Waring School
College Counseling Office
Common Application Guidelines

Application Options:

This year 700+ schools are accepting the Common Application. There are some that still accept their own online or paper form as an alternative or as the only way to apply. Many, but not all, state schools, are in this category. A few such as the University of California system and McGill University require the student, rather than our Registrar, Becky Schaeffer, to initially submit all information, including transcripts. Becky will help you walk through this process. Once accepted, Waring sends official transcripts. One other option for a small number of schools is the Universal Application. While a user-friendly application, it is a duplication of effort if a school also accepts the CA. If given a choice, I recommend the CA as the easiest way to consolidate and organize your information.

Some Guidelines for the Common Application:

Help Center: As you move through the CA, you will see a column on the right side of each page. There will be a number of good suggestions, in anticipation of your questions, for each section.

The Essay:
1) Essay Prompts: there are seven choices. See handouts you were given last spring. Make sure to select a topic that allows you to paint an authentic picture of yourself – with insights that will not be readily apparent in other parts of your application.
2) The word limit of 650 is absolute: even if you are able to type more, it will be cut off at 650 when you submit it electronically. You can type it in, copy and paste, or upload from Google Drive.
3) Unlimited edits: students will be allowed to make edits to their CA essay as they want after submission, intended to allow students to make minor changes like correcting grammar or spelling errors. This also may allow you to tailor your essay to a particular school if desirable. This does not mean you can change the topic completely, however.
4) The CA makes a provision for colleges that do not require the essay. It is in your best interest to use the essay for all schools, whether required or not, as long as they will allow you to submit it.

Where to begin:
1) **Go to the CA website**: set up your account with your email and password and keep a copy in safe place for future reference.

2) **You will see five headers at the top: Dashboard, My Colleges, Common App, College Search, and Financial Aid Resources.** You can begin in one of two ways: either start by filling out the Common App, which is the core of the application that has to be done before you fill out college-specific information, or put the colleges that you are most likely to apply to on your Dashboard.

3) **To add to Dashboard, go first to College Search.** Enter a college and press search. Once it comes up, check the box to the left of the name and press add. Then press Dashboard and you will go back to the opening screen and see it there. Once you have added all the schools you are considering at this time, you can go to My Colleges and they will come up in alphabetical order.

4) **You must complete the Common App information before you can continue with the individual schools' questions.** In order to do so you will need this information:
   - **Harold Wingood Title**: College Counselor; email: hwingood@waringschool.org; phone: 978-927-8793, ext. 335.
   - **Your parents' information**: name, occupation, place of employment, colleges attended, years graduated, degree earned, year earned. Same for siblings if they are in college or have graduated from one.
   - **Education:** Your anticipated courses for senior year.
     o If you are not entirely sure of them all, just do the best you can and adjust later. Put in second semester courses as well – Writing or Art, for example, without a title.
     o You will be asked to list up to **5 Honors** at the end of the Education section. Some examples: Boston Globe Art or Writing Award; Bronze Medal Grand Concours, or a prize in the Concours de Poésie; Commended Student or National Merit Semi-finalist (you won't know this for about a month); Debate award, Breadloaf, etc. Put TA in this category.
   - **Activities:** there are up to 10 spots. You can use activities in and out of school, jobs, community service, sports, leadership, committees, etc.
     o Start with the most important. You have up to 150 characters to describe each in well-written descriptive detail. Also list any leadership roles. This section will probably work for most of you; however, if you have a very large category that has dominated your high school years, you may consider a resumé for just that activity that could be put on the Additional Information space. It could also take the form of a website.
     o Some colleges will also let you upload a supplement for a resumé, so check all of the college pages before you make a decision how to include this information.

- o Check the Extracurricular & Honors Worksheet Becky prepared for you in the Resource section of the blue handbook for some ideas.

5) Individual College Sections:
   a. It is important to start with all the questions for each school. Do not pull up the writing supplements until you have done so, as sometimes the major or specific program you are applying to will dictate those questions and the standardized tests required.
   b. It is in this section that you will provide information about your recommenders. Be sure to ask your teachers which email address they want used; if different ones are submitted by different students, the teacher will have two accounts to manage. Once invited as a recommender by CA, the teacher - and I - will have an account that will list all the students for whom we are writing and their deadlines. Once they have sent in their documents, it will show up on your Dashboard as complete. Don't be concerned if this doesn't happen until the last days before the deadline. Sometimes there is a lag time between the submission and the accounting for it. **Important:** if you are applying to a particular program that has an earlier deadline than the regular one for that school, it is your responsibility to inform all recommenders. There could be a month's difference. The only date that will show on the recommender's screen is the general deadline.
   c. **Number of recommenders**: please note that some schools will require x number of recommenders but will allow more. For example, they may require 1 school counselor and 1 teacher but allow 2 teachers – or not. If restricted, it is up to you to decide which teacher will get that email request. There is another category of **"Other Recommenders."** Some colleges allow them and have a limit. Others won't accept them at all. If the college doesn't provide the opportunity, you can call the Admissions Office and ask if there is an email address to which the OR letter can be sent so that it can be scanned into your application. If so, you would give specific instructions to the OR so that it can be sent directly.
   d. **FERPA**: When completing the section for recommenders, you will be asked to waive, or not, your right to review all recommendations. This relates to a law called FERPA that allows this access. You should sign that you waive the right. If not, the recommender and the college will know you have seen the letter and may determine that its honesty could have been compromised.

Print preview at any time: you can print completed portions at any time, screen by screen. It is important to do this; accuracy is very important. Print a complete copy for one last review before submitting. I would be happy to look at it with you.