

COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDE

2020-2021



HANOVER HIGH SCHOOL
287 CEDAR STREET
HANOVER, MA 02339

COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDE

HANOVER HIGH SCHOOL

The Hanover High School College Planning Guide is designed to help both students and families navigate the college process. This can be an overwhelming and stressful time for everyone. However, with preparation and planning, the process can be much more manageable. There may be some information in this guide that will be useful to all students, but most will be relevant to students in their junior and senior years.

Keep in mind, this planning guide can't and won't answer all of the questions you may have. This guide is meant to supplement 1:1 student meetings, group workshops, seminars, and presentations offered by the Hanover High School Counseling Department. Please note: the college application process is ever changing. The counseling department will work diligently to update and maintain the most current information within this guide as much as possible.

How can I get more information outside the Hanover High School College Planning Guide?

The following events are often scheduled throughout the year to help students feel better prepared for their future:

- Junior Workshops
- Senior Workshops
- PSAT Administration (10th and 11th grade)
- Financial Aid Seminar: College Funding Services
- College Admissions Panel
- Senior Parent Breakfast: The College Application Process
- Destination Graduation Courses: College Planning
- Hanover High School Guidance Website

We are always looking to expand on the services offered to students, and therefore, the events listed are subject to change.

What are some examples of tools that are used to help students prepare for their future?

Throughout student workshops, meetings and seminars, counselors work with students to plan for their future through a variety of means. Some of these include:

- Career Inventory Assessments and Career Research
- Do What you Are: Personality Assessment
- Goal Setting: Setting SMART goals for the future
- College Search and College Research
- Navigating the College Application Process
- Khan Academy and PSAT Scores
- Google Classroom
- Naviance
- AchieveWorks: Inventories available through Naviance for future planning

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. Naviance
- II. Google Classroom
- III. Building Your List of Colleges
- IV. Standardized Testing
- V. The Application
- VI. The College Essay
- VII. Application Admission Options
- VIII. Two Year College and Other Options
- IX. Military Options
- X. Making Your Decision
- XI. Financial Aid

A special thank you to Newton North High School for allowing us to share their college planning guide with Hanover students. Much of the information found in this document was written by NNHS career counselors, NNHS PTO, and other Newton North community members.

Naviance

Uses of Naviance

Once you have registered as a Hanover Naviance user, you and your parents/guardians may access Naviance as frequently as you wish. Please note that your personal profile is confidential and only accessible to you, your parents/guardians and the counseling team. While transcripts and recommendations are sent through Naviance to colleges, nothing else from students' accounts accompanies these documents, (e.g. resume, inventory results, etc). Your test scores are stored in Naviance, but you must send them directly to a college from College Board or ACT.

How to Access Naviance

1. Go to the Naviance Student website: <https://student.naviance.com/HHS>
2. If you didn't already register, students should go to the "Are you new here?" section of the page and click "I need to register." Enter the registration code provided to you by your school counselor.
3. Enter your email address (required of all students) and create a password. The only way for parents/guardians to access the system is through the student's account.
4. Complete the registration procedures as instructed.
5. Naviance is also available through the Hanover website homepage under the Counseling tab.
6. Note that how information is presented on the Naviance site can change from time to time. The examples below represent the current sample as of the writing of this Guide.

It is helpful to login to Naviance while reading the rest of this chapter. If you are having trouble logging in, please see the section "Helpful Hints for Using Naviance" later in this chapter.

Home Page

When you log into Naviance Student, you are greeted with the following information:

- **Welcome Box** (upper left)
 - This is where Hanover-related college announcements and information will be posted. Please make sure you click on "Read More" to access all of the information.
- **My Favorites** (upper right)
 - **Colleges I'm Thinking About** - This feature allows you to keep track of the colleges you are considering. You can save colleges to this list by clicking the heart next to a college's name. During or after junior workshops, your counselors will be adding colleges they recommended based on your academic profile and interests.
 - **Colleges I'm Applying To** - This is where colleges will show that you have actually chosen to apply to..
 - **Careers and Clusters I'm Thinking About** - This allows you to keep track of careers that might be of interest to you for further exploration.

"New messages"

In the top right corner, you will be notified if/when you receive a new message. Messages sent to your Naviance account are also sent to the personal email that you have on file.

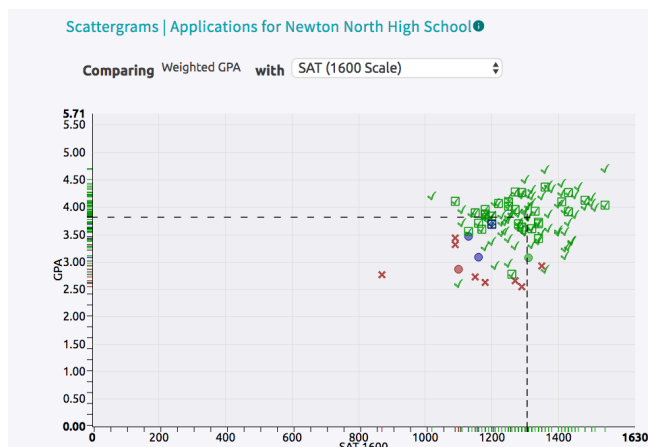
Tabs

Once you have entered the Naviance Student page (see the screenshot below), check the "Home" page for important messages. These menus are organized into three categories entitled: "**Colleges**," "**Careers**," and "**About Me**."

“Colleges”

This section contains information about colleges and admissions statistics and includes these sections: “Find Your Fit,” “Research Colleges,” and “Apply to College.”

- **Find Your Fit** – This section contains many tools to search for colleges that match your interests:
 - **SuperMatch™ College Search** - This search tool allows you to define your best fit for college based on the criteria that are most important to you. “SuperMatch College search” lets you enter a variety of criteria and gives you a list of schools that are an exact or close match for the criteria you entered. You can compare colleges that you are interested in and save colleges to your “Colleges I'm Thinking About” list.
 - **College Match** - This feature will analyze your information in Naviance and the schools to which you are applying. It will generate a list of other schools that students tend to apply to that may be like those schools.
 - **Scattergrams** – This section shows you the statistics and graphs that represent Hanover applications to specific colleges, and view admissions decisions for each of those colleges from past graduating classes. This data, which includes the SAT scores and weighted 4.0 scale GPAs of applicants (without names), allows students to see how their statistics match up to previous Hanover applicants. A scattergram can be very useful to see the admissions results for other Hanover students at many colleges. When you plot your weighted GPA and SAT scores on the graph, you can get a sense of how students with similar scores fared in admission at a particular college. Green means accepted, red means denied and purple is waitlisted. Of course, there are many other factors that go into college decisions, but the scattergram will allow you to compare your testing and academic statistics with those of recent candidates. Below is a sample scattergram:



- **Advanced College Search** - You can use Naviance’s extensive database of roughly 5,000 colleges to search for colleges based on criteria such as location, size of student body, majors offered, cost, etc. “College Search” is a less complex search tool than SuperMatch. It allows you to see all the criteria and enter it in order, selecting “search matches” anytime to see which schools fit your criteria.
- **College Lookup** - College lookup lets you find a school in Naviance by name or look up all the colleges in a state or in a country. You can find out admissions requirements, majors, activities offered and statistics about the student body at the click of a button. Current college contact information, including the name of

the college's admissions representative for Hanover, is readily available as well as a direct link to every college's homepage.

- **Research Colleges** - This section contains many helpful tools to search for colleges and admission statistics.
 - **"I'm thinking about"** is a student and counselor-generated list. Students may add colleges to this list at any time. As previously mentioned, counselors will add colleges they recommend based on your academic profile and interest.
 - **College Compare** - College Compare allows you to select up to 10 schools to compare with each other, with your own GPA, and with estimated or actual standardized test scores.
 - **Acceptance History** - Here students can access statistics and graphs that represent Hanover's history of college decisions.
 - **College Maps** - "College maps" gives you access to ranking and other lists that help you identify schools of interest such as the 100 Hidden Gems, 440 Great Colleges (Peterson's), 40 Colleges that Change Lives, etc. When you click on these lists, you see the location of all schools in the list on a map.
 - **College Visits** - This section contains a listing of all of the college admissions representatives who visit Hanover.
- **Apply to Colleges**
 - **"Letters of Recommendation"** is where you manage your invitations to teachers to write a letter of recommendation for you. After you have spoken face-to-face with your teachers again senior year (after asking during your junior spring), and they have confirmed that they are willing to write a letter of recommendation, click on **"Add Request."** Then select the teacher's name and write them a short message thanking them for writing a letter of recommendation for you and indicating your first college deadline date. Please allow 4-6 weeks for teachers to write recommendations.
 - **Test Scores** - This section includes all of your standardized test scores that are reported to Hanover. If your scores are not in this section, please see your school counselor. Again, standardized test scores are not sent to colleges through Naviance.

"Careers"

This section contains tools and inventories to assess your interests and personal characteristics, and find and explore careers that would be good matches for you. You can use the features listed below, or you can simply use the search bar to explore and read more about a specific career. By clicking on "Careers Home" or using the dropdown menu, you will have access to:

- **Careers I'm thinking about**
 - This link will bring you to an array of careers and career clusters you will be able to research and investigate. You can investigate the various career paths based on your cluster finder and personality test results. You can peruse job descriptions, skills required and average wages for selected careers. Careers that are of particular interest to you can be saved by clicking the "My Careers" link.
 - You can then save certain careers or clusters that you are interested in so you stay organized and revisit it later.
- **Career Cluster Finder**
 - This questionnaire will help you learn what career clusters may be a good match for you based on activities that interest you, personal qualities that you have and subjects that you enjoy studying in school.
- **Do What You Are**
 - This personality questionnaire is designed to discover possible careers for you by identifying your personality type.
- **Career Interest Profiler**
 - The assessment helps you discover the types of work activities and career that match your interests.

- **Roadtrip Nation Interview Archive** - The Roadtrip Nation interview archive is a digital career exploration tool that enables you to discover new pathways, interests, and ambitions. The archive includes more than 3,500 full-length video interviews chronicling the diverse personal stories of leaders who have turned their interests into their life's work.

[“About Me”](#)

This section contains information and statistics specific to you. Examples of the many features in this section include:

- **My Account** - This section includes your personal contact information, email, password, and academic information including unweighted and weighted GPA.
- **My Assessments** - This section has several different assessment tools.
- **My Stuff** – This section includes information about yourself including:
 - **My Surveys** – This section allows you to keep track of your questionnaires and surveys
 - **Resume** - This section is very useful in that it allows you to keep track of all of your activities so you don't forget them when it comes time to apply to college, jobs, scholarships, etc.
 - **Test Scores** - This section includes all of your standardized test scores that are reported to Hanover. If your scores are not in this section, please see your school counselor.
 - **Portfolio** - This section will show all areas of Naviance and your results from various activities.
 - **Documents Shared With Me** - This section helps you keep track of your documents in Naviance.
 - **Journal** - This section allows you to create entries. These entries include:
 - Make comments or notes
 - Upload important files
 - Opt to share information with teachers, counselors or parents.
- **My Assessments** - This section has several different assessment tools.
 - **Do What You Are®** -This personality questionnaire is designed to discover possible careers for you by identifying your personality type.
 - **StrengthsExplorer®**- This assessment identifies each student's three strongest emerging talents. The assessment includes explanations of these three talents, strategies to encourage growth, and action items to help students leverage strengths in the classroom and in life.
 - **Career Cluster Finder** - This questionnaire helps you to discover career clusters that are most interesting to you. Once you complete the Career Cluster Finder, the top matching career clusters can be added to your Favorite Career Clusters list.
 - **Career Interest Profiler** - The assessment helps you discover the types of work activities and careers that match your interests.

[Helpful Hints for Using Naviance](#)

[I can't remember my password. How can I sign in?](#)

If you have forgotten your password, click the link on the main page of Naviance Student that reads, “forgot your password?” Enter your email address and click the Reset Password button to receive a new, temporary password. If you receive an error when resetting your password, please contact your counselor to confirm that you have the correct email address listed in the system.

I entered my email address and password correctly, but I still can't sign in.

If you have configured your web browser to decline cookies, you must change this setting before signing into Naviance Student. If you still are having problems signing in, see your school counselor.

How do I change my email address?

To change your email address, sign in with the email address that you used when you first registered – even if you no longer receive email at that address. Once you have signed in, click on the “About Me” tab and click “My Account.” Click the “Security” tab and click “Edit Username.

GOOGLE CLASSROOM

Each class at Hanover is assigned a google classroom by the school counseling office in an effort to provide students with up to date announcements, sharing of documents, college and career information, scholarship opportunities, summer enrichment programs and other important information.

Students are provided a google classroom code during their freshman year. When items are posted to google classroom, students will receive an email alert to their school email address. Parents and families can also subscribe to google classroom to receive the same information as their student. For more information and access to google classroom, please reach out to the guidance department.

During grade level workshops, students will be assigned materials to help them prepare for their future. Some examples of these materials are:

- Career Research Worksheet
- College Research Worksheet
- Student Information Sheet (BRAG Sheet)
- College Interest Survey
- Documents related to the College Application Process
- Course Planning Worksheets

Google classroom provides students, families and counselors the opportunity to share information not only related to college, career but social-emotional well being as well. Counselors post information regarding mental health such as group therapy, mind-body coping skills and other helpful resources.

BUILDING YOUR LIST OF COLLEGES

Beyond Numbers

Families may feel a great deal of pressure during the college search process. Please try to keep perspective. College admission is more than just a *numbers game*. A student is not just a 30 ACT, a 1030 SAT or a 3.25 GPA. While colleges may use numbers as a starting point, admissions decisions are not always obvious and involve many factors.

As you begin crafting your list of colleges, you will probably ask yourself what makes a “good” college. Is it the college’s average SAT scores? Is it the rating the institution receives in a national magazine’s report? Is it the college’s acceptance rate? While interesting, these numbers may lead you away from the more challenging work of finding a “good fit.” **A college is a “good fit” if it matches well with your academic, extracurricular, social, financial, and personal needs and goals.**

Of course, you will add your own criteria to your “good fit” definition, such as the quality of academic programs, size, location, cost, etc. Exploring websites and reading the literature received from colleges will help, as well as conversations with your school counselor and s. Research and add at least a few colleges to the initial list that you don’t know that much about, but might be a good match. It is also important that your initial list is well-balanced in regards to admission selectivity.

Creating a Balanced List

Once you have had an opportunity to evaluate a broad range of schools that fit your academic, extracurricular, and social needs, you then need to organize your list based on the selectivity of the schools. You should make sure that your list includes a balanced selection of “reach,” “target” and “likely” choices in terms of your grades and test scores. You should also make sure that your list contains “likely” colleges that are within your financial reach. The point of this list is to identify schools you would be interested in attending that represent the range of selectivity.

Demonstrated Interest

Schools want students who are really interested in attending their institution which is why “demonstrated interest” is becoming an increasingly important aspect of the admissions process for many, but not all, colleges. The most common ways to show demonstrated interest are:

- Visit the campus – attend an information session and/or take a tour.
- Attend Hanover Mini College Fair (if applicable) – visit the tables of the schools you are interested in and introduce yourself to the admissions representative(s).
- Sign up for Virtual College Fairs offered through NACAC
- Attend Parent/Student presentations offered by the Hanover Guidance Department. These vary from year to year but may include: Financial Aid Night, College Admissions Information Panel, Parent/Student Workshops, etc.
- Email the regional admissions representative – reach out judiciously and do not ask questions that can be easily answered with a bit of time on the college’s website.
- Interview with the college if possible – either arrange an on-campus interview or a local alumni interview (if the school is far away).
- Check your email and “click through” on emails from colleges on your balanced list – many schools are beginning to track these points of contact and it is something you can easily do to show your engagement.

The good news is that showing demonstrated interest is completely in your control! It’s important to remember that schools, like applicants, want to be “chosen” so be sure to use some of the tools available to you to show your interest. Each interaction with a college shows your interest in attending while also giving you additional opportunities to assess whether that college is a good fit for you. One last point, do **not** forget to show some level of demonstrated interest to **all** of the schools on your balanced list regardless of whether they are a “reach,” a “target,” or a “likely” school.

Individual College Websites

Looking at individual college websites is the DEFINITIVE way to find detailed information about each school. These websites are easy to find through Naviance, or you can search for the college online. Once on a college's website, you can get specific details about academic offerings, extracurricular programs and financial aid. You can also get admission information including application deadlines and requirements, contact information for regional admission representatives, and upcoming admission events. Many colleges offer virtual tours on their websites as well. In addition, you can research the course requirements for each major as they may differ at each college. Always check individual college websites for specific up-to-date information.

College Search Factors

Students and families can use more specific considerations to evaluate and ultimately choose a college. Some of these considerations (college size, geographic location, academic environment) are outlined below. Some may be more important than others to you in your search. Please note that the Naviance *advanced college search* feature will allow you to search for colleges on most of the following criteria.

Major / Career Goals

- What are your areas of academic interest?
- Double majors / minors?
- Special programs (conservatory, nursing, ROTC, etc.)

Size

- What is your preferred size? (Keep in mind that a college of 2,000 is very different from a high school of 2,000 classmates you've known most of your life...)

Geographical Location

- Specific region?
- Urban, suburban or rural?
- College town?
- Ideal weather?
- Nearest city, airport?

College Type and Setting

- 4 year?
- 2 year/Community College?
- Military Academy?
- Private, public?
- Co-ed, male, female?
- Religious affiliation?
- Academically Specific (Business, Fine and Performing Arts, Technical, Engineering, Liberal Arts, etc.)?
- Historically black colleges and universities (HBCU)?
- Atmosphere: conservative/liberal, Greek life, School Spirit, Artsy, Intellectual, LGBTQ-friendly?

Housing

- Do you want to live on or off campus?
- Percentage of students who live on campus?
- What types of housing options are available? (learning communities, fraternities, single sex living, substance free, etc.)

Admissions Selectivity

- What is your GPA? Standardized test scores?

- Do you want Early Action, Rolling, Early Decision options?
- How does this fit into your balanced list of colleges (“reach,” “target” and “likely”)?

Academic Environment

- Do faculty teach and/or do research?
- Who teaches courses, especially to freshmen?
- Average class size?
- Is it important that the college offers an honors program?
- What courses are required and are there distribution requirements?
- Are there any unique classes/travel abroad/co-op opportunities you are interested in?
- Are academic support services available?
- Are there career planning services available?

Activities/Athletics

- What activities and/or athletics are you likely to participate in?
- Intercollegiate, club or intramurals
- Traditions

Student Body characteristics

- What is your ideal ethnic mix / diversity?
- Geographic distribution?
- Gender ratio?

Admission Requirements

- SAT and/or ACT, SAT subject tests, GPA?
- Essays / Letters of Recommendation?
- Common Application?
- Interview requirement?
- Test Optional Schools?
- Required high school courses?

College Expenses:

- How much will it cost? Include tuition, room and board, application fees, deposits.
- Books, additional fees, travel costs to home?
- In-State vs. Out-of-State tuition?

Financial Aid:

- How important is the availability of financial aid?
- Need-based, merit-based scholarships?

Consider how your college choices match up against characteristics that are important to you. Weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each. A good match is a place where you feel at home and will get the most out of the overall college experience. If you and your parents/guardians are looking at rankings of colleges, keep in mind that these rankings are devised by for-profit entities that are using evaluation criteria that may or may not be important to you and your decision. The ranking of a college is not necessarily a determinant of whether it is a good match for you. During the college search and application process, look at your own needs and preferences, learn more about the many great colleges out there and try to find the colleges that are best for you. Make sure you include a range of selectivity in your working list. In grade level college workshops, counselors will introduce a college comparison worksheet to help students organize this information.

Visiting Colleges On and Off Campus

It is very helpful to make some form of contact with each of the colleges you are considering. There are a number of ways you can accomplish this: onsite campus visits, information sessions held locally by admissions representatives, college fairs, admission representatives' visits at Hanover High School, and a visit to the college's website. Students can receive up to three excused absences for college visits, with documentation of participation from the college.

Hanover High School College Mini Fair

The Hanover College Mini Fair is during the school day in September. Approximately 100 colleges send representatives to speak with students. Hanover's Mini Fair is a great opportunity to get more information about colleges that interest you, to ask questions of the representatives and to discover new colleges. A wide range of colleges participate, and the list of attending colleges is posted on google classroom a few weeks prior to the event.

Getting the most from the mini fair takes some advanced planning, and here are some suggestions:

1. Look over the list of visiting institutions and identify several colleges to contact during the college fair. Your school counselor can help with suggestions of colleges in which you may be interested. The colleges are arranged in alphabetical order at the event, so you'll know where to find each college.
2. Develop a few specific questions to ask each college representative. They shouldn't be questions that are easily answered in the college's literature. Questions might include special academic interests, particular sports, support services available, interviewing opportunities or financial aid procedures. Collect written materials from colleges that look interesting. Also, bring a notebook and a pen to jot down notes, names, addresses, websites, phone numbers and answers to your specific questions. You may also write down some of your general impressions of the college and/or the representative with whom you spoke.
3. Get on the college's mailing list to receive more information. If you have already visited a college or have had an interview, a quick hello to the admissions person visiting Hanover is a good way to be remembered.
4. Be open to colleges that might not have been on your original list, but which seem interesting. Talk to at least three representatives from colleges that you've never heard of! You may find yourself interested in a college you never considered.
5. Make a good impression. The college reps are going to see many students that day, so they probably won't remember all of them. However, if you plan on meeting with a rep at a college that you are sincerely interested in, and you plan on asking them several well-thought out questions, make a good impression on them. They could be the person who reviews your application and/or the one who conducts your admission interview. Also, dress to be presentable. If the representative has a business card, ask for one. You can send them a nice note thanking them for their time.

College Campus Visits

* Please note: In person college visits may be limited due to COVID-19. Please check the college websites for more information

How to choose colleges to visit

Visiting a variety of colleges is important if you wish to learn firsthand about an institution's programs and "personality." Visits are time-consuming, yet they are invaluable to the process. Parents/guardians can play the role of a research assistant during these visits. By comparing notes, reactions and insights, you and your family can reach more informed decisions.

Even if you have strong opinions about size, location, selectivity, programs, cost, etc., it's good to be able to compare and contrast different colleges.

You can explore just about every type of college within half an hour of Boston. Take advantage of our location and visit local colleges. If you are taking a family vacation, drop by a couple of colleges in the area where you are vacationing. If you're planning a college trip, plot it out on a map, and don't try to squeeze in more than two a day. Include colleges that are on the more likely side of your list as well as the more selective options.

You never know where you're going to end up, and many colleges include "demonstrated interest" as one of their many criteria for admission.

Tips for a Successful College Visit

February is the time of year when many juniors and their parents/guardians start visiting prospective colleges. Here is some advice for families to help make the campus visit successful and informative.

1. Visit the college's Admissions Office website to schedule a campus tour and/or information session. Be sure to do this well in advance of your intended visit to ensure that tours are available on the date you prefer. When scheduling a campus visit, you may also be able to make arrangements for the following (this may require a phone call):
 - A personal or group interview
 - A visit to a class of academic interest, a rehearsal, or a sports practice
 - A conversation with a faculty member of a department of interest (academic, athletic, dramatic, etc.)
 - An overnight stay in a dormitory and at least one meal in the campus dining hall
2. February and April vacations are prime times for juniors to visit colleges. Many colleges host open houses, special information sessions and extra campus tours during this very busy week. Check individual college websites for the dates and times of tours. Make sure to plan ahead because these weeks fill up - check websites and call early!
3. College students are very open to offering their opinions and assistance to visiting high school families. Take advantage of their availability, especially tour guides, to ask questions.
4. Be attentive to the condition of campus buildings, the upkeep of the campus grounds, and how well-equipped the academic and technology buildings and labs are. The library, career center, student union, performing arts and athletic facilities are also areas to consider. Talk to students in the dorms, in the student center, bookstore, or wherever they congregate. If possible, sit in on classes.
5. Pay close attention to what students talk about. Get a sense of what their priorities are at each college. It's always impressive to see students who are genuinely excited about certain classes, or professors, or an upcoming internship or semester abroad. Yes, college students all want to have fun, but you could be especially impressed by a college whose students clearly know the main reason they are there—getting an education!
6. Ask students about availability of faculty and academic advisors. Many colleges like to boast about close faculty/student interaction and support, but it's more a fact at some colleges than others.
7. If relevant, ask about academic support services.

8. Always ask to see typical freshman housing. Most colleges offer quite a range of housing options. Try to see a variety of housing options from the nicest to the less desirable - often reserved for first-year students.
9. A choice of college is a major decision. Tours often highlight a college's strengths. Make sure you probe students to also determine some of the college's drawbacks. Every college has them - make sure they're acceptable to you.
10. Make some brief notes about each visit and/or take some pictures, including things you liked and things you didn't particularly like. These notes will be helpful as decision time approaches.
11. At the end of your visit, ask yourself two very important questions:
Do I see myself fitting in here? Am I comfortable here?

Sample Questions to Ask of Students and on a Campus Tour:

- *What makes this college unique?*
- *How intense is the academic competition in the classroom?*
- *What is the average class size?*
- *What do students praise most about this college?*
- *Describe your typical workload for a night.*
- *Describe your typical weekend.*
- *Who is your favorite professor and why?*
- *What campus events have you attended recently?*
- *How would you characterize the relationship between the college and the town?*
- *Name one thing you dislike about this college and how would you change it?*
- *Why did you choose this college over the other schools where you were admitted?*
- *What is the biggest campus issue currently?*
- *What percentage of students live on campus?*
- *How long did it take you to adjust? At what point did you finally feel comfortable?*
- *What do you think made your application stand out?*

Virtual Tours

If you are unable to visit a college in person, the following websites offer virtual tours:

www.youvisit.com

www.ecampustours.com

www.campustours.com

The College Interview

Introduction

Each college determines its own policy regarding the interview and its importance in the admissions process.

While the majority of colleges do not require an interview, a small number of colleges still do. There are also a few colleges that "recommend" that you have an interview. The word "recommend" usually means that you should do whatever it is that a college is recommending you do. However, if you are not ready or comfortable in an interview setting, don't feel compelled to interview if it is not required.

That being said, if you are comfortable in an interview setting and are prepared to discuss yourself and your interests, an interview is another opportunity to present yourself in a favorable light and improve your chance of admission.

Interviewing

There are two types of interviewing options a college might use:

- ❖ The On-Campus Interview
- ❖ The Off-Campus Admissions Rep/Alumni Interview

The On-Campus Interview:

This is an interview that is held on-campus, typically by appointment only. During the interview you meet with an admissions representative for a conversation about yourself and your interest in the college.

This interview may be evaluative, which means that it is used to help the admissions office determine whether you are the type of student the college is looking for. Your interview becomes part of your application file at that college.

The Off-Campus Admissions Rep/Alumni Interview:

This type of interview is similar to the On-Campus Interview in that it helps the admissions office determine whether you are the type of student the college is looking for. The difference is that these interviews are conducted by traveling admissions representatives or alumni of the college and are held off-campus all over the country and the world. These people act as representatives of the college and return an evaluation form back to the college with their impressions of their conversation with you.

A Word About Timing

Colleges may offer interviews as early as spring of junior year and through the fall of your senior year. Some colleges don't offer interviews as an option until **after** you have submitted your application. Check the college's website for complete details as to whether, how, where and when interviews are held. Keep in mind that slots for interviews may be limited; act as soon as possible to make an appointment.

Ten Tips for a Great Interview

You can make your interviews work to your best advantage with the right preparation. Going into the meeting cold and mumbling monosyllabic answers to the interviewer's questions isn't a winning game plan. Here are some tips that will help you come across as a strong candidate:

1. **Make an Appointment**
 - Call the admissions office **at least** six weeks before you plan to visit.
2. **Dress Neatly and Comfortably**
 - Dress in a style natural for you and appropriate for a somewhat formal occasion. Don't let your attire be distracting. Choose something not too dressy, nor too casual.
3. **Display Courtesy**
 - Arrive on time for the interview, deliver a firm handshake and make eye contact with the interviewer.
4. **Don't Let Your Parents/Guardians Sit in**
 - The interviewer will be trying to gauge how well you can speak for yourself. Having a parent/guardian in the interview won't work in your favor. The interviewer may, however come out after the interview to meet your parents/guardians and ask if they have any questions.

5. Know About the School in Advance

- Access the college website before the interview so that you are well informed.
- **However**, you don't need to memorize every detail about the college - part of the reason for the interview is to help you learn more!

6. Present Yourself in the Most Favorable Light

- Develop a personal strategy beforehand that will help you come across well. Decide which of your qualities, interests and achievements you would like to mention.
- What sets you apart from the other applicants? How do you want the admissions officer to remember you? Be confident! This is your time to shine—practice discussing your strong points or noteworthy accomplishments in a positive, but not boastful manner.
- If you have created a resume, bring it with you to the interview. It gives the interviewer a bit more information about you and allows you to leave something behind.

7. Formulate Thoughtful Answers to Certain Types of Questions

- Be prepared to field questions like these:
 - Why do you want to go to college? What do you expect to gain?
 - Why are you interested in our college?
 - What academic areas are you most interested in?
 - What do you like or dislike most about high school?
 - What are your plans for the future?
 - What would you like to tell us about yourself?
 - Tell us about a challenge you have faced and how you dealt with it.
 - How are you doing in school and what are some of your favorite classes? What are your least favorite classes?
- None of the questions have one right answer, but your responses should show maturity, responsibility and honesty. If you're thrown by a question you don't understand, don't try to fake it – *ask for clarification*.

8. Prepare Questions of Your Own

- The interviewer will be impressed by an applicant who shows enough interest to ask pertinent questions about the college. You'll also get points for doing your part to keep the conversation moving at a comfortable pace.
- Ask questions that are not easily determined by looking at the website (i.e. do not ask basic questions such as: *"What is the size of your student body?"*). Instead, you might ask about specific courses or programs, things that relate to the culture of the college or things that are unique to the college.

9. Be Positive

- Be upbeat and talk about your strengths and your accomplishments in and out of school. Don't be afraid to acknowledge your weaknesses, but don't focus on them.

10. Send a Thank-You Note

- Follow up the interview with a friendly written note or an email to the admissions officer (spell their name correctly!). Personalize your note by referring to points you discussed during the interview. Reiterate why the college is right for you and why you would be a great addition to the college community.

Please note that if requested, the school counselor will work on interviewing skills with students on an individual basis. Please see them for further information.

Standardized Testing

CEEB (College Entrance Examination Board) HHS Code: 220950

Beginning in March 2016 the college board revamped the SAT. Make sure you use updated testing preparation and study materials.

Important Questions

Most, but not all, colleges require students to submit standardized test scores as part of the application. These may include the SAT, ACT and SAT Subject Tests. No colleges require both the SAT and the ACT. All colleges that require testing will accept either the SAT or the ACT. Understanding the testing requirements and the process involved will, hopefully, make the experience less stressful and more successful. Keep in mind that it is a student's academic achievement, not test scores, that is the most important factor in college admissions.

There are an increasing number of colleges that do not require standardized tests for admission. A list of these colleges can be found on www.fairtest.org. For definitive information on a college's requirements please visit its website. Many colleges made changes to their testing policy due to COVID-19 and have opted to go testing optional, either permanently or temporarily. To find out more, go to www.fairtest.org or the individual college websites.

Some questions that are important to consider when planning your standardized testing are:

- What tests should I take?
- When should I take the tests?
- How should I prepare for the tests?

Also, it is important to understand:

- How to register for the tests
- How to submit scores to colleges

Description of Tests

The SAT, SAT with Writing, SAT Subject Tests, and the ACT are tests designed to help colleges assess your academic readiness for college. The PSAT is offered at Hanover in October each year. All sophomore and juniors are required to participate in the PSAT.

SAT

The SAT is a three-hour test covering evidence-based reading, writing and math. The SAT with Writing includes an additional 50 minute essay section.

Registration: Students are responsible for their own registration for the SAT. Registering is done online through www.collegeboard.org. Test sites fill up so it is advisable to register early. Make sure that you will be able to get to the testing site you choose on time on the given Saturday morning. Note that Hanover is NOT a test site for the SAT.

Note that you cannot take the SAT and the SAT Subject Tests on the same day.

Receiving Scores: It takes approximately two to three weeks to receive your scores from www.collegeboard.org.

Sending the Scores: Students are responsible for sending their SAT scores to the colleges of their choice. Scores must be sent through www.collegeboard.org. From the time that scores are officially available to you, it can take up to 10 days for scores to arrive at a college, even if they are submitted electronically. Consequently, it is important to **plan carefully** so that you can meet your colleges' deadlines.

Note: Scores are NOT included in the transcript materials sent by HHS.

The SAT's "Score Choice" Option

The SAT has a policy called *Score Choice*. *Score Choice* gives students the ability to choose which test sittings they wish to send to individual colleges. When sending scores to a college you can either select to send all SAT scores from all sittings or select *Score Choice*, after which you can choose which **test sittings/date** to send to a given college. When you send your SAT scores, your scores for all sections from the test sittings selected will be sent. The rules are different for the SAT Subject Tests – see below.

Not all colleges allow *Score Choice* and want to see all tests taken. Refer to individual college websites for more information.

Super Scoring: Some colleges have a practice of "super scoring" a student's test scores. This means that they take the highest score for each section from across all the test dates submitted. Therefore, it is often advantageous to send all your test dates to a given college. You can try to check the policy for each college before you send your scores, but this information is not always made public.

ACT

The ACT is a three-hour test consisting of four subject areas: English, Math, Reading and Science. The ACT Plus Writing includes the four subject area tests plus a 40-minute Writing test.

The ACT is not an aptitude test. The questions on the ACT are related to what is taught in high school in English, math, reading, and science courses. For more details see www.act.org.

Receiving Scores: It takes approximately two to three weeks to receive your scores from www.act.org.

Registration: Students are responsible for their own registration for the ACT. Registering is done online through www.act.org. Test sites fill up so it is advisable to register early. Make sure that you will be able to get to the testing site you choose on time on the given Saturday morning. Hanover is a NOT test site for the ACT.

Sending the Scores: Students are responsible for sending their ACT scores to the colleges of their choice. Scores must be sent through www.act.org.

If you take the test more than once, you can choose which test sitting results the colleges will receive. ACT sends scores only for the test dates you select. Some colleges wish to see your scores from all of your sittings of the ACT. Check the college's website. From the time that scores are officially available to you, it can take up to 10 days for scores to arrive at a college, even if they are submitted electronically.

Note: Scores are NOT included in the transcript materials sent by HHS.

Super Scoring: Some colleges have a practice of “super scoring” a student’s test scores. This means that they take the highest score for each section from across all the test dates submitted. Therefore, it is often advantageous to send all your test dates to a given college. You can try to check the policy for each college before you send your scores, but this information is not always made public.

SAT Subject Tests

SAT Subject Tests have been discontinued by the College Board as of June 2021.

PSAT/NMSQT

The PSAT/NMSQT is a practice test for the SAT that runs approximately three hours. It is offered **only once** during the fall. The PSAT covers evidence-based reading, writing and math.

Hanover typically requires all juniors and sophomores to take the PSAT/NMSQT. A high score on the PSAT/NMSQT in your junior year may make you eligible to participate in the National Merit Scholarship program (see www.nationalmerit.org). During the 2020-2021 school year, the PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10 were offered to both juniors and sophomores on a voluntary basis.

The PSAT is normed for high school juniors and presents a good opportunity to prepare for taking the SAT under real test conditions.

Registration: Hanover administers the PSAT and registration is done through the Hanover Guidance Department.

Scores: Since this is a practice test, PSAT test results are not shared with colleges. PSAT scores are sent directly to students through electronic submission from the College Board. Students should make an appointment to meet with their school counselor to gain a better understanding of their score report and to receive their test booklet to help research wrong and omitted responses.

Accommodations for IEPs, 504 plans and Other Special Needs

Testing companies sometimes allow for accommodations based on information provided about the student, accommodation plans, or other special needs. Students and parents/guardians should speak to their school counselor and/or special education teacher about testing accommodations for **at least three months** before a testing date. Specific paperwork must be filled out and filed in order to get approval for an accommodation from the testing board. Please note that requested accommodations are not guaranteed.

Advanced Placement Tests (AP)

Hanover offers a wide range of AP classes which culminate in a standardized AP exam. These classes can provide opportunities for students to gain college credit or advanced placement for some college courses. The exams are usually given in May. **AP exams, however, are not required or necessary for most college admissions purposes.**

Registration: Registration for AP tests is done through Hanover High School. The tests are given in May in Hanover during school hours. Students enrolled in AP classes will receive notification from Hanover about registration, test dates and applicable fees.

Fees and Fee Waivers

There are fees associated with registering for all the standardized tests and for submitting scores. If the fees are a financial hardship, you may be eligible for a fee waiver. See your school counselor for more information.

Determining Which Tests to Take

First and foremost, it is critical to check the requirements for each college to which you will be applying to determine their specific test requirements. Colleges that require standardized tests will accept either the SAT or the ACT. In addition, some colleges require SAT Subject Tests.

SAT vs. ACT - Which Test is Right for Me?

Both the SAT and ACT are equally well-regarded by colleges. Students should pick the test they are most comfortable with and feel they can get the best score on. Some students may perform better on one than the other.

The best way to determine which test is right for you is to try a practice test of each type. You can take free practice SATs online through the College Board/Khan Academy collaboration. Another option is to take a full, timed SAT and/or ACT practice test from a standardized testing book available online or at most bookstores; or you could take an SAT and/or ACT practice test at a private testing center which are typically given free with no obligation for further services.

Rather than choose between the two tests, you may decide to take both the SAT and ACT. If you take both, you can send results from either test or both. Colleges will only see the scores you send.

Determining When to Take Your Tests

Plan Ahead

It is helpful to develop a tentative testing schedule in the second semester of sophomore year. This schedule can be modified, but a plan will help you see what tests are offered on given dates and how you might want to schedule your testing. Students may also want to consider the timing of tests in light of academics, extracurricular activities, athletic events, etc.

The tests are offered in the following months-

PSAT 8/9: March (9th grade)

PSAT- October (10th and 11th grade)

SAT - August, October, November, December, March, May, June

ACT - September, October, December, February, April, June, July

Make sure to check your schedule when planning your testing.

If you are taking multiple tests, the timing of your testing can be tricky and you should spend some time thinking ahead. Here are some things to consider:

- **Am I taking the SAT or ACT or both?**
- **Will I be taking AP tests in May of junior year?**
 - While SATs can be taken in the same month as APs, it may be more than a student will want to take in one month.
 - Some students find it advantageous to take the SAT Subject Tests while they are also preparing for the AP exam in the same subject.
- **How much time will I need or do I want to spend practicing and preparing for the test?**
 - If you plan to do some test prep, you will want to know your test dates in order to plan and schedule your test prep accordingly.
- **What if I want to or need to take the test more than once?**

- Make sure you leave yourself time to retake a test before your application deadlines.
- **Will I be applying Early Decision, Early Action or Rolling Admission to any colleges? Know your college testing deadlines.**
 - These applications will require submission of test scores earlier than regular decision applications. It can take up to two or three weeks to receive your scores and another 10 days to have them delivered to your college.
 - Check individual college websites to find out the last testing date that the college will accept.
- **Are there any conflicts with final exams, vacations or extracurricular activities?**

PSAT

Hanover High School typically requires all sophomores and juniors to take the PSAT in October.

SAT and ACT

The SAT and ACT are given several times a year but NOT every month.

The SAT is typically administered in August, October, November, December, March, May and June. More information about the exact dates for the SAT is available at www.collegeboard.org.

The ACTs are typically administered in September, October, December, February, April, June, and July (beginning in 2018). More information on the exact dates for the ACT is available at www.act.org.

Most students will take the SAT and/or ACT sometime between January and July of junior year. August or the fall of senior year is often when students will take the tests for a second or third time if they choose.

Students who are taking AP test(s) or SAT Subject Tests in May and June will need to pay extra attention to planning their testing schedule.

When to Prepare for the Test

Keep in mind that preparing for a test can take weeks or even months. Therefore, once you have thought about the timing of your testing, plan your test preparation accordingly.

Completing testing in your junior year or at the very beginning of your senior year is strongly advised. With the need to complete applications and course work, among other things, fall of senior year is often the busiest time in a student's high school career. Not having to complete testing during this first semester is a great benefit, and important if you think you might be applying under Early Decision, Early Action or Rolling Admission plans. If you are still testing into the fall of your senior year, however, note that the SAT, ACT and SAT Subject Tests are administered throughout the fall.

When to Retake a Test

If you are not satisfied with your scores, you are not alone. Many students opt to take the SAT and/or ACT a second time. Sometimes your score will help you determine which areas need improvement. Make sure to leave enough time between tests so that you can do additional preparation and cover more course material in your classes. Generally it is not recommended that you take a test more than three times. SAT Subject Tests can also be repeated.

A possible testing plan might be to take the SAT in March and repeat in August, or take the ACT for the first time in April or June and repeat in September.

It takes about two to three weeks to get scores from a given test. As part of your planning, you should think about possible dates when you might retake one of your tests, if needed. Think also about how much time you might need to prepare for your retake test and how it fits in with your other testing and application deadlines.

Make sure you have completed everything by your college's deadline! These deadlines are firm.

Test Prep

Students who plan carefully and familiarize themselves with the test format through practice materials may improve their scores.

For some students test preparation can take a few weeks, for others, it can span over a few months.

Test preparation can be done by taking full practice tests and/or sample questions from books, online at www.collegeboard.org and www.actstudent.org, or at private test centers. Lastly, you can hire private tutors and/or sign up for test prep classes.

Khan Academy: Test Prep for the SAT

The stated goal of the College Board is to tie the SAT more closely to the high school curriculum, making specific test taking skills less important. In an effort to make test prep accessible to all, the College Board is partnering with Khan Academy (a free, online learning resource) to make comprehensive test prep for the SAT free to students. It is recommended that this option of test prep be used by all students. See www.collegeboard.org or www.khanacademy.org.

Hanover High School has additional information regarding outside providers who offer test prep. Please see your school counselor for more information

The Application

A College Application Consists of...

The college application is your opportunity to present yourself to colleges that you are interested in. Colleges look at a variety of factors when evaluating your application. Some factors are objective such as grades and test scores; others are more subjective such as your extracurricular activities, teacher evaluations and essays.

A college application typically includes:

- A form, which people typically refer to as “the application,” in which you include biographical information, extracurricular activities, and personal statements (essays). Example = Common Application
- Official High School Transcript
- Standardized test scores (if the college requires them)
- Teacher Evaluation(s)
- Counselor Statement
- Supplemental materials which might include additional applications, essays, an art or music portfolio, or other items.

Materials sent by Hanover

After an official request is submitted by the student, Hanover will send the following official materials to the requested college(s):

- Official Transcript with weighted GPA including previous high school transcripts for transfer students. A weighted GPA (4.0 scale) will be reported for every student in the Counselor Statement. The high school transcript is sent directly to the college through Naviance or standard mail.
- Teacher Evaluation(s)
- Counselor Statement
- Hanover High School Profile

The process for making these requests is fully explained to students in Senior Workshops. Workshops are scheduled to begin in the fall of senior year. Notifications for dates and times are specific to posted outside the guidance office on the bulletin board and emailed to each individual student. Check with your school counselor if you have questions. In addition, instructions and information are posted to google classroom.

Manage your time. Since there are many components to the application, make sure to leave yourself plenty of time to complete it. Do not expect to finish an application in one sitting. Also, be sure to leave time for adequate proofreading and checking the accuracy of everything you submit.

The Common Application

What is the Common App?

The Common Application (also known as the **Common App**) is an online form through which you can apply to many colleges. It is a standard form that you complete once and is then available for you to send to multiple colleges. Note, you do have the opportunity to edit some of the details of the application form before you submit it to a particular college. Please see <http://www.commonapp.org>.

Colleges That Do Not Accept the Common App

Not all colleges accept the Common App. These colleges have their own application forms and directions for applying are specified on their websites. Make sure to check a college's website to determine its requirements.

In recent years, a number of colleges have created the Coalition for Access, Affordability and Success. A very small number of colleges are requiring this application for consideration for admission. Please see <http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org/> for more information.

While this chapter primarily focuses on the process of completing and submitting an application through www.commonapp.org, much of the following material will be relevant to most application processes because the components of the applications tend to be similar.

Accessing the Common App

To access the Common App you must register at www.commonapp.org. Once you have created your Common App account you can list the colleges to which you intend to apply and start to complete the form. It is not necessary to fill in all the information at one sitting. All of your data will be stored online. You can always update your list of colleges and edit the information in the form before it is sent to any given college.

WARNING: Do not open an additional Common App account **UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES**. Remember to keep track of your Common App password.

What's in the Common App

The Common App consists of several sections. You will be asked to input biographical information, information about your high school, a list of extracurricular activities, a list of honors and awards, your senior year classes, your self-reported test scores (if required), and one essay.

NOTE: You still have to send the official scores through the College Board and/or ACT.

As you fill out the application, the program will tell you when you have entered all the necessary information in a given section.

Should I complete the section that asks for “Additional Information”?

In order for the colleges to get the fullest picture of you, the “Additional Information” section of the Common App may be used to expand on something that has not been previously mentioned in detail. This section can cover one or multiple topics, depending on what is necessary/appropriate. Examples include:

- Interest / Passion / Extracurricular Activity
- Challenges you may have faced
- Explanation of something on the transcript

Should I include a resume?

A resume is a very useful tool for organizing activities and other extracurriculars in preparation for the college process and beyond. The question of whether to include your resume and how to do it is one that you should discuss with your school counselor.

Application Supplements

The Common App site will also show you which colleges require a “Supplement.” The supplement is an additional application form specific to a given college which often requires additional essays and other information.

Like the main part of the Common App, the supplement is filled out and submitted electronically at www.commonapp.org, and is unique to that college or university. For some colleges, the application supplements are submitted separately from the Common App. Please make sure you submit both!

Additional Application Requirements

Some colleges may require additional information beyond what is included in the Common App and/or a college’s application supplement. You will need to find these requirements on specific colleges’ websites as they will not be listed on www.commonapp.org.

Supplementary Artistic Presentations

Students interested in the Fine & Performing Arts (art, music, theatre and dance) have a number of options in furthering their studies. There are schools specifically dedicated to the Arts including conservatories of music, visual arts colleges, etc. where students can fully immerse themselves in Arts study. Additionally, many schools have art/music/theatre or dance departments that allow students to either major or minor in a given Arts area or to take enrichment courses.

Fine and Performing Arts programs (art, music, theatre and dance) may want you to supplement your application with an audition, recordings or a portfolio. These requirements may have different deadlines than the general application. Please check with each college website for detailed information.

Even if not required, students may choose to submit additional artistic presentations as part of their application. Please check with each college’s website as to their submission process. Please **be in touch early** with the HHS Music or Art teachers

Essays

The Common App requires one essay (currently a maximum of 650 words) based on one of a choice of seven writing prompts, including a topic of your choice.

Note that while you can type the essay directly into the Common App form, it is best to write it in a Google or Word document and cut and paste it into the Common App when you are ready to submit your application. You should NOT

personalize this essay for an individual schools because this essay is being sent to all of your schools. This strategy avoids potential accidental submissions and lets you use the advanced spell checking and formatting capabilities of your editing software. It also makes the essay available to you for use elsewhere if necessary. You should NOT personalize this essay for an individual schools because this essay is being sent to all of your schools.

Teacher Evaluations

Teacher Evaluations are NOT submitted through the Common App but are submitted by the teacher through Naviance. Teacher evaluations are an essential part of the application. Each college will indicate how many and what types of Teacher Evaluations are required. Two Teacher Evaluations and one Counselor Statement are the norm.

Hanover has a well-defined process for helping you identify teachers who will be writing your evaluations. Your school counselor will explain this process in detail to you as part of the college and career workshops. Materials and information reviewed in the workshops are posted to your class google classroom page.

Counselor Statements

Counselor statements are submitted separately by the school as part of the transcript materials. The counselor statement provides a comprehensive picture of your academic, social and extracurricular contributions to the Hanover community. School counselors are in the best position to collaborate with staff, communicate with you and review your record to provide colleges with a broad and unique perspective. The statement may also include an explanation and clarification of any special circumstances in your background that affected your academic achievement or attendance (e.g. transfer student, extended illness).

Standardized Test Scores

The Common App will ask you to self-report your standardized test and AP scores directly on the application. This data is NOT a substitute for submitting your official scores either through www.collegeboard.org for the SAT or www.act.org for the ACT. Please see your school counselor to discuss whether or not you should self-report your standardized test scores.

If a college specifically requires you to submit your AP score(s) as part of your application, you must do this through www.collegeboard.org.

You may omit your test score information if you are applying to a test-optional college. Students on IEPs or 504s can waive their test scores for the Massachusetts public universities.

Submitting Your Application

The Common App is submitted electronically from www.commonapp.org. Do not wait until the last minute. There have been years where major snowstorms and power outages have occurred and students were unable to meet college deadlines. These deadlines are firm!

Note that submission of the application is done separately for each college to which you apply. While most of the application will stay the same, you do have the opportunity to edit some of the details of the application before you submit it to a particular college. For example, you may wish to remove test scores for colleges that are test optional.

There is a fee to submit the Common App. If the fees are a financial hardship, you may be eligible for a fee waiver. See your school counselor for more information.

Colleges that don't use the Common App will have instructions on their websites on how to submit the required materials.

Checking the Status of Your Application

You should receive a confirmation from www.commonapp.org that your application was successfully submitted. In addition, the college will usually send you instructions on how to check the status of your application on its website or you may be assigned a login for an applicant portal.

It is important to check with the college to which you applied to make sure that it has received all components of your application including Teacher Evaluations, scores and transcripts. Even if Naviance or www.collegeboard.org indicate that materials have been sent, **do not assume** that all materials have been received. You need specific confirmation from the college that your application is complete. Many colleges allow you to check the status of your application on their website. If not, contact them. Do not assume that the college will contact **you** if information is missing

The College Essay

Essay Preparation

Most colleges require that an applicant submit an essay or personal statement as part of the college application. In general, the essay helps the college assess your critical thinking and writing abilities. It is also designed to shed light on your special interests or experiences, values, attitudes, and expectations of the future.

The Common Application (also known as the Common App) essay prompts are usually released by the spring of a student's junior year. At that point, you can preview the essay questions in order to best prepare for drafting the essay.

In order to avoid essay-writing anxiety, it is best to begin drafting an essay sooner rather than later. The summer between junior and senior year is an ideal time to begin brainstorming ideas for essay topics. The Common App requires a student-written essay. There are seven essay prompts to choose from with a maximum of 650 and minimum of 250 words. To preview the essay prompts, go to www.commonapp.org.

In addition, some colleges require a supplemental essay or essays to be submitted along with the Common App; these supplemental questions are released on August 1st. The supplemental essay topics tend to be more specific. For example, they might ask you to expand on your choice of major or reasons for applying to that specific school.

Make sure you are aware of the essay requirements for each college you are applying to. If you apply to multiple colleges with supplements, you may need to write multiple additional essays. If this is the case, review all of the supplemental essay topics to see where you can use a response for more than one college.

Hanover High School and FACE (Family and Community Engagement) also sponsor a College Boot Camp in August. During this program, students work on the essay with English teachers, practice interviews, create a resume and work on college applications. This is a great way to get a jump start on all things college, but especially the essay.

The Essay: Step by Step

If you are like most students, you see the college essay as another hurdle you must jump over on the way to being accepted at the college of your choice. In fact, the essay is not a hurdle but a rare opportunity. It is a chance for you to “talk” directly to the college’s admissions committee and to help them “see” you as a thinking and feeling person, rather than simply a set of impersonal statistics. Except for the interview, it is your only chance to share your thoughts, insight, and opinions; to

highlight your accomplishments; and to convey your maturity and outlook on life. If you see the college essay in this way, as an opportunity, then it is clearly worth the effort to put some extra time, thought and energy into writing it.

Purpose of the Essay

The college essay is extremely important for two major reasons:

1. It enables the college admission office to evaluate your communication skills. Through your essay they can assess the clarity of your thinking and your ability to convey your thoughts in written form.
2. It enables the admissions officer to learn more about you as a person, beyond what grades and SAT scores can convey. A well-written essay can speak volumes about your attitudes, feelings, personal qualities, imagination and creativity. For the admissions staff, it adds another important piece to the puzzle because it distinguishes you as an individual and differentiates you from other applicants.

Choosing a Topic

Regardless of whether you are writing an essay to meet the requirements of the Common App or a college's supplemental application, here are a few general hints about the most effective way to approach your topic:

- Tell a story only you can tell. Highlight information about yourself that is not evident anywhere else on your application. Since one important purpose of the essay is to reveal something unique about you, your beliefs, and/or your values, this is not a time to be shy or modest. Remember that little incidents or moments can be most revealing of one's character and outlook.
- Narrow your topic and try to be as specific and illustrative as possible.
- Do not be afraid to write about something you think is a little different. A unique topic or approach is often refreshing to a college admissions officer who has been reading applications all day. Further, an unusual or offbeat essay may be an excellent way to show your creativity.

Preparing To Write

Before sitting down to write a first draft of your essay, spend time organizing your thoughts. Develop a framework for your essay so it will have a smooth and logical progression from one idea or incident to the next. Consider your purpose in writing, what you want to convey, and the tone you think is most appropriate for the topic. Decide on a style that is comfortable for you, not one that you think the admissions committee prefers. Finally, remember that organizing your thoughts and deciding on a framework does not mean you must be overly rigid at the start: leave room for flexibility and creativity as you actually begin writing.

Writing the Essay

You do not have to get it right the first time! Instead, write the first draft of your essay with the main focus on having the content communicate your thoughts. Then set it aside for a day or two, reread it with a fresh perspective, and make any necessary changes. This is also the point at which you should consider matters of organization, style, grammar, spelling, and tone. Once you have rewritten your first draft you may wish to try it out on your family, friend, English teacher, or school counselor. While automated spell check is helpful, do not solely rely on it. Find a person to proofread your essay. While the final product and final "voice" should be yours, outside readers may be able to offer helpful suggestions for technical or other improvements to see what kind of impression you will make on someone who doesn't know you as well.

Note that while you can type the essay directly into the Common App form, it is best to write it in a Google or Word document and cut and paste it into the Common App when you are ready to submit your application. This strategy avoids potential accidental submissions and lets you use the advanced spell checking and formatting capabilities of your editing software. It also makes the essay available to you for use elsewhere if necessary.

Please use the “Preview” in the Common App to make sure your essay is complete and formatted correctly.

Dos and Don'ts

Within this general outline for writing the essay, there are some “Dos” and “Don'ts” to consider:

DOS

- Do tell a story only you can tell.
- Do think “small” and write about something you know.
- Do reveal yourself in your writing.
- Do show rather than tell. By giving examples and illustrating your topics, you help bring it to life.
- Do write in your own “voice” and style.

DON'Ts

- Don't write what you think others want to read.
- Don't exaggerate or write to impress.
- Don't use flowery, inflated, or pretentious style.
- Don't neglect the technical part of your essay (grammar, spelling, sentence structure).
- Don't ramble – say what you have to say and conclude.

Your college essay, along with your high school record, standardized test scores, and extracurricular involvement, will provide the basis upon which the college makes its admissions decisions. A thoughtful, well-written essay can affect that final decision in a positive way. Keep this in mind and take full advantage of the opportunity that the college essay affords you.

Admission Application Options

When you apply to a college, you may have a choice of which type of application to submit. These options affect the deadline for submission, the date you will receive notification about admission, the date by which you must notify a college that you will attend, and in some cases, it may determine what other applications you are allowed to submit to other colleges.

Regular Decision

- Regular Decision means you apply to the college's regular deadline (typically in early winter).
- You can apply to more than one college Regular Decision.
- You typically receive your admission decision between March and April.
- If you are accepted, the decision to attend college does not usually have to be made until May 1.

Rolling Admission

- Rolling Admissions means applications are reviewed by the college as they are received. That is, as the applications come in, the admissions office reviews them and makes the decision on a "rolling" or on-going basis.
- You typically receive your admission decision as early as a few weeks after receipt of the application.
- It is best to submit your application as soon as you have decided to apply to the college, as chance of acceptance may improve if you apply early.
- If you are accepted, the decision to attend college does not usually have to be made until May 1.

Open Admission

- Open Admission means that the college admits almost all applicants who have earned a high school diploma or a GED.
- Open Admission colleges usually have no deadline by which you must submit your application.

Early Action

- Early Action means you apply to the college by a specific early deadline, usually between early November and early December.
- You typically receive your admission decision 4-6 weeks after the application deadline (this is earlier than Regular Decision notification).
- If admitted early, you are not committed to enroll at that college and can choose to apply to other colleges.
- If you are accepted, the decision to attend college does not usually have to be made until May 1.

Early Action Unrestricted

- Early Action Unrestricted means that you are free to apply to more than one college with "Early" admissions options at the same time.

Early Action Restricted

- Early Action Restricted means that you are typically not allowed to apply to other colleges with "Early" admissions options at the same time, but some colleges may have some exclusions. For example, some colleges with Early Action Restricted may allow you to apply to a public college at the same time. Check specific details on each college's website.

Early Decision

- Early Decision means you apply to the college by a specific early deadline, usually between early November and early December.

- Some colleges now have a second early decision program (often called Early Decision II), usually with a January deadline.
- You typically receive your admission decision 4-6 weeks after the application deadline (this is earlier than Regular Decision notification).
- Under Early Decision, you must commit to attend that college if accepted. You, your parents/guardians, and school counselor may be required to sign a statement on the application agreeing to this binding policy. This is different from Early Action where you still apply early but you are not required to attend if accepted.
- **If admitted ED, you must enroll, you must withdraw any pending applications to other colleges and you must inform your school or.**

Points to Consider When Thinking about Early Decision

1. Applying Early Decision means, if accepted, you **will** enroll at that college. The decision is **binding**, which means that you must withdraw applications that have been submitted to other colleges and apply to no other colleges.
2. Early Decision **should be discussed in detail with your counselor and parents/guardians**. This decision must be well thought out and carefully considered. You should only apply Early Decision if you have visited the preferred college or attended an informational session.
3. The only way to nullify an Early Decision commitment is if the financial package is insufficient; however, this may not leave you much time to apply to other colleges.
4. You should request your teacher recommendations from a teacher in the spring of the junior year if you intend to apply to college on an Early Admission plan.

ADVANTAGES:

- Applying Early Decision is a way of sending a strong message to that college that “This is my definite first choice.”
- It can save time, energy and the cost of filing more applications.
- If the college is a realistic match with your academic background, applying early **might** give you an advantage.

DISADVANTAGES:

- If you are accepted by a college through Early Decision, it is binding if you have a change of heart.
- By agreeing to attend the college if accepted, you are giving up the opportunity to compare financial award letters from other colleges that accept you. You are also giving up the bargaining position. The Early Decision route may be a risk for a family with moderate or high financial need.
- If you are applying Early Decision, you must have applications to other colleges “ready to mail” in the event of a deferral decision, rejection decision or insufficient financial aid. While getting admitted early can reduce stress, the impact of an Early Decision deferral or rejection letter can be stressful.

Two-Year Colleges and Other Options

Community Colleges

Community colleges have become an increasingly popular choice. It's much less expensive to fulfill basic requirements at a community college. You can finish with a two-year associate degree or transfer and get a bachelor's degree from a four-year college. Another advantage to a community college is that if you didn't do as well as you hoped in high school (in either your classes or on standardized testing), you essentially start with a clean slate. Four-year colleges will primarily look at your college grades when considering a transfer application.

The community college application process is very simple. These colleges do not require standardized tests or essays, only a high school diploma or high school proficiency equivalent. You can decide to attend a community college as late as the end of your senior year, but use the resources available to you in the guidance office during the year. As a Massachusetts resident, in-state colleges will be much less expensive for you and are spread across the state.

<http://www.masscc.org/student-resources/our-campuses>

Another advantage to the community college system is that if you are in good academic standing, your credits will automatically transfer to a Massachusetts public university.

Also, you can choose to attend a two-year program in another state. You don't get the in-state tuition, but it's still a more affordable financial option.

Certificate Programs/Trade Schools

If you want short-term specialty training in fields such as automotive, culinary, cosmetology, construction, or electrical technician, there are many certificate programs and trade schools available in Boston and beyond. The Massachusetts Career Information System (MassCIS) is a free online service designed to provide occupational and educational information to help students learn more about careers, certificate programs, and trade school choices.

<https://masscis.intocareers.org>

Another resource for learning more about trade careers is <https://www.trade-schools.net>. Your school counselor can assist you in exploring these options.

In addition, Mass Hire at <https://www.mass.gov/topics/masshire> provides many resources related to job search, placement and career opportunities.

Distance Learning

More and more colleges and universities are offering online courses and degrees, whether for individualized learning or as a "virtual" class. These can be especially useful if you need a more flexible academic schedule, and they can be much less expensive or free. Some programs are completely online, and other colleges, including a growing group of selective institutions, are offering online options.

Web Resources:

- **Straighter Line** - <http://www.straighterline.com/> offers low-cost online courses that are guaranteed to transfer to schools in a network of 100+ accredited colleges.
- **Coursera** - <https://www.coursera.org> provides online courses from top universities and organizations.

- **EdX** - <https://www.edx.org> offers free online courses and classes through a partnership between the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University.
- **ASU** - <https://asuonline.edu> offers fully online certificate, bachelor's degree and graduate degree programs.

Gap Year

Many colleges will allow you to defer your enrollment for a year, but you must check each college's website or call the admissions office to confirm this. If you choose to defer, most colleges will hold your enrollment spot if you provide a deposit. Be in touch with your counselor and the college to discuss these options.

According to the American Gap Association, "A gap year is a structured period of time when students take a break from formal education to increase self-awareness, challenge comfort zones, earn money, and experiment with possible careers. Typically these are achieved by a combination of traveling, volunteering, interning, or working.

Benefits of Taking a Year Off:

- Allows for greater opportunity to learn about the world around you and self-understanding
- Enables greater engagement and purpose for attending college
- Improves self-confidence
- Earn money for college/advanced educational training
- Discover new interests and develop skills.

Gap Fairs, which are similar to college fairs, are typically held in January in Brookline and Dedham. These events will give you a chance to speak with representatives from an array of gap year organizations.

Gap Year Resources:

- American Gap Association: www.americangap.org/index.php
- Dynamy: www.dynamy.org
- Gap year search: www.gapyear.com
- Interim Programs: www.interimprograms.com
- National Leadership Outdoor School: www.nols.edu
- Teenlife - <https://www.teenlife.com/category/gap-year/gap-year-in-the-united-states/>

MILITARY OPTIONS

Another option after Hanover is to join the military, attend a military academy or participate in a ROTC or National Guard program. There are also colleges that focus on military education. Like any post-secondary decision, choosing a military path requires a great deal of research and reflection. There is a designated military liaison at Hanover who is available to provide

ROTC

Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) is a college-based military officer training program offered by more than 1,000 colleges. Academic scholarships are offered in exchange for military service after graduation. You should contact individual colleges to see what's available.

Military Academies

If you are interested in the very selective military academies, the process begins in junior year. There is no cost to attend any of the five academies; in fact you can earn a small salary while at the academy. You are required to give at least five years of active service and three years in the reserves after you graduate from an academy.

[The United States Military Academy](#) (Army)

West Point, New York

[The United States Naval Academy](#) (Navy and Marines)

Annapolis, Maryland

[The United States Air Force Academy](#)

Colorado Springs, Colorado

[The United States Coast Guard Academy](#)

New London, Connecticut

[The United States Merchant Marine Academy](#)

Kings Point, New York

All military academies (except the Coast Guard) require a nomination from a member of Congress.

If you want more information about how to choose among the branches, this is a helpful article:

<http://usmilitary.about.com/od/joiningthemilitary/a/choosing.htm>

If applying to a military academy you must be:

- A U.S. citizen (or an eligible non-citizen)
- At least 17 years old, but younger than 23, by July 1 of admission year (for the United States Merchant Marine Academy the upper age limit is 25)
- Unmarried
- Not pregnant
- Without dependents

National Guard

The National Guard (Army and Air) is a component of the reserve services for the United States military, serving as a supplement to the regular Army or Air Force. It is a state-run militia, with those enlisting training close to home, one weekend a month and one, two-week training period a year. Their state's governor can call those serving in the National Guard in times of crisis or state of emergency, as well as by the President of the United States. Many who serve in the National Guard simultaneously pursue a college education, with the Guard offering tuition assistance programs. To learn more about the National Guard, consult their website - <https://www.nationalguard.com/eligibility>.

Making Your Decision

Although many people will help in this process, the final decision should be yours. Don't forget to tell your school counselor all college admissions decisions!

If you applied to college through an Early Decision or Early Action program, you will probably hear back from your college six to eight weeks after submitting your application.

If you have applied through a Rolling Admissions program, you may hear as early as a few weeks after submitting your application.

If you have applied through the Regular Decision process, you will usually hear back from colleges sometime between February and April.

Admission Decisions

The Early Decision, Early Action, Rolling and Regular Decision decisions can come back in several different forms:

Admit: Congratulations! You have been admitted to the next year's class, and the only information you may still need before you can make a choice is what kind of a financial aid package you may be offered.

Defer: If you applied Early Decision or Early Action your admission decision may be "deferred" to Regular Decision. This means you're qualified, but the college wants to compare you to applicants in the Regular Decision pool. If you have just begun to improve your record, they might want to make sure you're continuing on an upward trend through your senior year. If deferred, it is important to send an email/letter of continued interest. You should be sure to send updated first semester grades.

Deny: If you are denied it means they do not have room for you in the incoming class. Few colleges permit appeals but it may be helpful to check if there is a process.

Waitlist: If you've been waitlisted it means you may be admitted once the college has heard back from its accepted students and has determined whether there is additional space in the upcoming class. Waitlist decisions are typically made by the college after the May 1st deadline for accepted students. Some colleges may contact waitlisted students throughout the summer.

Therefore, even if you choose to stay on a waitlist, you will need to accept and submit a deposit to **ONE** of the colleges to which you **have been admitted by May 1st**. This deposit is typically not refundable.

Remember that waitlists can be very long, and that their usage depends on the acceptance rate for admitted students. This is unpredictable and can be frustrating and varies from year to year. **The best strategy is to focus on and get excited about one of the schools that have admitted you, and have your waitlist school(s) as a happy backup plan.**

How to Decide

Making a final choice at the end of this long process can be challenging. However, you will probably end up feeling great about the school you pick.

- If you have received financial aid packages, compare them very closely and make sure you understand the differences among the offers. A financial expert from MEFA (the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority) will be available to meet with senior families in a large group setting in early April at Hanover to help them make sense of and compare different financial aid packages. You can always call MEFA who will answer your questions for free.
- Conduct thorough research by exploring the websites deeply. Take a virtual tour. Look at blogs. Ask questions online. Go to the Facebook page for the college. There may be a specific page for admitted students.
- Visit. If you're invited to an open house or other on campus programs for accepted students, you should try to take advantage of this opportunity. The benefits of these programs include seeing the campus in action, attending a class, spending the night in a dorm, and potentially meeting other prospective students. Also try to check in with students, faculty, coaches, etc. who are not specifically part of the admission event to get the most out of your visit. If you can't make the accepted student events, you can still visit. Try to arrange for a tour, sit in on a class, see a rehearsal or practice, visit the career center, eat in the cafeteria, and explore the town where the college is located. Contact the college's Admissions Office to arrange this visit.
- Ask school counselors, teachers, friends, alums about their experiences with the schools you're considering.

Once you've made your final decision **please make sure to email all the colleges to which you have been accepted and let them know whether you plan to attend. You don't need to wait for the May 1st deadline to respond.**

What To Do If You Have Been Waitlisted

Being waitlisted at the college of your choice is never easy.

If you are offered a spot on a college's waitlist, most colleges will give you the option to remain on the list or opt out. Each college has different policies and procedures, so carefully read the waitlist information provided by the college and adhere to the instructions. Some colleges require that you simply agree to remain on the waitlist, some allow you to submit a paragraph describing your interest and/or update your application materials, and others allow you to submit unlimited additional material. If you are waitlisted and you want to remain on the waitlist, you should consult with your school counselor who can help create a plan for moving forward. Your school counselor is available to call **ONE** school, of your choice, to support your application to come off of the waitlist.

If the college allows it, it is recommended that you do one or more of the following things:

- Write a letter to the college detailing your continued interest in attending. Although colleges typically do not rank order their waitlists, it is good for them to know that you are serious about wanting to attend their college and why.
- If you are writing a letter, include any **new and relevant** information (grades, scores, activities, honors, projects and/or special summer activities) for their information.
- Be in touch with your alumni/off-campus interviewer (if applicable) if you had a very good interview. He or she may be willing to advocate for you.
- Send an additional letter of recommendation from someone who knows you well.

Remember to send a deposit to one (and only one) of the schools to which you have been accepted while you wait.

Most importantly, look at the pluses of the colleges to which you have been admitted. You are most likely to have a wonderful experience at one of these if you decide to attend with a positive attitude!

Gap Year

Most colleges will allow you to defer attending for a year, but you need to check each college's website or call to confirm this. If you decide to defer your admission for a year, most colleges will hold your spot if you put down a deposit. Be in touch with your counselor and the college to talk about your options.

Some Helpful Articles

<http://www.campusexplorer.com/college-advice-tips/A205B019/After-Acceptance-How-to-Finally-Decide-on-One-School/>

http://www.mercurynews.com/columns/ci_25462728/college-acceptances-are-and-now-you-must-choose

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/making-a-decision/you-made-your-college-choice-whats-next>

Finally, don't forget to tell your school counselor all your college news, and congratulations for making it all the way through!

FINANCIAL AID

The cost of college is a major consideration when going through the application process. College costs go beyond just tuition and include room, board, books, fees, and travel, and can exceed \$60,000 per year depending on the college. While colleges are required to report their total costs on their websites, you will not know what the actual cost of that college will be for you until the financial aid process is complete and you have received notification from all financial aid sources. Keep that in mind if you are interested in a college that may appear to be financially out of reach.

Applying for financial aid isn't easy, but it is very manageable if you fill out the forms on time, stay organized and know where to go when you have questions.

Sources of Financial Aid

Financial aid can come in many forms:

Scholarships and Grants: money that does not need to be repaid, also known as “gift aid”

Loans: money that does need to be repaid

Need-Based: determined by a family’s ability to pay

Merit-Based: determined by a student’s achievement (academic, artistic, athletic, service, etc.)

Work Study: money that you must work for. You will maintain an on-campus job and you will earn this money gradually on an hourly wage.

The main sources of financial aid are:

- The federal government
- The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- Colleges and universities
- Private sources such as foundations, corporations and banks

Financial Aid from Colleges and Universities

From a cost perspective, there are several things to consider when choosing which colleges to apply to. Cost of tuition is certainly important. The Massachusetts State System (universities and community colleges) are going to offer tuition rates lower than private colleges or out of state public colleges.

For private colleges, it is important to look not just at tuition but how much financial aid a college offers. Sometimes colleges with very high tuition may end up being more affordable because of the generous financial aid they offer. You may want to look at the following information on a college’s website:

- What are the college’s resources for scholarships?
- Does the college give merit scholarships that you might apply for?
- Does the college have “need blind” or “need aware” admissions?
- Does the college meet full need?
- What percentage of students at the college typically get financial aid awards?
- What is the average financial aid package offered to students?

Hanover High School Financial Aid Night

A great way to learn about financial aid options for college is to attend the Financial Aid Night held at Hanover High School in the fall. Hanover offers additional financial aid seminars throughout the year based on presenter availability.

Getting Started

A great way to get started is to do a bit of research and use some online tools and calculators to help you assess how much aid you might qualify for and what college payments might look like under various aid scenarios. One useful tool is “Your Plan for the Future.” <https://www.yourplanforthefuture.org/Ext/YPFC/Home/index.html>

This tool is a joint initiative of the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority (MEFA). It is an online one stop shopping resource for planning post-secondary opportunities. Once you register, it provides a number of resources including:

- **Expected Family Contribution (EFC) Estimator:** an online step-by-step calculator to help you determine your EFC
- **College Cost Estimator:** an online tool to compare college costs
- **Loan Cost Estimator:** an online tool to estimate monthly payments on loans
- Search tool for scholarships available in Massachusetts

Another helpful tool is the **Net Price* Calculator**. Every college is required to post a Net Price Calculator to their individual website. This is a tool that you may use to enter your personal financial information to determine what the financial aid award may look like for you at that particular school.

*Net Price: the difference between the “sticker” price (full cost) of a college minus any grants and scholarships you receive (COST – GIFT)

What’s Involved

There are several forms required as part of the financial aid application process. All colleges require the FAFSA (see below) and some colleges require the CSS PROFILE (see below). In addition, there may be other requirements so make sure to check the college’s website for all required forms and deadlines.

You can also consider applying for scholarships offered by local community groups or other institutions. Some of these scholarships may be targeted to a particular area of interest or tied to specific criteria. There is a list of outside scholarships accessible to students on Naviance. Consult with a school counselor for more information.

A free resource to determine what outside scholarships you might be eligible for is **FastWeb** - www.fastweb.com.

The Forms

- **The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid):** All prospective U.S. college students who want financial aid must complete the FAFSA. Instead of filing one application for each separate college, each student only files one FAFSA for each academic year. There are spaces on the form where you can list your prospective colleges.
- **Institutional Documentation Service (IDOC):** The College Board collects families' federal tax returns and other documents on behalf of participating colleges and programs. The College Board notifies students selected by participating institutions when to submit the required documents.
- **The CSS (College Scholarship Service) PROFILE:** Used mostly by private colleges, this is a supplemental financial aid form. Check each college's website or the CSS PROFILE website to see if any of the colleges where you are applying require it.
- **Institutional Financial Aid Forms:** Some colleges have their own financial aid forms. If required, these are included in admissions applications, and usually have specific questions that the FAFSA does not cover. If a college requires the CSS PROFILE, it will NOT require an institutional form as well.

- **The Hanover High School Scholarship Survey:** Hanover High School students can fill out this survey and become eligible for the Hanover scholarships that generous members of the Hanover community have established. This form will be emailed out to students in February.
- **Outside Scholarships:** The term "scholarship" is sometimes mistakenly used to refer to all types of financial aid. Scholarships are, however, only one type of aid and should be looked at, in addition to, and not instead of, other types of aid (i.e., grants, loans and college work study) that are triggered by the FAFSA, the CSS PROFILE and institutional financial aid forms. Applying for scholarships is hard work, and we suggest approaching it in the following manner:
 - Make the FAFSA, the CSS PROFILE (if required), institutional financial aid forms (if required) the priorities. Fill these out thoroughly, accurately, and submit them on time.
 - Consider applying for "targeted" or "focused" scholarships first. Are there any scholarships that you might be eligible for that most other students are not? Look to these sources first. Examples include employers, foundations, social/ethnic/religious/ organizations and labor unions.
 - NEVER pay money to a scholarship service or to anyone who offers you financial aid or scholarship information for a fee. There are a lot of SCAMS out there.
 - Use a free scholarship search like FastWeb and check Naviance for the scholarship newsletter to find outside scholarships for which you are eligible.

Ten Things You Should Know About Financial Aid

Based on an article by Beckie Supiano "In a Rocky Economy, 10 Steady Tips About Student Aid" from *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

1. **Every student should apply for aid** —regardless of family income or citizenship. Even families who think they will not qualify for need-based aid at the time they apply, should still complete required financial aid forms by the required deadlines. If a family's financial situation changes during the course of the year, the financial-aid office cannot offer aid if forms have not been submitted at the required times.
2. **Deadlines matter.** Students have to apply for aid each year, and they must do so on time. First-year students need to understand that different colleges may have different deadlines. Give yourself sufficient time to collect the information you need, complete the form and submit it to the institution in time to meet their deadline.
3. **Check Each College's Financial Aid Application Requirements** - All colleges require the FAFSA. About 250 colleges require a CSS/Financial Aid Profile. State grants and outside scholarships may also require additional paperwork. It is important to check each college's website to see what forms you will need to submit when applying to that college.
4. **Understand what your 'Expected Family Contribution' will be** - When you apply for needs-based financial aid through the FAFSA or CSS PROFILE, a calculation is done to assess how much your family has the ability to contribute towards your student's education for one year. This is called the "Expected Family Contribution." Your EFC may vary slightly from college to college. Knowing your EFC will help you understand your eligibility for needs-based aid.
5. **Be aware of what is included in the cost of attendance** - This figure includes tuition, fees, housing and indirect costs like books, supplies and transportation. The actual cost paid for some of these items will vary from student to student.
6. **Eligibility and need aren't always the same** - If a student meets the criteria for a federal Pell Grant, the college has to award it. But the college may determine that a student who is eligible for a Pell Grant on paper doesn't demonstrate the level of need to get other institutional need-based aid.
7. **There is a big difference between need-based and merit aid** – You cannot apply for merit aid. It is awarded by the college and is almost always tied to academic performance or some specific circumstances that the college selects. Need-based aid is based solely on a family's demonstrated financial situation as documented in the financial aid application materials.
8. **There are different forms of aid** - Students can receive federal, state and institutional aid. Aid can come in the form of grants, loans, or work. And yes, financial-aid offices view loans as a form of aid.

9. **Award letters vary** - Be sure to note whether aid is in the form of grants or loans and whether it is renewable from year to year.
10. **Award letters can be appealed** - If a family knows or expects its financial situation will change, it should talk it over with the financial-aid office. Most offices can help a family with special circumstances.

Financial Aid Timeline

Fall - Winter of Senior Year

- October 1 - First day the FAFSA may be filed. Use your previous year tax information and list all of the colleges to which you will be applying.
- October 1 – First day the CSS PROFILE may be filed. However, the CSS PROFILE should not be filed later than two weeks before the EARLIEST priority filing date specified by the colleges or programs of choice.
- Sept/October – Attend Hanover’s Financial Aid Night.
- Research outside scholarships available through a list on Naviance and/or google classroom. The list of outside scholarships will provide details and deadlines pertaining to individual applications.
- Usually by early February - Submit the FAFSA by the earliest financial aid deadline of the colleges to which a student is applying. Check deadlines for your colleges and submit the FAFSA by the earliest financial aid deadline and any other financial aid applications that the college(s) may require.
- After the FAFSA is submitted, a student should receive the Student Aid Report (SAR) within three days to three weeks. Quickly make any necessary corrections and submit them to the FAFSA processor.

Spring of Senior Year

- Research/visit colleges where a student receives acceptance of admission.
- Review the college acceptances and compare the colleges’ financial aid offers.
- Contact a college’s financial aid office for any questions about the aid that a college has offered. Getting to know the financial aid staff early is a good idea no matter what—they can tell students about deadlines, other aid for which to apply and important paperwork that might need to be submitted.
- When a student decides which college to attend, notify that college of the commitment and submit any required financial deposit. Most colleges require this notification and deposit by May 1st.

Resources

- **FAFSA** - <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>

FAFSA is the KEY form in the federal financial aid process. Massachusetts also uses the FAFSA information for state scholarships. The FAFSA is required by all colleges. Hanover recommends that all students fill out a FAFSA.

It is FREE to fill out the FAFSA. Do not use sites ending in .com to fill out the FAFSA. You should not pay a fee to fill out this form.

The FAFSA hotline number is 1-800-4 FED AID.

- **Federal Student Aid** - <http://studentaid.ed.gov/>

The U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid website

- **CSS PROFILE** - <http://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile>

The CSS PROFILE financial aid application required by SOME colleges

- **finaid.org** - <http://www.finaid.org/>

finaid.org is a great resource for information about financial aid.

- **finaid.org/calculators** - <http://www.finaid.org/calculators/>

finaid.org's custom calculators can help you figure out how much college will cost, how much you need to save, how much aid you'll need and give you a quick approximation of your Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

- **MEFA** - <http://www.mefa.org/>

MEFA — the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority — is a non-profit state organization that serves students and families in Massachusetts and out-of-state students and their families pursuing higher education in Massachusetts. MEFA offers a number of resources to help make paying for college possible:

- Straightforward information and advice on applying for and choosing college financing
- Innovative college savings plans for parents/guardians of young children preparing for future education expenses
- Free financial aid seminars and helpful calculators and tools to help you understand your options and plan your college funding strategy
- Low-cost loan programs for parents/guardians and students
- "Ask a MEFA expert"
- Link to financial aid apps and scholarship search engine

- **The Common Data Set (CDS)** – <http://www.commondataset.org>

CDS is a detailed report covering University-wide information (eg. class size, cost, enrollment, demographics, etc.). Data is presented in the same "common" format used by most institutions of Higher Education to facilitate comparisons among institutions. Much of these data are used by the College Board, Peterson's Guides, and U.S. News & World Report.

- **"Is it a Scam?" - Federal Trade Commission**

<http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0082-scholarship-and-financial-aid-scams>

"Is it a scam?" Beware of scholarship and other financial aid scams! This website can help you spot scams and avoid wasting your money.

- **American Student Assistance** - <https://www.asa.org/planning/>

ASA has a location in the Boston Public Library that provides assistance to families with the FAFSA form and the CSS Profile (for no cost!). This service is offered most days of the week. ASA also has digital resources to help students prepare for life after high school.

- **John and Abigail Adams Scholarship and the Stanley Koplik Certificate of Mastery**

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/adams.html>

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/scholarships/mastery/default.html>

These awards are made available to students based on the results of their individual MCAS scores. Students who are deemed eligible, automatically receive the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship (they are informed in the late fall of their senior year), and students are informed late in their junior year if they meet the initial qualifications for the Koplik Certificate. See your school counselor if you have questions.

