured environment in which to review. Others will take time to do review on their own. Again, it is a personal decision and one answer is not right for all students. Either way, test experts agree that students who read outside of school perform better on ALL sections of standardized tests than students who do not.

**ANY TEST DAY TIPS?**

Yes, both the SAT Reasoning Test and ACT are nearly 4 hours long. Get a good night's sleep before the test and eat breakfast before going. Also, take a snack and some water. Parents, drive your son or daughter to the test site so that they are not stressed by parking congestion, etc. Review other tips available through many online resources as well.

## **10. WHAT DOES A COLLEGE APPLICATION CONTAIN?**

College applications may range from three or four pages to over fourteen pages. Each college determines what information it wants, but applications typically require several common items.

### **YOUR TRANSCRIPT AND THE SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT FORM**

Your transcript is the key document you present to the college. It is sent directly from the College Counseling Office. The Secondary School Report Form provides other information that the college wants and accompanies the transcript. Whenever a transcript is released, a copy of the Columbus Academy School Profile goes with it so the recipient knows how to interpret the information on the transcript.

Your transcript shows what courses you have taken and what grades you received at the end of each course. It is the single most important piece of information the college admission officer has and tends to correlate most strongly with college performance.

### **THE SCHOOL PROFILE**

The Columbus Academy School Profile (included with every transcript and available on our school website) is a key document that tells the admission officer what courses are available, information about Advanced and Honors Courses, our grading scale, the proportion of students who attend college, where Columbus Academy's students have been admitted and where they enrolled, and standardized test information. It is an essential piece of information for the admissions committee and it is the source of their knowledge of how you have done in relation to other students at Columbus Academy.

Increasing numbers of independent schools and many competitive public schools no longer provide colleges with rank-in-class information for their students. All colleges are accustomed to receiving transcripts from schools that do not rank. (At least one highly selective college reports that over 40% of its enrolled students attend high schools that do not provide rank-in-class information.)

### **STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES (SEE STANDARDIZED TESTING SECTION)**

#### **THE APPLICATION**

At larger universities, and at many state or public universities, the application is purely factual, asking only for biographical information, addresses, and other data. State-supported universities also ask for certification of address and other residency information. Complete this information only if you are applying for in-state resident fees. A college with a more personalized admission process is more likely to have a longer application and request a more detailed list of activities and involvements and an essay.

## **Note on the Common Application**

Over 500 colleges and universities are members of the Common Application group. The Common Application is a single application accepted by all of the members who agree to treat the Common Application as their own in the admissions process. For an increasing number of colleges, the Common Application with a supplement is their application. The Common Application is a great time-saver. You complete it once and send copies to other colleges that accept it.

You must check the college's application information to be sure whether or not a college-specific supplement is needed. All of this information is available at the Common Application web site at [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org).

## **ESSAYS**

The essay is your opportunity to let the admissions committee get to know you, to give or amplify information requested in other parts of the application, to give some insight into the depth and complexity of your thinking, and to demonstrate your writing style.

It should go without saying that your essays represent you and that they should represent your very best work. Some colleges ask to see a graded piece of academic work – usually a history or English essay with your teacher's comments and the grade on it. A photocopy is acceptable, but not if it looks as if you tried to change or correct something on it.

Many colleges request essays, while others do not. Some will ask for two or more essays and some even ask two or three short answer questions in addition.

When you know that you will be applying to a particular college, you should begin thinking about writing an essay. You can call a college in late summer and ask what the essay topics will be. If a college is a member of the Common Application group, you can review the topics found there. Most of the application essays fall into certain predictable categories.

## **Typical College Essay Topics**

1. The personal statement (i.e. Tell us about yourself.)

Alternate versions:

What else do we need to know about you?

What did we not ask that we should have asked?

Write page 127 of your autobiography.

Describe your 25th high school class reunion biography.

Reflect on a picture or object of significance to you.

2. Significant experience, achievement, decision, activity  
Subcategory: Leadership experience/opportunity

3. Influential person or event

Alternate versions: Interview with a person in history; great book/movie/painting/other art form

4. Reflect on a quotation – This question is really about whether you have thought about an issue deeply and have reached a conclusion.

5. Important Issues

Alternate versions: Social movement.

Subcategory: diversity, ethical issue, political issue/movement

6. Predict the future

**Essay prompts for the Common Application**

- Some students have a background or story that is so central to their identity that they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
- Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what lessons did you learn?
- Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?
- Describe a place or environment where you are perfectly content. What do you do or experience there, and why is it meaningful to you?
- Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood, within your culture, community, or family.

*If you look at these questions you will see that they are all about you!*

**COUNSELOR'S RECOMMENDATION LETTER**

Many colleges ask for a Counselor's Recommendation or a School Recommendation. Your college counselor writes this. It is important that your college counselor is able to talk knowledgeably about you, and much of the information about you comes from not only discussion with your teachers, coaches, and advisors but also from the questionnaires and résumé which are requested to start the college counseling process in your junior year. Take them seriously.

## **TEACHER RECOMMENDATION LETTERS**

Some colleges ask for teacher recommendations, and some do not. Some ask for one recommendation, while others ask for two. Some ask for recommendations from a particular teacher (English and math are the most common), and some let you choose. What they are interested in is information about you in a classroom setting. They want to know if you show interest in the subject or just in your grades? Do you accept criticism and work on improving? Are you consistent? Are you an inquisitive student or just argumentative? Are you active in class or do you do just enough to get by? The college counselors will be happy to help you make the decision about which teachers you want to ask to write recommendations.

Some students feel the need to include teacher recommendations if the college does not ask for one. Our suggestion is if you want to do that, go ahead, but understand that the college may or may not read it.

### **Should I waive my right to see the recommendation?**

Yes. The simple fact is that most admissions committees look for that waiver because it not only tells the college that you trust your recommenders but it also gives them the sense that they are getting the real story from your recommender.

### **How do I request a recommendation from my teacher(s)?**

Contact the teacher and ask if he or she is willing to write a positive letter of recommendation. Do not assume the answer will always be yes. Sometimes teachers do not think they can be honest and helpful to you at the same time. Always remember that the teacher is doing a service for you – you do not have the right to demand that any teacher write a recommendation. When you ask a teacher for a recommendation requested by the college, be sure to:

- Provide the teacher with the Teacher Recommendation Form to sign and date, which indicates their agreement to write a letter for you.
- Include an updated copy of your résumé.
- Include a completed copy of the Classroom Assessment form.
- Remind the teacher to email the recommendation to Mrs. Young (with your name in the subject line) for eventual electronic submission from our office to the college(s).
- Thank the teacher for writing your recommendation. (We will cover this information in detail during College Application Boot Camp.)

## OTHER INFORMATION

Students should feel free to include a more complete résumé as an attachment to their applications. But be sure to complete the application sections which request information about activities, interests, sports, etc., as well. Remember to put your name, address, etc., on the top of each page that you submit.

Extra, supplemental recommendations may be useful if there is someone in the community or an employer who knows you very well and can provide information that is not available in another part of your application. Even if the recommendation is from a politically important person or an important alumnus of the school, if the recommendation does not talk about you as an individual and about something particular you have done, it does not need to be a part of your application.

If you are an accomplished musician, artist, writer, etc., you might want to send samples (slides for art portfolios, etc.). But remember that you will not get these materials back and only do this if you have reached a point in your level of accomplishment that you are truly outstanding. If you have taken part in a summer activity or taken a course, consider including a transcript or recommendation if that is appropriate.

Most students will **not** need any extra pieces. Sending too much can be as big a problem as sending too little. There is an old saying in college admissions: “The thicker the file, the thicker the applicant.” Too much extra “stuff” might give the allusion that you are trying to divert attention away from your transcript/test scores. Always check with your college counselor before making that decision.

## **11. PREPARING AND SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION**

In the current admissions climate, competition for available spaces is keen and even excellent students with interesting résumés will find themselves in greater competition than they expected. The number of high school seniors planning to attend college is on the increase and they all seem to be submitting an increasing number of applications. This has led to more competition for each space. The selectivity index is often a student's biggest hurdle, not his or her preparation or school record.

In this situation, it is not wise to limit yourself to a small number of college choices, especially if you are applying to highly selective or very popular colleges and universities. Perhaps the best strategy is to spread your applications over a range of selectivity and entrance difficulty. While students are encouraged to think big and to try for entry at any college they believe best suits their needs, realism is essential, also.

Based on this, we recommend that students identify 6-8 colleges to which they will apply. These colleges should fall into three categories:

### **1. REACH COLLEGES**

Colleges that admit fewer than 40% of their applicants. The lower this percentage drops, the more competitive the admission. Reach colleges also include colleges where you are not in the top 25% of the profile of the freshman class.

### **2. POSSIBILITY COLLEGES**

Colleges that admit more than 40% and where you are in the middle 50% of the profile of the freshman class.

### **3. SLEEP-AT-NIGHT COLLEGES**

Colleges that admit no less than 65% and where you are in the top 25% of the profile of the freshman class. You can "sleep-at-night" knowing that you should have these options.

How many in each group? That is a decision based on your college search and your academic, testing, and extra-curricular records. We suggest 2-3 Reaches, 2-3 Possibilities, and 2-3 Sleep-at-Night colleges.

## WHAT IS DUE WHEN AND WHERE?

### TRANSCRIPT RELEASE FORM

This form is used to alert your college counselor to the colleges to which you will be applying and the deadlines by which your transcript, the Secondary School Report Form, and the counselor's recommendation must be sent.

You must provide this information no less than four (4) weeks in advance of the college's deadline due date in order for your college counselor to gather all of the information necessary to complete the forms and write your recommendation. It is your responsibility to know the deadlines for your applications and to complete all the requested information in a timely manner.

*NOTE: For students with application deadline due dates of January 1 – January 15, all requests for transcripts must be made no later than December 1.*

If you are applying electronically, your college counselor will be happy to look over your application, if you wish, before you push the send button. When you have decided to apply to a college, do the following:

1. Remember to let your college counselor know your application plans, and if you have questions, make an appointment to review the application to be sure you understand how to complete it or to have the college counselor read essays, etc. Keep in mind that suggestions for change are not intended to be criticisms but positive suggestions to make your work better.
2. Ask your intended references if they will write a letter for you and give them the appropriate materials and deadlines.
3. If you know you are going to apply to a college, there is no need to wait until the deadline. Complete and submit your parts of the application. Be one of the first applications they review, not one of the last.

*TIP: Keep copies of e-mail confirmation that your application is submitted (or payment confirmation of the application fee). Or take a screen shot for proof. Applications can be lost or misfiled, especially at colleges with a high volume of applications. Having this confirmation will save time later.*

### SENDING GRADES

If you apply Early Decision or Early Action, it is likely that you will do so on the strength of your grades through the end of your junior year. At Columbus Academy, grades are sent automatically in January, after the end of the first semester of the senior year, to all schools to which we are aware you have applied. Students may also request for their first quarter senior grades to be sent. Some colleges/universities may request them as well. If you receive a letter of deferral, you should be prepared to have third quarter grades sent to your colleges.



A final transcript is mailed in June to the college where you plan to enroll. It is your responsibility to notify your college counselor as soon as you send your enrollment deposit to the college.

Admissions officers review all final transcripts of incoming students to make sure that students have at least maintained the same academic level on which they were offered admission. Do not jeopardize your admission by presenting declining grades for your senior year.

## 12. APPLICATION ETHICS

It is unfortunate that, over the past 10 years, college admissions officers and college counselors have seen a growing number of students and parents who, in an attempt to manipulate the system to their favor, are crossing the boundary between doing smart things to help assure a desired outcome and doing things which are inappropriate.

The College Counseling Office at Columbus Academy takes a firm stance on certain ethical issues. The admissions process is not a game to be won at any cost. It is a complex process that demands a great deal of integrity on everyone's part.

Here are some examples of what we consider crossing the boundaries:

- Applying to binding Early Decision programs at more than one college or university. The whole point of a binding ED program is to make a contract: if accepted, I will withdraw all my other applications and attend that university. Colleges require that the college counselor sign the ED Agreement Form along with the student and parents. Columbus Academy will not send transcripts to more than one ED school or to any other schools once a student has been admitted under a binding ED program.
- Failing to withdraw your applications to other colleges when you have been admitted under a binding Early Decision program. It is not fair to those colleges or to the students who have applied to them for you to continue in the process just to see what happens.
- Attempting to gain release from an ED commitment because you have changed your mind. The only acceptable reason for requesting release from your contract with your ED College is the inability to work out appropriate financial aid. You and your parents should attempt to factor this into your initial decision to apply ED.
- Having someone else write or heavily edit your essays. When you sign an application, you are indicating that it is your work.
- Submitting deposits to more than one college. If you are admitted to a college which requires a deposit by May 1 and wait-listed at your favorite college, you can send the deposit to the college to which you were offered admission. If you then are offered admission from the wait-list at your first choice college, you should send in the deposit to the latter college and immediately notify the first college that you are withdrawing and why. Your college counselor can advise you about this conversation and what is the appropriate behavior.
- Stating an intended major that you have no intention to pursue because you think it might help your admission chances.

- Describing inaccurately your activities and accomplishments. Putting things in the best light is one thing; fabrication is something else.
- Stating to more than one college that it is your first choice.

#### **REPORTING VIOLATIONS OF STUDENT CONDUCT TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

An increasingly difficult area of concern is the situation in which a student has gotten into social or academic difficulty in school and wants to keep it off his or her record. If you have done something serious enough to warrant suspension or dismissal, that record will be a part of your school history. The college counselor is honor-bound to report that if asked by the college, as are you. Other, minor infractions generally are treated that way by colleges: as minor infractions. Suspensions and dismissals need to be acknowledged and dealt with forthrightly.

## 13. FINANCIAL AID

Some of the best things in life may be free, but for college you will need money. College costs are at an all-time high, and so is uncertainty among students and their families about the ability to pay the bills. Contrary to what you may have heard, help is available – and lots of it – in the form of financial aid. In fact, more than \$16 billion is expected to be available to students this year from the federal and state governments, from private programs and from colleges themselves. However, with costs going up and the amount of financial aid remaining about the same, there may not be enough help for everyone who needs it. Undoubtedly, students and parents will be paying more toward the costs of an education. But there is also no question that you can improve your chances of getting financial aid by learning about it and by planning ahead.

### WHAT IS FINANCIAL AID?

Financial aid is help for meeting college costs, both direct educational costs (tuition, fees, and books) and personal living expenses (room and board, personal expenses, and travel). Sometimes students are surprised to discover that financial aid can help them pay for living expenses.

Broadly, there are two kinds of financial aid available, aid based on need, as determined by the College Scholarship Service, federal guidelines, or institutional policies, and no-need or merit scholarships awarded for academic excellence, athletic prowess, artistic talent, leadership, or other criteria.

### NEED-BASED FINANCIAL AID

Although you do not have to be poor to qualify, you do have to demonstrate that you need aid. Fewer than 2 in 10 families can contribute fully to the costs of education at public four-year colleges. Less than 1 in 10 can contribute fully to the annual average costs at private four-year colleges.

Individual colleges determine financial aid packages based upon the information provided by you on several forms – the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the College Scholarship Service (CSS) PROFILE, and the college's own institutional forms. These forms will help the financial aid office determine the estimated family contribution (EFC) to the student's educational costs. The difference between the cost of attending the college and the EFC is the need. The individual college will put together a financial aid "package" designed to meet that need. At most colleges, a package will include a combination of grants, loans, and employment.

**Grants** are funds that do not have to be repaid. Grants are usually awarded on the basis of need alone and can come from a variety of sources – Pell Grants (federal money), state grants (usually available only to students attending college in their home state), and grant money from the college's own resources.

**Loans** must be repaid, generally after you have graduated or left school, and usually have lower interest rates than commercial loans.

**College Work Study Programs** involve earning money as payment for a job, usually one arranged for you by the college. Students normally work up to ten hours per week in an on-campus job selected by the student. The money comes to the student in the form of a paycheck and can be used for college expenses.

Your financial aid eligibility is usually equal to the amount of your demonstrated need. Since the amount you are able to pay stays the same whether the costs are high or low, you would be eligible for different amounts of aid at different colleges.

In fact, you could end up paying the same amount at a high-cost college as you would at a low-cost college. Even if your family is relatively affluent, you might qualify for aid if educational costs are high enough.

Not every college can meet full need for every student; it is increasingly common for a student to be admitted to a college but denied the full amount of financial aid needed to attend. This practice is called “gapping.” Most of the best endowed colleges guarantee to meet 100% of demonstrated need. However, some of these may consider financial need in making a small percentage of their admission decisions. Institutions that do not consider need are employing what is called a “need-blind” admission policy. Because “need-aware” schools only consider need in a very few decisions, it is still a good idea to apply for aid even if you are not sure you will qualify.

#### **APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID**

The most crucial part of applying for financial aid is adhering to deadlines for each form. It is recommended that all families fill out the FAFSA form in case of a change in family income, make-up, etc.

All students and parents applying for aid at any public college or university will have to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) that comes from the Department of Education. This cannot be filed until after January 1, but the FAFSA4caster can be filled out, and that information will transfer to FAFSA forms. The FAFSA should be filed as soon as possible after January 1. It will call for figures from the previous year's tax returns, so parents should prepare taxes as early as possible. The form is sent to a central processor who analyzes it and sends the results, called a needs analysis, to the colleges and scholarship programs that have been designated by the applicant.

Many families applying to private colleges will also have to file the CSS PROFILE, a customized financial aid form produced by the College Scholarship Service through the College Board. The PROFILE is tailored to reflect the specific requirements of the various colleges to which the student is applying and from which aid is being sought. There is a fee for the preliminary registration form in addition to a charge for each institution listed in a student's PROFILE. You must check the college's application materials to see if the PROFILE is required and when it must be submitted. Each college has its own deadline.

In addition to these standardized forms, some colleges still require short forms of their own, and some will request a certified copy of the most recent 1040 form. Again, each college has its own deadline. Make sure you are aware of these.

Four to six weeks after you submit your FAFSA, you will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR) indicating your expected family contribution (EFC). The colleges that you designate will receive this information as well. They will use this information in combination with the data they collect from the PROFILE and/or their own forms to come up with a financial aid package.

If you feel that any package is inappropriate, it is best to contact the financial aid administrator at the colleges directly. They will be interested in any supplemental data you may wish to provide. Letters explaining any unusual or special circumstances affecting the family's financial situation are welcomed by financial aid offices and should be sent directly to financial aid offices of the individual institutions.

### **NO-NEED OR MERIT SCHOLARSHIPS**

Aside from the National Merit program and competitive scholarships sponsored by businesses and community service organizations, non need-based or merit awards given by an institution are generally provided specifically for use at that institution. A religious, ethnic, or professional group may sponsor scholarships for students who belong to that religious or ethnic group or aspire to that profession. Some businesses also sponsor scholarships for the children of employees.

Students should inquire wherever they apply about no-need or merit scholarships. Some excellent private colleges (Brandeis, University of Chicago, Davidson, Emory, Johns Hopkins, Lafayette, Rochester, USC, Whitman, etc.) offer these for outstanding students. Please note that 97% of financial aid comes through or from colleges and universities.

Students should also inquire at their places of worship and parents should inquire at their places of employment or in their civic groups about scholarships available from those sources.

Whenever we receive information about competitive or other no-need or merit scholarships, we put this information into the SCHOLARSHIP section of Naviance.

Many colleges and universities that award athletic scholarships have a limited number, and unless a student is among the players most sought after, he or she is not likely to be awarded an athletic grant.

### **OTHER TIPS FOR FINANCIAL AID APPLICANTS**

- Do not eliminate a college because you think it costs too much. Apply for admission and financial aid, and see what happens. Many colleges can meet the demonstrated need.
- Make copies of everything, including your FAFSA and PROFILE forms.
- In April, do not accept the financial aid package you receive from the college at face value, especially if the offered package does not accurately reflect your family's situation. It is possible to request reconsideration with them in certain situations. You and your parents must do this; the College Counseling Office can help.
- Rely on individual college financial aid officers rather than costly computer service organizations or scholarship/financial aid "experts" who solicit your business through the mail.

## **14. MISLEADING MYTHS ABOUT COLLEGE ADMISSIONS**

### **MYTH #1: "SAT SCORES ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT PIECE OF THE APPLICATION."**

Fact: Colleges know that your performance in high school is a better predictor of college success than standardized test scores. Colleges certainly scrutinize SAT scores, but there are more students denied who have high testing and modest or low grades than students who have modest testing and high grades.

### **MYTH #2: "COLLEGES RECEIVE SO MANY PERSONAL ESSAYS THAT THEY PROBABLY ONLY GLANCE AT THEM."**

Fact: College admission officers read personal essays with great care. Writing about yourself in a way that reveals your uniqueness is the one significant thing you can do to set yourself apart from others. Don't wait until just before the deadline and dash off something that does not represent your best work. Admission officers notice the care taken in writing the application.

### **MYTH #3: "COLLEGES DO NOT LOOK AT THE SENIOR YEAR GRADES."**

Fact: Most college admissions committees analyze not only senior year grades in first semester but also the degree of difficulty of the senior year course of study. As for second semester grades - if there is a significant change in academic performance from January to June, the college that originally accepted you might require summer school work, put you on probation for the first semester of college, or even rescind your acceptance on the grounds that you are not the same student they originally admitted.

### **MYTH #4: "IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE AS MANY VARIED EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AS POSSIBLE TO IMPRESS COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PEOPLE."**

Fact: Colleges are looking for quality of involvement rather than quantity. They want a well-rounded student body made up of students who are vitally interested in particular activities and who have not spread themselves so thin that they have demonstrated no depth of commitment to anything. Colleges prefer, for example, the student who was solely a dedicated yearbook editor, rather than the student who dashed in and out of ten activities. They call this "productive follow-through."

### **MYTH #5: "IT IS BETTER TO GO TO A BIG UNIVERSITY THAT IS WELL-KNOWN THAN TO A SMALL COLLEGE THAT FEW PEOPLE HAVE HEARD OF."**

Fact: All generalizations about large versus small schools are dangerous. A large well-known university may be ideal for many students, but some would do better in a smaller, more personal environment. Relationships with professors can make a real difference in your experience and preparation for graduate school. It is important to define the things you want in a college – to understand yourself, not to be influenced by others' opinions.

### **MYTH #6: "IVY LEAGUE COLLEGES ARE THE ONLY ONES WORTH APPLYING TO."**



Fact: This is another misconception. The Ivy League colleges (Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, University of Pennsylvania, Princeton, and Yale) may not offer what you want; besides, did you know that the Ivy League is simply an athletic league like the Big Ten or SEC? Certainly the Ivy League is known for its academic quality, but it does not have a monopoly on academic quality! It is worthwhile to explore other areas of the country and to remember that when you say you are looking only at Ivy League schools, you are essentially expressing a preference for a sports association.

**MYTH #7: “THE FINANCIAL AID SITUATION IS UTTERLY HOPELESS THIS YEAR.”**

Fact: Financial aid continues to be more readily available than you might think in the form of grants, loans, opportunities for on-campus work, and merit scholarships. However, do not wait until spring to apply because funds may be depleted by then and financial aid deadlines are serious and inflexible! Read the section on financial aid in this booklet. There are extensions on many things in life, but not financial aid.

**MYTH #8: “I NEED TO APPLY EARLY ACTION/DECISION SOMEWHERE EVEN IF I DO NOT HAVE A FIRST-CHOICE SCHOOL.”**

Fact: While it may appear that some colleges are filling their classes with early applicants, most colleges still make the vast majority of their admission offers in the spring. Submitting an early application should be used as a way to indicate to a college that it is your first choice. Keep in mind also that your preferences may change over the course of your senior year; do not deprive yourself of that valuable period of research and self-discovery.

**MYTH #9: “SMALL, INDEPENDENT COLLEGES ARE LIKELY TO REVIEW THE ENTIRE APPLICATION, WHILE LARGER, PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS LOOK JUST AT THE NUMBERS (GPA, TEST SCORES).”**

Fact: Most institutions, large and small, public and private, use complex, multi-step procedures that involve multiple readings. Consider the increase we have seen recently in the seriousness of essay questions at large, public universities. The only safe generalization is that the process tends to be more complex if the number of applicants is considerably higher than the number of spaces.

**MYTH #10: “I SHOULD GO TO THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS COLLEGE TO WHICH I AM ADMITTED.”**

Fact: You should go to the college that “fits” you the best. If it happens to be the most prestigious, that is fine. However, fit has to do with how you feel when you are on campus, how the school matches with your learning style and academic interests and how the professors teach. If the college is not a good fit, you will be unhappy, regardless of the prestige.

**MYTH #11: “MY LIFE WILL BE RUINED IF I DO NOT GET INTO MY FIRST-CHOICE COLLEGE.”**

Fact: Thousands and thousands of students each year do not get admitted to their first-choice college. Rejection is hard on your ego, but you will not be alone. The vast majority of students who end up at their second, third or

fourth choice are happy there, because every school has something to offer you. The important thing is to focus on the things that attracted you to those schools in the first place.

## **15. STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCES**

If you have documented learning differences and have used those accommodations in the classroom you may be eligible for accommodations on standardized tests. Please see Mrs. FitzPatrick for information and forms.

Colleges are not allowed to ask if you have learning disabilities, but it can make a difference in your ability to learn at an optimal level in college. Our best advice is to self-disclose this information so that the college has the opportunity to fairly estimate your chances of success and whether it is able to offer you the range of support you require. Please remember that neither the College Board nor the ACT will grant accommodations that students do not receive on a normal basis during school, regardless of testing or recommendations by educational professionals.

## 16. GLOSSARY OF COLLEGE TERMS

**4-1-4:** Consists of two terms of 16 weeks separated by a one-month term used for intensive short courses, independent study, off-campus work, or other educational experiences.

**Academic solid:** Usually refers to a traditional discipline of English, mathematics, foreign language, science, or history. Highly selective colleges look for academic solids on a transcript.

**ACT:** An aptitude test that covers English, mathematics, social studies reading, and science reasoning (and an optional writing section) and is accepted by all colleges in lieu of the SAT Reasoning Test. The scores are reported on a scale from 1 to 36.

**Associate's degree:** A two-year degree earned at a community college (some abbreviate A.A.).

**Bachelor's degree** (B.A. – Bachelor of Arts (also written as A.B.); or B.S. – Bachelor of Science): A diploma earned after successful completion (usually spanning four years) of required courses at a university or college.

**Calendar:** The system by which an institution divides its year into shorter periods for instruction. The most common calendars are semester, quarter, and 4-1-4.

**Candidate Reply Date:** The date by which the student must reply to the colleges' offers of admission. Nationally, May 1 is the date to which most colleges adhere.

**CEEB:** Abbreviation for College Entrance Examination Board, which creates and supervises the administration of the SAT Reasoning and Subject Tests. Each high school has a CEEB ID code. Columbus Academy's is **3 6 1 5 2 5**.

**Class rank:** How a student's academic performance, as determined by the grade point average, compares to other members of his/her graduating class. Columbus Academy does not rank.

**College:** The term commonly used to describe any institution of higher education. Strictly speaking, it is an institution with a single

type of program, such as a four-year course leading to the bachelor's degree or a three-year course leading to the law degree. A college may be one part of a university (e.g. Yale College is the undergraduate division of Yale University) or may be independent.

**Common Application:** A form devised and accepted by over 500 colleges to make things easier for students in applying and teachers in writing recommendations. Practically, it means that if you are applying to more than one participating college, you may use the same application form for all. These forms are available online at [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org).

**Core curriculum:** A specified number of courses or credits in the humanities, social sciences, life sciences, and/or physical sciences, required of all students, regardless of major, to ensure a basic set of learning experiences.

**Cross registration:** A system whereby students enrolled at one institution may take courses at another institution without having to apply to the second institution.

**Deferred admit:** The practice of permitting admitted students to postpone enrollment, usually for a period of one year. In order to request this, you must apply and be admitted first.

**Dual degrees:** A program of study in which a student receives two degrees at the same time from the same institution.

**Early Action:** An admission plan whereby a student typically can submit an application by November and receive a decision by mid-December. The student is not required to enroll if accepted. Some colleges now specify whether a student may apply to more than one college Early Action. If they are not allowed to do so, this is referred to as Single-Choice or Restrictive Early Action.

**Early Decision:** A program whereby a student can apply to a first-choice college early in the fall of the senior year and receive a decision by mid-December. Upon making an Early Decision application, the student agrees to enroll if accepted and to withdraw other applications immediately if admitted. Students deferred under Early Decision are usually reconsidered with the regular-decision applicants.

**ETS:** Educational Testing Service. This is the organization based in Princeton, New Jersey that the College Board utilizes to write and administer its tests.

**FAFSA:** Free Application for Federal Student Aid (see section on Financial Aid).

**Gap Year:** The practice of postponing college enrollment, usually for one year, to pursue an educational, work or travel opportunity. This is very common in Europe and gaining popularity in the US.

**General Education Requirements:** Also called breadth or distribution requirements, or core curriculum courses, they are required by all majors for the bachelor's degree at a particular institution. The number and specificity of these course requirements vary greatly from institution to institution.

**Honors program:** Any special program for very able students offering the opportunity for educational enrichment, independent study, acceleration, or some combination of these.

**Internship:** Any short-term, supervised work experience usually related to a student's major field, for which the student earns academic credit. The work can be full- or part-time, on- or off-campus, paid or unpaid.

**Ivy League:** Although the term "Ivy League" is often misused to designate any eastern college with a strong reputation and a highly competitive situation, strictly speaking, the Ivy League is an athletic league including the following colleges: Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, University of Pennsylvania, Princeton, and Yale. These institutions are quite different from one another in terms of philosophy and atmosphere.

**Legacy:** A college applicant who is a son or daughter (or sometimes a more distant relative) of an alumna/us. Private colleges are sometimes generous in admitting such candidates. (At some, the percentage of legacies admitted is twice as high as for all other candidates.)

**Liberal Arts and Career Combination:** A program in which a student earns undergraduate degrees in two separate fields, (most often in a general/liberal arts major and a professional or specialized major) in years of study, whether on-campus or through cross-registration.

**Liberal Arts and Sciences:** A breadth of intellectual inquiry that broadens the student's knowledge and awareness in each of the major areas of human knowledge: arts, sciences, and humanities. A liberal arts education prepares one to communicate thoughts and ideas clearly and efficiently, to understand a wide variety of perspectives and values, to appreciate civilization, beauty and natural processes, and to continually discover with sincere curiosity the world around us. The liberal arts college offers a four-year course of study, leading to the B.S. or B.A. degree and any graduate or professional program.

**Major:** The field of specialization or concentration for a college undergraduate. The student normally does from a quarter to a third of the total undergraduate work in his/her major field. A student is typically asked to declare a major at the end of the sophomore year.

**Minor:** A secondary area of academic concentration, which may or may not be required by an institution.

**NMSQT:** National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (also known as the PSAT – see below), sponsored by the United States government and several hundred private corporations and colleges and taken by high school students in the fall of their junior year. Scoring well on this test is the first step toward recognition in the National Merit Scholarship competition. National Merit Semi-Finalists are those students who score in the top 1% of all students in their state. The NMSQT index is the sum of the verbal, math and writing scores.

**PSAT** (Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test – also known as the NMSQT – see above): a test of scholastic aptitude administered to high school juniors throughout the country. Sophomores also take this test for practice. Scores are given for verbal, quantitative and writing aptitude in two-digit figures (multiply by ten to approximate SAT equivalents).

**Post-graduate:** More commonly referred to as “graduate”; in reference to a student, post-graduate describes one who is working beyond the bachelor's degree; in reference to a school, post-graduate describes an institution that trains in a specific professional field and grants a post-undergraduate degree.

**Profile:** 1. A description of the freshman class of a specific college. The College Handbook, published by the CEEB, contains this information about most colleges and universities and is available in the College Counseling Office. 2. A description of the high school, updated annually (accompanies each transcript sent to colleges).

**Quarter:** A college term of ten to twelve weeks. Some colleges divide the calendar year into four approximately equal portions, or into three terms (trimesters: fall, winter, and spring), plus a slightly shorter summer term. In schools using either the quarter or the trimester system, the student normally studies fewer subjects at one time and changes his/her schedule more frequently than a student at a school using the semester system.

**Rolling Admissions:** A system of admissions decision notification whereby a college informs the applicant of his/her status within a short time (usually four to six weeks) after the application is complete. Most public universities employ this admissions practice.

**SAT Reasoning Test:** A multiple choice test made up of verbal, math and writing sections, designed to measure abilities that are related to college success. The SAT Reasoning Test does not measure others factors and abilities – such as creativity, special talents, and motivation – that may also help you do well in college.

**SAT Subject Tests:** Curricular-based tests given by the College Board to measure achievement in a particular subject. Twenty one-hour achievement tests are offered, scored on a scale of 200 to 800. It is advisable to take an SAT Subject Test while studying or immediately upon completing study of the subject.

**Scholarship:** Money or aid for an academically talented student. Some scholarships are based on need. Colleges, corporations, ethnic organizations or religious groups give many such funds away. Each scholarship opportunity has different eligibility criteria.



**Selectivity:** A term used by admissions offices to describe the ratio of admitted applicants to total applicants at a given institution.

**Semester:** Half of the normal school year. The usual college year has two semesters (fall and spring), each 15 to 17 weeks.

**Seven Sisters:** Refers to Barnard, Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Radcliffe, Smith, Vassar, and Wellesley; all of them remain women's colleges except Vassar (and Radcliffe no longer exists).

**Transcript:** The official complete copy of a student's academic record including courses and grades. In the college admissions process, this document is traditionally given the most weight.

**Twelve-College Exchange:** A one-year or one-semester exchange program among the following colleges: Amherst, Bowdoin, Connecticut College, Dartmouth, Mount Holyoke, Smith, Trinity, Vassar, Wellesley, Wesleyan, Wheaton, and Williams.

**Undergraduate:** A college student who is a candidate for a bachelor's degree; a program of study leading to a bachelor's degree.

**University:** An institution of higher learning comprised of several colleges. An undergraduate division confers bachelor's degrees and provides facilities for learning to take place through teaching. This undergraduate division may include a College of Arts & Sciences, a College of Engineering, a College of Business, and a College of Nursing. A graduate division confers masters and doctoral degrees and provides facilities for learning to take place through research as well as through teaching.

**Wait-list:** List of students who meet the admission requirements but will only be offered a place in the class if space becomes available. Most offers of admission from the wait-list are made prior to the end of the school year. Most wait-lists are not ranked; instead, they will admit students based on the college's needs and student interest.

**Yield:** The percentage of students admitted to a college who ultimately attend that college. The yield is often extremely high at selective colleges.

## 17. REFERENCE BOOKS AND GUIDES

### GENERAL GUIDES

- *The Fiske Guide to College* (highly recommended)
- *The College Board College Handbook*
- *The College Board Book of Majors*
- *Colleges That Change Lives*

### UNDERSTANDING THE ADMISSION PROCESS

- *The College Admissions Mystique* by Bill Mayher (highly recommended)

## 18. INTERNET RESOURCES

Here are just a few web sites where you can find helpful information. This is by no means an exhaustive list, and web addresses do change all the time.

- College Board's Big Future – great college search feature!  
<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search>
- College & University Reference Guide: [www.unigo.com](http://www.unigo.com)
- Common Data Set – Great information on first-time, first-year freshman admission. Just the facts, and data doesn't lie. Sample:  
<http://ucomm.stanford.edu/cds/2012>

### TESTING INFORMATION – RESOURCES AND REGISTRATION

- College Board homepage: [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) (SAT and APs)
- ACT homepage: [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

### FINANCIAL AID

- Financial Aid General Information: [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)
  - This is an excellent comprehensive site for financial aid information sponsored by the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.
- FAFSA: [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) (Please use the FAFSA4caster)
- Student Aid Guide: [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)
  - This is the official Department of Education website. Click on financial aid for information.
  - This site allows you to submit your FAFSA form via your computer. Next year's forms will not be online until early December.

### SCHOLARSHIP SEARCHES

There are many services out there that charge money for helping you find money for college. Make sure you exhaust all the free resources before you start paying for it.

- My Road: <https://myroad.collegeboard.com/myroad/navigator.jsp>

- FastWeb: [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)

### APPLICATIONS ONLINE

- Common Application: [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)

### LIFE ON CAMPUS

The Internet can also be helpful in learning about different activities and organizations on college campuses. Here is just a sampling:

- The Black Collegian: [www.black-collegian.com](http://www.black-collegian.com)
- College Democrats of America: [www.collegedems.com](http://www.collegedems.com)
- College Republican National Committee: [www.crnc.org](http://www.crnc.org)
- Fraternity and Sorority Directory and Resources: [www.greekpages.com](http://www.greekpages.com)
- Hillel, the Foundation for Jewish Campus Life: [www.hillel.org](http://www.hillel.org)
- NCAA: [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org)

### NAVIANCE/FAMILY CONNECTION -

Family Connection is a comprehensive website that you can use to help in making decisions about colleges. Family Connection is linked with Counselor's Office, a service our office uses to track and analyze data about college plans and that provides up-to-date information specific to Columbus Academy. The site is found at [connection.naviance.com/columbusacademy](http://connection.naviance.com/columbusacademy)

Naviance Family Connection will allow you to:

- Receive career advice and suggestions for **college majors**
- **Research colleges** – Compare GPA, standardized test scores, and other statistics to actual historical data from Academy for students who have applied and been admitted in the past (scattergrams)
- **See visit schedule** – Find out which colleges are visiting our school
- **Create a prospective list of colleges**
- **Track your college application deadlines**

Family Connection also lets us share information with you about up-coming meetings and events, local scholarship opportunities, and other Web resources for college and career information.

We will provide you with a personal access code and instructions for accessing Family Connection. You will use that code to create your own Family Connection account. Gain Access to Family Connection through the College Counseling section on the intranet.

## 19. CONCLUSION

This is a lot of information and it is intended to assist you through this journey. We are here to help you through every step and we encourage you to make yourself at home in the College Counseling Office any time. You are not alone, so stop by with questions or feel free to contact us via the information below. We look forward to working with you on your college planning process!

Darnell Heywood (614) 509-2211  
heywoodd@columbusacademy.org

Jen FitzPatrick (614) 509-2106  
fitzpatrickj@columbusacademy.org

Joan Young (614) 509-2537  
youngj@columbusacademy.org

*Thank you to Cary Academy of Cary (NC) and Harvard-Westlake School (CA) for their permission to borrow from their College Counseling Handbooks.*