



EMMA WILLARD SCHOOL

COLLEGE HANDBOOK

2010 - 2011

TABLE OF CONTENTS

College Planning Calendar	3
Emma Willard School’s College Counseling Program	10
Overview	10
The College Counselors	12
Rules and Responsibilities	12
College Representatives Visiting Emma Willard	13
College Search Materials	14
Naviance	14
Emma Willard’s College Counseling Web Page	14
Printed Material	15
Internet Resources	15
Evaluating Colleges	16
Academic Programs	16
Type of Institution	16
Size of Institution	17
Location	17
Facilities	17
Selectivity	17
The College Visit	19
College Applications and the Admission Process	20
The Application Form	20
Types of Applications	21
The Secondary School Report	22
Transcripts	22
Teacher Recommendations	22
Other Recommendations	23
Admissions Testing	23
The Interview	25
Financial Aid and Scholarships	28
Admissions Decisions	30
Seven Factors Colleges Consider	31
Taking a Year Off	32
Reading: A Good Use of Your Spare Time	33
College Matriculation – Class of 2009	34
College: A Good Match	35

COLLEGE PLANNING CALENDAR

Junior Year

October	Take the PSAT/NMSQT.
December	Register for January 22 SAT by December 23
January	Take the SAT on January 22. Juniors receive college counselor assignment and Naviance account registration code. Begin researching summer internships, study programs, service opportunities and jobs.
February	Read the College Handbook at http://www.emmawillard.org/academics/college_counseling/index.php. After reading it, go to your Naviance account and complete the college counseling questionnaire and autobiographical essay. Deadline for submission is no later than April 8 . Parents receive Naviance account registration codes and complete online parent questionnaire. Schedule an individual meeting with your college counselor after completing the college questionnaire and autobiography. If possible, invite your parents to attend your initial meeting. Once you have met with your college advisor and received a list of suggested colleges, begin using Naviance and other resources to start your college research. Begin working with Naviance's interactive online SAT tutorial, Method Test Prep. Continue to research colleges on your list. Make sure you go online and register as an inquiry at all colleges of interest.
March	Register for May 7 SAT or Subject Tests at: http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/reg.html or pick up a paper registration from the College Office. The deadline for registering for this test is April 8. If advised, register for April 9 ACT at www.act.org or pick up a paper registration from the College Office. The registration deadline is March 4. International students for whom English is the second language should register for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) at home over the summer. Sign up at www.ets.org/toefl . During spring vacation, begin visiting colleges (optional).

Continue to research colleges on your list.

April

Deadline for completing your college questionnaire and autobiography in Naviance is April 8.

Make course selections for the senior year in consultation with your advisor and your college counselor.

If advised, take the ACT examination on April 9.

Register for June 4 SAT (or Subject Tests in two or three different subjects) at: <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/reg.html> or pick up a paper registration from the College Office. The deadline for registering for these tests is May 6.

May

Take SAT or Subject Tests on May 7.

If advised, register for June 11 ACT exam by May 6 at www.actstudent.org or pick up a paper registration from the College Office.

If appropriate, take Advanced Placement examinations (May 2-10).

June

Take SAT Subject Tests or SAT on June 4.

Take ACT on June 11.

Summer

If you plan to take the SAT or Subject Tests in early October, remember that the registration deadline for that date is in early September. Go to www.collegeboard.com to register.

If you plan to take the ACT in early September, remember that the registration deadline is early August. You should plan to register at www.act.org while at home before returning to school.

Research the colleges on your list in Naviance in depth. Explore the information Naviance provides on each college as well as that provided by college Web sites. Read college guides such as the *Fiske Guide to Colleges*, and talk to alumni/ae you might know.

Go to the Web sites of each of the colleges in which you are interested and complete the online inquiry form so that you are on their mailing lists.

Reflect on your high school career, review and update your college counseling questionnaire, and create a resume. Click on “my resume” in Naviance and you will find a tutorial and a template.

Develop a travel plan with your parents and college counselor to visit as many colleges as you can. Make it a priority to see different types of colleges (large vs. small, urban vs. rural, etc.).

By now, you should be scheduling interviews at colleges of high interest to you (review "Conquering the College Interview" on the college counseling Web site). Because interview schedules fill up quickly, you should call admissions offices to schedule interviews as early as possible. You may also do this online at many college Web sites. As you plan your college trips, allow a morning or an afternoon on each campus.

If you have an interview at a college, take along your resume and an unofficial transcript. We will send you a copy of the latter in the last week of June or the first week of July.

Maintain a journal (preferably your junior seminar journal). Write down the three to five most important things you will use to measure a college and evaluate each visit in terms of those measures. Record your impressions of each college visit as soon after the visit as possible. Also, use your journal to record essay ideas, goals, questions to ask, to-do lists, contact information of people you meet at colleges, etc.

Begin working on a theme/concept for your college essay. If you can return in the fall with a draft(s) of your essay, you will feel well ahead of the game.

The new version of the Common Application is available each year on August 1 at www.commonapp.org. We recommend that you begin to explore it in detail and begin working on it.

As you explore the Common Application, go to "Download Forms" and click on "Requirements Grid." Highlight the deadlines, test and teacher recommendation requirements, and early application options for each of your colleges. Make a spread sheet with this and other pertinent information on it. This will help you feel organized and on top of things.

Begin drafting your college essay.

As you look at the Common Application for each college on your list, check to see if supplemental essays are required. Look at the supplemental essay questions and begin thinking about how you will respond to them.

In most cases, we do not believe it is necessary for you to take an SAT prep course. However, we do encourage you to practice in areas where you need to improve. You can do this by working with the online, interactive SAT review program in Naviance called Method Test Prep or by working with an SAT review book. One of the best ways to improve your Critical Reading and Writing SAT scores is to read as much as you can. Classical literature, current novels, newspapers, magazines -- they are all good. Discipline yourself to do this daily. Evidence suggests a correlation between a steady habit of reading and verbal/writing SAT scores.

Think about which teachers you will ask to write recommendations for you next fall. Ideally, you should choose two teachers from different academic areas (i.e. English/history and math/science) who have taught you in junior year courses. While we insist that you ask your teachers for recommendations in person, a heads-up email over the summer might be appreciated. If you have questions about teacher recommendations, contact your college advisor.

Make sure to keep communicating with your parents and your college counselor over the summer. Effective communication with all parties involved in your college process is essential. You don't want to get excited about colleges in California now only to find out next November that your parents will not support your going that far away from home.

If you are an athlete intending to be recruited by colleges and compete at the Division I or II level, register with the NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearing House at <https://web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter/common/>.

If you are an international student for whom English is not the first language, register to take the TOEFL here in Albany as early in the fall as possible. You can do so at www.ets.org/toefl.

Most importantly, take time to relax and let your tired mind breathe. You've had a demanding junior year, and your senior year will be a busy one. You need to return in the fall refreshed, focused, and enthusiastic.

Senior Year

September

Make appointment(s) with your college counselor immediately upon your return to campus. Sit down with everyone who has a stake in your college decision and solicit their input. Listen to what everyone has to say.

Register for October 9 SAT or Subject Tests at: <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/reg.html> or pick up a paper registration from the College Office. The deadline for registering for this test is September 10.

If advised, register for October 23 ACT at www.act.org or pick up a paper registration from the College Office. The registration deadline is September 17.

Continue work on college essay(s) and begin working on applications.

International students for whom English is the second language register to take the TOEFL at www.ets.org/toefl.

Visit The Common Application Web site at www.commonapp.org to see if your colleges participate in this program. If not, find college application forms online. Make a list of all college application and financial aid deadlines and place them in your planner or organize them in a college planning spreadsheet.

Monitor the schedule of college representative visits in the college office and sign up to attend appropriate presentations. See page 14 for more information about missing class for this purpose.

Visit (or re-visit) colleges of strong interest for admission interviews (review carefully the rules governing college visits in *Fine Print*).

Ask two (2) teachers *in person* if they will write teacher recommendations for you.

October

Continue consultations with your college counselor. Explore ED/EA options with your counselor. Narrow down your list to about 10-15 colleges.

If appropriate, register for November 6 SAT or Subject Tests at: <http://sat.collegeboard.com/register> or pick up a paper registration from the college office. The deadline for registering for this test is October 8.

Take the SAT or Subject Tests on October 9 and/or the ACT on October 23.

Continue to visit (or re-visit) colleges of strong interest for admission interviews (review carefully the rules governing college visits in *Fine Print*).

Continue to monitor the schedule of college representative visits in the college office and sign up to attend appropriate presentations.

Register for December 4 SAT or Subject Tests at: <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/reg.html> or pick up a paper registration from the College Office. The deadline for registering for this test is November 5.

Continue to work on college applications. Complete college essays and have them reviewed by your English teacher and/or your college counselor or a faculty member.

International students for whom English is the second language should take or retake the TOEFL.

Provide each of the teachers who will write your recommendations the materials noted in the section on teacher recommendations.

November

Continue to meet with your college counselor.

Register for December 11 ACT examination at: <http://www.actstudent.org/regist/dates.html> or pick up a paper registration from the college office. The deadline for registering for this test is November 5, 2010.

Go to College Board and/or ACT Web sites and send score reports to colleges.

Finalize your list of colleges with your college counselor.

Continue to monitor the schedule of college representative visits in the college office and sign up to attend appropriate presentations.

Take November 6 SAT or SAT Subject Tests.

Continue working on applications and essays.

Confirm that your teacher recommenders have what they need to write for you.

File November deadline ED/EA applications.

File rolling admission applications.

College Office sends out first-quarter grades for EDI / EA applicants.

If you are applying for financial aid, have your parent(s) begin working on the CSS Profile form available at

<https://profileonline.collegeboard.com/prf/index.jsp>.

December

Take December 4 SAT or SAT Subject Tests.

Take December 11 ACT examination if advised to do so.

Receive ED I / EA decisions and report them to your college counselor.

Confirm that SAT/ACT scores have been sent to colleges.

Ensure that the teachers writing your recommendations have everything they need *before* Revels.

File ED II and January 1 regular applications over vacation.

Submit your finalized college list to the college office by Revels week.

January

Complete January 15 and later applications.

Obtain and complete FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/> and college financial aid application forms.

Investigate scholarship options.

February

Schedule catch-up meeting with your college counselor to review application status and college list.

Receive ED II and rolling admissions decisions. Notify the college counselor of all decisions as they come in.

Mid-years grades are sent to the colleges to which you have applied.

March	Continue to work hard academically—spring semester grades can make a difference!
April	<p>Receive decisions from all colleges.</p> <p>Re-visit colleges at which you have been accepted. Attend accepted student programs.</p> <p>Work with your family and college counselor to decide which college to attend.</p> <p>Discuss your final choice with your college counselor.</p> <p>Notify all colleges of your enrollment intentions by May 1 and confirm that you have done this with the College Office.</p>
May	<p>May 1 – Deadline for enrollment deposit. Decline acceptances promptly in writing. (Remember: depositing at more than one college is forbidden.)</p> <p>Take AP's if appropriate (May 2-10, 2010).</p> <p>Complete your senior year in as strong a position as possible so as not to jeopardize your college acceptance.</p>
June	GRADUATION!!!

EMMA WILLARD SCHOOL'S COLLEGE COUNSELING PROGRAM

**“College is a match to be made, not a prize to be won.”
- Frank Sachs**

OVERVIEW

The mission of the college counseling program is to help you gain admission to colleges and universities that fit your intellectual and personal abilities, your interests, and your aspirations. In its efforts to educate, counsel, guide, support, and advocate for you throughout the college process, the college counseling team is guided by the philosophy that “college is a match to be made, not a prize to be won” (Frank Sachs). Fit is therefore emphasized over perceived prestige. As an institutional member of the National Association of College Admission Counseling, Emma Willard subscribes to the NACAC *Statement of Principles of Good Practice*. This statement delineates the professional and ethical standards, policies, practices, and procedures that guide and govern the activities of the secondary, post-secondary, and third-party participants in the college admissions process.

The college counseling team is headed by Kent Jones, director of college counseling. He reports to the assistant head of school and advises approximately three quarters of the senior class, oversees the entire college advising and testing program, and is responsible for the junior seminar program. The college counseling team also includes John Ball, Assistant Head of School; Kathleen McNamara, English teacher and Director of Faculty Development; Emily Snyder, history teacher and Director of Academic Support; and Cheryl Ackner, Administrative Assistant. The guidance and support provided by the college office is integral to the educational mission of the school. The members of the college counseling team see themselves as educators who are responsible for guiding you knowledgeably, professionally, and ethically. Our work is grounded in a deep respect for the worth, individuality, dignity, and dreams of each student. Our highest priority is to help you clarify your values, assess your strengths, and identify your goals for post-secondary education and then provide you (and your parents) with accurate information and realistic guidance about colleges and the college admissions process. In addition, we provide colleges with information about Emma Willard’s academic policies, profile, and the students applying to their institutions. We also provide input on discussions and decisions related to academic policy and curriculum development. Finally, we are responsible for dispensing information about colleges, college admissions, and the students involved in the process to a wide range of constituencies, including trustees, faculty, administrators, alumnae, and prospective students.

The college process encompasses standardized testing, Junior Seminar, and individualized college counseling. The college counseling office oversees and administers all standardized testing related to the college admissions process. The practice of taking the PSAT in your sophomore year gave you your first taste of the college process. You will recall that the director of college counseling met with the sophomore class early in the fall term to guide you and your classmates in your preparation for the PSAT in October. He met with your class again in December and January of your sophomore year to explain your PSAT results and advise you on strategies for improvement; he also wrote to your parents at this time explaining your PSAT results. In the fall of the junior year, the college counseling team meets with your class in early October to review strategies for re-taking the PSAT. When results come in, the director of college counseling meets with your class to review your scores and advise you on how best to prepare for the upcoming SAT. In January of the junior year, the process begins in earnest as you receive your college counselor assignment, along with this handbook. It will serve as an important reference as you go through the college process. A letter is again sent to your parents providing them with your junior PSAT scores and college counselor assignment, as well as information about future testing and the college counseling timetable. Your parents are encouraged to read the college handbook, which is made available

to them at http://www.emmawillard.org/academics/college_counseling/index.php. As a junior, you will be advised to take the SAT in January and again in May or June. You will also be advised to take two or three subject tests, usually in June of your junior year. In the senior year, you will be advised to take the SAT in October and, if necessary, one more time in November. You may be further advised to take additional subject tests in November or December. Approximately one-third of the senior class also takes the ACT examination, usually in June of the junior year and/or in late October of the senior year. All standardized testing should be completed by December of the senior year.

During your junior year, you will take Junior Seminar, a program that is unique to Emma Willard and taught by the seminar team and the director of college counseling. Created in 2006-2007, this course will provide you with a common platform of information about college and the college admission process. It will also challenge you to consider who you are and what you hope to make of your life by exploring and charting the pathways to your future and honing the communication and leadership skills you will need to accomplish your goals. The course's specific objectives are:

- To provide you with an opportunity to explore and discuss your future goals and pathways, including college, careers, and life plans.
- To help you assess your personal qualities, strengths, interests, values, and priorities.
- To explore your and others' expectations for college.
- To convey the basics of the college admissions process so that you can approach it intelligently, sanely, and with confidence.
- To teach you how to research and evaluate colleges.
- To provide you with opportunities to learn how to present yourself to the world and practice effective verbal and non-verbal communication.

The most important facet of Emma Willard's college counseling program is individualized advising about colleges. When you are assigned to your college counselor in January of your junior year, you will be asked to complete a college counseling questionnaire and a 500-750 word autobiographical essay in Naviance, our Web-based college counseling resource. At the same time, you parents will be asked to complete a questionnaire in their Naviance accounts in order to gain their input and assess their expectations for your college search. Once these documents are submitted, you, (and if possible, your parents) will be asked to begin meeting with your college advisor.

At the initial meeting, we will review your courses, grades, extracurricular activities, standardized test scores, summer plans, and most importantly, their academic and personal interests and goals. Together, we will develop an initial list of colleges that fit your profile and preferences. In addition, we will review the next steps in the college process, including researching colleges, visiting campuses, interviewing, and preparing to write the college essay. You will be expected to schedule follow-up visits and stay in communication with your college advisor during the remainder of the spring semester and over the summer, and you will be encouraged to visit colleges over spring break and summer vacation.

During the fall, you (and when possible, your parents) will meet regularly with your college counselor to refine your college list, finalize plans for standardized testing and submitting applications, and select teacher references. You will also continue to visit college campuses and participate in some of the approximately 60 information sessions given annually by college representatives who visit Emma Willard. In support of your applications, your college counselor writes a letter of recommendation for you based on interviews, your essays, your parents' observations, your teacher evaluations at the end of the junior year, and your grades and comments from teachers, houseparents, advisors, coaches, and other adults in the school community. Following the submission of applications, the director of college

counseling will carefully monitor the progress of your applications and work closely with college admission offices to ensure that your unique qualities and accomplishments are noted. As decisions come in during March and April, the college counseling team will assist you and your parents in understanding and processing those decisions and in selecting the option best suited to you.

Throughout the college process, a wide range of experts are invited to campus to give presentations in support of the goals and objectives of the college counseling program. For example, a former admissions dean is invited to speak to the faculty about the current landscape of college admissions and to assist them in preparing to write teacher recommendations for you. An admissions dean is also invited to give a presentation on the college process to juniors, and a director of financial aid speaks with junior parents in April about financing a college education. As part of the junior seminar program, college admissions representatives are invited to speak to the junior class on how selective colleges make decisions, and as part of the senior seminar program, recent college graduates offer advice to the senior class on how to make the most out of the college experience. Finally, as part of the senior retreat in May, seniors hear panels and presentations that prepare them for the impending transition to college.

THE COLLEGE COUNSELORS

The college counselors are your most accessible source of information on colleges and college admission. In your junior year they will begin individual conferences with you **after you have completed the College Questionnaire form and submitted an autobiography**. During these conferences, they will help you define your goals and interests, suggest colleges that seem to meet your requirements, guide you in a calendar of college planning and assist you in understanding the application procedures.

The college counselors are also the people who serve as your liaisons with college admissions offices. Although it is the school's responsibility to forward your records to colleges, it is your responsibility to ask the College Counseling Office that this be done. Be sure to keep your counselor informed of any new activities and accomplishments so they can be shared with your colleges.

In the course of your college investigations, the college counselors will assist you in assessing how realistic your college choices are. Their experiences with admissions decisions, records of decisions on past Emma Willard applicants in Naviance, and college profiles are all available to you. In assessing your chances of admission at a specific college, they can only offer educated estimates and advice, not assurances. Where you apply is ultimately your decision; whether you are accepted is the college's decision. Your college counselor will attempt to guide you so that when admissions decisions are made, you will not be completely surprised and you will be assured of an acceptance.

News about colleges and scholarships will be sent to you throughout the year via email and posted in Naviance.

Your college counselor will also write a confidential school recommendation, required by most colleges as part of the "Secondary School Report." This is not to be confused with teacher recommendations. It is important that you work closely with your college advisor so that she/he knows you well both as a student and as an individual. The counselor recommendation is based on personal knowledge and contact with you, comments from teachers and others who work closely with you, and your school record.

RULES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As an institutional member of the National Association of College Admission Counseling (NACAC), Emma Willard subscribes to the policies, practices, and procedures that govern the activities of the secondary, post-secondary, and third-party participants in the college admissions process. You and your parents should become familiar with this code of conduct so that you understand your rights and responsibilities. NACAC's *Statement of Principles of Good Practices* is available at <http://www.nacacnet>.

org/AboutNACAC/Policies/Documents/SPGP.pdf.

Everyone involved in the college admission process has responsibilities. The school's job is to help you get started, to help you build an initial college list, to provide you with resource materials, and to make educated guesses about your prospects at certain institutions. In addition, we aim to help you and the colleges to which you apply evaluate accurately your accomplishments, talents, and potential. The nature and competitiveness of college admissions have changed significantly in recent years, and sometimes our estimates of your chances of admission at a particular school will not square with those of your parents. You have our assurance that we will always do our best to be honest with you, to provide you with the best information possible, and to ensure that the admissions process is as transparent as we can make it.

We will expect you to take initiative, do research, visit colleges, and meet deadlines. We will also expect you to ask questions (it is impossible for us to anticipate all of them!) and to keep us informed of the challenges you encounter and the progress you make. As far as possible, you should take responsibility for making interview appointments and following up on correspondence. You must further keep your college advisor informed of communications with colleges about information missing from your application file, admissions decisions, etc.

Emma Willard also believes that your parents have responsibilities in this process. They should be objective sounding boards for you and help you think out loud about your options. They should be honest with you in discussing their own expectations and parameters and be supportive (as well as instructive) during this difficult and sometimes emotional process. Remember that your parents may have a high emotional as well as financial stake in your college plans, and it is certainly understandable that they will have feelings about one school or another. But just as Emma Willard does not ultimately "select" a college for you, neither should your parents.

In the beginning, you may feel overwhelmed by the amount of information and the great number of possible colleges. There are, for instance, well over 3,000 colleges in the United States, and a number of these would probably be an acceptable fit for you. You will start with many options and, with our help, gradually narrow the field based on factors you consider most important. During the process, you should remember that college catalogues and Web sites are only two sources of information. You will need to go beyond official literature to include visits to college campuses, meetings with representatives who visit Emma Willard and conversations with individuals such as your college counselor, teachers, friends, alumni/ae, students at the colleges, and parents. While others' views should always be taken with some skepticism, listen to what they have to say; much of the advice from these sources will be useful.

Finally, few students can safely apply to only one college. We will encourage you to apply to eight to ten schools and ensure that your final list includes schools of varying difficulty and is balanced between "reaches," "possibles," "likelies," and "safeties." We will encourage you to aim high, but we will also insist that you remain realistic about your college choices.

COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES VISTING EMMA WILLARD

Each year nearly seventy colleges send representatives to Emma Willard to talk with seniors. The majority of these visits occur between September and December.

Not only is the representative able to provide up-to-date information about his/her institution and its admissions policies, but he/she is another contact for you with the admissions office. The representative with whom you talk at Emma is often the same one who will review your application and participate in your decision. If you are unable to visit a college's campus, meeting with the representative from that institution will be particularly helpful.

The schedule of college visitors is contained in "The College Visitor Binder" in the College Counseling Office, announced weekly at Morning Reports, posted on the bulletin board outside the College Counseling Office, and posted on the college counseling Web page. These meetings are reserved for seniors. You will be allowed to miss a class for this purpose if you have received prior written permission from your college counselor and your teachers. To obtain permission to attend a meeting with a college representative, you must complete a yellow "College Representative Visit Form" (available in the college office), have it signed by your college advisor, and give it to the teacher of the class you will miss at least one day in advance of the meeting. In the event of a conflict with an announced test, it is your responsibility to be in class unless you can make alternate arrangements. You are always responsible for any work that you miss.

COLLEGE SEARCH MATERIALS

NAVIANCE

The most helpful tool in your college search will be Emma Willard's Web-based college counseling resource, Naviance. Here you can find a vast amount of information about colleges and the admissions process. For example, you can learn about your strengths and interests, prepare for the SAT, see results of recent Emma Willard applications to any college in the United States, have at your fingertips a convenient and streamlined method to research colleges and monitor your applications, find a wealth of scholarship information, and much more. In January of your junior year, you will receive a user name and password and be directed to the Naviance Web site at <http://connection.naviance.com/emmawillard>.

EMMA WILLARD'S COLLEGE COUNSELING WEB PAGE

Emma Willard's college counseling Web page is located at http://www.emmawillard.org/Academics/college_counseling/index.php. Along with Naviance, this Web page provides you with access to important resources and information pertaining to the college process. One of the most important tools available to you and your parents here is this College Counseling Handbook. You will be expected to read this handbook with care and be responsible for the information it contains.

PRINTED MATERIAL

College resource materials are available in the College Counseling Office's resource room in the Academic Suite. Among the resources available are:

- College catalogues
- College viewbooks and pamphlets
- Alumni/ae magazines and newspapers
- College guides
- College profiles
- Scholarship and financial aid information and forms
- Resources on career preparation and majors available at individual institutions

Testing information and registration materials are available in the College Counseling Office.

You may also wish to accumulate your own collection of college material. The following are helpful college guides which can be purchased online and at most bookstores:

- Barron's Profiles of American Colleges, Barron's
- The College Handbook, College Board
- Peterson's Annual Guide to Undergraduate Study, Peterson's Guides
- Princeton Review's Complete Book of Colleges, Princeton Review
- The Fiske Guide to Colleges, Edward Fiske
- The Best 361 Colleges, Princeton Review
- U.S. Colleges that Change Lives, Loren Pope
- The Index of Majors and Graduate Degrees, College Board
- Rugg's Recommendations on the Colleges, Frederick Rugg

INTERNET RESOURCES

The Internet provides valuable, timely guides to colleges. Some of the most popular sites are:

- <http://connection.naviance.com/emmawillard>.
- <http://www.collegeboard.com>
- <http://www.act.org>
- <http://www.commonapp.org>
- <http://www.collegeconfidential.com/>
- <http://www.petersons.com>
- <http://collegeapps.about.com>
- <http://www.princetonreview.com>
- http://www.emmawillard.org/academics/college_counseling/index.php

EVALUATING COLLEGES

In making college decisions, one of the most difficult tasks is to determine what you are looking for in a college. The process of college selection becomes considerably less perplexing once those criteria have been defined. While a college counselor is likely to go through the following issues, either individually or in Junior Seminar, you should take time to think about them independently and discuss them with your family and other trusted advisors.

You should never apply to colleges that you would not like to attend. A "safety" college becomes meaningless if you do not want to go there. Likewise, it is thoughtless for you to apply to a college just to see if you will be accepted when your acceptance might eliminate someone who would like to enroll.

Here are some factors you should consider while researching colleges to find schools that fit you as a learner and potential member of a learning community:

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Your first concern should be whether or not a college has the academic program you seek. It is not sufficient that the college simply offers it; you must evaluate the strength of the program and the department (courses, faculty, placement of graduates, facilities, research and internship opportunities, etc.). You should also learn about the core requirements for all graduates and any other programs that might relate to your goals and interests.

If you are undecided about a college major, do not worry! Many students entering liberal arts programs share your indecision, and many more change their minds about their major during their first two years in college. In imagining what might be a good major for you, consider your academic strengths and interests, your aptitudes, and your ideas about what you might like to do after college. If you are undecided, flexibility in a college's curriculum and co-curricular programs will be important to you if you wish to explore a wide range of academic possibilities. For example, can anyone have a part in a play or do all roles go to drama majors? The Internet is an invaluable resource for researching majors. Most colleges post their catalogues on their Web sites. Catalogues provide requirements for the major, distribution requirements, and lists of faculty.

TYPE OF INSTITUTION

Religiously affiliated or not? Research institution or liberal arts? Graduate programs or not? Coeducational or a women's college? The advantages of coeducational (coed) institutions are obvious, and a majority of Emma Willard students opt for the coed environment. But it is also important to consider the advantages of the other alternative before making final choices. For example, at a woman's college the institution's total energy and facilities are devoted to women. Career counseling is committed to placing women in the job market. Student leadership positions are all assumed by females. Research assistant positions with faculty go to women. All financial aid is assigned to women.

Many students have a preference for public or private institutions. Cost, size, diversity of students and offerings, administrative control, and admissions criteria are factors which may vary between state and private colleges.

SIZE OF THE INSTITUTION

There are colleges with 250 students and others with 50,000. While the quality of a college is not determined by its size, a student's enjoyment of it may be. Here are some of the factors that may be affected by the size of the institution:

- Extensiveness of course and program offerings
- Diversity of student body and faculty
- Faculty/Student ratio
- Class size, particularly in introductory courses
- Dependence on graduate teaching assistants
- Academic and social contact with students and faculty
- Availability and accessibility of facilities
- Involvement in leadership and extracurricular activities
- Dependence on social structures (fraternities, sororities, etc.)
- Degree of personal discipline, independence, and initiative required of a student
- Classroom interaction or academic support

LOCATION

Another decision to make is location. Urban, suburban, or rural setting? What part of the country? It can significantly add to an educational experience to attend college in another part of the country, yet there may be reasons why it is important to be near home. Make your decision, but in the process do not overlook an outstanding college (whether it is in New York City or a midwestern farm town) just because of its setting or location.

FACILITIES

The availability and condition of campus facilities should also be considered. The extensiveness of facilities in a particular academic area may reflect the strength of the program and the college's commitment to it. There are also practical considerations: an astronomy major will want an observatory; adequate practice rooms will be a must for the music major; if living in a single-sex dorm is important, the college should have one. Looking at the libraries, information technology resources, the condition of the dorms and classrooms, and even the grounds will tell you much about a school's resources and management.

SELECTIVITY

Understanding a college's selectivity relative to your own qualifications will be very important in making a realistic assessment of that college. Yet, it is equally important that you do research beyond the numbers to know if a college is right for you. While some college guides explicitly categorize colleges by their competitiveness, rankings are most often based on average test scores, gpa information, and the acceptance rate (the percent of applicants admitted out of those who apply). These rankings do not tell everything about the quality of either the college or its applicants. When using such guides, try to understand how they evaluate and compare candidates and what each college is looking for in addition to academic qualifications.

The guidelines below may be helpful in determining selectivity in general:

1. **Highly Selective** - In this group, about four-fifths are independent (private) colleges. In the past several years, however, more and more state-supported institutions are falling into this category. For instance, the University of Michigan is highly selective, particularly so for out-of-state residents. (Most public colleges and universities have a different and more selective admissions policy for out-of-state students.)

Because colleges in this group are well known and have more qualified applications than spaces, they are difficult to enter. Sheer numbers of applications can result in restricting admissions to top academic students only. To be considered for admission, an applicant must meet the following requirements:

- Have a well-balanced program of at least 20 academic courses. Colleges in this category expect students to pursue at least four of the five traditional academic disciplines - science, mathematics, English, history/social studies and foreign languages – through senior year and to be advanced in two or three areas.
- Earn grades in the A range in most subjects.
- Have good recommendations and a thoughtful, well-presented application.
- Give evidence of maturity, purpose and desire to learn. Summer programs such as American Field Service, Experiment in International Living, Andover Summer School, National Science Foundation programs and advanced placement programs for high school students are often evidence of these traits. Independent study may also enhance a student record.
- Have test scores to support the classroom record (2100 composite or above on the SATs).
- Show evidence of something other than study. A student may have an interest in extracurricular activities, have done volunteer work, or have a special talent or interest in an area that might intrigue the admissions committee or benefit the college.

Within this category, there is a wide range of selectivity, from those institutions that accept fewer than 50% of their applicants to those that accept fewer than 15%. Schools that fall in the most highly competitive range (i.e., they accept under 25% of the applicant pool) are in the luxurious position of rejecting most of their applicants for seemingly trivial reasons. They annually reject applicants whose scores are perfect, whose grades have never fallen below an A- and who have a wealth of extracurricular activities. For most colleges the best guide to measure the chance of being accepted is the profile of the past two or three years for Emma Willard students applying to that college. This information is available from the college counselor.

2. **Selective** - This includes a number of four-year institutions, 40% of which are public universities. Many private colleges in this group are small, having from 1,000 to 10,000 students on campus. Although some of these universities and colleges are less demanding in their admissions requirements, they may be stiff about weeding out students during the freshman year. For admission a student should:

- Have earned good grades in at least 90% of all academic courses with no D's or failures. All colleges expect higher grades junior and senior years.
- Earn grades in the A and B range.
- Demonstrate a serious desire to learn.
- Have test scores which place her in the middle range of college-bound seniors (around 1800 composite on the SATs).
- Have contributed to some voluntary extracurricular activity.

3. **Less Selective** - This group includes four-year and two-year colleges, many of which have exciting programs to offer in liberal arts or in such career programs as pre-nursing, child development, fashion design, etc. For admission a student should:
- Have a particular talent or desire to pursue a specific area along with, or instead of, liberal arts.
 - Have at least a C average. Colleges in this category are most interested in the applicant's qualifications for the specific area of interest to which she is applying.

These colleges draw able, well-prepared students, many of whom continue study for graduate degrees. However, these colleges are willing to give students with a strong desire and a reasonable record an opportunity to learn. Often colleges in this group provide strong guidance in selecting courses, making decisions, and adjusting to college demands.

4. **Specialized Colleges or Programs** - For some students who have a specific talent and a strong desire to spend most of their waking hours developing this ability, it might be worthwhile to investigate special schools or colleges, such as Rhode Island School of Design, Juilliard or North Carolina School for the Arts.

THE COLLEGE VISIT

A visit to a college campus is one of the most helpful resources in the college investigation. Not only does the visit enable you to see the physical setting and the facilities of the college, but it exposes you to its students, faculty and staff.

Although many college admissions offices argue that the best time to visit a college is when it is in session, try to schedule summer visits. This is a good time to participate in campus tours and information sessions. It is also a more relaxed time to interview if such opportunities are available. Fall visits and open house programs can then be used for more indepth explorations of colleges. Absences for fall college visits must be kept to a minimum; ordinarily, seniors will be permitted to miss no more than one or two class days, and then only with advance permission from a college counselor. For specific information about permissions for college visits, see *Fine Print*.

If you wish to visit a college(s), you should make every effort to do so during vacations or long weekends to avoid conflicts with school commitments. Approval to miss school commitments for college tours, interviews, and open houses is granted only to seniors and given only when travel forms have been filed on time and permission has been granted by your parent, houseparent, and college counselor. If you are a boarder who will be away overnight, you will need to submit a college overnight visit request form (pink) to Student Services in addition to the regular travel form which is filed with your houseparent. Your parents assume full responsibility for you when you are away from campus, and you remain subject to school rules and expectations for appropriate conduct while away for this purpose. If you are a boarding student who will be unchaperoned during an overnight visit, your travel form must include a contact at the college. If you are a day or boarding student who will be visiting colleges only for a day (i.e. not overnight), you must submit a college visit request form (blue) to Student Services. The forms are available in the College Counseling Office and must be signed by a college counselor at least one week in advance of the visit. It is always your responsibility to inform your teachers of any intended absence and to make up any missed work. Absences for college visits for non-seniors will not be excused and will be considered parental decision absences.

It is critical to plan college visits judiciously. Because college admissions office appointment calendars fill up fast, you are advised to make fall appointments during the summer. Here are some tips on getting the most out of your campus visit:

- Discuss the visit with your college counselor. She/he can help in planning and sometimes provide the names of Emma graduates who attend a particular institution. Contacting the college is solely the student's responsibility, however.
- Call (preferably) or write or email the admissions office to request an interview and a tour of the campus.
- There may be times, particularly when the admissions office is making admissions decisions in February and March, when appointments are not granted. In this case, the opportunity for a tour and a group information session is usually possible.
- Visit classes if the college is in session.
- To spend the night in the dorm, make arrangements through the admissions office at the college. Not all colleges encourage this.
- Students with a special talent--e.g., in music, athletics, visual arts or dance—should arrange in advance to see faculty or coaches involved in your particular area(s) of interest.
- In touring the campus, pay special attention to the library, campus bookstore, housing units, grounds, recreational facilities, and any facilities that fit your special area of academic and extracurricular interest.
- Read the student newspaper. Try to find other student publications -- department newsletters, alternative newspapers, literary reviews.
- Scan bulletin boards to see what day-to-day student life is like.
- Eat a meal in a cafeteria.
- Visit the student center. Talk with as many people as possible to see their responses to the institution. Ask a student what he/she does on weekends. Listen to the college's radio station. Caution: One person's view is not the college's nor is the weather that day necessarily the norm....The immediate conditions encountered on the visit should not overly prejudice a student's reaction to the college as an entity.
- Walk or drive around the community surrounding the campus.

COLLEGE APPLICATIONS AND THE ADMISSION PROCESS

Please keep your own file of all college correspondence, interview dates and names, SAT scores, ACT scores, etc. A helpful form for tracking applications can be found online at:
<http://www.collegeboard.com/article/0,3868,5-25-0-8435,00.html>.

THE APPLICATION FORM

The application form is the initial, but not the only, step in applying to college. More than 90 percent of applications are now submitted online, and almost all colleges now prefer that you apply electronically. To determine which schools use the Common Application, visit each college's Web site or refer to <http://www.commonapp.org>. All admission and application requirements for Common Application schools are conveniently listed at the Common Application Web site in a form called "Requirements Grid" located under the "Download Forms" tab.

The application form requests biographical and demographic data, information about your family, information about your academic background and standardized test results, extracurricular involvements, work experiences, future plans, and academic and career interests. Most selective college applications also require a short-answer essay (usually about why you are interested in the particular college), an application essay of 500-750 words, and one or more supplemental essays. These essays are read both for

content and for spelling, grammar, voice, organization, etc. Almost without exception, colleges require an application fee ranging from \$25-\$75, though some colleges waive the application fee if you apply online.

Since colleges want the application to reflect you, your interests and values, your ability to write, and your ability to think, completing applications requires significant time and energy. You should "put your best foot forward" without being boastful. Throughout the application, it is important to be honest, thorough, concise, neat, and attentive to directions. Make a copy of the application before submitting it and review it with your college counselor. Leave plenty of time for revision.

Remember that your college applications are your responsibility. It is your responsibility to file your applications completely and on time. Make a spread sheet or chart to stay organized. Set your own preliminary deadlines in advance of official deadlines. It goes without saying that your application and essays should reflect your own work. The Buckley Amendment requires that you or your parents authorize Emma Willard to send an application, transcript, etc. to a college. When you reach 18, you will be asked to come to the Registrar's Office in order to sign an authorization to this effect. Until then, your parents' authorization to release this information is necessary.

NOTE: If you are considering applying to one of the service academies (i.e. West Point or Annapolis), you should inform your college advisor and be in contact with your congressperson's or senator's office in the spring of your junior year. This application requires earlier attention than regular college applications.

TYPES OF APPLICATIONS

Early Decision (ED): If you have an intense interest in applying for early decision (ED) at a college that offers such a plan, and if it is a realistic choice based on your record at Emma Willard, we encourage you to do so. Approximately 50-60 percent of our senior class has done this over the past few years. You may apply to only one school under ED I or ED II, but if not accepted under and ED I plan, you may apply to another school under ED II. If accepted to a school under ED I or ED II, you *must* enroll. If your ED application is deferred, it will be reconsidered in the college's regular applicant pool at a later date. You may apply to other colleges (either Early Action or regular decision) while your ED application is pending, but once admitted under ED, you must withdraw all other applications immediately. Most ED I deadlines fall in early to mid-November, and colleges notify candidates by mid-December. Most ED II deadlines are in early to mid-January, and notifications are sent in mid-February.

Early Action (EA): Early Action works just like Early Decision with the significant exception that it does not require a binding commitment to enroll if accepted. EA application deadlines are similar to ED deadlines, and accepted students have until May 1 to enroll. A handful of very highly selective institutions have instituted Single Choice Early Action or Restricted Early Action (REA), a plan that limits you to just one application until you hear from the college. Emma Willard's policy is to encourage you to treat a Single Choice Early Action acceptance the same way you would an ED acceptance. Even though EA is not binding, we assume that when you apply to a school under EA, you are indicating a very strong interest in that school

Regular Decision: This is the application round in which most students apply to colleges. While most regular decision deadlines range from January 1 to February 15, application dates may vary. Most regular decision application programs notify students in late March or early April and require a commitment from accepted students on or before May 1.

Rolling Admissions: Some colleges notify applicants on an ongoing basis shortly after receiving the application (4-6 weeks). There is no enrollment commitment required before May 1 under such a plan, although students may be encouraged to put down a deposit prior to that date.

THE SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT

Most application materials contain a secondary school report, which must be completed by the College Office. The secondary school report includes:

1. A brief identification of the student and the school and a description of the grading system.
2. Although colleges which have traditionally attracted Emma Willard students are aware of the demands of the curriculum and the competitiveness of the student body and take these factors into consideration, the College Office provides a school profile with each transcript to ensure that admissions officers fully understand Emma Willard's academic program and environment.
3. Courses taken (grades 9-12) either at EWS or at previous high schools.
4. Grades earned in each course.
5. In accordance with Emma Willard School policy, grade point average and rank in class are not calculated or reported to colleges.
6. In lieu of completing the personal qualities rating grid on the secondary school report form, your college counselor will write a confidential letter of recommendation for you which completes the second part of the form.
- 7.

Read the instructions on secondary school report form(s) carefully. If applying via paper application, be sure to give the hard copy of the secondary school report form to Cheryl Ackner in the College Office.

You should complete the student information section of this and all other forms handed over to others to be completed. Also, be sure to sign the waiver of access option.

TRANSCRIPTS

The College Office will send a transcript reflecting all grades earned through the first quarter of the senior year to all the colleges listed on the transcript request form you submit to the College Office. In early to mid-February, the College Office will also send a mid-year report reflecting all grades through the end of the first semester of the senior year to each college to which you have applied. While the College Office does not routinely send third quarter grades to colleges, it will provide them either upon your request or that of a college considering your application. At the end of the academic year, one final transcript will be sent to the college at which you have enrolled.

TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Most selective colleges, seeking information on your motivation, abilities, attitudes, self-discipline, determination, creativity, and mastery of individual subjects, request one or two confidential teacher recommendations. In selecting teachers to write them, choose teachers from your junior or senior year in different disciplines (i.e. English/history and science/math). You should ask each teacher you have selected to write a recommendation for you *in person* (not by email or telephone) by October 15 or at least one month before the recommendation is due. You should ask the same teachers to write recommendations for all colleges that request them. With little alteration, the same information can be sent to each college. Remember that it takes a great deal of time, thought, and effort to craft a recommendation. After a teacher has written a recommendation for you, it is customary to send him/her a handwritten thank you note. As a courtesy, you should also keep your recommending teachers apprised of college decisions when they are received.

Students applying online via the Common Application: When you create an account in the Common Application online, you must first identify your high school. When this is done, you can access the School Forms section of the application where you can identify a teacher(s) to be added to your list of school officials. As you do this, an email is automatically sent to the teacher(s) with instructions about using the

online teacher recommendation system. You will then be able to monitor when your teacher has submitted his or her recommendation and when it was received by each college. (It is not necessary to do this for your college advisor since the records and information we provide are accepted in lieu of the official school report form.)

Students not applying online: You should give each teacher writing a recommendation for you each school's teacher recommendation form (or a copy of the Common Application teacher recommendation form). For example, if you are applying to eight colleges, you should give each teacher eight recommendation forms. The first section of the form, "To the Applicant," should be completed by you. You should also read and sign the privacy notice, checking "yes" to the question, "Do you waive your right to see this recommendation?" Each recommendation form should be accompanied by a *stamped*, No. 10, plain white business envelope addressed to the college admissions office. You should also write the teacher's return address (name, 285 Pawling Ave., Troy, NY 12180) in the upper left hand corner of the envelope. All that your teacher should have to do is place the recommendation in the envelope you provide and drop it in the mail. To ensure that you have a record of receipt from each college, it is advisable to include in each envelope a stamped or postage-paid postcard (available from the mailroom). This postcard should be addressed to you on the front, and on the back you should write, "(name of college) has received (teacher's name)'s recommendation for (your name)."

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

You may also wish to have additional recommendations, either from a third teacher or advisor or from an individual(s) outside of school, submitted on your behalf. In most cases, an additional recommendation is useful only if the person writing it can provide a perspective that will not be reflected in your other recommendations. You should consult with your college counselor about the advisability of including additional recommendations; too many can hinder rather than help your chances, and some colleges will even discard recommendations other than those requested in the instructions.

ADMISSIONS TESTING

Emma Willard's CEEB code is 335600. The school code number must be placed on all application forms. **Your name must be recorded identically each time.** The test company's computer will catch even the omission of a middle initial, causing the creation of two or more accounts for you in their database. When this happens, your scores will not all appear in one place or on one report, and you will need the assistance of your college advisor in resolving the problem.

The most frequently used admissions tests are the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the test administered by the American College Testing program (ACT). These tests, given on national Saturday test dates, are the only common factor among the applicants to a college (high school demands, recommendations, etc. vary immensely). The extent to which colleges weigh these results in admission decisions also varies. A very few colleges have an absolute minimum test score; for most, admission test results are but one of a number of factors considered in the admissions decision. Nevertheless, test scores are important. The more selective the college, the more important the scores become as discriminators among otherwise qualified candidates.

SAT Reasoning Test (SAT) and Subject Tests: The SAT is 3 hours and 45 minutes long. It is a test of verbal, quantitative, and writing abilities. You should take the SAT in January and May of your junior year and in either October or November of your senior year. The SAT reports three separate scores, each on the familiar scale of 200-800. Results will be given in three areas: critical reading, math, and writing, with two sub-scores provided under the writing section: a multiple choice sub-score of 20-80 and an essay score scaled from 2-12. Some colleges only consider the critical reasoning and math scores and do not include the writing portion in their evaluation. Yet, recent research indicates that of the three SAT sections, the writing section is the most predictive of academic success in college. While standardized test

scores do predict academic success in the freshman year, especially when coupled with high school grades, colleges know that they do not assure success. More important, they know that your test scores do not say anything profound about your ability to be a happy, productive person. Nevertheless, they are a significant factor in the admissions process at most selective colleges.

Many colleges also ask you to submit scores from the SAT Subject Tests. These are one-hour, multiple-choice, subject-specific tests also offered by the College Board. They are frequently used in admissions, but they may also be required for course placement (for example, placement at the beginning or intermediate level of a required writing, language, or math course). There are currently twenty-two Subject Tests from which to choose. You may begin taking SAT Subject Tests as early as June of freshman year. As a general rule, you should have taken SAT Subject Tests in two or three different subject areas by June of junior year and, if necessary, retake some tests in the fall of your senior year.

The cost for the SAT is \$47 and the basic registration fee for Subject Tests is \$21. Each Subject Test costs \$10.00 in addition to the basic registration fee.

American College Testing Program (ACT): Many if not most colleges accept the results of the ACT examination (either with or without writing) in lieu of the SAT and SAT Subject Tests. This is a three-hour examination with sections in English, math, reading, and science reasoning. Some colleges require that students take the ACT Plus, or the ACT with writing. The ACT Plus takes an additional thirty minutes and is available on all national test dates. You should review each college's testing requirements carefully to determine whether to take the ACT or the ACT Plus Writing test. The ACT (without writing) is \$33 and the ACT Plus (with writing) is \$48.

Score Choice – A New Way to Report Your SAT Scores: Score Choice is a new score reporting option provided by the College Board that lets you choose which scores (by test date for the SAT and by individual test for the SAT Subject Tests) you send to colleges. Your decision must be in accordance with each college's stated score use practice. You may choose from one, several, or all SAT test dates. The College Board has worked with colleges and universities to help you understand which scores they would like you to send. Different colleges have made different decisions as to how they want you to report SAT scores. Not all have elected to go with score choice, and many that have ask for scores in different ways.

Please note the score reporting requirements for each of the colleges to which you are applying at: http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/score_choice.html. Colleges will only receive the scores you send them; your scores will not be released for admission purposes without your specific consent. If you choose not to use Score Choice, all of your scores will be sent automatically with each report. Score Choice applies only to the score reports that you send to colleges; you and Emma Willard will still receive scores from all your test dates in one report. Since ACT scores are reported only by the test date and previous scores do not appear on ACT score reports, the score choice option for this test is already built in.

Getting Your Test Results: Your SAT scores will generally be available to view online in your College Board account two to three weeks from the date of the test. For a table showing when you can view your scores after each test date, go to <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/scores.html>. ACT scores are available online at your student account page within the same timeframe following the test date. A schedule of when ACT scores are available can be found at <http://www.actstudent.org/scores/early/>.

Sending Your Scores to Colleges: It is your responsibility to report your official scores in a timely manner. To send your scores to colleges, go to <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/scores/sending.html> or <http://www.actstudent.org/scores/send/index/html>. Although most students wait to see their scores before sending them to colleges, you may wish to list colleges to receive your scores at the time that you register for the SAT or ACT. If you do so, the first four score reports will be sent free of charge. You have up to nine days after the test to add, change, or remove a college from your score report. If you choose to list more than four colleges to receive your score report at the time you register, or if you

request scores to be sent to colleges after you register for the test, the cost is \$9.50 per report for the SAT and \$9.00 per report for the ACT.

Score Optional Colleges: The National Center for Fair and Open Testing, or “Fair Test,” provides a list of the more than 830 colleges and universities that deemphasize the use of standardized tests by making admissions decisions about substantial numbers of applicants without using the SAT or ACT. Some schools exempt students who meet grade-point average or class rank criteria while others require SAT or ACT scores but use them only for placement purposes or to conduct research studies. Check with each school's admissions office or Web site to learn more about specific admissions requirements, *particularly for international students*.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL): Students for whom a language other than English is the native language should register to take the TOEFL in the spring of the junior year and the fall of the senior year at www.ets.org.

Advanced Placement (AP) Tests: The AP program enables high school students to experience college-level coursework and earn college credit. Emma Willard offers AP courses in fifteen subjects. Evidence of AP courses on a transcript can enhance the perception of the strength of your academic program in eyes of a college admissions committee. While junior year AP results can have a bearing on your admission, the results of AP examination taken in May of the senior year have no impact since the scores are not available until June, long after you have enrolled at a particular college. AP test scores of 4 or 5 on the 1-5 grading scale are normally considered for credit toward graduation at selective colleges, although they may not exempt students from prerequisites in a college major. While each AP examination costs \$82, this investment may represent a considerable savings relative to the cost of a college course. Information about sending AP results to colleges is available at http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/exgrd_rep.html. The decision to report AP scores to colleges is entirely yours; they are separate from SAT scores and do not appear on the SAT score report.

THE INTERVIEW

The admissions interview can improve your chances at a particular school by personalizing your application and conveying your interest in that college. Many schools are now so overwhelmed by applications that the interview is no longer required or even recommended; some colleges no longer grant interviews. It is important that you find out the interview policy at each of your colleges. Whenever possible, you should take advantage of any opportunities to interview. When college representatives come to Emma Willard, you should meet with them if you are considering the college, even if you have already visited the campus. Some colleges will also offer the option of meeting with an area alumnus/a for an interview.

The interview provides an opportunity to:

- Ask questions of the college concerning academic programs, study abroad, the social landscape, etc.
- Explain an academic challenge that your transcript reveals.
- Speak with enthusiasm about your greatest passions.
- Provide context for various choices you've made (such as changing schools, dropping a core class, adding a particular extracurricular activity, etc.).
- Showcase your delightful personality.
- Make a memorable, favorable impression.

General Rules of Thumb:

- Call colleges at least a few weeks in advance of your visit to inquire about interviewing. Many colleges fill their interview slots early, especially in the fall. Ask if it is possible to schedule your interview with the admissions officer who reads files from Emma Willard. If there are no on-campus interviews available, ask about alumni/ae interviews.
- Even if you cannot interview, be sure to stop by the admissions office to pick up information, take a tour, and give your name to the receptionist; this is a simple way of “demonstrating interest.”
- Allow plenty of extra time to get to the interview. Tardiness detracts from your ability to make a good first impression.
- Try to schedule your first interview at a safety school (but not a school where you know you’d never apply). This will enable you to get some practice where the stakes are perhaps not as high.
- Bring copies of your transcript and resume. Your interviewer may or may not want to look at them, but she/he may find them helpful in recording impressions after the interview.

Making a Good Impression:

- Be yourself!
- In most cases, formal dress is not expected; your dress should be similar to or slightly better than what you might wear on a normal school day, and your appearance should be comfortable, authentic, and respectful both of your interviewer and of the importance of the occasion. It goes without saying that your clothing and appearance should not be sloppy, revealing, distracting, or provocative.
- Maintain good eye contact.
- Be conscious of your posture; sit up straight.
- Turn off your cell phone.
- Listen actively; try not to fidget, play with your hair, chew gum, look out the window, etc.
- Smile a lot and show enthusiasm about yourself, the conversation, and the college.
- Answer with openness and honesty. Do not talk too much in response to a simple question, but also do not give one word or one-phrase answers to questions that call for a more thoughtful response.
- Most interviews last about half hour to forty-five minutes, and most will cover in that time period your interest in the college, your academic background and interests, your extracurricular involvement in school, and how you use your time outside school. Time will be left at the end of the interview to cover any questions you may have that have not already been answered. This is a lot to cover in a half hour, so manage your time and gauge the length of your responses with this in mind. Do not be disconcerted if the interview is shorter than expected; sometimes this is more a reflection of the interviewer’s style than of her/his judgment of you as a candidate.
- Frame your responses positively. (If you are describing a challenging situation, focus on your growth and how much you learned from the experience rather than on the bad decision you made).
- Speak with economy, specificity, and confidence; try to avoid slang such as “like,” “you know,” “cool,” “umm”...

- Have ready two or three specific, intelligent questions about the college that cover information not readily available to you on the school’s Web site or in its view book. Avoid questions such as “Do you really have to do the math core requirement here?” Instead, look at current news and program information on their Web site and ask specific questions such as “What is the relationship between the students and faculty here?” or “I noticed that Dr. Bang just received a grant from NASA for his rocket fuel project; will there be an opportunity for undergraduates to work on this project?” or “In general, how are undergraduates chosen for research projects in the physics department?”
- Students who control the direction of the conversation stand out. Before you even get to the interview, think about what aspects of yourself you want to highlight; try to move the conversation in those directions.
- Again, be yourself!

A Word for Parents:

College admissions officers believe that where a student goes to college is mostly her own decision; they are generally not interested in speaking with parents beyond a quick hello and answering your questions at the end of the interview. You should not expect to be invited in to the interviewer’s office with your daughter, and you should remain in the waiting area during the interview.

Sample Interview Questions:

1. Why are you considering this college?
2. What makes you think that this college would be a good match?
3. Where else are you applying and why?
4. What do you hope to major in?
5. What do you expect to be doing ten years from now?
6. How do you define “success?”
7. What have you liked or disliked about your school? What would you change?
8. How would you describe yourself to someone who did not know you?
9. What newspapers and magazines do you read?
10. What books not required for school have you read recently?
11. What television shows do you watch?
12. Tell us about your family.
13. How do you spend a typical afternoon after school? Evening? Weekend?
14. What extracurricular activities have you found most satisfying?
15. What are your strengths? Weaknesses? What has been your proudest achievement so far?
16. If you could talk with any one living (or deceased) person, whom would it be and why?
17. What events have been crucial in your life?
18. What is the most important thing you’ve learned in high school?
19. What mark do you feel you’ve left on your school?
20. What do you want to get out of your college experience?
21. What about you is unique? What could you contribute to our college community?
22. Talk about a significant challenge you have encountered.
23. Is there anything you’d like to tell us about your transcript?
24. What is your greatest passion?
25. How would your friends describe you?
26. If you had high school to do over again, what might you have done differently?
27. What are your goals for your senior year?

After the Interview:

You should try to gather as complete an impression as possible during your campus visit. Either before or after the interview, wander around absorbing the “feel” of the campus.

- Pay special attention to the library, campus bookstore, housing units, and any facilities that fit your special area of academic and extracurricular interest.
- Read the student newspaper. Try to find other student publications—department newsletters, alternative newspapers, literary reviews.
- Scan bulletin boards to see what day-to-day student life is like.
- Eat in the cafeteria.
- Visit the student union. Approach students and ask them about their experiences at the school; most students are pleased to be able to talk about their colleges.
- Explore the community surrounding the campus.

A Final Word: When you get home, send a personal note or email to the interviewer thanking him or her for meeting with you. Do the same to your tour guide if you have his or her contact information. You should also give positive feedback on your visit, citing things about the college that impressed you.

FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Financial Aid is based solely on demonstrated financial need (your family's ability to pay for college expenses based on an analysis of income and assets) versus the cost of attending a college (tuition, fees, room, board, books, and personal expenses). If there is a gap between the expected family contribution and the cost of attending the college, this gap is referred to as demonstrated financial need. Since college costs vary, the financial aid package is also likely to vary from college to college. The only constant is usually the amount a family is expected to contribute. To determine a family's expected financial contribution (EFC) and the amount of demonstrated need, colleges require your parents to submit a financial statement called the FAFSA. This form is available online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Many colleges also require the CSS: Profile, also available online at <http://profileonline.collegeboard.com/index.jsp>. These forms should be completed by parents and submitted as soon after January 1 as possible. In cases where your parents are divorced or separated, most colleges will still require information from both parents.

Need-based financial aid typically comes in the form of a “financial aid package” that includes grants (gift aid that does not have to be paid back), loans (money that has to be repaid), and student employment (money that is paid directly to you for work on campus). Grants can come from the federal and state governments, the college, and private endowments. Loans are available to students and parents from the federal government, private lending agencies or banks, or the college, itself. Employment (or “work-study”) comes through the college as compensation for an assigned job. For more information about the types and sources of financial aid, visit <http://www.nasfaa.org>.

In contrast to financial aid, **scholarships** are not based on need but are awards made in recognition of academic merit and/or outstanding talents. Areas such as leadership, academics, music, and athletics are frequently among those singled out for scholarship awards. Students who will be applicants for financial aid/scholarship should indicate their intentions on their admission applications and obtain the required financial aid application forms in January of the application year. Applications for financial aid should be processed as early as possible after January 1 of the senior year.

While the FAFSA may not be filed before January 1 of the senior year, students applying for Early Decision or Early Action may apply earlier for financial aid. All colleges offering early admission programs provide some type of early need analysis form, and all colleges accepting students under ED/EA will provide an estimated financial aid package. Most private colleges will use the CSS Profile online form for this purpose. Students who file early for financial aid must also comply with the college's FAFSA and CSS Profile requirements after January 1. Consult each college's admissions and financial aid Web sites for specific instructions on how to apply for financial aid as an ED or EA candidate.

There are a number of Web sites and search engines that allow you to search for scholarship and grant funds. Of the ones we have previewed, we suggest you start with these:

www.nasfaa.org
www.fafsa.ed.gov/
www.ed.gov/finaid/
www.collegeboard.com/pay
www.finaid.org/
www.studentaid.ed.gov
www.fastweb.com

Tuition Tax Credits: The federal government offers parents and students two tuition tax credit programs, Hope/American Opportunity and Lifetime Learning, to help pay for higher education costs. If your parents meet certain conditions, they can qualify for a reduction on their federal income tax bill. However, they may not claim both the Hope/American Opportunity and the Lifetime credit for the same student in the same year.

Tax credits allow your parents to subtract, on a dollar-for-dollar basis, the amount of the credit from their total federal income tax bill. Income tax deductions are subtracted from their income before their taxes are calculated. As a result, tax credits usually allow for greater total savings than tax deductions.

The Hope/American Opportunity Tax Credit: With the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA, also known as the Stimulus Bill), Congress has expanded the existing Hope tax credit, now called the American Opportunity Credit. The expanded terms will apply to tax years 2009 and 2010. While the Hope Credit could be applied to two years of postsecondary education, the expanded program allows the credit to be claimed for four years, and also expands income eligibility.

To claim this credit, you must be enrolled at least half-time in a program leading to an undergraduate degree or other legitimate education credential. The maximum yearly credit per eligible student is \$2,500. The American Opportunity Credit is partially refundable, which means up to \$1,000 could be paid back to lower-income taxpayers when the credit exceeds their total tax bill. There is no limit on how many family members can receive the credit. The amount of the credit begins to phase out if your parents modified adjusted gross income (AGI) is between \$80,000 and \$90,000 or more for a single return and between \$160,000 and \$180,000 or more for a joint return. For parents or guardians to claim a Hope credit for their child's college expenses, you must be listed as a dependent on the tax form. If you are not listed as a dependent on another person's tax form, you can claim the credit. For exact directions for claiming the American Opportunity credit, and information about a further credit available to students in specified Midwestern disaster areas, consult IRS Publication 970, [Tax Benefits for Education](#).

The Lifetime Learning Tax Credit: This credit is available for all years of postsecondary education and for courses (even a single course) to acquire or improve job skills. The Lifetime Learning credit can only be used for tuition and fees. The credit can be claimed for 20 percent of the amount your parents pay. A taxpayer may claim a tax credit for 20% of up to \$10,000 in a combination of tuition and fees. This equates to a \$2,000 tax credit in 2008 and 2009. The amount of the credit begins to phase out if your AGI is between \$50,000 and \$60,000 for a single return and between \$100,000 and \$120,000 for a joint return. Consult [IRS Publication 970](#) for specific rules on eligibility and claiming this tax credit.

For more information on tuition tax credits, visit the Department of Education and the IRS Web sites. Your parents might also want to consult a tax preparer or financial advisor.

ADMISSION DECISIONS

Acceptance: When you receive an admission decision from a college, you should advise your counselor or Cheryl Ackner in the College Office at once. Make careful note of the reply date for responding to an acceptance. When you accept or decline an offer of admission, you should notify the college (and the College Office) as soon as possible, and certainly no later than May 1. You may enroll at only one college, and a final transcript will be sent in June only to the college at which you have enrolled. If you accept an offer of admission from a waiting list, you must withdraw in writing from the college at which you were earlier enrolled at the same time you enroll at the school that accepted you from the waiting list.

Deferral Under Early Decision: If your ED application is deferred, it will be reconsidered in the regular applicant pool, and you will receive a decision at the same time that regular applicants are notified. While it is possible that the outcome of an ED deferral could be a waiting list decision, most colleges try to make a decisive decision (accept or deny) and avoid putting you off yet one more time. If you are deferred under ED, the binding commitment is lifted, and you are free to consider other offers of admission.

Waiting List: If you have been placed on a college's waiting list, you should discuss the advisability of staying on that waiting list with your college counselor and, if appropriate, with the college, itself, before signaling your intention to remain on the waiting list. In most cases, colleges will not move to their waiting lists until after responses to their initial offers of admission are received on or shortly after May 1. They normally complete waiting list action prior to June 1.

Denial: If you have been denied admission to a college, the decision is, unfortunately, final and not subject to appeal.

Deferring Enrollment: Most colleges will allow you to defer your enrollment for a year or more for the purpose of pursuing a special interest or experience outside the academic setting. In general, you will be expected to honor your commitment to matriculate at the college at the end of the gap year and not use the year to apply to other colleges. Some schools will require that you request deferral (always in writing) at the time of enrollment (May 1); others will allow you to defer up to the beginning of the school year. In all cases, if you are receiving financial aid, you must reapply for aid for the following year by the appropriate deadlines.

Remember: You will be expected both by the college at which you enroll and by Emma Willard to keep up your academic work through the spring. All college acceptances are provisional, contingent on the completion of your senior year at the same level on which the offer of admission was made. Colleges may rescind an offer of admission if your final transcript (sent by the College Office in June) reflects significant deterioration of academic performance. You and the College Office may also be obligated to notify your college of any significant disciplinary action during the spring semester.

SEVEN FACTORS COLLEGES CONSIDER WHEN MAKING DECISIONS

The college admissions process is a complex one, but here are some points that may be valuable to you and your parents as you try to unravel its mysteries.

1. The single most important credential in your application file is your **academic record**, particularly that of the junior year and the first half of the senior year. In many cases you can help your college chances by making a strong effort to improve during this time, thereby billing yourself as a student "on the way up." It is important to keep in mind, however, that college admissions officers scrutinize your entire academic record. As they do, they will consider the strength of your academic program as well as your grades.
2. **College admission examinations** are important, even though an increasing number of colleges are making them an optional requirement. Catalogue and interview rhetoric notwithstanding, the vast majority of schools pay real attention to the SAT and Subject Test or ACT scores because they constitute one way of comparing students from a wide range of high schools and backgrounds. In addition, at highly competitive colleges the tests become an additional discriminator among many highly qualified candidates.

Each year about three million high school seniors apply to the more than 3,000 accredited colleges and universities in the country. Being in the top half of the group of 3 million students, while certainly good enough for the majority of colleges, is not good enough for the most competitive colleges. For example, the eight "Ivy League" colleges received a total of 202,900 applications for the class of 2013, and acceptances went to only 24,146 students (11.9 percent).

These 24,165 students are, in theory, among the most outstanding of the three million who take the SAT. They are said to represent more or less the top one half of one percent of high school seniors. And, at these eight Ivy League universities, the average incoming first-year student has SAT critical reading plus math (not including writing) scores of 1438. When a highly selective university processes 20,000 to 30,000 applications, scores take on added importance because the great majority of applicants already offer excellent grades and excellent extracurricular activities. Scores thus become a tool to differentiate among similarly and highly qualified students. This is true to a greater or lesser degree at all competitive colleges that are not score-optional. While standardized test scores do predict academic success in the freshman year, especially when coupled with high school grades, colleges know that they do not assure success. More important, they know that your test scores do not say anything profound about your ability to be a happy, productive person. Nevertheless, they are a significant factor in the admissions process at most selective colleges.

While evidence indicates that it is not possible to "beat" the examination by "cramming," and while we do not want to suggest distorting curriculum by priming for one test, we also do not discourage those who seek extra help in particularly troublesome areas. For instance, it is inevitable that if you spend a week reviewing geometry, you will feel more comfortable on that section of the SAT, and perhaps that lessening of apprehension by itself is enough to warrant the extra time and effort. Because test preparation courses cost about \$1,000 and take up to twelve weeks, Emma Willard offers an excellent alternative through an online, on demand test preparation program called **Method Test Prep**. This interactive and self-directed program is available to juniors and seniors free of charge through their Naviance accounts.

3. **Extracurricular activities** both at school and at home play a role in the admissions process. Colleges frequently state they look for the unusual student who will make a significant contribution to the college's classrooms and community (the "angular" student who helps to make a "well-rounded class"). Because 70% to 80% of all the candidates at competitive colleges can handle the academic side of things, colleges are often looking for that extra dimension--musicians, editors, actors, photographers, athletes and others with a developed and usable talent. If you have superior ability in a specialized area, you can expect to receive careful consideration by the admissions committee and possibly by the relevant department(s) at the college.
4. The application and supplemental **essays** are the most difficult aspects of applying to a college, yet they can be a critical factor in the admission decision. Colleges read student essays very carefully. Essays that are bland, overwrought, sloppy, poorly organized, poorly written, or pretentious can hurt even a strong candidate's chances. Good essays bring an application to life through engaging topics, lively and lean writing, a strong and clear sense of voice, keen observation, and perceptive self-reflection.
5. For most colleges, **recommendations** are an essential part of each applicant's file. The exception to this rule may be large public universities where written recommendations are either not required or not given as much weight as they are at selective private colleges. Recommendations describe not only achievement and skills, but also character, integrity and patterns of growth. In addition, teachers' reports play an important role in the selection process, particularly when the teachers know the student well and are willing to underscore in detail her potential in specific areas.
6. **Children of alumni/ae** receive careful consideration at most colleges. The obvious reason is that any institution benefits immeasurably by having some students who represent a continuing tradition of loyalty and understanding. A legacy (child of a graduate) or family tie does not guarantee admission, but a legacy is insured an extra "look." If there is such a thing as two equal candidates, the legacy will probably have the edge. Remember, however, that if you are a legacy, you must still meet high academic and personal standards, and you must compete against other legacies in the admissions process.
7. At many colleges, on-campus **interviews** are very helpful to both to you and the college. They are essentially informative conversations in which both parties are trying to put their best foot forward and, at the same time, gain information that might not be otherwise available in the application or selection processes. For more information about interviews, see the section of this handbook on this topic.

TAKING A YEAR OFF

Not yet ready to settle down to life at a university or college? One option is to take a year off, which is known as a "gap year." If you wish to take a year off, you should still apply to colleges during your senior year while you explore potential gap year activities. Most colleges will be interested in knowing what plans you have for your year off. There are numerous Web sites describing gap year activities. These include volunteer work, educational opportunities, and work options. You are encouraged to make an appointment with Ms. Mossop, the Director of Independent Studies, to discuss gap year options.

READING: A GOOD USE OF YOUR SPARE TIME

It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of reading. What you read and the amount you read have implications throughout the college admissions process. Reading well, reading sensitively, just reading—this is what college and university academic life is all about, even for students who pursue majors in the visual arts, in mathematics or in science. It is no accident that the National Merit Corporation weights verbal areas twice as heavily as math skills to determine the winners in their scholarship competition. By doing this for a program that is accepted by every accredited institution of higher learning in the country, the National Merit Corporation signals to you what colleges and universities think is most important.

On a more practical level, reading increases your vocabulary, your reading comprehension, and your facility to write well. Either on your application or in your interviews you will be asked to discuss recent books you have read. College admissions people want to hear that your reading extends well beyond the assigned book list.

Whenever you are "bored," have "nothing to do," or want to "chill," think again. Reading a good book will help your peace of mind--and may very well aid you in the college admissions process. If you have a choice between joining another club that meets one hour per week or reading one extra hour a week, consider the latter!

COLLEGE MATRICULATION CLASS OF 2010

Agnes Scott College (2)	Pace University (3)
Amherst College	Rice University
Barnard College	Rollins College
Boston College	Savannah College of Art & Design
Boston University (2)	Sewanee: The University of the South
Brandeis University	Smith College (2)
Bryn Mawr College	St. Lawrence University (3)
Connecticut College	SUNY New Paltz
Cornell University (2)	SUNY Geneseo
Dartmouth College	Trinity College
Dickinson College (2)	Tufts University
Duke University (2)	Union College (2)
Elon University	University of Chicago
George Washington University (3)	University of Mary Washington
Hamilton College (2)	University of Pennsylvania
Hobart & William Smith Colleges (3)	University of Pittsburgh
Hollins University	University of Richmond
Kentucky Wesleyan College	University of Rochester
Lafayette College	University of Sydney
Lehigh University	University of Toronto (2)
Lesley University	University of Vermont
Lewis & Clark College (2)	University of Washington
Middlebury College	Ursinus College
Mount Holyoke College	Vassar College (2)
New York University (2)	Wellesley College
Oberlin College	Williams College (2)
Occidental College	

COLLEGE: A GOOD MATCH, NOT A PRIZE

By Frank D. Sachs

I believe it began ten years ago in April with a phone call. The father of a student I had been counseling called me. The student had just been accepted to Dartmouth, Georgetown, Northwestern, and Stanford. I thought he was calling to thank me for my help and guidance. What occurred next shocked me. He began our conversation by saying, "What did you do wrong? Why didn't my child get into Harvard?" What should have been a joyous celebration suddenly turned ugly by focusing on what was not achieved.

More recently, a college admission director from a highly selective university shared this story with me. A parent called and confessed that he had opened his daughter's decision letter. He was calling to ask how an institution could reject his child when she so obviously wanted to attend the school. He went on to say that his child's room was filled with symbols of this particular college, including posters, sweatshirts, coffee mugs, and hats. How could he possibly tell his daughter she did not get in? Would they not reverse their decision now that they had this information? Certainly, they could understand that he could not tell his child she had failed to gain entry. My colleague first asked the father if the child had gained admission into any other schools. The parent replied, "Yes several other schools, but." My colleague advised, "When your child gets home, you must show that you love and accept her more now than ever. He added, "Reassure her that she is loved and don't cheapen what she has achieved by focusing on what she has not achieved." Sage advice from a seasoned professional.

Why am I sharing this? Because each spring, and again in the fall, college admission hysteria begins. That hysteria is heightened by the media's desire to sensationalize the college process. It is also exacerbated by American parents' obsession to obtain the perceived most valuable brand name when it comes to the education of their children. What has caused this dilemma faced by millions each year? The answers are plentiful and the responsibility is shared.

Last year, James Fallows wrote an insightful article in *Atlantic Monthly* shedding light on how many colleges and universities manipulate the early decision process to their advantage by admitting more students in order to look more selective overall. One result of this manipulation is that schools may look better in the "rankings," a highly suspect measure of excellence produced each fall by *U.S. News & World Report*. I have often asked myself if this issue offers sound advice or is just sensationalism that creates sales for the magazine akin to the Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue. (I think I know the answer.)

Last spring, a ray of hope appeared. Yale's President Richard Levin was quoted in the *New York Times* asserting that it would be "a good thing to abandon early decision admission programs at the nation's select colleges." Is Levin a prophet to be followed, or is he Moses crying out in the wilderness? Either way, he makes sense to me.

Today, early decision programs abound (over two hundred colleges and universities have them), and many students (more and more each year) avail themselves of this opportunity. Again, this trend begs the question, "Is early decision for the student's benefit or the college's?" Ostensibly, it is for the student, but more and more it appears to benefit the colleges that offer them. The end result is fewer spaces available during the regular decision round when the majority of students apply, a tactic which allows colleges to appear more selective. I admit that more and more of my students apply under early decision because they believe it will enhance their chances of getting into one of their favorite schools. (Who can argue with them, the facts support this conclusion.). Yet many of these same students willingly admit that they might

have applied to another school or two that they were, in fact, interested in attending had there not been such a clear advantage in applying early elsewhere. Certainly, for students, their families, their counselors, and many college admission directors, there is less joy in this process. Today, record numbers of students are applying to college (some fifteen million). With more on the way, as many as twenty million by 2010, the process is bound to get worse. Does the application process have to operate this way?

At my school, since that fateful phone call 10 years ago, we have taken a different approach. To some degree, I believe we have been successful. We believe and stress that "college should be a match to be made, not a prize to be won." No one college is a "perfect fit" for anyone. Rather, there are several wonderful matches for each student. We emphasize to our students that they should only apply to colleges which they would be pleased to attend. Parents and students need to realize that a "match made in academic heaven" might be the school they just discovered during their exploration. We stress that they should not to get too "hung up" on one school or think of college as a prize. Instead, they should establish and identify a unique set of criteria for selecting a college, then carefully research a range of schools that fit those criteria.

We explain to students that falling in love with only one college is a lot like dating exclusively. If that one school denies you admission, it is like having a steady beau break up with you. It means you will not be going to the prom. On the other hand, if a student has several good friends and half say no and half say yes, the student will still have someone to go to the dance with on Saturday night. The same principle holds when applying to more than one college. Our students and their parents understand this approach, and this helps promote a greater degree of satisfaction with their choices. But this can only be accomplished if students and their parents, supported by the school administration, are educated about and buy in to this approach.

I began by relating some painful experiences, but I conclude with some hopeful ones. Last year, two of our very top students found themselves deferred under Early Decision. Though they initially struggled, both eventually articulated that they were sure they would find great matches in the regular admission process. One parent even called and stated that he had told his child, "Your first choice school should now be your first choice from among those schools that accepted you."

Here is a parent who gets it, who understands that his child was the prize, not the college she would be attending. The other student and his parents agreed. Rather than shooting the messenger, they remained engaged in the process. Both students had numerous regular acceptances. One actually was accepted by his early decision school, but decided to attend another college. The other student became very excited about her new choices. For both students, rejection only meant new, interesting opportunities elsewhere. Recently a group of kindergartners toured our high school. Many wore sweatshirts sporting college logos. I stepped out of my office and asked them if any knew what the words on their shirts represented. None did. Was this a sad or happy event? Some may say it was a missed opportunity to set them on the road to college. Others might say it is a good thing. After all, there is plenty of time to worry about college. Let children enjoy their childhood.

I fall into the latter category. If a college is a match rather than a prize, then there is plenty of time to find the right fit. All too often, students and parents are romanced by a name rather than looking for the best matches. In the end, the best fit should be what the student determines, and there should be several fits, not just one. If we do our jobs as counselors and parents, we can trust students to make and assume ownership of their decisions. It then becomes our job to support their decisions and feel good about their accomplishments.

Frank D. Sachs is director of college counseling at The Blake School (MN). Sachs graduated with a bachelor's of science in education from the University of Missouri-Columbia, and earned a master's of science in guidance and counseling from Central Missouri State University. He is a past president of both the Minnesota Association of College Admissions Counseling and the National Association of College Admissions Counseling. This article appeared in the Spring, 2003 issue of the Journal of College Admission. Copyright, National Association of College Admissions Counselors. Provided by ProQuest Information and Learning Company. All rights reserved.