THE SEVEN HILLS SCHOOL

College Counseling

Handbook for Students & Parents

2017-2018

The Seven Hills School
College Counseling Handbook
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College Counseling at Seven Hills – An Introduction

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The Seven Hills School College Counseling Philosophy:
Our belief is that students must understand themselves before they can successfully navigate the college search. With that in mind, our counselors lead them through a process that's as much about self- discovery as campus tours. The result: they go to colleges where they feel that they belong and where they thrive.

At Seven Hills, College Counseling:

- encourages students' comprehensive, honest, and fruitful self-evaluation and discovery.
- emphasizes the importance of "fit" at every stage of the college search process.
- recognizes and cultivates the value of a collaborative approach in which each student is supported by and coordinates with college counselors, parents, and teachers toward the successful fulfillment of a common goal.
- leverages the extensive background and knowledge base of the college counseling team to provide the best possible college search experience for each student.
- introduces and connects students to a broad range of colleges and universities across the country and the world by way of one-on-one counseling, opportunities to meet with college representatives on our school's campus, ample programming and events, and more.
- seeks, above all else, to help each student discover and enroll at an institution of higher education that is well suited to foster his or her intellectual and personal development and success.

College Counseling Overview:
Our dedicated college counseling team is comprised of experienced, knowledgeable, caring counselors working to assist parents and students at every stage of the college search, beginning as early as freshman year.

- Each College Counselor supports an assigned group of students. This counselor meets with each of these students regularly beginning in the fall of the freshman year. Not only do counselors get to know students personally, they help nurture students' relationships with the colleges on their lists and ensure that they have both a balance of schools and a plan for maximizing their chances for admission.
- Throughout the process, the College Counselors meet frequently as a team, ensuring a collaborative approach toward the development of informational programming, the creation of college lists, and the navigation of the highly complex and ever-changing college admissions landscape.

Expectations & Responsibilities
The college search is a team effort, the successful navigation of which requires appropriate engagement on the part of all those involved. Below we have listed the primary expectations and responsibilities of students, parents, and counselors.

Students are responsible for:

- attending all required individual and group college counseling meetings.
- reading their Seven Hills email on a regular basis and responding to messages as necessary.
- maintaining their Naviance accounts, which should include an up-to-date list of colleges under consideration and/or colleges to which they are applying.

•paying attention to College Counseling announcements during all-school assemblies and class meetings, as well as monitoring Schoology for current information regarding college representative visits, important updates, etc.

•being responsible, assertive, and engaged.

This includes, among other things: signing up for standardized test dates on time; asking teachers, in person, for letters of recommendation in a timely and polite manner; keeping track of application requirements and deadlines; taking measures to ensure a thoughtful, well-informed college decision by attending college representative presentations, meeting regularly with a college counselor, and, when possible, visiting college campuses.

•ultimately taking the reins in the college search, application, and decision processes.

In the end, it is the student who will be going to college and, therefore, the student who should take ownership of this exciting journey. While college counselors, parents, teachers, and admissions representatives are all important individuals --who can serve as sounding boards, emotional supports, informative resources and more – they support rather than lead this process.

Parents are responsible for:

•supporting students throughout the college search and decision processes by providing positive, constructive encouragement and feedback.

•whenever possible, attending college counseling Parent Nights and individual college counseling parent meetings and providing candid information to the College Counseling team so that, in return, they can most effectively assist students in finding a good academic, social, and financial fit.

• maintaining open and productive communication with college counselors throughout the process.

•promptly and thoroughly completing any necessary parent forms, such as Early Decision agreements or the FAFSA and CSS Profile, during the application and financial aid processes.

College Counselors are responsible for:

•providing honest, caring, and well-informed counsel to students and parents from beginning to end of the college search.

•representing The Seven Hills School and each individual student to colleges, universities, professional networks, and the public in a manner that is professional and positive, and that best serves the interests of the student and the School.

•advocating on behalf of each student, including but not limited to providing supportive letters of recommendation that convey a thorough understanding of each student's unique strengths, goals, and personal qualities.

•cultivating healthy, trustful relationships with college and university admission offices.

•remaining knowledgeable and informed regarding: colleges and universities, including their application procedures and review processes; standardized testing practices; issues pertaining to financial aid; and best practices in college counseling.

•being mindful of required materials and information associated with each student's application and providing them to colleges in a timely manner.

•supporting each and every Seven Hills student as he or she navigates this exciting, at times daunting, process of searching for, applying to, and choosing a good-fit institution of higher education.

Myths about the College Search & Admissions Process

"College admission is a prize to be won."

College admission should be about making a good match between the student and the institution. Rather than focusing the search on attaining admission to one of the "best" schools or one with the most prestigious reputation, we encourage students instead to focus on finding a school that aligns most closely with their personality, interests, strengths, and goals.

"Families need to hire an expensive, independent counselor or college consultant if they want their student to get into a top school."

Absolutely not. The Seven Hills college counseling team is knowledgeable, experienced and caring. We have successfully guided thousands of students through the college application process, we love what we do, and we are eager to work with you and your child on everything from initial questions to those final choices once all the acceptances are in hand. It is impossible for an independent counselor—not a member of our school community—to know your child as well as we can.

"I can't afford anything other than an in-state, public college."

While public schools typically have a lower "sticker price" than their non-public peers, many private colleges and universities offer generous aid based on need and/or merit. In fact, students sometimes find that a private institution is a more affordable option because of the scholarships it offers. We encourage families to compare costs only after any need- or merit-based financial aid has been received. See financial aid section.

"Once they reach high school, students should start the college search process as soon as possible – the earlier the better."

Although it is wise for students and families to do some advanced planning, we believe

that the college search process should not consume the early high school years. While we begin meeting with students in the freshman year, these initial conversations are designed primarily to get to know the students, while also helping them settle in and thrive in the Upper School environment. We are happy to talk to students and parents about college more specifically at any point, but in truth the search process itself does not need to begin in earnest until the junior year.

"The goal should be to go to the highest-ranked school possible."

We strongly encourage students and parents to look beyond rankings or name recognition and focus instead on those schools that best meet the student's academic and social needs. In the end, the "best" school will be one that makes the student feel at home, that encourages him or her to test limits and dig deeper, and that most effectively allows him or her to grow intellectually and personally.

"If I didn't get the best grades freshman and/or sophomore year, there is nothing I can do about it now."

When reviewing an applicant's transcript, admissions officers will often look for grade trends. Although a notable downward trajectory in your grades can have negative repercussions, an upward trajectory can have quite the opposite effect. Admissions offices often appreciate students who have shown the ability and drive to turn their grades around, and to perform better even in the face of increasing rigor. While putting forth your best effort and applying yourself all four years at the Upper School is the best course of action, all is not lost if there are a few bumps in the road.

"Colleges and universities get so many applications, there is no way that they actually read the essays."

Surprising as it may seem, if a college or university asks for an essay as part of the application, in all likelihood that essay will be read thoroughly. The essay provides insight not only into a student's writing skills, but also into who that student is as an individual. Nowhere else in your application do you, the student, have the opportunity to present yourself in your own words and in your own way. Admissions offices value the essay tremendously for just this reason, as they seek to find students who will fit well with and bring something unique to their institutions.

"Where you go to college is the single most important decision you will make in life."

There are hundreds of wonderful colleges and universities out there, and a given student could be equally happy and successful at any number of them. In other words, there is not just one "right" school for each student.

"I need a long list of extracurricular activities and accomplishments in order to get into college."

When it comes to extracurricular involvement, more is not always better. While admissions officers want to see that you are involved in your school and/or community – be it through clubs, athletics, a job, or community service – they are not looking for a laundry list. Admissions folks have a keen eye for identifying "serial joiners" – those who join everything, or jump from club to club, without any consistency or depth of involvement – and they are not impressed. They would much rather see genuine passion and commitment, illustrated through

dedication to and leadership in a few meaningful activities or organizations.

"As long as I score high on the ACT or SAT, my grades won't matter."

No single factor determines college admissions decisions. While standardized test scores can certainly play an important role, they are considered alongside numerous other aspects of a student's performance and interests.

"I need to apply Early Decision to a school if I want to get in."

Early Decision, a binding agreement signed by student, parent and counselor, should be entered into only if the college is the student's first choice and if finances are not an important factor to the family. The agreement states that if the student is accepted Early Decision, he/she will withdraw all other applications and will enroll in that college. While it is true that borderline applicants who apply E.D. often have a better change of admission, it's also true that E.D. students do not have the opportunity to compare and select from offers of admission and/or financial aid or merit scholarship offers.

"The more recommendations the better."

Most colleges and universities will ask for two to three recommendations--one from a counselor, and one or two from teachers—and that's what they want to receive. More is definitely not better in this case.

"The more schools I put on my list, the better my chances of getting in."

We recommend that students begin with a list of 10-20 schools under consideration, and gradually narrow this down to 5-10 schools to which they will ultimately apply. This list should include a mixture of "reach," "50-50," and "likely" schools. It does not behoove a student to keep adding more and more "reach" schools with the assumption that this will increase his or her odds of being admitted to one of them. No matter how strong a student may be, the landscape of highly selective admissions is a complicated, often unpredictable one. With each and every student, college counselors will reiterate, over and over, the importance of maintaining a "balanced" college list.

"You should only get recommendations from teachers who have given you an A."

You should ask for recommendations from teachers who have seen you at your academic best, exhibiting intellectual curiosity, perseverance, integrity, and genuine interest in the subject matter. For that reason, the best recommendations sometimes come from teachers who taught a class that challenged you because those teachers can speak to your determination, resilience, and work ethic in a way other teachers might not. Recommendations are most valuable when they show a genuine knowledge of the student – his or her strengths, personality, and unique qualities.

College Counseling Timeline

Freshman Year

•Receive information on your college counselor assignment.

•Jump into the life of the Upper School inside and outside the classroom.

•Become acclimated to the demands and expectations of Upper School academics.

•Develop a good relationship with your advisor, as well as other teachers – ask lots of questions if you need help!

•Build strong study and time management skills.

•Find ways to be an active citizen in your school and community.

•Continue interests you have already established through clubs, athletics, etc. Now is also a great time to explore some new pursuits.

•Students and parents should feel free to introduce themselves to the college counseling team at any point during the year.

•Attend required group and/or individual sessions with college counselors.

•Consider taking the PSAT in October (optional for freshmen).

•Find time to read, including for pleasure.

•Explore options for community service; begin identifying a community service project to which you wish to commit.

•Find fun and meaningful ways to use your summer break. •Enjoy your first year as an Upper School student!

Sophomore Year

•Continue to be an active citizen in your school and community; begin taking on leadership roles and identifying those activities you wish you to pursue at a higher level.

•Feel free to explore new activities or interests as well – just don't spread yourself too thin!

•Continue group and/or individual sessions with college counselors.

•Try to attend at least one college representative visit if your schedule permits; these meetings will help you learn more about colleges without ever leaving campus and will help you become accustomed to speaking with college representatives.

•Attend the Cincinnati Suburban College Fair, jointly sponsored by Seven Hills, Summit, CHCA and CCDS, and held at CCDS in September.

•Sit for the PSAT exam, offered at Seven Hills in the fall.

•If you have not already done so, select a service project and submit contract for approval.

•Consider ideas for your Personal Challenge project; attend Challenging Sharing days to see what others have done. The Personal Challenge contract is due by the end of sophomore year.

•In the spring, sophomores should consider taking any SAT II's for which they just completed the relevant coursework (a letter with more information will be sent home in the spring).

•Over summer (or spring break if you are eager), you may wish to begin touring a handful of colleges to get a sense of types of institutions.

•Include meaningful, productive experiences in your summer plans.

Junior Year

Fall

•Schedule individual college counseling meetings.

•Attend "Mock Admissions Committee Workshop"

•Meet with visiting college admissions representatives. We recommend attending at least 2-3 of

these.

•Attend the Cincinnati Suburban College Fair, jointly sponsored by Seven Hills, Summit, CHCA and CCDS, and held at CCDS in September

•Take the PSAT, which is offered at Seven Hills on Saturday in October.

•Consider using Fall break as an opportunity to visit colleges you were not able to get to over the summer.

•Work on Challenge Project if appropriate.

Winter

•Start thinking about standardized tests (ACT and SAT) and decide when you want to take them, and when/how you will prepare.

•Register for a winter or spring sitting of the ACT and/or SAT.

•Attend small group college counseling sessions as scheduled.

Spring

□•Consider visiting colleges over spring break. This does not have to be the purpose of the trip itself, but check to see if there are any schools close to where you might already be vacationing.

•Take any AP exams and SAT II Subject Tests for which you have completed relevant coursework.

•Maintain Naviance with up-to-date college list.

•Take the ACT and/or SAT. Most Seven Hills students now take both the ACT and SAT at least once. All colleges and universities accept either; no collegeß prefers one over the other.

•Attend essay writing workshop offered near end of school year.

•Continue meeting regularly with your College Counselor.

•Begin thinking about which teachers you would like to write letters of recommendation for you. Consider asking them, in person, prior to summer break.

Summer

•Tour colleges as time and plans permit. Keep notes or a journal of your thoughts and reflections for your own reference and so that you can share these with your college counselor in the fall.

•Keep Naviance updated with colleges under consideration.

•Continue working on and/or completing Challenge Project and Community Service. Failure to complete these by the deadline (during first quarter of senior year) will result in your being

assigned to study hall.

•Beginning August 1st, create a Common Application account and start exploring. You may wish to take a look at questions asked by colleges you are considering and begin brainstorming your answers

Senior Year

Fall

•Meet with your college counselor in the first few weeks of school to check in, discuss college visits, etc.

•Follow up with teachers from whom you have requested recommendations. Provide specific deadlines as well as an up-to-date list of schools to which you will be applying.

•Fill out Common Application and any other applications.

•Meet with visiting college admissions representatives.

•Attend the Cincinnati Suburban College Fair, jointly sponsored by Seven Hills, Summit, CHCA and CCDS, and held at CCDS in September

•Work on application essays. Submit drafts to and meet with your college counselor for feedback.

•Submit applications to colleges with "rolling admissions."

•Attend small group college counseling meetings as scheduled.

•Use the Fall Break to visit colleges if you wish.

•Mid- to late Fall: apply to any Early Decision or Early Action deadlines you have chosen.

•Begin to explore and complete the FAFSA, released on October 1st, 2016. *Note that many colleges have additional, school-specific financial aid forms they require.

•Complete CSS/Financial Aid Profile, if required by colleges. Deadline dates will vary by institution and application process. Available October 1st each year.

*We recommend that all Seven Hills students submit at least one application before winter break. Applications for all January 1 deadlines should be completed by mid-December.

Winter

•Continue applying to colleges for which you have selected Regular Decision or other winter deadlines.

•Receive admissions decisions and financial aid offers via mail, email, or online notification. Inform your college counselor of each of these decisions as they arrive.

•If accepted Early Decision to a school, you must withdraw any other applications you have submitted.

•Visit or make return visits to schools to which you have been accepted and that you are seriously considering - many schools offer visit programs for admitted students in the winter or spring.

Spring

•By May 1st submit enrollment deposit to chosen school.

•Check mail and email regularly for updates on "next steps" such as pre- registration, housing forms, required immunizations, etc.

Summer

•Complete any assigned summer reading if applicable.

•Shop and pack!

•Enjoy time with your friends before many of you part ways.

A NOTE ABOUT TIMELINES: Each student starts the process at a different point, and each student progresses at a different rate. College counselors meet students where they are in the process and help them along the way.



College Counseling: Policies & Procedures

Class Rank: Like many independent schools, Seven Hills neither calculates nor reports class rank. From the college perspective, class rank is no longer considered a key factor in admissions review, in part due to the decreasing number of high schools that report it and in part due to the questionable significance of this statistic.

Confidential Letters of Recommendation: Confidential recommendations are seen by colleges as significantly more valid than non-confidential letters. For that reason, Seven Hills parents and students are asked to sign a document waiving their rights to read letters of recommendation written by teachers and counselors.

Reporting of Disciplinary Issues: The Seven Hills College Counseling Office will answer questions regarding major disciplinary action posed by colleges in secondary school reports, mid-year reports, and final school reports. Students are expected to disclose such information to the colleges as well.

Standardized Admissions Testing

Most colleges and universities require some form of standardized testing to be submitted as part of the application process, but the extent to which these scores affect a student's admission decision varies tremendously. Some schools place more emphasis on test scores and GPA, mostly due to the volume of applications they receive, whereas other schools put little to no weight on these results.
The two major testing agencies, both nonprofit organizations, are the ACT (American College Test) Corporation, which administers the ACT, and the College Board Corporation, which administers the PSAT, SAT, Subject Tests, TOEFL, and AP examinations.
All colleges accept both ACTs and SATs; no college prefers one over the other.

Overview of Test Types

PSAT – The PSAT is a preliminary or practice version of the SAT, typically taken during sophomore and junior year (although available to freshmen and certain seniors). Its content and format closely mimic the SAT, containing a reading test, writing and language test, and a math test. PSATs are not used directly for college admissions purposes. For high- scoring juniors, the PSAT also provides access to the National Merit Scholarship Program, College Board scholarships, and the National Hispanic Recognition Program.

Seven Hills sophomores and juniors are automatically registered for the PSAT, which is administered at school on a Saturday in mid-October.

ACT **(www.actstudent.org)** - Graded on a 1-36 scale, the ACT is generally taken by at least 85% of a typical Seven Hills graduating class, and is more widely taken across the country than the SAT. It is offered several times throughout the year, and includes English, math, reading comprehension, science reasoning, and optional writing sections.

*Be sure to sign-up for the Writing Section of the ACT when registering; it is required by many colleges.

***SAT* (www.collegeboard.com)** - The SAT is generally taken by 85% of a typical Seven Hills graduating class. Each section is graded on a 400-1600 scale. It includes a reading, writing and language section (scored 200-800) and a math section (scored 200- 800). The test also has an optional writing section, graded on writing, analysis and reading (scored 2-8/section).

*Be sure to sign-up for the Writing Section of the SAT when registering; it is required by many colleges.

***SAT Subject Tests* (www.collegeboard.com)** - Graded on a 200-800 scale, Subject Tests are designed for students in advanced classes who anticipate applying to the most selective colleges. Since these tests are content-specific, students should take them in May or June of the year that they finish a relevant course. Students unsure about whether or which test(s) to take also find it helpful to complete a practice test or two (available on our library website).

***AP* (www.collegeboard.com)** - Graded on a 1-5 scale, Advanced Placement tests are administered each year in May to students enrolled in AP courses. The vast majority of colleges do not use these scores for admissions. Instead they are used for course placement or to award academic credit once the student decides to matriculate at a given college or university. AP scores are returned to the student in July following the test.

***TOEFL* (Test of English as a Foreign Language)** - The TOEFL is used to assess the English proficiency of students for whom English is not their first language. Depending on the length of time the student has spent in the U.S., the TOEFL requirement may be waived. For example, if a student has attended an American high school for more than two years, many colleges will waive the TOEFL. Non-native English speakers should consult the websites of each college for applicable TOEFL requirements.

Testing – Additional Information to Know

Score Choice

Although some colleges ask to see all of a student's scores, most honor the College Board policy called Score Choice, which permits students to select which entire SATs and Subject Test scores they send to colleges (selective reporting of subsection scores [reading/math/writing] is not permitted). The ACT has a similar policy. "Super scoring," the combination of ACT or SAT sub-sections to generate a new "score," is practiced on an institutional level. Students should check the websites of individual colleges to learn whether they super score tests. Speak with your College Counselor if you have questions about test score reporting policy or strategy.

Testing Accommodations

Students with diagnosed learning differences who receive extended time on tests at Seven Hills may apply for extended time on the PSAT, SAT, AP, and/or ACT exams. Because the ACT and PSAT/SAT/AP's are administered by separate companies, there are two separate processes for applying for extended time; qualifying for extended time on a College Board test does not grant a student extended time on the ACT, and vice versa. Qualifying for extended time may take 4 to 7 weeks, so advanced planning is necessary.

Upper School Learning Support Co-Chair Meredith Brown is responsible for helping students file extended time requests for these tests. Please see her to complete this process.

Once qualified for extended time on the PSAT/SAT/AP, a student will receive those accommodations for all four years. For the ACT, however, a student must reapply for extended time each calendar year.

Test Prep Resources

The Young Family Library at Seven Hills offers a wide variety of test preparation resources, both print and online, and our College Counseling website (http://www.7hills.org/podium/default.aspx?t=45927) lists free test prep sites. In addition, students may wish to purchase a test preparation guidebook such as Cracking the SAT or Cracking the ACT by the Princeton Review. Through a collaboration with The College Board, Kahn Academy offers extensive free SAT tutoring through an interactive online environment. Visit https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat for more information.

Although some students enroll in test preparation or tutoring programs, often at considerable expense, this is certainly not necessary. Many effective, affordable test preparation options are available. Feel free to contact a College Counselor to discuss test prep options.



The College Search

The College Search – Getting Started

Before you begin to consider particular colleges, you should start by thinking about who you are as a student and a person, and what your goals are. The more time and energy you devote to this phase of the process – the more honest and more thorough your self-evaluation – the more likely you are to emerge from the college search happy and successful. Our goal is for each of you to attend a college or university that fully supports your needs, goals, and preferences.

Questions to ask yourself:

Take time to think about, and provide honest answers to, the following questions. Doing so will help you narrow in on your preferences and consider how they might influence your college search. At the same time, your college counselor will discuss many of these questions with you in an effort to get to know you better and to better serve as your guide as you explore, apply to, and ultimately decide upon a college.

1. **What aspects of your high school experience have you most enjoyed?** What are your favorite things about Seven Hills? Is there anything you would change?
2. **Why do you want to go to college?** What do you hope to get out of this experience?
3. **What are some of the biggest influences that have shaped you into who you are today?** Particular people? Particular events or experiences?
4. **What are your main academic interests?** Are there particular subjects you really enjoy? Any you struggle with or find less interesting?
5. **How do you learn best?** What styles of teaching have you found to be the most effective and engaging? Are you an auditory learner? Visual learner? Kinesthetic learner?
6. **Do you prefer discussion-based classes or lectures?**
7. **Do you feel you have worked up to your academic potential in high school?** Is your academic record an adequate representation of your abilities? What challenges or "bumps," if any, have you encountered along the way?
8. **Is it important to you to have close relationships with professors in college?** Is it

important that your professors know your name and/or teach all classes (as opposed to graduate assistants)?

9. What college environment will make you happiest? Do you most enjoy being in bigger cities, small towns, or more rural environments? What do you like or dislike about each of these settings?

10. What activities do you most enjoy outside of school? What have you done outside of the classroom that has been most meaningful to you?

11. What do you see as your biggest strengths? Biggest weaknesses or shortcomings?

12. How would your best friend describe you? Your personality? Your role in the school and/or outside community?

13. Do you see yourself as politically liberal or conservative? Is it important to you that the college you choose is politically active?

14. Is there an issue of local, national, or global concern that especially interests you?

15. Is there a particular career you have always dreamed of?

16. What inspires you?

17. What do you hate to do?

Doing the Research – Finding Colleges Right for You

After doing significant self-reflection and assessment, it will be time to begin exploring college options that match your wants and needs. Your College Counselor will be a vital resource in this process, working to compile an initial list of college suggestions and helping to revise this list at every stage of the process. But we also encourage you to research and/or discover options of your own choosing. To that end, explore the resources listed below to learn more about colleges and universities that may interest you.

Online Resources

Naviance Family Connection (http://succeed.naviance.com) *As sophomores, all Seven Hills students receive personalized log-in information for Naviance and a tutorial on its use. Naviance is central to the college search and application process and serves a variety of purposes – a college and career search tool for students, a means of requesting recommendations, a platform for submission of application materials, a means of tracking what's been sent to which colleges. Students are expected to use and maintain their Naviance accounts throughout the college search process.*

College Board's Big Future (www.collegeboard.org/bigfuture) *Allows students to search for information on specific colleges, or to perform a search based on location, majors offered, and a variety of other factors.*

Raise: Micro-Scholarships (www.raise.me) *Sponsored by The University of Pennsylvania, Facebook, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, this platform enables students to amass micro-scholarships from a range of colleges.*

ACT College Search (www.act.org/collegesearch) *Another search engine that helps students find colleges with the factors that are important to them.*

College Navigator (http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/) *A U.S. Government website that*

focuses on accountability and outcomes. Provides information on graduation rates, net price, financial aid, and loan default rates.

Fair Test (http://www.fairtest.org) *Examines the role of testing in the college admissions process and maintains a database of test-optional or test-flexible colleges.*

Youniversity (http://www.youniversity.com) *Features online video tours of hundreds of colleges and universities across the country.*

Princeton Review (http://www.princetonreview.com/college-education.aspx) *College search tools and rankings by the makers of popular college guidebooks.*

Unigo (www.unigo.com/colleges) *Another college search engine based on the criteria students choose. Unique features include a wide variety of rankings and lists ranging from "New Ivies" to colleges for "Aspiring Entrepreneurs" to "Hipster Colleges."*

Colleges That Change Lives (www.ctcl.org) *An organization dedicated to emphasizing the importance of "fit" in the college search. Features about 40 colleges dedicated to providing students with extraordinary educational and personal growth.*

Department of Education College Scorecard (https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/) *Comprehensive data on colleges, such as graduate rate, diversity facts, average salary after graduation and net price by income.*

College Reality Check(http://collegerealitycheck.com/en/) *Administered by the Chronicle of Higher Education, this site is intended to help inform students and families as consumers of higher education. You can search and compare colleges on factors such as graduation rates, average debt load, and starting salaries of graduates.*

Printed Resources: Many books and printed materials are available for use in the Young Family Library at Seven Hills. The College Counselors also have a wealth of resources they are happy to share with you. You may also want to purchase a select few of these books for yourself. Books we recommend include:

Annual College Search Books

- *The Fiske Guide to College* by Edward Fiske
- *The Best 382 Colleges* by The Princeton Review
- *Insider's Guide to Colleges* by Yale Daily News

Specialty College Search Books

- *Colleges That Change Lives* and *Looking Beyond the Ivy League* by Loren Pope
- *Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be* by Frank Bruni
- *College Match* by Steven R. Antonoff
- *African American Student's Guide to College Success* by F. Erik Brooks and Glenn L. Starks

•*The Advocated Guide for LGBT Students* by Shane Windmeyer
•*Getting IN by Standing OUT* by Deborah Bedor
•*A is for Admissions* by Michele Hernandez
•*Creating a Class* by Mitchell Stevens

Written for Students

•*The Naked Roommate: And 107 Other Issues You Might Run Into in College* by Harlan Cohen (2015 edition)
•*1001 Things Every College Student Needs to Know* by Harry H. Harrison, Jr.

Recommended Popular Press Articles or Videos

•YouTube: "Zeitgeist Americas 2013" - Maclolm Gladwell speaks to Google about the college admissions process and graduation outcomes.
•*David and Goliath* by Malcolm Gladwell - Chapter 3 "If I'd gone to the University of Maryland, I'd still be in science"
•*The New York Times*:
○"How to Survive the College Admissions Madness" and "How to Choose a College" by Frank Bruni
○"College is a Journey, Not a Destination" by Marty O'Connell
•New Yorker Magazine:
- "The Order of Things: What College Rankings Really Tell Us" by Malcolm Gladwell

•*The Chronicle of Higher Education*
- "Colleges' Prestige Doesn't Guarantee a Top-Flight Learning Experience" by Dan Berrett

• *US News and World Report*
- "As Industry Changes, Some Liberal Arts Colleges Still Thrive" by Allie Bidwell

•Policy.Mic
- "The Most Popular Colleges in America Aren't the Ones You'd Expect" by Becca Stanek

Meetings with College Representatives at Seven Hills

Each year, representatives from 80-100 colleges and universities across the country (and the world) visit Seven Hills to get to know our school, meet with interested students, and share information about their institutions. These visits, which take place primarily in the fall, can be very valuable for students as they provide them with an opportunity to learn about a wide variety of colleges without ever leaving the Seven Hills campus.

**For ideas of questions you might ask, see Appendix.*

College Fairs

College fairs offer another valuable way to get to know colleges and universities from across
the country without having to travel great distances or rely on online or print publications.

•*What are they?*

A college fair brings together representatives from a wide range of postsecondary institutions in one location, allowing students and parents to collect information and ask questions at their leisure.

•*When are they?*

Usually in the fall, during the prime "travel season" for admissions representatives.

•*Which ones should I attend?*

Cincinnati hosts a big college fair every September. Sponsored by the National Association of College Admissions Counseling (NACAC), this fair is usually held on a Sunday afternoon at the Convention Center downtown. The Cincinnati Suburban College Fair, jointly sponsored by Seven Hills, Summit, CHCA and CCDS, is held at CCDS every fall.

The Admissions Interview

Although interviews are far less common than they once were, some colleges continue to conduct individual interviews with prospective students as part of the admission process. These may be required or optional, on-campus or off-campus, with members of the admission staff or with alumni or even students. Be sure to review interview options and requirements for each school to which you plan to apply well in advance of admission deadlines so you are able to schedule interviews as necessary.

What purpose do interviews serve?

Interviews are a two-way street – they can benefit both you and the college. For you, interviews are an opportunity to show who you really are as a person; a chance to learn more about the institution by asking thoughtful, specific questions; and a way to demonstrate and expressly articulate your interest in the college. For the college, interviews allow admissions representatives to get to know you beyond your application, and to better assess "fit" with the college, and to understand how interested you are in their college.

What should I expect?

Admissions interviews may be "informational" or "evaluative." Informational interviews primarily focus on the exchange of information – you receive further information about the college, while the admissions representative receives further information about you. These interviews tend to be optional and play a less substantial role in the admissions decision process. Evaluative interviews, on the other hand, put greater emphasis on the evaluation of the applicant, and this feedback often serves a formal function in the decision process. When arranging interviews, you may wish to ask whether they are informational or evaluative. Regardless, note that positive impressions are important even during informational interviews.

What if they are optional?

Just because interviews are optional does not mean that they are not encouraged. The personal contact interviews provide with a representative of the college or university can be important, and a positive interview can help you stand out in a crowd of otherwise comparable applicants. At the same time, interviews can provide you with a wealth of information from an admission representative or alumnus/ae about academics, student life, the admissions process, etc.

How should I prepare?

Update your resume so that it accurately conveys your accomplishments and interests. Research the school in advance so you are able to articulate how it specifically aligns with your interests and goals. Also, take a look at the list of Common Interview Questions in the Appendix of this book and brainstorm ways in which you might answer.

Applying to College

Types of Admission Programs / Deadlines

In addition to deciding *where* you want to apply, an important point of consideration is *when* and *how* to apply. Most colleges offer multiple application deadlines from which to choose – each with its own set of stipulations and incentives. At the same time, colleges may offer multiple types of application from which to choose. The following is an overview of common application options and procedures.

Early Decision

You may apply to only one college via Early Decision (ED) because it involves a binding agreement. In other words, if you are accepted, that's the college you will attend. The only acceptable reason for backing out of an ED agreement is if you are offered insufficient financial aid and therefore cannot afford to attend that college. This means that Early Decision should only be used for your #1 choice. Typically ED deadlines fall between mid-October and mid-November; some colleges offer ED II programs with later deadlines but similar caveats.

ADVANTAGES of Early Decision: -potentially an earlier conclusion to the college search process – you will get a decision back earlier and will put down your deposit earlier; -in some cases, the likelihood of being admitted via ED is higher than through other programs – colleges want students who want to be there; -if you are denied admission through ED, you will still have time to apply to other colleges via Regular Decision.
DISADVANTAGES of Early Decision: -you must decide upon a college much earlier than the typical May 1st Decision deadline; -you do not have the advantage of being able to compare financial aid packages or merit scholarships before committing to a college.

Early Action

Early Action (EA) is a non-binding early admission program. Unlike Early Decision, you may apply to as many schools as you wish via EA, and you don't have to commit to a particular

college until May 1st (the national response deadline). EA lets students demonstrate a high level of interest in a college without any of the added risk of Early Decision. Students applying EA will still receive an admissions decision much earlier (often in late December) than through Regular Decision programs and will have time to compare financial aid offers, make additional college visits, and do further research before making a commitment. Many EA deadlines are in November or December.

Single Choice Early Action (sometimes called Restrictive Early Action)
Another non-binding program, Single Choice Early Action (SCEA) is less common, but is quickly becoming more widely offered. With SCEA, students apply early – usually between November 1st and November 15th – and receive an admissions decision within a month or so. Like standard Early Action programs, SCEA applicants still have until May 1st to weigh options and commit to a college.

Unlike typical EA, however, SCEA does restrict students in terms of where else they can apply and when. Specifically, by applying SCEA a student agrees not to apply to any other institution through early programs – be that ED, EA, or SCEA. Usually, these colleges permit SCEA applicants to apply to public institutions via rolling or early action programs, but private institutions are off limits at this point in the process. Once the SCEA decision arrives, regardless of whether it's yes or not, students are free to apply to any additional colleges through Regular Decision (or EDII) programs. **Because stipulations vary from college to college, it is very important to check each school's website for specific information.*
ADVANTAGES of SCEA:

-as with ED, applicants demonstrate their very high interest in the college by applying SCEA;

-acceptance rates are often higher through SCEA than through RD programs;

-applicants receive an admissions decision earlier than through RD, but are not committed to enrolling, as with ED.

DISADVANTAGES:

-applicants must forgo all other early admission opportunities at other private colleges;

-that means SCEA applicants have to wait until spring to receive any remaining decisions and compare offers.

Regular Decision
As with Early Action, students may apply to as many colleges they wish through Regular Decision programs, but RD applicants will not receive an admissions decision until some time in the spring – typically early to late March. Nonetheless, RD applicants are still required to reach a college decision and respond by May 1st, meaning that the student will have less time to compare offers, make return visits, etc. In many cases, Regular Decision is the only alternative offered to Early Decision and therefore is the correct choice for students who are not ready or able to make an ED commitment.

Rolling Admissions
With Rolling Admissions, there are either very late (sometimes March) deadlines, or none at all. Because rolling applications are reviewed as they come in to admissions offices--and decisions are commonly released within 4 to 6 weeks of receipt—colleges using this plan often become more selective as the number of available spaces in the in-coming class grow smaller. For that reason, students should apply earlier rather than later to Rolling schools. NOTE: Some Rolling Admissions schools have "priority deadlines" for admission and/or for scholarship consideration. You should apply well in advance of these priority deadlines in order to receive the fullest consideration.

The Bottom Line
Colleges determine their own admissions plans. Depending on the schools you choose, you may well use several different plans, perhaps ED at one school, EA at another, and Rolling at a third. It all depends on your individual list. *But remember to check the website of each school to which you are applying for application programs and specific deadlines. These vary from college to college, and may even vary from year to year. Do not rely on Naviance and/or college guidebooks for the most current deadlines.*

Types of Applications
The vast majority of colleges and universities now use on-line applications for admission, most of them exclusively. These may be home-grown applications, used solely for the purpose of admission to that particular university; alternately, many colleges now use the Common Application, which allows students to apply to many different colleges using the same online platform. Check the websites of each school to which you are applying to confirm application procedures.

The Common Application (www.commonapp.org)
Used by over 500 colleges and universities, The Common Application is the mostly widely used college application. Member colleges may use the Common App exclusively, or they may offer alternative means of applying as well. The appeal of the Common App is that students save time and energy by using one application to apply to multiple institutions. Many colleges do, however, require students to answer a few supplemental questions, and possibly complete a supplemental essay or essays. Students will see a college's specific requirements once they have set up a Common App account and added that college to their
Common App list. The current version of the Common App for each admissions cycle goes live every August 1st.

The Universal College Application (https://www.universalcollegeapp.com)
Similar to the Common App, the Universal College Application (UCA) is an online application used by about 30 member colleges, some of whom also accept the Common App. When that is the case, the applicant chooses which one to submit. Applications receive equal consideration regardless of which the student chooses.

Collation for Access, Affordability and Success
(http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org/) This new application, debuting in the summer of 2016, will be used by over 80 colleges and offer an alternative method of applying. Coalition member schools will likely also accept The Common Application, Universal College Application, and/or their own school-specific application. Students receive equal consideration regardless of which application the student chooses. The College Counselors will be receiving more information on this system in the near future.

University of California Application
(http://admissions.universityofcalifornia.edu/applicant)
All colleges within the University of California system share one online application system. When completing the application, you simply select the campus or campuses to which you wish to apply (a fee is charged for each campus selected). Each individual campus makes its own admission decision, independent of others', and uses its own set of criteria and processes for review.

Other Online Applications
A number of larger universities--Indiana University and Michigan State University, for example--use their own, independent online applications, accessible via the university's Undergraduate Admissions page.

Paper Applications
Paper applications are increasingly rare. The vast majority of colleges and universities now accept online applications exclusively, or highly recommend online versus paper submissions.

The Admissions Review Process
While every college has its own procedures for reviewing applications, looking at the information collected from a very sizable representation of schools offers a sense of what is typically considered and what level of importance is attached to each factor.

Factors Considered: According to a survey conducted by NACAC (National Association for College Admission Counseling), the factors considered by most colleges, in order of importance, are:

1. Grades
2. Rigor of Coursework / School
3. Standardized Test Scores
4. Essays
5. Recommendations
6. Extracurricular Activities & Leadership
7. Special skills, talents, awards, community service, and passions

This ranking does not hold true for all institutions. Some colleges don't even accept letters of recommendation, often due to the sheer volume of applications they receive, while at very highly selective institutions, such as the Ivy League, an applicant may be expected to show great talent and performance across the board- -they are looking for the "and" not the "or."

Overall, however, admissions officers look to these factors to understand how and to what extent the applicant fits with a particular college and what he or she will add to the campus community.

Pieces of the Application

The Transcript

What is it?

The transcript is widely regarded as the most important component of a student's application, as it tells a detailed story of his or her academic record. The transcript lists all completed coursework, all semester and year-end grades, and the courses currently in progress as well as those to be taken in the coming semester of that academic year.

Who is responsible for sending transcripts to colleges?

The student's College Counselor sends his or her transcript to each college the student applies to. Transcripts are generally sent electronically via Naviance, which maintains a record of submissions for each student.

What is assessed?

The admissions team uses this document to assess rigor of curriculum, classroom performance, and any relevant trends (such as an upward grade trend or consistently lower or higher grades in a particular academic discipline).

Tips:

The transcript is created over the entirety of a student's high school career. To ensure that it reflects your abilities and work ethic in a way that works for you, note that:

-All four years count.

-The goal is to achieve a balance between rigor and achievement - challenge yourself but only to the point that the quality of your work is not severely compromised.

The Application

What is it?

Typically an online form of some kind (e.g., the Common App), the application itself collects a wide variety of information regarding the student's demographics, family background, schooling, activities and involvement, writing ability, disciplinary history, etc.

Who is responsible for completing/submitting it?

Students complete their applications independently, with consultation from parents (especially for the family background section) and guidance from their College Counselor. The College Counselors appreciate the opportunity to review all applications before they are submitted to ensure that the application portrays the student in the best and most accurate form.

What do colleges look for?

Colleges will universally say that the transcript is the most important piece of a college application. Colleges look for evidence that you have taken advantage of an appropriately challenging curriculum at your school and that you have been involved in your

community. Their goal is to get a strong sense of who you are as an individual (this includes your personality and voice), as a student, and to establish context into which to place your academic and extra-curricular achievements.

Tips:
- The application is often the college's first introduction to you, so be sure to put your best and most polished foot forward. You never want to submit an application in a rush. Take your time when completing it, be thorough, and pay attention to detail.

- When listing your activities and involvements, be sure to list them in order of their importance to you, not chronologically or alphabetically.

*All students will participate in a detailed and updated workshop on completing applications, as well as receiving individual application guidance from the College Counselors.

Essay(s)

What are they?
The vast majority of colleges ask applicants to submit at least one essay and sometimes several. Topics vary, but the purpose of the piece should be to showcase something about yourself. The essay is a strategic opportunity – it is the only piece of the application that really allows you to present yourself as you wish to be presented and to speak in your own voice. College essay writing is distinct; they are not written in traditional academic writing voice, but rather a narrative/storytelling personal voice. Use this to your advantage! While your grades may help to demonstrate your strengths as an academic writer, your personal statement and additional essays help the reader to understand the role you may play in a diverse residential community.

Who is responsible for completing/submitting it?
It should go without saying that essays should be written by the student. Be sure to see "*A note about essay help from others"* below.

What do colleges look for?
Colleges will say, over and over, that a strong essay will have a clear, authentic voice. In other words, essays should sound as though they were written by you (because they were), and they should provide useful insight into who you are as an individual and what you will add to the campus.

Tips:
- There is no "right" answer or topic. Almost any topic can work if done well.

- Don't simply rehash information that can be found elsewhere in your application. Each essay should tell the reader something new and unique about you.

- Be sure to answer the question! This may seem obvious, but this is among the most common errors cited by admissions officers. Read the question carefully and make sure your essay addresses it.

-Again, this may seem obvious, but at some point you may wish to just "be done with it." Be sure not to undermine your application by sending an essay that is not your best work or that is wrought with errors.

- When possible, be original. Admissions officers read hundreds or even thousands of essays in a given admissions cycle. Try not to let yours sound like it could have been written by a thousand other students. "I want to go to XYZ college because it is New England," is not an original idea. In fact, it's not a strong reason to be admitted to a school as well.

- Tell a story that only you can tell. If you are a strong comedic (be sure the counselors approve, as some comedy essays can go terribly wrong) or dramatic writer, show those skills on paper

- Never recycle verbatim an essay about why you want to be at College A to answer a question about why you want to be at College B. Just as you want colleges to understand what's unique about you, they want you to understand what's unique about them. These essays should be unique and specific to the particular college or the particular prompt at hand.

- Don't downplay the importance of supplemental essays, no matter how short. Sometimes admissions officers will turn to supplements to get the most accurate depiction of the quality of a student's writing. They know that students' main essays tend to be polished because they typically undergo an extensive draft process and are subject to the advice and editing of a number of individuals. Meanwhile, students often view supplements as an afterthought, something to finish up quickly at the last minute. A poorly written short essay can discredit a well-written longer essay, so you should devote adequate time and attention to all the writing you submit. Think of the supplemental essays as love letters to a specific school. If the love is not genuine, it will come across.

**A note about essay help from others:* To reiterate, a good essay is written in a strong, genuine voice. Parents or other relatives, college counselors, teachers, and friends can be great sounding boards when students are considering topics. They can also provide helpful feedback as the student works toward a final draft. *However*, too much feedback or editing can quickly get in the way of the student's voice, thus jeopardizing the quality and usefulness of the essay in the eyes of admissions committees. One Yale admissions officer's easy rule to help avoid this problem: parents and others should never read an essay with pen in hand or fingers on the keyboard.

Letters of Recommendation

What are they?
Most colleges ask for letters of recommendation from a college counselor and at least one teacher. Specific requirements may vary, so students will need to consult the website of each school to which they are applying. Teachers and counselors at Seven Hills make it a priority to get to know students well as students and as individuals; the recommendations they write are detailed, insightful, and positive.

Who is responsible for completing and submitting them?
Students request recommendations from teachers *in person* no later than early fall of senior year. Be sure to provide an up-to-date list of schools to which you are applying and deadlines for each. You must also "invite" recommenders using Naviance, a process your counselor will explain to you. College Counselors also write and submit letters of recommendation; again, the student must keep the counselor informed of application plans. Unless the college requests otherwise, all recommendations are submitted electronically via Naviance.

What do colleges look for?
The recommendations serve as additional pieces of the puzzle, helping admissions officers further understand the student's story – academically and otherwise. Teachers' letters focus on the student as a learner in that discipline; counselors' letters speak to the student as a learner and as a member of the community. Seven Hills counselors and teachers are well versed in the types of information admissions committees find helpful and compelling in letters of recommendation, and this knowledge is reflected in the supportive, thoughtful letters they write.

Tips:
When choosing teachers, don't focus only on those from whom you received the best grades. Think instead of what each teacher knows about you as a learner. Select recommenders who know you well and are able to speak to your strengths, or even your ability to overcome a challenge.

**NOTE: When the application asks whether you waive your rights to view letters of recommendation, your answer should always be "yes." This is because confidential recommendations are seen by admissions officers as significantly more credible than non-confidential recommendations—and we want admissions officers to believe all the good things we tell them about you!*

School Profile

What is it?
The school profile is a document prepared by Seven Hills to inform colleges and universities, as well as the general public, about the school, our academic offerings, and our record of student achievement.

Who is responsible for completing/submitting it?
College Counselors electronically send a copy of the profile to each school to which a student is applying.

What do colleges look for?
This document is exceptionally important for providing context for your application. The profile helps provide admissions reviewers with important information regarding the rigor of the school and your curriculum in particular, as well as a variety of other important contextual pieces.

Standardized Test Scores

What are they?
Most colleges require students to submit either the ACT or SAT, sometimes along with SAT Subject tests.

Who is responsible for completing/submitting them?
Students must ask testing agencies to send their scores to each college to which they are applying. This can be done on the ACT and College Board websites. College Counselors cannot do this for students. Unofficial test scores (such as those listed by the student on the Common Application) do not take the place of official score reports, which much come from either ACT or the College Board.

What do colleges look for?
Depending on the college, test scores may be considered more or less heavily in the admissions review. The range of scores each college seeks also varies tremendously, so it is important to consult the admissions website or other sources to get a sense of their average incoming student profile. Remember that test scores make up just one piece of the puzzle and are viewed alongside your other accomplishments – both academic and extracurricular.

Tips:
- We suggest that students take either the ACT or SAT twice, preferably at two consecutive sittings. As some students find that they test better with one exam over the other, students should also consider taking at least one exam of each.

- When taking the exams, it may be wise not to send your scores directly to any colleges. Although it's more expensive to do so, we suggest waiting until you are able to view the results before choosing to send official score reports.

Resume

What is it?
Resumes are rarely required by colleges since the majority of this kind of information (work or volunteer experience, extracurricular activities, summer enrichment programs, etc.) can be found elsewhere in the application. Unless required, the majority of colleges

will not review a resume if it is included with an application. Students who interview, however, will find a resume very helpful, especially if they are nervous and want a helpful tool to use in the interview.

Who is responsible for completing/submitting it?
When resumes are permitted or required as part of the application, students are generally able to upload them through the Common App. Occasionally colleges ask for an electronic copy to be emailed directly to the admissions office.

What do colleges look for?
The resume is yet another way in which colleges assess the non-academic qualities that distinguish a particular applicant. For many colleges, this information is sufficiently gathered from the application's "Activities" section and other components of the application. Regardless of how they obtain the information, colleges are looking for evidence of leadership, breadth and/or depth of involvement, and distinctiveness of experiences and/or interests.

Tips:
- Start a working draft of your resume early in your high school career (the earlier the better), and add to it as you participate in more activities, assume leadership positions, etc. This way you will be sure to remember everything that is relevant, and you will not need to start from scratch.

- When the time comes to finalize your resume, you will need to do major consolidating and fine-tuning. The goal should be to fit everything onto one, well-organized page.

Interview
Only a few colleges, many of them highly selective, still require an interview, and even fewer still require students to interview on campus. Many colleges will offer informal and non-required interviews in Cincinnati. This information is rarely conveyed to the college counselors and often comes directly to students via mail or email. Students should always feel free to reach out to admissions offices and inquire about local, campus, or digital (Skype, Google Hangout…) interviews. The College Counselors are happy to help students prepare for interviews; they also conduct mock interviews for those students who prefer to practice beforehand.

How are decisions made?
Just as colleges differ in the factors they consider and the weight they attach to each, they also differ in the actual process for application review. Although there are too many variations to discuss all of the many approaches colleges use to evaluate applications, a few general concepts and terms are outlined below.

"**First Reader" or "Territory Manager"**
Many colleges assign a "first reader" to each student based on geographic region, or in some cases by academic discipline or another set of criteria. This individual

is responsible for reading the application first and for making a preliminary recommendation on an admissions decision before passing the file along to second/third readers or the admissions committee as a whole. Importantly, this individual is often also the admissions officer who travels to schools or college fairs in their assigned territory. *In other words, the admissions representative you meet at a high school visit or college fair here in Cincinnati will quite often read your application and play a key role in the decision process*. That's why it is of utmost importance to connect with them when they are here and to make a positive impression when you do.

Committee Review

After the application has been read by one or more individuals, it usually goes to the admissions committee for a final decision. This meeting includes some or all of the admissions staff, who discuss, deliberate, and ultimately decide whether each applicant will be admitted, denied or wait-listed. Not all colleges or universities use this type of decision-making process, especially those whose incredible volume of applications would preclude such an approach. At the same time, not all applications make it to the admissions committee (most often reserved for borderline cases and/or for students recommended for "admit" by at least one reader).

What are possible admissions decisions?

Admissions decisions include the traditional, straight-forward answers, as well as more nuanced decisions that may require further action on your part.

Admit

Every college acceptance is exciting news. An acceptance rewards the hard work you have put forth throughout your high school career as well as the hard work you put into the application process itself.

Note: Every offer of admission is conditional upon your maintaining an academic and disciplinary record consistent with what was presented in the application. Colleges *do* check senior grades and they *do* amend and rescind admissions decisions and scholarship offers. They are also notified of any out-of-school suspensions and are free to enforce any repercussions they see fit.

Deny

Unfortunately, there is not room in a college's incoming class for every student who wishes to attend, or even everyone whose grades and scores suggest they could be successful at that school. But denials should in no way be interpreted as an indication of your worth; they simply reflect the competitive nature of the admissions landscape and the tough decisions that admissions offices must make.

Waitlist

A "waitlist" decision means that the college is very much interested in you but is unable to offer you a spot in the incoming class at that point in time. Waitlisted students are notified after May 1, and usually by early July, whether they will or will not be admitted. If you are waitlisted, you must let the college know whether you wish to remain on the waitlist (you are in no way obligated to do so). If the answer is "no," you are withdrawn from consideration and are free to focus on your other college options. If "yes," you must still select an alternate college from your list of admissions offers and put down the necessary deposit at that college by May 1st. If you are ultimately accepted off of the waitlist and are still interested in attending, you must withdraw from the college where you initially deposited.

Defer or "Need More Information"

Rather than make an outright decision, colleges sometimes decide that they need more information. This typically involves a student's Early Decision or Early Action application being "deferred" into the Regular Decision pool. Most commonly, the college will request seventh semester grades (i.e., first semester senior year) to see how the student is performing with a more rigorous curriculum or to see if grade trends are continuing or changing directions. *You must notify your College Counselor if grades are requested so we can submit them on your behalf.* Students may also submit additional information or updates regarding extracurricular involvement, etc., or even an extra recommendation.

Admit for later date, alternate program, or alternate campus

Colleges may choose to admit a student, but with a particular condition attached. For example, some colleges admit students for January or second semester entry, as opposed to starting in the fall. Students may also be admitted to the college, but to a program other than their first choice – this could be a second or third choice listed on the application or might be some variation of "exploratory studies." Colleges with multiple campuses may admit students to a satellite campus but not to the main campus, typically with options for later transfer.

With each of these options, you will want to speak with the college, your parents, and College Counselor before deciding if the alternate route offered is ideal for you.

Why are particular decisions made?

The majority of admissions decisions are made using a "holistic" review. In other words, the student is considered as an entire person, using a host of factors including those discussed at length above. On one hand, this means that applicants are not reduced to numbers and figures or subjected to any hard-set formulas. On the other hand, it means that the making of admissions decisions is much more an art than a science, with the subjectivity and unpredictability that accompanies such deliberations.

Historical data, such as Naviance presents, helps to provide a sense of the academic profile of recent Seven Hills students who were, and were not, admitted to a particular college or university. It is important to note, however, that this data cannot factor in the "what else" each applicant brought to the table, and it is this "what else" that often tips the balance one way or the other when admissions decisions are made. It's also true that every year is different, every student is different, and every college is different.

Most importantly, remember that admissions decisions are ultimately made with the best interest of the *college* in mind, sometimes referred to as "institutional fit." The job of an admissions director is not simply to bring in a target number of students to fill seats for the coming fall, but rather to "craft a class" that best meets the needs of that particular college at that particular time. These needs or priorities may range anywhere from increasing the academic profile of the incoming class, to bringing in greater tuition revenue through lower-need students, to increasing the number of international or first-generation students, to filling a newly-formed athletic team. Each of these priorities, whatever they may be, takes up a piece of the pie in the incoming class, and there is only so much pie to go around. This can lead to surprises, for better or for worse, since admissions decisions are not simply based on whether or not a given student is qualified.

What is a student to do in light of this? You should focus on controlling the things that are within your control – performing well in challenging classes, pursuing authentic non-academic interests and leadership opportunities, preparing thoughtful and well-organized applications, etc. At the same time, the unpredictable nature of the college admissions landscape also demands a focus on *balance* when identifying and applying to colleges.

What's next?

As you receive admissions decisions, next steps should include:

- Informing your College Counselor of each decision and any scholarship money offered. We confidentially keep track of both merit and need-based scholarships in a private database.

- Scheduling any desired return visits to colleges still under consideration. Many colleges offer visit programs for admitted students that are fun and highly informative.

- Reaching out to Seven Hills alumni or other acquaintances at schools under consideration for the "insider's" take. Keep in mind, however, that every student's experience is unique.

- Responding to waitlist offers – do you or do you not want to remain on the waitlist?

- Applying for financial aid and scholarships if you have not already done so; comparing offers that you receive.

- Doing serious reflection and self-evaluation. While others' opinions and insights are valuable, in the end the decision is yours and should "feel right." Take time to truly connect with your feelings about each of your choices.

- Deciding where you will attend by May 1st, the national response deadline, and putting down a deposit at the college of your choice. (This May 1st deadline does not apply to students admitted and enrolled via Early Decision.)

Special Talents

Athletics

Athletic Divisions

Division I

Division I athletics are the most competitive and are generally found at larger schools. Full and partial athletic scholarships are available for DI sports teams.

Division II

Division II schools tend to be smaller public universities, mid-sized private colleges, or junior colleges. They generally offer only partial athletic scholarships.

Division III

Division III athletics tend to be found at smaller, often private institutions. Unlike D-I and D-II, athletic scholarships are not allowed for Division III, although academic and general merit scholarships are often available.

**How do I know which schools are which division?* The NCAA website hosts a search tool that allows students to search by Division, sport, and/or location. This can be found by searching online for "NCAA Who We Are."

Steps to Becoming a Recruited Athlete

- *Reach out to coaches*

  This can be done in the form of a letter or email expressing your interest in the college and in the team. Many colleges also offer online forms that can be completed and serve a similar purpose. Contacting coaches of programs you are drawn to, rather than waiting to be contacted, shows great initiative and helps you make it onto the coach's radar. The more competitive the sport, the earlier these contacts should be made.

- *Meet with Coaches on Campus*

  When visiting college campuses, try to incorporate a visit with the coach of the sport you're interested in. Depending on the college's process, this may be done through the admissions office or may need to be done

directly with the coach. (You can find a coach's email address on the college website.) Before meeting with any coach, be sure to research the school and the program thoroughly and have a list of questions prepared to ask.

- *Attend Recruiting Camps*

  Recruiting camps can be very important, as they allow a large number of coaches to see you in action at one time. Coaches (school and club) and the Seven Hills Athletic Director can help advise you about which camps to attend and how to do so. Prior to the camp, call or email coaches from the schools in which you are interested to let them know you will be attending. During the camp, do your best to make a positive impression both on and off the field.

- *Prepare an Athletic Profile*

  An athletic profile provides coaches with a summary of important statistics and information. This document should be brought with you to be shared during personal meetings with coaches and may be included with college applications. *See the appendix for an example.*

- *Prepare Recruiting Video and/or Website*

  Game footage, which can be shared directly with coaches or uploaded to a recruiting website, is another way to give coaches the opportunity to see you play. This does not need to be professionally filmed; a simple home video will suffice.

- *Respond to Recruiting Phone Calls and Emails*

  You should respond to coaches' efforts to contact you. If you're not interested in that college, say politely that you're restricting your college search to schools in New England, or urban schools, or whatever your criteria are. If you are interested, return the coach's call or email promptly. This can be a great opportunity for you to ask questions, to build a relationship with that individual, and to express your interest in that particular college or program. However, keep in mind that, particularly in the early stages, a phone call from a coach is in no way a guarantee that you will in fact be admitted to the school or have the opportunity to play on the team. If calls become overwhelming or you are receiving phone calls from schools in which you have no interest, do not hesitate to politely tell these coaches. Doing so will ultimately save you and the coach valuable time and energy.

- *Conduct Official Visits*

  College coaches may invite you on an "official visit" to campus. During this time, you may meet (and potentially practice with) the team, stay overnight with a current player, tour campus, attend games, attend classes,

etc. Before participating in any official visit, be sure to consult the NCAA rules for such visits found here:

http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/future/recruiting

The NCAA permits students to participate in no more than 5 official visits, although they may visit many other schools "unofficially." It is also important to note the athletic recruiting calendar and the "periods" that may correspond with your sport. Depending on your age and sport, a college coach may only be able to recruit you during times of your high school career.

For more information, we also recommend you review the following link and the NCAA Publication *Guide for the College Bound Student-Athlete,* found here:

http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/future

- *Apply for Eligibility*

  Students considering D-I or D-II athletics must establish eligibility before they can be recruited or even invited for an official visit. This should be done between the end of junior year and the beginning of senior year. To do so, visit the following site:
  www.eligibilitycenter.org

  Students who are leaning toward D-III may nonetheless wish to establish eligibility using this process. There is no harm in doing so, and this will ensure that options are open if plans should change.

- *Early Decision for Athletes*

  Because coaches often encourage recruited athletes to apply Early Decision, those students should talk with their College Counselor as well as their parents about their communication with coaches.

- *Commit to the Program of Your Choice*

  Once admissions offers have been received and options have been weighed, it is time to commit to the college and the program of your choice. Depending on the school and the division, the process for doing so may differ. Consult with college counselors and Athletics Director, Brian Phelps, with specific questions about this step in the process.

** These steps may be completed in a variety of sequences and may not be necessary for all athletes, depending on the sport, the college, the division, and the coach.*

***Ivy League athletic recruits are subject to requirements unique to those colleges. If considering athletics at an Ivy League institution, be sure to talk to your College Counselor for more specific information.*

For more information regarding college athletics recruiting and/or to discuss a student's specific options, please feel free to contact:

Brian Phelps
Athletics Director
Email: brian.phelps@7hills.org
Phone: 513-728-2479

Fine Arts

Students with significant experience in the arts – visual art, music, dance, etc. – may want to showcase their work as part of their college applications. Even if you don't plan to major or minor in the arts, including these materials may speak to the significance of your talent and experience. At the same time, you should understand that it will be the arts faculty—professionals in their field—not the admissions office who will evaluate your submission. For that reason, submit materials only if they will help your application.

Before including a supplement of artistic work, consult the college's specific guidelines and requirements, as they may differ.

General Tips for Art Supplements:

- Start collecting early but not before 9th grade because colleges are most interested in what you've done in high school. When the time comes, you will have a robust portfolio of items from which to choose for submission. The same holds true for recordings or videos of dance or music performances.

- Include a range of pieces done in different media or styles.

- Label individual pieces with your name, the title, the medium (when applicable), and any other important information.

- Draw on the knowledge and experience of faculty and/or outside instructors when going through this process. They can offer invaluable advice on what to include, how best to present materials, and more.

- Use online submissions such as Flickr, YouTube, or SlideRoom (now synced with the Common Application). *When using YouTube, you must send the full link and not the shortened version. Condensed YouTube links are temporary and may expire before your work has been reviewed, giving the reviewer an error message.*

- Include an Arts Resume with information regarding classes taken, awards received, and experiences pursued.

The Cost of College

The Cost of College

College has become costlier than ever, with the average yearly comprehensive fee (tuition, fees, room and board) at almost $45,000 for private four-year institutions, and approximately $20,000 for public four-year institutions, according to the College Board's 2016 Trends in College Pricing Report. At the same time, however, efforts have been made by the government, lenders, and the colleges themselves to offset these rising sticker prices with more ample funding in the way of grants, loans, and merit-based scholarships.

Net Price

It is important to distinguish "sticker price" from "net price." Much of what we hear regarding the soaring costs of college focuses on "sticker" or list price. This is essentially the "purchase at full cost" price– the price before any scholarships or aid has been awarded. However, the "net price" – the sticker price minus any aid offered - tends to be *much* different than the sticker price, particularly at private colleges.

That's because these colleges often have generous need-based financial aid, and/or achievement-based merit aid, policies and ample funding. In fact, many of the most expensive colleges guarantee to meet a family's full demonstrated need, as calculated by the FAFSA and/or CSS profile. That means their net price may be turn out to be significantly lower than the advertised price, and may even be more affordable than the cost of some "less expensive" colleges.

Tip: Never rule out a college based on sticker price alone. Informed decisions based on cost can only be made once the student has been admitted and once all scholarships and financial aid offers are in hand.

Net Price Calculators

Many colleges now report the average net cost for students; this information can also be found on some searchable databases such as College Navigator. To get a more personalized estimate, however, "net price calculators" can be a helpful tool. Colleges who receive federal aid are required to include one of these calculators, which provides a rough estimate of net price based on a few data points entered.

Each college's calculator uses a unique formula and asks for certain data that is reflective of the school's own financial aid and/or merit scholarship allocation process. Calculators typically reflect the aid awarding process for *all* students; therefore, scholarships that require a special application and/or are only awarded to a select group of students are usually not reflected in calculator estimates. The simpler a school's aid awarding process, the more likely the calculator will be accurate.

Public institution calculators will typically only ask a few simple questions to produce an in-state or out-of-state pricing estimate. Scholarships at public schools vary greatly, and these algorithms are usually not incorporated into public school net price calculators. Private institution calculators may be more robust, asking detailed questions about high school context, course rigor, family assets, and so on, to produce a more accurate estimate, including need-based and merit-based aid. Generally, the more questions on a calculator, the more accurate the estimate

PLEASE NOTE: Results will likely differ between institutions, as will calculator accuracy. These calculations are only estimates, and are only as accurate as the information entered into them. Actual award packages may differ, higher or lower, for any number of reasons. Contacting each school's financial aid office directly and asking if a "by-hand" estimate is appropriate may yield the most accurate estimate. Families with highly complex financial situations should not rely on calculators.

Public vs. Private

It is certainly true that private colleges bear a heftier sticker price than their public counterparts, but a few key points are worth highlighting. First, sticker price does not always equate with actual cost paid. Despite their higher cost, private colleges often offer more substantial or more widespread aid. This sometimes reduces the private college cost to the point that it is comparable to, or even more affordable than, a public option.

Second, public universities often represent more affordable alternatives for in-state students, but their price tag tends to jump for out-of-state students. In other words, don't assume that public universities are, by definition, more affordable. According to the College Board, in 2015-2016, students received "an average of about $18,870 in grant aid and federal tax benefits to help them pay for college. Average aid is about $6,110 at public four-year institutions and about $5,090 at public two-year colleges."

Need-Based Financial Aid

Need-based aid (such as grants, subsidized loans, work study, etc.) is based on an assessment of the amount of financial assistance a family might need in order to afford a particular college. There are three primary documents, or types of documents, families encounter in the financial aid process:

-FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid),
-CSS (College Search Service)/Financial Aid PROFILE, and -
college-specific forms.

The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid – fafsa.ed.gov)

• *What is it?*

The FAFSA is the most widely used tool to access financial aid. It is the only pathway to access governmentally financed aid, including grants, loans, and work-study. Many schools will also award their own institutional financial aid based on the results from the FAFSA. The FAFSA can used for all schools to which a student is applying, has applied, or has been accepted.

• *How do I complete it?*

Just like filing your taxes, schools, the IRS, and the Department of Education, prefer the form to be completed online, although it can be filed using paper forms.

• *Who should submit the FAFSA?*

Any family hoping to receive need-based aid to help with college costs should complete and submit the FAFSA.

• *What kinds of questions are asked?*

The FAFSA asks about income, finances, and assets. The prior-prior year's tax records will be necessary to complete the FAFSA. The IRS Data Retrieval Tool on the FAFSA website can allow you to import data from your taxes directly into the FAFSA. FAFSA data is not public, and is only transmitted to the schools you indicate.

• *When should I do it?*

The FAFSA becomes available on October 1st of the student's senior year The FAFSA should be filed no later than February 15th, or the earliest "priority filing" date provided by the schools a student is applying to. As a general rule of thumb, we encourage all families to complete the FAFSA before winter break.

• *How will the FAFSA information be used?*

It will be processed according to a U.S. Government formula to calculate your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The EFC is the amount the formula indicates that the family can pay each year toward the student's college expenses, and it is the same for each college, regardless of cost. The college uses the EFC to calculate "need" using the following formula:

Comprehensive fee – EFC =* ***Need***
**Comprehensive fee includes tuition, fees, room and board*

Once "need" has been determined, the college decides what resources, if any, it can allocate to meet this need. Less well-endowed colleges are

often unable to meet the full demonstrated need, which results in what is referred to as a gap.

Need – Financial Aid = ***Gap***

- *What are some of the most common forms of federal student aid?*

Federal Pell Grant: $5,920 (2017-2018) gift aid from the government that does not have to be repaid and is based on financial need.

Subsidized and subsidized loans: As of 2017-2018, over the course of four year, students can borrow up to $31,000 from the government. No more than $23,000 of this amount can be in subsidized loans, which means that the government pays the interest on these loans while the student is in school.

College Scholarship Service/Financial Aid PROFILE ("CSS")

- *What is it?*

The CSS is managed by The College Board and used by nearly 400 colleges and scholarship programs to determine eligibility for non-federal financial aid. The CSS is far more extensive than the FAFSA, so many institutions with substantial financial aid resources prefer this tool to allocate their funds.

- *How do I complete it?*

http://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile.

Unlike the FAFSA, the CSS is not free to submit. The initial application fee is $25, with a $16 fee for each additional report sent. Fee waivers are available for qualified students and are automatically applied based on an algorithm determined by The College Board.

- *What kind of questions are asked?*

Questions regarding assets, income, and finances are asked.

- *When should I submit it?*

The PROFILE may be filed as early as October 1st of the student's senior year, and, like the FAFSA, should be submitted no later than the earliest priority deadline specified by the colleges to which the student is applying.

College-Specific Forms

Some schools may require additional forms or essays for scholarships with specific requirements. Consult the college's website for information regarding any college-specific scholarship programs for which you may be eligible.

Additional Questions & Tips on Financial Aid

• *When will I hear about need-based financial aid?*

Need-based financial aid offers are typically mailed in mid- to late March. This allows families about a month to compare offers before the May 1st tuition deposit deadline. Early Decision applicants receive an *estimate* of financial aid much earlier, typically in December, before the commitment deadline associated with the ED program (typically in early to mid-January).

• *What about private loans?*

After the FAFSA and any additional forms have been filed and financial aid packages have been received, your family may still consider applying for private loans. These can serve as a useful way to help bridge the "gap" or to ease the family's immediate financial aid burden. However, interest rates and requirements are typically higher for private loans (as compared to federal loans) and should be used with caution.

• *Can financial aid offers be negotiated?*

Many colleges and universities try to work with families to make the finances of the particular college work.

Key points to remember when trying to negotiate financial aid:

- Timing: Wait until all offers of financial aid are in hand so that you can compare offers and make an informed case for more aid, but don't wait until the last minute. It may be too late at that point—the college may already have distributed all its aid.

- Let the college know how much you can actually afford. Be as specific, and realistic, as possible.

- Ask about work-study programs.

- Understand that colleges are sometimes unable to negotiate and/or have already presented you with the best offer they can provide.

- Be professional and polite. (Yelling doesn't help.)

Merit-Based Scholarships

College-Specific Scholarships

Some merit scholarships are associated with a particular college or university and can only be awarded to admitted students of that institution (and only used by those deciding to enroll).

Consideration for some of these scholarships is automatic: All applicants are considered and no extra application is required. Others have separate

application processes, and even separate deadlines, information about which can be found on the college's website.

Additional college-specific scholarships focus on a particular area or kind of achievement. For example, scholarships may be awarded for students interested in a particular discipline, for students of diverse backgrounds, for students excelling in the fine arts, or students with significant leadership experience or capabilities. These typically require additional steps in order to receive consideration, such as additional essays or forms.

- *Where to find them:* The college's website

- *When to apply:* Scholarship deadlines may or may not be the same as application deadlines. Some scholarship deadlines may even be *before* the application deadline. Be sure to do your research well in advance (during the summer or early fall) so that you are not caught off-guard.

Independent Scholarships

Scholarships offered by businesses, churches, community organizations, or clubs can be used regardless of where a student attends and are therefore more flexibility than college-specific awards.

- *Where to find them:* Free scholarship databases such as Fastweb.com, and Micro-Scholarship portals such as Raise.Me, can be especially helpful, as they collect data on numerous scholarships and assist students in sifting through this information. See the Seven Hills College Counseling website for a list of additional sources.

- *When to apply:* Application deadlines for outside scholarships vary tremendously. Although most are due during the second semester of the senior year, students and families are encouraged to begin searching for these opportunities early (as early as junior year).

Understanding Financial Aid Packages

For the most part, unless you apply Early Decision or Early Action, financial aid award letters arrive around mid-March and mid-April. The aid "package" is usually comprised of 3 parts:

- Grants and scholarships (which do not have to be paid back)
- Work study (an on-campus job of up to 10 hours/week)
- Loans (offered to the student)

Because financial aid packages look different from college to college, direct comparisons can be difficult, so you may wish to consult with the financial aid office of the college, your college counselor, or even a financial advisor.

Here are a few general tips and suggestions to help decipher and compare financial aid packages:

- In general, the "best" package is the one that offers the most in scholarships, grants, merit aid, and work-study, and less in loans, which accrue interest and need to be paid back over time.

- Not all loans are created equal. Institutional and federal loans typically have the lowest interest rates; private loans tend to have higher interest rates and less lenient repayment requirements.

- Funding from work-study is not guaranteed money. The amount represented in the financial aid package is the amount the student is allowed to receive via work-study for an on-campus job. The student must still secure a position and work the necessary hours in order to receive this amount, which is typically awarded in the form of a pay check and not directly applied to tuition bills.

- Colleges differ in what they include in the financial aid package. For example, some financial aid offices will include Parent PLUS loans or other private loans in the aid package, making the package seem more generous, while others will not.

- Look into tuition payment plans, which allow families to pay the bill in regular monthly installments rather than in a lump sum.

- You do not need to accept *all* of the financial aid package offered. You may pick and choose which components of the package you wish to accept (for example, all the grants but none of the loans).

- Be careful to incorporate important factors such as graduation rates into your decision. A less expensive college with a considerably lower 4-year graduation rate may end up costing more than a more expensive college if the student needs to go for a 5^{th} or 6^{th} year.



Parents & the College Search Process

Parent Timeline

Freshman Year

•Fall: Attend "Coffee with a College Counselor" – one of these early programs will be geared toward freshman and sophomore parents in particular

•Winter: Attend Freshman Parent Meeting (see school calendar for date) to meet your child's College Counselor and hear an overview of our four-year program.

Sophomore Year

•Fall: Attend "Coffee with a College Counselor" – one of these early programs will be geared toward freshman and sophomore parents in particular

•Fall: Attend Mock Admissions Workshop for Sophomore and Junior Students and Parents (see school calendar for date).

•Winter: Attend Sophomore Parent Meeting (see school calendar for date).

•Summer: Consider including college visits in your summer plans.

Junior Year

•Fall: Attend first Junior Parent Meeting of the year (see school calendar for date).

•Fall: Complete and return Privacy Waiver and Parent Questionnaire by Winter Break.

•Fall: Attend Mock Admissions Workshop for Sophomore and Junior Students and Parents (see school calendar for date).

•March: Attend Junior Parent Meeting, where you'll become acquainted with and start exploring Naviance Family Connection.

•Spring: Consider including college visits in your spring break plans. College Counselors are happy to assist you and your student in preparing a "visit list."

•Spring: Meet individually with College Counselor.

•Summer: Consider including college visits in your summer plans.

Senior Year

•Fall: Attend Senior Parent Meeting

•Fall: Attend optional Financial Aid Night.

•Fall: Continue meeting with College Counselor as desired.

•Fall: Consider follow-up or first-time college visits over long weekend in October.

•After October 1, complete FAFSA if applying for need-based financial aid. Also complete CSS Profile if your child is applying to one of the 400 colleges that require it (check college websites).

•Spring: Make return college visits as needed for student to finalize decision.

•Spring: Submit deposit to student's chosen college by May 1st (earlier for Early Decision applicants).

Parent Meetings

Parent Meetings by Grade

At various times of the year, parents of each grade will be invited to a group meeting with College Counselors (and at times with guest presenters). If you are unable to attend, we will mail home any materials distributed at the meeting.

Coffee with a College Counselor

Usually beginning at 7:30am, these informal meetings are open to any parent with questions or wishing to learn from others' questions. No formal presentation is involved; the

program takes a more casual, Q&A format. All parents are invited unless an announcement is made regarding a particular target audience (for example, freshman and sophomore parents).

Individual Meetings

Although College Counselors are happy to meet with parents at any point, we usually begin individual parent meetings in the spring of the junior year, after we have begun to work more frequently with the juniors.

Tips for Parents

•Remember that because each student is different, each student's college search is different.

•To lessen the pressure on your child, you might start by visiting a set of colleges to which your child will most likely not apply. Include a large university, a small liberal arts college, a school located in a city, a more rural or suburban school, etc. This will help your child get a sense of the features of a school he or she likes, but in a low-key way.

•Try not to make college a constant dinner conversation topic and avoid discussing your student's GPA, test scores, or college list with friends, at work, or at parties. This is private, personal information. Imagine how you might feel if your child shared personal information about you such as your income or weight!

•Celebrate all successes and help your child move past any disappointments in a positive manner.

• Let us know how we can help.

Technology & the College Search

Naviance Family Connection

This secure, web-based college research tool is a key element in managing the college search and application processes at Seven Hills. Through Naviance, students and parents are able to access up-to-date information on colleges and universities and incorporate this information into an informed, proactive college search. College Counselors likewise enjoy access to a wealth of information via this resource and also use Naviance to transmit essential application materials to colleges.

•*What are some of the key features of Naviance?*

- **College Lookup**: Allows you to search for a specific college by name, or browse by country or state. Provides extensive information including: admissions statistics, deadlines, and process; financial aid; majors and minors offered; student life; overlap schools; statistics on how Seven Hills students have fared in the admissions process and how you compare.

- **College Match**: Provides a list of colleges that are typically seeking students with profiles similar to yours (this in no way guarantees admission, of course). Once you have completed your "prospective colleges" and/or "colleges to which I am applying," College Match will suggest additional schools similar to the colleges on your list.

- **College Search**: Enables you to search for colleges based on a host of criteria: public vs. private, co-ed vs. single-sex, campus surroundings, college groups, religious affiliation, location, size, male/female ratio, majors and special programs, sports offered, etc.

- **College Compare**: Allows you to compare up to ten colleges at a time, based

on admissions statistics such as average SAT and ACT scores, average GPA, and acceptance rates. This data is compared to your own in order to provide a sense of how you might fare in the typical applicant pool.

- **Colleges I'm Thinking About**: Here you list the colleges you are considering, indicate your level of interest, see information regarding deadlines, contact the college or access its website, and view scattergrams showing Seven Hills applicants' admissions history. This list changes throughout the process as you add and subtract colleges under consideration. College Counselors are also able to add colleges to this list that they feel could be good fits.

- **Colleges I'm Applying To**: Once you've narrowed the list of potential colleges to those to which you definitely want to apply, you must move each school from "Colleges I'm Thinking About" to "Colleges I'm Applying To." <u>This step is extremely important</u>: only after this has happened can College Counselors send the necessary supporting application materials to each college (i.e., transcript, counselor and teacher recommendations, school profile).

- **Scattergrams**: Naviance provides a graph for each college that shows information regarding admissions decisions for Seven Hills students who have applied within the last five years. The graphs are updated yearly.

The x-axis represents standardized test scores (SAT or ACT) and the y-axis represents GPA. Each applicant is represented by a symbol on the scattergram; the shape and/or color of this symbol signifies the admissions decision that particular student received:

- Green check = accepted
- Red "x" = denied
- Blue circle = waitlisted, never admitted
- Green circle = originally waitlisted, later admitted

When accessed via a student's account, the scattergram will also show a larger, empty circle outlined in red. The circle represents your GPA and scores, and shows where on the chart you stand in relation to past applicants' GPAs and scores. These graphs can give you some sense of the likelihood of admission. Keep in mind, however, that GPA and test scores make up only a piece of the puzzle and that many other factors typically come into play as well (see the section on "How are Decisions Made" earlier in this handbook).

- **College Visits**: Upcoming visits from college admissions representatives are posted on Naviance, in addition to on the Seven Hills website and Schoology. There is no need to sign up for these, but to meet with a college rep, students must follow the protocol outlined earlier in this handbook under "Meetings with College Representatives at Seven Hills".

- *Who can use Naviance?*

Naviance is available for use by current juniors and seniors, and 2nd semester sophomores. Parents are encouraged to access Naviance using their students' accounts. College Counselors use the site extensively, and teachers use Naviance for the purpose of submitting recommendation letters.

•*Why is it important to maintain my Naviance account with up-to-date information?*

Naviance serves as a key means of communication and collaboration between you and your College Counselor throughout the search and application process. You'll talk with your counselor frequently as your college list grows, evolves, and narrows. Your Naviance account should reflect these discussions and changes so that everyone is on the same page. Remember that your College Counselor cannot send materials to any college until it has been moved to the "Colleges I'm Applying To" tab.

Schoology

Students will receive access to a Schoology College Counseling page for their graduating class (e.g., "College Counseling Class of 2019"). This serves as one of the primary means of communicating important announcements, updates, and information between College Counselors and students. Information posted may include dates of upcoming college representative visits, articles related to college admissions, and reminders for college counseling meetings. Students are expected both to join this page and to check it frequently to stay up-to-date and informed.

Social Media Use by Colleges & Students

•*How and why do colleges use social media?*

Colleges and universities often use social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest) to connect with and recruit prospective students. Links to these sites can typically be found on the admissions website of each college. As snail mail, and even email to a certain extent, become increasingly ineffective at reaching prospective students, colleges have turned to these social media outlets to attract interest and to share information regarding admissions deadlines and events, campus news and any number of other things.

•*Should I "like" and/or "follow"?*

Because of the valuable information that is shared in this way, it can be advantageous to you as a prospective student to connect with colleges via social media. This will give you access to ample, up-to-the-minute information and impressions of what life might be as a student at a particular college.

At the same time, keep in mind that you must be especially mindful of your own online presence and the impressions you might be giving by way of your pictures, posts, comments, or even Twitter handle (for example, @partyanimal15 does not send a positive message, no matter how "clean" the rest of your online activity may be). Be especially cautious when posting directly on a college's page, in a college-run group, or using a college's hashtag - this activity is monitored regularly.

•*A word of caution for students using social media*:

While most admissions offices don't regularly turn to social media or the web to covertly find out more information about applicants, or certainly not all applicants, there have been many public reports of information found online or via social media negatively impacting admissions decisions (such as offensive or bigoted comments, inappropriate pictures, etc.). Monitor your online presence!

•*Some Social Media Tips*:

- Periodically Google yourself – including an image search - and see what turns up. It is better to know what a college might find about you than to be in the dark.

- Assume that colleges will look at your online presence, even if they say otherwise. Behave and present yourself accordingly. No, this does not mean you need to present yourself as someone you are not. Colleges fully understand that you are a high school student and that social media is often a source of fun and socialization. This does mean, however, that you should put your best foot forward and not one that might reflect poorly on your judgment, integrity, or character.

- Do not rely on privacy settings to hide everything, although it is certainly a good idea to have some in place (restrict access to those in your direct friend network whenever possible). These do not always work as effectively as you would hope, and changes to Facebook and other social media outlets at times, and unexpectedly, render these ineffective.

- Be wary not only of what you post, but also of what others post about you (including pictures). In return, be sure to post only positive, appropriate comments and pictures of your friends and classmates.

Email & The College Search Process

Email has now become arguably the most utilized means of communication between colleges and their prospective students. Through email, you will receive a wealth of information including application deadlines and procedures, scholarship opportunities, academic programs, student life, and more. During the application process, emails are also widely used to inform applicants of their application status (including information regarding missing materials) and sometimes even the admissions decision itself. In other words, email is very important. Check it regularly and respond to when necessary so that essential information is not overlooked.

A few tips to ensure that email is used effectively throughout the college search process:

•Create an email address to use only for the college process. Always use it when filling out college-related forms including the ACT/SAT, college visit sign-ups, information requests, etc.

•For your college search email, choose something simple and appropriate, such as Brian7Hills18@gmail.com or CollegeMaggie2019@gmail.com. Never give out an email address that could send a message you do not want an admissions officer to receive such as Likes2Party@gmail.com or HotChick16@gmail.com.

•Your family may decide that access to this email address will be shared by you and your parents so that everyone is kept in the loop. But your parents should not respond to college emails on your behalf—that sends the college the wrong message.

•Check it regularly - daily during senior year - and delete unwanted or read messages.

And check your spam folder regularly too – important items may accidentally land here. Also, be sure that emails from schools you are considering are not marked as spam.

•As your search progresses and narrows, create folders for each college under consideration and save important messages here.

•When emailing anyone at the college – from your admissions representatives to processing staff - be professional and courteous. This includes using an appropriate salutation and closing, and following proper grammar and capitalization rules.

- Once you rule out a college, you may ask to unsubscribe from their mailing list. Instructions for doing so are typically found at the bottom of the email; otherwise, email the admissions office directly and ask to be removed from future mailings.

Appendix

A) ***Questions to ask College Representatives***
The best questions aim to uncover the personality of an institution in order to determine fit. Try to ask questions that generate stories and not facts that can be found on the web or in mailings. Not only will this be most helpful to you, but also it will make you more memorable to the college admissions officer.

How would you describe the personality of the student body?

What makes this school unique?

I'm planning to major in _____ . What differentiates this program from what I'd find at other colleges?

What are some of your most notable undergraduate research projects currently taking place on your campus? What funding is available for me to do my own research?

What forms of aid do you offer? What is the balance between merit and need aid?

What is the average class size? How does this vary by class level?

Can you share a story that represents the way students interact with the administration?

Why do your students decide to stay at your institution past their first year?

Why do students decide to transfer to other schools?

What frameworks are in place to ensure students graduate in four years? How many actually do graduate in four years?

Describe a weeknight versus a weekend night?

What can you tell me about the location of the campus? What kind of opportunities are there for entertainment, volunteer work, etc. in the surrounding area?

What role does athletics play on your campus? Do you have an honors program? What are the admission requirements? What is the political climate of campus? What are the general education or distribution requirements (if any)?

Would I be able to participate in the theatrical (or dance, music, etc.) productions or ensembles, or are these open to majors only?

B) ***Common Admissions Interview Questions***
Tell me about yourself.

What are your academic interests?

Why are you interested in our college?

Was there anything on your tour that you found particularly interesting or surprising?

What do you feel you would add to a college campus?

How do you like to spend your time outside of school?

What do you like to read? What is the last book you read that was not assigned reading for school?

What do you like to do for fun?

What questions do you have about our college?

What do you hope to do after graduation?

How did you spend your summer?

What is your favorite class currently and why?

What is your biggest strength? Your biggest weakness?

Tell me about your family.

Who has been the most influential person in your life?

What high school experience has been most important to you?