

College Counseling Handbook

Class of 2018

Maryvale's Mission

Maryvale, a Catholic independent girls' school serving grades six through 12, affiliated with the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, provides an environment in which each student can reach her academic, spiritual, physical and civic potential in a loving, supportive and diverse community. Building upon its unique and special heritage, Maryvale's mission is to provide an exceptional education that responds to change and prepares young women for life.

Managing the College Application Process is Your New Sales Job

Work at this – don't disappoint yourself by not giving this process the effort needed! Your return on effort in this process is critical for maximizing your options.

Determine which colleges are the best **matches for you**. College is a match to be made, not a prize to be won.

While I will do everything possible to facilitate students' college choices and applications, each of you hold the key to your own success.

Since you cannot be in the room when an admissions committee is making a decision, the application must do the talking - show them, through words, what makes you a great match for that particular college.

The best way to dazzle college admissions offices is not to **appear** impressive but to **be** impressive.

A love of learning is evidenced not just by attaining strong grades, but also by showing enthusiasm for the learning process - delve deeper, think bigger, explore, and question.

Enthusiasm for an activity is evident when you do more than the minimum, such as holding positions of leadership (not just in title, but in actions, too) and taking the initiative to make improvements rather than going with the status quo.

Your Job?

ASK, ASK, ASK

RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH

WORK HARD IN SCHOOL – COLLEGES LIKE THAT

MAKE THEM LOVE YOU



Monica C. Graham
Director of College Counseling
410-308-8504
grahamm@maryvale.com

The Junior Year Timeline

FROM DAY ONE ... use your MARYVALE EMAIL

ON EVERY correspondence you have with a college – THROUGH EMAIL, TO REGISTER FOR A VISIT or ON WRITTEN MATERIALS (resumes, activities charts, supplemental letters, etc.). Why? Colleges need to *easily* determine where you attend and who you are without trying to decipher your personal email address (*prettyinpink@yahoo.com* or *ilovelax@gmail.com* just do NOT make a good impression). *You want them to know which school to contact if questions arise about your application.*

Fall (September-December)

- Your October PSAT results are a valuable tool. Review score results to determine what kind of help you need to perform well on the SAT.
- Attend the meetings with the college reps; check the “Colleges Visiting Maryvale” calendar in Naviance for dates and times.
- Use the SuperMatch survey in Naviance. Consider size, location, degrees offered, reputation, selectivity, family connections, majors, and extracurricular offerings. After completing one survey, save & begin another, using different parameters.
- Continue preparing for the ACT/SAT. Visit www.collegeboard.com OR www.actstudent.org to establish a personal account so you can register for tests. Both sites have A LOT of information about the test and test prep questions. Use the free resources available.
- The AIMS College Counselors host a financial aid night, open to all AIMS schools. This past September, it was held at Maryvale. Come!
- Get on colleges’ mailing lists. Visit the websites – register.

Winter (January-February)

- Register for testing – whichever you choose (ACT or SAT OR both)
- Schedule a college counseling meeting for you and your parents with your counselor.
- Investigate college summer programs of interest, internships, jobs, service, or other activities.
- Begin entering colleges of interest into your Naviance account under “Colleges I’m Thinking About”
- Continue preparing for the ACT/SAT. Register for spring testing. Visit www.collegeboard.com and www.actstudent.org to register for tests.

Spring (March-May)

- Register for your senior year classes.
- Plan visits to colleges over spring break.
- Attend the AIMS College Fair or Junior Open Houses at colleges of interest.
- Request teachers complete recommendations for you; ask them in person before entering them into your Naviance account. Consider faculty who are knowledgeable about your academic AND personal strengths. Think about the subject areas of importance to particular colleges, especially if you are applying for a specific major, program or discipline.
- Review the 5 Common App essay prompts – jotting down possible topics for at least 2 or 3 of them.
- ATHLETES: Register through the NCAA Clearinghouse if you plan to participate in D-I or II athletics in college. Visit www.eligibilitycenter.org
- Investigate college summer programs of interest, internships, jobs, service, or other activities.

Pre-Senior Summer (June-August)

- Refine your list of prospective colleges. Keep college list in Naviance up-to-date.
- Continue to work on your essay draft.
- Attend college summer enrichment programs.
- Visit college campuses.
- If you feel retesting for the SAT/ACT is important, register for the October test date.

The Senior Year Timeline

Fall (September-November)

- ASK FOR HELP – don't flounder, get frustrated or not make progress - ASK
- Review college choices, application process, and application deadlines.
- See teachers who are writing your letters of recommendation. Provide any requested information (questionnaire, activities résumé, etc.) and inform them of your earliest known application deadlines.
- Visit colleges and universities of interest.
- Continue to complete and submit applications.
- DOUBLE CHECK EARLY DECISION/EARLY ACTION APPLICATIONS DEADLINES.
- Some Early Decision deadlines are as early as October 15!
- Meet with college representatives who visit Maryvale – see visit calendar in Naviance
- Explore financial aid and scholarship opportunities, recognizing the importance of meeting deadlines.
- FAFSA – register as early as possible. The site opens October 1. Visit www.fafsa.ed.gov
- Explore financial aid and scholarship opportunities.

Winter (December-February)

- Finish and submit any/all final college applications.
- Personally thank teachers who have written you letters of recommendation.
- Mid-Year grade reports are submitted to the colleges to which students have applied.
- Submit a copy of any offers of admission, merit-based scholarships and financial aid/grants you've received to the College Counseling office.
- Gear up for mid-year exams.

Spring (March-June)

- Consider making final campus visits – attend welcome events. Attend classes, stay overnight in a residence hall, eat in the dining hall, and meet current students and professors.
- Provide copies of all decision & grant/aid letters to the counseling office. (I need them please!)
- Notify colleges of your decision to attend or not by May 1st, the Common Reply Date.
- Submit a copy of any offers of admission, merit-based scholarships and financial aid/grants you've received to the College Counseling office.
- Send in confirmation and housing deposits.

Graduate!!

Understanding College Admissions Vocabulary

Common Application

An on-line application widely accepted by over 500 participating institutions. See <http://www.commonapp.org/>

Early Action (EA)

EA permits students to apply to a college or university and receive a decision early in the senior year, well in advance of the normal spring response dates. Although an earlier admission decision is received, you are not committed to attend and may still apply to other colleges and consider offers received. Some EA applications are deferred to regular decision, often with additional requests (essays; recommendations) in order to be reconsidered. If denied EA admission, applicants may not reapply through regular decision.

Single Choice Early Action or Restricted Early Action

The above definition applies, but students may only apply early to one institution, and are not committed to enroll if admitted.

Early Decision (ED)

ED is recommended for students who have completed a thorough college search and find that *one school* stands above and beyond the others. ED requires you commit to a college or university at the time of application that, if admitted, the student *will* enroll. Upon admission, the institution will require a nonrefundable deposit well before May 1. If denied admission, early decision applicants may not reapply through regular decision.

Rolling Admission – Under this application process, an institution reviews applications as they are received and offers decisions to students soon after review. For these colleges, admission consideration is a continuous process. Notification is usually made within 2 to 3 weeks, yet commitment is not required until spring.

Priority Application

Some colleges are offering students priority applications, which often means the application fee is waived and sometimes an otherwise required essay is waived. The colleges usually review these applications on a rolling basis.

Wait List

This term is used by institutions to specify in which they may initially delay offering or denying admission, but rather extend the possibility of admission in the future. Colleges offer admission to wait list candidates if insufficient numbers of regularly admitted candidates accept offers of admission. Refer to the Statement of Students' Rights & Responsibilities for the rights which you are assured if placed on a waitlist.

Deferred Decision

Students who are neither accepted nor denied under Early Decision or Early Action programs may have their admission decision deferred and the application considered under Regular Decision. Thus, their application will be reviewed with the full regular decision applicant pool. When an ED decision is deferred, the student is automatically released from any ED commitment and automatically becomes a RD applicant.

Superscore Testing

When colleges receive your SAT scores, it is usually from several test dates. Perhaps your December SAT Reading score was higher than your June score. The majority of colleges will take the highest subset score from any testing. In other words, colleges will *superscore* your test results, giving you the highest possible composite score, no matter when each section's highest score was recorded.

Common App Essay

Part of the Common Application is an essay responding to one of five prompts. Students will choose one of the prompts and prepare an essay with a maximum word count of 650. The essay will be uploaded into a designated space on the application.

Supplemental Essays

Some colleges required additional essays, some short-answer, some longer in length. Some websites include specifics on these additional requirements; others will include them in the Common Application.

Test Optional

Some colleges do not request SAT/ACT results as part of the admissions requirements. These schools will review your results if you send them, but don't require them. There is often an additional requirement in lieu of testing – an additional essay; submission of a graded paper from an English or Literature class; a specific GPA or higher.

Demonstrated Interest

Meeting with the college representative when he/she visits our school campus, registering for a campus tour so you have another check mark next to your name, emailing the regional representative with "Nice to meet you", "Thanks for coming", "Thanks for answering my questions", "I'm really interested in your XX Program" questions or to share additional information once your application has been submitted ... are these valuable in the process? YES. Many colleges make final decisions based on how interested you seem to be in enrolling. The colleges want 'yes' answers to their offers of admission.

Criteria Colleges Use for Determining Eligibility

Admission officers are responsible for selecting students who will contribute to both the academic and social climate of their institution. Different colleges and universities place varying emphases on the criteria they use to admit students. However, the vast majority of colleges carefully consider the following:

Academic Record

Every year matters. The academic transcript submitted to colleges will reflect marks from 9th grade through 11th grade, as well as listing the courses taken in 12th grade. A strong academic record in challenging courses throughout the high school experience will be the factor most likely to influence an admission decision in your favor. The breadth and difficulty of the courses on your transcript are regarded as the best forecast of college success. Students are responsible for ensuring they take the courses necessary to even apply to the colleges. For example, a student who wants to major in nursing will need to complete Anatomy & Physiology, and if you intend to major in engineering Physics and Calculus are expected.

College Admission Standardized Test Scores (ACT, SAT and SAT Subject Tests)

As a rule, admission tests scores alone are not likely to result in either your acceptance or rejection. Admission officers usually view scores as a "snapshot" of the more complete person. One exception is the large university that uses test scores to reduce large numbers of applications down to a manageable number. Test scores may also be used for placement in freshman classes. Most of the highly selective colleges require two or three SAT Subject Tests. Students should have a plan for taking these standardized tests so opportunities are not missed.

Extracurricular Activities and Work Experience

These experiences present a picture of the student outside of the classroom. Participating in activities is important not only for your college application, but also for your own personal development. *Colleges are not looking at the number of activities in which you participate, but rather that you are participating.*

Teacher and Counselor Recommendations

These first-hand observations by educators who have worked with you during Upper School emphasize your abilities, aptitudes and interests. They often present information about your personality, character and motivation for learning.

Essays

The essay is the one place you can sell yourself to the reader. Colleges that require an essay consider this creative work to be a make-or-break part of their admission decision. Strong admission essays result from careful planning and allowing adequate time for thoughtful expression, editing and rethinking. It is an opportunity to share something about

you that isn't reflected in grades or numbers. It is also your chance to explain a situation that affected your performance, giving the reader an honest explanation instead of her/him wondering why.

Interview

Some colleges require or recommend an interview. Even if it is optional, do it! The staff member or alumni representative conducting the interview will prepare a report that becomes an official part of the admission folder. This opportunity is another way to show interest. Additionally, it is a chance for you to have the interviewer answer your questions and sell YOU on their school.

Special Talents and Characteristics

A particular talent can be influential in gaining admission to a college. You will need to present those special skills to the appropriate people at the college level. Portfolios, video or audio tapes, and résumés are just a few ways to effectively showcase and share your talents. Colleges may also give added consideration to children of alumni or individuals with other characteristics or skills they hope to attract.

Naviance

Naviance is a software purchased by Maryvale to assist in exploring and making decisions about colleges, careers and individual needs.

Tools in Naviance

- Explore new college matches based on GPA and ACT/SAT scores, region
- Navigate links to college and university webpage and other online resources
- Manage timelines and deadlines for making decisions about colleges
- See which colleges are coming to meet Maryvale students – and register to attend those sessions
- Manage personal prospective college list

To Access Naviance

<https://connection.naviance.com/maryvale>

General Instructions

Besides the obvious search tools, Naviance has a wealth of information for students and parents. Explore the site – push buttons – compare – lookup – search – discover yourself – research and SAVE searches!

Student Login

Username: Maryvale Email Address

Password: lastnamefirstinitial (once logged in, you should change your password)

If you forget your password, contact your counselor.

Parent Login

Username: Personal Email Address

Password: Beginning of Personal Email (before the @)

Your password should be reset once you register.

“About Me” heading

Interesting Things About Me

Counselor Information Form – a questionnaire you complete that helps me know you better; it is a valuable tool for me in writing a letter of recommendation for you

Game Plan – complete goals after high school, career and college interests

Strengths Explorer – a survey tool for assessing your personal strengths and interests

Career Interest Profiler – complete the survey to help you discover what careers/jobs match your interests

“Colleges” heading

SuperMatch College Search

Use this tool to define/refine the colleges that best match your specific interests and needs (save EACH search you complete – you never know when you might want to refer back to a school not on your newest search)

Colleges I’m Thinking About

When you find schools on your SuperMatch results list that spark your interest and may be worth further research, click on “Add to Colleges I’m Thinking About” – all them to that list.

College Resources & College Search Engines

There are 4,000+ four-year colleges in the US from which you have the opportunity of choosing one to attend.

College Board – www.collegeboard.com

When it comes to gathering information about colleges, students will find an array of sources. The one source that shares a wide array of statistics is collegeboard.org (the site used to register for the SAT). Enter the name of any college/university and see the pages-long information specific to that school. It is a valuable comparison tool.

Naviance – <http://connection.naviance.com/maryvale>

College Mailing Lists

As you identify colleges that interest you, consider registering on the college’s website as a prospective student. The profile you create will provide the college with information about you and, in turn, the college can provide you with information specific to your needs and interests. By email or mail you may receive information about your potential major, notification of open houses or other events, scholarship opportunities or new programs.

Taking any national test (PSAT, SAT, ACT) will alert colleges of your interest in attending college. After taking any of these tests, you will begin to receive mailings and email notification – yes, the colleges buy those lists from College Board & ACT, as do other for-profit organizations. Look and read – but don’t leap YET.

Important Factors to Consider for College Exploration

About You

Know yourself!

Achievements
Aptitudes
Interests
Personality traits
Values and goals

Academics

Academic fit should be your number one criteria in selection of a college. Place yourself in an environment where you will be challenged academically, yet where you are also able to meet that challenge.

About the Institution

School Type

- Public, Private
- Religious Affiliation
- Co-Ed, Single-Sex
- Urban, Suburban, Rural

Location/Region

- New England
- Middle Atlantic
- Mid-West
- Southeast
- Rocky Mountain States
- Far West
- Southwest
- OR you can choose specific states

Undergraduate Enrollment

- Small (Less than 2000)
- Medium (2000-7500)
- Large (More than 7500)

Selectivity

Selectivity or competitiveness of an institution is usually noted by the percentage of applicants offered admission.

Extra-Curricular Involvement

- Athletics
- Service opportunity
- Activities – clubs and organizations
- Study abroad programs

Majors/Minors/Specific Professional Programs

If you are pursuing a specific major, such as nursing, education or engineering, this may drive your search and will limit possible colleges/universities. Look into whether these programs are 'direct entry' or you apply after freshmen or sophomore year.

Cost of Attendance (COA)

- In-state tuition, out-of-state tuition
- Room & board, Books, transportation, other costs/fees
- Need-based aid, merit-based aid

College Visits

The purpose of visiting a college campus is for a student and her parents to get a first-hand view. Visiting a college campus is a key component in the college exploration process! Each student begins to decipher her likes and dislikes as she ventures from one campus to another. Use the following guidelines to help you make the most of "Campus Visits."

Start Local

The Mid-Atlantic area has numerous colleges and universities that meet every criteria and can be reached in an hour or two. Check out some of the schools in our area and discover what you "like" and what you "dislike" before you travel long distances. You may find you don't want to visit that school in Idaho after all. Refine your list before a long college trip.

Plan Ahead

Look at upcoming holiday breaks or three-day weekends and plan accordingly! Make sure to visit when college students are on campus.

Register for a visit before going to visit a college. The college websites have registration information with time slots. Register early, especially if you're visiting at busy times of the year. If an interview is part of the college's application process, when you register for a visit schedule an interview, if possible.

Research the College Before You Visit

It is important to have some background information prior to visiting any college/university. Visits begin with a check-in at the Admissions Office. An information session and tour are the standard expectation for a college visit. If you find a campus map online, print it out and take it with you. You'll be ready as soon as you step out of your car!

Go on a Scheduled Tour

Don't forgo a tour!! Student-led tours allow you to see the cafeteria, library, residence halls, and classrooms. It also provides an opportunity to ask questions of a current student.

Keep Notes, Take Pictures and Reflect On What You've Seen

After visiting several colleges, it will be difficult to remember specifics details about each. Take notes during the information session, take photos of the campus and jot down comments on your way home. You'll be glad you did!

Send a Follow-Up Email

Before visiting the college, identify that college's admissions representative – they are listed on the college websites. Schools have assigned geographic regions to admissions staff. When there is *not* a regional representative, use the director of admissions as your contact person.

When you return home, send a short email to your admissions representative or the director (or anyone else with whom you had significant interaction, e.g., the presenter at the information session, a coach or a professor). Mention something specific about the college that impressed you or matched your needs.

Questions to Ask on the College Visit

It is important to get a range of views about a college during your campus visit. Ask the same questions of different people to get a clear picture!

Questions to ask college student guides

- What are the more popular extracurricular activities (or "Do you have ..." a specific activity)?
- Where do students study? What are the Library hours?
- Are there socializing areas/living rooms in the residence halls?
- Does the social life revolve around the campus, or do many students go home or away on weekends?
- How available are the professors to talk to outside of class?
- Are campus jobs available?
- Were you able to register for all the classes you wanted?
- If you were to do it again, would you choose this college?
- What is the social life like at this school? Does the college provide planned cultural and social activities?
- How's the food??
- How important are fraternities and sororities to social life? Would you call this a "Greek school?"
- What do you think is the best thing about your school?

Questions to ask an Admissions Officer

- What are your most popular/distinguished/unique programs?
- How many students will be in my first year courses? Are those courses taught by professors or by graduate assistants?
- Describe the college's resources for first-year students (freshman intro classes; advisors; orientation).
- What percentage of students receives financial aid and what does the typical package provide?
- Are there academic/talent scholarships available?

- Is housing guaranteed? Freshman year? All four years? If not, is there a department on campus to help?
- What are the building/expansion plans for the next few years?

Questions to ask yourself on campus

- Could I live in one of the residence halls I visit?
- Are the buildings on campus in good shape? How are the facilities that support my interests? (i.e., art studios, science labs, athletic facilities)
- Are common areas of residence halls comfortable, and do the facilities meet demand?
- Are the grounds attractive? What is the general condition of campus?
- Is the campus close enough - or far enough away - from the city for me?
- How is it getting around campus? Can I walk to class or do I need a bike or shuttle?

Questions to ask yourself in the classroom

- Do students appear to be interested in the material?
- Do students participate in discussion?
- Do the students seem to have a relationship with the professor?
- Would I feel comfortable as a student in this setting?

College Representatives and College Fairs

College Representatives Visiting Maryvale

College representatives visit Maryvale in the fall. We welcome many college representatives each year. They provide valuable information to students. Seniors are encouraged to attend these visits, especially if the school is on their final list. The rep will welcome your participation. The college reps who visit Maryvale and promote their schools at recruiting fairs ARE THE FIRST READ on your application. A complete and up-to-date listing of visiting colleges and universities can be found in Naviance.

College Fair

Do your homework. Study the roster of participating colleges (if available) and prepare a list of questions. Take your list to the fair and don't be shy about asking your questions.

The colleges want your personal contact information. To expedite this process, provide each of the college's representatives with one of your Maryvale business cards. This will allow time to talk to the representative (instead of spending time completing a contact card).

Allow sufficient time to talk with as many college representatives as possible. If you are undecided about where to apply, use the fair to continue your exploration. While many colleges will be familiar to you, others will not. If you have narrowed your list of colleges, the fair will permit you to be more directive in your information quest, but you may wish to engage in discussion with some colleges that are not on your list.

Write down the answers to your questions. Note the name or take the business card

Present yourself in the best possible manner. The college fair is an opportunity for you to interact face-to-face with college admissions reps, individuals who will be reviewing your application and contributing to the admissions decision. Make the most of the very first impression.

Take some time after the fair to write personal follow-up notes, letters, or emails to the reps you met .

Talk with your classmates after the fair and compare notes regarding the information you received and their impression. Comparing your insights and experiences with others may generate perspectives that were not apparent before.

College Admissions Testing

Timelines • Registering • Reporting • Non-Report Options

An Overview of College Admissions Tests

Admissions requirements vary from school to school, and students should check with the individual colleges to determine the policy of each school in which they have a serious interest. The college counseling office can be of assistance to students in determining which examinations should be taken for each particular college or university. Some form of college admissions testing is usually required.

College Admissions Testing Definitions

ACT – A college entrance exam that measures students’ general educational development and their ability to complete college-level work. The test covers English, mathematics, reading, and science with an optional writing test. The ACT with Writing takes 3 hours and 25 minutes to complete. See <http://www.actstudent.org/regist/>

AP Tests (Advanced Placement) – These three-hour college-level exams are given in May and are scored on a scale of 1 to 5. A high score may earn a student advanced placement in college or course credit. Scores earned at the end of the junior year may be taken into consideration by colleges in their evaluation of a student’s candidacy.

PSAT - Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test – This test is an abbreviated form of the SAT Reasoning Test and is designed to give students an opportunity to practice taking a test which is similar but shorter than the SAT Reasoning. It also gives students a chance to enter National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) scholarship programs. It is administered in October and results become available in December. See <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/about.html>

SAT Test – The SAT, a 3 hour test, measures skills in two areas: math and evidence-based reading. The SAT may be taken in place of or in addition to the ACT. See www.collegeboard.com

SAT Subject Tests – The SAT Subject Tests are one-hour, mostly multiple-choice tests in specific subjects, measuring knowledge of particular subjects and the ability to apply that knowledge. Many colleges require or recommend one or more of these tests for admission or placement purposes. These tests are offered in subjects such as English, foreign languages, science, history, and mathematics. See www.collegeboard.com

College Admissions Testing Timelines

Sophomore Year

- The PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test) is given in the fall of sophomore year. This test is only given once a year. **The PSAT is not used for college admissions.**

Junior Year

- The PSAT is given the fall of junior year. The junior score is the basis for selection for the National Merit and several other scholarships. **The PSAT is not used for college admissions.**
- The ACT, SAT Reasoning, and SAT Subject Tests are administered throughout the fall, spring, and summer. It is important for students to take all tests at the time when they are most prepared.

Senior Year

- Seniors may retake the ACT, SAT Reasoning, and/or SAT Subject Tests in the fall of her senior year. (Note: You cannot take the SAT Reasoning and the SAT Subject Tests on the same day. *Plan ahead!*)

Registering For Tests

- You can register for the SAT and ACT online. To register online, SAT/SAT Subject Tests: www.collegeboard.com; ACT: <http://www.actstudent.org/regist/>
- Use your full, legal name when registering for all tests! You will need to show a formal ID when you arrive to test – AND IF THAT NAME DOESN'T MATCH WHAT IS ON YOUR REGISTRATION, you don't test!
- It is the responsibility of the student to register for the appropriate tests and to submit their scores to the necessary colleges by the application deadlines.

Reporting Scores to Colleges

- Students are expected to keep records concerning their own testing results.
- Students are responsible for reporting their scores directly to the colleges.
- Test scores do not appear on the transcript.
- Note: IF TAKING AN OCTOBER TEST IN SENIOR YEAR, be sure and put the colleges to which you're applying on your online registration form OR the scores may not be received in time for consideration.

Non-Standard Testing

For questions concerning nonstandard testing for students with learning differences please contact the Learning Specialist. (Note: This is a very detailed and lengthy process. Plan ahead!)

Testing Optional

Over 900 four-year colleges and universities deemphasize the use of standardized tests in making admissions decisions. Some schools do not require standardized testing for any students, whereas others exempt those students meeting a particular GPA or expect scores for scholarship consideration. Always check with the universities of interest to learn their policies.

For a complete listing of schools with Non-Report Testing Options, see <http://www.fairtest.org/university/optional>

Constructing Your College List

Each student is encouraged to begin constructing her college list in the spring of her junior year. Based on the information gathered through college exploration, students should have a preliminary list of colleges and universities that match her desired interests. In the spring of the junior year, each student will create her "my colleges" list in Naviance. Students will use Naviance to construct and maintain their list. Students should only keep colleges on the list that they are really interested in attending.

Foundation Schools are colleges where you *easily reach or exceed* the standards for admission to that college. Likelihood of admission is 70%-100%.

Competitive Schools are colleges where you will find yourself *very competitive* in the admission pool. Your SAT/ACT scores and GPA are within the mid-50% scores of their freshman class statistics. Likelihood of admission is 40%-70%.

Reach Schools are schools where your GPA and standardized scores may be less than most other applicants and/or schools that accept a small percentage of its applicants. At a highly competitive college, many qualified applicants are denied or waitlisted even when they meet the admissions standards. Likelihood of admission is 1%-40%.

- It is recommended that students *diversify* their list of colleges, applying to schools ranging from most likely to be accepted to those that are a reach.
- Every college to which you apply should be a place *where you want to go and is a good match*. Applying "just to see if I get in" is discouraged.
- Statistics from the previous year's admission pool for that college are good measures to compare your credentials. (i.e., average SAT/ACT scores, average GPA, percentage of applicants admitted)

- Whenever possible, visit those colleges and universities on your college list before applying to assess whether it is a good fit.
- **The most accurate source of information is the Admissions office of the school to which you are applying.** Contact the college's admissions office with questions or concerns and for admissions information specific to their school.
- Be sure to demonstrate interest in those schools to which you apply and would like to enroll. Communicate your interest in a school through campus visits, tours, interviews, overnights, and correspondence with admissions representatives.

Application Options and Deadlines

Early Decision (ED) - Phase I and Phase II

- ED programs are recommended for students who have completed a thorough college search and find that one school stands above and beyond the others.
- ED policy requires a student to commit to a college or university at the time of application that, if admitted, the student **will** enroll.
- Students **MAY NOT** apply to more than one college under the Early Decision plan.
- Upon admission, the institution will require a nonrefundable deposit. If denied admission, students may not reapply through regular decision.
- Some colleges may defer your decision to the regular decision pool of applicants. This means you will be released from your ED commitment.
- The deadlines for completing Early Decision applications are early in the fall of your senior year. The college will usually notify you of its decision before December 15. The same information applies for ED Phase II, however the application deadline for ED Phase II is usually January.

Early Action (EA)

- EA permits students to apply to a college or university of their choice and receive a decision early in the senior year, well in advance of the normal spring response dates.
- Though students will hear earlier regarding your admission, they are not committed to attend and they may apply to other colleges. If denied admission, they may not reapply through regular decision.
- **Restrictive Early Action (REA)** - Above definition applies. Students may be restricted from applying ED or EA or REA to other institutions, but are not committed to enroll if admitted.

Rolling Admission

- Colleges that offer rolling admission continuously evaluate applicants and notify the applicants regarding acceptance on an ongoing basis.

Regular Admissions

- Most colleges require that applications for regular admissions be submitted by December 31. Check the web sites of the specific colleges you select to obtain their deadlines.
- Most colleges will inform you of their decision by April 1 and require that you make your decision about whether to matriculate by May 1.

College Application Checklist

Senior Student Responsibilities

- Create AND maintain your account in Naviance
- Create, complete AND submit your applications in Common App or on specific college website
- When registering for your final SAT/ACT, request your test scores sent to the colleges/universities to which you are applying (you are charged for each transfer of scores; be prepared with a credit card in hand). Colleges require that the scores come to them directly from the testing agency.

- Activities résumé – it needs to be complete
- Essay – write, rewrite, edit, refine ... a well-crafted essay could mean a ‘yes’ instead of ‘no’
- Teacher recommendations (2 teacher minimum from academic subjects)
- Provide teacher with helpful information about you (résumé) – speak with them, share information with them.
- Thank them!! (candy doesn’t hurt!)
- Any supplemental essays required by the college (particularly when using the Common Application)
- Any recommendations from people outside of Maryvale
- Financial aid forms (FAFSA and CSS Profile)
- Interview, portfolio, or audition (when required)
- Scholarship applications (when separate from admission application)
- Providing the Counseling Office with copies of every decision letter YOU receive from a college

Maryvale’s College Counseling Office Responsibilities

College Counseling Office will provide the following documents to each of your college choices:

- Secondary School Report
- Transcript
- Resume
- Counselor letter of recommendation
- Teacher letters of recommendation
- Maryvale School Profile
- Mid-Year grades (sent automatically once available)
- Final transcript/graduation confirmation (sent automatically once available)

Recommendations & Résumés

Counselor Recommendations and Teacher Recommendations

A recommendation is an extremely important part of your application. College admissions counselors value a teacher’s perspective and enjoy reading what type of student you are and what you contribute to a classroom. It is vital that you give teachers enough time to generate a great letter that reflects all of the wonderful qualities you have to offer.

Ask Early - begin asking teachers in the spring of your Junior Year.

When a teacher agrees to write a letter for you, provide the teacher with the following information:

- Due dates for the application(s), if known.
- Any specific requirements for the letter.

You must go into your Naviance account and add these faculty members to your recommendations list, thus allowing the teacher to upload a letter into your file and then complete the Common App evaluation form. Periodic reminders up until the due date may be helpful!!! Write a thank you note to your teachers.

Résumés

On college applications, students will need to indicate the extracurricular, volunteer, and work related activities that they have participated in throughout their high school experience. In addition to indicating this information on the application, colleges often ask students to submit a résumé. This is one more opportunity to showcase your talents, honors, awards, and participation in activities.

Keep in mind that the resume should be clear and concise and reflect your strengths!

The Dreaded Essay

Like most other admission criteria, the weight given to the essay will vary from institution to institution. However, if the college requires an essay, you must treat it with importance and use it as an opportunity to strengthen your application for admission.

While the essay is first a measure of your writing abilities, it also provides insight into your intelligence, expressiveness, and thinking skills. Like the interview, the essay provides you with an opportunity to answer unasked questions and to communicate directly with the educators and officials who have a voice in your admission.

Where Do I Begin?

There is no book, no instruction manual, no 'do this' for a college essay. For the first time in your life, you will need to write about YOU. The college essay is a story of you; a story that is quite personal. It is difficult to write and takes time to perfect, so leave time to do it well.

The best advice for a good essay? SHOW, don't tell. Put yourself in the seat of the reader. Captivate the reader. It IS POSSIBLE ... but ... how do you do that??

Begin by reviewing the 5 Common App essay questions. Read them - jot down anything that comes to mind - anything. You may have several ideas for one question, or none for one or two. **SAVE THE FILE!**

The next day, reconsider the questions. Expand on any/all of the ideas. Perhaps you've thought of something else not considered before – add it to yesterday's notes. **HIT SAVE!**

You can't edit until the words are out of your brain – so write - EMOTE. Expect to write twice as much as you need – it can be whittled down more easily than it is to express it initially.

As you revisit the question or two that you think could develop into an essay, continue to write. Delete nothing – *absolutely nothing* – the thought from a week ago may become the essay. One of them can develop into an interesting read. **HIT SAVE!**

During dinner one night, you may remember a key idea, fact, whatever about one of the topics – write it on the napkin! Don't lose the thought. Don't expect this essay to develop overnight – give yourself time!

Editing Your Draft

- Does your introduction capture the reader's attention?
- Are you consistent in your verb tense?
- Are you clear and coherent?
- Are you concise enough to adhere to the limits in length?
- Have you checked for grammatical and spelling errors?
 - Does the essay present you as you wish to be seen?
 - Did another person review your essay for possible mistakes?
 - Would you remember your essay if you read one hundred others?

Interviews

A college interview provides students with the opportunity to learn more about the college, while the college learns more about the students. An interview may last anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour. The person conducting the interview may be an admission officer, a student, or an alumnus. A less formal interview may be conducted in a group setting. Use these tips to assist you with the interview process.

- Be yourself!
- Start and end your interview with a firm handshake. Make eye contact.
- Bring information to share (i.e., transcript, résumé)
- Dress appropriately.
- Arrive ten minutes early.
- Research the institution before the interview and come prepared to ASK questions.
- Don't ask questions that can easily be answered by looking on the college's website.
- Be positive about yourself!

Questions an admissions representative might ask you:

Academic

- What classes are you taking? What subjects interest you most?
- What's your favorite book? Who's your favorite author?
- Are you pleased with your high school record?
- Do you enjoy outside of school? What do you do in your spare time?
- If you could change any aspect of your high school, what would it be and why?
- What is your favorite/least favorite class? Why?
- Your strongest quality? Weakest?
- How has your high school experience prepared you for college?
- What is the most important thing about yourself that you would like me to report to the admissions committee?

Extracurricular

- What activities are you involved in?
- What are your other interests?
- What have you learned/gained from participation in these activities?

Questions YOU may/should ask an admission representative:

Academic

- How large are your classes? Do you have teaching assistants?
- Is there an advising system? Career counseling? When do both begin?
- Do you have a required core curriculum?

Other Questions

- What are your housing options?
- How do you match roommates?
- What are the student graduation rates?
- What types of safety and security do you have?
- How many students come from in state vs. out of state?
- How many students are international?
- What do students have to do on weekends? Do students stay on campus?
- How has this college changed in the last five years?

CSS/Profile, FAFSA, & Scholarship Searches

CSS Profile

The PROFILE is the financial aid application service of the College Board. Many of the member colleges, universities, graduate and professional schools, and scholarship programs use the information collected on PROFILE to help them award nonfederal student aid funds.

Visit www.collegeboard.com for more information, a list of participating colleges and universities, and important deadlines.

FAFSA (Free Application For Federal Student Aid)

Use this application to apply for federal student grants, work-study aid, and loans. The FAFSA is available for completion October 1. For complete information, visit www.fafsa.ed.gov for more information.

Scholarship

There are numerous scholarships available to students. The trick is finding them! Maryvale receives information about scholarship each year that we promote to students and parents. Students may also consider inquiring about scholarships at the colleges and universities to which they are applying.

Some colleges and universities will reduce financial assistance by the amount of outside scholarships, especially if full need has been met in the offer of admission. Grants from outside organizations are paid directly to the college. Be sure and ASK each individual college what their policy is on the application of outside scholarships to a need-based package.

There are scholarship search engines that may be useful to students and parents.

www.fastweb.com

www.scholaraid.com

myscholly.com

www.college-scholarships.com

www.collegenet.com

raise.me

www.finaid.org

www.fastaid.com

College Admissions Status & Making the “Final Decision

Withdrawing your Application

If a student has decided NOT to apply to a college but has already submitted the application and/or transcript request, she should contact the college or university via email as soon as possible. The email or letter should include name, address, school, college admissions number, contact information and one sentence stating the request to withdraw the application.

Deferred or Waitlisted

Read the deferral or waitlist letter very carefully. Follow their directions and deadlines.

Is there a chance? Roughly one-third of colleges and universities use wait lists. The most "selective" colleges (defined as accepting fewer than 50% of applicants) use wait lists at a much higher rate than those that admit more than half of their applicants. The number of colleges using wait lists has remained relatively steady over the past ten years, but the number of students placed on wait lists has increased. On average, nine percent of students who apply to institutions that use a wait list are placed on the list.

Get the scoop. To assess your chances of acceptance from the wait list, call the college's admission office SOON AFTER you receive the decision. Ask what your position is on the list (if the list is ranked at all; most are not – sometimes it is first-call/first-off). Another important piece of information is the percentage of students that have been accepted from the wait list in recent years. If a college hardly ever uses its wait list or accepted only a few wait-listed applicants last year, that trend is unlikely to change this year. The goal in contacting the college/university is to determine your chances of eventually being accepted AND show demonstrated interest should the wait list be considered.

Confirm your interest. If the college is still your #1 choice, make sure you state your definite interest! *It is important that you contact the college rather than have a parent or college counselor make the contact.* In a letter and/or an email, state your interest and provide the college with any new, additional, and/or pertinent information.

Mid-year grades are important. We will submit your mid-year grades. Make sure you notify your counselor of any recent additions to your résumé!

Restate your interest! In early March, it is important to once again contact the colleges to restate your interest. In a letter and/or an email, emphasize your desire to attend that college. Be detailed, but do not repeat prior information.

Decision Made! What Now?

Notifying Colleges of your Final Decision

It is very important to notify colleges of your final decision (accepting or declining) by the stated deadline.

- Notify each college that offers you admission whether you are accepting or rejecting the offer. You should make these notifications as soon as you have made a final decision, but no later than May 1.
- You should confirm your intention to enroll and submit a deposit to only one college or university.
- If you are put on a wait list by one or more colleges, contact the college to let them know if you want to remain on their wait list or not. If you do not let the college know you want to remain active on the wait list, you will most likely *not* be considered for admission. If you are later admitted to an institution off the wait list, you may accept the offer and send a deposit. You must, however, immediately notify your first college to inform that college of your intention not to enroll (recognizing that the deposit will not be refunded).
- If you are accepted under an early decision plan, promptly withdraw the applications submitted to other colleges and submit no additional applications. If you are an early decision candidate and are seeking financial aid, you need not withdraw other applications until you have received notification about financial aid.