

CAMBRIDGE RINDGE AND LATIN SCHOOL

Career and College Planning Guidebook

*A tool to help students and families navigate the
confusing and exciting career and college
planning process.*

2015-2016

CRLS GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT

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Career and College Options

4-Year Colleges and Universities

When you graduate from a 4- year college you will earn a Bachelors Degree. These schools vary greatly in size, location, whether they are public or private, and what they can offer you in academics and extracurricular. It's all about finding the right fit for you!

Benefits of a 4-year degree:

- *extensive learning in and out of class*
- *opportunity for extracurricular activities such as internships or study abroad programs*
- *although this may not always be true, a Bachelor's degree often has the possibility to give you a leg up in the job market or a higher earning potential*

2-Year Colleges

When you graduate from a 2-year college you will earn an Associate's Degree, or a Certificate, a more specific degree that many 2-year colleges offer. In many fields of study, a program can be completed in 2-years and you can begin searching for jobs in that field right when you graduate. Students may also attend a 2-year program with the intention to transfer to a 4-year college or university upon completion of their Associate's Degree. Community colleges are included in this category.

Benefits of a 2-year degree:

- *Get a college degree in less time*
- *Allows an opportunity to save money and begin making money*
- *Allows time to perfect your skills or raise your grades before transferring to a four-year school (if you do well at a two year program you may be more likely to be **accepted into a college that you could not gain acceptance to right out of high school**)-see Mass Transfer Policy on next page!*
- *Flexible scheduling*



Mass Transfer Policy

<http://www.mass.edu/masstransfer/home.asp>

What is it? Makes transferring from a Massachusetts 2-year program to a Massachusetts 4-year program easier and at a lower cost.

If you graduate from a Massachusetts community college you are eligible to transfer to a Massachusetts State University or a University of Massachusetts campus with the following benefits:

| Benefits | Final GPA* of 2.0+ | Final GPA of 2.5+ | Final GPA of 3.0+ |
|--|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>No Application fee</i> | x | x | x |
| <i>No application essay</i> | x | x | x |
| <i>Automatic satisfaction of most or all general education requirement</i> | x | x | x |
| <i>Guaranteed transfer of credits</i> | x | x | x |
| <i>Guaranteed admission</i> | | x | x |
| <i>33% of tuition waived!</i> | | | x |

**GPA from 2-year college program, not high school*

U-Mass Amherst Community College Connection

If you graduate with at least a 3.7 from community college, you will also receive a \$500 book scholarship and priority application review, priority financial aid consideration, reserved housing, and priority course registration at UMass Amherst. For more information see:

<http://www.umass.edu/umccc/>

Vocational Programs

Vocational Programs are usually a one or two-year institution that offers certificate programs that prepare students for immediate employment. Examples would be culinary

schools, tech schools, massage therapy schools, automotive repair schools, or other skilled trades.

Benefits of Vocational Schools:

- *The skills you learn will prepare you directly for a specific job upon graduation*
- *It is a quicker road to a desired career*
- *Can expand the skills learned in one of the RSTA classes or teach a new trade*

Gap Year

Some students who wish to take a year off prior to attending college look to internship experiences, volunteer work, travel, or an entry level job in their desired future profession. In a process called **deferred admissions**, students apply to college for the fall after they graduate high school and in the spring of their senior year they ask permission of the college they wish to attend to postpone admission for one year. A student and family considering this option should discuss it with their guidance counselor.

Benefits of a Gap year:

- *A Gap year can build a student's resume or make them a more attractive candidate to colleges, universities, and employers*
- *Can help a student mature and prepare for their future in a real world setting*
- *Can give the student an opportunity to travel and learn about different cultures before starting on a career path*
- *Can provide a student who is undecided on a career choice clarification about various professions, trades, and jobs*

For more information on Gap year programs visit:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ Americorps>

<http://teenlife.com>



Military

There are several branches of the Military and extensive military career options. Before making a commitment to the Military, students should make sure to do some research and learn about what would be required of them.

Benefits of joining the Military:

- *The Military will grant you a stipend to pay for your college tuition after a minimum required amount of service time.*
- *Possibility for a career and career mobility*
- *Medical coverage*
- *The Military offers experience in learning a variety of skills and trades that you can take with you once you leave.*
- *Opportunity to travel*

For more information on specific branches of the military visit:

Army: <http://www.goarmy.com>

Navy: <http://www.navy.mil>

Air Force: <http://www.airforce.com>

Marine Corps: <http://www.usmc.mil>

Coast Guard: <http://www.uscg.mil>

Each year Military Recruiters from various branches visit the CCRC. Military Recruiter visits are listed in the college visit tab on Naviance.

Getting Started: Who does what?

Sometimes the roles in the post-graduation planning process can be confusing between students and guidance counselors. If students are ever unsure about how to approach a process or what steps they need to take versus what steps the guidance counselor will take, make an appointment with your guidance counselor!

Students and Parents Will:

- Research all post-secondary options that sound viable, exciting, or interesting to the student.
- Sign up for all admissions tests necessary (SATs, ACTs, TOEFL and Subject Tests) and know what potential colleges and universities require.
- Fill out and submit applications (know due dates!)
- Have SAT, ACT or TOEFL scores sent directly from the testing agency to all colleges and universities (students can do this online through their College Board, ACT or TOEFL account).
- Submit required financial aid forms (FAFSA).
- Ask teachers or other community members for recommendations in a timely manner (**students will be asked to fill out brag sheets on Naviance to assist recommenders**).
- Write admissions essays and schedule interviews as necessary.

Guidance Counselor Will:

- Provide college counseling and support around the process.
- Write college recommendation (upon receiving a brag sheet).

- Send transcripts, school profile, and all recommendations.
- Answer questions!

Senior Planning Calendar

| SENIOR PLANNING | |
|--------------------------|--|
| AUGUST/ SEPTEMBER | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Narrow list of colleges to 5-10 schools.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Set up a meeting with your guidance counselor to discuss school choices and application options.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Plan college visits and interviews.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Register early for Fall SAT/ ACT.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>If applying for Early Decision or Action, begin applications.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Get test fee waivers/TOEFL fee reduction (SAT, ACT or TOEFL) see your guidance counselor for eligibility</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Ask for recommendations from two teachers, and fill out brag sheets on Naviance for your recommenders (guidance and teachers).</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Inquire about senior year internships or shadowing possibilities if you are interested in pursuing work after senior year.</i> |
| OCTOBER | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Try to finalize college choices (although your list may be flexible, you should have a few you are definitely applying to.)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Take SAT/ ACT/ TOEFL.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Begin college essays, ask for people to</i> |

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| | <p><i>proofread them.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Attend college fair, plan visits.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Start an account on Common Application and begin filling it out, if necessary.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Submit early action/ decision applications if necessary (check deadlines!)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>CSS Financial Aid Profile (check to see if colleges to which you are applying require this form)</i> |
| NOVEMBER | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Submit early action/decision applications. (Usually due between November 1st and November 15th)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Complete at least one college application by Thanksgiving.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Check on dates for CRLS financial aid nights.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Research sources of private outside scholarships.</i> |
| DECEMBER | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Take SAT/ ACT if you haven't yet.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Finish applications and essays to selective colleges, and send them.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Check all application deadlines.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Attend Financial Aid Night at CRLS.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Meet with counselor to make sure they have sent seventh semester grades to necessary schools.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Check in with teachers to make sure all recommendations are in.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Early Decision applicants notify counselors of admission decision withdraw all other applications if accepted ED.</i> |
| JANUARY | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Apply for FAFSA or other appropriate financial aid forms between January 1st and the end of March.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Check due dates and send in necessary applications to schools.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Early Action applicants notify counselor of admit status</i> |
| FEBRUARY | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Check/Apply for private scholarships either found online or provided by CRLS.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Check deadlines for AP tests.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>No Senioritis! Colleges DO look at</i> |

| | |
|--------------|--|
| | <i>second-semester senior grades.</i> |
| MARCH | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Stay active in school. If you are wait-listed, colleges will want to know what you have accomplished between the time you applied and learned of its decision.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Update admission status in Naviance</i> |
| APRIL | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>You should receive acceptance letters and financial aid offers by mid-April.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>If you have not done so yet, visit your final college before accepting.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Notify counselor if you have decided on a school.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Contact college about any questions having to do with housing.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Write withdrawal letters to colleges you will not attend.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Make final decision by May 1st.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Review FAFSA Student Aid Report.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Update admission status in Naviance</i> |
| MAY | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>AP Exams!</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Send in your deposit and acceptance letter.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Work with counselor to resolve any admissions or financial aid problems.</i> |
| JUNE | <i>Declar attending college in Naviance GRADUATION! ☺</i> |

Building a List of Schools and Programs

College Fair, School Visits, and the CCRC

The College planning process begins with research. As soon as your junior year gets going you should begin thinking about what you want from the college experience and begin to look at schools that could provide this for you. A great way to do this is to visit the CRLS Career and College Resource Center (CCRC) which is open all year round to help assist students in researching options all year round.

College representatives, gap year programs and Military representatives visit the CCRC throughout the year to meet with students and provide specific information about their program. Sign into Naviance to see the schedule of when programs are visiting, you can then sign up to attend the presentation and print your confirmation as a pass to leave class

Attend the CRLS Career and College Fair in your junior and senior year to get to know schools and the college representative assigned to your region. Throughout your junior and senior year, visit as many college campuses as you can! Visiting a campus gives you a much better understanding of the culture of the school and a picture of what it would be like to attend that school. **Check with your guidance counselor about organized CRLS college visits and remember you live in an area where a large number of great colleges and universities are accessible by the T or a walk.**

CRLS College Fair: October 7, 2015 from 6-8 p.m. in the CRLS Field House

Online Search and Matching Tools

As students build a list of possible colleges, please be sure students add the colleges to Naviance “Colleges I’m thinking about” section under the *Colleges* tab! This will be visible to parents and guidance counselors and provide information about the college.

Naviance! Sign into Naviance through the icon on the CRLS website in the student tab. Students should have already received usernames and passwords; the account is “CRLS.” Use the Naviance *Colleges* tab to research schools and view the admissions history of CRLS students. Take the Naviance *Career Interest Profile* if you are unsure of possible majors/career paths or the *SuperMatch* tool as a starting point for researching schools.

CollegeBoard.org – The College Board website provides a wealth of information about 2 and 4-year college programs.

Career Cruising (www.careercruising.com)– Find colleges that have a majors related to your desired career.

US Department of Education (www.nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator) – The College Navigator matches schools based on major and location preference.

The College Score Card (<https://collegescorecard.ed.gov>) – College Score Card provides fresh data to help students choose the right college, with an emphasis no cost and post-graduate results.

Princeton Review (www.princetonreview.com)- research schools.

College Prowler (<http://collegeprowler.com>) – reviews of colleges written by current students.

MyRoad (www.myroad.com) – My Road is an interactive planning tool that includes a personality assessment, career information, college search tools, and articles about colleges and careers. MyRoad is available to all PSAT/NMSQT takers (that's you!)

Campus Tours (www.campustours.com) – Provides virtual tours with still pictures and descriptions, webcams, campus maps, and videos of hundreds of colleges throughout the United States. Campus Tours provides a first look at colleges.

Remember you can always find a wealth of information about a college or university on their website, which can usually be found by Googling the college or university or in Naviance under the college tab.



Organizing Schools: Reaches, Matches, and Most Likely

Compare your GPA, standardized test scores, and finances to what the colleges on your list generally accept (and what they cost) and decide if they are a:

Reach: Chances of admission are lower (less than 50%) but perhaps the school is a top choice or the student feels like they have something unique to offer that school. Keep in mind many competitive colleges deny more students than they accept!

Best Fit: Chances of admission are good. There is a 50% chance or more of acceptance. The student is a strong applicant for admission; their GPA and test scores are similar to what the school is looking for.

Likely: Chances of admission are very likely. There is an 80-100% chance of acceptance. Perhaps the school may not be a first choice, but it meets most of your requirements and you know you could most likely attend.

It can be easy for students and families to get caught up in the “**name game**” with schools, but it is best to focus on matching a school with a student in order that all the students’ needs can be met and that he/she can contribute to the school he/she attends. Students should have a few schools in each of the above categories to make sure the admissions process is well balanced and successful.

Tips on Finding a Match

It is important to identify priorities when looking for a college. Carefully research the characteristics of a range of schools. Finally, see if the schools you like match your priorities. Here are some college characteristics to consider:

Size of student body: Size will affect a student’s opportunities and experiences

- Range of academic majors offered
- Extracurricular possibilities
- Amount of personal attention a student will receive
- Number of academic resources

In considering size, a student should look beyond just the number of students that attend. For example, perhaps the student is considering a small department within a large school. Students should investigate not just the number of faculty members, but also their accessibility to students. Students should also look for the average class size. Some large schools may still strive to keep classes small.

Location: Does the student want to visit home frequently, or is this a time to experience a new part of the country? Perhaps an urban environment is preferred, with access to museums, ethnic food, or sports games. Or maybe it’s easy access to outdoor activities or the serenity of a small town.

Academic Programs: If a student has decided on a field of study (major), they can research the reputations of academic departments by talking to people in the field of interest and by searching online for reviews. If a student is undecided, as many students are, they may want to choose an academically balanced institution that offers a range of majors and programs. Students normally don’t pick a major until their sophomore year. In considering academic programs, a student should look for special opportunities such as internship and research assistantships, or pick a school that offers a number of possibilities.

Campus Life: Before choosing a college, students should have a general answer to these questions:

- What extracurricular activities, athletics, clubs, and organization are available and what would I possibly want to participate in?
- Does the community around the college offer interesting outlets for students?
- Do sororities and fraternities influence campus life? Does that matter to me?
- Is housing guaranteed for the entire time I am attending?
- How are dorms assigned?

Cost: In considering cost, look beyond the price tag. Because of financial aid, most students pay less than the “sticker price,” so don’t rule out a college that would be a good fit for the student before you find out how much financial aid will offer (in early spring of their graduation year). Most colleges work to ensure that academically qualified students from every economic circumstance can find aid that allows them to attend.

Diversity: Students should explore what can be gained from a diverse student body. The geographic, ethnic, racial and religious diversity of the students can help students learn more about the world. Investigate which student organizations, or other groups with ethnic or religious foundations are active and visible on campus. Also if students are interested in study abroad, they should find out how possible and cost effective a school makes this for the students.

Retention and Graduation Rates: One of the best ways to measure a school’s quality and the satisfaction of its students is to learn the percentage of students who return after the first year and the percentage of entering students who go on to graduate. This can usually be found by googling the school’s name and “retention rate.”

Remember, counselors are knowledgeable about many different kinds of colleges and universities and can help build or narrow your list. This can be a confusing and overwhelming process for every student, so don’t be afraid to seek help! You can make an appointment with your guidance counselor by visiting their office or sending an email to them through First Class.

Assessing the List

Use the following questions to assess the list of school and programs you have so far and to possibly narrow your choices to the schools you will actually apply to!

The Basics

Where is the college? Is the location desirable?

Is the size of the school what you desire?

How selective is the college's admissions process?

Does the college offer majors and classes that interest you?

What percentage of students live off campus? Is housing guaranteed?

How many freshman return to the school for their second year?

How much does the program cost? What is the total per-year expense?

What type of financial aid and scholarships does the school give out that you could receive?

Do I fit in? (Most of this information can be found on Naviance)

What are the admission test scores at the colleges that interest you? Where do you fall?

What was the average high school GPA of most of the freshmen last year?

Are there extracurricular activities that interest you?

School Culture (look at school's website, literature, and guidebooks)

What are their strong academic programs?

What courses are required for graduation?

Are the courses you need/want available every semester? Is registration easy or do spots fill up quickly?

Are there special programs that interest you (study abroad, internships, etc.?)

What is social life like?

What is *your* general impression of the college?

Admission Process (most of this information can be found on the school's website under the 'admissions' section)

When are applications due?

Does the college accept the Common Application? If so, do they have specific forms you need to attach with the Common Application (known as supplements)? You can find this out once you add the school on commonapp.org.

Is an interview suggested or required?

Are SAT or ACT scores required or suggested?

When may you visit the college? Do they have open houses in the fall?

What are the financial aid deadlines? What financial aid forms are required?

Now answer these:

Am I a strong candidate for admission?

If I am not a strong candidate, what are my chances?

Do I want to visit this college?

Once students have made the decision to apply to a school, they should visit their list of “Colleges I’m thinking about” on Naviance. Check the box next to school you want to apply to, scroll to the bottom, and click “Move to Application List.” This will make it possible for guidance counselors to send recs and transcripts to that school.

Types of Admission

Early Decision: If a student is *certain* they want to attend a particular school by the fall of their senior year, they may choose to apply early decision (only available at some schools). The application deadline is usually early November, as opposed to January or February for regular applications. When a student applies early decision they must sign a statement saying that if they are accepted, they will attend that school. At the time of acceptance the student must withdrawal applications from any other schools. Usually you will know the school’s admission decision by mid-December. The scrutiny of your application is sometimes much closer than in regular admissions, because fewer students apply early decision. You may, on the other hand, have a slight advantage because you are clearly saying to the school that they are your first choice. Either way, remember that early decision is binding (you must attend) if you are accepted!

Early Action: Early action applications, like early decision, are expected to be in by mid-November and students will usually hear the admissions results by mid-December. The difference is that students are not obligated to attend the school if they are accepted. They can wait to hear the acceptance results from all the schools they applied to and then make their decision from there. Early action lets the student show strong interest in a school without it being a binding agreement. (Colleges typically have *either* an Early Decision option or an Early Action option, but not always both.)

If a student plans to apply Early Decision or Early Action, it is strongly advised they meet with their guidance counselor in early fall to make sure they can put together their recommendations, test scores, and application together in a timely manner!

Rolling Admissions: This is one of the most popular methods of notifying students of their acceptance. As colleges accumulate complete applications from a student, the admissions board makes a decision and notifies the student sometimes within three weeks of receiving all the data. Remember that this means spots are filling up as time passes, so it is best to send your application in as soon as it's ready.

Deferred Admission: This is an admissions plan whereby a student applies to a college and is notified of acceptance during their senior year. However some students may decide to take a year off after graduation to work, take an internship, to travel, for medical reasons, or join the military. At this point the student may write a letter to the school asking them to delay admission for one year. Often a deposit may still be required by the school by May 1st of senior year.

Wait List: In addition to accepting and rejecting applicants, many colleges place students on a waiting list for admission. This may mean the college is interested in the student but has run out of spots. As accepted students choose to attend other schools, the college will give their spot to a student on the waitlist. If a student is waitlisted at a school they are very interested in, it could be beneficial to send a letter reiterating their interest in that school.

Candidates Reply Date Agreement, originated by the College Board, states that May 1st is the earliest a college may require an accepted student to say whether or not he or she plans to attend. This allows students to make a decision once they have heard back from all their potential schools. The exception to this is early decision binding agreements.



Tips and Organization

Getting Started

- Set up a folder for each college/university. Keep all material relevant to each college in its own folder.
- Request letters of recommendations at least a month (more is better) before the deadlines.
- Review all application requirements. Set up a schedule for completing them, leaving enough time for revisions and correcting. Involve your guidance counselor in this process.
- Find out if your school requires the Common Application or if they have their own electronic application or a paper application. Do you send it by mail or submit it online?

Completing the Process

- Review each page of the application before you start to work on it.
- Be accurate and neat. Spell correctly and use correct grammar. **Note: There is no spell check on the Common Application!**
- Don't type your essay directly into the application. Draft it separately, then upload it and proof read the uploaded version.
- Request the testing organizations to send your official test scores directly to the colleges. You can do this online at collegeboard.com (SATs) or actstudent.org (ACT) or ETS.org (TOEFL). There is a cost to send scores, costs vary by testing agency, but if you had a fee waiver for the test you are eligible for fee waivers for the scores being sent.
- Always have at least two people read over your applications and essays.
- Make sure you keep your counselor updated on the schools you are applying to and their deadlines. This way they know when to send transcripts, school reports, and letters of recommendation.**

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I have a better chance of getting in if I apply early?



This can vary from school to school and year to year and may depend on the applicant pool at the school which you are applying. Check to see what percentage of students in the previous graduating classes at CRLS were admitted Early Decision to a specific college (look on Naviance graphs). Are you qualified to apply Early Decision? Do you have your application ready? Is this a school you really wish to attend? If so, then apply early. Just be aware that if you apply Early Decision to a school that is binding and if you are accepted, you have to recall all other applications and promise to attend that school.

How many times should I take the SAT/ACT?

Some students are satisfied with their test scores the first time they take the test. Others believe they will benefit from taking it a second time. Most students will take the SAT in the spring of their junior year and in the fall of their senior year. There is no evidence that taking the test more than twice results in significant score gains for most students. Most students base the score they are trying to get on what the colleges that they are applying to generally accept.

My test scores are very low, and my grades are very high. Will this affect my chances of admission?

While test scores are an indicator of success in college, admissions staffs look at many different factors when making a decision about whether to admit a student. One of the main things they are looking for is to see if your high school academic profile indicates that you have potential for success on their campus. What kinds of courses did you take? Were you a participant in clubs, volunteering, and extracurricular activities? What do your essay and recommendations say about you? There is also a whole list of schools that are test optional, meaning you aren't required to submit test scores. They are listed here:

<http://www.fairtest.org/university/optional>

My parents don't make a lot of money-will colleges hold this against me?

Colleges should tell you whether they have a "need-blind" admission policy; those that do, never consider ability to pay as an admission requirement (most schools are "need-blind"). Some schools, which are "need-conscious" may consider ability to pay, but only for a very small proportion of the admitted group. Our advice is always: don't worry about this. The fact that your parents don't make a lot may also mean you receive more need based financial aid from the government and the school!

How can I improve my chances of getting in from the wait list?

If a college is your first choice, let the college know that-although the college may not ask for this information. Write a letter to the director of admission expressing your continuing

strong interest and updating the admission office with any new information that enhances you (second semester grades). In addition, you may wish to ask your counselor to make a call on your behalf. Many colleges keep track of these kinds of contacts, and students who are enthusiastic and persistent will get looked at first. Colleges want to admit students off the wait list who will accept the offer of admission. This does not mean harassing the college everyday with emails, they will consider this annoying.

Do colleges really care about senior year grades?

They absolutely do! Many colleges will not make a decision until receiving seventh-semester grades. They expect to see a performance that indicates you are ready for college-level work. The college at which you make your enrollment deposit will ask for a final transcript at the end of the senior year. A college can withdraw an offer of admission when grades drop significantly over the course of the senior year.

Application Ethics

In recent years, college admissions officers and college counselors have seen a growing number of students and parents who, in an attempt to manipulate the system in their favor, are crossing the boundary between helping ensure a desired outcome for students and taking inappropriate action. Here are some things that we consider crossing the line. DO NOT:

- Apply to binding Early Decision (ED) programs at more than one college or university. CRLS will not send transcripts to more than one ED program. If a student is admitted through a binding ED contract, they must withdrawal all applications from other schools.
- Attempt to gain release from an ED because you have changed your mind. The only acceptable reason for requesting release from your contract with you ED college is the inability to work out appropriate financial aid.
- Have someone else write or heavily edit your essays.
- Submit deposits to more than one college. If you are admitted to a college that requires a deposit by May 1st, but are wait-listed somewhere you would rather go, call the college that admitted you and explain your situation. Your counselor can advise you on this process.
- State an intended major that you have no intention of pursuing, because you think it will help your admissions chances.
- Inaccurately describe your activities and accomplishments.
- State to more than one college that it is your first choice.

Recommendations

Counselor Recommendations

In the fall of the student's senior year, their counselor will write a comprehensive letter of recommendation for them. The letter is sent with their transcript to all schools to which the student has applied. This recommendation is developed through personal contact, knowledge of academic and extracurricular achievement and the student's and parent's guidance brag sheet, to be filled out on Naviance.

Teacher Recommendations

Most schools will require one or two teacher recommendations. (It is possible some schools may have specific forms in the application packet they want teachers to fill out, but most schools will just accept the letter from a teacher.) If a school says recommendations are optional, remember that it will only help you and make you more rounded if you submit them. Especially if you feel other areas of your application may be weaker. Take the following steps to complete teacher recommendations:

1. Think of two teachers who you have a positive relationship with, most likely from your junior year. If you have an idea of a desired major or career, keep this in mind when choosing teachers. For example, someone wanting to attain entrance into an engineering school would want at least one recommendation from a math or science teacher.

2. Fill out the teacher brag sheet on Naviance.

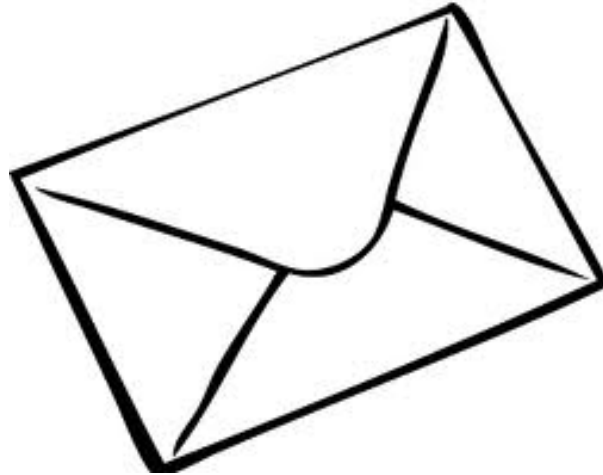
3. Personally approach the teacher and ask if they would be willing to write you a recommendation for you.

4. **If the teacher agrees, request a recommendation from them on Naviance.** A student can do this under the Colleges tab, at the very bottom of the “Colleges I’m Applying To” page. You will see a “teacher recommendation” section where you can “add requests.”

5. Students are encouraged to waive the rights to see recommendations (if applying through Common App, it will prompt the student to waive it). The student’s guidance counselor will send their recommendation along with the teacher’s recommendations to the schools of the student’s choosing.

Students should ask teachers as soon as possible to write recommendations since they take time to write and it is likely multiple students are asking that teacher for one. This may mean asking teachers at the end of the junior year or very beginning of senior year. Don’t forget to thank teachers after they have written you a recommendation!

It may be appropriate for students to include additional recommendations from sources other than teachers. This may include one from an employer, a coach, an advisor, the principle, the superintendent, or another community leader. However, sending too many letters of recommendation can work against students. Your counselor can advise you on possible appropriate sources for recommendations, but usually these will include people who can speak to other aspects of your character, maybe ones not addressed in the letters from school personnel. Students seeking letters of recommendations from non CRLS staff should provide the recommender with a stamped addressed envelope to the college to which you are applying.



Essays

Do's and Don'ts

| |
|---|
| DO: |
| Keep your focus narrow and personal. Be genuine. |
| Back up what you say, give specific examples. |
| Have an intriguing, interesting, and poignant first sentence. |
| Have at least two people proofread your essay. |
| Check over for grammatical errors more than once! |

| |
|---|
| DON'T: |
| Tell them what you think they want to hear. Admissions officers read plenty of essays about the charms of their university. Bring something new to the table. |

| |
|--|
| Write a resume. |
| Be repetitive of information they can find elsewhere in your application. Essays are for you to explain yourself in a way that the other pieces of your application can't. |
| Use 50 words, when five will do. Be brief. |
| Forget to proofread. (Don't rely on your computer's spell check !) |
| Have someone else write your essay. |

Sample Prompts from Colleges and Universities

Here are some examples of college essay prompts to spark ideas and help you practice.

Common Application: Choose one of the topics

1. Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk, or ethical dilemma you have faced and describe its impact on you.
2. Discuss some issue of personal, local, national or international concern and its importance to you.
3. Indicate a person who has been a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.
4. Describe a character in fiction, a historical character, or a creative work that has had an influence on you and describe that influence.
5. A range of academic interests, personal perspectives, and life experiences adds much to the educational mix. Given your personal background, describe an experience that illustrates what you would bring to the diversity in a college community, or an encounter that illustrated the importance of diversity to you.

Middlebury College: Middlebury values a sense of place and community in all forms. Please tell us about where you have grown up. How has it influenced you and your vision about the kind of college community you would like to join next year?

University of Virginia: Discuss something you secretly like but pretend not to or vice versa.

Morehouse College: Please write a brief essay about the person, place or event that has had the greatest influence on your life, and what influence you expect Morehouse College to have on your life.

Gonzaga University: "My imperfections and failures are as much a blessing from God as my successes and talents..." - Mahatma Gandhi. What has been one of your significant failings, and what did you learn from the experience?

Colgate University: What would be the title of your autobiography, and why?

Stetson University: If you wrote a letter to yourself to be opened up in 20 years, what would it say?

University of Michigan: Ask and answer the one important question you wish we had asked you.

Helpful Resources

Cambridge School Volunteers: Cambridge School Volunteers (CSV) are available in the College Career and Resource Center (room 1501) every Wednesday from 2:30-4pm. CSV will be available to help students by reading over essays, offering edits and suggestions, or by brainstorming ideas with students who are just starting off on the writing process.

Community Representatives: Staff members from afterschool academic and career support programs such as Upward Bound, Breakthrough, City Links, and Work Force are willing to help students by reading over essays.

English Teachers: English teachers are also usually willing to help read over essays but keep in mind how busy teachers are. If students want support with their essay writing, they should give teachers plenty of notice before applications are due!

Interviews and Visits

Making an Impression

- The interview is primarily for you to learn about the college and to allow the interviewer to learn about you.
- Do your very best to relax, it will make you better able to be yourself!
- Your interview will usually be with an admissions staff member, but it may be with a student, alumnus, or a professional interviewer. Keep this person's perspective in mind. Don't write off the college just because you think you had a bad interview.
- Have helpful questions that show you've done some research on the college already!
- Self-assess! Know your test scores, your areas of interests, and your possible future majors. If you are undecided about a career, feel free to say so.

- Interviewers may ask questions about your interests, extracurricular activities/jobs, books you've read, meaningful experiences, reasons for applying to this college, life at school, and similar topics. Be ready to talk about these things.
- Be honest about your strengths AND weaknesses, colleges will help you with some of the latter and promote the former.
- Plan to have your interview alone, without parents present.
- Dress neatly and comfortably.
- When you return home, write a thank-you note to the person that interviewed you.

Questions to Ask

During tours, interviews, and college representative visits to CRLS don't be afraid to ask questions! It shows you are thinking, being attentive, and remaining interested in that school. **Here are some sample questions you may want to ask:**

How large are your classes?

Do graduate students or professors teach most classes?

Does the school have a core curriculum? How restrictive is it?

When do you have to declare a major? What are the most popular majors?

Are some dorms better than others?

How available are professors?

Can you tell me firsthand about the (English, Biology, Engineering, etc.) department?

What's the biggest issue in local campus politics?

What percentage of students study abroad and how easy is it to do?

What impact does Greek life have on campus? Athletics? Performing Arts?

What are weekends like?

What do students complain about?

How diverse is the student body?

What kinds of students are happiest here? Least happy?

Do you have opportunities for internships or research experience?

Are class schedules flexible? Could a student work and attend this school simultaneously?

Standardized Testing

SAT and the ACT

Most colleges will require students to take one of the above standardized achievement tests. These tests are meant to measure that you can succeed in high school level academics and predict your academic ability in college level courses. But don't fret, there are many ways to prepare, and this test is not the only thing colleges look at! **Students can register for both the SAT on collegeboard.com or for the ACT on actstudent.org online.** While the SAT is administered periodically at CRLS, the ACT is not so students may have to test in other schools or institutions. If you are unsure which test to take, check the websites of the colleges you are applying to and see what they require. You can also talk to your guidance counselor about what they recommend, but usually colleges don't have a preference in which score you submit.



| SAT | ACT |
|---|--|
| 3 HOURS 45 MINUTES | 3 HOURS 25 MINUTES (with writing) |
| Critical Reading, Math, and Writing Sections | English, Math, Reading, Science, and an optional writing section |
| Composite scores range from 600-2400 (each section is worth 800 points) | Composite scores range from 1-36 |
| Cost \$52.50* | Cost \$56.50 (with recommended writing)* |
| *Fee waivers are available to students with free and reduced lunch. Each eligible student can receive two fee waivers. See your guidance counselor for the fee waiver application. | |

TEST OPTIONAL SCHOOLS: More and more schools are going “test optional” which means you may not have to report any test scores to them. In this case it would be up to you to report your score if you felt like it made you a stronger applicant, but you are not required to. Again all schools are different so make sure you do your research to see what your desired colleges and universities require of you. To see a full list of tet ooptional schools go to <http://fairtest.org/university/optional>.

When do students take the tests?

Most students prefer to take the test of their choice two or sometimes three times in order that the school can see their best possible scores. Often the first test is taken in the spring of their junior year and in senior year. The second test will occur in the fall or possibly winter of your senior year. **Keep in mind the ACT is given less often than the SAT, so students may need to plan further ahead when signing up.**

SAT Subject Tests

The SAT Subject Tests are designed to measure the knowledge and skills you have developed in a particular subject area. They are administered in the following areas; literature, biology, chemistry, physics, math I and II, U.S. history, world history, French, Spanish, German, Modern Hebrew, Latin, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. Many four year colleges require two or three SAT Subject Tests. Some schools may require specific tests, others may leave it up to the student to decide where their strengths are.

Since Subject Tests measure what you have already learned in a specific area, it is best for juniors to take them as late as possible in a semester, preferably in January for courses ending in semester one and for courses ending in semester two the June test date. This ensures the students has covered all the material and it is fresh in their minds! **Go to collegeboard.com** to register.

SAT and Subject Test Registration Dates (2015-2016)

CRLS Test Center is #22-256 / CEEB Number is 220493

Oct. 03, 2015 (register by Sep. 03, 2015)

Nov. 07, 2015 (register by Oct. 09, 2015)

Dec. 05, 2015 (register by Nov. 05, 2015)

Jan.23, 2016 (register by Dec. 28, 2016)

Mar. 05, 2016 (register by Feb. 05, 2016)

May 07, 2016 (register by Apr. 08, 2016)

June 04, 2016 (register by May 05, 2016)

ACT Registration Dates (2015-2016)

Sep. 12, 2015 (register by Aug. 07, 2015)

Oct. 24, 2015 (register by Sep. 18, 2015)

Dec. 12, 2015 (register by Nov. 06, 2015)

Feb. 06, 2016 (register by Jan. 08, 2016)

Apr. 09, 2016 (register by Mar. 04, 2016)

June 11, 2016 (register by May 06, 2016)

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)

Students are required to take the TOEFL if they meet either of the following:

1. Have been in the US for fewer than 5 years.

2. Indicate anything other than English as your **primary language**.

Fee reduction applications are available. See your guidance counselor.

Register at: <http://www.ets.org>

Preparation

College Quick Start: If you have taken the PSAT's you have access to free and individualized SAT planning online through College Board. When you receive a score report for the PSAT in January you will also receive an access code for Quick Start. You can then access this study tool through the College Board site.

actstudent.org: The ACT website provides practice questions, one full length practice test, tips on preparing, and a practice question of the day.

sat.collegeboard.com/practice: The SAT practice sit provides one full length practice test and a question of the day.

www.ets.org: The TOEFL website has practice questions and test tips. The CCRC also has a TOEFL study book.

CRLS Testing and Education Reference Center: The **T.E.R.C.** is located in the Pearl K. Wise Library at CRLS and provides access to prep books (PSAT, SAT, AP, ACT, etc.). You can also access resources and practice tests from the T.E.R.C. online for free! Follow these steps:

if accessing from a computer that is not on campus, enter the username CRLS and the password **rindge**

1. Go to the CRLS homepage (<http://crls.cpsd.us>)
2. Select *Pearl K. Wise Library* at the top of the page
3. Under "Quick Links", select SAT & AP Practice Tests

Harvard Chance: Harvard Chance is a program offered to any CRLS student who desires help with homework, college admissions, and SAT tutoring. The tutoring is provided by Harvard students and it is only a three minute walk from CRLS. Plus, there's pizza at each meeting. See your counselor for meeting days and locations.

SAT, SAT Subject Tests, ACT, PSAT, and AP practice books are for sale at many bookstores and online and will often include extra practice tests or further practice in a specific area of the test (ex. SAT math section). Many libraries will also have them available for photo-copying as well.

Prep for a fee:

Naviance: Once you are logged into Naviance, there are multiple links on the left hand side. Here you will find a list of well known companies who specialize in test preparation. And score improvement. *Although these companies will charge a tuition fee for their classes, scholarships are available. Please see your guidance counselor, or search on the websites for available scholarships.*

Kaplan Test Prep

MIT ATI SAT Prep

Dome SAT Prep

Club Z

Princeton Review Test Prep

Sherwood Test Prep

Signet

Score Reporting

Remember: Guidance Counselors do NOT send SAT or ACT scores to colleges; students do! Students will receive four free score reports every time they register for the SAT. We highly recommend that you take advantage of these reports, as additional reports are subject to a fee. Each test allows you to send four reports for free, and each additional report will cost around \$11.25 to send. In order to send your scores to schools go to **collegeboard.com**, **actstudent.org** or ETS.org. If you were eligible for a fee waiver to take the SAT, you are also eligible to get additional score sending fees waived.

It is extremely important that students remember their login usernames and information for the above sites, because they will be using it to access information about their scores and to send their scores to colleges. ***Students should have a memo in their phone or planner with all their important usernames and passwords.***

Special Testing Accommodations

If you currently receive accommodations in school due to a professionally diagnosed and documented disability, you may submit documentation to support a request for special

testing accommodations. This request must be made far ahead of time, as the process involves a formal application, as well as enough time to obtain College Board's approval for accommodation. CRLS recommends all freshmen who are currently on an IEP or 504 and receives special, in school, testing accommodations submit an application for special testing accommodations through the College Board upon accepting their IEP or 504 Accommodation plan. **Though a student may receive accommodation due to an IEP or 504 at CRLS, this does not guarantee the College Board will approve a request for special accommodations.**

Students should see their guidance counselors if planning to apply for special testing accommodations.

Financial aid

FAFSA

FAFSA is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. It is highly recommended that all students planning on attending any 2 or 4 year schools after high school fill out the FAFSA. There is nothing to lose and everything to gain. This application allows students to get loans, work-study, and grants from the government for post-secondary education and is mostly need based. You will be able to decide whether you will accept some or all of the financial award. Awards and loans received from filling out the FAFSA will be distributed to the student through the college they choose to attend.

Registration and Due Dates:

FAFSA online applications, for the 2015-2016 school year are due by May 1st, 2016, for Massachusetts schools (<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/fotw1415/pdf/Deadlines.pdf> for other states). However you can submit your FAFSA online starting January 1st, 2016.

CSS (College Scholarship Service) Profile

The CSS Profile is not required by all colleges, but some schools require it **IN ADDITION** to the FAFSA. The schools that do require the CSS Profile will say so in their financial aid literature and websites. Information from the CSS Profile will allow colleges to give their own funds to students through scholarships, grants, and loans, as opposed to the FAFSA, which is money from the federal government. Go to the link below and then click on the “Participating Colleges, Universities, and Programs” tab on the right for a full list of schools that will require the CSS profile.

<https://profileonline.collegeboard.org>

Registration and Due Dates:

You can fill out your CSS Profile at <http://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile>. Students will pay an initial registration fee (\$25) and additional costs per college (\$16). Within several weeks, students can expect to receive a profile packet, containing college-specific forms if required.

All colleges will have different due dates for the CSS profile. You can find individual due dates on the financial aid section of the college’s website. Absolutely all CSS profiles will be due by **March 1st**.

Many colleges and universities will also have their own financial aid form to fill out (usually only a page or two long) that is due before you can receive aid (check the school’s financial aid website for deadlines and to download the form.)

Type:

Loans: money that is borrowed and must be paid back with interest after graduation.

Subsidized Loans: federally guaranteed loans based on financial need. Interest does not accrue on the loan while you are in school.

Unsubsidized Loans: federally guaranteed loans that are not based on financial need. Interest does accrue from the time the loan is disbursed to the school.

Grants: money for college that you do not need to pay back.

Scholarships: money for college that you are awarded. Scholarships are based on merit, need or other criteria, such as interests or involvement in the community. You do not need to pay scholarships back.

Resources:

CRLS Scholarship Book- comes out in January. This book will list all the scholarships available to CRLS students given by CRLS.

Fastweb.com- extensive information on merit and need based scholarships and aid.

Collegeboard.com- This website has a scholarship search, a loan calculator, and an online application form for the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE form, which is required by some colleges.

Fafsa.ed.gov: The website for Free Application for Federal Student Aid. This form should be submitted in the senior year in between January 1st and May 1st. This is the site where the electronic form can be completed.

Finaid.gov: Good site for information about types of financial aid and applying for financial aid.

uAspire – uAspire helps students in Cambridge find an affordable path to higher education. uAspire partners with CRLS to work with college-ready students on how to pay for their education beyond high school. Through engaging workshops and one-on-one advising sessions with an expert college affordability Advisor, uAspire is empowering students in Cambridge to make a college education affordable.

American Student Loan Assistance (ASA) – ASA is a dedicated resource for information about federal education loans. No matter your situation, their experts are equipped to answer your most challenging student loan questions. *Free individual financial counseling and assistance filing college financial aid forms, is available daily in the basement of the Boston Public Library.*

Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee (CEOC)-CEOC is Cambridge's designated anti-poverty agency that provides many services to residents of Cambridge. CEOC will provide free assistance for filling out the FAFSA. CEOC can file your FAFSA right after tax return completion or by appointment. Assistance is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Creole. *Phone: 617-868-2900 Website: ceoccambridge.org*

CRLS Financial Aid Night: Wednesday, December 2, 2015 at 6p.m. in the CRLS Theater- The Guidance Department hosts a financial aid night in order to provide all the general information on paying for college and the financial aid process with a Q&A session to conclude the evening.

College Goal Sunday: Sunday, January 31 at 1p.m.- Financial Aid experts will be at CRLS the last Sunday in January to assist students and parents in filing their FAFSA and other

financial aid forms. This service is free and extremely helpful. Come, meet with the experts, and leave with your FAFSA done!

Visit www.collegegoalsundayusa.gov for a full list of documents and ID's to bring with you so that the process can move as efficiently as possible.

Be careful of online scholarship scams. You should never have to pay money to receive or apply for scholarships, no matter how great it sounds!

Student Athletes



Athletic Associations; Overview and Requirements

Colleges and universities offering intercollegiate teams are organized into various associations. These groups seek to ensure that teams playing against each other are from institutions with similar commitments to promoting and funding sports. The largest and most well known association is the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), but schools may also have joined the NJCAA or the NAIA.

These associations also set standards for college athletes; depending on the athletic division the school places itself in, division one, two, or three. A school selects what division it will participate in depending on the size of the school, the amount of scholarship money they can afford to give to student athletes, and the fan base at the school. The lower the division number, the larger the school tends to be and the more publicity their sports programs receive.

The larger divisions (one and two) will be more selective about the student athletes they admit and offer team positions to due to the large interest in athletics and the fact that they disperse scholarship money for student athletes. The NCAA sets academic requirements for high school students desiring to play in these larger divisions (D1 and D2). An outline of academic requirements can be found in this PDF:

NCAA ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/Quick_Reference_Sheet.pdf

NCAA REGISTRATION

Students who wish to play a sport at these larger and more competitive schools should also register with the NCAA by the end of their junior year. This will allow prospective schools to confirm that the student is eligible and interested in playing. Students can register with the NCAA here:

http://web1.ncaa.org/ECWR2/NCAA_EMS/NCAA.jsp

OR

Go to NCAA.com and scroll to the very bottom of the page where you will click on [ELIGIBILITY CENTER](#)

Students who are interested in playing sports in college, should discuss their options with their coach and guidance counselor. Coaches and guidance counselors will have suggestions about recruitment steps to take based on the student's skill level and the program they are applying to.

Do you feel that you have what it takes to participate in collegiate athletics? Perhaps the program of your dreams doesn't even know that you exist! **The starting point is to send information about yourself to prospective colleges.** Here are some tips to help you get started.

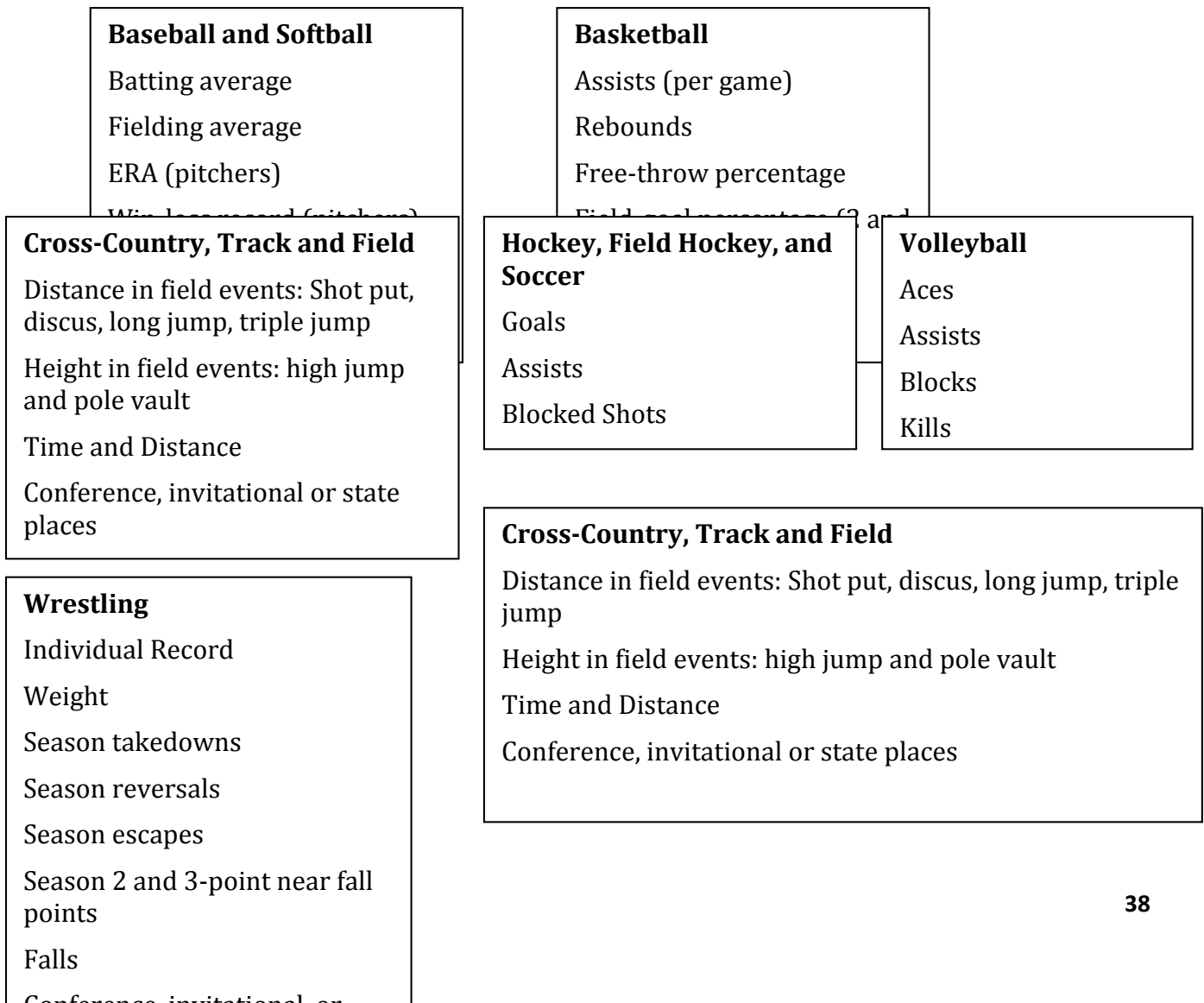
- Have an honest talk with your coach about your athletic ability. Your coach can give you some suggestions as to the size and type of program for which your talents are best suited.
- Treat this like a job search. Write a cover letter and resume.
- Be certain to obtain the name of the college coach to whom you are writing. Most colleges' websites will provide the information. Do not send impersonal mass mailings or information that is false or misleading.
- Research the colleges' athletic and academic programs. Do not contact colleges for which you cannot meet the stated athletic and academic standards.

- If you receive profile forms or questionnaires from coaches, complete and return them as soon as possible.
- Send a letter with athletic and academic information to coaches at schools that interest you, and let them know you have a video available.
- Follow up with a telephone call from you, not your parents.
- Be patient.

Building a Student Athlete Resume

The idea behind the resume is to give coaches a quick idea of who you are, what you've done and what your potential may be. The resume should include your grade point average, admission test scores, the sport you play, awards and honors received, personal statistics and references (such as your high school coach, who will contact the college coach to offer a recommendation). Where appropriate, include your time for sprints and longer distances. For most sports it's important to know how fast (and for how long) you can move.

Statistics to Include in an Athletic Resume



| | |
|-------------|--|
| Golf | Swimming |
| Scores | Events and times |
| Handicap | Dives, difficulty and scores |
| | Major conference, invitational or state places |

| | |
|---|---|
| Football | |
| Tackles (defensive player) | Receptions-yards, average, touchdowns |
| Assists (defensive player) | Punts-attempts, longest, average |
| Sacks (defensive player) | Kickoff returns- attempts, longest, average |
| Interceptions (defensive/back/linebacker) | Points scored-touchdowns, extra points |
| Fumbles recovered | Field goals-attempts, longest, average points |
| Yards Rushing (running back) | |

| |
|--|
| Gymnastics |
| Events and scores |
| Conference, invitational or state places |

| |
|--|
| Tennis |
| Record and ranking |
| Major conference, invitational, or state ranking |

Fine and Performing Arts Applicants

Some students with strong interest and talents in the arts may choose to apply to programs that offer degrees in fine and performing arts. Many colleges will have these programs embedded within their liberal arts curriculum as a possible major or minor. At most liberal arts schools you can also choose to take arts classes as electives without majoring in art. There are also schools dedicated only to the arts, you may have heard of examples such as Savannah School of Art and Design (fine arts), Julliard (performing arts) or the Fashion Institute of Technology. These schools are sometimes more selective and may require a portfolio or audition tape.

Finding an Art School

Arts schools can sometimes be a bit more difficult to find and research so below are some online resources we found helpful in looking for schools. Remember you can always use **Naviance** to search for specific schools and find admission information and the school's website!

You can find a list of fine and performing art schools at colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges

-Once on this page, scroll towards the bottom and click on ***More Rankings and Lists.***

-Under this page, scroll to the bottom section that says ***Unranked Specialty Schools*** and click on the ***Arts*** section.

You can also search art schools by going to campusexplorer.com and searching ***Performing Arts*** or ***Fine Arts*** in the search box. This website will give you a list of schools by location and price range.

Applying to Art Schools

Many art schools will require similar things as would a normal liberal arts school, you will probably still need to fill out an application and submit recommendations. However they will likely also ask you for a portfolio or audition tape. This allows them to sample some of the work you have already done and assess your skill level.

Remember: every school will have their own requirements for portfolios and audition videos. They will also have their own method of uploading or viewing your work. So make sure to check on the specific school's website, under admissions, to make sure you are meeting their requirements for applying.

Portfolios

Below is an example of one school's portfolio requirements. This link may be helpful in putting together your own portfolio as well and seeing what many schools might be looking for.

<http://www.collegeadmissioncoach.com/uploads/5/8/1/4/5814510/howtoprepareaportfolio-howto.pdf>

Audition Videos

This article provides tips for applying to performing arts schools.

<http://thechoice.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/21/tip-sheet-how-to-apply-to-a-performing-arts-school/>



1st Generation Student and Family Resources

The college and career planning process can be a stressful and confusing time for every student. Students who are the first in their family to attend a college may need extra support navigating the application process, since they are the first in their families to go through it. Below are some resources that may be of use and as always, students *and their families* should make appointments with their guidance counselors if they have any questions.

Online Resources

College Board: <http://prepare.collegeboard.org/resources>

- This website is well organized and provides a great deal of information on every aspect of the college process.

KnowHow2Go: www.knowhow2go.org/middle.php

- This media-friendly website directed at middle school and high school students, provides information the benefits of attending a college, and how to prepare. It also provides information on financial aid.

You Can Go: <http://youcango.collegeboard.org>

- This is also a College Board website that focuses more on inspiring and informing students about the bigger hurdles to college access. Student's personalized videos about their own process are provided.

Fast Web: <http://www.fastweb.com/student-life/articles/a-field-guide-for-first-generation-college-students>

- A Field Guide for First-Generation College Students- helpful tips for first generation - college students.

Students with Disabilities

It is important for students with disabilities to know that they have every right and opportunity to attend college. It may require students and families to do a little extra research and to start promoting self-advocacy in students.

Self-Advocacy

Students should start review and become familiar with their Individual Education Plan or 504 plan and its effect on their learning. This way a student can become a self-advocate while still in high school. A self-advocate communicates his or her own needs with logical and positive language. To do this effectively, students must know their disability and their academic-related needs. At the college level, students will be responsible for identifying and requesting support services. Students can practice self-advocacy now by participating in discussions at IEP and 504 meetings. Students can do this by:

- Prepare before each meeting by understanding the purpose of the meeting and reviewing the report from you last IEP meeting. Review the goals on your IEP and think about whether or not new ones need to be included.
- At the IEP meeting, summarize your past goals and progress made, state your new goals, and ask for ideas and feedback from others at the meeting.
- Know what support and help you may need to meet your goals and ask for it!
- Ask questions when you don't understand something.

Student Readiness Checklist

I have already participated in the following as it related to post-high school planning:
(check as many as apply)

- Met with my parents, college counselor and IEP or 504 liaison
- Conferred with my counselor
- Conferred with my liaison
- Met with career or college representatives
- Did a career search
- Did a college search
- Talked things over with my parents

I need help with: (check as many as apply)

- Getting started
- Understanding what I'm supposed to do next
- Knowing how to use resources
- Understanding class rank, test scores, and college options
- Planning my senior year course work
- Signing up for admission tests (SAT or ACT)
- Knowing my interests
- Planning ahead
- Knowing about financial aid
- Understanding where my parents fit in
- Other: Please Specify _____

College Accommodations and Services

Colleges are not required to follow a high school IEP or 504 plan. Yet many schools do offer supports and services through a Disability Services office or department in order to level the playing field so that students with disabilities have just as much of a chance to do well as other students. Colleges draw a distinction between accommodations and personal services. Some services are accommodative, such as note taking. Others are considered

personal services, such as typing or personal care assistance. Many colleges do not provide personal services because of the extra expense, staffing and administrative burdens involved. Students will have to negotiate with the coordinator of disability services to arrange for what they feel is needed.

Below are types of accommodations and services that *may* be available for students with special needs:

- Accommodation letters to professors
- Alternate distraction-reduced location for tests
- Assistive listening devices
- Books on tape, CD, or the internet
- Braille Calculators
- Calculators and keyboards with large buttons
- Calculators, talking
- Calculators when not usually permitted
- Captioning, real time, open and closed
- Change of format on exams
- Class relocation
- Closed-caption decoders
- Computer-assisted reading programs and devices
- Computer-assisted writing programs and devices
- Counseling and Advising
- Disability specialists, assistance of document conversion (audio, Braille, enlarged text)
- Electronic readers
- Elevator access keys
- Extended time for tests
- Interpreters, sign language or oral
- Laboratory assistance
- Laptop computer use on tests or in class
- Lead time for assignments
- Lenient attendance policy
- Mind mapping or concept mapping such as Inspiration
- Modified exams
- Monitoring by LD specialists
- Noise blockers, earmuffs, white-noise machines
- Note taker
- Preferential Parking
- Preferential Seating
- Priority Registration

- Proofreading by learning specialists
- Raised-line drawing kits
- Reaching device for library use
- Readers
- Reduced course load if under 12 credit hours
- Screen enlargers
- Scribes
- Single dorm room if not usually available
- Special foreign language course
- Specialized gym, swimming pool equipment
- Special orientation
- Spelling waived
- Support group
- Taped or digitally recorded texts
- Tutoring Centers
- Digitally recorded lectures
- Telecommunication devices for persons who are deaf
- Telephone handset amplifiers
- Test questions read
- Videotext displays
- Voice Synthesizers

College Choice Process

Self Reflection

All students, and especially students with a learning disability, need a supportive, understanding environment, one that recognizes interest and skills while remedying weaknesses. Assessing needs and abilities is a crucial first step in getting ready for college. Therefore, *students need to ask themselves the following questions:*

1. What are my strengths?
2. Where do my interests lie?
3. What are my particular deficiencies and problem areas?
4. What is my learning style, and under what conditions do I learn best?
5. What is my level of independence?
6. What are my coping skills?

7. What academic preparation have I had and what additional preparation will I need?

College Selection

When selecting a college, all students should consider factors such as location, cost, size, student life, housing, admissions, and type of school. Once students have decided on the kind of college they prefer, they should visit schools that match up with what they are looking for.

On these visits students with disabilities should set up a meeting with the coordinator of the disability services program or head of the department of services for students with disabilities.

Some colleges may also offer individual diagnosis, assessment and testing. In addition, colleges may have a learning center with a learning disabilities specialist present. Peer support groups may also be present. Visiting these resource centers will give you the best feel for the quality of services present at the school. Here are questions to ask the learning centers:

- Is the center easy to access?
- How is it staffed? What resources are available?
- Is the center open to all students or specifically to students with learning disabilities?
- Is the director of the center a member of the school's faculty or a separate entity?

Questions to Ask

On visits and interviews, students should be able to talk about what accommodations or services they would need and ask the colleges what they should offer. Below are some questions to ask and some questions the school might ask.

Students should ask:

- Is there a specific office that serves students with disabilities?
- Do full-time professionals staff the program?
- What documentation should I bring?
- Who decides if I qualify for accommodations?
- Who should or would be notified of my disability?
- Will I receive a special academic advisor to help me with my course selection and receiving accommodation?
- What are my responsibilities for making sure I receive the services I need?
- Is there a support group on campus for students with disabilities?

- How well-informed are faculty members regarding students with disabilities? Are they willing to work with these students?
- Are the classrooms/buildings physically accessible?
- What specific accommodations/ services could I get?
- Are there waivers or substitutions granted to students who, because of a disability, cannot pass certain courses such as foreign language or statistics?
- What tutoring is available? Is there a fee?
- Can students with a disability take a reduced course load and still be considered full time? (This may affect financial aid.)

Colleges might ask:

- What is your disability?
- How does it interfere with learning?
- How comfortable are you in discussing your disability with teachers?
- What are your academic strengths?
- In what areas do you have difficulty or problems?
- What accommodations will you need?
- What kind of support services have you used in high school?
- Which were the most helpful?
- How do you manage your time?

Transition Tips for Parents

- Promote self-advocacy! It's time to step back and let students be articulate and knowledgeable about their disability and their needs.
- Review the relevant documentation (504/ IEP) with students.
- Assist your child in understanding what his or her disability is and how it impacts learning.
- Start the admission process early. This will help decrease anxiety!
- Help your child make contact with the college's disability support office prior to graduation. These offices are a great resource and can help start the disability registration and accommodation process early.
- Support your child's desire for independence while encouraging the use of any necessary accommodations. Some students feel stigmatized by "special education" and may resist registering for disability services at colleges.