

Godwin School Counseling College Guidebook



School Counselors:

Mrs. Gravely

Mrs. Walton

Ms. Katz

Mr. Clough

Mrs. Eubank

Mrs. DiTommaso

Where to start???

- Start with the end in mind. If you know what career aspirations you have, then work backwards for what degree that requires and what fields of study would be directly related to that career.
 - Decide if a two or four year college or university is right for you
 - There are many types of degree programs for you to pursue, [check them out here](#).
 - If you know what you are passionate about studying but not certain what careers it could offer you, [check out this tool](#).
- It is helpful to know what your preferences are in looking for a school and also knowing what major you wish to study. Here is a guide to help you [narrow down what your preferences are](#) for schools to research.
- To learn more about career options or majors, consider taking a career interest assessment at [vawizard.org](#).
- Keep yourself organized throughout the process as best you can, so you do not feel overwhelmed or procrastinate in certain tasks. [Here are handouts and worksheets](#) to keep you on track. Also, these are some of my favorite [worksheets to stay organized](#) as well.
- Here is another resource for learning about the [college application process](#) and College Boards [College Advising Essentials](#) to walk you through the process.

Action plans/timelines/checklists by grade level to prepare for college

- [College Planning: 9th/10th Grades](#)
- [College Planning: 11th Grade](#)
- [College Planning: 12th Grade](#)
- [College Application Checklist](#)

Searching for schools

- Try out [Big Future](#) where you can select all of your personal preferences in a school to find options that fit you. You can select schools and save them to your profile for later and also compare schools side by side. They also have a [step-by-step guide](#) on searching for schools.
- Wanting to start off at a community college first and transfer? There are a lot of positives to this route; [learn more here](#). You can also [read more](#) about what that looks like to transfer from a 2 year college to a four year university.
 - [Reynolds Community College](#)
 - [2024 Best Community Colleges in Virginia](#)
- Searching for schools and creating a college list can be [easy with these steps](#).
- Typically, students apply to 5-8 schools with a range of safety, match, and reach options. Here is a way to differentiate between [safety, match, and reach schools](#).
- Student search: [studentsearch.collegeboard.org](#) allows students to enter their information for colleges and scholarships to find them

How to research and learn more about colleges and universities

- Visit sites like YOUVISIT.com and <https://campustours.com/> to do virtual tours of schools that 1) may not be doing tours currently due to COVID or 2) are too far to visit for a quick trip.
- Schedule in person tours when available. Here is a [college campus tour checklist](#).
- Sign up for in person meetings when our college admissions officers come to visit Godwin
 - During COVID-19, check out our Schoology page under Seniors→ College Admissions Resources to see updates from the admissions officers at various schools.

Finding the right "fit"??

- [Here you can learn more](#) about what makes a good fit in a college that's right for you.
- When you search a school, many sites will share previous applicant data to share the chances of next year's applications getting accepted. [Here on CollegeBoard](#), it will report the average GPA and test scores for the previous Fall applications/current freshmen. [Niche.com](#) will do the same.
- Compare colleges through [Cappex](#) (majors, scholarships, financial aid, etc.).
- Use [College Scorecard](#) to further explore your college fit

What makes me a strong applicant

- Course rigor
 - Each year you should be taking increased rigor from the year prior but still maintaining good grades
 - Here is what CollegeBoard says about a [strong academic portfolio](#)
- Personal statement
 - This is where you have the most wiggle room as a senior in your application. If you don't feel as confident in your grades or test scores, this is the place to voice your excitement about attending a specific college. Be sure to brag about your accomplishments!
- Start the process early→ Don't procrastinate! Here are some [checklists by grade level](#) starting in the 9th grade year. [Seniors, here is your checklist](#).
- [Admissions Secrets Colleges Don't Want You to Know](#)---She also has lots of other great videos for some tips and tricks!
- Talk to your school counselor to discuss your Academic & Career Plan and be sure you are on track for graduation. The goal is to align your courses to your interests and possible career goals while also increasing rigor in your classes each year. Colleges will look to see that you have a strong academic course load senior year.

College Entrance Exams

- When should I take the SAT or ACT?

- You can test at any point your junior year, going into fall of your senior year. If you are advanced in your math, you may be ready to test fall of junior year, but most students begin testing in the spring of their junior year.
- What is the difference between the two tests?
 - [ACT vs. SAT](#)
 - You can test in one or both to see how you do on each.
- Colleges will superscore results to give the best combination of scores from multiple test dates counting the highest math score of each of your test attempts plus the highest verbal score of each of your test attempts.
- Those of you wanting to boost your score on the SAT will want to take advantage of Khan Academy and study based on your previous PSAT scores. Here is a guide to your [PSAT interpretation and linking your CollegeBoard account to Khan Academy](#)
- Test optional schools: There are an increasing number of schools that are becoming test optional, especially with changes in COVID-19. In this case, you would want to consider taking one of these tests if you think it will make you a more competitive applicant. A strong test score coupled with a good GPA could only help your chances of being admitted to the college of your choice. On the other hand, if you're not usually the best standardized test taker yet you have really good grades, maybe you choose not to take the test if it is optional. Be sure you are checking each school's requirements to determine if this is an option for you.

Requirements of a college application

- [College Application Checklist](#)
- Many schools have their own college handbook for everything that pertains to their school. Here is [Johns Hopkins University](#) for example. Go to your schools' websites to see what each application requires as well as virtual tours and [COVID] updates.
- ***Common Application & Coalition***
 - If you are applying to multiple schools, we strongly encourage you to create an account with [The Common Application](#) and/or [Coalition](#). Here are all the colleges that are [available in the Common App](#). It's possible to apply to 10 or 20 schools on one platform and only have to fill out one application.
 - If your school does not use either application site, they would have their own application or portal on their admissions site.
 - Students should use personal email address-add Godwin to account once signed up
 - Common App questions:
 - CEEB Code: 471872
 - GPA Scale: 4.0/ Weighted
 - Class rank reporting: Exact
 - Scheduling system: Semester
 - Counselor job title and phone number: School Counselor at 804-750-2606
- ***Transcripts & Parchment***
 - Transcripts are updated at the end of the year, at the beginning of the year (to include summer grades) and after the first semester.

- Transcripts include:
 - FG: Final Grades of courses only
 - GPA: Cumulative Added Value (weighted-includes added weight from Honors: .5/AP courses: 1), & Cumulative Unweighted
 - Rank (rising seniors only)-Updated at the end of Junior year to include grades through Grade 11 (this would not include summer course work after junior year). Rank is updated again for seniors after the first semester. If you would like rank removed from your transcript, please see your counselor for an opt-out form.
 - Standardized Test Scores- if you would like test scores removed, your parent will need to complete the opt-out form in PowerSchool Parent Portal.
- Here is a Parchment [Student Guide](#) for your review
- Parchment is our online portal for sending transcripts. In order to get an account, your parents will first need to sign the Parchment Permission form: [Accessing Online Permission Form](#)
 - To create an account, students should visit www.parchment.com/register and follow the prompts. **Students should NOT use their HCPS email address to create their Parchment account** -- the HCPS email address will be deleted upon graduation, making it difficult to access Parchment in the event that a student has forgotten their Parchment password.
 - Answer the few required questions - FERPA, Agreement..
 - 'No' I do not wish to share my information...
 - I 'do' waive my rights...
- [How to order a transcript or counselor recommendation](#)
 - Transcripts can be ordered and processed for individual schools or you can order one to be sent directly to your Common Application account. If you are applying to 5 schools on The Common Application, you will only need to order ONE transcript and once processed, all of your CA schools will see it in the portal.
 - For Coalition, you will need to send transcripts to those individual schools via Parchment.
- We also attach a School Profile with your transcript that gets sent to schools. Colleges use this to see all of what Godwin has to offer and the opportunities/courses you have taken advantage of while a student there.
- [How to track your transcript](#)
- *How do I send my test scores to schools*
 - Some of your (highest) scores may show on your transcript, but the county only updates these every so often so they may not have the most recent scores. Regardless, colleges want you to submit scores from the test sites themselves. So log on to act.org or sat.org and send your scores from there to your schools.
 - Hint: If you haven't already registered or tested yet--during registration, you can plug in up to four schools to send your scores to for FREE. After the test, you have to pay to send your scores.

- Do I send my AP test scores?
 - No, but you will want to send them prior to registering for college courses to see in case they transferred credits. Here is where you go to see what credits transfer where at the college level: [AP Credit Policy](#).

➤ *How to write a strong personal statement/essay*

- [Common App Essay Prompts](#)
- [Coalition Application Essay Prompts](#)
- [Choosing a College Essay Topic](#)
- [CollegeBoard: Crafting Your Best College Essay](#)
- [Top 5 Reasons to Start Your Essays Early](#)
- [Tips for Writing Supplemental Essays](#)
- [The Right Approach to Writing Your College Essays](#)
- [Essays That Worked by Johns Hopkins University](#)
- [Essay Master - How to write an effective essay](#)
- Getting a head start is the most important tip. If you can start the summer before senior year, the less stressed you will be.
- Most schools have their own essays to submit in addition to the Common App essay
- Be sure to get other eyes on your essays to proofread!
 - If you can get someone who doesn't know you all that well to read it and they can understand who you are behind the pen and paper, that will be the best way to replicate a college panel reading your essay and how they may perceive it

➤ *Recommendation letters from a teacher and counselor*

➤ Teacher recommendations:

- Typically colleges require 2 teacher recommendations. It is best to ask a teacher whose discipline is parallel to your future career interests or a teacher whose class where you have shown improvement. You can use this [teacher brag sheet](#).
- Ask your teacher *in-person* at least **three weeks** in advance if they are willing to write you a letter of recommendation. If they say yes, they will provide you with a teacher brag sheet to complete & return to them. You can also provide them with a resume. Be sure to submit those materials at least **two weeks** prior to your application deadlines to allow them time to write your recommendation.
- In Common App, add the teacher into your specific schools within Common App (if they are not in CA, you will need to add them to the school-specific application/portal).
- Be sure to write them a thank you letter afterwards!

➤ Counselor recommendations:

- Notify your counselor that your applications require a counselor recommendation.
- Add your counselor into the main profile page of your Common Application (or other school application portal).
- Complete the [counselor recommendation packet](#) and email to your counselor at least **two weeks** before your application deadline.

- Optional letters
 - You may provide an additional optional third letter of recommendation from an administrator, coach, or internship supervisor.

Are you a student athlete?

- Be sure to register through [NCAA eligibility center](#)
- Send your transcript to NCAA through Parchment
- Notify your counselor that you are looking to play D1 or D2 sports in college

Financial Aid & Scholarships

➤ *Where to find scholarships*

- [Godwin Scholarship Newsletter](#)
- [Niche.com](#)
- [SallieMae](#) (with lots of college financial savings tips!)
- [Unigo](#)
- [High Five Scholarships](#)
- [Opportunity Scholarship- for Juniors and Seniors!!](#)
- [psat.org/scholarships](#)
- [Air Force/ROTC Four-Year Scholarship](#)
- <https://bold.org/scholarships/virginia/>

➤ *FAFSA*

- FAFSA= Free application for Federal Student Aid
- [Here you will find the application](#) that you may begin submitting as of December 1st (the sooner you apply, the more free \$\$\$\$ that is available)
- [How to complete the FAFSA; Completing the FAFSA: What you need to know](#)

➤ *GRASP*

- GRASP= Greater Richmond Aspiration Scholarship Program
- Godwin has a GRASP advisor, Cathy Semel, who holds meetings with students and their parents to walk them through their FAFSA application (what to include and what to leave out). Just meeting with her makes you eligible for the GRASP scholarship. She can also provide you more information about other scholarships.
- Mrs. Semel will start taking appointments virtually this Fall. She can be reached at godwin@grasp4va.com or 804-223-0158. She is available by phone, text, email and also virtually meetings. Be sure to ask about her GRASP scholarship, too!
- Explore the GRASP website and subscribe to their newsletter at <https://grasp4va.org/>.

➤ *Other financial aid assistance*

- Need a financial aid checklist? [Try this one!](#)

- www.fafsa.gov
- finaid.org
- Fastweb.com
- www.collegecost.ed.gov
- financialaidtoolkit.ed.gov
- www.highfivescholarships.com
- studentaid.gov

COVID Updates

- [Higher Ed and COVID information from SCHEV](#) (State Council of Higher Ed for VA)
- Here are a few tidbits of advice from a college admissions counselor:
 - If students missed extracurricular opportunities due to COVID, they should share details on their activities list or in the additional information section instead of the COVID essay prompt. This is for tone reasons, keeping in mind that admissions officers will be reading thousands of essays about COVID this fall.
 - If a student's profile has been negatively affected due to the missed opportunity, they can invest more in essays and interviews to try and bridge that. For example, if they write an awesome essay, that can overcome a less developed profile even more so than in past years.
 - For schools that have gone test optional as a result of COVID, they truly mean test optional where you do not have to take an SAT/ACT test or submit scores.
 - You can search for a list of [all test optional schools here](#).

Post-secondary education opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities

- [ThinkCollege](#)
- <https://aceitincollege.org/> (VCU)
- <https://lancerlearning.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Longwood-Life-Brochure.pdf> (Longwood)
- <https://www.projectsearch.us/> (St. Mary's-Vocational Opportunity)
- <https://www.imdetermined.org/youth-summit/>

Other links and presentations:

- [Junior College/Career presentation](#)
- [Higher Ed Data and Articles from SCHEV](#)
 - Specific college data: [Example from UVA](#)
- Bigfuture.collegeboard.org
- [College Board College Essentials](#)
- [ECMC](#)
- niche.com
- Cappex.com

- Certificate programs:
 - [Reynolds Community College](#)
 - [John Tyler Community College](#)
 - [Trade Schools](#)

Interested in the military?

- Talk to your counselor about taking the [ASVAB test](#) and to get connected with a military recruiter!

Looking for general career guidance?

- [VA Wizard](#)
- [Major Clarity](#) allows you to watch videos of professionals day to day responsibilities
- [VA Career View](#)
- [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)
- [Career Finder on College Board](#)
- Resume builder:
 - <https://www.resumebuilder.com/high-school-resume-examples/>
 - <https://www.resumebuilder.com/create-a-resume/>
- Here is a [career lesson](#) you could use to help determine what it is you are interested in pursuing as a college major or future career.

Know that you are not alone in this process! We meet with every senior in September/October to walk them through this process in more detail. We also meet with every 9-11th grader each year during scheduling season to discuss their Academic & Career Plan to align with their future goals. We are always here to help you through this college application journey.

