

# HACKLEY COLLEGE COUNSELING





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# HACKLEY SCHOOL COLLEGE COUNSELING HANDBOOK

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This will provide links to specific topics addressed in the Handbook.*

# *College Counseling Philosophy*

At Hackley we believe that exploring one's goals, considering one's college options, and applying to colleges can and should be an exciting and highly developmental process. As we prepare and support our students, we have several primary goals: to make sure students are ready to begin the college process, to help them explore their goals and know themselves, to introduce them to their college choices, and to support them as they research their options, present themselves to colleges, and complete their applications. From creating a curricular plan to devising a testing schedule, from suggesting college options to offering mock interviews, from helping with college essays to coaching students on how to present themselves to our 100+ college visitors each year, we consider ours a full-service program.

We also offer one other thing: a healthy perspective. While many of our students attend the most selective colleges in the nation – and we prepare our students to maximize their options – we believe it is more important that students find collegiate programs and communities that “fit” them – schools where they are most likely to realize their full potential academically and personally, regardless of the college's selectivity or brand name. Based on our collective 60+ years of college admissions and college counseling experience, we have come to believe strongly in the “win-win scenario,” as every Hackley student has the ability to find great matches in colleges that represent a range of admissions selectivity. Hackley is a rigorous school with high-achieving students, but we do things a little bit differently: we celebrate learning, personal growth, friendship, community, and the “college fit” rather than our “college list.”

We wish you the best, whenever you begin to explore the world of higher education, and we look forward to working with you!

Jean Nadell, Rebecca Hall, Sara Kratzok and Nicole Frasco

## *College Counseling Team*

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## College Search and Application Timeline

### Junior Year

#### FALL:

**For the Class of 2025:** Prepare (or continue preparing) for the **SAT or ACT**. Register online for the March Digital SAT by early December ([collegeboard.org](https://collegeboard.org)) or for the December ACT by early October ([services.actstudent.org](https://services.actstudent.org)). Include Hackley's CEEB code when registering: **335540**.

College evening in early fall for first-time junior parents.

**October Digital PSAT:** The PSAT is a *practice* test for the SAT. Scores “count” *only* in the National Merit Scholarship and National Recognition Programs for African American, Hispanic American or Latinx, and Indigenous students; these scores are *not* sent to colleges.

Sign up for subsequent ACT (February/April) or SAT (May/June) exams, if desired.

#### WINTER:

Early January: College evening for juniors and their parents.

January or early February: Initial family meetings with college counselor. Students, parents/guardians, and college counselor together create “exploratory” college list, discuss testing, senior year curriculum, financial aid, and other important issues.

ACT offered in February; Digital SAT offered in March.

Research colleges online using SCOIR, contact admissions offices, read about colleges in *Fiske Guide* and *Princeton Review*.

Plan to visit several colleges over spring break (in-person if at all possible; otherwise, attend *online* tours and information sessions), to test your theories about what you would like in a college. It is very important to visit schools representing a *range* of selectivity.

#### SPRING:

Visit some colleges during *spring break* (in-person if at all possible; otherwise, attend *online* tours and information sessions); interviews are not advised at this time. (Note: Juniors will *not* be excused from school to visit colleges except in special circumstances, such as a scheduled audition or special athletic recruitment program; the written approval of one's college counselor is required.)

SAT offered in early May and early June; ACT offered in April, June and July (July ACT exam not offered in New York).

Plan summer college visits (in-person if at all possible). Choose schools to research and visit based on spring break visits, chances of admission, and other research. It is very important to find schools you really like in a range of selectivity, and it is especially important to find “likely” and “very likely” schools that you really like.



Meet with your counselor in April (after spring break), to adjust your college list, review grades and scores, and make a plan for the balance of the spring and the summer months.

Do a mock interview with your counselor in May.

Consider which two of your teachers you want to write recommendation letters for you for the college application process; discuss your choices with your counselor *first*, and then ask your teachers, *in person*, before the end of the school year. Submit the teacher recommendation questionnaire to your teachers and to your college counselor within two weeks of asking the teacher to write for you.

Attend the required Common Application workshop held by your counselor in late May.

#### **SUMMER:**

Visit colleges (in-person if at all possible), read college literature, do deep research on each college you are considering and work to narrow down your college list. Make sure to visit *all* of the colleges you're seriously considering before the end of the summer; there's very little time to visit during the school year. June is often a good time to visit colleges.

→ Visit "very likely" schools early in the summer (the most important college to find is a "very likely" college that you *really like*). *Remember also that if you don't visit a college (in-person if at all possible, otherwise online), you may jeopardize your chances of admission.*

If on-campus interviews are offered, schedule and do the interview when you visit the college campus over the summer. If not offered or if you absolutely cannot visit the school in person, take advantage of possible virtual interview opportunities. Interviews help to establish your interest in and "fit" for colleges and thus are very important, even when they're not required. They're also a great way to learn more about a particular school!

We ***strongly encourage*** students to write **drafts of college essays** and complete the Common Application activity list before school starts in the fall. It will make your fall much saner.

#### **JULY:**

ACT offered in July.

Register for appropriate tests. Note that the August SAT and September ACT tests are the only "fall" tests *sure* to arrive in time for ED and EA application reading. **The registration deadline for the August SAT is in July; for the September ACT the deadline is in early August.** As always, we recommend registering much earlier than that, since test centers may fill up early.

### **Senior Year**

#### **AUGUST:**

SAT offered in late August (but test centers are limited - register early if this is an important testing date for you).

If you haven't already worked on these, start the Common Application personal essay and activity list. "Invite" your college counselor on the Common Application (see instructions from College Counseling Office).

#### SEPTEMBER:

Early to mid-September, meet individually with your college counselor to develop/finalize a balanced application list, and timeline for completing college essays and applications.

If you have not already done so, ask two teachers by no later than Sept. 15 if they would be willing to write recommendations for you. "Invite" your teachers (after they've agreed to write) via the Common Application and "assign" them to each of your colleges. You must also fill out our office's [teacher recommendation questionnaire](#) by no later than Sept. 20th and submit that to both the teacher and to your college counselor. Remember that ED, EA and "rolling" admission schools have early due dates.

Send your official test score reports (via the testing agency's website - ACT or College Board) to the schools that require official score reports, 4 weeks before the application deadline. (Note: you must send score reports to colleges, when required; Hackley cannot do this for you). Many colleges now allow students to "self-report" their scores on their applications, but this must be confirmed on the college's website.

#### OCTOBER:

Families applying for financial aid file the FAFSA and the "CSS Profile" forms (not all schools require the CSS Profile). *Due to major revisions being made to its content and format, the FAFSA, which all schools require for processing financial aid applications and distributing Federal aid, will be available later than usual this year - sometime in late December.* Be sure to fill out the FAFSA as soon as it becomes available.

#### OCTOBER/NOVEMBER:

Students do the bulk of their applications. Students applying to colleges with "rolling admission" continue to submit applications in October. October 15, November 1, and November 15 are common Early Decision and Early Action application deadlines.

**December 1** is our suggested "target date" for completing all college applications. (Note that ED, EA and rolling applications are submitted much earlier.) While *actual* deadlines are established by the colleges themselves, experience has taught us that the senior year is much saner if you aim to complete all applications by December 1. In any case, we require three weeks to process *our* part of your application, called the School Report Form.

#### DECEMBER - APRIL:

Students receive admission decisions from colleges. **Keep your grades up!** (Offers of admission are always contingent upon completion of the senior year with similar grades as previously earned, and we have seen offers of admission revoked for both academic and behavioral reasons.) Second trimester grades will be sent to colleges in early March, right around the time many colleges are making decisions.

**JANUARY:**

Seniors “deferred” from ED and EA admission rounds should see their counselors about sending updated information and a letter of continued interest.

**APRIL:**

By mid-April, you should have received all admission decisions and financial aid awards. You must select a college and make a non-refundable tuition deposit at *only one* institution by **May 1**, even if you’re on a “waiting list” at another institution. You are also required to notify all of your *other* colleges, in writing, that you *do not* intend to enroll there. Students on waiting lists should see their counselors about final decisions and waiting list strategies. Students required to confirm previously self-reported SAT or ACT scores (to the one college they are attending) should send those scores directly to the college from the ACT or the College Board.

## ***Rules and Expectations for the College Search and Application Processes***

We are very lucky to be part of a school where students, families, and school employees value our community and treat one another accordingly, with respect, integrity, and friendly concern. Those three principles also guide our expectations for students and families in the college search and application processes.

### **Behavioral Guidelines**

It is no secret that the college search and application processes can sometimes cause stress, so it is important that we operate with a shared understanding around expectations and that we treat one another with kindness, consideration, and sensitivity during this time. We often tell students to limit their conversations about “college stuff,” so that the topic doesn’t dominate their daily lives. We also suggest to students that they not overshare their experiences and opinions, as doing so can cause misunderstanding and social friction. Students should encourage one another in the process, respecting their unique goals, life journeys, and college choices.

### **Gossip and Competition**

Every year we ask juniors, in their questionnaires, what they like best about Hackley. The overwhelming number one response is the Hackley community. We are very fortunate that our juniors and seniors generally maintain a warm and respectful relationship with one another throughout the college process, avoiding a tendency in many schools towards gossip and unhealthy competition.

Gossip is idle talk or rumor, especially about the personal or private affairs of others. Students and families should not share others’ college admissions goals, interests, college lists, results, qualifications, or any personal information without explicit permission from the student in question. We also strongly suggest that students not share their own college process or their personal information with anyone but their closest and most trustworthy friends, and that family members respect the students’ privacy and the cohesiveness of the School community by avoiding the subject with their own peers. Students and families must not keep track of other students’ decisions or share such information with others. Years of experience have also shown us that one’s college search process is best not shared on social media, both for the protection of the individual and the interrelationship of the community.

Hackley is very fortunate in that its students tend to be more supportive and less competitive with one another than is true at some other schools. Competition among classmates can be extremely harmful to a school community and contrary to Hackley’s values. Students should understand that they are not in direct competition with one another in the college admissions process, except to the degree that they are in competition with other applicants of similar backgrounds and abilities from many, many schools, in the Northeast and nationwide. There is no quota for Hackley acceptances to a particular college; we have had years when certain highly selective colleges have accepted far more students than any such quota would allow, as well as years when those same institutions have not admitted a single Hackley applicant. In essence, colleges will admit whomever they want, based on what the individual students might contribute to their community, generally without regard to any sort of apportionment among high schools.

### **Integrity**



Students are expected to represent themselves and their intentions with honesty and integrity as they communicate with their Hackley college counselors, their families, colleges, and college representatives. Furthermore, their college applications and all supplementary materials must be completed accurately, honestly, and thoroughly. It is the students' responsibility to complete the entire application themselves, and to make sure their writing is completely their own work. Writing must not be over-edited by others, no matter how good the editors' intentions may be. Since well-meaning editors are often unfamiliar with the ethical limitations on such advice, we provide a quote from Hackley's former History Department Head, Bill Davies, as guidance:

"It is not only acceptable, but desirable, to seek help with writing. We all benefit from having another person with whom to share ideas or another pair of eyes to read over our writing. Violations of academic integrity occur, however, when consultation shifts to creation; that is, when another person actually provides content rather than guidance. For example, it is fine to have a parent, sibling or tutor read over a draft in order to say something like, "Your third paragraph doesn't seem to have much to do with your thesis," or, "I can't see how your conclusion follows from your argument." No other person should, however, rewrite the paragraph or thesis to make it better, nor should they tell you how to rewrite it. Simply put, it is perfectly acceptable to have help in pointing out a needed improvement; it is not acceptable for anyone other than you to write (or tell you how to write) the needed improvement."

Not only is it simply wrong to present unoriginal or over-edited work as one's own, it is also not to the student's advantage. College admissions officers read thousands of applications, year after year. They know what an original, 17-year-old's essay sounds like, and if it sounds over-edited or inauthentic, it won't help the applicant (in fact, it could possibly hurt the applicant). The difference may not be apparent to people who haven't worked in college admissions, just as a forged painting may only be discernible to an art expert.

Likewise, students should be careful not to exaggerate or misrepresent their records, activities, accomplishments, and intentions in college applications, in interviews, or in any other means of communication.

## **Rules and Regulations**

### **College Visits**

Students are urged to visit colleges that they may wish to attend, as this is important to selecting colleges and to demonstrating interest in them. Juniors will not be excused from school to visit colleges except in special circumstances (such as a scheduled audition or special athletic recruitment program) and with the approval of one's college counselor. While we urge students to complete all of their college visits before the beginning of senior year, seniors who must miss school to visit a college must get permission from their college counselor at least one week in advance. Hackley also provides a Senior College Visit Day on a Monday in late September/early October, a day when seniors are excused from classes.

### **College Representative Visits to Hackley**

Each year, in September and October, approximately one hundred colleges and universities send admissions representatives to visit Hackley, to meet with interested seniors. Often these visitors comment on Hackley students' thoughtfulness, enthusiasm and friendliness. We strongly encourage seniors to meet with these representatives, to ask questions, to demonstrate interest, and to learn

from the responses to their peers' questions about the institution or its admissions process. Often these meetings occur during class time, in which case the senior must get the teacher's written permission to miss the class (using our office's form) at least two days in advance of the meeting.

### **The College Application Process**

Hackley expects all of its students and families to abide by the rules and expectations of the college admissions process as explained in this handbook, as well as those set forth by the colleges to which the student applies. Any attempts to deceive, cheat, or gain unfair advantage during the process will be subject to Hackley's disciplinary system. Family member violations may be interpreted as breaching the expectations inherent in Hackley's school-family partnership and may therefore influence the status of the enrollment contract.

Students (and their families, where concerned) are expected to follow the rules, requirements, and agreements set forth within the college applications themselves and by Hackley. These include, but are not limited to, the following.

- **Early Decision** commitments, by the letter and in spirit (see Hackley's own Early Decision Agreement form)
- **Reporting probations, suspensions**, as required (see Hackley Upper School Student Handbook)
- **Making an enrollment deposit at only one college**, and in a timely fashion
- **Withdrawing excess applications** and turning down excess offers of admission in a timely fashion, as instructed by the College Counseling Office

Students will consult with their college counselor before making a commitment to any college. They must provide any required documentation, and not make any commitments to a college or its representatives that they cannot honor.

### **Guidance, Assistance, and Student Responsibility**

Hackley students are lucky to have as much help as they need from their college counselors. The advising process is intrinsically personalized to the student from its outset. Starting in January of junior year, we meet with students to advise them in all aspects of discovering, selecting, visiting, and interviewing for colleges. We provide personalized advice on standardized testing and on course selection for senior year, we help students develop their own college search criteria, and we suggest colleges for each student that are likely to meet those criteria. We advise juniors throughout the spring, as they visit colleges and refine their college searches, we conduct mock interviews with them before the summer interview season, and we help them choose teachers to ask for recommendations. We hold a Common Application workshop before the summer, and we remain available during the summer, to provide guidance as students continue to visit colleges and start writing college essays. During senior year, we help students finalize their lists and weigh strategic issues, and we spend a great deal of time helping them on the very personalized details of their applications, from deciding when and where to send which test scores, to which majors/schools they might apply to within a university. We read application essays and "short answers," and we review other critical parts of the application, such as the "activity" section. We help students determine what other application requirements each school may have. In essence, we provide a full-service college counseling program.

**It is up to the student, however, to take advantage of our assistance, to follow our recommendations to set up appointments, share their work with us in a timely fashion, use the organizational tools we provide, and follow our instructions in requesting that transcripts and recommendations be sent to colleges.** This level of responsibility is not new to students; they already take ownership in completing their homework, writing papers, and preparing for tests. We are available to provide all the help they need, but in the end, it is up to students to take responsibility for monitoring their day-to-day progress. We have great faith that they will complete the search and application processes successfully, as Hackley students have done for more than 120 years, and that by spring of senior year they will have grown significantly in terms of personal responsibility, sense of identity, and self-confidence.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Students

This is a rewarding and exciting process, and it requires your leadership. This is *your* future. *Your* actions will determine *your* directions. No one can tell you what the right answers are. There are no daily assignments, no quizzes along the way, no prerequisites, no progress reports, no grades. Many people care about you and how you determine your future, but they're only coaches on the sidelines. Here is a short list of your responsibilities:

- You must take an active role in the process. You'll get out of the search and application process as much, or as little, as you put into it.
- Keep a healthy perspective. This process doesn't have to be stressful if you are organized and remember that the glass is 95% full: you're going to college (☺) and with your Hackley education, you'll be ready to excel there.
- Make sure to set up a testing schedule with your counselor, and to REGISTER for the tests in advance of the registration deadlines.
- Research colleges online and in recommended guides (such as the *Fiske Guide* and the Princeton Review's "*The Best 389 Colleges*").
- Come up with thoughtful questions before visiting each college – questions that really matter to *you* – for the information session presenter (usually admissions staff) and the tour guide (usually a student). Otherwise, the visit will be less useful and certainly less interesting. This is also pertinent for some virtual tours and information sessions that may allow students to ask questions.
- Set up a mock interview with your college counselor before the summer.
- Meet with and update your counselor regularly.
- Keep your parents informed about what you're doing and thinking. This will help them worry (and nag) less, and they'll feel free to allow you more control of the process.
- Organize yourself, using the tools provided by the college counselors.
- Complete a draft of at least one essay over the summer, after discussing the topic with your counselor.
- Visit all of the colleges you're interested in before the end of the summer (in-person when possible, otherwise attending online tours and information sessions), and make sure these colleges represent a range of selectivity.
  - *Put at least as much energy into finding and visiting likely and very likely colleges that you really like as you do into finding more selective colleges for your list.*
- Follow your counselor's instructions, plan what you need to do and when you need to do it, and meet all deadlines. This is *your* responsibility, not your parents' or your counselor's. If you need help, seek out your counselor, who can provide tools to help you keep on track.
- Complete every part of your applications yourself; your parents should not even know your Common Application password!
- Show your essays, short answers and extracurricular section to your counselor **at least two weeks before they're due.**

## Parents

The trickiest part of the process, for parents, is how to provide just enough impetus to motivate your children, without taking control. Walking the fine line between managing your child's life and letting go is nothing new to parents! You may be tempted to take control, but it's important that you respect your child's ownership of the process. You can be very helpful to your child, but you should also understand your limits.

- Be patient with your children and allow them to ease into the process. They won't (and shouldn't) have all the answers at the beginning; allow them time to explore and figure it out without trying to "correct" them. It will usually take a few months before students really take ownership of the process.
- Ask your child how you can help with various organizational tasks:
  - purchasing college guides and test prep materials
  - arranging test prep classes/tutors, as may be appropriate
  - setting up spring break college visits and registering for virtual visit opportunities (just be sure to use your student's contact information, not yours!)
  - setting up summer visits (and researching interview policies, where appropriate)
- Learn about college costs and financial aid, as appropriate, and give your child early and clear guidance as to the role finances will play in college selection.
- Listen to your child's thoughts about colleges, without passing judgment or sharing your own opinions. You may ask clarifying questions, but keep your own preferences at bay.
- Help your child brainstorm questions that will elicit information germane to their own priorities. This is especially useful prior to college visits.
- Be sure this process is about your child's college education and not about your desires or fears.
- Be realistic in putting together the college list (consult our online admissions data and your child's counselor) and make your children put at least as much energy into finding and visiting "likely" and "very likely" colleges *that they really like* as they do into finding more selective colleges for their list. Importantly, react with as much enthusiasm to the less selective colleges that fit their needs as to the more selective colleges.
- Ask your child if they would like help organizing the application process, or suggest asking the counselor for organizational tips or tools. (Remember: we are happy to help students organize, but it's up to them to ask for our assistance and to then carry out the plan.)
- Students must complete their applications themselves, and parent involvement in this task is inappropriate and, most often, counterproductive. That doesn't mean your child can't show you the essay if they want to, but be careful to give only general reactions. We are professionals at this. We provide thorough instruction in class and in workshops on completing applications; we ask students to seek our help individually; and we will gladly help students with every part of the application for which they seek our guidance.

Most importantly, remind your child how proud you are of them, and reassure them that this is a "win-win" situation; they will attend a college that meets their needs, and their motivation and Hackley education will prepare them to do great things in college.

## College Counselors

We counselors are eager to support students and their parents in many ways throughout the college search and application processes:

- We provide timelines, advice and detailed information about the process – in classes, in regular grade meetings, in workshops, and in individual meetings as often as they wish.
- We try to get to know each student and family so that we can suggest specific colleges which might meet a student's needs.
- We will give students a rough idea of their chances of admission to these schools and advise students on building a balanced list of colleges.
- We can help students plan for special talent-based admissions processes (such as athletic recruitment, auditions and portfolios), and consider special types of school options (such as conservatories, art schools, and military academies).
- We can advise families about the financial aid process and financial alternatives.
- We can suggest methods of exploration and decision-making. We provide information and suggestions about visiting colleges and interviewing, and we do mock interviews with most of our students before the summer.
- We give advice about standardized testing and course selection.
- We advise students during the application process itself, help students with their essays, activities list, and "short answers."
- We maintain professional relationships with college admissions offices, and we support our students' applications to colleges with our written recommendations and other written and verbal communication with admissions officers during the application reading seasons.
- We advise students about representing themselves in person and in writing – to put their best selves forward – and we also advise them how to demonstrate genuine interest in the colleges they are considering, so as to make them attractive candidates.
- We typically host approximately 100 college visitors at Hackley each fall and help students make the most of those visits.
- We provide occasional reminders to students and parents, and we are available to answer as many questions as students and parents may have during the process.
- Most importantly, we hope we can help make this a *positive*, "win-win" process for students by helping them find a number of colleges that "fit" them, in a range of selectivity.

While we are here to support students in many ways throughout the process, of course we are not surrogate parents. That is, we don't *drive* the process or *manage* each student's applications. We are always here as a resource and advocate, and we will teach students how to "own" the process themselves. We will give them all the tools they need to succeed, and in the end, the students accept the ultimate responsibility for completing the process. And by accepting and fulfilling this responsibility, students gain independence, confidence, maturity, pride, and a sense of self – all of which are critical as they head off to college.



# HACKLEY COLLEGE COUNSELING

## POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR SENIORS

As we dive into college application season it is critical to clarify our policies, rules, responsibilities, and expectations for students. It is also important for parents to understand these policies and expectations in order to support the School in guiding seniors through this process, and for parents to abide by these expectations themselves. Below are the policies of the College Counseling Office and Hackley School. Further details can be found in our *Hackley College Counseling Handbook*, on the College Counseling page on HOL.

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that since we work together in a time-sensitive environment, I will check my Hackley email at least once every school day, and respond to college counseling emails by the end of the following school day (barring illness), just as my counselor does for me. I understand that my counselor is eager to meet with me when I ask for help, but I recognize that they get very busy meeting with other students during the busiest weeks of the year and that I need to make requests well in advance during these crunch times.

I understand that it is my responsibility to complete my college applications in a timely manner, and to arrange the submission of all supporting materials (recommendations, transcripts, test scores) according to the instructions and timelines of each college and of Hackley's College Counseling Office.

I understand that it is my responsibility to be proactive and seek out the advice and support of my college counselor whenever I need it. I also understand that I need to seek out support weeks in advance of any deadline, as it takes time to edit and re-work essays and other documents and complete many of the tasks involved in applying to college.

I understand that it is my responsibility to consult Hackley's list of college visitors on SCOIR and to seek written permission to miss class, where necessary, using the proper form, at least two days in advance of the meeting.

I understand that if I can't visit a college on senior college visit day or on another non-school day (Saturdays, Indigenous Peoples Day, etc.), and I feel I need to miss school to visit a college campus, I will seek out my counselor for permission at least a week in advance.

I will attend all scheduled meetings with my college counselor, and I understand that missing a scheduled meeting decreases my counselor's availability to my classmates. If I need to cancel a meeting, for some reason, I will email my counselor right away.

I will apply to all colleges and universities that accept the Common App using only the Common App. *As a note, the Common App has a 20 school maximum.* For the few schools that do not accept the Common App, I will communicate with the College Counseling Office regarding the application submission process.

If I apply Early Decision, I agree to abide by the college's and Hackley's ED agreements. I also agree to abide by each college's Restrictive or Single-Choice Early Action policies.

I will consult with my college counselor before making a commitment to any college. I will provide any required documentation, and I will not make any commitments to a college or its representatives that I cannot honor.

I will follow the application timelines provided by the College Counseling Office, and I understand that my counselor is **not** generally available on evenings, weekends, and school breaks, except in case of a real, unexpected college counseling “emergency.”

I understand that Hackley School does not report SAT, ACT, or AP scores to colleges, and that it is my responsibility to ascertain the requirements and reporting methods for each college, remembering that it may take up to 3-4 weeks for a testing agency to report scores to colleges.

I understand that Hackley School will assist me in the reporting of disciplinary infractions (such as probation and suspension) as required by colleges, and that Hackley will report to these colleges any post-application submission instances of such disciplinary infractions until I graduate.

I understand that once admitted, I must commit to only **one college by May 1st**. I also understand that Hackley will send my final high school transcript to that one college or university shortly after I graduate.

I will treat my peers with respect during the college application process and follow the principles outlined in this excerpt from our College Counseling Handbook, below.

*“We are very lucky to be part of a school where students, families, and school employees value our community and treat one another accordingly, with respect, integrity, and friendly concern. Those three principles also guide our expectations for students and families in the college search and application processes... Students should not give college advice to their peers, as it may well be misleading... students should encourage one another in the process, respecting their unique goals, life journeys, and college choices... Students and families should not share others’ college admissions goals, interests, college lists, results, qualifications, or any personal information without explicit permission from the student in question. We also strongly suggest that students not share their own college process or their personal information with anyone but their closest and most trustworthy friends, and that family members respect the students’ privacy and the cohesiveness of the School community by avoiding the subject with their own peers. Students and families must not attempt to keep track of other students’ decisions or share such information with others. Years of experience have also shown us that one’s college search process and admissions results are best not shared on social media, both for the protection of the individual and the consideration of others within the community.”*

**I have read and understood the above statements. If I had questions about any of the above, I have asked my counselor for clarification before signing.**

**Signature:**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**\_\_\_\_\_

## Standardized Testing

### Variations on College *Test Requirements*

1. SAT or ACT required. Most colleges suspended SAT/ACT requirements during the pandemic. With relatively few exceptions, this suspension will continue for the Class of 2024 and probably beyond. Some notable schools or school systems that do require test scores include (this is not an exhaustive list): MIT, Georgetown, Purdue, Florida's state schools, Georgia's state schools, Tennessee's state schools, Military Academies.
2. No testing required. There are currently over 2,000 test-optional schools; some are test-blind. (Test-blind means that the college will not consider scores, even if a student submits them.)
3. N.B.: the College Board discontinued SAT Subject Tests as of January 2021

### When to take the tests:

#### SOPHOMORE YEAR

##### PRE-ACT AND DIGITAL PSAT PRACTICE TEST:

- Offered at Hackley in February (Pre-ACT) and March (digital PSAT practice test). Use test scores and personal preferences to determine which test to prepare for, and to take, by December of junior year. Scores do *not* go to colleges.

#### JUNIOR YEAR

##### PSAT (maybe):

- Those who are interested may take the PSAT/NMSQT at Hackley in October. Hackley does *not* require that juniors take the PSAT (except for anyone who isn't planning on taking the ACT or SAT by December), and **the vast majority of our juniors do not take the PSAT**. The PSAT is a *practice* test for the SAT. Scores "count" *only* in the National Merit or College Board Recognition Program scholarships (for students who are African American, Hispanic American or Latinx, or Indigenous); these scores are *not* used in college admissions.

##### SAT/ACT:

- We recommend that all juniors take the SAT or ACT by December of junior year, *unless* the guidance *from their counselor* is to delay testing due to academic and/or preparation issues, or to not pursue standardized testing at all.
- Juniors may retake the ACT or SAT in the winter and/or spring.

*OFTEN, JUNIORS TAKE...*

Advanced Placement Exams: Given at Hackley, on weekdays, during the first two full weeks of May. Required for AP subjects you're taking, and optional for other subjects, most commonly AP English Language and/or AP U.S. History. You choose what scores to send where – or not send. (We discuss optional AP exams and guide students through the registration process in our Intro. to College class in the fall of junior year.)

## SENIOR YEAR

### SAT/ACT:

SAT: possible last attempt in August (or occasionally October, November or December for regular decision applications).

ACT: possible last attempt in July or September (or occasionally October or December for regular decision applications).

### *SAT Test Dates:*

SAT Test Date	Registration Deadline	Late Registration & Testing Changes Deadline
August 24, 2024	August 9, 2024	August 13, 2024
October 5, 2024	September 20, 2024	September 24, 2024
November 2, 2024	October 18, 2024	October 22, 2024
December 7, 2024	November 22, 2024	November 26, 2024
March 8, 2025	February 21, 2025	February 25, 2025
May 3, 2025	April 18, 2025	April 22, 2025
June 7, 2025	May 23, 2025	May 27, 2025

### *ACT TEST DATES:*

Test Date	Regular Registration Deadline (Late Fee Applies After This Date)	Late Registration Deadline	Photo Upload and Standby Deadline
September 14, 2024	August 9, 2024	August 25, 2024	
October 26, 2024	September 20, 2024	October 7, 2024	
December 14, 2024	November 8, 2024	November 22, 2024	
February 8, 2025	January 3, 2025	January 20, 2025	
April 5, 2025	February 28, 2025	March 16, 2025	
June 14, 2025	May 9, 2025	May 26, 2025	
July 12, 2025*	June 6, 2025	June 20, 2025	

\*No test centers are scheduled in the state of New York for the July test date.

It is the student's responsibility to register for these exams and, in fall of senior year, to have official score reports sent to the colleges that require official score reports. We will counsel students as to which tests to take and when, beginning in our first family meeting in January or February. When registering for the SAT or ACT, please remember Hackley's **CEEB code: 335540**. It is very important to use the same name and initials each time you register (it is always best to use your full given/legal name when registering for any standardized test). We recommend that you *sign up early* for tests: the closer the deadline looms, the harder it may be to get a seat at a preferred testing site.

## College Application Decision Plans

It is important to research the admissions deadlines and decision plans at each college you're considering. However, what you find out may be confusing. To help you understand the various plans, the most common ones are explained below.

### "Deadline" Admissions Plans

Most selective colleges operate admissions processes that have specific application deadlines. These colleges collect all of the applications they receive up until the deadline, then they read them all and select from among the entire group of applications. Applying earlier than the deadline does not give the applicant any advantage; the applicant is in competition with all of the other applicants who apply under that decision plan.

**REGULAR DECISION:** This is the most common, basic process. Applicants apply by the deadline (often January 1<sup>st</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup>), receive an admissions decision (usually between the third week of March and the first week of April), and have until May 1<sup>st</sup> to choose from among their offers of admission.

**EARLY DECISION ("ED"):** *This is a "binding" admissions process. The student pledges to attend the college, if admitted.* Students apply early (usually by November 1<sup>st</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup>) and receive an early admissions decision from the college (usually in mid-December). *If admitted, students must enroll in the college, withdraw their applications to other colleges, and turn down any other offers of admission.* (There are special arrangements regarding ED financial aid applicants; see your counselor.) Obviously, students may *not* apply to more than one ED college at a time. **If you apply ED to a college, we require you to fill out Hackley's Early Decision Agreement form.**

**EARLY DECISION II ("ED2"):** *This is also a "binding" admissions process.* ED2 works just like ED, except that the due dates are later. ED2 deadlines are often January 1<sup>st</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup>, and the applicant usually hears by February 1<sup>st</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup>. *If admitted, students must enroll in the college, withdraw all of their other applications, and turn down any other offers of admission.* This second ED process exists primarily for two reasons: to allow applicants more time to make up their minds about such a commitment, and to allow students who were denied admission in an earlier EA or ED round to apply ED2 to another college. **If you apply ED2 to a college, we require you to fill out Hackley's Early Decision Agreement form.**

**EARLY ACTION ("EA"):** *This is NOT a binding admissions process.* EA students apply early (often by November 1<sup>st</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup>) and receive an early admissions decision from the college (sometimes in mid-December; sometimes not until January or February). However, *students admitted under an Early Action plan are NOT required to attend the college.* Students may wait until May 1<sup>st</sup> to decide whether or not to enroll in an EA college that accepts them. Generally, students may apply to more than one EA college and can even apply ED to one college and EA to others (however, there are some notable exceptions, see below). Of course, an ED commitment is binding and always applies.

**RESTRICTIVE EARLY ACTION:** This plan allows EA applicants to apply to other EA colleges, but prohibits these students from applying under ED plans.

**SINGLE CHOICE EARLY ACTION:** A few colleges have this modified EA plan. It works just like the EA plan described above, in that students apply early and receive a decision early, but they are not bound to attend the college. *The difference is that Single Choice Early Action applicants may not apply to most other private colleges under an EA or ED plan.* Some of the most selective colleges instituted this plan to prevent the strongest applicants from taking multiple spots at the most selective EA colleges.

### **“Rolling” Admissions Plans**

Colleges that have rolling admission review applicants on a “rolling” basis. As the applications come in, admissions officers read the applications in batches and send out decisions as other applications are still coming in. A college might, for example, start accepting applications on September 15<sup>th</sup>, and start sending out decisions on October 1<sup>st</sup>. *It is generally in the student’s best interest to apply early in the rolling admission process, as it often becomes more selective as the admissions cycle progresses.*



## Hackley School College Counseling Office

### Early Decision Agreement

In its simplest form, Early Decision seems pretty straightforward: you apply, you commit to attend if accepted, and if you are accepted, you enroll. And 98% of the time, it is that simple. Sometimes, however, there are questions about the details of the process, especially when financial aid is involved. **We are laying out the details here, just to make them clear, so that there are no misunderstandings between our families and the colleges regarding Early Decision.**

When students apply under an Early Decision process, they are required, along with a parent/guardian and their college counselor, to sign an Early Decision Agreement in the Common Application. **In order for the college counselor to sign the Common App's Early Decision Agreement, we require that the applicant and the applicant's parent(s)/guardian(s) understand and agree to the details herein, and sign below, to make sure that there is no confusion as to the nature of the agreement and the procedures it requires.**

There are two types of Early Decision scenarios, each with its own attendant process, depending on the role of financial aid in the decision-making process.

#### **For Early Decision applicants who do NOT require need-based financial aid:**

When you apply under any Early Decision process, you agree that if you are admitted to that college, you will

- accept the offer of admission right away,
- immediately withdraw all other applications, and
- promptly decline all other offers of admission, waiting lists, deferrals, etc.

#### **For Early Decision applicants applying for need-based financial aid:**

While the Early Decision commitment is quite simple for those who don't require financial aid, it requires some explanation for those who do require financial assistance. If you are in this category, Early Decision may be beneficial or limiting, depending on your circumstances:

- **Benefit:** as long as you follow procedures, you will have a preliminary financial aid award if and when you are admitted or shortly thereafter, and you will have the right to back out of the agreement *at that point*, if the financial aid office cannot meet your financial expectations.
- **Limitation:** if you are admitted, you must either make an irrevocable commitment to attend the college, or else decline the offer of admission, at that time, based on your preliminary financial aid award. You may not wait until you have received your regular decision financial aid awards, to make your final commitment.

Because of the above limitations, it is important to have an estimate of your financial aid award before making an Early Decision commitment. In order to get such an estimate, and to ensure a prompt financial aid award, families must

- fill out the college's Net Price Calculator and consult the college's financial aid office with specific questions before going ahead with the Early Decision application, and
- file all required financial aid documents and submit all required supplementary information to the college before the Early Decision financial aid deadline.

If admitted, families must resolve any financial issues as quickly as possible:

- make sure you receive and review your aid award as soon as possible,
- make any appeals, if necessary, within one week of receiving your award, and

Once you have received your final aid award, either

- decline the aid award and the offer of admission within a few days, or
- accept the aid award and the offer of admission within a few days.

If you accept the offer of admission and agree to enroll in the college, then you will need to

- withdraw all other applications, and
- decline any previously received offers of admission, waiting lists, deferrals, etc.

### **Early Decision Agreement**

Whether or not you are applying for financial aid, once you accept the college's offer of admission, you agree that you will not renege on this commitment, and you understand that your reputation, the reputation of Hackley School, and the prospects of future college applicants from Hackley may be dependent upon your honoring this commitment. Following the above rules is required by Hackley School, and any violations may be interpreted as breaching the school-family partnership. Furthermore, in order to protect its reputation and the integrity of the Early Decision process, Hackley may feel compelled to contact involved colleges if a student fails to adhere to the requirements of the Early Decision process as described above.

If you have any questions, or foresee or encounter any situations that don't seem to fall under the above guidelines, you must consult your college counselor for guidance and direction.

We understand and agree to Hackley's Early Decision expectations as described herein.

I am applying apply Early Decision/Early Decision II (circle one) to \_\_\_\_\_  
(college name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of parent/guardian 1

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of parent/guardian 2

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## College Application Strategies Series: “Demonstrating Interest”

*This is the second in our series of College Application Strategies articles. The first article in the series, called Reaching, addresses a topic that is both practical and philosophical: the consequences of applying to colleges that are not likely to offer admission to the applicant. The following article is more narrowly pragmatic, discussing one facet of the admissions practices of the majority of colleges, and suggesting ways in which one can take advantage of these practices—or at least avoid the disadvantages of ignoring them. We begin by explaining the reasons behind these practices, not because the college’s perspective is particularly captivating, but because understanding the colleges’ motivations may help guide the prospective student’s actions.*

### The College Perspective

During the college admissions marketing revolution of the 1980s, many college admissions offices began using data to predict the depth of a student’s interest in a college. This allowed colleges to do a better job of targeting their recruitment of students based on each college’s enrollment requirements and aspirations. Colleges acquired some of this data through the College Board and other organizations that provided student contact addresses, test scores, academic interests, and demographics. Moreover, colleges also began to collect and track their own data directly from their contacts with prospective students. Examining this data through regressive analysis allowed admissions offices to assign what became known as a “contact value,” to each type of student contact (a written response to a mailed brochure, a phone call, a campus visit, or an interview, for example), based on the statistical correlation among each type and combination of student contacts and the student’s eventual enrollment.

Predicting a prospective student’s likelihood to enroll was important to colleges for a variety of reasons. First, it allowed admissions offices to target their recruitment more effectively, allocating work hours, budgets, and other resources appropriately. (Think of it as using the right baits for the right kinds of fish, in the best fishing holes.) Second, it allowed them to make better predictions as to the college’s “yield”—the percentage of admitted students who accept the college’s offer of admission. Students who visited campus and interviewed were more likely to accept an offer, for example, as compared with students who did not. Creating a yield model using the contact value of each admitted student allowed the admissions office to come closer to enrolling the exact number and type of students needed in the freshman class. At this point, the contact value started affecting not only whom the college recruited, but also whom they admitted.

College is big business, and almost all independent colleges and universities rely upon tuition dollars for their very existence. At the same time, colleges can only enroll so many students before bursting at the seams. Admissions deans are thus responsible for hitting the nail on the head; if the President says the college wants to enroll 500 students, the dean needs to provide exactly that—no more, no fewer. Accurate yield prediction is thus extremely important. Furthermore, colleges are often judged on their admissions yields, by various college ranking agencies and publications, by bond-issuers, and even by their own trustees. ***The best way to hit various enrollment targets and increase yield is to admit students who are likely to enroll, or conversely, not to admit students who are unlikely to accept an offer of admission.***

Enrollment models have become ever more sophisticated over the years and now may reflect any number of variables related to student performance or background, as well as each prospective student’s actions—the type, quantity, and *quality* of a student’s contacts with a college. **In fact, many colleges use sophisticated enrollment management software, which, with the click of a button, can predict for the admissions officer exactly how likely it is that the student would accept an offer of admission.**

## **The Student Perspective**

I'm sure that many students will find the history described above rather tedious. However, they might well be interested in getting into the colleges they like. This is why students need to think about the contacts they have with colleges as a strategic issue. (There is also intrinsic value to these contacts—a subject for another day.) Below we address a variety of contacts prospective students may have with a college and assess their importance.

### **Connecting Online**

As soon as students identify a school they may be interested in attending (most often during winter of junior year), they should visit the college's website and request more information. Getting on a college's mailing/email list serves three purposes: it helps the student to learn more about the college's campus, curriculum, personality, extracurricular opportunities, visiting procedures, and admissions requirements; it demonstrates early interest; and it allows the college to *actively* inform the student about the college, its application process, and any special programs or opportunities it may offer.

### **Visiting College Campuses**

The most obvious way to show one's interest in a college is to visit formally, through the admissions office. Typically, this involves scheduling an appointment for a student-led campus tour, an information session, and, starting in the summer after junior year, an interview (if available). *For many independent [a.k.a. private] colleges, the campus visit is a necessary demonstration of interest*, even if the college doesn't say so, and we have seen some of our strongest applicants wait-listed or even denied admission because they chose not to visit campus. Not every independent college "tracks" campus visits (and most public colleges do not), but such colleges are the exceptions to the rule. Even if the college does not track campus visits as a demonstration of interest, we still *highly* recommend visiting; once a student has made a list of colleges that fit his or her interests, the campus visit is typically the most important factor in choosing among the colleges on the initial list. For most students, *not* visiting a college is missing an important step in the search process. *We highly recommend visiting all of the colleges on one's list before September of senior year.*

Sometimes visiting campuses is impossible because of a family's financial or medical constraints. Hackley's college counselors are ready to support all of our students, and we can often help the student explain these constraints to the colleges. *In such cases, it is particularly important that the student take advantage of the other opportunities to demonstrate interest detailed below, which can generally be accomplished virtually or locally.* Additionally, students facing these circumstances are advised to pursue other means of getting to know the colleges: reading books like *The Fiske Guide to Colleges* and The Princeton Review's *The Best 382 Colleges* (both books available in Hackley's library); consulting college websites thoroughly and taking the virtual campus tours; meeting the colleges' representatives at Hackley during senior year; signing up for local or virtual interviews; attending local presentations by the colleges; and connecting with Hackley alumni attending the colleges of interest.

### **Interviewing**

Some colleges *require* interviews, some offer *optional* interviews, and some don't offer interviews at all. *Our general rule of thumb is to interview for every college on one's list that offers interviews.* Even if not *required*, there may be an unspoken *de facto* requirement (minimum demonstrated interest) for those with the resources

to do an on-campus interview, and with Zoom, FaceTime, and local alumni options, interviews are usually available for those who are financially or otherwise *unable* to visit campuses.

Hackley students are generally very good at interviews, and with appropriate preparation (we do mock interviews with all of our juniors), the interview should be a bonus to their applications. **Thus, forgoing an interview not only risks indicating a lack of interest, it also passes up a prime opportunity to make a positive impression.**

### Attending College Presentations at Hackley

Every fall, approximately one hundred colleges and universities send a representative to Hackley to speak to our seniors. Since the representative who visits is usually the admissions officer who first-reads Hackley students' applications, this is an important opportunity to make a good impression and "put a face with the name." Students should come prepared with *thoughtful* questions for each college, as a demonstration of interest in the college. We often suggest to students that they prepare for the presentation as if they were going to be the only student to show up—and they just might be, depending on the college. When that happens, the meeting may be more like an informal interview than a presentation. Conversely, *not* showing up to the meeting could be interpreted as a lack of interest in the college. ***We recommend that all Hackley seniors prepare for and attend the presentations for the colleges on their application lists.***

### Corresponding with College Representatives

Most college admissions offices assign their admissions officers to particular geographical regions and list these assignments on the college's undergraduate admissions website. Students who have appropriate questions or concerns (those not answered on the website), about the college or the admission process, should feel free to contact these representatives. However, students should not contact these "reps" with concocted questions simply to "establish a relationship." Unless there is a real need to contact these folks, it is best not to take up their valuable time. On the other hand, if these reps reach out directly to students, it is entirely appropriate and good form to reply courteously, thanking the rep for reaching out and for any information or invitation proffered.

### Reading and Responding to College Emails

Colleges can tell whether students have opened their emails, how long the student spent reading a particular email, whether or not the student replied or clicked on anything else in the email, etc. ***We recommend that students open and read all college emails from the colleges on their list, clicking further as interested.*** This is not just for demonstrating interest, but also because sometimes these emails impart *important information* about applying, a student's application status, financial aid, events one might attend, visits to Hackley, and other opportunities.

### Attending Local Presentations

Colleges, both singly and in groups, often hold local information sessions, in hotel meeting rooms, restaurants, and even the homes of alumni. ***These should be considered optional in most situations,*** but they can be important to certain colleges (see your counselor), especially when students are unable to carry out other demonstrations of interest recommended above.

## The Application

It is ironic that the most obvious demonstration of interest in a college—the college application itself—is also one of the most underrated. Most importantly, the application must show care and attention to *all* of its various sections—even the “short answers.” In fact, the “Tell us why you are interested in attending University X” response, which many colleges require, may be as important as—or even more important than—the main personal statement (the “essay”). Each question will require a well-researched, thoughtful, and carefully crafted response. These responses must not be generic; students should avoid making any statement that could apply to another college. *Students should enlist their college counselor to review their application drafts.*

## “Optional” Essays

When your wife, husband, partner, or sweetheart tells you that you don’t “need” to do anything for Valentine’s Day or their birthday, you might take their word for it. Or, you might wish to continue the relationship instead! Sometimes writing an extra essay is optional. So is going to college. It’s up to you, but **from our point of view, there is no such thing as an “optional” essay.**

## Early Decision

The ultimate demonstration of interest in a college is Early Decision (ED)—the application process through which an applicant makes a commitment to attend the college, if admitted. What this means to the college is a yield (enrollment) of 100% of those they admit through ED. Many highly selective colleges fill about half of their freshman classes with students who apply ED, leaving comparatively fewer spaces available for the greater number of Regular Decision (RD) applicants.

While applying ED can increase one’s chances of admission to a college, the admissions benefit varies depending on the school’s selectivity in relation to the student’s record. For instance, applying ED is not likely to help a student gain admission to a college that is otherwise unlikely to admit him, nor is it likely to change the decision at a college that is already very likely to admit him (the student probably would have been admitted to the “very likely” college anyway). *Applying ED is most likely to have an effect on the admissions decision at “maybe” colleges*, where the student’s chances of admission are already about 50-50.

It is also important to note that *applying ED is not a substitute for other demonstrations of interest*. An ED application from a student with little previous contact with the admissions office may fall flat in the ED process. Furthermore, one can apply ED only to one college (and sometimes to another college, subsequently, in an ED2 process in January). If one’s ED application is not accepted, the student will have to compete in the Regular Decision round, where competition for spaces increases and previous demonstrations of interest (between March of junior year and November of senior year) are most important.

*We recommend that students who may have a favorite college by September of senior year, consider applying ED, if the college offers such a plan.*

Sometimes students who plan to apply for financial aid feel they can’t consider an ED application, but this is not necessarily the case. Students with financial need often do apply ED. They also apply early for financial aid, and if they are admitted to their ED college, they will get a financial aid award shortly after their admission letter. While ED requires a commitment to attend, if admitted, the one exception to that commitment is based on financial aid. *If a student is admitted ED but receives an insufficient financial aid award, the student may decline the offer of admission.* Of course, it is a little more complicated than that, so we urge students pursuing financial assistance to speak to their college counselors about the process, benefits, and downsides of applying ED with financial need.



## Early Action

Many colleges offer Early Action (EA), either instead of ED, or as an additional option. The EA process provides an earlier response from the admissions office, but it does not require a commitment to attend the college, if admitted. Since there is no commitment involved in applying EA, it does not provide colleges with the same 100% yield as ED, and is thus less of a boost to one's chances of admission. However, for many colleges that offer EA (and not ED), EA may be the best application process through which to indicate a high degree of interest. Furthermore, *not* applying EA may demonstrate a lack of enthusiasm for the EA college (unless one's other applications prohibit applying EA to the college). Finally, there is little reason *not* to apply EA, if possible. Earning one or more EA acceptances in December or January can remove some of the stress associated with waiting until the spring for an offer of admission. For all of the reasons listed above, **we recommend that students apply EA to all of the colleges on their list that offer the option**, except in special circumstances or where other colleges' ED or EA application agreements prohibit an EA application.

## Regular Decision Letters of Interest and Commitments

Many students who apply ED or EA to a particular college are neither admitted nor denied admission, but rather *deferred* to the college's Regular Decision (RD) process. In such cases, colleges typically expect deferred applicants to reaffirm their interest in the college through an e-mail and/or through a special process the college sets up. Although colleges do not normally ask for an ED-like commitment from deferred students, sometimes students will decide to commit to enroll at their definite-first-choice college in the RD process. ***Students interested in this option must speak to their college counselor***, as the college will want the counselor's reassurance in this non-standard but *equally binding* action. The same option exists for students who did not apply ED or EA to any college but have come to a late decision as to a college's unquestionable primacy on their list.

## Waiting Lists

In the Regular Decision process, colleges may make one of three decisions, usually in late March: admission, denial of admission, or the offer of placement on a waiting list. Students offered a place on the waiting list must respond to that offer, either accepting the place on the waiting list or declining it. Students interested in admission from the waiting list are strongly advised to write to the college concerning their enthusiasm for the college in early April. If the student can commit to attend the college (if offered admission from the waiting list), the student should let the college know at this time. ***Students interested in any waiting lists should see their college counselor in early April.***

## Cakes, Cookies, Tattoos

Much of the general public is now aware of the importance of demonstrating interest in colleges. With increased awareness, a sense of competition is inevitable, which leads some students to go to extreme lengths to demonstrate their interest: sending baked goods to the admissions office, sending pictures of themselves in college apparel and/or attending college functions, painting their faces/bodies as an exuberant fan might, sending love poems about a college, pestering a college representative with e-mails, etc. We urge applicants *not* to undertake such tactics, as they are not helpful to one's candidacy—and may even be annoying. Instead, we recommend sticking to the appropriate and serious means of demonstrating interest mentioned above, and investing any enthusiasm students may feel for colleges into the *quality* of their more conventional interactions.

## **Conclusion**

Sometimes demonstrating interest in a college may feel forced, and therefore cynical. On the other hand, fully investigating and appreciating one's college options is an intrinsically important undertaking. Hackley students are extremely lucky to have the college opportunities and support that they do. It would be foolish not to take full advantage of these opportunities and invest oneself in one's college search and application. Aside from learning more about one's opportunities and increasing one's chances of admission, learning how to communicate enthusiasm for any undertaking is a vital preparation for the adult world. We are here to help along the way and hope that our students learn to take joy in the adventure. The more they invest of themselves in connecting with colleges, the more they will be excited about their opportunities.

Peter Latson, Spring 2019

## **Note**

Athletes who hope to become highly recruited by college coaches should see their counselor in freshman or early sophomore year about additional, often earlier, demonstrations of interest and talent.

## College Application Strategies Series: “Reaching”

*We see many complicated and nuanced issues in the college process—complexities that families wrestle with year after year. The questions they engender are often perplexing because they arise at the nexus of family values and expectations, the complicated relationships between parents and children, teenage issues of identity and self-worth, concerns about the future, and a truly Byzantine college admissions process. While we address most of these questions on a case-by-case basis, sometimes their prevalence merits a more generalized analysis. This is the first in a new series of such articles.*

*For this article, in particular, it is helpful to understand some Hackley College Counseling terminology. We estimate one’s rough admissions chances with the following terms: **very likely**, 9 out of 10 chance; **likely**, 7 or 8 out of 10; **maybe**, 4-6 out of 10; **stretch**, 2 or 3 out of 10; and **unlikely**, 1 out of 10. “Reaching” refers generally to the practice of applying to stretch and unlikely colleges.*

One question we hear very often from students and parents, both before the application process and *post mortem*, is whether it is/was a “waste of time” to apply to a particular stretch or unlikely college. “Waste of time” is a strange, albeit common choice of words. When one speaks of applying to *one* stretch or unlikely college, and assuming the student in question would really *like* to attend that college, the primary issue is rarely about whether or not it is really a “waste of time” to apply. We counselors would never discourage a student from applying to a college that is unlikely to admit him or her, provided the college is a good fit and that the *student* (not just a parent) really wants to attend the college — although we would very likely discourage a student from applying to a preponderance of such colleges. I imagine that most people choose the phrase “waste of time” because it seems almost offhand, not even hinting at the “elephant-in-the-room” emotional issues underlying the question.

One might use a more specific phrasing of the question: “what consequences would there be to applying to a school that is not likely to admit me?” To state the obvious, the *positive* consequence the student seeks is admission to a college that is unlikely to admit him. However, admission is also the least likely outcome, unless there is some truly exceptional reason for the college to admit the student—such as becoming one of a coach’s top recruits—at which point the college is no longer considered a stretch or unlikely option.

The more likely, *negative* consequences to applying to a stretch or unlikely college—beyond risking rejection—are not as obvious, and because students and parents often overlook or discount them, they require some explanation. These are what we call *the costs of reaching*. Briefly, there are two categories of costs associated with applying to a stretch or unlikely college: strategic costs and psychological costs.

### Strategic Costs

Students apply to stretch and unlikely colleges to attempt to create attractive opportunities, but as often as not, they may also give up other opportunities in doing so. The primary cause of this strategic deficit often involves Early Decision or Early Action admission processes.

In order to apply Early Decision (ED) to a college, students (and their parents) are required to “commit” to the college in writing; then, if admitted, the student is required to withdraw all other applications, decline any other offers of admission, and enroll in the ED college. A student can only apply ED to one school (at a time—some colleges offer a second-round ED2 process for those not admitted in the first ED round), and the student must be willing to give up all other options.

Students who apply Early Action (EA) apply early, but they are *not* required to enroll in the college if admitted. Some EA colleges have other restrictions, however, prohibiting a simultaneous ED application (often called Restrictive EA) or prohibiting other ED *and* EA applications (often called Single-Choice Early Action).

Given all of the possible restrictions to applying ED or EA, one might ask why these early processes are so popular. The answer is simple for ED: applying Early Decision to a college can significantly improve one's chances of admission. For EA, there are two possible benefits: a lesser admissions advantage (but not entirely insignificant) from signaling strong interest in a college, and the simple attraction of receiving an early offer of admission to a college one would really like to attend.

The advantage of applying ED, in particular, has grown significantly over the years. It is a common and growing trend, for instance, for highly selective colleges to admit *half* or more of the incoming first-year class through ED, leaving only half of the spaces available to the much larger and typically more diverse Regular Decision (RD) applicant pool. College admission officers will often relate to us how competitive it is in the RD pool. In fact, RD admissions rates at the most selective colleges are often less than a third of their ED rates.

For these reasons, students who are reaching for their “dream school” will often apply ED or EA, if available at their dream school. While that may seem a good strategy on the surface, there are two caveats to consider.

First of all, ED (not to mention EA) is not a magic bullet; the effect of applying ED is limited and is relative to one's strength in the applicant pool. If I were to make a *broad guess*<sup>1</sup> as to the admissions benefit of applying Early Decision, it would depend on how likely one's chances of admission were to begin with:

Joe's chances at College X in Regular Decision	Joe's chances at College X in Early Decision	Increase in Joe's chances from Regular to Early Decision	Real effect on Joe's outcome
unlikely	unlikely	negligible	probably none at all
stretch	stretch	marginal	still most likely a “no”
maybe	likely	<b>significant</b>	could really tip the scales
likely	very likely	<b>significant</b>	could nail down a favorite
very likely	very likely	negligible	still most likely a “yes”

Second, when considering the possible advantages of applying ED, EA, or even RD, one must also consider the possible disadvantages. In the admissions business, we refer to this as the “*lost opportunity cost*” of reaching, as applying ED, EA, or even RD may limit one's other options.

Given the complexity of the process and its many variables, it may be helpful to consider a hypothetical student, Jane. Below is Jane's list of colleges, their admissions plan options, and Jane's preferences. (Note that “ED” refers to processes that provide a decision in December; “ED2” typically has an application deadline in January and provides decisions in February.)

Jane's Preferences	Jane's Colleges	Jane's Odds of Admission Offered by College	Admissions Plans
Favorite	Sullivan University	unlikely	Single Choice EA, RD
2nd Choice	Jones College	stretch	ED, RD
3rd Choice	Johnson University	maybe	ED, ED2, RD
Likes a lot	Thayer College	maybe	Restrictive EA, RD
Likes a lot	Garcia University	likely	EA, RD
Likes a lot	Drummond University	unlikely	ED, RD
Likes	Roosevelt University	maybe	ED, RD
Likes	Robertson College	very likely	ED, RD

In the above scenario, Jane has a clear first-choice college, Sullivan University. And although she *really wants* to go to Sullivan, she will say confidently, although reluctantly, that Jones and Johnson are her clear second and third choices, respectively.

As a counselor, I would *not* want to discourage Jane from applying to Sullivan U. [if her folks were okay with Sullivan U.] *simply* because it is a big reach. As I have heard many parents say, “What the heck, you never know! Go for your dreams!” Would I want to discourage Jane from going for her dreams? Should I tell her that it is better to be conservative in this world and not aim too high? No. That’s not my call.

On the other hand, Jane’s decision to apply to Sullivan U. is likely to have other consequences, besides the likelihood of rejection from her dream college:

- If Jane applies Single Choice EA to Sullivan U, where she is not at all likely to get in, she will lose the opportunity to apply ED to Jones, her second-choice college, since Jones does not have a second ED (ED2) round. And applying ED to Jones would at least have *some* chance of making a difference.
- Furthermore, if Jane opted not to apply EA to Sullivan, she could apply to both her second *and* third choice colleges under sequential ED (Jones) and ED2 (Johnson) processes (assuming ED to Jones did not result in an offer of admission).
- Applying Single Choice EA to Sullivan would also prohibit her from applying EA to Garcia U.
- In essence, applying EA to Sullivan is very unlikely to yield her anything positive, but it will keep her from applying ED to two of her top three colleges and is likely to leave her with only a denial until April. This is her “lost opportunity cost.”
- Even if Jane were to apply Regular Decision to Sullivan University, would she still be willing to apply ED to Jones and Johnson, knowing that getting into either would require her to withdraw her application to Sullivan U.?

Should Jane apply EA to her top choice college? Perhaps. Perhaps not. However, the existence of the unlikely Sullivan U. on her list is not free of consequences.

Aside from ED and EA opportunities and lost opportunities, what might be the consequences of applying to a significant number of “stretch” or “unlikely” colleges? When students’ lists have many such colleges, the students almost invariably spend more time and effort focusing on those colleges than on the colleges that are

more likely to provide opportunities down the line, falsely equating selectivity with quality and fit. They tend to visit the less selective schools later in the process—if at all, they usually spend less time researching the less selective schools' opportunities, they write weaker applications to these colleges, and they often skip opportunities to visit or interview. In essence, these students often do not take the time to get to know and appreciate the less selective schools. Some of these students are surprised when a "likely" or "very likely" college doesn't admit them—until we remind them that they didn't interview, or perhaps they didn't meet the counselor at Hackley or write a really good statement of interest in the school. In some cases, students' disdain for less selective colleges is so obvious that there is a perfect correlation between how much a student likes a college and how selective it is. Such a focus on selectivity usually sets the student up for a win-lose admissions process—rather than a win-win process—and for likely disappointment. It might make one wonder, "Who suggested all these more-selective colleges in the first place?"

## Psychological Costs

Aside from the strategic concerns, we should also consider the inherent message we send when we encourage students to "go for their dream school." Are we saying to the student, in essence, "the best college for you is one where you are not likely to be admitted"? Are we signaling that getting into a college where the student is an average or above average applicant is somehow disappointing? The more "stretch" and "unlikely" colleges a parent suggests, the clearer that message is to students—intended or not. The more of such colleges the student applies to, the more bad news she is likely to receive, making for unhappy results and very often a feeling of failure.

Teenagers are good at acting dismissively toward their parents. In fact, they are pretty much programmed to do so. They feel they are supposed to be proving themselves as competent individuals, and admitting that they don't know something or acknowledging their parents' wisdom is often, in their eyes, psychologically tantamount to an admission of a "failure to launch." However, while teenagers *appear* not to care about their parents' opinions, they are actually extremely sensitive to their parents' subtlest signs of approval or disapproval. Suggesting more "stretches" or "unlikelys," or otherwise focusing more on selectivity than "fit," is a sure way for parents to make their children feel like disappointments, no matter what else the parents may say. It is thus incumbent upon parents to show just as much enthusiasm for the "maybe," "likely," and "very likely" colleges on the student's list.

## Alternative Opportunities

Finally, one must ask oneself an important question: Is it always better to go to a "stretch" or "unlikely" college than a "maybe" or "likely" college? Is it necessarily better to be in the bottom of one's class, statistically? An important longitudinal study showed that there is no long-term monetary gain for equally able students who attend institutions that are more selective.<sup>2</sup> Assuming that it is bad to attend a less selective school, where one is, let's say, in the *top* third of the class is like assuming that Hackley's A/A- students are not challenged or fulfilled. Furthermore, given the fact that 95% of Hackley graduates over the last decade gained admission to colleges among the most-selective 6% of 4-year colleges<sup>3</sup>, one might argue that focusing on fine gradations of selectivity as a primary driver in choosing among these elite colleges is, in fact, splitting hairs and causing more harm to our children than good.

Taking the issue further, one might consider that there may actually be *advantages* to being in the middle or nearer the top of one's college class. In some cases, might college actually be a *better* experience for someone in the top third of their college class? Being a top student in a slightly less selective college might help one excel, possibly gaining access to special programs, research opportunities, scholarships, and the special attention of

the professors—not to mention the boon to one’s self-confidence. Students and parents often overlook this aspect of “fit.”

## Conclusion

Over the years, I have frequently heard parents urge their juniors and seniors to visit and apply to colleges that are unlikely to admit them. The parent might ask, rhetorically, “What’s the harm in reaching?” Under certain limited circumstances, there is not a lot of harm in doing so. Moreover, we college counselors are not interested in standing in the way of students’ dreams. However, there are often strategic and psychological costs to reaching, and especially to overloading one’s list with longshots, particularly if we demonstrate in actions or words that we place greater value on the more-selective schools and approach them with greater enthusiasm than the “maybe” and “likely” schools on the list. Finally, families should realize that they have more control over the eventual good news/bad news admissions outcome ratio in the college *selection* process than in the college application process.

Peter Latson, Spring 2018

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I hasten to note that these are *very broad* estimates, which I provide only to illustrate the point, which I form solely on my 30+ years of experience. Such estimates would vary from college to college as well. Furthermore, there may be an extra advantage to applying Early Decision when other admissions “hooks” are involved. There is often a significant difference in the advantage of applying as a “legacy,” for example, depending upon whether one applies Early Decision or Regular Decision; and most highly recruited athletes are expected to apply Early Decision if they want the support of the coach in the admissions process. Of course, many colleges offer Early Action (non-binding processes) instead of Early Decision. Applying Early Action typically has less strategic benefit unless one is applying with a “hook” such as the two examples mentioned above.

<sup>2</sup> “Estimating the Return to College Selectivity Over the Career Using Administrative Earnings Data,” by Stacy Dale and Alan B. Krueger; Working Paper 17159 <http://www.nber.org/papers/w17159>, National Bureau of Economic Research, June 2011: “...when we adjust for a proxy for unobserved student characteristics – namely, by controlling for the average SAT score of the colleges that students applied to – our estimates for the return to college characteristics fall substantially and are generally indistinguishable from zero for both the 1976 and 1989 cohort of students.”

<sup>3</sup> According to selectivity ratings from *Barron’s Profiles of American Colleges*, editions 27 through 33.

## Visiting Colleges

We recommend that you try to make official visits to all of the colleges you're seriously considering before September of senior year, *in-person (if you have the resources), otherwise through official online college programs, including virtual tours, online information sessions and other admissions programs*. These visits are important for two reasons: 1) so that you can find out about the colleges on your list, and 2) so that the colleges know of your serious interest in them. In fact, if you *don't* visit a college, you *may* be jeopardizing your chances of admission, unless a lack of accessibility (or a pandemic) prevents your visit (in such cases, you should speak to your counselor and plan on making virtual visits). It is also *very* important that these colleges range in selectivity from your "very likely" schools to your "unlikelies." There are four optimum time periods to visit campuses, each with its own particular purpose:

- **In the beginning of the college search**, college visits can help you understand what you like and don't like. Big/small, rural/urban, north/south – some of the basic criteria for narrowing down one's college search are merely theoretical abstractions to many high school students until they actually get a first-hand look at what these differences mean. Often, **spring vacation of junior year** is a good time to visit a few different *types* of schools (including visits to "100-level" classes, if possible). These visits can help you define your search. (Note: Juniors will not be excused from school to visit colleges except in special circumstances, such as a scheduled audition or special athletic recruitment program, and with the approval of one's college counselor.)
- **During the summer between junior and senior years**, it is VERY important to do the bulk of your visits. Students who do not visit colleges in the summer almost always regret it. True, campuses are often empty, but you can learn enough about a school during the summer to determine whether or not you want to apply to a school. The logic is simple. Visiting a relatively long list of schools takes lots of time – much more time than seniors and parents will have in the spring of junior year and the fall of senior year. It's also a good time to visit colleges farther away. The senior fall is extremely busy; seniors have the toughest courses in the school and the most demanding leadership positions, as well as college applications to do. Trying to visit more than a few colleges during the fall just doesn't work.
- **The fall of senior year** is a good time to *revisit* some of the colleges on your short list, when the colleges are in session. This will add greater depth to your understanding of the school. If the college is too far away to make that revisit convenient, you can wait until April, after hearing from college admission offices. Hackley frowns on students' missing school in order to visit colleges. Instead, we suggest using Professional Development Day weekend, Columbus Day weekend and the three-day Senior College Visit Day weekend made for college visits (we give seniors a Monday off just for this purpose). If you absolutely *must* miss school to visit a college, you are required to get permission from your college counselor and all of your teachers *at least a week in advance* of the visit. Forms for this are available in the College Counseling Office (and in the back of this handbook).
- **In April of senior year**, after you have received your acceptances, you may want to revisit a top choice or two in order to make your final college selection by May 1<sup>st</sup>, the national reply deadline.

**A good college visit takes energy on the part of the student.** If you are passive on your college visits, you will learn much less about the college, enjoy the visit less, be less impressed by the college, and make a lukewarm impression on the admissions office. (If you take a college tour, for instance, and just listen to the tour guide, you will learn more about buildings than about college



life. But if you come armed with good questions, you can direct the discussion away from the physical structures to more important issues.) *Be careful not to let your parents take the lead*; they should stay in the background. You need to address your questions and concerns. If your parents take over, you will learn less about what matters to you and run the risk of leaving a weak impression in the admissions office. Remember also to give each campus your full attention when you visit, even if you don't think you're as interested in the college. If you just drive through a campus on your own or visit on a day when the admissions office is closed, for example, you're likely to get a very different (and less positive) impression of the college and risk your chances of admission.

Remember to have fun on your visits! Try to leave your preconceptions at home, stay open-minded, and be ready to take each college on its own terms. See what great opportunities the colleges have to offer! We truly do live in a land of plenty; if you look for the good, you will indeed find lots of it.

### The Visit

It's a good idea to set up your college visit 4-8 weeks in advance, or even earlier if planning a summer trip. Do not try to visit more than two colleges in a day – even two is a stretch. Plan to spend some time on campus, and it's nice to explore the surrounding area as well. There are a number of things to do:

- **All initial campus visits should include an official visit to the admission office.** As part of that visit, you should take a tour of campus and attend either an information session or a personal interview. (If interviews are offered, we recommend them only after May of junior year.) This official contact is important for two reasons: 1) the admission office has important information to impart to you, and 2) it's important that the college **knows** you visited campus; at most colleges, students who don't visit campus have a harder time in the admission process.
- **NO "DRIVE-BYs."** Very often, the first impression one gets when arriving at a college changes dramatically during the tour and information session. For the same reason it is of relatively little value to visit a college when the admission office is closed or is not hosting visitors.
- **Parents and students should take separate tours, if feasible.** This way parents and students can ask what they want without fear of embarrassment! This strategy also provides insights from two different student tour guides. (Try to ask the guides some of the same questions, then compare your notes later on in the car.)
- **Ask lots of questions.** Ask the **same** questions of a number of different people: faculty, admissions staff, and at least two or three students. Write down your questions beforehand so you don't get distracted and forget to ask them during your visit.
- Read the bulletin boards and kiosks.
- Eat in (or at least walk through) the dining hall, if possible.
- During the academic year, attend a class or two, if available.
- During the academic year, spend a night on campus, with a friend or with an admissions host.

## Interviews

Interviews are required by some colleges, recommended by others, and not offered at all by some. **YOU must check with each college to find out what its policy is.** When you call to schedule a campus visit, ask the college about its interview policy. If it is suggested that you have an interview, go ahead. (If you're nervous, or if you don't think you'll interview well, see your counselor.) Some of the more selective colleges interview *applicants only*; they wait until you apply, then arrange an interview.

Interviews are beneficial for several reasons. They serve as a chance for you to “put a face to a name” and to put your best foot forward. They give you a chance to show your **enthusiasm** for the college, help you learn more about a college and allow you to ask your questions. They also provide a chance for you to explain your transcript, your accomplishments, your activities, your ideas, and your goals.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TIPS ON INTERVIEWING, SEE THE COLLEGE INTERVIEW GUIDE PAGES FOLLOWING THIS SECTION.

### Questions to Ask

Good questions are sometimes hard to think of on the spur of the moment, so it's important to come up with good questions *in advance* and write them down. This will also show colleges that you have “done your homework.” You can then ask these questions at every college you visit, take notes after you leave campus, and compare answers among colleges later on.

It's not a good idea to ask obvious questions or questions that could be answered by a thorough reading of the college's brochure. Questions like “How many students go here?” or “Do you have a business major?” indicate a lack of preparation for your visit and a lack of interest in the college. If you dig just a little deeper, however, you can come up with some good questions along the same lines: “I know that you have about 5000 undergraduates and 3000 graduate students. To what extent do you think the senior faculty include undergraduates in research opportunities when they have a number of graduate students eager to do research in their fields?” or “I see that business is a popular major here. Given your rather rural location, do many of your business majors take advantage of summer internship opportunities instead of internships during the school year?”

### Academic Questions

While no one expects you to have chosen a major at this point, it is important to learn about academic programs you might be interested in, and colleges *do* expect you to be able to talk about possible areas of academic interest. Pick a likely major or two or three and read about those subjects in the college's course catalog (available online at each school's website). Beyond the confines of specific subject areas, you also want to find out what it's like to be a student at a particular college:

- What courses are required for graduation? Are there distribution requirements or some form of general education requirements?
- Is there a freshman seminar or foundation course of some sort?
- What is the range of class size and what is the average? What percentage of classes are large lecture courses?

In addition to such standard questions, try to get a sense of the academic atmosphere by asking your tour guides and other students some more probing and difficult questions:

- Which nights of the week are the big studying nights, and which are the big partying nights? (If the students name Wednesday through Saturday as big partying nights, that tells you something about the school right there!)
- How/when did you choose a major?
- What are the professors like? How do professors treat students? How accessible are the professors? To what degree are they interested in their students?
- Have you conducted any research projects with professors?
- What services does the career placement office offer?
- Do students talk much about their classes or about “issues” when they’re not in class?
- Do you feel like you’re getting a good preparation in your major? What makes you think so?
- How much studying do students do every day? (To look for on your tour: Are there lots of students using the library, given the hour of the day?)
- What do you like most about your academic program? What would you change about it?

### **Social Questions**

Keep in mind that you’re not just choosing a school; you’re choosing a *home* for four years. What are the other students like and how do they spend their time? Ask students:

- What do students do in their spare time? Do they play sports, visit museums, do a lot of community service volunteering, go skiing, go to fraternity parties, go to lectures, or just hang out in small groups and talk?
- How many students attend the games? Do they attend the concerts and plays?
- Are students conservative or liberal? Activists or apathetic? Somewhere in between? What’s the hot topic on campus this year?
- Are there any campus “hang-outs”? When are they open and what are they like?
- Do students join fraternities and sororities? If so, what percentage of men and women join? When do they “rush”? Are the fraternities/sororities residential? Do they dominate the social scene? Is there anything to do *besides* going to frat parties, or does everyone go?
- Do students stay on campus on weekends or go home?
- What do you like most about the social life on campus? What would you change about it?
- Where are the students from? How diverse is the student body in terms of ethnic, geographic, cultural, socio-economic, political, gender, sexual diversity? (How important is this to you?) How accepting/supportive are students of differences? Do all the students seem to be made from the same mold?
- As you overhear conversations, do the students sound like students you’d like to know?
- What three adjectives would you use to describe the stereotypical College X student?

### **Student Life**

Questions about activities you’re interested in can be directed to admissions personnel or to students. The admissions representative may have a greater breadth of knowledge about activities, but a student who participates in an activity you’re interested in will give you a more thorough introduction.

- **SPORTS:** If you’re interested in a particular sport, find out how competitive it is to make the team. Is there a varsity team in the sport? Is there a JV team? Perhaps it’s a club team. (Club teams play against other colleges, but with less funding. They may or may not have a coach; game schedules may be limited; the team may need to raise its own funds, etc.) Is the sport offered as an intramural sport? If so, what’s the competition like?
- **MUSIC:** If you’re interested in music, how competitive is it to earn a spot in the band or sing in the choir? Are ensembles open to non-majors as well as majors? If the top ensembles are very

competitive, are there less competitive alternatives? Can non-majors take lessons? What's the cost of lessons? What are the studio instructors like? Do you have to audition to take lessons?

- THEATER: What is the theater program like? Are productions open to non-majors? If so, how tough is it to get parts? How many large or smaller productions are there each year? What about stage crew opportunities?
- COMMUNITY SERVICE: Is community service popular? What sort of volunteer opportunities exist on campus or in town? Is there an organization that coordinates or facilitates student service? What percent of the students get involved in community service?

### **Campus Location**

Questions about the school's location and its effect on student life are crucial. Don't make assumptions about rural or urban settings; there can be plenty to do in an isolated location, and sometimes students in cities spend all of their time on campus anyway.

- Where do students go to do their basic shopping: clothes, soap, books, snacks...? How do they get there?
- What's public transportation like? Are cars allowed on campus? Are cars allowed for freshmen? What percentage of students have cars?
- What activities are available locally for fun? Do students take advantage of the local area or do they spend their free time on campus?
- How close is the nearest city? What's the city like? Do students go there? How often? What do they go there for? How do they get there? Does the school provide a shuttle service?
- What sort of outdoor recreation is available/popular?
- If the school is relatively isolated, what is there to do on campus on weekends?
- How safe is the campus for young women? What are the safety statistics?

## College Interview Guide

Interviews are required by some colleges, recommended by others, and not offered at all by some. **You must check with each college to find out what its policy is.** When you call to schedule a campus visit, ask the college about its interview policy. If it is suggested that you have an interview, go ahead, but not before the summer after your junior year, unless you are visiting a college far away during Spring Break of your junior year and you do not anticipate returning to campus because of its distance. (See your counselor if this is the case.) Some of the more selective colleges interview *applicants only*; they wait until you apply, then arrange an interview. Students who prepare for interviews and do a mock interview with their counselor are likely to do very well in an interview. If you're particularly nervous, or if you don't think you'll interview well, see your counselor.

Interviews are beneficial for several reasons. They serve as a chance for you to "put a face to a name" and to put your best foot forward. They give you a chance to show your enthusiasm for the college, help you learn more about a college and allow you to ask your questions. They also provide a chance for you to explain your transcript, your accomplishments, your activities, your ideas, and your goals.

Your relationships with adults at Hackley are pretty informal. Your teachers know you, and although you may not realize it, they cut you a lot of slack in your behavior. As informal as the interviewer may try to make the interview feel, this is a formal meeting, and you should be on your best behavior, highly *interactive* without overdoing it to a false degree. Look your interviewer in the eye, smile and listen. Think of this as meeting a good friend of your parents at his or her place of work. "Cool" attitudes should be left behind, as they will telegraph arrogance; you are forging ahead into the adult world and need to show friendliness, confidence and maturity.

### Prepare for the Interview

- Dress appropriately. Wear nice Hackley-like clothes: clean, neat, tucked-in shirts, collars, no short skirts/shorts, no cleavage, no T-shirts, no denim, no flip-flops, no facial jewelry. Do not overdress: jackets and ties don't really work and will make you uncomfortable.
- Shake hands with the interviewer right off, smile, and look him or her in the eye. Show that you're glad to meet him or her. Always be respectful, and unless your interviewer is a *student* who *asks* you to use his or her first name, make sure to address the interviewer as Mr., Ms., or Dr.
- Do not chew gum. Use a breath mint beforehand.
- If the interview is to be conducted online (which became common during the pandemic and is likely to remain an option with many schools) find a quiet space with good wi-fi and make sure you have the contact information well in advance (Zoom address, etc.). Make an extra effort to maintain eye contact, smile, and show your enthusiasm, as it is sometimes easy to adopt a "flat" demeanor and appear removed or uninterested online.
- Read up on the college, especially the school's own brochures. Find out what the college thinks is special about the education it provides. Look in the college's course catalog on-line: study the graduation requirements, and read up on the departments and programs that interest you.
- Be able to explain your interest in the college, in both general and specific terms.
- Come up with *good* questions about the college – not questions that can be answered by a simple reading of the school's materials. Prepare these in advance.
- Show *enthusiasm* for the college.
- Be ready to discuss your interests and how they might continue at this college.

- You don't need to be sure of your major, but you need to be able to show enthusiasm for at least one subject offered at the college.
- Make sure you've read about the college's offerings in your subject(s) of interest (read this in the course catalog on-line). Come up with specific questions.
- Make sure that activities you say you want to continue are indeed offered at the college.

At the end of the interview, get the interviewer's card (or name and address) and write a thank-you note or email, citing at least one reason why you enjoyed talking to him/her. This is especially important when interviewing with an alumna/us.

### **Interview Strategy: The Personal Narrative**

College interviews are different from many other interviews in that the subject matter is relatively narrow – at least the essentials. Any normal college interview will include the following primary topics:

- Your interest in attending and “fit” for the college in question
- Your academic interests and abilities
- Your extracurricular involvements

This presents the interviewee with an advantage; since you know what some of the primary topics will include, you can prepare ahead of time. You can come up with your own *personal narrative* in advance.

Start by making a list of all the things you want the college to know about you. Then ask your parents, a close friend, and a teacher or two who knows you well to list a few things they would want colleges to know about you. Have you read 47 books in the last 5 months? Did you found a club that has really taken off in popularity? Are you the type of student who loves to learn just for the fun of it? Perhaps you've taken interesting classes over the summer. Maybe you did a really exciting internship. Maybe you're heavily involved in certain types of community service. Are you enthusiastic? If so, what anecdote or information would you share to make the interviewer understand that? Are you the hardest worker on the football team? Did you write a history paper that you really liked? What is it that makes you interesting and reflects your strongest qualities?

Then try to see how you might talk about your strongest qualities in answer to questions related to the above topics. If you wait for the interviewer to ask you how many books you've read in the last five months, you may never get to tell him! If you think about it ahead of time, you'll probably work that fact into your answers. In fact, if you think about it, you might work those reading habits into either your extracurricular *or* academic narratives. Remember, the interviewer doesn't want to work at trying to find the right question to ask. Make it easy for them; take the ball and run with it. If they ask about your interests, take it upon yourself to answer in detail, including any of the related topics in your *personal narrative*.

### **Answering vs Informing**

If you're a math student at heart, you may be inclined to give simple answers:

“What are you interested in studying in college?” the interviewer might ask.  
 “Business,” you might answer.

That answer may be correct, but it's not good enough for a college interview. That's the *math test answer*. You want the *essay answer* -- detailed, allowing you to show your strengths, interests, and experiences. You don't simply want to give a *correct* answer; you want to inform the interviewer.

**HERE'S ONE POSSIBLE RESPONSE TO THE SAME QUESTION:**

"My favorite courses in high school have been my math classes, and I'm taking both AP Statistics and AP Calculus next year. I'm also looking forward to taking Econ next fall. I'm pretty sure I want to study business or economics in college. At home I always pick up my dad's business magazines and try to make sense of them, and this past summer I had the chance to do an internship for a few weeks in a marketing firm. (Give some details.) I've been reading your course catalog on-line and have noted that you offer courses that sound interesting to me. There is one called "International Marketing and the Cultural Divide" that really caught my eye. I've studied Spanish for a number of years and went to Spain on a school trip, and I think it would be really interesting to try to look at product promotion from a multicultural perspective. Based on what I saw in my internship, I can only imagine how hard it must be to try to sell a product in another culture -- even within the United States -- and I'm convinced I should keep studying Spanish in college. I'm still just starting to learn about the business world, of course, but your program makes it sound really exciting."

**IN THIS ANSWER, THE SAME STUDENT HAS MADE A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT POINTS.**

1. Not only is the student interested in business, but he also has taken the time to research the college's offerings. This lets the college know that he's serious in his interest and that he has taken the time to see if the college is a good academic "fit."
2. The student has told the interviewer that he's taking AP Statistics, AP Calculus, and Economics. This lets the interviewer know that he'll have a strong preparation for business study and that he is not afraid of challenging quantitative courses; in other words, the student has both the interest *and* the smarts.
3. The student's mentioning of the internship shows that his interest in business is not all theoretical, and his wondering about cross-cultural marketing shows that he actually thinks about business issues. Furthermore, this is an opportunity to bring up the internship; you can't assume that the interviewer will ask another question that will lead to this topic.
4. The fact that the student has studied Spanish and has had some experience in another culture *may* add to his attractiveness as an applicant to the college -- or the business program. This could be developed more in this question or in another question, if appropriate.
5. The last sentence of the response also demonstrates some reasoned enthusiasm for the college, adding to the student's response to "why are you interested in attending this college?"

This is just an example of how having a prepared narrative can help both you and the interviewer. You don't want to make the interviewer work to try to guess the right questions to ask. What if he never asks, "Have you spent time overseas?" If you give the math test answer, he'll never find out about it. If you go into your personal narrative, he'll learn all sorts of things he may not have asked about but definitely wants to know. (A worksheet follows to help you get started.)

**A Final Question**

Interviewers will often ask, "Do you have any questions about College X?" As mentioned above, make sure to come up with a few good questions *before you interview* -- not questions that are easily answered in the brochure. Good questions reflect the fact that you've done your research, and have

thought a lot about how the college might be a good “fit” for you. Your questions may address academic, extracurricular, or general topics:

“I’m interested in business and Spanish. How difficult is it to double-major?”

“Do most of the students stay on campus on the weekends?”

“Are all of the musical groups open to non-majors?”

“Can you tell me more about the career development office and internships?”

“I get the sense that the students here are really excited about their coursework. Do you think that’s true?”

## Don’t Overdo It

It’s important to prepare for an interview, as your preparation will enhance your conversation, but do remember that this is indeed a *conversation*. Interviewers may take you in all sorts of directions in an interview. If they do, don’t resist them, and *don’t worry!* Your interview is not your only chance to tell the colleges about yourself; that’s why colleges have applications! Don’t feel you have to touch on everything you thought about in your preparation. Be well prepared, but don’t be pushy about your own agenda for the interview. As one admissions director puts it, “They do not want to be so intent on following a script that they come across as overly rehearsed and unauthentic.”

### REMEMBER THE KEYS TO A GOOD INTERVIEW:

- Prepare thoroughly for *each* interview
- Show enthusiasm for the college and for your academic & extracurricular interests
- Ask thoughtful questions
- Smile 😊

## Questions You Might Be Asked

### Common questions:

- Tell me about your interest in College X.
- What are you interested in academically?
- Tell me about your extracurricular activities.
- What would you contribute to our school?
- Do you want to go abroad in college?
- Do you have an idea of what you would like to pursue as a career?
- Which activities do you plan to continue in college? (Be sure ahead of time that any activities you mention are actually possible at this college!)
- What is Hackley like? If you could change one thing about Hackley, what would it be? (Best to pick something minor and frame it in a positive way.)
- Describe a teacher who has inspired you.
- What has been your favorite course this year and why?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses as a student?
- Talk about a recent paper or academic experience you’ve found interesting.
- What academic experience have you had that changed the way you think or feel about a subject?
- What do you do in your free time?
- What did you do over the summer?



- What books have you read lately? Which one was your favorite and why?
- Do you have any questions about College X?

**Less common questions:**

- If you were to take a Gap Year, what would you do?
- How would your friends describe you?
- What movie did you like best that you saw recently and why?
- Which issue in the world or country most concerns you? Why?
- How would you contribute to the diversity of College X?
- Tell me about yourself.
- What makes you unique?
- Tell me about your passions.
- What keeps you motivated?
- What is one important thing about you that would not be on your application?
- Tell me about your family.
- What is the hardest thing you've ever had to deal with and how did you handle it?

You might even be asked an odd question. If you are, don't get rattled; there is no right answer. The interviewer is just trying to get to know you. Take your time. (Feel free to think out loud, if you want; this can cover the awkward silence: "Let me see...if I could be *any* animal...well, I know I like dolphins, since they always seem to be playing...and they're pretty smart...but I'm not sure if I'd like to eat fish every day...actually, I'd probably like to be a panda bear, since they're vegetarians, but they're not prey.")

- If you could meet anyone from history, who would it be and why?
- If you could be any book character, who would it be and why?
- If you could have any superpower, what would it be and why?
- If you could be any animal (or tree, or fruit, or ice cream flavor, etc.), what would you be and why?

## Personal Narrative Preparation Worksheet

List your strengths/ things you want the college to know about you, *including your personal, academic and extracurricular interests* (remember to ask others about this, too):

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 8. _____ |

Now, by the same item number, note evidence or anecdotes that illustrate each of your strengths or interests listed above:

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 8. _____ |

Next, match the items above to the most appropriate interview question below:

"Tell me about your interest in this college.      Item numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

"Tell me about your academic interests."      Item numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

"Tell me about your extracurricular activities."      Item numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

Now, research each college, so you know how your interests fit the college's offerings.

Your interest: \_\_\_\_\_ College's Offering: \_\_\_\_\_

Your interest: \_\_\_\_\_ College's Offering: \_\_\_\_\_

Your interest: \_\_\_\_\_ College's Offering: \_\_\_\_\_

Your interest: \_\_\_\_\_ College's Offering: \_\_\_\_\_

# FINANCIAL AID PROCEDURES: 2023-2024

## STEP ONE: Research financial aid options

*Visit each college's web site and complete the Net Price Calculator*, so you can see what financial aid you might qualify for. Consider applying to low-cost, in-state public colleges, as well as high-cost/high-aid independent colleges. If you're looking for merit scholarships from colleges, remember that you're much more likely to get them at colleges that are "likely" or "very likely" to admit you. To look for college scholarships from other sources, visit [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) for a free and very useful scholarship search program.

## STEP TWO: Research college financial aid application requirements

In September, students should make sure they have all of the financial aid instructions they need from each college's website, including **which financial aid forms each college requires and when each college requires you to file them**. Parents should start gathering all of their **2022** tax forms and information.

## STEP THREE: Complete and file forms

**The FAFSA form.** The FAFSA form is required by all colleges to which you apply for financial assistance, and for most types of federal and state aid. File the FAFSA on-line at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). (Be careful: do not go to *fafsa.com*, a commercial site.)

**This year, the FAFSA will be available in December 2023.** In prior years, the FAFSA was available to file starting on October 1, but this year the form is being simplified and the significant changes to the form have delayed its release. Families should be prepared to file the FAFSA as soon as it becomes available (sometime in December), using 2022 tax information.

**The CSS Profile form.** Many colleges also require the College Board's CSS Profile form. To register for the CSS Profile, go on-line, at [www.collegeboard.org/css](http://www.collegeboard.org/css). When they register, students/parents will need to know which colleges *require* the Profile. (This should be spelled out in each college's financial aid information; the complete list of schools requiring the Profile can also be found on the [CSS website](http://www.collegeboard.org/css).)

**College-specific forms.** Some colleges will require their own institutional financial aid form as well as, or instead of, the Profile.

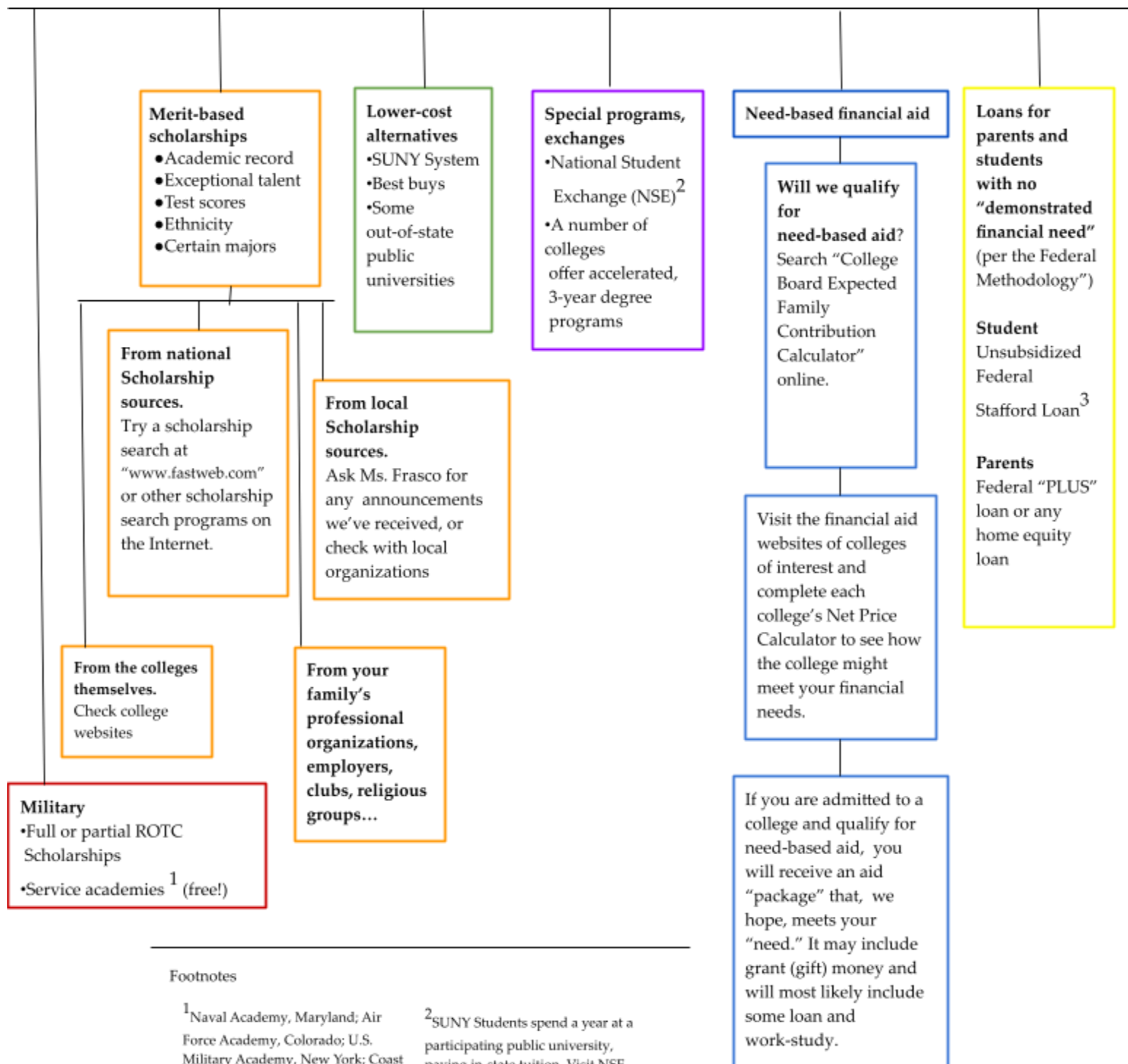
Colleges often require copies of tax forms. These may include W-2 forms, 1040s, and other supplemental information. *Many colleges will also require financial information from a divorced/separated parent.*

If at all possible, the figures you submit on the FAFSA and the Profile forms (and on your taxes) should agree. Discrepancies in numbers could delay your financial aid award.

**If you apply to a school under an Early Decision plan** (as opposed to Early Action, rolling, or regular decision plans) be aware that these plans are "binding." This means that if you are

admitted Early Decision and the Early Decision financial aid award is acceptable, you must withdraw your applications for admission to other schools. If the aid award is not acceptable, even after appealing the award, you must turn down the offer of admission promptly. This does, of course, prevent you from *comparing* the ED aid award with Regular Decision aid awards from other colleges, since those wouldn't be available until March or April, long after making your ED decision. The bottom line: if you feel you need to *compare* financial aid awards to make a final decision about where to attend, you should not apply Early Decision.

## If college costs are daunting, consider these options...



### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Naval Academy, Maryland; Air Force Academy, Colorado; U.S. Military Academy, New York; Coast Guard Academy, Connecticut; Merchant Marine Academy, New York.

<sup>2</sup> SUNY Students spend a year at a participating public university, paying in-state tuition. Visit NSE website: "www.nse.org"

<sup>3</sup> You MUST file the FAFSA form to get an unsubsidized Stafford loan.

## TIPS FOR COMPLETING COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

The approach you take to your applications makes a big difference to the admission officer. The two most important “watch words” in setting an appropriate tone are **honesty** and **enthusiasm**. Be honest about yourself, your accomplishments, and your goals. Show enthusiasm for the college, for your education, for your future. Admission officers will *want to admit* people who are sincere and enthusiastic. (Conversely, admission officers won’t want to admit [and often don’t admit] people who don’t show sincere and specific interest in the college or who come across as pompous, boastful, generic, insincere or cynical, even when the college would otherwise be considered a “very likely” for the student.) This is an exciting step in your life; it is important to relay this excitement.

- Do a **neat and thorough** application to show the college that you respect its admission process and care about the college.
- It is very important to put as much **care and thought into the “short answers”** as you do with the essay. A beautiful essay will “ring hollow” if the short answers aren’t of the same quality.
- The “**Why are you applying to this college?**” question is *extremely* important. If your answer could apply to other colleges, it will come across as generic - and that is a bad thing.
- Make sure to work on your writing and your activity section with your college counselor. **We are eager to help** you with this process.
- **Don’t let others over-edit** your work; college admission officers read thousands of essays every year, and they *know* what high school seniors “sound” like in essays. If it sounds like a 45-year-old, it will not serve you well. Be your authentic self.

### The Personal Essay

The Common Application has a hard 650-word limit. Note that you don’t need to write 650 words; anywhere near 450 and upwards may be fine, depending on the topic and how you write. **Colleges basically want two things from an essay:** they want to know that you can write well, and they want to learn more about who you are and how you think.

**The topic:** The Common App prompts for the primary “personal essay” are merely suggestions, since there is one prompt that gives you complete freedom in choosing your own topic: “*Share an essay on any topic of your choice.*” (Keep in mind that when you answer the colleges’ *own* supplementary essays or short-answer questions it is crucial that you *do* answer the specific question, but with the main Common App personal essay, the topic is up to you.)

This is *not* a good place to attempt to “work in” all of your accomplishments. That would be obvious, annoying to the reader, and superfluous. Contrary to the advice in some popular guides, this is not a time to *try* to be “different” or “stick out” in a way that is unnatural for you; that plan usually backfires. Very few essay *topics* are original or unique, but how you write about them – your voice – should be. The way to *really* stick out is by being yourself – by being honest and introspective, by attempting to take a real look at something that means a lot to you, by eschewing the superficiality that most students *think* admission officers want to hear. Represent “the real you” on paper and you *will* “stick out.”

If possible, write about something that really *matters* to you. It will give the readers a better insight into who you are. It will be less superficial because your feelings about it run deeper. You will be more inclined to *care* about the essay and do a good job on it. Showing self-awareness and reflection is key to the essay, and writing about something important to you will allow you to do that.

**Your essay doesn't need to show you as perfect, and trying to come across as perfect hints of arrogance. The personal growth one shows in an essay is often the most interesting and attractive part, showing maturity, humility and potential for future growth.**

**The Writing Process:** Always ask yourself "why?" or "so what?" Why does it mean a lot to me? Why do I care? Why is this important? For every *statement* you make in your essay, ask yourself "why?" Most of the time, the answer will be obvious. Sometimes, the answer will require that you clarify what you've written. Once in a while, the answer will open up a completely new vein for you to pursue.

After writing your first draft, put it away for a few days. Then read it *aloud*. Read it as if you were a third party. Does it *sound* right to you? Does it make sense? Will it be clear to someone who doesn't know you? Does it sound honest and thoughtful?

Rewrite it. The best writers are all careful *rewriters*. Have one or two teachers or other adults read it and ask you questions about it, react to it. *Do not let adults rewrite it for you*; that is both dishonest and bad strategy. Colleges are on their guard; the essay that sounds like an adult wrote it will not gain you points. A well-written essay that sounds like *you* will work to your advantage. And, of course, work on it with your college counselor!

Remember to "show," not just "tell" the reader. "I was nervous about the meeting" isn't as convincing as, "I woke up around 4:00 a.m. worried about how the meeting would go. Would I make a complete fool of myself or impress everyone with my idea? The stakes seemed high to me, and I had never done anything like this before."

Telling a meaningful personal story can be a good beginning for an essay. However, the story is only part of the essay. A good rule of thumb is that the story should be *no more than* half of your essay. At least half of your words should describe the importance of the experience *to you*, what you've learned from it, how it may have changed your opinions, outlook and actions, and perhaps how the lessons you learned might affect your future. You must spell it out for the reader. Don't put the reader in the position to ask, "so what?"

**Colleges want to see your self-awareness in your essays.**

Check for grammar, spelling, capitalization and awkward phrasing. These *do* count; an unpolished essay shows a lack of caring and discipline.

Don't worry *too* much about your essay. Work on it because it *is* important, and it *can* make a difference, but know that at *most* colleges, probably about 15% of the essays are very strong, 15% are weak, and the rest are somewhere in that gray area which won't "make or break" the application. Of course, the more selective the college, the higher the expectations will be. What's most important is that you're true to yourself and that you do your level best to take advantage of this opportunity.

## Parts of the Application: What Goes Where?

Rev. . 7/2021

Everything  
begins with  
the  
**STUDENT**

### TEACHER RECS

Ask 2 teachers in person. Complete Teacher Rec Questionnaires. "Invite" teachers on the Common Application & then "assign" them to each college by September 15. For non-Common Application colleges, see each college's instruction.

### APPLICATIONS

Send drafts of all writing to your counselor; make sure we see final drafts at least two weeks before deadline. Review activity section with your counselor. Complete and submit the Common App (or other application) online at least one week before the deadline.

### TESTING

If you need to or want to report SATs or ACTs to a college, send either *officially* (through College Board or ACT, 4 weeks before application deadline) OR self-report them to the college, according to each college's requirements. Self-report AP scores as desired.

### TRANSCRIPT, SCHOOL REPORT, & COUNSELOR REC

**By October 1** (sometimes earlier for rolling admissions), log in to Scoir to mark schools that you are applying to, indicating your application deadline and intention to apply on Common App.

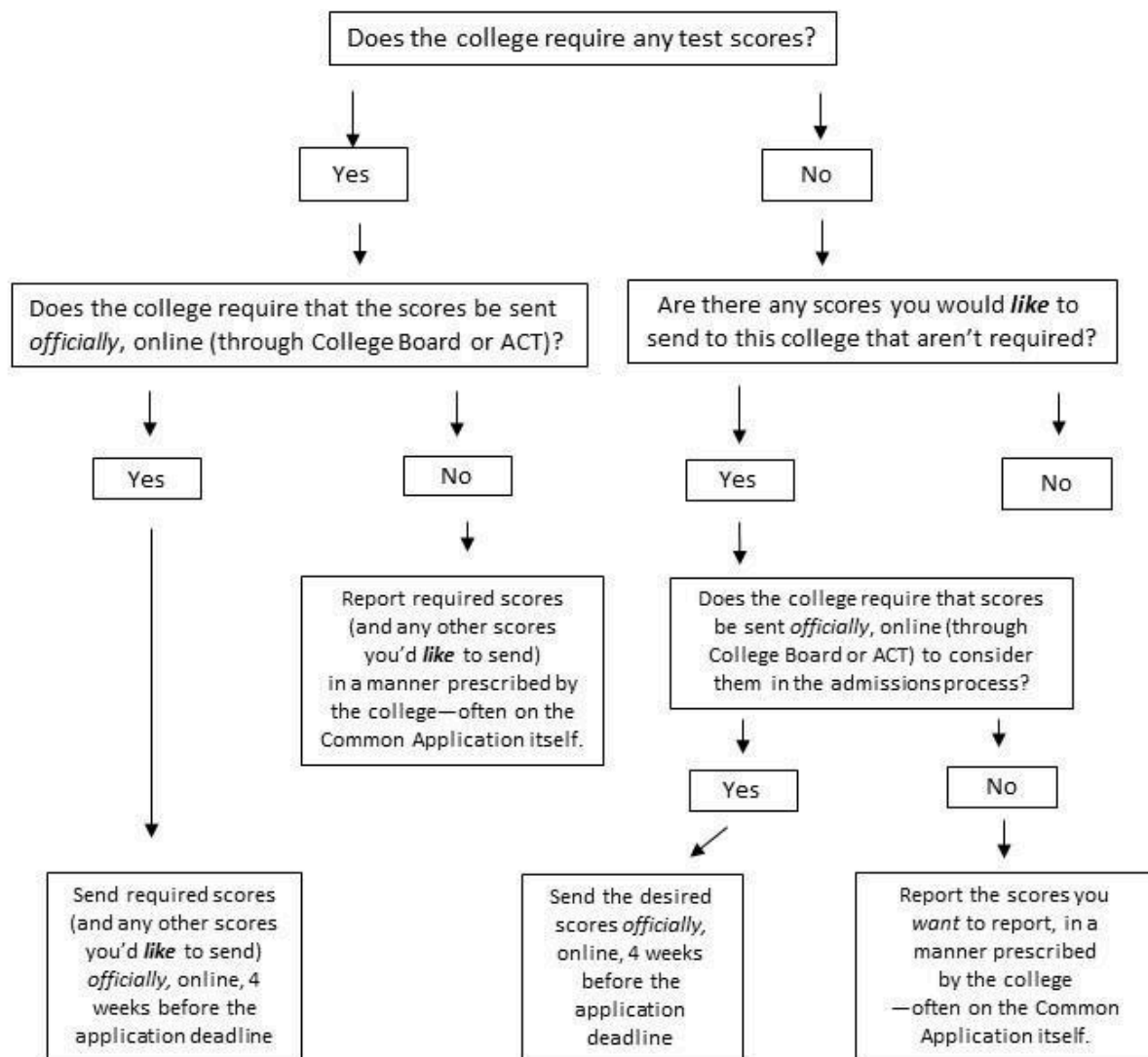


And ends in the  
**COLLEGE ADMISSIONS OFFICE**



## Sending Standardized Test Scores to Colleges

It is the student's responsibility to send test scores to each college as required by the college or desired by the student. Hackley does not report test scores to colleges on our transcripts.



## **Teacher - Counselor Recommendations for College Applications**

### **STEP ONE:**

Find out what your colleges require. Most colleges require two recommendations. Some colleges will require recommendations from teachers in certain subject areas (example: English or science) or grade levels (usually, junior or senior year). **Consult your college counselor for his/her advice and approval.**

### **STEP TWO:**

Once your counselor has approved, approach your teachers politely (in person, if possible). Ask them if they'd be willing to write you a college recommendation. Example: "I know you're very busy, but I was wondering if you think you might be able to write me a recommendation for colleges." If the teacher responds positively, then you're all set. (If the teacher hesitates, you might say, "Think about it, and I'll get back to you later." Then, see your college counselor.)

### **STEP THREE:**

Once your college counselor has approved and your teacher has agreed to write for you, complete the [Teacher Recommendation Questionnaire](#) (available on HOL: click Upper School, then College Counseling) and send it to your teacher (and copy your college counselor).

### **STEP FOUR:**

FOR COMMON APPLICATIONS, go on-line to your application, after August 1, and "invite" your counselor and your two teachers to write for you. (See instructions on the next page for inviting recommenders to Common App.) After "inviting" them, you'll need to "assign" each recommender to each college where you want the recommendation to go (not necessary for the counselor letter). Double-check with the teacher to make sure he/she receives your recommendation request via email and make sure the teacher knows your earliest deadline. **Make sure you select the decision plan for each of your colleges: ED, EA, or Regular. If you *don't* select a decision plan, the teachers will not know the deadline for submitting the recommendation. (Note: you can change a decision plan, from ED or EA to Regular Decision, if necessary, up until you submit your application.)**

FOR OTHER TYPES OF ON-LINE RECOMMENDATIONS, follow the instructions of the on-line application(s). **Double-check with the teacher to make sure he/she receives your recommendation request via email and make sure the teacher knows the deadline for each non-Common App recommendation.**

**COMPLETE STEPS 1 & 2 BY MAY 24, STEP 3 BY JUNE 6, AND STEP 4 BY SEPT. 6 AT THE LATEST  
(STEP 4 CAN BE DONE AS EARLY AS AUGUST 1)**

**Remember: this is *not* a particularly good time to annoy your teachers.**

DO NOT make the teacher track you down for missing information or make the teacher rush off a hastily written recommendation. Be prompt and courteous; your teachers are putting in a *lot* of extra work, for no extra pay, on your behalf and may have twenty other students' recommendations to write as well. **Do not badger teachers to submit your recommendations before the official due date.** Trust your teachers to meet their deadlines.

**STEP FIVE:** After the recommendations are done, remember to thank your teachers. They are willing to write for you (putting lots of time and attention into each recommendation) because they care about you, so thank them for their help and let them know how things turn out!

## Common Application Account

*During the first few days of August, follow these instructions for inviting your college counselor, and, later, your teachers, to write recommendations*

Log into your [Common App account](#). (You'll need to answer a few questions to renew your account for the new year.)

If you don't have any colleges on your account yet, go to "College Search," enter a college's name (that's all you need to enter) and click the search button. Then, **click the box next to the college name, and click the "add" button.**

Go to "Dashboard" and **click on a college name.**

Click next to "Recommenders and FERPA."

Click on "Complete Release Authorization."

Read this section carefully, **then click on the box next to "I have fully read and understood the FERPA Release Authorization explanation above" and click continue.**

**Click on the box next to "I acknowledge that every school that I have attended may release all requested records..."**

**IMPORTANT: Be sure to select, "I waive my right to review all recommendations..."**

*You're waiving this right for the reasons we discussed in our Common App workshop. Waiving your right lets colleges know that you do not intend to read your recommendations, which reassures colleges that the letters are candid and truthful. Since Hackley's teachers and counselors write very strong recommendations, you'd be undermining their value to colleges by not waiving your right. Many recommenders prefer not to write letters for students who don't waive this right. If you feel uncomfortable waiving your right, speak to your parents and to your college counselor.*

**Click on the box next to "I understand that my waiver or no waiver selection above pertains to all colleges..."**

**Sign in the box (type your signature), select today's date, and click "Save and Close"**

**Click on "Invite Counselor."**

**Enter the appropriate information** for your *college counselor* (triple-check every letter of the e-mail address):

Ms. Jean Nadell	<a href="mailto:jnadell@hackleyschool.org">jnadell@hackleyschool.org</a>
Ms. Rebecca Hall	<a href="mailto:rhall@hackleyschool.org">rhall@hackleyschool.org</a>
Ms. Sara Kratzok	<a href="mailto:skratzok@hackleyschool.org">skratzok@hackleyschool.org</a>

**Click "Invite"**

**Next, click on "Enable Preview" under the box with your counselor's name.** This will allow your college counselor to see your application occasionally, when we're working on it together, or when we have a question about your application.

---

**Next, if you have already cleared a teacher rec choice with your counselor, asked the teacher to write for you, and sent the completed [Teacher Rec Questionnaire](#) to your teacher and counselor, you should "invite" the teacher to write for you:**

**Click on "Invite Teacher,"** add the teacher's information (triple check the email address), **and click "invite."** Check with the teacher to see if they have received the invitation. **After you've "invited" your teachers to write for you, you'll need to "assign" them to each of the colleges where you want the recommendation to go.**

**IMPORTANT: Please DO NOT select "Other Recommender" to write for you--at least not yet. We will discuss this option with you during the first week of school.**

## Teacher Recommendation Questionnaire Rev 8/2023

(NB: This questionnaire is also available as a [Google Doc](#) - please make a copy and then share with your teacher and counselor.)

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Students:**

1. **Speak to your college counselor** before asking the above teacher to write for you.
2. **Ask your teacher, in person**, if he/she would be willing to write for you.
3. **Fill out this form and give it to your teacher; give a copy to your counselor.**

*Your responses below will help your teacher write a more thorough and supportive recommendation. Specific anecdotes and recollections are particularly helpful, as we old folks are losing our memories at an alarming rate! We know you probably had a wonderful experience in this class, but **remember that the focus of this questionnaire is you, not your teacher.** Please address **your** achievements, growth, and enthusiasm, rather than spend your time heaping praise upon the teacher. **Do not be modest!** Don't make stuff up (☺), but be proud. *Do a good job, and you'll help us sing your praises!**

Describe your **greatest achievements** in this teacher's class(es) and the **abilities you demonstrated** of which you are proudest. (Please be as specific as you can.)

What were your **most important contributions** to this class?

Describe one or two of the **most fun or meaningful experiences**, units, classroom conversations, anecdotes, recollections, projects, or events you experienced in this teacher's class(es) that you may remember in five years. What makes it/them so valuable/fun/memorable? How does this reflect your own personality/preferences/goals?

What did you gain from this teacher's class(es) (including **new attitudes, interests, study habits, skills**, etc.)?

Please describe your **biggest challenge** in this course. How did you overcome it?

Does this course/discipline relate to your future academic or career goals? If so, how?

Envision your teacher speaking to a college professor. What would your teacher say to get the professor psyched about having you in class?

Write your own one-sentence teacher recommendation for yourself that makes clear to a college the most important reason it should accept you:

Once you've finished answering these questions, **send the form to your teacher and send a copy to your counselor.**

Use the space below for any additional comments.

## Visiting College Campuses During the Fall of Senior Year Rev 8-2023

Hackley discourages seniors from missing school. With the heavy workload and college applications to complete, it is hard enough to juggle one's obligations without missing school. At the same time, Hackley recognizes that there may be circumstances when missing school to visit colleges during senior year may be important: an athletic recruitment visit, a musical or theatrical audition, or perhaps a last-minute re-visit to confirm an ED commitment.

If the need arises to visit a college during the fall, seniors should first consider whether they can schedule the visit during one of the days when Hackley is not in session:

**September 25:** Yom Kippur (for those who don't observe the holiday)

**October 2:** Senior College Visit Day

**October 9:** Columbus/Indigenous Peoples' Day

**November 10:** Professional Development Day

If none of those dates work, and if a Saturday morning visit does not work out (college admissions offices were often open Saturday mornings in the fall in pre-pandemic times), then the senior should see his or her college counselor about alternatives and perhaps consider the possibility of missing school. The counselor may then sign the form below and initiate the permission process. It is important that the student have the form signed by all of the teachers of the classes the student will be missing, *at least one week before the visit date*.

### **College Campus Visit Pass – Due One Week Before You Miss School**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

College(s) to be visited: \_\_\_\_\_

Which school day (specific date) will be missed: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Required Signatures (College Counselor must sign first):**

College Counselor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of teachers/coaches/P.E. teachers/play directors/etc. of classes and extracurricular commitments to be missed\*:

DO NOT SIGN UNTIL  
COLLEGE COUNSELOR HAS  
SIGNED ABOVE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Attendance Office Signature (Ms. Coy): \_\_\_\_\_

\*Please notify your private music instructor, and/or others as appropriate.

**Return completed pass to Ms. Frasco in the College Counseling Office one week before you leave to visit the college.**

**College Campus Visit Pass – Due One Week Before You Miss School**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

College(s) to be visited: \_\_\_\_\_

Which school day (specific date) will be missed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Required Signatures** (College Counselor must sign first):

College Counselor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of teachers/coaches/P.E. teachers/play directors/etc. of classes and extracurricular commitments to be missed\*:

DO NOT SIGN UNTIL  
COLLEGE COUNSELOR HAS  
SIGNED ABOVE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Attendance Office Signature (Ms. Coy): \_\_\_\_\_

\*Please notify your private music instructor, and/or others as appropriate.

Return completed pass to Ms. Frasco in the College Counseling Office one week before you leave to visit the college.

**College Campus Visit Pass – Due One Week Before You Miss School**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

College(s) to be visited: \_\_\_\_\_

Which school day (specific date) will be missed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Required Signatures** (College Counselor must sign first):

College Counselor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of teachers/coaches/P.E. teachers/play directors/etc. of classes and extracurricular commitments to be missed\*:

DO NOT SIGN UNTIL  
COLLEGE COUNSELOR HAS  
SIGNED ABOVE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Attendance Office Signature (Ms. Coy): \_\_\_\_\_

\*Please notify your private music instructor, and/or others as appropriate.

Return completed pass to Ms. Frasco in the College Counseling Office one week before you leave to visit the college.

## College Visits to Hackley Rev 8/2023

### Senior Attendance Policies

Each fall, over one hundred colleges and universities visit Hackley to talk to prospective students and our college counseling staff. These visits are important for a number of reasons, including the following:

- Seniors can demonstrate their interest in a college by attending its session and asking **good, informed** questions about the college. Failure to have **good** questions ready can leave a negative impression.
- College representatives provide important information about their programs and selection processes.

Traditionally, seniors have been allowed to attend these sessions if

they have a free period at the time of the meeting, and bring the permission form below

**OR they meet all of the following criteria:**

- they are serious about considering applying to the college,
- they *request and receive* their teacher's permission, on the form below, to miss part or all of a class to attend the meeting,
- they receive this permission *at least a few days in advance* (visits to Hackley are usually scheduled *weeks in advance* and a schedule of future visits is posted on the Upper School bulletin board, on the College Counseling Office door, and on our website), and
- they bring the signed permission form to the meeting.

**IF, however, the college session occurs during a test, or if the teacher decides against granting permission for other reasons, the student should write a short note for the college counseling office to give to the college representative.** In the note, the student can voice enthusiasm for the college, disappointment at missing the college session, the reason they can't attend, and if they either have visited or plan to visit the college campus.

Permission forms (sample below) are **REQUIRED** for admission to the college sessions:

### College Session Attendance Permission Form

Name of senior: \_\_\_\_\_

College: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of session: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of session: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I will not miss any class or study hall to attend this college session.

or

☐ I will miss the following class or study hall on the date & time listed above:

Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Teacher's Permission

I give my permission for this senior to miss my class during the time listed above. I understand our general criteria for giving such permission:

- the student has asked for permission at least a few days in advance of the meeting
- the student will not miss a test

Teacher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*You must bring this form with you to be admitted to the college session.*



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Teacher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*You must bring this form with you to be admitted to the college session.*

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Teacher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*You must bring this form with you to be admitted to the college session.*