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INTRODUCTION

If a student aspires to attend college after high school, Randolph-Macon Academy can assist in finding the best academic, social and financial fit for a post-secondary education. Randolph-Macon Academy (R-MA) offers a comprehensive college counseling program focusing not only classroom but also one-on-one college planning. Searching for colleges is an important milestone in moving toward adulthood as students are considering their home for the next four years. The college counselor will consider the student’s talents, interests, career goals and academic record to give students and parents a clearer picture of post-secondary opportunities. At R-MA the college counselor can help to clarify a student’s goals, see whether grades and courses are acceptable for the colleges that the student is considering, and help the student develop a plan for the subsequent college 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 dozens 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 the student.

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 Air Force JROTC, athletics, the arts, and other extra-curricular activities. Nevertheless, it is up to the student to take advantage of these opportunities. What they make of their 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 use it, 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 (holistic), not the individual grades. That said, regardless of where a student attends high school, earning high grades in core courses is the #1 factor in the admission process.
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 rigorous classes, high test scores, academic consistency and participation in meaningful extracurricular activities. Even students with stellar records can get admitted to a good college—if you define “good” as the college that meets their needs.

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

False! 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. Rankings 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? What is the percentage of graduates landing a job or getting into graduate school? 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 in college 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. A College Counselor is 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 core courses (math, science, English, social studies and foreign language) you take, the better a student’s chance of getting into their first choice 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 matured. 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 sustain 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.

THE PARENT'S ROLE

It is natural for parents to feel almost as much anxiety as their children during the college selection process. What may have been true 20, 10 or even 5 years ago is often not true today. While we believe strongly that a student must assume ownership of this process, parents play a vital role in their child’s college selection decision. Our goal is for your child’s college search to be a team effort. The parent’s role in this process is to advise and encourage your child, visit colleges early, apply for financial aid, and communicate with the college counselor. 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. A suggested reading list is in the Resources Section of this guide.

- **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 and applying to 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 merit scholarships and financial aid may often help families send their children to even the most expensive colleges. No matter your income level, find out all you can about merit scholarships and financial aid. Make inquiries of the admissions office for scholarships and grants that may be available to your child.

- **DO Remind Your Child of Deadlines.** The life of a high school student is 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 him or 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 involved in the college application process, 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 talents, interests and personality. Be aware 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 the 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. It will become overwhelming for them. 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.

  *The students that are most successful with college acceptance and subsequent admission, the parent, along with the college counselor are fully engaged with the student in the college readiness process.*

**THE STUDENT'S ROLE**

While the college counselor facilitates all students through the college readiness process, the main responsibility for applying to college rests with the student. Parents, teachers, mentors and the college counselor share in advising along the way.

- Through a collaborative effort with the Aerospace III instructor and the English 11 teacher, juniors during their second semester learn the broader aspects of the college admission process, including admission jargon, financial aid and the predictability of admission. As the semester progresses, students are required to take standardized test(s), review their high school transcript, develop their resume, research prospective colleges, write the first draft of a personal statement and college essay, request letters of recommendation and learn about the admission process from a college admissions officer’s perspective. The students will complete a college application portfolio for the Aerospace III exam.

- Every R-MA student has a *Naviance Family Connection* account, and the student is responsible for completing career surveys and items on the checklist and keeping their information current. This is a valuable resource for students and parents, and it is most useful when the student invests the time in completing prescribed deliverables.
• The third most important factor in the college admission process is standardized testing. R-MA requires students to take either the SAT and/or ACT during the second semester of their junior year. **R-MA is a test site for SAT and ACT in October, February and March.** It is the student’s responsibility to register for testing and to send their official test scores to their respective colleges directly from the testing agencies. Each student has an established account on either Collegeboard [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) and/or ACT [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org). All colleges accept both entrance exams. Competitive colleges may require or recommend that students also take the SAT Subject Test for admission consideration.

• The college counselor works with each student to develop a list of prospective colleges to investigate. However, students will do the bulk of the research and decide on their final list of “Colleges That I’m Applying To.” Students should be exploring websites and communicating with college admissions counselors before submitting their college applications. **Naviance Family Connection** is an excellent tool for research. Students should plan on visiting colleges in which they are most interested with their parents. When possible, schedule college visits during breaks and summer vacations before the student’s senior year.

• College applications are submitted online in almost every case. **All college applications will be completed and submitted by the student.** It is the student’s responsibility to manage their college application deadlines, including early action and early decision deadlines. R-MA requires all seniors and post-graduate students to submit at least three (3) college applications to a 4-year institution by December 1st.

• **Students are required to maintain their active college lists (Colleges I’m Applying To) in Naviance Family Connection, along with the result and decision information.** Students are responsible for monitoring their email, following up with their respective college admission counselor and responding quickly to any outstanding application requirements.

• Randolph-Macon Academy does NOT allow students to charge their student account for standardized testing registration, test score submission or college application fees. **The student must have access to a credit or prepaid bank card.**

• Students are required to submit the applicable forms to R-MA faculty and staff for letters of recommendation in a timely manner. If it is not an electronic submission (providing the references email address in the application), the student must also provide addressed envelopes for each college where the student is going to apply. R-MA faculty and staff are afforded a minimum of three (3) weeks to submit letters of recommendation to the student’s college(s).

• **All transcript requests must be made by the student through Naviance Family Connection.** The request for transcripts must be made at a minimum three (3) weeks prior to a college’s deadline.

**THE COLLEGE COUNSELOR’S ROLE**

Students and parents are encouraged to take advantage of the college counseling resources that are available at R-MA.

**Availability and Communication:** The college counselor is committed to meeting regularly with students and parents in order to help explore the opportunities available in colleges. The college counselor advises students through the college readiness process and assists in the self-discovery that will ensure creation of a list of colleges that is both appropriate and realistic. Students and parents are informed of visits by college representatives and testing opportunities.

**Advocacy:** One of the key roles of the college counselor is to be an advocate for each R-MA student. The primary form this advocacy takes is in the school recommendation letter written on behalf of each student and included with the transcript/secondary school report (SSR). The college counselor communicates regularly with admissions officers to provide them with further information about particular students and about R-MA’s programs. The college counselor is committed to supporting each student’s candidacy for admission to college.
**Instruction and guidance:** The college counselor meets with every student on a regular basis, in the classroom and one-on-one to build individual goals and strategies. Formal programs for parents are regularly offered on fall and spring family weekend; and additional programs for parents are scheduled at various times throughout the school year.

**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 career 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** 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 and 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. **Please email the Academic Office (academics@rma.edu), to obtain access to your child’s Naviance Family Connection account.**

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

**FACTORS INFLUENCING COLLEGE ADMISSION DECISIONS**

Many students assume that they don’t have to worry about the admission process until they formally become a college applicant. A student becomes a college applicant the day he/she becomes a high school freshman. Everything counts! Key areas of choice involve academic preparedness, extracurricular engagement and the application process itself. While it is not practical to obsess on any one of these, a student needs to be accountable for the decisions that he/she makes while in high school. Almost every college in the United States evaluates applications through a system known as “holistic 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) administered its 2012 Admission Trends Survey to the 1,366 4-year post-secondary institutions who are members of NACAC, which represented 69% of all 4-year, not for profit, baccalaureate degree-granting, Title-IV institutions in the U.S. The following table illustrates the percentage of colleges attributing different levels of importance to factors in the admission decision for 2012. More than half of all colleges and universities rated 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. 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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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grades in college prep courses</td>
<td>82.3%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strength of curriculum</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Admission test scores (ACT, SAT)</td>
<td>56.1%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades in all courses</td>
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<td>37.5%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
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<td>38.1%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrated Interest</td>
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<td>25.7%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor recommendation</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher recommendations</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class rank</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular activities</td>
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<td>39.1%</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
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<td>25.3%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
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<td>10.7%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP Test Scores</td>
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<td>30.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAT 2 scores</td>
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<td>57.9%</td>
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<td>State graduation scores</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NACAC Admission Trends Surveys, 2012

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

- Grades that represent strong effort and an upward trend.
- A rigorous high school curriculum that challenges the student.
- Solid scores on standardized tests (SAT, SAT Subject Tests, ACT).
- 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.
- 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.

**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 this process begins in the 9th grade, the student and parent should review and analyze the transcript each school year. The following information can be found on the transcript:

**Where students have 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 2012 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 their cumulative GPA, they will be reviewed by colleges after the first semester. Senior class schedules will be included on 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, especially if a student has been deferred for an admission decision.

In most cases, the grades earned and the courses taken will determine the schools to which the student has 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
drowned. 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?

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. After five (5) transcript requests, a student’s account will be charged accordingly:

<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>

GPA and Class Rank

Randolph-Macon Academy calculates a cumulative 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, language or science. R-MA will compute GPA for 9th, 10th and 11th grades for college applications. As always, the cumulative GPA is a dynamic entity as colleges often recalculate according to their own standards. According to the National Association of College and Admissions Counselors 2012 survey, about half of colleges that responded recalculate a student’s GPA. Students should check with their respective college on their specific policy.

Randolph-Macon Academy has a policy of NOT ranking students. R-MA believes that not ranking students improves academic motivation, collaborative spirit, and intellectual curiosity. When working on college applications where rank is requested, students may enter their class decile. The student’s GPA and class decile can be found in Naviance Family Connection.

STANDARDIZED TESTING

All R-MA students will be required to register and take either the SAT or ACT in the spring of their junior year. Most colleges and universities require their applicants to take at least one of the standardized tests 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 Subject Tests. Historically, the SAT has been more popular among colleges on the coasts, and the ACT is more popular with the Midwest colleges. 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 conditional GPA requirements.
As is the case with any test, it is important to prepare prior to taking the exam. By taking the PSAT as a sophomore and 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 programs. THE PSAT/NMSQT measures critical reading, math problem solving and writing skills. The PSAT is only offered once per year in October, with no makeup dates. R-MA offers the test to 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 are responsible for registering for standardized tests (SAT, ACT & TOEFL) and having a method of payment (bank or credit card); student accounts may not be charged for SAT, ACT and TOEFL testing fees.

SAT Reasoning Test
www.collegeboard.org

Since the SAT’s introduction in 1901, its name and scoring have changed several times. It will change again beginning with the March 2016 test. The redesigned SAT draws on research-based evidence that defines the knowledge and skills that are most essential for post-secondary readiness and success. The redesigned SAT will reflect the work students do in the classroom. The new scoring scale will be 1600 with an optional essay scored separately. R-MA is a test site for the SAT in October and March.

SAT Subject Tests
www.collegeboard.org

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. Every test is now a one-hour timed test. 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.

ACT Test
www.actstudent.org

The ACT test is universally accepted for college admission. 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 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. **R-MA is a test site for the ACT in October and February.**

**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 college has their own standard of what score is required for admission consideration. An international student should check directly with each college that they are applying for the college’s specific English language requirements. It is the student’s responsibility to register for TOEFL exams at the closest test site to R-MA and 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. The college’s web site indicates mid-range scores for standardized tests. This information for each college can also be found in Naviance Family Connection. Keep in mind that this is the mid-range standard, 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. A student’s test score target should be within or above the college’s mid-range.

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."

**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 earned on the exam (a scale of 1 to 5), and the schools to which a student is 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, you may 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 AP exam at the completion of the course.**

**Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities are encouraged to request accommodations 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.

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? R-MA discourages a “blitz” approach of applying to a multitude of schools, some of which a student has no intention of attending. We suggest that regardless of academic ability that you “do not put all of your eggs in the “reach basket.” We suggest that you apply to no more than 7 to 9 schools with varying selectivity, but which possess the unique features desired by YOU.

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 academic 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 may not be “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 prospective list of about fifteen or so colleges which you should visit over 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 “Colleges That I’m Applying to” list of about seven to 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?

**College Visits**

One of the most important elements in the college selection process is visiting a college campus. For the most part, the filters (introduced by family, friends, the media and promotional brochures) are gone. Early in the search, impressions are influenced almost entirely by others. **Plan to visit colleges early and often as possible.** Families should **plan to visit campuses during family gatherings and vacations.** Even if a college isn’t on a student’s list, spending time on its campus can provide a valuable perspective for more informed decision-making later in the process. More than a few students have chosen a college that emerged from a random visit.

There is no such thing as a ‘drive-by’ college visit! Plan in advance. For information about visit times, check the college’s web site (usually under ‘Visitors’ or ‘Visiting the Campus’ in the Admission or Prospective Student sections). Read information about the school, and develop a list of questions to ask during the information session and tour. Take advantage of opportunities to introduce yourself to the people you encounter on campus. If you want an interview, call to arrange the date and time that suits you best. Not every college offers the opportunity for a personal interview. Ask if you can visit an academic department or program in which you have an interest. This is the best opportunity for a student to learn and make a good impression.

Whenever you visit a college campus, make sure that you sign in at the admission office. Do whatever it takes to make sure they know that you were there. This is particularly true of visits prior to the time when admission decisions are made. The best indicator to a college that you are a “high yield” prospect is the fact that you spent time on its campus.

**NOTE TO 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. **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.**

Students should 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 (mid-range GPA and test scores) 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 meet or exceed the mid-range GPA and test scores, 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 ("most likely" or "safety"). 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!
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 students 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. The institution will 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. 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.

Should a Student Apply Under One of These Plans?

A student should apply under an early decision plan only if they are very sure it is the college that they want to attend, and they 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 plan, if they want 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...
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.

Students should determine the requirements for each college where they will be applying and make a spreadsheet with these headings and any associated fees:

- What is the mid-range GPA and test score for the college?
- Do you need to take Subject Tests?
- How many letters of recommendation will you need?
- Will you need to write a personal statement or essay? What is the essay prompts?
- Will you apply early action or early decision? What are the deadlines?
- If it is an electronic application, what is my username and password?

Starting the Application Process

The application season typically open on August 1st. A college will open a student’s file as soon as the application is submitted. Items will be added to the file until it is complete and ready for review. Plan to spend two hours to complete one application. Colleges expect one thing beyond all else: applicants read and follow directions carefully. 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 an application is submitted be prepared to check your email daily.

Deadlines

The student is responsible for managing ALL COLLEGE APPLICATION 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 three weeks prior to a college’s deadline. Due to the volume of transcript requests received during the application season (Oct-Jan), the academic office cannot process “last-minute” requests.

Online Applications and the Common Application

Almost all applications will be initiated online. Applications differ according to who is applying, make sure you apply under 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 – that students may submit to any of their 500-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 Application as it reduces the amount of time spent filling in applications. The Secondary School Report (SSR) and Teacher Recommendations are submitted electronically. In addition, be sure to check for Supplemental information that your college may require. Most often these are additional essay questions that must be submitted for your application to be complete.

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 or punctuation errors on important information such as name, address, or teacher’s names or emails for recommendation letters. Make sure your essays are well-edited and free of typos, punctuation and grammatical errors as well. Always make a copy of your application, print your confirmation of submission and pay. Remember to write down your user name and password for all online applications.

A special note about your name. Apply to every college with your given name as it reads on your birth certificate, formal identification, or Visa/Passport. 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, can visualize and what they read.
- Don’t lie or exaggerate: YOU run a risk of being disqualified if you are deceptive.
- 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 your application.

Teacher Recommendations

“Most students being considered for admission are on the same playing field academically---words of teachers often make the difference between them.” – Harvard University
Writing college applications can prove to be a big job—especially when you have a "story" to tell. Students tend to focus on the essay—and, sometimes, the interview—in conveying key messages. **In doing so, they completely overlook a potential source of powerful testimonials to their stories: letters of recommendation from counselors, teachers, coaches, and mentors.**

Letters of recommendation are important to admissions officers because they provide contextual interpretation of your academic performance. **Writers share critical insight into your work habits and learning style as well as your ability to respond to challenges and setbacks.** They can help explain irregularities in your academic program and/or performance and shed light into key factors that define your learning environment.

**So who should you choose to write your letters?** The people best positioned to support your application are **those who know you well from your recent work in the classroom.** They are familiar with your intellectual abilities and academic skills. They have watched you respond to a range of challenges in the classroom and understand your capacity and desire to learn. **They are your teachers, mentors and college counselor—they are your champions. Let them help you.**

The following are **five tips for securing recommendation letters that can help strengthen the overall presentation of your applications.**

1. **Choose teachers who know what you can do:** These are the teachers who push you and don't let you settle for "good enough"—the folks who are more likely to be invested in your long-term success. Contrary to popular belief, your most insightful supporter may not be the teacher regarded as the most popular. Generally speaking, at least one of your recommenders should be someone who is familiar with your critical thinking and communication skills.

2. **Give your counselor and teachers the courtesy of time:** Your recommenders need time (minimum 3 weeks) to think about and prepare the letter. Extend the same consideration (time, access to information) you would want if confronted by a writing assignment that accounts for most of your grade in a class.

3. **Talk with your recommenders about why college is important to you:** Share your dreams and ambitions. Reflect on your strengths and weaknesses. If there are factors beyond your control that have influenced your ability to perform as you would have liked, make sure your recommenders are sufficiently informed so they can help you tell your "story." Give them the necessary information and insight so they can write well-balanced letters on your behalf. **Give your teachers the Worksheet for Teacher Recommendation.**

4. **Share a brief résumé of your activities and achievements:** Supply the teacher with information about you; your activity resume, worksheet for teacher recommendation and/or your senior brag sheet. These documents are all in **Naviance Family Connection.**

5. **Provide a list of your application deadlines and the appropriate forms:** Most electronic college applications (for example, Common Application) will have the student submit information (name and email address) for their references. The application source will email the student’s reference(s) and request that they complete an evaluation and upload their letter of recommendation for the student. This does not preclude the student from a face-to-face request for a letter of recommendation. If a student is not using an electronic college application, then the student must provide their references with envelopes addressed to their college’s admission office. While your reference(s) may elect to use electronic forms, they will still benefit by being able to respond to the guidelines and information requests provided by the colleges to which you are applying.

**When you ask someone to write on your behalf, you will be asked to waive your right of access to that letter.** Do it! Your recommenders need to be able to provide a complete and balanced perspective without having to worry about how you or your parents will react to what they have written. If your recommenders are concerned about being second-
guessed in any way, they will be less inclined to share the kind of information that is useful to admissions officers in the credential review. Give them some space and trust that they will act in your best interests. The people you have chosen for this task are your strongest supporters and want to see you do well.

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 your college outcomes.

Application Fee(s)

Application fees range from $25-$75 depending on the college. In some cases, a college will waive the application fee if the student is applying while on a college 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.

Sending Test Scores (SAT, ACT & TOEFL)

It is the student’s responsibility to send their test scores to ALL colleges and scholarship programs to which they are applying from the testing source.

HOW MUCH DOES A COLLEGE EDUCATION COST?

When comparing costs of college, families can go into 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 tuition. 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. Private colleges with large endowments may provide significant merit scholarships and grants. If a student has a stellar academic record and high test scores, a private college could cost less than a public college.

**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. Even if you don’t think that you will need or receive financial aid, you should apply for it.

**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, usually in the form of scholarships or grants, is given to students who meet requirements not related to financial need. For example, a merit scholarship may be given to a student who has done well in high school or one who displays leadership qualities, 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 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 1 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 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!

“I WANT TO ATTEND A SERVICE ACADEMY”

Here are 10 tips for students that want to attend one of the four service academies:

1. **Get the grades!** You have to be among the very best to be a cadet. Ninety percent of selected cadets are in the top twenty percent of their class.
2. **Practice testing.** The ACT and SAT are critical. Find out what scores you need at the service academy web sites. Keep testing until you score high enough to be above the academy’s standard.
3. **Be an athlete.** Not everyone is an intercollegiate athlete, but most cadets play intramural sports, take fitness assessments and undergo strenuous physical training.
4. **Be a leader.** The academies are looking for leaders. R-MA offers students an excellent opportunity to lead in Air Force JROTC. Participation in clubs and extracurricular is not enough, you need to become a leader in these organizations. Work hard to earn academic, athletic and community awards. Being the “best” separate you from the pack.
5. **Be involved in the community.** Leaders care. Show you care by routinely volunteering or working in community programs. Lead a community service project.
6. **Ace the interview.** Your interview with the academy liaison officer is a big deal. Show passion and a desire to service your country. You will be asked about citizenship, reasons for wanting to attend an academy and even current events.
7. **Secure a nomination.** You need an official nomination to get into the academies (except the USCGA). These come from Senators, Congressmen, the Vice President and President (see eligibility requirements).
8. **Pass the DODMERB physical.** You must be healthy, without disorders or diseases.
9. **Apply for academy summer programs.** Each academy offers programs for exceptional students during the summer before their senior year. These programs provide an up close look at the academies and what cadet life is like.

10. **Prepare now!** While the academies don’t start official applications until your junior year in high school, you should begin preparing as a freshman, or sooner. Get the pre-candidate questionnaire and/or candidate kit online. Apply for R-MA’s High Flight program. Meet the academy’s liaison officer for your area. **Let everyone know that you have a dream and a plan to attend a U.S. Service Academy.**

   R-MA’s High Flight Program [http://www.rma.edu/High-Flight-Prep-Track](http://www.rma.edu/High-Flight-Prep-Track)

   United States Air Force Academy [http://www.academyadmissions.com/admissions](http://www.academyadmissions.com/admissions)

   United States Naval Academy [http://www.usna.edu/Admissions](http://www.usna.edu/Admissions)

   United States Military Academy (West Point) [http://www.usma.edu/admissions](http://www.usma.edu/admissions)

   United States Coast Guard Academy [http://www.uscgacadma.edu](http://www.uscgacadma.edu)

**COLLEGE READINESS MILESTONES**

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

**Freshman Year**

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

- Meet your college counselor and discuss your goals for the future.
- Become familiar with Naviance Family Connection, [http://connection.naviance.com/rmava](http://connection.naviance.com/rmava), which will be used extensively for the college readiness process.
- Learn study and time management skills to earn excellent grades.
- Build strong academic and critical thinking skills by taking challenging courses.
- Attend the R-MA campus information sessions with college admissions officials.
- Strengthen your vocabulary by increasing your reading.
- Participate in extracurricular activities that are meaningful to you.
- Think of reasons why you should attend college.
- Browse through college literature or surf the Web to get an idea of what colleges may be of interest to you.
- Research what high school courses colleges require.
- Start your academic portfolio and begin your activity resume.
- Know NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) requirements if you want to play sports in college.
- During the summer, attend an enrichment program at a college to experience a college-like atmosphere.

**Sophomore Year**

*Discover your talents and concentrate on academic preparation.*

**1st Semester**

- Meet the R-MA College Counselor and discuss your plans for the future.
• Use Naviance Family Connection, http://connection.naviance.com/rmva to discover your talents and explore possible careers.
• Develop your goals for the future.
• Attend the R-MA campus information sessions with college admissions officials.
• Build strong academic and critical thinking skills by taking challenging courses.
• Do well on the PSAT in October. This is a preliminary test that prepares you for the SAT.
• Take an active role in extracurricular activities...focus on your interests.
• Stay on top of your academic work. Ask for help, if you need it.
• Explore the web to get an idea of what types of colleges may interest you.
• Save your best work in academic courses for your academic portfolio.
• Review results from the PSAT...log into My College Quickstart, www.collegeboard.com/psat tools to explore ways to improve your future scores.

2nd Semester
• Grades (GPA) are the #1 factor in the college admission decision. Do well on your exams. Stay “on top” of your academic work. Ask for help, if you need it.
• Strength of curriculum is the #2 factor in the college admissions decision. Plan for a rigorous junior year course load.
• Register by February if you plan to take the SAT and/or ACT at R-MA in the spring.
• Find ways to lead a community service project or extracurricular activity.
• Apply for special summer courses or enrichment programs.

Junior Year

Beginning the college application process...

Fall

• Make a strong academic start! Colleges take a close look at junior year performance.
• Attend the R-MA campus information sessions with college admissions officials.
• In September, register for the October SAT Subject Test(s). Consult with your teachers on which subject tests to take.
• In September, Register for the SAT Subject Test for language which is only offered in November.
• Do your best on the PSAT that will be administered in October. This will prepare you for the SAT and may qualify you for the National Merit Scholarship.
• 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.
• Save samples of your best work, especially writing samples, for your academic portfolio (all year).
• Explore ways to lead an extracurricular activity or community service project.
• Plan to visit college campuses during Thanksgiving and Christmas breaks.
• Review results from the PSAT...log into My College Quickstart, www.collegeboard.com/psattools to prepare for the spring SAT.
• Register for the March SAT www.sat.collegeboard.org/register and/or February ACT www.actstudent.org that will be held at R-MA. Mandatory for all juniors!

January

• Do well on your exams. The 2nd semester of your junior year is the last semester that will be reflected on your transcript.
• Begin making 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

• Begin the college application process in your Aerospace III class.
• Take the ACT at R-MA. Alternative for mandatory standardized testing.
• When selecting your senior courses, be sure to continue to challenge yourself academically and continue to take core courses.
• Meet with the college counselor to discuss your preliminary list of colleges. Discuss whether your initial list of colleges meets your current academic profile and interests (academic program, size, location, cost, etc.).
• Apply for special summer academic or enrichment programs. Colleges love to see students using their knowledge and developing skills outside of the classroom.

March

• Take the March SAT Reasoning Test at R-MA. This is mandatory for all juniors.
• 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 perfect time to visit colleges.*

**April**

• 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.

• Begin working on your senior brag sheet. Identify references 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.

• Attend a National College Fair.

• U.S. Service Academy and ROTC scholarship applicants should visit academy and ROTC websites and fill out the pre-candidate questionnaire.

• U.S. Service Academy applicants, 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).

**May**

• Finalize the Aerospace III college application portfolio.

• Collect and prepare writing samples; assemble your art portfolio or audition tapes.

• If you are an athlete and plan on athletics 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, or other information that they may request.

• Prepare to visit prospective colleges. Email or phone your admissions counselor 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 mentor, a teacher, or a senior who has experienced college interviews. Set up interviews as early as possible-interview times become booked quickly!
• U.S. Service Academy and ROTC scholarship applicants should inquire about scheduling 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.
• Determine if you should take a standardized test preparation course over the summer.

June

• After school ends, road trip 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.
• Begin practicing for the SAT, ACT and TOEFL or take a standardized test prep course.
• Participate in clubs, service projects, community and extracurricular activities.

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.
• Begin researching private scholarship opportunities.

August

• August 1, Common Application opens! Begin your college applications, especially if you are applying early action or early decision.
• Register for the October SAT Reasoning Test and/or SAT Subject Tests or September/October ACT while you have time and access to a credit or bank card.
• Finalize your list of “Colleges I’m Applying to” in Naviance Family Connection. 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.
• Purchase a jump drive, because you will be jumping over the next few months.
• Know your social security number for your college applications.
• Have access to a credit card to pay for testing and application fees.
• 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.)
• Explore opportunities for college nights and open houses.

Senior Year

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

September

• Get in the habit of checking your email frequently!
• Update your activity resume in Naviance Family Connection, http://connection.naviance.com/rmava. What did you do this summer?
• Your college counselor plays a significant 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 finance forms.
• Have your personal statement and application essays reviewed by a teacher or mentor.
• Attend the R-MA campus information sessions with college admissions officials.
• Follow-up with your references about writing letters of recommendation for you. Provide recommendation forms, any special instructions and addressed business envelopes (if applicable) to the people writing your recommendation(s). Be thoughtful! Write thank-you notes to those who write recommendations and keep them informed of your decisions.
• As you work on your colleges applications, remember to write down all username and passwords.
• 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.
• If applying for an ROTC scholarship, finalize and submit your application.
October

- 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.
- If applying for early decision or early action, submit 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 Family Connection to request that your transcripts be sent to the colleges to which you are applying at least 2 weeks prior to a deadline.
- Have standardized test scores (SAT/ACT) sent by the testing agency to colleges on your list well ahead of your deadlines.

November

- Take the November SAT Reasoning Test or SAT Subject Tests (language). Don’t forget to have test scores sent to colleges on your list.
- Register for the December SAT Reasoning Test, SAT Subject Tests or ACT if needed. This should be the final test!
- 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 special financial aid forms. 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 nomination liaison(s) about interview dates.

December

- Have three (3) college applications submitted by December 1st, if you have not already been accepted and admitted to a college. This is an R-MA requirement!
- Have all official test scores sent from the testing source 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.
• Begin preparing for submitting your FAFSA application www.federalAID.gov in January.

• Research and apply for private scholarships and grant programs.

• Visit your colleges over the holiday break.

January

• Remember to monitor (READ YOUR EMAIL) your applications to be sure that all materials are sent and received on time and that they are complete. Follow Up! Have the colleges where you have applied received your (1) application, (2) test scores, (3) required essays and/or supplemental information, (3) application fee, (4) letters of recommendation, (5) transcripts, and (6) financial aid statements for international students? 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.

• 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.

• Do well on your exams. Midyear transcripts will be sent to your prospective colleges. REMEMBER...colleges reserve the right to change admission decisions.

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).

• 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

• Update acceptances and scholarship awards in Naviance Family Connection.

• Submit a copy of acceptance and scholarship letters to the college counselor.

• Stays 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, enables 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

- May 1st is National College Decision Day! You must decide on the one college that you will attend. By May 1st, 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. Where your college t-shirt or sweatshirt proudly on May 1st.
- 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 “College That I’m Attending”. We will use this information to send your final transcript after graduation.
- Provide the College Counselor with copies of your scholarship and grant letters.
- GRADUATE!

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

ACADEMIC CORE: Usually refers to discipline of English, mathematics, language, science, social studies and foreign
language. Selective colleges look for the academic core on a transcript.

ACCREDITATION: Colleges, universities, and individual academic programs are evaluated and receive “certification” if
they meet set standards (for example, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools).

ACADEMIC MAJOR: The area of specialization where a student concentrates a major portion of his or her academic
work.

ACADEMIC MINOR: A secondary concentration of academic work.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP) TESTS: Designed for strong students who have completed college level work in high
school. APs are given in specific subject areas and are used in determining whether or not a student may gain advanced
standing in college.

AMERICAN COLLEGE TEST (ACT) ASSESSMENT: The ACT includes four curriculum-based tests prepared by the ACT, Inc.
ACT scores are used throughout the country by college and university admission offices. The multiple-choice tests
measure a student’s skills in English, mathematics, reading and science. Each test is scored on a scale of 1 (low) to 36
(high), and the four tests are also averaged to provide a composite score. The ACT also has an optional writing
component.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: Date set by a college or university admissions office for when a student’s application must; (a)
be on file in the Admissions Office, or (b) be postmarked.

APTITUDE TESTS: SAT OR ACT standardized tests, presumably measures a student’s potential for success in college.

ARTS AND SCIENCES: A program of courses that does not primarily have a vocational aim; sometimes referred to as
Liberal Arts.

ASSOCIATE DEGREE (A.A., A.S.): A two-year degree that generally prepares the student for further study. Some
associate degree programs are sufficient training for certain careers, but many students in two-year colleges intend to
complete their studies at four-year colleges.

AUDIT: Attending a class without earning a credit.


CALENDAR: The system by which an institution divides its year into shorter periods for instruction. The most common
calendars are semester and quarter.
CANDIDATE REPLY DATE: The date when the student must give their decision to the college. Nationally, May 1st is the date to which most colleges adhere.

CEEB CODE (College Entrance Examination Board): For R-MA, the CEEB Code is 470900.

CLASS RANK: How a student’s academic performance, as determined by grade point, compares to other members of his/her graduating class. R-MA does not rank; however, we will provide the student’s decile. This information may be found in Naviance Family Connection.

COLLEGE: An institution at which students study toward two- or four-year undergraduate degrees after completion of secondary school.

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP SERVICE (CSS FINANCIAL AID PROFILE): A supplemental need-analysis document used by some colleges and private scholarship programs to award their non-federal aid funds. This profile DOES NOT REPLACE THE FAFSA.

THE COLLEGE BOARD: A nonprofit organization governed by college and secondary school members. The College Board is the oversight agency for many tests and services connected with the college admission process, including the SAT.

COMMON APPLICATION: Allows a student to fill out one application form for filing at more than one college.

CONSORTIUM: A group of institutions which have joint education programs and have joined together to promote their institution.

CO-OP: A program of study in which a student combines academic study with practical work experience.

DEFERRED ADMISSION: Many colleges offer an opportunity for a student who has been admitted to delay or defer enrollment for a year or a semester. A deposit is often required by the college to hold a place in the next entering class, and it is the college’s right to expect the student to be able to account for the time spent between graduation from high school and actual matriculation at the college. The student who defers admission to a college cannot attend another college during the time off, unless the college is notified in advance and agrees to the plan.

DOCTORAL DEGREE (Ph.D., J.D., M.D.): Three or four years of study in a very specified subject after completion of a bachelor’s and/or master’s degree.

EARLY ACTION: Students apply early and receive a decision well in advance of the institution’s regular response date.

EARLY ADMISSION: Programs in which an outstanding high school student applies and is accepted for admission to a college upon completion of the eleventh grade.

EARLY DECISION (ED): Student make a commitment to a first-choice institution where, if admitted they definitely will enroll. The application deadline and decision deadline occur early. **A student may apply early decision to ONLY ONE school.**

EDUCATIONAL TESTING SERVICE (ETS): A nonprofit agency employed by The College Board to produce its tests.

EXPLORE: A program from ACT Inc., a set of four tests that measure academic achievement. It can help eighth and ninth grade students plan their high school courses, prepare for the ACT or choose a career direction.
FINANCIAL AID PACKAGE: Describes the total amount of aid that a student receives. A package generally consists of several parts: grants/scholarships, loans and jobs.

FREE EDUCATON FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA): A detailed form that is the first step in applying for federal aid, offered by the US Department of Education (www.fafsa.ed.gov).

GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS: Core curriculum courses required by all majors for the bachelor degree at a particular institution. The number and specificity of these course requirements vary from institution to institution.

GRADUATE SCHOOL: Usually part of a university – an institution for students who have already earned the bachelors degree.

GRADUATE DEGREE: A degree completed by study after the bachelor’s degree.

GRANT: Money given to a student that carries no stipulation of repayment. Grants can originate from the federal or state government, private sources or the college itself. Eligibility tends to be based on need; when need is high, the grant aid tends to be high as well.

HIGHLY SELECTIVE COLLEGE ADMISSION CALENDAR: Many college admission office timetables call for applications to be filed during the fall or early winter of the senior year. Supporting data (standardized test scores, high school records and recommendations) are sent to the college at the student’s request. Members of the admission office or admissions committee retreat from late February to late March to read applications and to make decisions. Decisions are mailed to applicants from early to mid-April, and accepted applicants are required to notify the college that they choose or decline the offer to attend no later than May 1st.

HONORS PROGRAM: A plan designed to encourage academically superior students to engage in a more challenging program in their area of concentration than is required. This may include special and usually smaller honors sections of available courses.

IVY LEAGUE: Although the term “Ivy League” is often misused to designate any eastern college with a strong reputation and a highly competitive selection; strictly speaking, the Ivy League is an athletic league including the following colleges: Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Princeton, University of Pennsylvania and Yale.

LEGACY: A college applicant who is the son or daughter (or sometimes a more distant relative) of an alumna/us. Private colleges are often generous in admitting such candidates.

LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES: A breadth of intellectual inquiry that broadens the student’s knowledge and awareness in each of the major areas of human knowledge; arts, sciences, humanities. A liberal arts education prepares one to: (1) communicate thoughts and ideas clearly and efficiently, (2) to understand a wide variety of perspectives and values, to appreciate civilization, beauty and natural processes, and to continually discover with sincere curiosity the world around us. The liberal arts college offers a four-year course of study, leading to the B.S. or B.A. degree and any graduate or professional program.

3-2 LIBERAL ARTS AND CAREER COMBINATION: A program in which a student completes three years of study in a liberal arts field followed by two years of professional technical study (i.e., engineering, architecture, etc.) at the end of which the student is awarded the bachelor of arts by the first institution and bachelor of science by the second institution.
MAJOR: The field of specialization or concentration for a college undergraduate. The student normally does from a quarter to a third of the total undergraduate work in his/her major field. Most often the student is asked to declare a major at the end of the sophomore year.

MASTER’S DEGREE (M.A., M.S., F.F.A.): One or two years of study in a specific subject after completion of the bachelor’s degree.

MINOR: A secondary area of academic concentration, which may or may not be offered by an institution.

NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP QUALIFYING TEST (NMSQT): Combined with the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT) the NMSQT is used in the selection of the top scholars in the country. The minimum score to receive national recognition varies from year to year.

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.

NON-RESTRICTIVE APPLICATION PLANS: Students are not restricted from applying to other institutions and have until May 1st to consider their options and confirm enrollment.

OPEN ADMISSION: Some colleges do not practice selective admission and offer admission to virtually all students who apply. Such colleges usually have extensive programs designed to provide remedial or developmental help to students who enroll with academic deficiencies.

PRELIMINARY SCHOLASTIC ASSESSMENT TEST (PSAT): The PSAT is a practice test designed to prepare students for the SAT. The test is divided into two categories: critical reading and math. The critical reading section includes short and long reading passages and sentence completion questions. The math section tests concepts from Number and Operations, Algebra and Geometry. PSAT scores are not usually used by colleges as admission criteria.

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.

PRIVATE COLLEGE: An academic institution financed primarily by tuition and endowments.

PROFILE: 1) A description of a specific college freshman class. The College Handbook, published by CEEB, contains this information about most colleges and universities. 2) A description of the secondary school that accompanies each senior transcript sent to a college.

PUBLIC COLLEGE: An academic institution financed primarily by tuition, endowments and state or local taxes. Tuition for in-state students is reduced and programs and policies are state-regulated.

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

**REGULAR DECISION:** Students submit an application by a specified date and receive a decision in a clearly stated period of time.

**RESTRICTIVE APPLICATION PLANS:** Students are responsible for determining and following restrictions.

**RESTRICTIVE EARLY ACTION (REA):** Students apply to an institution of preference and receive a decision early. They may be restricted from applying ED or EA or REA to other institutions. If offered enrollment, the student has until May 1st to confirm.

**ROLLING ADMISSION:** Institutions review applications as they are submitted and render admission decisions throughout the admission cycle.

**SCHOLARSHIP:** Money given to a student that carries no stipulation of repayment. Scholarships can originate from private sources or the college itself. Scholarship eligibility is often based on financial need, academic achievement, particular talents or skills, or a combination of one or more of these factors.

**SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST (SAT):** This test is usually taken in the junior year and again the senior year and is a required test for admission to many colleges. A multiple-choice examination designed to test a student’s reasoning aptitude in an academic context, the SAT is divided into three sections; each section is scored on a scale of 200-800, with two writing sub scores for multiple-choice and the essay. Low scores are not indicative that a student is unable to do competitive work in college, merely that someone with higher scores may be able to do the same work with more ease.

**SCORE CHOICE:** Colleges consider the highest individual section results across all sittings of the SAT and the highest composite score for the ACT.

**SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT:** This report is part of the application and is submitted along with the transcript. The college counselor usually includes a narrative or letter of recommendation, completes the form, and mails it along with a transcript and school profile to the college.

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

**SEMESTER:** Half of the normal school year. The usual college year has two semesters (fall and spring).

**SUBJECT TESTS:** Often taken at the end of the junior year and possibly at the midpoint of the senior year, SAT Subject Tests are administered in a variety of academic subjects to test the level of knowledge of student in particular academic disciplines in relation to other students throughout the country. Some colleges use the Subject Tests only for placement in various levels of freshman courses: some use them as additional supporting information in the admission process.

**TEST OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE:** The TOEFL, a computer-based test, is designed for students for whom English is not a native language and whose scores on SAT would obviously be affected by the language difference. Generally, students take TOEFL in addition to other standardized testing such as SAT or ACT.

**TRANSCRIPT:** The official complete copy of a student’s academic record including courses and grades. In the college admissions process, this document is traditionally given the most weight.
TRANSFER PROGRAM: A two-year program which results in an associate degree. It is designed for students who intend to continue their studies at a four-year college.

TUITION DEPOSIT: Also known as the admission deposit, commitment deposit, or commitment fee. A college usually requires a student who has been admitted to verify intention to enroll by submission of a deposit or fee to be applied (usually) to the student’s tuition charges for the upcoming academic year. Colleges that are members of the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) agree to allow accepted applicants the opportunity to learn the decisions of all colleges they have applied to before requiring tuition deposits, provided that all decisions are made before May 1st. A student is obligated to submit a tuition deposit to only one college before its required deadline (usually May 1st). Colleges view dual or multiple deposits by students as serious violations of trust and may revoke a previous offer of admission from any student who is found to have sent tuition deposits to more than one college.

UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE: Two-year (associate) or four-year (bachelor’s) degrees.

UNIVERSITY: An institution which may be the same as a college, but which usually offers graduate degrees in addition to undergraduate degrees.

WAIT LIST: This is an admission decision option utilized by institutions to protect against shortfalls in enrollment. Wait lists are sometimes made necessary because of the uncertainty of the admission process, as students submit applications for admission to multiple institutions and may receive several offers of admission. By placing a student on the wait list, an institution does not initially offer or deny admission, but extends to a candidate the possibility of admission in the future, before the institution’s admission cycle is concluded.

YIELD: The percentage of students admitted to a college who ultimately attend that college. The yield is often highest at selective colleges.
RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

*Guide to the College Admission Process, National Association for College Admission Counseling

*Students’ Rights and Responsibilities, National Association for College Admission Counseling

*R-MA College Handbook

*R-MA College Readiness Plan

*These four (4) documents may be found on the R-MA College Counseling web site http://www.rma.edu/college-counseling

Facebook – “Like” R-MA College Counseling

Suggested Reading List

Admission Matters, Sally P. Springer, Jon Reider, Joyce Vining Morgan

College Admission, From Application to Acceptance, Step By Step, Robin Hamlet and Christine Vandevelde

College is Yours 2.0, Patrick J. O'Connor

Colleges That Change Lives, Loren Pope

Crazy U, Andrew Ferguson

Sending Your Child to College, Prepared Parent’s Operational Manual, Marie Pinak Carr

*Winning the College Admission Game, Peter Van Buskirk (AY2015-2015 Theme)

Helpful Web Sites

CollegeBoard https://www.collegeboard.org

The ACT http://www.actstudent.org

TOEFL http://www.ets.org/toefl
The COMMON APPLICATION https://www.commonapp.org/Login

FAFSA https://fafsa.ed.gov

CSS Financial Aid Profile http://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile

Colleges That Change Lives http://www.ctcl.org/

Enrichment Alley (summer programs) http://enrichmentalley.com

Test Optional Colleges http://www.fairtest.org/university/optional

CAPPEX (College and Scholarship Search) www.cappex.com

SCHOLARSHIPS (search) www.scholarships.com/

WIKI COLLEGE LISTS http://www.collegelistswiki.com/

USDE College Affordability and Transparency Center http://collegecost.ed.gov/