

WARING SCHOOL
Office of College Counseling

November 2018

Dear Juniors and Parents,

You are about to embark on an exciting journey of self-reflection, exploration and discovery. The college process should not be a daunting one. Think of it as an opportunity to apply what you have learned about yourself and your values in a new context. My primary role is to help you. In order to do so, I need to get to know you - your strengths, interests, and priorities - from a number of different angles. I invite you and your family to help as we engage in this process together. I will ask that you meet with me on a regular basis, complete questionnaires, share essays, and tell me which classes and activities I can attend to see you in action.

The most important factor will be your dedication to the thoughtful process necessary to take the next step in your education. It begins with critical self-assessment and then thorough and careful research into the colleges you are considering. Be true to yourself and listen to what resonates for you, not what friends or others may say. With over 3,000 four-year colleges and universities on the table of possibilities, you will have no trouble finding a number of wonderful options. Waring has provided you with an outstanding foundation for your college experience; feel confident that you are well prepared for what lies ahead!

The attached handbook is offered as a guide to the various aspects of the college process with worksheets, timelines, and valuable resources included. Please read it carefully and let me know if anything is missing that would help as you proceed. I look forward to getting to know you and providing whatever support I can to make this a meaningful and fulfilling part of your journey at Waring.

Sincerely,



Harold M. Wingood
College Counselor

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COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Student Responsibilities

- Stay open-minded.
- Continue to work hard, and bring your best efforts to the classroom and your activities throughout this process.
- Research schools early and continue to research as you gain new insights.
- Create individual folders for each school; make notes as you finish each visit.
- Visit as many schools as possible as early as you can; review and revise your list as you proceed.
- When making your final list, make sure that your choices accurately represent YOUR interests and priorities across a range of selectivity. It is important to love your “likely” schools as much as others on the list.
- Communicate openly and frequently with your parents and your College Counselor about your desires and needs.
- Develop a chart/timeline to help you stay on track. Meet all deadlines and start early in order to do so – including test registration and application deadlines and dates materials are needed by the College Counseling Office.
- Write essays early and share drafts with someone you trust.
- Write thank you letters to all who helped you along the way.
- Attend college admissions representatives’ visits at Waring.
- Remain calm, focused, and optimistic!

Parent Responsibilities

- Give your son or daughter your unconditional support, reminding him or her of strengths and talents that are independent of college admissions decisions, standardized tests and other objective measures.
- Discuss future plans, including your financial concerns and any possible restrictions, early in the selection process.
- Keep an open mind in the early stages; encourage your child to look at schools that may not be at the top of his/her original list and especially not to fixate on one or two dream schools.
- Help organize visits to as many colleges as possible to provide a broad context in which to consider viable options. When you visit, take some notes, but wait for your son or daughter to share reactions first before you discuss your own.
- Read the College Handbook; ask questions about anything you do not fully understand.

- Complete and return the Parent Questionnaire before our initial family meeting to provide a valuable context for our work together.
- Communicate frequently with the College Counselor and make as many family meeting appointments as would be helpful – at least two before the end of junior year, one over the summer, and one in the fall of senior year.
- Don't be afraid to suggest/impose, if necessary, some planning that will accommodate your needs and your child's so that, in the end, all the research needed to ensure the best decisions will be completed.

College Counseling Office Responsibilities

- Work hard to get to know each student, as early as possible, in order to fully appreciate his or her strengths, talents and personal qualities. Attend school events in which he or she is participating.
- Provide students with up-to-date and timely information regarding all aspects of the research and application process.
- Serve as a resource to students and parents to process student research, college visits, standardized test results and planning.
- Work with students to develop a final college list that is both broad and deep in scope – ensuring that a good final decision will be possible through its range of options.
- Serve as an effective advocate for students, presenting their transcripts and official school recommendations in a timely and effective manner and following up individually, where appropriate, with top choices.
- Listen, learn from and communicate with each member of the family with respect and accommodation for different perspectives and priorities.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTING COLLEGES

Researching Yourself

Perhaps the most important part of the college process is knowing yourself before you begin to look for colleges that are good matches. Your application will provide opportunity for your personality to shine through in addition to the statistics and facts about your academic and extracurricular experience and standardized test scores. It is critical to know yourself in order to be authentic. The key to a successful application is the ability to reflect, to gain important self-knowledge and then to project a clear, distinct voice in all aspects of the application process - from personal essays to interviews. The search should not be about finding the one perfect school; it is about looking for schools where you will feel comfortable and will be able to grow into the person you want to be.

Student Questionnaire

What follows is a lengthy set of questions, geared to help you do some important self-reflection. The questions are designed to focus on you as an individual and are intended to help you prioritize what is important in finding a great college match. Also, it will be helpful to share with me so that I can get to know you better. Though it may seem like a time consuming task, it is well worth the effort. It is amazing what insights you may gain by simply putting your thoughts on paper. I suggest you use the questionnaire as a guide and answer on a separate document, allowing you to be open-ended in your responses. The end result should benefit you in the following ways:

- Help you find colleges that are right for you.
- Prepare you for topics you will be covering in interviews and essays.
- Help you present yourself authentically and effectively to the colleges of your choice.
- Create a more manageable and less stressful context for the coming months.

Parent Questionnaire

Parents, you know your child better than anyone. Since he or she is unlikely to brag, sometimes forgets important accomplishments, or is hesitant to describe him/herself in personal terms, it is important that you help paint a complete picture of your son or daughter, using our questionnaire or your own guidelines. This will be kept in complete confidence!

Waring School
College Planning
Student Questionnaire

Writing college counselor recommendations is primarily a process of gathering as much information as possible from as many sources as possible. I will be asking for input from faculty, staff, coaches, parents and anyone who knows you well enough to share well-informed and meaningful information; and obviously, your input is critically important. Please answer the questions below and email the answers to me. Ideally, I would like them before our first meeting. Send your responses to me at: hwingood@waringschool.org. Thank you.

1. How would people who know you best describe you: your best qualities, your shortcomings, who you are at your core?
2. How would you describe your family and its influence in your life?
3. How do you think Waring has shaped you on both academic and personal levels?
4. What are your academic interests? Which courses have you enjoyed the most and which have been most challenging and why?
5. Have you done any academic work outside of Waring that might be important for a college to know or that might direct your college choices?
6. What has been your most stimulating intellectual experience – in or out of school?
7. Complete the sentence, “I learn best when...”
8. Discuss your most important activities, at Waring and in the community (job, religious affiliation, travel, community service, etc.).
9. What has been your most satisfying experience outside the classroom? Why?
10. What did you do last summer, and do you have plans for next summer?
11. When you have spare time (a rare occurrence!) what do you enjoy doing?
12. Is there a profession or career path you would like to explore that would tap your interests and strengths?
13. Discuss two or three important priorities to consider as you begin your college search.
14. What are your definitions of success and happiness?
15. What are you most excited about and most nervous about as you look ahead to the college process?

WARING SCHOOL
College Planning Questionnaire

Parent Response Form

Dear Parent(s),

Writing recommendations is a process of compiling as much information as possible from as many sources as possible. In addition to my own impressions of students, I gather information from teachers and administrators, students questionnaires, and the essays written to accompany the college applications. Because you know your son or daughter best, your insights are particularly helpful. Don't feel that you need to be limited to the prompts below. You may use them, or make up your own, or both! Please complete and email to me at hwingood@waringschool.org. I look forward to your valuable input! Thank you so much.

Attach additional pages as needed.

Student's Name: _____ **Parent's Name:** _____

What are your child's outstanding personality traits? Please use specific examples or illustrations if possible.

What are some of your child's greatest strengths and most outstanding accomplishments during the past few years (in or out of school)?

Were there any major events that you see as turning points in his/her development? Are there any unusual personal circumstances that have impacted his/her life in a significant way?

How did your child decide to attend Waring and in what ways has the Waring experience and education shaped him/her?

How does your child spend time out of school on weekends and during the summer that may be significant in understanding his/her passions and talents?

Please add any thoughts you may have that will help in creating a comprehensive picture of your child's high school profile – from academic, personal and extracurricular perspectives.

Researching the Colleges

As you begin the college search, don't expect any startling or quick revelations. The answers will come in due time; this is a process that will unfold, but not entirely on its own. The comfort you will feel when the final decision is made will be directly linked to the thoroughness with which you have done your work – both through the self-reflection process just outlined and through careful, step-by-step research into the colleges themselves. There are over 4,000 colleges and universities in this country, approximately 3,000 of which are four-year institutions. Since traditionally all Waring students have been interested in four-year schools, much of the information below applies to that category.

There are many ways to classify and start to organize the colleges you will consider. Selectivity is always one of the first factors. In general, schools are classified as ***Most Selective, Highly Selective, and Selective***. It is important to arrive at what is called a ***Vertical List*** – one that includes one or two in the top category for you (reach), four or more in the middle (target) and at least one or two for which you are a very strong candidate (likely). Students used to apply to an average of 6 schools; however, the Common Application and other on-line applications have made it easier to apply to more – one of the reasons for the increasing competitiveness of the applicant pool. Your final list will be established after a much broader and more open-ended one is considered; it should include a range of 8 – 12 schools. Here are some factors involved in determining where to start:

- **Size:** Typically colleges are grouped as small (under 2,000) or mid-range (roughly 2,000-7,000). Small to medium universities fall between 7,000 and 15,000 and very large universities up to 40,000+.
- **Type:** There are liberal arts colleges, universities, and special emphasis schools such as business, technical, education, women's colleges, military academies, etc.
- **Academic Program:** Does the school offer a pre-professional major you are considering or is it liberal arts only? Are there internship opportunities? Are there study abroad programs; if so, are they offered directly by the school or through another institution?
- **Location:** New England, East Coast, South, West Coast, Mid-Atlantic, no preference?
- **Setting:** Urban, suburban, or rural?
- **Diversity:** What percentage of students are international, and what is the mix of races and religions?
- **Specialized Programs:** If needed, are there services for learning disabled, physically challenged, or for those who speak English as a second language?
- **Extracurricular Activities:** According to your interests, what specific sports, music, cultural and social opportunities (such as fraternities/sororities), etc. are offered?
- **Housing:** Is it on/off campus, required or not, guaranteed or not, coed, single sex, theme houses, or apartments? What is the overall quality of accommodations?

- **Facilities:** What is the quality and appeal of its architecture, libraries, student unions, classrooms and labs, recreational/athletic offerings for non-athletes, stores, laundry, etc.?

Once you have determined your priorities by using the above criteria, it will be easier to bring the actual research process into a manageable realm. Remember, you are the consumer; both you and the colleges will be seeking a good match. Take the time to write down your priorities. You will be asked to identify some qualities of your dream school to assist your College Counselor in making recommendations. For example: 1. urban location 2. intellectual environment 3. great music scene 4. 5,000 students or more. Take notes as you research and make a grid that will facilitate your analysis. It is also useful to note what you **do not** like.

It is important to: learn everything you can about a college **before** you visit; ask questions **during** your visit; and, if you like what you see, ask for follow up information **after** your visit. Of these, the first is the most important and, at the same time, the most difficult. It is crucial for you to do your homework before you visit a school so that when you arrive, you can apply the information you already know and ask pertinent questions. There are myriad resources available to you that range from purely objective descriptions and data to highly subjective opinions about a school's programs, philosophies, and social climate. Do your research; draw upon a variety of sources from all angles; and ultimately form your own opinion and make an informed decision about whether or not the school meets your needs and is a good fit for you.

As you consider options, it may be helpful to review the following definitions:

- **College:** a term loosely used to refer to a program that leads to a bachelor's degree. All students are called undergraduates - that is, students who are working toward a BA (Bachelor of Arts) or BS (Bachelor of Science) degree in one of many majors. Some colleges are devoted to the liberal arts, while others specialize in a pre-professional field such as business, education, architecture, nursing, technology, the arts, etc. Colleges tend to be small, ranging from 500 to 5,000 students. They may be freestanding or part of a university.
- **University:** an institution that combines one or more undergraduate colleges, including one for liberal arts, with graduate programs that award Masters, Ph.D.'s, M.D.'s, Ed.D.'s, or other postgraduate degrees. Most private universities range from 5,000 to 20,000. Public universities are often much larger.
- **Public Institution:** one supported by the state where it is located, subsidized by taxpayer money and accountable to the state board of education. Public schools traditionally offer much lower tuition than private, but have little or no endowment (funds generated by alumni giving and used for grants and scholarships). They are reliant, for the most part, on federal and state financial aid and parent loan programs. Class sizes are usually larger than private school counterparts, at least in the general requirement areas, with smaller classes as you enter your major. They tend to be strong in professional programs such as business, engineering and education and offer Honors programs with small classes, special advising and sometimes separate residential options.

- **Private School:** run by a board of trustees and supported by private funds in addition to tuition. The country's oldest colleges are private, founded when the U.S. consisted of the East Coast. To this day, the Northeast and East Coast, in general, host the greatest number and the most prestigious of the nation's private schools. They tend to focus on liberal arts education with some pre-professional emphasis. Tuition costs are very high but, for those who qualify for financial aid, the bottom line out-of-pocket cost of attending may parallel a public school or even come out ahead.

One last note before you begin: colleges and universities have unique **personalities**. After all the research, visits and deliberation, it often comes down to a gut level decision among final options. Where did you feel a connection; where did you feel comfortable and optimistic about your opportunities to grow as a person and a student over the next four years? This factor is intangible; however, you can look at some helpful comparisons as you go along. For example, some colleges are decidedly liberal, others conservative; some foster a collaborative learning environment, others project a tone of intense competition; some have school spirit, others are more understated; some have a social life that is focused upon sororities and fraternities, others do not support a Greek system. It would be helpful to record your observations on your computer or in a journal that you take on all visits and have by your side as you read and research. Once home, make a folder for each college. Remember – **you are the consumer and you** should feel satisfied that you have used all the tools available to make the right decision.

Resources

1. The Printed Word:

- a. There are many **comprehensive guides providing objective and subjective information about specific schools** with a variety of themes and areas of emphasis. Consider going to a bookstore or library to look at options in the reference section or read about them online. Another suggestion is to ask friends who are seniors which book(s) they valued most (perhaps they will turn them over to you!). It isn't necessary to purchase one of the huge general guides, produced by the College Board, Peterson's, etc. as they provide only factual information that can be easily accessed on the Internet. More helpful would be one of the books that provide in-depth profiles of a more limited number of schools. Favorites on our list include: *The Fiske Guide to Colleges*, *The Princeton Review: Best 382 Colleges*, *Looking Beyond the Ivy League*, *The Insider's Guide to Colleges*, and *Colleges that Change Lives*.
- b. There are also a number of **general guides** that offer an overview of the process or a specific aspect such as financial aid or essay writing: *The Enlightened College Applicant* by Belasco and Bergman
Fiske Guide to Getting Into the Right College by Fiske and Hammond
Admission Matters by Springer, Reider, and Morgan
College Match by Antonoff

Plan and Finance Your Family's College Dreams by Hupalo and Mazareas
The College Atlas and Planner published by Wintergreen Orchard House
Fiske Real College Essays That Work by Fiske and Hammond

- c. **College view books and catalogs** may be provided by visiting representatives or are mailed to you. More and more, however, colleges are relying on the Internet to promote their programs. Keep in mind that these materials are part of advertising campaigns to attract students and do not present information in an unbiased way.
- d. **Magazine and newspaper articles** are prevalent in the spring when decisions come out for seniors and in the fall when the college search and early decision deadlines are in full swing. Well known is the *U.S. News and World Report* annual issue that ranks colleges; read, but beware of bias and a narrow approach in the methodology used to determine the ratings.

2. The Internet:

This is an increasingly important tool in the college search. Not only is it the quickest and most accurate path to information in the early stages of research, but also it will prove to be the vehicle for completing your applications, registering for standardized tests, completing financial aid forms and much more. It is great for sifting through objective information and also is a source of more subjective websites. Each college has its own website, with virtual tours that can provide you with an initial impression, highlighting what the school considers its strengths. Then there are the comprehensive websites that will help you refine your search and provide many more services that can be tailored to your preferences. Some excellent sources to start with are: The College Board, U.S. Department of Education College Navigator, My College Options, and The Princeton Review. A few good student sites are College Prowler, College Confidential and Unigo. Facebook is also playing a role in the exchange of information.

3. College Outreach Programs:

- a. **College fairs** are held in the area, sponsored by other high schools and professional organizations, usually in the spring and some in the fall. Many colleges from all over the country send admissions representatives to one location. Though college fairs can be a little overwhelming with so many schools in one place, they can be a great place to gather a lot of information and to have a chance to ask questions as you move from booth to booth. Information about fairs may be on the school websites. We will inform you of any that come our way.
- b. **College forums** are organized by small groups of schools with similar selectivity or focus; they are usually held at hotels in the Boston area in the evening. You can find out about these events from the school websites. This

is a good way to get more in-depth information than you would get at a fair and to see, at the same time, some comparisons within a given group.

- c. **Individual admissions counselors' visits to Waring** - approximately 35 representatives come for scheduled visits during lunch or Focus/Flex in the fall. Not only is this an excellent time to ask questions, but it is also an informal way that you can be interviewed, acknowledged and remembered when the counselor – who is usually in charge of this region – reads your application later.

4. **College Counseling at Waring:**

- a. Harold Wingood, College Counselor, and Becky Schaeffer, Registrar, will work with you every step of the way. We will have individual, family, and group meetings throughout the process.
- b. Becky is in charge of your transcript, making sure that every aspect of it is correct and sending it to schools with your and your parents' approval and sign off. She is also in charge of the important School Profile that accompanies the transcript.
- c. Our work together will begin with a family meeting, with one or more parents, as early as possible. Please complete and submit the student and parent questionnaires, and do some preliminary research and thinking before the first meeting to establish some priorities and parameters for our discussion. The outcome of the first meeting may be a broad list of as many as 20 schools, or it may be focused on one region that you plan to visit. Several follow up meetings will take place as you complete your first round of visits and start to receive test scores back that will assist us in determining your vertical list.
- d. Subsequent individual meetings will focus on strategies for determining your essay topics and supplements, and completing the Common Application.
- e. In the fall of senior year, Harold will write the counselor recommendation that accompanies the Secondary School Report and transcript/profile. It will cover all aspects of your growth and development at Waring. In order to do the best possible job for you, she needs to get to know you! She will also be assisted by the entire faculty, who will share notes and anecdotes about your career at Waring that will ensure a well-rounded portrait of you.
- f. And finally – this entire process can run smoothly only if you help us by communicating frequently, responding right away with information when requested, and letting us know what we can do to make this time in your life as stress free as possible!

College Visits

Once you have completed stage one of your research and had a meeting with the College Counselor, it is time to begin the next step of the process - **the visits**. Visiting college campuses is important for two reasons: 1) to gain a feel for the campus, students, academic departments and areas that specifically appeal to you, and think about whether you could see yourself as a student there, and 2) to demonstrate your interest in the school (always sign in at the admissions office or find a way to let them know you were there).

Allow a **half day** for each school and try to do two in one day that are no more than two hours apart. If necessary, add a third, less important school, as a drive through at the end of the day. Check online for times of **student led campus tours and information sessions conducted by staff**. It is usually not necessary to make a reservation, but check to be sure. Colleges that offer information sessions generally have one in the morning and one in the afternoon. It is best to plan the hour-long tour just before or just after the session. Don't let the tour guide or weather affect your impression of the school too much. If time, stop and have lunch at the student center or visit the library. If you are looking at a specific major or program, you may be able to arrange in advance a tour of that facility or a meeting with someone on the faculty in that department, but your time would have to be adjusted accordingly. Most admissions offices are open during the week, with limited Saturday mornings in peak season.

The best time to get an authentic impression of a school and its potential to be a good match for you is when school is in session. That eliminates holidays, much of January in some cases, spring vacation (different for each college) and summer. It is important to sit down as a family and look at the entire year ahead, and set up a schedule of one day and longer visits. If possible, plan as many as you can before Junior Trip. The summer may have to be utilized; some of the larger schools may have summer sessions, and even the smaller ones have a group of current students working in the admissions office who will be available to answer questions and serve as guides.

The fall is a great time to revisit the schools that are at the top of your list – perhaps to do an interview or an overnight visit with someone you know (most schools will not arrange these until you are an accepted student). There are also a number of weekend open houses in the fall where, in one short visit, you will see a big picture of the campus and its offerings.

However, sometimes time and money limit you. Our suggestion is to start locally and visit a sample of different types, sizes and locations of schools in the immediate area. Right away you will gain valuable information that may help focus your list and make other visits more meaningful. If necessary, apply to a few colleges you can't see and then visit between the time you receive a decision and May 1st. Whenever you visit, leave time to take notes immediately following your time on the campus. It would be helpful to have a single journal or file on your computer to record all visits. These impressions will be critical when you review all options and begin to refine your list with the College Counselor.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The application is your best opportunity to paint a personal and complete picture of who you are, beyond the statistics and what your recommenders say about you. Though there are many supplemental materials, your application (especially the essays) is the piece of the puzzle with the potential to influence the decision on its own or to tip the scale in your direction in a very competitive pool. Before we break the application into steps, however, it is important to look at the criteria each admissions committee will be considering as it reviews you as a candidate for its incoming class.

Criteria

Academic Performance: Your transcript is arguably the single most important component of the puzzle. This one piece of paper reflects your academic achievement over four years – rigor, depth, performance, and consistency – along with honors, awards, and extracurricular activities. You will be assessed in the context of Waring’s curriculum and the quality of your peer group.

Standardized Testing: Your standardized test scores are recognized by many colleges as a reliable predictor of success in college. The more selective the college, the more weight tends to be put on this factor, though there are an increasing number of very competitive schools that are Test Optional. In a few cases, however, scores may be required for Waring applicants because of our lack of grades. In addition to the SAT or ACT, some colleges may ask for Subject Tests. It is critical that you check individual requirements for each school you are considering. If there is not a section that delineates policies for non-graded high schools, call the individual admissions offices to get your answer.

Teacher Recommendations: As you research your colleges, check to see how many recommendations are required and if they need to be from a particular subject area; for example, math may be required for engineering or science for nursing. Two teachers from Waring, regardless of the number required, will support your application. It is important that

both be in the core area – science, math, French, or humanities – and be from teachers who taught you junior or senior year. The one exception is if you are applying to a specialized school such as an art school or music conservatory. It is your responsibility to work with us to determine the best choices. You will be asked toward the end of junior year to give us two or three names of teachers to be considered and why. Final decisions will be made on at least one letter writer by June. We will also discuss the possibility of outside recommendations with you.

Secondary School Report and Accompanying Materials: With few exceptions, colleges require that this report accompany your official transcript. The College Counselor completes the SSR and attaches a letter that consists of an overview of your high school years on multiple levels. Input from you, your parents, teachers, tutors, and coaches will be used to present the most comprehensive picture possible. With this report will go an official transcript of four years (including a transcript from another school if you entered Waring after 9th grade), and a Profile of Waring that outlines detailed information about its academic program and students. In addition, the narrative evaluations from second semester junior year will be attached. On occasion, a school will request evaluations from previous years. The Registrar is responsible for putting all of this together and will work with you to ensure accuracy of the transcript. If you have received credit for a college course, a transcript may be sent directly from that school or it can be sent with your Waring transcript.

Activities and Interests: Your activities and interests will appear on your transcript in abbreviated form; however, you may want to consider developing a way to highlight and bring these arenas to life. One option is a resumé that would include more descriptive detail regarding employment, summer experiences, volunteer work, scouting, hobbies, outside sports or theater/music/art accomplishments. This is especially useful if you have an interest with a long history and multiple experiences. A resumé may be uploaded to some specific colleges that provide that link or put on the Additional Information section of the Common Application. Resumés can also be useful as a way of introducing yourself to the person conducting an interview.

Another option is to create a website that could be referenced in the Activities section or, again, added to Additional Information. There are many tools available that will help you build a website; one in particular is www.weebly.com. You can also bring yourself and your interests alive by creating one or more short videos, using another website, www.zeemee.com.

Special Talents: Colleges are looking for a well-rounded student body. That does not mean that each individual has to be “well rounded” (whatever that means!). Instead, they want people who have specific talents or strong suits to add to the class.

- The athletic arena is the most heavily emphasized. Many Division I and II schools (with the exception of the Ivy League) not only offer coaches a great deal of influence, but some also give substantial athletic scholarships. Division III schools have varying degrees of influence, but no money attached. If you think you would like to play a sport in college and may be “recruitable,” first talk with your current coach(es) and Waring’s Athletic Director to generate some guidelines as to how you could go about finding a match. Summer camps, club tournaments, and showcases

- provide excellent opportunities to make connections. Samples of athletic resumés and introductory letters to coaches will be made available to you.
- Waring students are especially talented in many of the creative realms. As a result, you may have a “hook” in an area that, while you do not intend to select as a major, could be a key factor in the selection process. It is important to start with the appropriate department/teachers who know you and your talent well – music, art and theater are the likely choices. Check the colleges’ applications to see if special talent supplements may be included if not in your intended major.
 - In both of the above cases, the College Counselor will work with you and the appropriate teacher/athletic director to determine a plan to highlight this talent.

Legacies: Legacy is a term used to describe an applicant who is the son or daughter, grandson or granddaughter of a graduate of the college in question. Usually the graduate must have received a degree from the undergraduate program (not law school, Master’s degree program, etc.). Sibling relationships should be mentioned but do not constitute a legacy lineage. Legacies still must fall within the general parameters of qualification the college has put forth; but once in the qualified applicant pool, legacies usually have a significant advantage. In most cases, if you, the student, are sure your parent’s alma mater is your first choice, the best chance for you to gain admission is through an Early Decision (and to a lesser extent EA) option. See below.

College Admissions Plans

After your research and visits are behind you, the next decision to be made is your strategy for applying – what admission plan will you use. The following is a list of your options:

- **Regular Decision:** Most colleges have a definite deadline for submitting your application – ranging from December 1st onward. In this type of plan there is a longer wait for a response. The outside date for notification is mid-April, to provide you time to consider all options before the May 1st deadline to choose which school you will attend. You may apply to an unlimited number.
- **Rolling Admissions:** Candidates’ applications are reviewed in the order that they are received, and decisions are made within a shorter amount of time than Regular Decision – generally within six to eight weeks. As colleges with Rolling Admissions may begin to fill their freshman class, it is to your advantage to apply as soon as possible. This is particularly true of many state universities that use this plan.
- **Early Decision I or II:** This is an option to be used only after careful thought and early completion of all of your research and visits. It is a contractual agreement between student and college (also signed by the Waring counselor) that if the student is accepted, he or she will attend and will withdraw any applications to other colleges already submitted. ED I plans generally have deadlines of November 1 or 15 or December 1. Notification is usually by the third week in December. Some schools offer an ED II plan with a deadline in January or February. It is still binding but allows additional time for thought and research before making a decision.

- **Early Action:** This option allows you to apply with early deadlines similar to those of ED without the binding commitment. If accepted, you may continue to apply to other schools, await all decisions, and make your choice by May 1st. Some schools offer Single-Choice or Restricted Early Action only. In this case, you do not have to commit early if accepted, but you must agree to apply EA to one school only. However, in most cases, you may also apply to public institutions. Please note that some colleges may have additional restrictions connected with their EA option; check individual websites.

- **Some considerations if you are thinking of applying early:**
 1. It is important to feel fully confident that you have explored all of your options and have found a great (not best, as there is no such thing!) school for you.
 2. You should be satisfied that your junior year is the best possible representation of your academic performance and potential.
 3. Your credentials should place you in the top part of the projected applicant pool. Applying early does not give you an advantage if you aren't a strong candidate, as colleges are picking the cream off the top and may defer you to the regular applicant group if you are not clearly in their "must take" pile. You may also be rejected.
 4. If you are a qualified applicant, but not necessarily in the above category, go ahead and consider an Early bid if you are a recruited athlete, legacy, or have another outstanding talent or designation.
 5. Be aware that, should you be accepted ED, the only reason you can use to withdraw from the agreement is your inability to finance the cost (a financial award package comes with your acceptance).
 6. You do not need to apply early to prove that the college in question is your top choice. There are supplemental letters, interviews and other options that could be used to express your interest. The most important factor is your readiness.

Many students use a combination of these plans. For example, you may apply to one state school in November on a Rolling plan, one EA school about the same time and, depending on the results, continue to apply to six or seven others January through March in time for their Regular Decision deadlines. The response deadline will still be May 1st for all of them.

Methods of applying

The Common Application (CA): The CA is used by more than 700 colleges and universities, including a large number of the most selective. Many of these schools use it exclusively and do not offer a paper version. If both are offered, they will be considered equally. However, we recommend using the CA if available. Your teachers and Waring's Registrar and College Counselor will submit all materials electronically, once you have submitted requests with their names and email addresses. There is a core section that

you will complete first, including biographical, academic and extracurricular information, and one main essay. Once you enter your list of colleges, you will complete individualized questions for each school and, for many, one or more supplemental essays. It is important to print a draft of your application before submitting. It can be saved indefinitely. You may begin it this spring or summer and will be able to “roll it over” after August 1st (the date the official version for your class will be available). However, only the core section can be transferred; individual college questions cannot.

Some tips for the CA

- Use the same name on everything; be sure it is your full legal name.
- Your social security number will be required if you are applying for financial aid.
- When asked for the College Counselor’s number, use the Waring main number – 978-927-8793, ext. 888. The fax number is 978-921-2107. The school’s address is 35 Standley Street, Beverly, MA 01915. The CEEB code is 221786.
- Ask the College Counselor and the two teacher recommenders exactly how they want their names and emails spelled. Be consistent once you have entered them.
- Always waive your right to access the recommendations (FERPA). If not, it is assumed the credibility of the letter may be compromised.
- Leave the questions about rank and GPA blank. That will be covered elsewhere.
- Fill out all questions completely; if you don’t know the answer, ask someone!
- If you are planning to apply for financial aid, check that box. Do not think that you have to say no in order to be an attractive candidate.
- If you are planning to indicate that you want to consider a potentially competitive major such as engineering, pre-med or pre-business, check with the College Counselor. It is important to be sure you meet the academic requirements, have the correct teacher recommendations, and relevant Subject Tests. It is fine to be “undeclared” unless the only avenue of admission to a program is to apply directly as a freshman.
- List your activities in order of importance to you and the years you participated. If you have more to say about each or have activities that don’t fit, consider doing a resumé or extra essay in the Additional Information section at the end.
- List your best SAT and/or ACT test scores and the dates taken. Be sure you are accurate...don’t trust your memory! Also, be sure to have the scores you select sent officially to the colleges by ACT or the College Board. AP scores are also may be sent by the College Board – necessary if you would like college credit for those courses.
Important: if you are planning to apply to any Test Optional schools, do not self-report. Simply send the scores officially to appropriate colleges.
- Take time thinking about how your main and secondary essays will best **show** the reader who you are. Write several drafts and share them over time with teachers, the college counselor or other trusted adults who know you. **This is very important!**
- Know that you can do one or more revisions of your complete application, but that is time consuming. Make sure each aspect of your application is correct before you send the first one.
- Keep a printed copy of everything you send.

CA Supplements

You may think you have done the bulk of your writing, once you have completed the main CA essay. However, many colleges require supplemental essays. In some cases, one college may have 3+ additional essays. Even if they are short, they will require thought and research about the school and particular reasons why you think it would be fit for you. It is helpful to review all the questions for the schools to which you are planning to apply – looking for potential overlaps. Once you have read all supplement questions, review them in relation to the essay you have already written for the main application; it is important to use each opportunity provided to you by a single college to paint a full picture of yourself.

Other Options:

- **Coalition for Access, Affordability and Success application:** Currently endorsed by approximately 60 highly selective private colleges and public universities with strong financial aid budgets and high graduation rates. More opportunity to customize application for each school. Most member schools will accept both the CA and this new application.
- **Online individual applications:** available on the college's website. If you use this option, be sure the Registrar, College Counselor and teachers are given specific instructions as to what is required from each.
- **The Universal Application:** similar to the CA – used by a smaller number of schools.
- **Paper applications:** still used by a few schools. Give your recommenders their forms, filled out and signed by you at the top. Provide stamped, addressed envelopes for the teachers who are writing for you.

Interviews

We recommend that you do not interview on your first few visits. Sizing yourself up in relation to each new context can be a bit overwhelming and confusing at first. After you have seen several from your broad initial list, you begin to clarify priorities that could be articulated in an interview if asked what you are looking for in a school and why school X fits that description. However, if you are traveling a considerable distance and may not be able to return for a follow up, an interview is appropriate if available. Also, you could possibly schedule a Skype interview.

If a school offers interviews but indicates that they are “not required” or “optional,” consider taking advantage of the opportunity that the one-on-one contact provides. It may be easiest to have your initial interview at a college that is not your first choice; once through the experience, you will feel more confident and knowledgeable about the next. Not only is the interview a great way to present yourself in the strongest possible light, but also it is the place to ask pertinent questions that may not be evident in the materials you have read. In any case, be sure to do your research carefully, prepare some talking points, and consider having a personal resumé ready to share with the interviewer. Mock interviews are available with the College Counselor at Waring and with our Intern.

If you have a particular talent or area of interest, it would be important to contact the appropriate coach, department, or professor to see if someone would be available to meet with you the day of your visit. Do this with plenty of advance notice and by writing a letter of introduction to the appropriate individual. You can obtain contact information (usually email addresses) from the Admissions Office.

It is important to write a thank you letter to anyone on the staff with whom you have met. That communication also opens the door for follow up as you have new questions or accomplishments to share. Whenever you contact an individual at the school or the admissions office in general, assume that your email, phone call, or letter is recorded and added to your file. Make sure it is concise, polished and a positive portrait of you, the candidate.

In addition to on campus interviews, some schools offer interviews with alums in our area. Usually, these interviews occur after you submit your application, but check each website to discover the interview options and requirements of all the schools on your list.

Essays

The essays, short answers and supplements together are the most important way for you to present yourself as the unique person you are. Think of your application as a puzzle, the many pieces of which come together to paint a complete picture of you, bringing you to life in the eyes of the reader. We hope that what you say about yourself, what your transcript and recommendations say about you will have common themes – will be genuine and consistent. Each part, however, should focus on a different aspect of your personality, talents, and interests – so there is not a lot of repetition. The essay is most effective if it presents a part of you that would not otherwise be seen by reading your transcript and resumé: a value, a life-changing experience, a goal, or a tiny look at you from the inside out.

As juniors, you have the time and opportunity to start generating ideas for standout essays. Three sources for topics are your responses to the student questionnaire, this year's questions on the Common Application, and prompts offered by your writing teachers or in the Personal Essay or College Writing class. Choose two or three topics and write open-ended drafts, without concern for structure and length at this point (final essay should not exceed 650 words). Then, put them aside for a week or so, reread, and look for themes you like. Often the essays that are the easiest to write are the most genuine and show the reader the most about you. Colleges generally don't care what you write about; they want to see the quality of your writing and get to know you better. Work on a revision of the essay you like best; then share it with a teacher or the College Counselor for his/her reaction. Though in most cases you are just

beginning to develop a college list, if you have a few “likely” colleges in mind, you could begin to outline supplemental essay questions for those schools.

If you take the time to do this work in small steps, you will have a head start on this important aspect of your application. It is our goal that by the end of the summer, you will have completed the Common Application, including the main essay, and will have made substantial progress on the supplements. We cannot emphasize enough the need for an early start, with time for many thoughtful revisions.

Waring teachers and the College Counselor are more than willing to help you, but this process takes time and, in most cases, several revisions. It is critical, therefore, to have a general timetable for essay writing and stick to it! Please take a look at some guidelines provided at the end of this handbook.

In conclusion, it is most important that all of your essays are your own – that it is your voice that speaks! The “authentic you” will do a far better job of impressing and engaging the admissions staff than the teachers, parents, or other resources that have helped along the way.

STANDARDIZED TESTING

Introduction: SAT, ACT, Subject Tests

Standardized testing is an important aspect of the college admissions process, especially at the most highly selective colleges and universities to which our students apply. Several colleges have downplayed the importance of scores in recent years, instituting Test Optional policies. However, since Waring does not give grades, these tests can play a more important role. Some colleges, for example, require Subject Tests in addition to the SAT or ACT for our students but not for their regular applicant pool. This information has to be secured on an individual college basis and is important to track as you do your research and visits. We have found that students who plan carefully and familiarize themselves with the test options and formats are able to attain scores that accurately reflect their potential and school performance. It is critical to keep standardized testing in perspective. Your academic achievement, extra-curricular activities, essays and letters of recommendation are, together, frequently more important than scores. In general, the more selective the college (the lower the acceptance rate), the more weight is given to the test scores.

It is important to look ahead at the test dates for ACT, SAT and Subject Tests in conjunction with your own obligations, priorities and strengths. Some students begin testing in the fall of junior year; the remainder take at least one SAT and perhaps an ACT in the winter/spring of junior year and, if appropriate, Subject Tests in May or June. They then retake the SAT or ACT (and possibly additional Subject Tests) in the summer or fall of senior year if needed. If you are

planning to do some preparation, either on your own or through a test prep program, keep in mind that you should plan to take the test in question as close to the conclusion of your prep as possible. Because some students do decidedly better on the SAT or the ACT, it is helpful to either do some assessment in advance to determine your preference, or take each test once and plan to do some prep for that test before your second test date.

Some Comparisons

The SAT used to be the test of choice in this part of the country; however, over the past several years the ACT has become an increasingly popular alternative. It is accepted by colleges and universities in place of the SAT and, in some cases, in place of the SAT and the SAT Subject Tests. This past year was a year of transition for both the SAT and the ACT – the SAT in particular, as it has been completely revised. The PSAT given in October of last year and this year were based on the new test. Results will be good predictors of how you might perform on the SAT this winter/spring. The first revised version of the SAT was given in March 2016. All subsequent tests are in the revised format. We will provide you with concordance tables that relate ACT and SAT scores.

Key differences in the new SAT include:

1. There are only two sections, now called Evidence Based Reading and Writing, and Math. Each test is 200 – 800 points (total 400 – 1600). The Essay is now optional and is scored separately.
2. Math emphasizes narrower but deeper grasp of Algebra, less Geometry and a few Trigonometry questions. Calculator prohibited on one Math section.
3. Reading, Writing and Language sections are more evidence based; vocabulary will be contextual.
4. Science questions will be included in all the above sections.
5. There is no penalty for wrong answers.
6. Format is more similar to ACT - 5 sections, comprising 3 tests: Writing & Language, Reading, 2 Math sections and the optional Essay. 3 hours and 50 minutes.

ACT has made some changes in the way it scores its test; there are also some new sub scores available, including two new hybrid scores in English Language Arts (ELA) and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). 3 hours and 25 minutes.

SAT SUBJECT TESTS:

The Subject Tests are one-hour tests that measure achievement in particular academic disciplines. You can take up to three one-hour tests on one day. You must choose a test date for Subject Tests only; they may not be taken on the same day you take the SAT. It is best to take a Subject Test at the conclusion of a specific course – such as Biology, Chemistry or Physics. In the case of French, you must first assess your level of accomplishment in the subject. The French Subject Test is offered on most SAT test dates. **However, the French with Listening is only offered in November.** If appropriate, you could take the French with Listening in the fall of your junior or senior years and/or the French language on another date. English Literature,

Math I and II and the history exams can be individually decided. The choice of taking the Math I or Math II depends on your college goals and willingness to prepare outside of class. Your teachers will be helpful in making decisions about which tests to take. Your College Counselor would be happy to talk with you about all of these options. For the most part only the most highly selective schools require Subject Tests – usually two but occasionally three. However, because Waring does not give grades or a GPA, it is helpful and sometimes required that these tests be added to your standardized testing profile. If not immediately evident in the admissions information for each school, it is important to contact the admissions office and ask if they require additional tests.

SAT TEST DATES:

- March 9th (registration deadline February 8th)
- May 4th (registration deadline April 5th)
- June 1nd (registration deadline May 3rd)
- August 24th
- October 5th
- November 2nd
- December 7st

The following Subject Tests are offered on all of the above dates, except March:

- Literature (any time, but spring of Junior year is ideal)
- Biology E/M, Chemistry, Physics (at completion of the course)
- Mathematics Level 1 (after Advanced Algebra and Geometry, sometimes Precalculus; content similar to math on the SAT)
- Math Level 2 (after Precalculus or during Calculus; more advanced function theory tested)
- U. S. History (talk to your Humanities teacher)
- French Language

ACT TEST DATES:

- February 9th (registration deadline January 11th)
- April 13th (registration deadline March 8th)
- June 8th (registration deadline May 3th)
- July 13th (registration deadline June 14th)
- September 14th
- October 26th
- December 14th

NON-STANDARDIZED TESTING:

Tests may be taken in a modified format, provided that students have gone through the required steps to determine eligibility. These modifications are available only to students with documented disabilities. They may involve extended time (usually by 50%), unlimited time, large print test materials, audio cassettes, keyboard, or the use of Braille. There is a rigorous

and time consuming process involved that takes place between the test publisher and the student and is supported by Waring's Registrar, Becky Schaeffer. The specific test agency ultimately makes the decision. You must apply separately to ACT and SAT. Please contact Becky with questions and start early if you think you will qualify. If successful you will receive an eligibility letter that includes your SSD (Services for Students with Disabilities) code – necessary when you register for the tests.

GUIDELINES FOR ONLINE REGISTRATION:

- Guidelines can be found on the College Board website for the SAT and on the ACT website.
- You may register for multiple test dates at the same time but will have to fill out separate registration forms for each date.
- Create a username and password that will allow ongoing access to registration, practice tests, scores, testing dates, etc.
- Use your full legal name (no nicknames) and be sure you are consistent in the way you spell it so that there won't be different records.
- Fill in your Social Security number if you have one; leave blank if not.
- You will need Waring's CEEB code: 221786.

REPORTING SCORES:

When you register for the SAT or ACT you are given the opportunity to have your scores sent to four schools for no additional fee. Don't take this option unless it is the last test date in the fall and you have applied early to a college that must have them. You want to be able to compare the first scores to those of subsequent test dates. It is also hard to know on the early dates what four colleges would be tops on your final list senior year.

At the time you do apply, you will have the advantage of deciding which scores to release. For example, if you did decidedly better on the ACT than the SAT overall, you may want to eliminate the SATs completely. If you took the ACT or SAT more than once, you can either pick the best results from one date or send both sets so that the top individual scores from each can be used. SAT has an option called SAT Score Choice. When you register for the test you should select Score Choice. If you do not choose it, colleges will receive all of your scores. Eventually, when you make your choices, you will have to include all sub scores from one SAT test date. Some colleges want to see all dates and say that they select the best among them. However, you may choose among Subject Tests you took on one day. This is something we will discuss with you as the application time draws near. **Note:** Waring will not report SAT, ACT or Subject Test scores on your transcript. The responsibility is entirely yours; the colleges want official scores that can only be sent by the test organization at your request.

AP TESTS:

The Advanced Placement Examinations are optional in the college admissions process. Their purpose is to gain college credit or placement in a higher level course once in college. Your teachers will discuss with you what AP test(s) is appropriate for you. Because of the strength of the Waring curriculum, it is entirely appropriate to take an AP test without having had a course

designated as AP. These scores may also be sent to colleges by the College Board. Because AP tests represent work done over the course of an entire academic year – and are college level – they are another important indicator of your readiness for the next step. AP scores range from 1 – 5. Although a score of 3 is passing, a 4 or 5 is more broadly considered helpful and may be reported by you and highlighted in your recommendations.

TEST PREP:

Test prep of some kind is bound to be helpful in increasing your familiarity with the test style and format and also with review of information and skills you may have mastered but are out of your current academic domain. It is important to take into consideration your own personal needs and priorities when choosing an approach. ACT and the College Board offer many online and paper version materials that, if self-disciplined and have the time, you can use to great advantage. The College Board partners with Khan Academy, which provides extensive options for prep for the SAT online – all free. Other options include private, one-on-one tutoring and group classes, which usually are three hours a week for ten weeks leading up to an exam date. We suggest that you do some research and talk with students who have used these services to help determine the best course of action for you. We would be happy to look at options with you.

IN CONCLUSION:

Your teachers and College Counselor will be happy to answer your questions and help you make decisions regarding the best plan of action for you as you navigate all of the above tests in the coming year. Take one step at a time; preparation and planning will alleviate a major amount of the stress that, unfortunately, is often associated with standardized testing. Rest assured; you are well prepared!

FINANCIAL AID

With the increasing cost of a college education and sometimes multiple children in one family to consider, financial aid can play a key role in the college admission process. Costs are rising faster than inflation; it is critical to plan ahead and understand the resources available to fund your education. Financial aid comes from several different sources: federal and state governments, colleges and universities, local private organizations and scholarship programs, and banks.

Most aid in this country is based on need. **However, there is another category of aid in the form of merit scholarships for academic excellence, athletics or other special talents. Criteria for merit awards must be obtained from each college you are considering.**

Your family's "need" will not be a fixed amount. There is an attempt to quantify it through federal and institutional methodology; however, the bottom line is that each college will determine your need according to its own interpretation of all the financial information you provide. In formulating your final college list, it is wise to be as well informed about the

financial aid policies and history of giving aid, as it is to know about academic strengths. And it is critical to have a financial back up school – perhaps a state college in Massachusetts or one where your credentials definitely place you in a merit-awarding category.

Because financial aid policies vary so much from school to school, we urge you to read all of the materials provided by each college and encourage you to contact the financial aid (not admissions) offices if you have questions. The financial aid officers are there to help you. It is possible to make an appointment if you are visiting campus and have unusual circumstances or questions you would like to discuss in person.

It would be helpful in your planning to use one of the many financial aid calculators available online. The U.S. Department of Education has one called the FAFSA4Caster. Many colleges have their own which are apt to be more accurate, predicting outcomes for their particular schools. All colleges and universities are required to provide their own calculator or recommend another one to assist you in making good decisions. Be aware, however, that these calculators are predictors, not guaranteed offers.

General definitions:

- **Need Blind:** In this case, the admission decision is separate from the financial process. Once your application has been reviewed and you are accepted, it will go to the financial aid office for the next step. There are not many schools today that can afford to be Need Blind, but those who are often offer the most generous packages and make every attempt to minimize the amount of loans a student will have to carry post-graduation.
- **Need Aware:** A growing number of schools whose resources have been stretched by the economic downturn of the past several years are now being more honest about admitting that need may play a role in their decisions. For the most part this affects a small group of candidates who may be in that last pool considered. In some cases these students are placed on a Wait List. It is unlikely, however, if you get off a Wait List, that there will be any remaining financial aid available.
- **Gapping:** Cases where a financial package is awarded but it does not fully meet your calculated need, thus leaving a gap.
- **EFC:** Expected Family Contribution – the total amount the family (including students and parents) is expected to pay toward the total cost of attending. This amount is determined by a formula established by Congress and calculated through information you provide on the FAFSA.
- **COA:** Cost of Attendance – the total cost of attending the college, which includes tuition, fees, room and board, books, estimated personal expenses and travel. This is the figure colleges use when determining need. The EFC is subtracted from the COA to establish the amount of money the financial aid should cover.
- **FAFSA:** Free Application for Federal Student Aid – the form that is the foundation for all need based aid, used by all public schools as its only required form and by private colleges in conjunction with other forms. It should be filed online as soon as possible on

or after October 1st of senior year. Analysis of this data will determine eligibility for Stafford Loans (subsidized and unsubsidized), Federal Work Study, Federal Perkins Loans and Pell Grants, and Supplemental Educational Opportunity grants (SEOG). This is the foundation for all other financial aid and the basis on which the private schools begin to build their packages. There is no cost to process the FAFSA. **Note: the FAFSA requires the prior year income tax returns...i.e. for the academic year beginning in the fall of 2017; returns from 2015 will be used. This is a change from previous years.**

- **CSS PROFILE:** This form is used by approximately 400 private colleges and universities to supplement the information given on the FAFSA. It allows applicants access to non-federal forms of aid such as institutional grants and scholarships. The College Scholarship Service, which is a branch of the College Board, developed the CSS PROFILE to streamline the process, eliminating the need for each college to create its own form. There is a core form and then supplements for the specific colleges to which you apply. The PROFILE may be filed on or after October 1st of senior year. There is a cost associated with its submission to each college.
- **NCP:** Some colleges will require a Non-Custodial Parent Application as part of the CSS PROFILE. You will be informed about the process after you have registered for the PROFILE. There are ways to work around this requirement if the Non-Custodial Parent is inaccessible and cannot be involved. Each college may have a different process.
- **INSTITUTIONAL FORMS:** In some cases private institutions will require a third form that asks additional questions and is relevant only to that school's financial aid process. They may also require copies of tax returns to verify information. It is important that you look at the exact financial aid requirements for each school to which you will be applying. These forms will also be due by the deadline of the individual schools.
- **DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PROFILE AND THE FAFSA:** In the case of the FAFSA, only the student and the custodial parent(s) information are considered. Schools using the PROFILE usually ask for the non-custodial parent form as well. Home equity is not considered on the FAFSA but is on the PROFILE. A business/farm supplement is asked for by PROFILE schools and not by the FAFSA. More assets are taken into consideration by the PROFILE. It also takes into consideration medical and dental expenses, private school tuition, the student's summer earnings and trust funds held by siblings. Do not assume, however, that you are put at a disadvantage by submitting the PROFILE. Colleges using it may have access to more monies than public schools. The net cost to you at a private college is often the same or lower than at a public one.

Some questions to ask when applying for financial aid:

- What is the college's policy – need blind, need aware, etc.?
- What percentage of the last freshman class received aid?
- What percentage of students had their full need met?
- If I receive financial aid in freshman year, can I count on the same aid in following years, provided my family's financial picture remains the same?

- If my family has more than one student in college at the same time (or in private secondary school), will that be taken into consideration in determining my aid (the FAFSA will divide your EFC in half if there are two in college but it doesn't hurt to ask the question of private colleges)?
- Do I need to maintain a certain GPA to maintain my aid?
- If I receive an outside scholarship, will my aid be reduced by a like amount; if so would it come off the grant component, the loan component or my family's contribution?
- Is my aid adjusted annually in conjunction with increases in college costs?
- What happens if my circumstances change and my needs increase after I have matriculated?
- What is the college's policy regarding non-custodial parents and their spouses?
- Will my aid package cover a study abroad experience?
- How many hours would I work as part of a Work Study program?
- Does the college have an estimate/limit for the amount of student loans the average student takes with him/her upon graduation?
- Does the college have a plan that allows parents/students to spread out their payments?

The financial aid package:

While it may seem logical that once the family EFC is determined, your aid packages from multiple colleges would look the same; however, that is not the case. Each financial aid office has considerable discretion and flexibility in its process and how it constructs your individual offer.

Whether public or private, each college will begin with the federal programs, usually with the Stafford Loan (a student loan that does not accrue interest and payments are deferred until 6 months after you graduate or leave school). Then, depending on your status, you may receive a Pell Grant (not to be paid back) or a low interest Perkins Loan. Work Study is another option. Jobs are on campus; students work approximately 15 hours/per week throughout the academic year. Funds generated are considered available for on-going expenses and can't be applied to the tuition/room and board bills. You are also expected to contribute a portion of your assets and personal savings and a percentage of summer earnings (if you don't have a job, a realistic amount will be allocated).

Allowances are made for the number of dependents in your family, the costs of other private education, your oldest parent's age, special circumstances and more. Your parents' assets are factored in at a much lower percentage than yours. Once the EFC is fully determined, taking all of this into consideration, the balance between the options just outlined and the total cost of attending the college or university will be made up by school based grants and parent and student loan programs. Merit awards may also be a part of a financial aid package in the form of scholarships that are awarded without reference to need.

Packages may vary to a great degree. For example, one college that has a good endowment and places a limit on the amount of debt a student can have at the end of four years may award a large portion of aid as grant money. Another that doesn't may fill the gap with parent and additional student loan programs (some offered in-house and others to be procured through outside banks and financial institutions). If the college you choose has a financial aid package that substantially falls short of your needs, it is entirely appropriate to contact the financial aid office and request an in person or telephone meeting to discuss options. In some cases adjustments will be made.

It is important to review all of the financial aid forms and specific college requirements early so that you are prepared for what will be a very tight window in the fall (if applying early) or in January of senior year to complete this process. There are many resources available online and in books that can help. One that is very useful is the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority – a non-profit state agency that offers a great website and fall seminars where you can be helped in person.

PROCESSING THE DECISIONS

Once all of your applications are in, the wait can be challenging. Stay focused on the present, working at your capacity throughout your senior year and continuing to enjoy your activities and friendships at Waring. Rest assured you will be accepted at a variety of colleges, any number of which will be good matches and offer you what you are looking for in this next chapter of your life. Here are some strategies that may be helpful as you move toward the finish line.

Getting a Yes!

1. After your initial celebration be sure to call home and then notify the College Counseling Office.

2. Accept or deny the offer either right away or by the May 1 deadline, after you have had a chance to review other acceptances. A deposit of several hundred dollars will be required with the acceptance. This is non-refundable should you decide to attend another school later.
3. Financial aid information should come with your letters (or may be sent separately). Call the financial aid office if you do not hear within a few days.
4. If financial aid is an important consideration, carefully review and compare all packages and ask for clarification or reconsideration if needed.
5. You may want to revisit a college before making your decision; many schools have “accepted students” days that provide opportunities to learn a great deal.

Getting Denied

It is never easy not getting what you want, but do not take it personally if you have been denied. There are so many more qualified candidates than spaces available in an incoming class. The factors used in making the selections are entirely out of your reach or control. Instead, focus on the schools where you are accepted. They carefully selected you after determining you were a great match; trust that judgment. All students with balanced lists will receive a combination of answers.

Getting Deferred

This is a possible outcome from an EA or ED program. A deferral indicates that you have the credentials to be accepted, but are not at the top of the individual school’s priority list in this first stage of the process. You are then put into the regular pool to be considered during the winter – with acceptances or denials arriving in late March and early April. At the end of the midyear, with first semester courses completed, a new transcript and first semester narrative evaluations will be sent to any EA or ED schools where you have been deferred. This provides a chance to add new information, awards, and accomplishments that were not available at the time of your original application. If there is something of significance to be shared, the College Counselor can include it in the midyear report. In addition, it is important for you to send a letter to the college, sharing the information yourself and communicating your continued interest – including noting if the school is still your first choice. You are, however, no longer committed to attend, should you eventually be accepted. If you have completed a college course in the fall of your senior year, the transcript from that school with your grade should be sent to the college. This may be done directly or through the Registrar.

The Wait List

Because there are more candidates on the admit list than a college has room for, some admissions offices may notify you that you have been placed on a Wait List. Admission from the Wait List usually occurs after the first week in May and can go on as late as August. If you are granted acceptance and wish to attend, you must immediately withdraw from the college where you made a deposit on May 1. Usually you are given only a day or two to decide.

The Wait List status can be confusing and can vary widely from school to school and at the same school from year to year. In some cases, many will be taken in a given year and in others none at all. It largely depends on the college's yield (the percentage of students who accept them who have been offered spots in the freshman class and choose to attend). Colleges base their Wait List numbers on their projected yields, but can be off in their calculations.

If you are really interested in a school that puts you on its Wait List:

- Send the response card back right away – indicating real interest.
- Write a personal letter, emphasizing your desire to attend the college and why, highlighting any new information that may help you.
- Talk with the College Counselor to discuss strategies. She can play a vital role in advocating for you.
- Think about getting one additional letter from someone who knows you well or has something new to add.
- If the college is close enough you could call the admissions office and ask if it would be helpful to come in for an interview.

The Gap Year Option

More and more students are deciding to take a gap year between the completion of high school and the beginning of their college experience. Once a deposit is made by May 1st, you can request a deferral of one year. This is almost universally granted. Also, sometimes this can be a bargaining chip if you are wait listed at a college that really wants you. Colleges support the idea that a structured and focused year to test yourself and some of your passions may enhance your college years and your future contributions to the college community. There are many resources – some which can be accessed directly by you and others that are planned through consultants who have done research and vetted thousands of opportunities around the world. The College Counseling office will help you if this is an avenue you wish to explore.

COLLEGE PLANNING TIMETABLE

Junior Year

September:

- Attend college representative lunch visits at Waring; be open to schools you may not have considered.
- Begin to do some college research online and take opportunities as they present themselves to visit college campuses that may be en route to other destinations.

October:

- Take the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT) and National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMQT).

- Consider your option to take the French with Listening Subject test in November and possibly another Subject test and register if you plan to do so.
- Continue to attend college meetings and do some broad research.

November:

- Take test(s) if registered.
- Begin to do some self-reflection about your college search priorities.
- Consider registering for December SAT. Take timed practice tests; if time, try ACT as well. Talk to College Counselor about the advisability of this test date for you.

December:

- Review PSAT results and identify areas of weakness to help focus your test prep.
- Take December SAT if scheduled.
- Register for the January SAT, if that is best for your planning.
- Take timed practice SAT and ACT tests, if you haven't already, and/or look at the option of professional prep programs to help determine your winter/spring testing plan.
- Meet with College Counselor in small groups to discuss an overview of the college process. Plan meeting with the College Counselor and your family for early winter.

January:

- Talk to friends who are home for break about their college experiences. Attend college panel with Waring alums, organized by the College Counselor and Parents' Committee.
- Complete student questionnaire to frame your priorities; give to College Counselor. Use college handbook suggestions to do more in-depth college research.
- Meet with College Counselor; create a working list of about 15-20 colleges; begin to plan a schedule of visits.
- As you research, create a grid that will contain pertinent information about each college you are considering that will help in the formation of a Vertical College List.
- Start a folder for each college you are considering.
- If feasible, register for the February ACT (limited test locations).

February:

- Register for the March SAT if desired.
- Take the February ACT if scheduled.
- Continue your research and test prep.
- Try to plan a few college visits, using your Waring college days or other opportunities.
- Continue communicating with the College Counselor as you have reactions to visits; do more research that will help fine-tune your list.
- Talk to relevant senior teachers about which Subject Tests might be appropriate and then access some prep materials to give yourself plenty of time to work on them.

March:

- Take the March SAT if planned.
- Register for the April ACT if desired.

- Register for the May SAT or Subject Tests.
- Use March break, if possible, to take longer college visits.
- Keep a journal; add notes to your college folders; use test scores to help categorize your colleges into groups according to selectivity.

April:

- Take ACT if planned.
- Schedule another family meeting with College Counselor to take stock of all you have covered on your own with visits, research and testing. Fine tune your list and reduce it in number. Consider adding new schools to replace those that have been eliminated.
- Continue with test prep if needed – in particular prep for individual Subject Tests that you will take.
- Register, if you haven't already, for the May test. Plan how you will use the May date to cover the rest of the testing for the junior year.

May:

- Take appropriate SAT tests and AP examinations.
- Register with NCAA Clearinghouse if you might play Division I or II sports.
- Talk with the teacher or teachers whom you may have selected by then to write your college recommendations. Set aside a time to talk with them about your college list and provide information about interests and accomplishments outside Waring.
- Finish your junior year in the strongest possible position.

June, July, & August:

- Take Subject Tests during Junior Trip if appropriate.
- Register for and then take July ACT or August SAT.
- Plan summer college visits; arrange interviews and meetings with coaches or special interest faculty members/departments.
- Continue to do test prep if needed.
- Make a list of all the essay and supplement topics. Look for overlaps. Work on essays and attempt to have good drafts ready by the opening of school.
- Begin to complete the Common App, entering the colleges to which you will most likely apply. Work on central application only if before August 1st. Applications begun before then can be “rolled over” after the 1st. We will have at least one session to help you in August at Waring that will be called “Waring Common App Boot Camp.”
- Consider creating a resumé, which can be included in your CA additional information section or used for interviews, etc.
- Work on portfolios/supplements to be submitted for specific majors.
- Register for fall tests: ACT in September, October and December - SAT and Subject Tests in October, November, and December.
- Stay in touch with College Counselor with a goal of having a tentative final list by fall.

Senior Year

September:

- Submit your College Update Form to the College Counselor.
- Submit your Extracurricular/Honors form to the Registrar.
- Finalize your second teacher recommender if not already determined.
- Meet with the College Counselor and your family to plan a strategy for completing your search and finalizing applications. Decide if you are an EA or ED candidate.
- Make a timeline for your applications with deadlines, requirements for testing, etc.
- Share the timeline with the counselor and teachers who are recommenders and, if you haven't already, arrange meetings with them. Make sure you let them know when you are appearing in theater productions or doing anything else on or beyond campus that would help them in recommending you.
- Take ACT if planned.
- Register for October SAT or ACT and also November and December dates if possible.
- Attend college representative visits at Waring.
- Look for open houses in the fall at colleges you are considering and haven't visited or at those where you would like a second visit. They are often held on a Sunday or holiday.
- Plan your fall schedule to allow time for each aspect of the process now in full swing.
- Continue work on essays.

October:

- Retake SAT, Subject Tests or ACT: these dates are the last comfortable dates to meet an early deadline.
- Plan a few focused visits or revisits and interviews where available.
- Review your transcript with the Registrar to be sure it is accurate.
- Submit Transcript Request Forms to the Registrar for each college that has an early deadline – giving at least two weeks' notice.
- Provide the Registrar with clear information about schools that do not use the CA, along with a printed Secondary School Report for each or instructions about online access.
- If you are applying Early and are a financial aid applicant, complete a FAFSA and a CSS PROFILE registration form, if necessary (see Financial Aid chapter).
- Work on essays and applications.
- Attend college representative visits at Waring.

November:

- Take SAT or Subject Tests (in particular, French with Listening), if needed.
- Register for December SAT, Subject Tests or ACT if appropriate.
- Complete November 1 and 15 applications. Submit them and save confirmation emails.
- Continue to work on other applications, even if you have applied early.
- Touch base with teacher recommenders and the College Counselor to be sure they are on board with your plan and deadlines.
- Finalize your entire college list.

December:

- Take final round of SAT, Subject Tests or ACT if registered.
- Submit final transcript release forms to Registrar by beginning of the month.
- Complete December deadline applications or Rolling Admissions. Submit them and save confirmation emails.
- Notify Registrar and College Counselor when you receive your ED or EA answers.

January – March:

- Finish all applications. Meet with College Counselor if needed.
- Continue to work hard, as your midyear and final transcripts should not show a decline.
- Inform the College Counselor and Registrar of any new information or awards that should go on your transcript before it is sent at the end of January.
- Complete the FAFSA, CSS Profile and any other college financial aid forms if you haven't already done so for early applications.

March – April:

- Receive decision letters; notify Registrar and College Counselor of these decisions.
- Meet with the College Counselor and family to discuss options if helpful.
- Visit schools on your own or attend accepted student days at top choices.
- Notify all colleges of your final decision.
- Mail a deposit to one college by May 1st, even if you are on a Wait List at another

May: Graduation! Congratulations – you did it!