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WELCOME

If a student aspires to attend a good college, Randolph-Macon Academy can assist in finding the best college match. R-MA offers a comprehensive college counseling program focusing on one-on-one college planning. Searching for colleges is an important milestone in moving toward adulthood as students are finding their home for the next four years. Introspection will be required as strengths, interests, and goals are assessed. The college counselor will consider your personality and academic record to give you a clearer picture of schools that will be good fit. At R-MA the college counselor can help to clarify your goals, see whether your grades and courses are acceptable for the colleges you are considering, and help you develop a plan for the rest of the admissions process.

MYTHS ABOUT THE COLLEGE PROCESS

Myth

“There’s only one right college for me. And it has to be perfect.”

Reality

Parents and some students have the mythical notion that there is the one “perfect” college or university that is just waiting for them to apply. The United States has been subjected to marketing and advertising campaigns that try to sell us the concept of the perfect car, the perfect house, the perfect toothpaste. Why not the perfect college? The quest for perfection has led us to believe that there is only one college that is right for a student. Of the 4,000 colleges in the United States there are a dozen where any student at almost any achievement level can make the most of their potential. Don’t limit yourself to the handful of colleges you hear other people talking about. The search process is all about finding the best match for you.

Myth

“My family paid dearly for a private school education. That investment had better pay off in admission to a prestigious college.”

Reality

Independent schools like Randolph-Macon Academy offer a solid return on investment by providing a challenging academic environment and rich opportunities to participate in sports, the arts, and other extra-curricular activities. Nevertheless, it’s up to students themselves to take advantage of their opportunities. What they make of the high school years is the biggest factor in where they’re admitted to college. Paying for a great high school is like paying for membership in the best health club. You can spend a lot of money for access to state of the art equipment, but if you don’t actually exercise, you won’t get results. Students who fail to apply themselves will find their college choices limited, regardless of the quality or the cost of their high school.
Myth

“Getting B’s in hard classes that independent schools offer will hurt my chances of getting into a good college.”

Reality

College admissions officers appreciate the differences between A’s and B’s in various courses. They also realize the importance of considering the whole person, not the individual grades. That said, regardless of where a student attends high school, earning high grades in challenging courses is the best predictor of success in a highly competitive college. Posting several C’s is a predictor of so-so performance at such a college and gives admissions officers’ good rationale for rejection.

Myth

“No student gets into a good college without all A’s, 2000-plus on SATs and a dozen activities.”

Reality

Selective colleges do require high grades in the most rigorous classes, solid test scores, and a record of meaningful activities. Even students with stellar records can get admitted to a good college—if you define “good” as the college that meets their needs. Keep in mind these comforting statistics:

- A selective college is generally considered to be those that accept fewer than 50% of applicants.
- The average selectivity rate—percentage of students who are offered admission—at four year colleges and universities in the United States was 68% for Fall 2006.
- On average, 58% of colleges accepted 75% or more of those who applied.
- 91% of students are accepted by their first or second choice college.

*Source: The College Board’s 2008 Annual Survey of Colleges

Myth

“The more rigorous the admission standards, the higher the quality of education.”

Wrong. Admission statistics could have a lot to do with a college’s basketball team having a fabulous season, being mentioned in a national magazine, or its sweatshirt being worn by someone on a popular television show. Many excellent colleges have applicant pools that are self-selective, so their admission rates are higher. Many state schools have quotas for in and out-of-state students. The numbers have little to do with quality. What you should be asking is the number of students who are graduating from the college, and how long does it take them to do so? How many freshman stay after their first year? Getting accepted is just one piece of the higher education pie.

Myth

“If students don’t make it into a big name college, they’ll always lag behind those who did.”
Reality

What students make of their college education is more important than where they attend. A number of long-term studies challenge the popular assumptions that graduation from one of the big name universities has any affect whatsoever on long term success and overall happiness. In addition, although many successful people emerged from prestigious colleges, plenty of others did not. Employers and graduate schools are much more interested in your accomplishments and what you have to offer than the name of the college you attended.

Myth

“If I go to the right private school, the combination of its reputation and its counseling staff will get me into the right college.”

Reality

Most independent school students do have the advantage of a rigorous curriculum in a supportive environment. Counselors are a valuable resource and can offer advice based on personal knowledge of a given student and a variety of colleges. Bear in mind, colleges make their own decision about whom to admit. No counselor has the power to get a student accepted, or to reverse a rejection letter.

Myth

“You only have to take the minimum college prep to get into college.”

Reality

Technically, this is true. In reality it is not. The more math, science, and languages you take, the better your chances are that you will get into a good four year college. Any college that lists the rigor of the secondary school record as a Very Important Admissions Factor is looking for honors and AP courses on the transcript.

Myth

“I failed miserably my freshman and sophomore year. No college will accept me.”

Reality

Colleges look for improvement in performance as a sign that you can and will do the work. In fact, a vast improvement as a junior and senior indicates to a college that you have settled down. However do not expect to catch up for three poor years in one good semester as a senior. Primarily, your grades from 9-11th grade are what are considered for college admissions. Senior year is the time to show that you can maintain your grades and carry a fully loaded schedule.

Myth

“I am a failure if I do not get into College XYZ.”

Reality

The college process is a human one, and it might not always be what you consider to be fair. There are many reasons you might not be accepted to a particular college. Remember that you are in high school in one of the best educated and most college-bound areas of the country. Competition is tough,
and a denial is not necessarily a reflection of your qualifications. Please don't judge your own self-worth by a single college's acceptance or denial.

Myth

“Some secret strategy or private college counselor can get me admitted to a college.”

Reality

In our society and neighborhoods, where money can buy almost anything, it is easy to believe this. Impressive letters of recommendation from famous people and gimmicky application or essay approaches will not get you into college. YOU and your record will get YOU into a college –perhaps with a lot of guidance, assistance and support – but it will be YOU, and there is no secret strategy for any school.

These Myths and Realities were adopted from Patrick Basset National Association of Independent Schools and College Match by Steven Antonoff and Marie Freidman.

Tips for Parents

The college search and admission process is a life-changing event for your child, and often for the whole family. The beginning of the college search signals the beginning of a child’s transition from teenager to young adult. As a result, it can be difficult for parents to strike the right balance of helping their child without taking over. Below are some dos and don’ts for parents when entering the world of college admission:

- **DO GET INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS.** Even if you have vivid memories of your own college decisions, realize that the college admission process has changed considerably. Whether or not you attended college, invest some time in reading about today’s college admission process. R-MA encourages families to pick up the current copy of *College Match* available in the R-MA book store. It can answer many questions you may have throughout the process and learning how to find the best college fit.

- **DO Discuss Restrictions Up Front.** If there are financial or geographic restrictions that limit the range of colleges your child can consider, discuss them with your child at the beginning of the college search. Being up front and honest builds trust, and your child will not waste time and energy researching colleges that he or she will not be able to attend.

- **DON’T Limit Choices Based on Fees.** “Parents should certainly be willing to lay out economic realities to their children at the front end of the college search process, but should not shut out options based purely on sticker price,” says Michael E. Dessimos, Associate Vice President, Roosevelt University (IL). It’s always a good idea to encourage your child to include several affordable colleges among their college choices. Remember that financial aid often helps families send their children to even the most expensive colleges. No matter your income level, find out all you can about financial aid. Make inquiries of the admissions office for scholarships and grants that may be available.

- **DO Remind Your Child of Deadlines.** The life of a high school student is often very busy, and teenagers are still learning time management skills. So help your child begin keeping a calendar or day planner to keep track of all those college application deadlines, as well as their school work and activities. It is ultimately the student’s responsibility to be aware of all deadlines during the college process, keep up to date with college communications and to follow up on missing requirements.
• **DON’T NAG.** “Say what you have to say and drop it,” advises Scott White, a counselor at Montclair High School (NJ). “If the process delays or changes because students don’t do what they are supposed to do, they may have to live with the consequences.” Remember the goal is for your child to “own” the process and make college decisions that are right for her.

• **DO Listen and Offer Advice.** For many students, their choice of college is their first adult decision and it can be difficult. Likewise, it can be difficult for parents to find the right balance of guiding their child without making decisions for him or her. “Parents should be aware of what is going on, should make sure deadlines are not missed, ensure that the proper tests are taken, and should be available when the student wants advice,” says White. Try to act as a sounding board for your child; ask good questions and let your child supply the answers.

• **DON’T Make Decisions for Your Child.** Your child needs to choose a college based on their individual abilities, interests and personality. To that end, beware of pressuring your child to apply to colleges that you would like for him or her to attend. This is the first adult decision your child will be making on their own behalf. After all, your child will be the one who spends several years living and learning at college.

• **DO Be Your Child’s Cheerleader.** The college admission process can be stressful. Your child may feel uncertain about the decisions that they must make, fearful of rejection from colleges or anxious about meeting deadlines for both college applicants and their school work. Over the course of the search process, your child may change their mind more than once about their career aspirations, academic goals or what they want in a college. All of this is normal. Parents can help their college-bound child by offering plenty of encouragement, a listening ear, and gentle guidance. Remember to celebrate each milestone along your child’s journey from high school to college.

**NAVIANCE FAMILY CONNECTION**

Preparing students to be **successful** and **self-reliant** in college and beyond is the focus of our school. The goal of Randolph-Macon Academy’s College Readiness program is to assist students in discovering their talents, exploring career interests, researching colleges and preparing their application for the college admission process.

Open communication between parents, students, mentors and the college counselor is critical to ensuring an effective path to higher education. R-MA uses **Naviance Family Connection** as a collaborative tool for parents and students to access career and college information and prepare students for the college admission process.

**Naviance Family Connection** allows parents to get involved in the student’s planning and advising process – build a resume, complete online surveys and manage timelines and deadlines for making decisions about college. Students and parents can also research colleges and compare the student’s GPA and standardized test scores with historical data from R-MA for students who have applied to colleges and been admitted in the past.

**Naviance Family Connection** also lets us share information with parents and students about upcoming college visits and events, scholarship opportunities, web resources for college and career information, and the student’s career exploration activities and readiness for the college admission process. To access **Naviance Family Connection**, use your web browser to connect to:

http://connection.naviance.com/rmava
When you visit the site for the first time, please enter your personal registration code in the New User box, then follow the on-screen instructions to create your own account. If you have not received a registration code, please email the Academic Coordinator (cbennett@rma.edu).

Parents and students only need to register once. Once you are registered, you only need to use your user name and password to access the site.

COLLEGE SELECTION

One of the questions asked most frequently by students is, “What should my final list of colleges include?” There are two fundamental considerations: (1) how many schools should I apply to, and (2) what range of schools should be included in regard to admission competition? Randolph-Macon Academy tries to discourage a “blitz” approach of applying to a multitude of schools some of which you have no intention of attending. We suggest that regardless of academic ability that you “do not put all of your eggs in one basket.” We suggest that you apply to no more than 6 to 9 schools with varying selectivity, but which possess the unique features desired by you individually.

Categorizing Selectivity

- **Most selective** – acceptance rates at these schools is less than 25%
  SAT-V= 750-800 SAT-M= 700-800 ACT 33-36; weighted GPA 4.0 or higher; 8 or more AP/Honors courses
- **Highly Selective** – acceptance rates at these schools are between 25 and 50%
  SAT-V= 670-800 SAT-M= 600-800 ACT 29-36; weighted GPA 3.6 or higher; 6 or more AP/Honors courses
- **Very Selective** – acceptance rates at these schools are approximately 50%
  SAT-V =or>550 SAT M=or> 550 ACT 24-28; weighted GPA 3.0 or higher; 1-2 AP/Honors courses
- **Selective** – acceptance rates at these schools may go as high as 80%
  SAT-V= 480-540 SAT-M= 450-540 ACT 19-23; 2.5 weighted GPA or higher
- **Less Selective** – acceptance is based primarily on space available
  SAT-V= around 400 SAT-M- around 400 ACT 11-18; weighted GPA approx. 2.3

Reach

It is appropriate to include a couple of “long shots.” These schools possess many of the features the student desires, but admission is extremely competitive.

Match

Schools that possess the significant features a student desires, and at which the probability of admission is even to slightly better than even.

Safety

Schools that possess the majority of features a student desires and at which the probability of admission is highly likely.
While there is no hard and fast rule, we suggest selecting no more than three schools from each category. Obviously the schools in each of these categories will vary from student to student based on their academic profile. Each student should be aware of their academic record and make sure that they are selecting colleges that fall in their choice range.

**Building a College List**

Building a solid college list is much like building a house. Begin by constructing the foundation: the colleges that you truly like and where you have a safe bet on your chance of admission. With those in place, you can build the structure of your list by choosing colleges that are a good match for your grades, test scores, and other characteristics, but which are not necessarily sure bets for admission. Finally, after you’ve cemented the foundation and built the walls, you can turn your attention to the roof – those colleges that may be just out of reach, or which are extremely selective. A house built from the roof down is seldom stable.

Begin - and end - with the most important person in the entire process: you, the student. College may still seem far off, but you already know quite a few things about yourself that will ultimately affect where you apply and your chances. A successful college search is a bit like trying on shoes: If you keep trying to push your feet into the wrong sized shoe, you'll have a different experience than if you figure out which size you need upfront and concentrate on trying on shoes that fit.

The process of selecting the colleges to which you will apply, and eventually the one you will actually attend, is very personal and should be undertaken with careful consideration. The process must also be accompanied by an honest and realistic self-assessment. By the end of your junior year, you should have a working list of about fifteen or so colleges which you should investigate during the spring and summer. By the fall of your senior year, you will have deleted schools from the list and added others. Your goal is to develop a final list of about nine schools, any one of which you would be happy and successful if you were to find yourself there as a student.

Start by thinking about your educational experiences to date. What have you liked and disliked about high school? What do you hope will change in college, or stay the same? Which teachers in high school have you enjoyed most -- and what was it about their teaching style that made their class enjoyable? What does that say about what you'd like in a college? How have you learned best in high school? Do you do best in classes where there's lots of discussion or where the teacher does most of the talking? How prepared are you for college? Be honest: what are your academic strengths and weaknesses? What type of college setting will help you maximize your strengths and minimize your weaknesses? Look beyond the classroom, too. Who have your closest friends been in your high school? Are there groups in your high school you admire or could do without? What does that say about the types of students you hope to find - or not find - in your college community?

Parents, while you may have hopes and dreams for your child’s college search, now is the time to start adjusting to the idea that the person who will be attending college is your child, not you. Give them a chance to sort through their preferences and figure out their own hopes and dreams for college. However, one caveat: Now is the time to discuss any financial limitations with your child, and to realistically assess together how those limitations may influence their college list.
Many students develop a final list of schools which includes three types: "reach" schools – colleges you would like to attend but for which you do not quite "fit" the profile of a typically accepted student, or for which you "fit" but the school is so selective that it turns away many "qualified" applicants; "likely" schools where your chance of acceptance is more reasonable in that you "have what they are looking for" or exceed the averages, but where a good number of qualified students are not accepted; and schools where your chance of getting admitted is almost certain: you fit the profile and most qualified applicants are accepted ("safety" schools). Keep in mind that there is no such thing as a guarantee or a sure-shot acceptance for anyone. Also, you should not apply to a "reach" school that is too much of a reach if the academic environment you would face there would be overwhelming or burdensome. Nor is much accomplished by going through all of the work of applying to a school just to see if you can get accepted if you have no intention of attending, or by finding out how many colleges will accept you – you can only attend one college!

Adapted from Carolyn Z. Lawrence, School Counselor

Types of Decision Plans

The use of multiple admission plans by colleges and universities often results in confusion among students, parents and counselors. Schools must clearly define their policies as related to the different options (defined below) as agreed to by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC).

Non-Restrictive Application Plans

These plans allow student to wait until May 1st to confirm enrollment.

- **Regular Decision.** The application process in which a student submits an application to an institution by a specified date and receives a decision within a reasonably and clearly stated period of time. A student may apply to other institutions without restriction.
- **Rolling Admission.** The application process in which an institution reviews applications as they are completed and renders admission decisions to students throughout the admission cycle. A student may apply to other institutions without restriction.
- **Early Action (EA).** The application process in which students apply to an institution of preference and receive a decision well in advance of the institution’s regular response date. Students admitted under Early Action are NOT OBLIGATED to accept the institution’s offer of admission or to submit a deposit prior to May 1st. Under non restrictive Early Action, a student may apply to other institutions.

Restricted Application Plans

These plans allow institutions to limit students from applying to other early plans.

- **Early Decision (ED):** The application process in which students make a commitment to a first choice institution, where, if admitted, they definitely will enroll. While pursuing admission under an Early Decision plan, students may apply to other institutions, but may have only one Early Decision application pending at any time. Should a student who applies for financial aid not be offered an award that makes attendance possible, the student may decline the offer of admission and be released from Early Decision commitment. The institution must notify the applicant of the decision within a reasonable and clearly stated period of time after the Early Decision deadline.
Usually, a nonrefundable deposit must be made well in advance of May 1st. The institution will respond to an application for financial aid at or near the time of an offer of admission. Institutions with Early Decision plans may restrict students from applying to other early plans. Institutions will clearly articulate their specific policies in their Early Decision Agreement.

- **Restrictive Early Action (REA):** The application process in which students apply to an institution of preference and receive a decision well in advance of the institution’s regular response date. Institutions with Restrictive Early Action plans place restrictions on student applications to other early plans. Institutions will clearly articulate these restrictions in their Early Action policies and agreements with students. Students admitted under Restrictive Early Action are not obligated to accept the institution’s offer of admission or to submit a deposit prior to May 1st.

**Should a Student Apply Under One of These Plans?**
A student should apply under an early decision or early action plan only if they are very sure of the college that they want to attend and present a *well-rounded* application to include great academics and test scores. Sometimes, students who apply under these plans have a better chance of acceptance than they would through the regular admissions process. These plans are also good for colleges, because they get students who really want to go to the school to commit early in the process.

A student should **not** apply under an early decision or early action planning to weigh offers and financial aid packages from several colleges later in the spring. In the fall, it may seem appealing to get the college decision over with, but goals change as senior year progresses. Early decision is not for the faint of heart, as colleges may decide to defer to regular decision or deny outright. In addition, the student must be organized and on target with all admission materials submitted prior to the deadline. On the other hand, he or she may be confident of thriving at a certain college. If so, your child is the type of student early decision was created for.

**THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

**Getting Organized**
Much of the stress associated with a college search stems from being overwhelmed and being unorganized. As the college search begins, organizational skills will play a key role in the success and sanity of the process. As soon as students begin to take standardized tests and visit colleges, volumes of information will arrive daily in the mail. Some will be personalized with the student’s name and own website link! To maintain order, review each as soon as it arrives, first, as mail comes in filter through, and if the school is of interest, save it. If the school is not one of interest, recycle it.

**A CRATE Idea**
Now that you know what you are going to keep, purchase a plastic crate or file box that is designed to hold hanging files. Here is a suggestion on how to set up the folders:

- Activity Resume
- Applications
- Personal Statement/Essay
- Standardized Tests
- Scholarships/ROTC (if applicable)
- Campus Visits
Reserve another 6-9 folders to label for each college on your “list of colleges.” As information begins to trickle in, set up a file for that school including contact information and specific counselor if one has been assigned. As interests change so will the order of the folders. This initial organization can relieve some stress and clutter in your life.

**Teacher Recommendations**

Many colleges require teacher recommendations to be submitted with application materials. Depending on the academic program, the college may request a specific teacher, such as math or science to be included. Teachers from junior and senior year are usually preferred, as are teachers of "core" academic subjects like Math, English, History, and Science. However, someone else may know a student equally as well and be able to give an honest opinion. Coaches, mentors, or pastors may give insight to students. Randolph-Macon Academy teachers take the responsibility of writing very seriously and spend a considerable amount of time and effort preparing thoughtful well-written letters for students. R-MA has a specific process to assist in helping students and teachers with recommendation letters.

- Students are encouraged to request letters of recommendation before their senior year begins. At a minimum, teachers are **given three (3) weeks’ notice** for all letters of recommendation.
- Supply the teacher with information about you; your activity resume, worksheet for teacher recommendation and/or your senior brag sheet. These documents may be found in Naviance Family Connection.
- Supply the teacher with envelopes addressed to each college’s admission office.
- If the college has a specific teacher evaluation form, please complete the student section, sign, and give it to the teacher.

All letters of recommendation are **CONFIDENTIAL**; it is the discretion of the teacher if they wish to share the contents. **DO NOT MAKE LAST MINUTE REQUESTS TO TEACHERS**; they have no obligation to comply with the request without adequate time. Requests for letters of recommendation should be made in person. Remember to thank teachers who have written letters and share with them college outcomes.

**The Application Process**

**Starting the Application Process**

The application season is typically open from August until January. A college will open a file as soon as your application is initiated. Items will be added to the file until it is complete and ready for review. **It is the student’s responsibility to follow up on all application materials**; the college counseling office has no way to know if items have been received by the school where a student applies. Students should have an email
address, and once you submit applications be prepared to check email daily. Plan to spend two hours to complete one application. Colleges expect one thing beyond all else: applicants read and follow directions carefully.

**Deadlines**

The student is responsible for ALL DEADLINES. This includes knowing the difference between “post marked by” and “received by” for all colleges. The request for a transcript must be in Naviance Family Connection ten (10) business days prior to a college’s deadline. Due to the volume of transcript requests received during the application season (Oct-Dec), the academic office cannot process “last-minute” requests.

**Online Applications and the “Common App”**

Online Applications

Almost all applications will be initiated online. Applications differ according to who is applying, make sure you have the freshman or undergraduate application. If you are attending R-MA on an F-1 Visa, you will most likely submit an International application.

The Common Application is a non-profit organization that serves students and member institutions by providing an admission application – online and in print – that students may submit to any of their 400-plus members. A student is able to complete one application for many different schools. It’s a good idea to see if your college utilizes the Common App as it reduces the amount of time spent filling in applications. Secondary School Report and Teacher Recommendation forms will be submitted electronically. In addition, be sure to check for Supplemental information that your college requires. Most often these are additional essays to be submitted.

**Tips for Applying Online**

Even though there are checks and prompts to fill in missing information the student should be sure to READ all of the directions. Have your activity resume handy. Do not make typos on your important information such as name, address, or emails for recommendation letters. Make sure your essays are well-edited and free of typos as well. Always make a copy of your application, print your confirmation of submission and pay, and write down your user name and password.

A special note about names. Apply to every college with your given name as it reads on your birth certificate, formal identification, or Visa. Do not use nicknames, abbreviations or initials. Type in your full name. Be consistent throughout the process, especially with registering for tests. Applications have been rejected because test scores are in one name, and the application is in a different one. A college will not know the difference nor match up test scores for an applicant.
Essays/Personal Statements

Many colleges require essays as part of the application, and this seems to be the most difficult part of the process. The essay is the student’s opportunity to “talk” directly to the college admissions officer, in their own voice. All R-MA students participate in a College Essay Workshop through collaboration with their English-11 class. Students submit a rough draft; and recommendations are made for students to improve their essay(s). Writing for a college application is different than writing a typical essay; students brainstorm their ideas and discover the “hook” to grab the reader. College admission officers typically only have three to five minutes for reading essays, so there has to be an attention grabber in the first sentence. Here are some quick guidelines:

- **The essay should be about YOU.**
- **Don’t be boring:** Give them a reason to select you. It is not what you say that counts; it is what they hear and what they read.
- **Don’t lie or exaggerate:** You run a risk of being disqualified if you are deceptive. According to the National Association of College Admissions Counseling, falsification of application information is the second reason for revoking admission offers.
- **Communicate effectively:** Think about your assets and present them.
- **Do not repeat your resume:** Avoid repeating grades, activities and test scores; they want to know something else that is not on the application.

Requesting Transcripts

It is the student’s responsibility to request official transcripts through Naviance, *Family Connection*. The Academic Coordinator will process all requests weekly on Tuesday and Thursday.

**Transcript fees for SY 2011-2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcript(s) Requested</th>
<th>Fee/Each</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>No charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 and up</td>
<td>$25.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sending Test Scores

It is the student’s responsibility to send their scores to ALL colleges and scholarship programs to which they are applying. This can be completed when registering for any standardized test: SAT ACT, TOEFL, or AP Exam. See the STANDARIZED TESTING section for more information.

Application Fee

Application fees range from $25-$90 depending on the college. In some cases, a college will waive the application fee if the student is applying while on tour or participates in an open house event. Without the application fee paid, the application will not be processed.

All R-MA students are responsible for having a method of payment (bank or credit card) on-hand for college-related expenses; student accounts may not be charged for testing or college application fees.

College Visits

The summer between junior and senior year is the best time to visit colleges. A college visit should have at least two dimensions: formal and informal. Formal activities involve campus tours, sitting in on a class, or interviews. Informal aspects are those you can accomplish on your own, eating in the dining hall, talking to students, or attending a sporting event.

R-MA recognizes the importance of visiting college campuses. Seniors are permitted three (3) excused days at the discretion of the Academic Dean for college visits. All seniors must complete and submit a college visit form three (3) days prior to departure to the College Counselor. The form may be found in Naviance Family Connection, Document Library. The student must provide the point of contact for the college’s admissions office, including their email and telephone number. The student must also receive written permission from their parent or guardian. The college office will keep a copy of the completed form on file. Students may not schedule college visits prior to or immediately after a break. In addition, they are required to complete all class work that is missed and follow up with teachers on missed work and assignments. Using this unexcused absence for anything other than a college visit will be considered an Honor Code violation.

ACADEMIC TRANSCRIPTS and GPA

Academic Transcripts

The high school transcript is the single most important part of a student’s application to any college. As the process begins, review and analyze all transcripts from schools previously attended. The following information can be found on the transcript:

Where students attended high school

R-MA students are fortunate in attending a high school which enjoys a good and respectable reputation in college admission offices. Colleges are aware that Randolph-Macon Academy is competitive and academically demanding, and that its graduates are well prepared for college and life.
The courses taken

The curriculum at Randolph-Macon Academy offers students rigor throughout their high school career. Students are encouraged to challenge themselves by pursuing the Advanced Diploma. The National Association for College Admissions Counseling (NACAC) survey in 2009 reported that participation and success in college prep courses can indicate to a college admission officer both motivation and ability to succeed in post secondary education.

The courses taken during senior year

The courses taken in senior year play an important role in possible admission to certain colleges, especially the more selective ones. Colleges prefer a full schedule leaning towards more academic core courses. That is not to say that electives are not important; fine art classes such as music, theatre arts, and band showcase talents and a well-rounded student. Also they are searching for trends, i.e., is there an upswing academically? Can grades be sustained? While senior year grades are not counted toward GPA, they will be reviewed by colleges after the first semester. Senior class schedules will be included with all transcript requests.

The grades earned

Colleges want students who have done well in high school. As the Director of Admissions at UNC Chapel Hill said, "Performance predicts performance." At R-MA transcripts will reflect only semester grades. The transcript shows all courses from freshman year and in some cases middle school if a student has taken a math or language that was considered high school level. Colleges DO look back to freshman and sophomore years. Junior year grades, however, being the most recent, receive a more careful review. When the first semester grades of senior year are available they will be forwarded to the colleges, and those grades get an even more critical review.

In most cases, the grades earned and the courses taken will determine the schools to which you have a reasonable chance of admission. Students are able to discern what kind of student they are by reviewing grades as an admission officer would. Is the student average? A poor student? An exceptional student? Late bloomers are not necessarily doomed. Admission offices notice trends, both up and down. Have grades been getting better with each semester? Was there a bad first semester sophomore year? Is the student stronger in the sciences and math than in the humanities?

GPA and Class Rank

GPA

Randolph-Macon Academy calculates an overall GPA based on ALL credits earned over the entire high school career. This would include courses taken in middle school that receive upper school credit; most often these are math or science. R-MA will compute GPA for 9th, 10th and 11th grades for college applications. As always, the GPA is a dynamic entity as colleges often recalculate according to their own standards. According to the NACAC 2009 survey, about half of colleges that responded recalculate GPA. Students should check with their respective college on the specific policy. A few other notes about GPA:

- When transferring in from another institution, GPA will be converted to the R-MA scale, provided it benefits the student.
- When repeating a course, the higher grade will be used in GPA calculation.
- All AP and Honors courses are given .50 weight.
Class Rank

Randolph-Macon Academy has a policy of **NOT** ranking students. The Academy believes that not ranking students improves academic motivation, collaborative spirit, and intellectual curiosity. When working on college applications where GPA is requested, students should enter N/A or 99 in the electronic field to continue the application. R-MA will report a decile to colleges, strength of the applicant’s course selection and diploma type.

**STANDARDIZED TESTING**

Most colleges and universities require their applicants to take at least one standardized test for their consideration for admission. The choices are the SAT Reasoning Test or the ACT. In addition, selective colleges or specific departments may require one, two, or even three SAT II Subject Tests (formerly called Achievement Tests). Historically, the SAT has been more popular among colleges on the coasts, and the ACT is more popular in the Midwest and South. However, both will carry equal weight in the admissions process. In addition, there are some colleges that are test-optional, and do not require tests at all, provided that the student meets minimum GPA guidelines.

There are substantial differences in funding, curricula, grading, and difficulty among U.S. secondary schools due to American federalism, local control, and the prevalence of private, distance, and home schooled students. ACT/SAT scores are intended to supplement the secondary school record and help admission officers put local data—such as course work, grades, and class rank—in a national perspective.

As is the case with any test, it is important to prepare prior to taking the exam. By taking the PSAT as a junior, the groundwork has begun for the SAT. The Preliminary SAT/NMSQT is a standardized test that provides firsthand practice for the SAT Reasoning Test™. When taken in junior year, the test also gives a student a chance to enter the National Merit Scholarship Corporation scholarship programs. THE PSAT/NMSQT measures critical reading, math problem solving and writing skills. In addition, the test can help identify a student to colleges to which they may of interest. It is only offered once per year in October, with no makeup dates. R-MA offers the test for 10th and 11th grade, and is a testing site for homeschooled students.

Preparation usually means something different to each person taking the SAT. For many R-MA students, and indeed, for a large number of the college-bound seniors in this area, preparation means taking a preparation course. Before deciding on taking a course, ask some of these questions: How much time is available to devote to this course? How much work will be required outside of class? Are you, the student, disciplined enough to prepare for the exam on your own? However you decide to prepare, remember that what will be most important will be the time devoted to preparation and the attitude with which you approach the test. Remember that there is neither course nor any individual with a “secret” to success.

*All R-MA students will be required to register and take either the SAT or ACT in the spring (March) of their junior year.*

**SAT I Reasoning Test**

www.collegeboard.com

The SAT Reasoning Test is a standardized test for college admissions in the United States. The SAT is administered by the College Board Corporation, a non-profit organization in the United States, and is developed, published, and scored by the
Educational Testing Service (ETS). The current SAT Reasoning Test is administered in about 4 hours and costs $45; additional fees apply for late registration, standby testing, registration changes, scores by telephone, and extra score reports (beyond the four provided for free). **All R-MA students are responsible for having a method of payment (bank or credit card) on-hand for college-related expenses; student accounts may not be charged for testing fees.**

Since the SAT's introduction in 1901, its name and scoring have changed several times. In 2005, the test was renamed as "SAT Reasoning Test" with possible scores from 600 to 2400 combining test results from three 800-point sections (math, critical reading, and writing), along with other subsections scored separately (see details below).

The College Board states that the SAT measures critical thinking skills that are needed for academic success in college. The SAT assesses how well the test takers analyze and solve problems—skills they learned in school that they will need in college. The SAT is typically taken by high school juniors and seniors.

The SAT consists of three major sections: Mathematics, Critical Reading, and Writing. Each section receives a score on the scale of 200–800. All scores are multiples of 10. Total scores are calculated by adding up scores of the three sections. Each major section is divided into three parts. There are 10 sub-sections, including an additional 25-minute experimental or "equating" section that may be in any of the three major sections. The experimental section is used to normalize questions for future administration of the SAT and does not count toward the final score. The test contains 3 hours and 45 minutes of actual timed sections, although most administrations, including orientation, distribution of materials, and completion of the biographical sections, run about 4 hours (10–25 minutes per sub-section) long.

**Critical Reading**

The Critical Reading, formerly verbal, section of the SAT is made up of three scored sections, two 25-minute sections and one 20-minute section, with varying types of questions, including sentence completions and questions about short and long reading passages. Critical Reading sections normally begin with 5 to 8 sentence completion questions; the remainder of the questions is focused on the reading passages. Sentence completions generally test the student’s vocabulary and understanding of sentence structure and organization by requiring the student to select one or two words that best complete a given sentence. The bulk of the Critical Reading questions are made up of questions regarding reading passages, in which students read short excerpts on social sciences, humanities, physical sciences, or personal narratives and answer questions based on the passage. Certain sections contain passages asking the student to compare two related passages; generally, these consist of short reading passages as well as longer passages. Since this is a timed test, the number of questions about each passage is proportional to the length of the passage.

**Mathematics**

The Mathematics sections of the SAT consist of three scored sections. There are two 25-minute sections and one 20-minute section, as follows:

- One of the 25-minute sections is entirely multiple-choice, with 20 questions;
- The other 25-minute section contains eight multiple choice questions and 10 grid-in questions;
- The shorter section is all multiple-choice, with only 16 questions.

Notably, the SAT has done away with quantitative comparison questions on the math section, leaving only questions with straightforward symbolic or numerical answers. Since the quantitative comparison questions were well-
known for their deceptive nature—often turning on the student's recognition of a single exception to a rule or pattern—this choice has been equated to a philosophical shift away from "trickery" and toward "straight math" on the SAT. Also, many test experts have attributed this change, like the addition of the new writing section, to an attempt to make the SAT more like the ACT. Indeed, there is a correlation between ACT scores and SAT scores.

Writing

The writing section of the SAT, based on but not directly comparable to the old SAT II subject test in writing, includes multiple-choice questions and a brief essay. The multiple-choice questions include error identification questions, sentence improvement questions, and paragraph improvement questions. Error identification and sentence improvement questions test the student’s knowledge of grammar, presenting an awkward or grammatically incorrect sentence; in the error identification section, the student must locate the word producing the source of the error or indicate that the sentence has no error, while the sentence improvement section requires the student to select an acceptable fix to the awkward sentence. The paragraph improvement questions test the student’s understanding of logical organization of ideas, presenting a poorly written student essay and asking a series of questions as to what changes might be made to best improve it.

The essay section is always administered as the first section of the test and is 25 minutes long. All essays must be in response to a given prompt. The prompts are broad and often philosophical and are designed to be accessible to students regardless of their educational and social backgrounds. For instance, test takers may be asked to expound on such ideas as their opinion on the value of work in human life or whether technological change also carries negative consequences to those who benefit from it. Two trained readers assign each essay a score between 1 and 6, where a score of 0 is reserved for essays that are blank, off-topic, non-English, not written with a no. 2 pencil, or considered illegible after several attempts at reading. The scores are summed to produce a final score from 2 to 12 (or 0). If the two readers’ scores differ by more than one point, then a senior third reader decides. The essay score accounts for roughly 30% of the writing score whereas the multiple choice component accounts for roughly 70%.

Taking the test

Most of the questions on the SAT are multiple-choice; all multiple-choice questions have five answer choices, one of which is correct. The questions of each section of the same type are generally ordered by difficulty. However, an important exception exists: Questions that follow the long and short reading passages are organized chronologically, rather than by difficulty. Ten of the questions in one of the math sub-sections are not multiple-choice. They instead require the test taker to bubble in a number in a four-column grid. The questions are weighted equally. For each correct answer, one raw point is added. For each incorrect answer one-fourth of a point is deducted. No points are deducted for incorrect math grid-in questions. This ensures that a student's mathematically expected gain from guessing is zero. The final score is derived from the raw score; the precise conversion chart varies between test administrations. The SAT therefore recommends only making educated guesses, that is, when the test taker can eliminate at least one answer he or she thinks is wrong. Without eliminating any answers, one's probability of answering correctly is 20%. Eliminating one wrong answer increases this probability to 25%; two, a 33.3% probability; three, a 50% probability of choosing the correct answer and thus earning the full point for the question.

The SAT is offered seven times a year in the United States, in October, November, December, January, March (or April, alternating), May, and June. The test is typically offered on the first Saturday of the month for the November, December, May, and June administrations. R-MA is a test site for the SAT in October and March/April.
**SAT II Subject tests**

The SAT Subject Test is the collective name for 20 multiple choice standardized tests given on individual subjects. A student typically chooses which tests to take depending upon college entrance requirements for the schools to which he or she is planning to apply. Until 1994, the SAT Subject Tests were known as Achievement Tests; until January 2005, they were known as SAT IIs; they are still well known by this name. Every test is now a one-hour timed test. Historically, the exception to the one-hour time was the writing test, which was divided into a 20-minute essay question and a 40-minute multiple choice section; it was discontinued after January 2005.

A student may take up to three SAT Subject Tests on any given date. Most SAT subject tests are offered on the same dates as the regular SAT, except for the March administration. The language tests with listening are generally available only once a year, in November and students **must provide their own CD player**. A calendar of test dates and registration deadlines can be found on College Board’s official website www.collegeboard.com.

**Taking the test**

When a student is seated for the SAT subject test, he/she receives a large booklet containing all of the subject tests available on that date along with an answer sheet. The student has the option of taking the tests in whatever order he/she prefers. Students receive a five-minute break between the first and second tests and a one-minute 'stretch break' between the second and third tests. They are not permitted to look at any review material or discuss questions during these breaks.

**ACT Test**

www.ACT.org

The ACT test is universally accepted for college admission. The test itself is curriculum based, and is neither an IQ nor aptitude test. The current ACT includes four sections directly related to what students have learned in high school courses in English, mathematics, and science. In addition, it has an optional writing section. The current cost of the test is $31 without writing and $46 with writing. This includes scores being sent to four different colleges. The ACT tests are based on what is taught in the high school curriculum, and students are generally more comfortable with the ACT than they are with traditional aptitude tests or tests with narrower content. The ACT is more than a test as it provides test takers with a unique interest inventory that provides valuable information for career and educational planning and a student profile section that provides a comprehensive profile of a student's work in high school and his or her future plans.

**English**

The English test has 75-questions, 45-minutes covering usage, mechanics and rhetorical skills. Specifically punctuation, grammar usage, and sentence structure are in the first, and strategy, organization and style are in the latter. The test consists of five prose passages, each one accompanied by multiple-choice test questions. Different passage types are included to provide variety. Some questions refer to underlined portions of the passage and offer several alternatives to the underlined portion. You must decide which choice is most appropriate in the context of the passage. Some questions ask about an underlined portion, a section of the passage, or the passage as a whole. You must decide which choice best answers the given question. Many questions include "NO CHANGE" to the underlined portion or the passage as one of the choices. The questions are numbered consecutively. Each question number corresponds to an underlined portion in the passage or to a box located in the passage.
Math

The ACT Mathematics Test is a 60-question, 60-minute test designed to measure the mathematical skills students have typically acquired in courses taken by the end of 11th grade. The test presents multiple-choice questions that require you to use reasoning skills to solve practical problems in mathematics. You need knowledge of basic formulas and computational skills to answer the problems, but you aren't required to know complex formulas and perform extensive computation. You may use a calculator on the Mathematics Test, however all problems can be solved without a calculator.

Reading

The Reading Test is a 40-question, 35-minute test that measures your reading comprehension. You're asked to read four passages and answer questions that show your understanding of:

- what is directly stated
- statements with implied meanings

Read more about Reading Test content.

Specifically, questions will ask you to use referring and reasoning skills to:

- determine main ideas
- locate and interpret significant details
- understand sequences of events
- make comparisons
- comprehend cause-effect relationships
- determine the meaning of context-dependent words, phrases, and statements
- draw generalizations
- analyze the author's or narrator's voice and method

The test comprises four prose passages that are representative of the level and kind of reading required in first-year college courses; passages on topics in social studies, natural sciences, prose fiction, and the humanities are included. Each passage is accompanied by a set of multiple-choice test questions. These questions do not test the rote recall of facts from outside the passage, isolated vocabulary items, or rules of formal logic. Instead, the test focuses on the complementary and supportive skills that readers must use in studying written materials across a range of subject areas.

Science

The Science Test is a 40-question, 35-minute test that measures the skills required in the natural sciences: interpretation, analysis, evaluation, reasoning, and problem solving. Calculators are not permitted on the Science test. The test assumes that students are in the process of taking the core science course of study (three years or more) that will prepare them for college-level work and have completed a course in Earth science and/or physical science and a course in biology. The test presents seven sets of scientific information, each followed by a number of multiple-choice test questions. The scientific information is presented in one of three different formats:

- data representation (graphs, tables, and other schematic forms)
- research summaries (descriptions of one or more related experiments)
- conflicting viewpoints (expressions of several related hypotheses or views that are inconsistent with one another)

The questions require you to:

- recognize and understand the basic features of, and concepts related to, the provided information
• examine critically the relationship between the information provided and the conclusions drawn or hypotheses developed
• generalize from given information and draw conclusions, gain new information, or make predictions

Writing

The Writing Test is a 30-minute OPTIONAL essay that measures your writing skills—specifically those writing skills emphasized in high school English classes and in entry-level college composition courses. The test consists of one writing prompt that will define an issue and describe two points of view on that issue. You are asked to respond to a question about your position on the issue described in the writing prompt. In doing so, you may adopt one or the other of the perspectives described in the prompt, or you may present a different point of view on the issue. Your score will not be affected by the point of view you take on the issue. Most selective colleges will require the ACT with writing.

Taking the test

The ACT only scores based on correct answers, there are no penalties for guessing. Students should pace themselves, and not spend too much time on a single passage or question. Answering the easy questions first is a good strategy, then go back to answer the more difficult ones. Answer every question! If you complete before time is called, recheck your work on that specific test only.

ACT then converts the raw scores to scale scores. Scale scores range from 1 (low) to 36 (high) for each of the four tests, and then compute the Composite. The Composite is the average of all four test scores, rounded to the nearest whole number. In addition, the ACT exam can be taken with or without writing. With the ACT, the writing section is at the end of the four subject area tests.

Advanced Placement Exams

The AP Exams are administered by the College Board and are designed to be taken upon the completion of an AP course for validation purposes. Depending on the score you receive on the exam (a scale of 1 to 5), and the schools to which you are accepted, you may be able to obtain college credit or advanced standing as a result. Because most students do not take AP Exams until the end of the senior year, they are not typically considered in the college admission process. However, if you have done well on an exam taken before senior year, send a copy of your score report to the colleges to which you are applying. At R-MA, a student who is enrolled in an AP class is expected to continue the class the entire school year as well as take the exam at the completion of the course.

TOEFL Exam

www.ets.org/toefl

TOEFL is the Test of English for Foreign Language speakers and it is required for all international students or those who have English as a Second Language and will be applying to college. Each school has their own standards of what score is required for admission consideration. Please check directly with each college that you are applying to for their specific requirements.

Which exam should I take?

TOEFL has different versions of the exam: iBT, CBT, or paper based. The most popular is the iBT. The TOEFL iBT measures how well you read, listen, speak and write in English and will be able to use these skills together in the university classroom. For example, you might read a passage or listen to a lecture, and then write or speak about what you have learned.
How to Register?

The student will register at http://www.ets.org/toefl.

The student is responsible for having a method of payment (bank or credit card) on-hand for college-related expenses; student accounts may not be charged for testing fees.

It is also the student’s responsibility to arrange transportation through student services to the test site.

A Final Word on Testing

How important are your test scores? That depends on where you are applying. College guidebooks and admission materials often indicate an average score for students. Keep in mind that this is an average, not a minimum. More schools have moved to the reporting of their scores as ranges for the middle 50% of their students. This information is usually more helpful and a lot less intimidating. If your test scores are within the college’s range, their relative importance, when compared to other parts of your application, decreases.

College admission officers are fully aware that some students do not "test well." Slow reading speed, unfamiliarity with the test format, or simple fear may cause a student to perform poorly on standardized tests. For these reasons, test scores are usually reviewed in the context of all other parts of the student's application. As one admission officer said, "We are much more interested in what the student has done in three and a half years than we are in what he has done in three and a half hours on a Saturday morning."

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are encouraged to request accommodations on for ACT/SAT or AP Exams. Each testing service has their own guidelines for approval. Please review the links below for specifics. When requesting accommodations, pay attention to the deadlines for documentation to avoid delays.


FACTORS INFLUENCING COLLEGE ADMISSION DECISIONS

Steve Farmer, Director of Admissions for UNC Chapel Hill, says, “When we read applications, we remember that each one represents a real student, a young person with hopes and dreams and a unique combination of strengths and weaknesses. We try to understand the ways in which each candidate will contribute to the kind of campus that will help us fulfill our mission.”

Almost every college in the United States evaluates applications through a system known as “comprehensive review.” That means they are not just evaluating applications based on standardized test scores and grades. The National Association of College and Admission Counselors (NACAC) conducts a survey of factors considered in college admission annually and reports that grades in college preparatory courses, strength of curriculum, admission test scores and overall grades were the top four factors in the college admission decision. More than half of all colleges and universities rated each of these factors as “considerably important.” As the chart illustrates, there are other factors that have their place in the decision process, however over the long term, it is grades and strength of curriculum that will bear the most weight.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Considerable Importance</th>
<th>Moderate Importance</th>
<th>Limited Importance</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
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<td>Grades in college prep courses</td>
<td>79.9%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
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<td>2.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strength of curriculum</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Admission test scores (ACT/SAT)</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades in all courses</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>40.1%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
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<td>37.9%</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrated Interest</td>
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<td>43.8%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor recommendation</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher recommendations</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class rank</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Interview</td>
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<td>23.7%</td>
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<td>29.8%</td>
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<td>Extracurricular activities</td>
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<td>32.2%</td>
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<td>26.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>AP Test Scores</td>
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<td>45.7%</td>
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<td>Work</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
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</table>


**The Bottom Line: What Do Colleges Want to See in Applicants?**

- A rigorous high school curriculum that challenges the student.
- Grades that represent strong effort and an upward trend.
- A well-written personal statement that provides insight into the student’s “standout factor”, values, and goals.
- Passionate involvement in a few activities, demonstrating leadership and initiative.
- Solid scores on standardized tests (SAT, SAT II, ACT).
- Special talents or experiences that contribute to a well-rounded and diverse student body.
- Non-cognitive variables, including work and community service, that illustrate responsibility, dedication and development of areas of interest.
HOW MUCH DOES A COLLEGE EDUCATION COST?

When comparing costs of college, families can go through sticker shock. College costs will vary depending on the number of courses a student takes, the student's major, and his or her personal lifestyle, among other factors. However, a significant expense for most college students is the cost of classes. Students pay tuition to cover costs such as professors' salaries, classroom and laboratory equipment, classroom maintenance and utility costs. Yes, some colleges are expensive, but costs vary from institution to institution. In addition, the availability of financial aid, money available from various sources to help students pay for college, can make even an expensive college affordable for a qualified student.

College Costs

The basic costs of college are tuition, fees, and other expenses:

- **Tuition**: Tuition is the amount of money that colleges charge for instruction and for the use of some facilities, such as libraries. Tuition can range from a few hundred dollars per year to more than $40,000. The least costly option for postsecondary education is typically a local community college where the average tuition and fees are under $1,700 per year.
- **Fees**: Fees are charges that cover costs generally not associated with the student's course load, such as costs of some athletic activities, student activities, clubs, and special events.
- **Other Expenses**: Besides tuition and fees, students at many colleges and universities pay for room, board, books, supplies, transportation, and other miscellaneous costs. "Room and board" refers to the cost of housing and food.

**Tuition at Public and Private Colleges**

Tuition varies between public and private institutions.

- **Public schools**: Receiving a large proportion of their budgets from state or local government, they can charge students who live in that state relatively low tuition.
- **Private Institutions**: Private, or sometimes called independent institutions charge the same tuition for both in-state and out-of-state students. Private college tuitions tend to be higher than those of public colleges because private schools receive less financial support from states and local governments. Most private colleges are non-profit; however some are proprietary meaning they are legally able to make a profit.

**How Can I Afford to Send My Child to College?**

Saving money in advance and obtaining financial aid are common ways for parents to make their child's education affordable. Other ways of making college affordable, such as attending college part-time, will be discussed later in this handbook.

**Saving Money**

Saving money is the primary way to prepare for the costs of college. Setting aside certain amounts every month or each payday will help build up a fund for college. If you and your child begin saving early, the amount you have to set aside each month will be smaller.

In order to set up a savings schedule, you'll need to think about where your child might attend college, how much that type of college might cost, and how much you can afford to save. Keep in mind that colleges of the same type have a range of costs and your child may be able to attend one that is less expensive. You can also pay part of the costs from your earnings while your child is attending school. In addition, your child may also be able to meet some of the costs of college by working during the school year or during the
Finally, some federal, state, or other student financial aid may be available, including loans to you and to your child.

Don't forget that you won't necessarily have to save for the entire cost of college. The following section tells about student financial aid for which you and your child might qualify and other ways to keep college costs down.

Financial Aid

A college education is more important than ever; however, paying for one can be a challenge. If you and your family need help with college costs, there is good news: financial aid is available. Many high school students don't know that they may be eligible for financial aid to attend higher education. Financial aid is available through private, school, state, and federal student aid programs. The primary purpose of financial aid is to provide assistance to students who would be unable to attend college without financial help. Almost everyone who attends college needs some form of financial assistance. This section will provide you with an action plan, some basic information, warnings and alerts, and resources to use in your quest. If you think you'll need financial help, apply for it. If your family's income is too high, you may not receive need-based aid, but you may qualify for other scholarships, grants or low-interest student loans.

Types of Financial Aid

Need-based Financial Aid

Need-based means that the amount of aid a student can receive depends on the cost of the college and on his or her family’s ability to pay these costs. Most financial aid is need-based and is available to qualified students.

Merit-based Financial Aid/Scholarships

Merit-based assistance, usually in the form of scholarships or grants, is given to students who meet requirements not related to financial needs. For example, a merit scholarship may be given to a student who has done well in high school or one who displays artistic or athletic talent. Most merit-based aid is awarded on the basis of academic performance or potential. This type of financial aid can help alleviate the financial burden of college tuition. Most universities and colleges have scholarships specific to their school and prefer direct student contact regarding application procedures. When contacting an admissions office, inquire about the requirements and deadlines for scholarships. Merit aid does not have to be repaid but may require students maintain certain grade levels or take certain courses.

Grants

Grants are funds that do not have to be paid back. A grant may be awarded from the federal, state or institution level. Some grants are based on income level, and others are based on where the student resides. Check with the college’s financial aid office about the type of grants that are available.

Loans

Loans are another type of financial aid and are available to both students and parents. Like a car loan or a mortgage for a house, an education loan must eventually be repaid. Often, payments do not begin until the student finishes school, and the interest rate on education loans is commonly lower than for other types of loans. For students with no established credit record, it is usually easier to get student loans than other kinds of loans.

In all cases, a loan taken to pay for a college education must be repaid, whether or not a student finishes school or gets a job after graduation. Failure to repay a student loan can ruin a student or parent’s credit rating. This is an important reason to consider a college's graduation and job placement rates when you help your child choose a school.
**Work-Study Programs**

Many students work during the summer or part-time during the school year to help pay for college. Although many obtain jobs on their own, many colleges also offer work-study programs to their students. A work-study job is often part of a student’s financial aid package. The jobs are usually on campus and the money earned is used to pay for tuition or other college charges.

**Where to Start with Financial Aid?**

**http://www.fafsa.ed.gov**

The information you provide on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is used to determine your eligibility for federal and state financial aid. *Many colleges also use the FAFSA to award institutional dollars therefore all students regardless of income should apply for the FAFSA.* Unfortunately international students who attend school on an F-1 visa are ineligible to receive federal or state financial aid.

**The first step for the FAFSA is to apply for a PIN in October of the senior year.** The PIN is used to sign the FAFSA electronically. The FAFSA application official opens January 2 for the upcoming school year. Parents will need to supply tax information when completing the FAFSA. Do not wait to complete the FAFSA, apply as soon as possible starting January 1 and before the college’s earliest financial aid deadline. In addition, you may need to file the CSS/Financial Aid Profile or other institution applications sooner, if your college has earlier deadlines for special admissions programs. You should use estimates if your family has not filed their 2010 federal income tax return rather than miss a deadline. Students who provide estimates may receive a notice from the U.S. Department of Education reminding them to make corrections to their FAFSA, if needed.

**Financial Aid Eligibility**

The determination of your eligibility for federal and state financial aid begins with the calculation of your financial need. This is the difference between the college’s cost of attendance (COA) and what you and your family can be expected to pay. Each college has its own cost of attendance or student budget that includes tuition, fees, housing, food, books, transportation, and personal expenses for the year. It may also include an allowance for the rental or purchase of a computer.

The amount you and your family can be expected to contribute toward the year’s college expenses is known as your expected family contribution, or EFC. The information you report on the FAFSA is used to calculate your EFC using a standard federal formula. Often independent colleges use their own institutional formulas and supplemental application forms to determine who receives their private financial aid dollars.

**Financial Aid Awards**

Students usually receive a college’s financial aid offer in an award letter after they have been accepted for admission. The letter lists the college’s cost of attendance for the year, the types and amounts of financial aid being offered, the terms and conditions of each award, and a deadline for responding. The aid may be need-based, non-need-based or a combination of the two. Financial aid offers usually will vary by college, and not all colleges may be able to meet all of each student’s calculated financial need. Students may accept or reject any part of the financial aid offer.

**Evaluating Financial Aid Offers**

A side-by-side comparison of each college’s financial aid offer can help you determine what it will cost you to attend. A quick way for you to compare offers and determine your net costs is to subtract all your grant, scholarship, and other free aid from the college’s cost of attendance.

When comparing offers, some key considerations are:

- What is the college’s cost of attendance for the year? Does it include all college costs and is it realistic?
• How much aid is being offered in grants and scholarships? Are they renewable each year? Will the dollar amount increase with tuition hikes? What are the terms and conditions?
• Are merit scholarships available? If so, how do I apply?
• If offered work-study or campus employment, how many hours will I be expected to work each week? What is the hourly pay rate? What is the availability of jobs? Are jobs related to my major or career goal?
• How much loan aid is offered? Are the loans subsidized or unsubsidized? What are the terms and conditions of each loan?
• Will the college apply any outside scholarships toward my unmet need or reduce other aid?
• If grants, scholarships or federal loans do not cover my total calculated financial need, can I dip further into any personal assets or earn the remaining balance through a part-time job or do I need to borrow more?
• Does the college offer a tuition payment plan that allows me to pay in installments?

Final Thoughts on Financial Aid

The bottom line is that college does cost a significant amount of money, but over time the benefits will outweigh the costs. Parents are hesitant for their children to take on student loans, but they are a good way to establish credit and also learn fiscal responsibility. Students will have a vested interest in their courses if they understand a portion of their tuition is their responsibility. Finally, everyone should apply for financial aid every year, even if there is doubt you qualify. There are many factors affecting eligibility for financial aid. For example, a student who didn't qualify one year might become eligible during the next year when a parent, brother or sister enrolls in college. A change in family financial circumstances might affect your eligibility for student aid. The federal and state governments can make changes to the grant programs as well. The application is FREE!
COLLEGE READINESS MILESTONES

Below are suggested guidelines for the college process, based upon each grade level.

Freshman Year Calendar

"Begin with the End in Mind" –Stephen R. Covey

- Become familiar with Naviance, http://connection.naviance.com/rmava, which will be used exclusively for the college readiness process.
- Build strong academic, language, mathematics and critical thinking skills by taking challenging courses.
- Take the EXPLORE® in 9th grade. Review your scores with your parents and teachers. This is a benchmark for the ACT®.
- Study hard and get excellent grades.
- Strengthen your vocabulary by increasing your reading.
- Become involved in co-curricular activities.
- Meet your college counselor and discuss your plans for the future.
- Start thinking about reasons for attending college.
- Browse through college literature or surf the Web to get an idea of what kinds of schools may be of interest to you.
- Research what high school courses colleges require.
- Know NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) requirements if you want to play sports in college.
- Begin your activity resume. Keep an academic portfolio and co-curricular record.
- Research career possibilities.
- Research the cost of attending college and how financial aid works.
- During the summer, attend an enrichment program at a college to experience a college-like atmosphere.

Sophomore Year Calendar

Concentrate on academic preparation and continue to develop basic skills and co-curricular interests.

October

- Become familiar with Naviance, http://connection.naviance.com/rmava, which will be used exclusively for the college readiness process.
- Take the PSAT. The PSAT is a preliminary test that will prepare you for the SAT Reasoning Test. The results are not be used for college admission.
- Sign up, if you have not done so already, for co-curricular activities and community service projects that are meaningful to you. The level of involvement and accomplishment is most important, not the number of activities. Keep a record of your co-curricular involvement and volunteer work (all year).

November

- Make sure you are "on top" of your academic work. If necessary, meet with your teachers and ask for additional help.
- Save your best work in academic courses and the arts for your academic portfolio (all year).
December

- Receive results of the PSAT. Read materials sent with your score report. Log into My College Quickstart, www.collegeboard.com/psattools to explore ways to improve on future standardized tests.
- Plan to take courses next year which may be required or beneficial for your post-high school plans.

January

- Keep studying!
- Volunteer - a great way to identify your interests and to develop skills.

February

- It is never too early to start researching colleges and universities. Look at literature and guidebooks or surf the Web and check out college and university home pages.

May

- Plan now for wise use of your summer. Consider taking a summer course or participating in an enrichment program (e.g., for prospective engineers or journalists or for those interested in theatre or music) at a local college or community college. Consider working or volunteering.

June

- During the summer, you may want to sign up for a PSAT/SAT prep course, use computer software, or do the practice tests in books designed to familiarize you with standardized tests.
- Make your summer productive. Continue reading to increase your vocabulary and reading comprehension.

Junior Year Calendar

Beginning the college application process...

September

- Become familiar with Naviance, http://connection.naviance.com/rmava, which will be used exclusively for the college readiness process.
- Take a rigorous course load. This is your most important academic year, because these will be the most recent grades available to colleges.
- Save samples of your best work, especially writing samples, for your academic portfolio (all year).
- Continue to participate in meaningful co-curricular activities and maintain a co-curricular record for your activity resume (all year).
• Register for the October SAT Subject Test(s). These one-hour exams test you on academic subjects that you have already completed: math, biology, chemistry, foreign languages and physics. Many colleges require or recommend one or more of the SAT Subject Tests for admission or placement. You should take the SAT Subject Tests when you have successfully completed the corresponding course with a B+ or better. Consult with your teachers on which subject tests to take.

October

• Junior year PSAT scores may qualify a student for the National Merit Scholarship Competition and the National Achievement and the National Hispanic Scholars Programs. So, even though these scores will not be used for college admission, it is still a good idea to do your best on the PSAT. The more times you take standardized tests, the more familiar you will become with the format and the types of questions asked. If you wish to receive free information from colleges, indicate on the PSAT test answer form that you want to participate in the Student Search.

• Register for the SAT Subject Test for language which is only offered in November.
• Attend a college fair to get more information about colleges on your list. NACAC sponsors college fairs in cities across the country during the fall and the spring. Visit NACAC's National College Fairs Web page to check out the schedule for the National College Fairs and the Performing and Visual Arts College Fairs.
• Attend the R-MA campus visits with college admissions officials.
• Parents should watch for local announcements to attend college & financial aid/parents’ night.

November

• Junior year grades are extremely important in the college admission process, because they are a measure of how well you do in advanced, upper-level courses. Grades also are used to determine scholarships and grants for which you may be eligible. So put in the extra effort and keep those grades up!

• If you will require financial aid, start researching your options for grants, scholarships and work-study programs.

December

• During December you should receive the results of your PSAT. The PSAT is excellent preparation for the SAT Reasoning Test, which you will take in March.

• Register for the March SAT Reasoning Test.

• Prepare for the SAT Reasoning Test or ACT by signing up for a prep course, using computer software, or doing the SAT/ACT practice tests available in the college resource center or at bookstores.

January

• Begin to make a preliminary list of colleges you would like to investigate further. Surf the Internet and review the literature in the college resource center.

• Ask your parents for your Social Security number (required on many college applications). If you were never issued a Social Security number, contact the closest Social Security office as soon as possible to obtain a number.

• U.S. Service Academy applicants should apply for the summer seminar program.
February

- Register for the March SAT Reasoning Test.
- When selecting your senior courses, be sure to continue to challenge yourself academically.
- Meet with the college counselor to discuss your preliminary list of colleges. Discuss whether your initial list of colleges meets your needs and interests (academic program, size, location, cost, etc.) and whether you are considering colleges where you are likely to be admitted. You should be optimistic and realistic when applying to colleges.

March

- Take the March SAT Reasoning Test at R-MA. This is mandatory for all juniors.
- Register for the April ACT Test that will be given at R-MA.
- Write, telephone, or use the Internet to request admission literature and financial aid information from the colleges on your list. There is no charge and no obligation to obtain general information about admission and financial aid.
- Talk with your parents about colleges that interest you. Spring break is the best time to visit colleges.
- U.S. Service Academy and ROTC scholarship applicants should visit academy and ROTC websites and fill out the pre-candidate questionnaire. Request letters of recommendations from your English, Math and Chemistry/Physics teacher. Contact your congressman, both U.S. senators and vice-president to begin the nomination process to the academies of your choice. Determine if you are eligible for additional nominations based on family members with previous or current military experience. Practice for the candidate fitness assessment (CFA).

April

- Take the ACT at R-MA. Alternative for mandatory standardized testing.
- Register for the May/June SAT Reasoning Test and/or the May/June SAT Subject Tests. Not all SAT Subject Tests are given on every test date. Check the calendar carefully to determine when the Subject Tests you want are offered. Register for the June ACT if you want to take that test.
- Continue to evaluate your list of colleges and universities. Eliminate colleges from the original list that no longer interest you and add others as appropriate.
- Apply for special summer academic or an enrichment program. Colleges love to see students using their knowledge and developing their skills and interests outside of the classroom.
- Begin working on your senior brag sheet. Identify teachers that will write you a strong letter of recommendation for your college applications (teachers, mentors, coaches, employers, etc.). Share your thoughts about applying to college with them.
- Parents should be working on the parents brag sheet.

May

- Finalize the Aerospace III: Life Skills portfolio: goals; skills profiler; personality profile, careers & clusters; occupational outlook; pay outlook; cost of living comparison; updated personal data in Naviance; game plan; activity resume; personal
statement & essays; senior brag sheet; draft Common Application; six (6) colleges listed in “colleges I’m thinking about”-2 safety, 2 match, 2 reach.

- Collect and prepare writing samples; assemble your art portfolio or audition tapes. If you are an athlete and plan on playing in college, contact the coaches at the schools to which you are applying and ask about intercollegiate and intramural sports programs and athletic scholarships.

- Request recommendation letters from your mentor, teacher(s), coach or others who know you well. Provide them your activity resume, brag sheet, and other information that they may request. If you know the colleges that you will be applying to, give them envelopes addressed to the admissions office.

- Prepare to visit prospective colleges. Phone to set up appointments. Inquire about specific scholarships for each college. Interviews are always a good idea. Many colleges will tell you they are optional, but an interview will show interest, enthusiasm and initiative on your part and provide an excellent opportunity to have your questions answered. Do a practice interview with your counselor, teacher, or a senior who has had college interviews. Set up interviews as early as possible-interview times become booked quickly!

- U.S. Service Academy and ROTC scholarship applicants should schedule your Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board (DODMERB) medical exam. The DODMERB exam serves all five military academies as well as ROTC scholarship applicants.

June

- After school ends, get on the road to visit colleges. Seeing the college firsthand, taking a tour and talking to students can be the greatest help in deciding whether or not a school is right for you. Although it is ideal to visit colleges during the academic year, going in the summer will be valuable. Admission offices employ their students to give tours and answer questions from prospective students and their parents.

- U.S. Service Academy applicants should visit the academies to which you are applying.

- U.S. Service Academy applicants should begin their applications now. The application has several parts and you need to spend a considerable amount of time on them. Request your transcripts, letters of recommendation (math, English and Science), and SAT/ACT scores be sent to the academies to which you are applying. Submit your application as early as possible. Plan to have all application requirements submitted before October 1st.

July

- Visit colleges, take tours, have interviews and ask questions. Make college visiting a family event. Involve your parents or guardian in every step of your application process. Choosing the right college is a tough decision; the opinions of those who know you best can provide helpful insight into which college is best for you.

August

- Finalize your list of “applying to” colleges. Be sure your list includes “safety”, as well as good “likely” and “reach” schools. Decide if you will be applying early decision or early action. Early decision and early action deadlines fall in October and November.
Complete the NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse form if you hope to play Division I or II sports. (This form cannot be mailed until you finish your sixth semester of high school.)

Senior Year Calendar

Apply to colleges. Make decisions. Finish with pride in yourself and your accomplishments.

September

- Update your activity resume in Naviance.
- Your college counselor plays a big role in helping you get into college, so keep her informed. Meet with the college counselor to be sure your final list includes colleges appropriate to your academic and personal record. Review your transcript and activity resume with the college counselor to ensure their accuracy.
- Make sure that you have all required information to complete your applications for college admission and financial aid. Write, phone, or use the Internet to request missing information.
- Check on application and financial aid deadlines for the schools to which you plan to apply. They may vary and it is essential to meet all deadlines! Deadlines are not negotiable!
- International students should have an original bank letter or statement of financial responsibility, photo copy of your current I-20 and VISA to submit with their college application. Check to see if the colleges to which you are applying require any other declaration or certification of finances forms.
- Register for the October/November SAT Reasoning Test and/or SAT Subject Tests, or September/October ACT.
- Have your personal statement and application essays reviewed by an English teacher.
- Follow-up with your teachers, mentor and/or coaches to write letters of recommendation. Provide recommendation forms, any special instructions and an addressed business envelope to the people writing your recommendation. Be thoughtful! Write thank-you notes to those who write recommendations and keep them informed of your decisions.
- Attend a regional college fair to investigate further those colleges to which you will probably apply. Visit the [College Fairs section on NACAC's Web site](#) to view the schedule for NACAC's National College Fairs and the Performing and Visual Arts College Fairs.
- Plan visits to colleges and set up interviews (if you didn’t get to them during the summer or if you want to return to a campus for a second time). Read bulletin boards and the college newspaper. Talk with current students and professors.
- If applying for an ROTC scholarship, finalize and submit your application.

October

- If applying for early decision or early action, send in your application now! Also prepare applications for “safety” schools. Remember, if you are accepted under the early decision option, you are expected to enroll at that college and to withdraw all other applications.
- Mail applications in time to reach the colleges by the deadlines. Use Naviance to request that your transcripts be sent to the colleges to which you are applying.
- Have standardized test scores (SAT/ACT) sent by the testing agency to colleges on your list.
November

- Take the SAT Reasoning Test or SAT Subject Tests (language). Don't forget to have test scores sent to colleges on your list.
- Consult with your mentor and college counselor to review your final list of colleges. Be sure you have all bases covered (safety, match, reach). It is a good idea to make copies of everything before you submit your application. If for some reason your application gets lost, you will have a back-up copy.
- Be sure your first quarter grades are good.
- Continue completing applications to colleges.
- Check to see if the colleges to which you are applying require any other financial aid form. Register for the CSS Financial Aid Profile, if required, and obtain the college's own financial aid forms, if available.
- Keep all records, test score reports and copies of applications for admission and financial aid. Do not throw anything away until at least the end of your first year in college. Having detailed records will save you time and effort should anything be lost or should you decide to apply in the future to other colleges and scholarship programs.
- Service academy applicants should be prepared for congressional nomination interviews. Check with your particular representatives about dates.

December

- **Have three (3) college applications submitted by December 1st.**
- Have official test scores sent to colleges on your list if you have not done so.
- If you applied for early decision, you should have an answer by now. If you are accepted, follow the instructions for admitted students. If the decision is deferred until spring or you are denied, submit applications now to other colleges.

January

- Remember to monitor your applications to be sure that all materials are sent and received on time and that they are complete. Stay on top of things and don't procrastinate; you can ruin your chances for admission by not submitting missing information expeditiously or missing a deadline.
- Keep working in your classes! Grades and courses continue to count throughout the senior year.
- Request that midyear transcripts of your first semester grades be sent to the colleges to which you applied.
- Parents and students, complete your income tax forms as soon as possible. You will need those figures to fill out the FAFSA. Complete and return your FAFSA as quickly as possible after January 1. Check to make sure your colleges or state does not require any other financial aid forms. If they do, contact the college's financial aid office.

February

- If you completed a FAFSA, you should receive your Student Aid Report (SAR) within four weeks after submitting the FAFSA. Review the SAR carefully and check for any inaccuracies. If necessary, correct any items on the SAR and return it to the FAFSA processor (if a college transmitted your data directly, notify the college of any change).
• If more than four weeks have passed after sending in your FAFSA and you have not received an acknowledgment, contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center at (319) 337-5665. To identify you, they will need your name, social security number, address, and date of birth exactly as it was written on your FAFSA.
• Complete scholarship applications. You may be eligible for more scholarships than you think, so apply for as many as you can.
• Enjoy your final year in high school, but don't catch senioritis!

March

• Submit a copy of acceptance and scholarship letters to the college counselor.
• Stay focused and keep studying—only a couple more months to go!

April

• Review your college acceptances and financial aid awards. Be sure to compare financial aid packages in your decision-making process. If you are positive you will not enroll at one or more of the colleges which accepted you please notify those colleges that you have selected another college. Keeping colleges abreast of your plans, enabling those colleges to admit someone else. If you know which college you will attend, send your tuition deposit and follow all other instructions for admitted students. You must decide which offer of admission to accept by May 1 (postmark date).
• If your first-choice college places you on their waiting list, do not lose all hope. Some students are admitted off the waiting list. Contact the college to let them know you are still very interested. Keep the college updated on your activities.

May

• By May 1, decide on the one college that you will attend. By May 1, send in your tuition deposit to the college you will attend. Notify the other colleges that accepted you, that you have selected another college.
• BE PROUD—you have completed a difficult task.
• Take Advanced Placement examinations, if appropriate and request that your AP scores be sent to the college you will attend.
• Update Naviance Family Connection with the school that you will be attending in the fall. We will use this information to send your final transcript.
• Provide the College Counselor with copies of your scholarship and grant letters.

June

• Notify the college of any private scholarships or grants you will be receiving.
• Know when the payment for tuition, room and board, meal plans, etc., is due. If necessary, ask the financial aid office about a possible payment plan that will allow for you to pay in installments.
• Congratulations, you've made it through high school! Enjoy your graduation and look forward to college.
July

- Look for information in the mail from the college about housing, roommate(s), orientation, course selection, etc. Respond promptly to all requests from the college.

August-September

- Ease the transition into college. Accept the fact that you'll be in charge of your academic and personal life. What you do, when you do it and how things get done will be up to you. You'll have new responsibilities and challenges. Think about budgeting your time and establishing priorities. Take charge of the changes that lie ahead and eliminate or minimize pressures. Go forth with confidence and enthusiasm, willingness to adapt and determination to succeed academically and personally.

- Pack for college. Don't forget to include things that remind you of friends, family and R-MA. Be prepared for the new opportunities and challenges. Have a great freshman year!

- Thank your parents, mentors, and teachers who helped you achieve your goals.
COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TERMINOLOGY

Early Decision

An admission application option in which a student files for admission to his/her top choice college early in the senior year, usually by November 1st, under the guiding principle that the student will be bound to attend that college if accepted. Early decision applicants are generally notified in mid-December, and if accepted, the student must withdraw all applications to other colleges. A student may apply early decision to ONLY ONE school.

Early Action

Offered by some colleges, this application is similar to an early decision application but has no commitment to the college.

Rolling Admission

A system used by some colleges, this process gives admission decisions to a candidate as soon as possible, after all materials have been received. In addition, the school will have no defined closing date on applications, and will accept students until their freshman class is full.

Priority Admission

Applications that are college-initiated versus student-initiated. A college may mail or email a partially completed application and waive the admissions fee if students will consider applying. Mostly this is employed by private colleges, where a student has already shown an interest in the school.

Regular Decision

The college processes all applications received and, on a certain date, notifies all applicants of admission decision. Generally students are notified by March 1st.

Wait List

After the college has received all the application materials and given out the majority of acceptances, they may decide to ask the candidate to wait until other applications can be processed.

Deferral

A college may defer a decision until a later date. This can happen at any time during the college process with any admission type. For example, a college may defer an early decision candidate to the regular decision pool.

Most Selective

Even superior students will encounter a great deal of competition for admission to the colleges in this category. In general, these colleges require high school rank in the top 10%, have a solid background of extra-curricular activities and a “uniqueness” to the candidate. Median freshman test scores at these colleges are generally between 650 and 800 on both verbal and math sections of the SAT I and above 27 on the ACT.

Highly Selective

Colleges in this group look for students from the top 10% to 50% of their graduating class. They report median freshman test scores in the 575 to 625 range on both verbal and math section of the SAT I and from 26 to 27 on the ACT.
Very Selective

The colleges in this category admit students who rank in the top 25% to 50% of their graduating class. They report median freshman test scores in the 525 to 575 range on both verbal and math sections of the SAT I and from 23 to 25 on the ACT.

Selective

This category is a broad one, covering colleges that generally have median freshman test scores between 450 and 525 on both verbal and math section of the SAT I and between 19 and 22 on the ACT.

Open Admission

The colleges in this category generally only require evidence of graduation from an accredited high school. Some require entrance examinations that are taken for placement purposes only. Colleges are rated open admission if they admit all state residents, but have some requirements for non-residents.

Merit-Based Financial Aid

Financial aid awarded based on the talent (academic or otherwise) of the student. Merit-based aid can be awarded for athletics, art, music, academics, community service, leadership, and many other factors. The factors considered vary among colleges and scholarship providers.

NCAA Clearinghouse

Students who plan to play Division I or Division II sports during their freshman year of college must register with the NCAA during their senior year of high school. This registration process certifies that the student has met certain academic and other standards, as required under NCAA guidelines in order to compete and receive athletic-based financial aid.

Need-Based Financial Aid

Financial aid awarded based solely on the financial situation of the student. Need-based aid eligibility is determined based on the FAFSA and sometimes additional financial aid forms required by a college.
RESOURCES

College and Careers

College View
Research colleges, majors and financial aid.

U.S. News & World Report
Best college rankings in U.S. News and World Report, with admissions information.

College Board
An organization that connects students to colleges and opportunities. Register online for the SAT.

Jesuit Colleges and Universities

Peterson's
College search and database.

CollegeNET
A guide to colleges and universities of more than 4,600 schools.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Virtual Campus Tours
A source for college campus tours.

The Common Application
A common application form for over 300 colleges.

Occupational Outlook Handbook
Research careers on the Department of Labor website.
Financial Aid

Black Excel: The College Help Network  www.blackexcel.org
A scholarship service for African-Americans.

The Smart Student Guide to Financial Aid  www.finaid.org

Scholarship Experts  www.scholarshipexperts.com
Free scholarship search site with an up-to-date award database of over 2.4 million scholarships worth over $14 billion.

The FAFSA Express  studentaid.ed.gov
Download a free financial aid application.

U.S. Dept. of Education resources on financial aid.

College Scholarships and Financial Aid Page  www.college-scholarships.com
Easy access to information on colleges, scholarships and SAT and ACT test preparation.

CSS Profile On-Line  profileonline.collegeboard.com
The CSS/Financial Aid Profile is the form many private colleges and universities require, in addition to the FAFSA, for those applying for financial aid.

Sallie Mae Financial Aid Information  www.salliemae.com
Sallie Mae is a multi-purpose lending service which helps students in every aspect of applying for loans. The CASHE scholarship search can be accessed through this site.

International Student Financial Aid  www.internationalstudent.org/international-financial-aid
Test Preparation

College Testing www.kaptest.com/college
Kaplan's information on SAT, PSAT, & ACT plus sample questions.

ACT Home Page www.act.org/aap
FAQs about ACT; strategies and sample questions.

College Board SAT Test Center sat.collegeboard.org/practice
SAT preparation and practical questions.

Military

Air Force ROTC www.afrotc.com

Army ROTC www.goarmy.com/rotc

Navy ROTC www.navy.com/navy/joining/education-opportunities/nrotc

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ACT, inc.

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