



**CLASS OF 2021 COLLEGE COUNSELING HANDBOOK**

# Quick Reference Guide

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## Important Dates

**April 4, 2020**

ACT date

**April 23, 2020**

College Fair

**May 2, 2020**

SAT date

**October 3, 2020**

SAT date

**October 24, 2020**

Retake ACT (if necessary)

**November 7, 2020**

SAT date

**October 1 & 15, 2020**

Tilton Deadlines for Early Action & Early Decision applications

**May 1, 2021**

National Candidates' Reply Date

## Online Forms

Federal Student Aid  
AN OFFICE of the U.S. DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION  
**Financial Aid Forms**  
**(CSS Profile and FAFSA)**  
<https://fafsa.ed.gov/>

THE COMMON  
APPLICATION  
**The Common Application**  
<https://www.commonapp.org>

 COALITION for ACCESS,  
AFFORDABILITY, and SUCCESS  
<http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org/>

## College Board (CEEB) School Code

300-580

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# Timetable for the Class of 2021

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## **October / November 2019**

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- Read the *Tilton School College Counseling Handbook*.

## **December 2019**

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- Early December: Students sign up for a college counselor and submit the Junior Year Questionnaire.
- Parents submit the Parent Response Form.

## **January 2020**

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- College Process Weekend for students and parents/guardians. Meet college deans and directors of admission from across the country.

## **February/March 2020**

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- Weekly college counseling sessions begin (built into your schedule).
- Early February: Submit your preliminary interest list of college options based on college counseling “homework” assignment.
- Registration begins for senior year courses. Consult with teachers, advisor and counselor.
- Begin thinking about summer plans.
- Talk with your counselor about possible college visits during spring break.
- Attend a practice mock interview with local college representatives.
- Spring break can be a good time to start visiting some college campuses. If colleges are in session, visit classes in addition to taking tours.

## **April/May 2020**

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- April 4: ACT date
- April 23: College Fair
- Arrange college counseling session with your counselor and your parents. Create testing plan/strategy and develop a broad, realistic, and appropriate list of colleges to investigate further. With the help of your college counselor, separate list into the categories of Realistic Challenge, Target, and Likely.
- Attend workshop on college essay writing.
- Weekly meetings come to a close after the college fair.
- Early May: SAT Reasoning Test at Tilton (May 2, 2020).
- Mid-May: Contact all colleges you are exploring to get on their mailing list. Finalize plans for the summer.

## **June 2020**

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- June 1: SAT Subject Tests in subjects of your choice. You may take up to three tests. This is an off campus test date.

## Summer 2020

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- Keep investigating. Read, talk to current students, and visit college campuses (schedule interviews where appropriate). Begin to narrow down your list of appropriate possibilities.
- Read and organize application materials.
- By August 7, complete Common Application draft.
- Prepare for fall standardized test registration at Tilton by making note of all college (ACT & SAT) codes for score release.
- Consider taking the August SAT before returning to Tilton.

## September 2020

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- College Defense Program.
- Schedule a meeting with your counselor to update them on your process and develop plan of action for the fall.
- Narrow list down to 8-10 schools. Make final application plans, particularly for the University of California system; early action, or early decision. Be aware of schools with rolling admissions.
- Attend sessions with visiting college admissions officers at Tilton throughout the fall.
- Enter college list into SCOIR to ensure transcripts & recommendations are submitted.
- Work hard in your courses—first semester grades count!

## October 2020

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- Early October: Deadline to submit Early Action/Early Decision contract to your counselor and to notify them of the schools to which you are applying early or rolling.
- Early October: Deadline to ask your teachers for a recommendation—we do this together in SCOIR.
- Early October: Retake SAT Reasoning or Subject Tests if necessary.
- October 24: Retake ACT if necessary.
- If your family is applying for financial aid, submit CSS Profile forms and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- Consult with your counselor regarding essay drafts and final list of applications.
- Begin submitting rolling applications.
- Have test scores sent to your Early Decision/Early Action and Rolling Admission schools.

## November 2020

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- November 1 and 15: Deadlines for Early Action and Early Decision applications (Tilton School deadline two weeks prior).
- Early November: Retake SAT Reasoning or Subject Tests if necessary.
- November break: Deadline to complete all application work and be ready to submit all January and later deadline applications.
- Time to arrange for another meeting with your parent/guardian and college counselor to review and approve confirmed college list application work. Make arrangements for application fees with parents.

## **December 2020**

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- Early December: Deadline to submit additional colleges to your list.
- Early December: Retake SAT Reasoning or Subject Tests if necessary. This is your last chance to take them for University of California consideration.
- Be sure test scores were sent to your regular decision schools.
- Receive early decision/early action decisions.
- Notify and thank teachers who wrote letters for you.
- Final submission for late applications before December break.

## **January 2021**

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- Three weeks after submitting applications, confirm the receipt of all of your application material, school forms, and standardized test scores.

## **March 2021**

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- Colleges begin notification of admission decisions. Most highly-selective schools will notify near end of the month.

## **April 2021**

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- All decisions should be received by mid-April. If you have done all you are supposed to do, you will have choices.
- Decision-making time. Consult counselors, friends, current students, and family.
- Attend Open Houses for admitted students.
- If you have been wait-listed and wish to pursue admission to that institution, see your counselor for appropriate guidelines and procedures.
- Request that a final transcript be sent to the college you have chosen.
- Continue to work. Colleges look at your final senior grades; your matriculation is contingent on continued academic performance through the end of the senior year.
- Inform and thank teachers who wrote your letters of recommendation.

## **May 2021**

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- May 1: National Candidates' Reply Date. Notify all colleges to which you are admitted where you have decided to matriculate.

# Big Thinking and Researching Your College Options

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The time of transition from high school to college is a busy and sometimes confusing one for students. It is also an exciting and challenging time with new opportunities and possibilities opening up and new demands for students to deal with. It is a time of anticipation, of saying good-bye to old friends, of moving off into the new and the unknown. Many times students lose sight of what they are trying to accomplish because they are so involved with the myriad tasks that have to be accomplished.

This handbook is offered to help you and your family see that the task of applying to college is a process with a beginning, a middle, and an end. We hope to help you anticipate what needs to be done and to plan your work to make the best use of the time you devote to it.

## **Self-Questioning and Reflection**

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The first step in the process consists of taking a close look at yourself; your abilities, interests, and values; your hopes and aspirations. Most importantly, you should be working toward developing some sense of what you are seeking for yourself and from a college. Because selecting a college is a very personal process, you can't simply pick a name out of a hat and assume that that college will be a good one for you. As you think about what you are looking for in a college, be realistic. Talk with your family about your strengths and weaknesses as well as your dreams and ambitions.

Before you meet with your college counselor to begin talking about colleges, you should give some thought to the following questions that can help you decide what colleges might be worth consideration.

1. Why do you want to go to college? Are you thinking about it because you want to continue to pursue education for its own sake? Are you seeking specific training for a definite career or goal?
2. Are there geographical areas that you definitely want to look at or that you definitely want to avoid?
3. Are you interested in a liberal arts college or in a more specialized kind of institution? What are your tentative ideas of possible majors? Will you provide a portfolio of writing or art?
4. What size school are you interested in attending?
5. What kind of campus setting are you seeking? Urban? Suburban? Rural?
6. Are there sports or activities that are of major importance in your college planning?

# Getting Organized

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You will soon discover that applying to colleges requires hours of research, hours of talking (to admissions officers, alumni, coaches, friends, teachers, and parents), hours of filling out applications, and a great deal of thought. To be done properly and with the least amount of anxiety, it also requires organization. We suggest that each student/family devote a large binder to the college search process. You should also have an electronic folder where you keep emails related to your college process. Either your binder or your electronic folder should include the following items:

- Notes on the various colleges you are considering.
- A chart of application deadlines.
- A record of tests you have taken, when you took them, and the colleges to which you have sent them.
- A record of your college-related internet accounts, usernames, passwords.
- A record of interview appointments.
- A record of which teachers you have asked to write recommendations and when you asked them. SCOIR helps!
- Copies of the essays and short answer responses you have submitted. Google Docs!
- A record of all correspondence between you and the colleges.

When you have identified what you are looking for in a college, you should discuss with your college counselor what you are seeking, as well as your academic “profile” (grades, PSAT test scores, activities, course levels—AP courses, Honors courses, College Prep courses, etc.). The goal of these discussions is to develop a working list of colleges that meet most or all of your criteria.

Don’t be surprised or discouraged if you find your counselor constantly concerned about ensuring that you have sufficient “likely” schools on your list. It is not a sneaky way of making derogatory comments about you or your ability. Most students and families have little difficulty in identifying “long shots”—highly competitive colleges to which they aspire. Your counselor’s job is to work with you to insure that your list of colleges is balanced and realistic and contains schools where you will be reaching, schools where you will be competitive, and schools where in all likelihood you will be accepted.

If counselors seem at times to be “professionally pessimistic,” it is because we do not want you to be disappointed in the spring if none of the schools you applied to accepted you. This will not be your plight.

Do not get sucked into the rumor mill. It is most often inaccurate. When in doubt, check with us! You are not alone in this process. Keep in touch with your college counselor. We are here to help guide you through the process.

It might be enlightening to sit down with your counselor to go over the pattern of past acceptances at schools you are considering. Seeing how other students with similar test scores and grades were treated may help you develop a better feeling for how competitive a particular school may be for you.

You are the one in the driver’s seat. Though you will get input from parents, your advisor, the college counselors, friends, relatives and admission officers, remember that the person going to the college in the end is you. You are not going through all this to please other people, so make decisions that feel good and make sense to you.

## **College Representatives at Tilton School**

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More than 70 admissions officers will visit Tilton School next fall, providing you with one of the best ways to learn more about the colleges they represent. In most cases, the college representatives who visit Tilton are those who read application files for our school and make the decisions about our students. Seniors are permitted to miss class to attend these meetings provided they have secured prior teacher permission and are responsible for missed work.



# The College Visit

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For the majority of seniors, the campus visit will be a decisive factor in where you will apply and enroll. The campus visit is your chance to size up a school and to gauge how it fits with your interests. Do some research before you go—read the catalogue and look at the website—so the visit will be more meaningful in the context of what you have already learned. If you are planning an extended trip, consider visiting no more than two schools a day and keep notes of your impressions. Build in days with a lighter schedule to make the trip more enjoyable. Remember, you are preparing for the *Senior College Defense Program*. A good idea is to make your list of pros and cons before leaving the parking lot. Have your parent or guardian do the same and then wait to share your impressions at dinner.

## When to Visit

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Most visit campuses during the academic year breaks or during the summer prior to senior year. Seniors often use long weekends, such as Family Weekend in October, to revisit top choices. Summer is also a good time to visit colleges. Although classes may not be in session, admission offices are open during this busy season of college visiting, offering tours, group information sessions, and at some colleges, interviews.

## College Visitation Policy

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You are allowed to miss two class days each semester (excused absences) for college visits. You will be responsible for making up any work you miss. College Visit Requests require parents' confirmation of your appointment(s) and approval of the Student Life Office. We ask that you take a "selfie" at a college landmark or maybe with the mascot and send it to us!

## Preparing for Your Trip

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Always research the college's website to find out what type of campus visit options are available well in advance, at least four to five weeks, of your intended visit. Many colleges will allow students to register for their visit online; others may request that families call ahead. Avoid dropping in on a college; you may be visiting on a day the university has an all-campus event, cancelling classes and tours. And while it might be tempting, don't simply drive through campus, even if pressed for time. If you choose to walk around campus on your own because your travel plans do not fit with tour times, stop by the admission office and be sure you are on their radar—and their mailing list. "Demonstrated Interest" is very important at many colleges where they track the number of contacts made by a student. The same goes for a visit with a coach—be sure to stop by the admission office. Do not ignore them.

## While on Campus

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Attend a group information session. These are usually held at the admission office and are especially helpful if you don't plan an interview. This is usually led by an admission officer. Take a tour. This is usually led by a current student. Talk to students. Don't be afraid to ask them about their experience. If it is in the summer, you may want to look for students who have stayed to do research or who work at the college. Look at school newspapers and bulletin boards. These things will give you an idea about what is happening on campus and what the political and social climates are like. Check out the student center. Where do students hang out? What do they do? Visit classes, if possible. Talk to professors in departments that interest you. Explore on your own. The tour won't take you everywhere. Get a good feel for the place.

While it is not expected, nor feasible for students to visit every college on their list, it is expected that students will be proactive about researching schools (through websites and SCOIR, attending college presentations at Tilton and the college fair, and have a reason of why a college is on their short list. The *Senior Defense Program* requires effective research and multiple points of college contact. A visit can be a key factor in helping you narrow your list.

# Building the College List

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In developing your list of colleges, you need to make sure it is balanced in the range of selectivity represented and reasonable in the number of schools. The key to success, as well as maintaining your mental health through your senior year, is to cover the full range of selectivity, which you should be able to do with eight to twelve applications. A “Likely” becomes meaningless if you don’t intend to go there under any circumstances.

## **How do You Determine What Your Chances of Admission Are?**

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Assessing your record, your strengths and weaknesses, and examining the college’s selectivity and statistics will give you some idea. Knowing whom a college has admitted or denied in the past can also give you some clue, but be aware that it can be dangerous to generalize too much from past decisions. The student who got in with grades lower than yours may have had unusually strong recommendations; they may have been a talented artist; they may have been the son of an alumnus. Obviously, grades and test scores are not the only things taken into account in a selective admission process, but it is a good place to start in evaluating your chances at a particular college.

SCOIR allows you to compare your academic profile to other applicants to a particular college. Before you start looking at statistics, however, take the following steps: Evaluate yourself. What kinds of grades have you earned? What kind of testing profile do (will) you have? How rigorous is the curriculum you have selected? We can help provide a context for this. Get the facts on the colleges in which you are interested. What is the acceptance rate? What is the middle 50 percent range of SAT scores of accepted applicants? What is the average GPA of accepted candidates? Compare your grades and scores with those of your selected schools. SCOIR has a useful tool that allows you to compare your statistics to previous applicants from Tilton School.

## **A Warning About GPAs**

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When determining your likelihood of admission, you will be using our in-house only cumulative GPA. This is calculated in the College Counseling Office using core academic courses only and no weighting for AP or Honors work. We use your grades through the first semester junior year and then recalculate at the end of June before senior year. The data is entered into your SCOIR account allowing you to use the scattergram functions in the program.

This number can sometimes be misleading. One number representing three and a half years of a student’s work often cannot represent the true performance of a student. The upward (or downward) trends or rigor of curriculum cannot be discerned from a single number. A student with eight AP courses and all ES’s may have the same grade point average as someone with no AP courses and all SES’s.

A college will focus on the curriculum that a student has chosen and the grades over the course of three and a half years, not a single number represented in a GPA. Senior year grades can also be a factor in college admission evaluations, especially as the most recent indication of potential for college work.

Tilton’s College Counseling Office uses the following terminology to describe a student’s chances of admission: Likely, Target, Realistic Challenge, and Reach. To that end, we expect everyone to include at least two “Likely” and three “Target” colleges on the final list by September of senior year.

Naturally, these should be institutions that you would happily attend. These schools should be researched as carefully and thoughtfully as your “Reach” colleges. Don’t apply to any college or university that you really would not attend.

# College Selectivity

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When working with our students in college counseling at Tilton School, we refer to the Barron's Guide, *Profile of American Colleges 2019*, which ranks the admissions selectivity for four-year colleges and universities in the United States. Below are the Barron's categories outlining admission standards (the key factors being a student's GPA and standardized test scores) at different levels of selectivity from Most Competitive to the Non-Competitive colleges.

## **Most Competitive: (6)**

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In general, these colleges require a GPA of 3.3-4.0 on a 4.0 scale. Median freshman test scores at these colleges are generally between 655-800 on each section of the SAT or 29 composite and above on the ACT. Acceptance rates at these schools are usually below 30 percent, at times quite a bit lower.

**Examples of schools in this category:** *Harvard University, Carnegie Mellon University, Boston College, Tufts University, Boston University, Brandeis University, Bowdoin College, and University of California Los Angeles.*

## **Highly Competitive: (5)**

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In general, these colleges require a GPA of 3.0-3.3 on a 4.0 scale. Median freshman test scores at these colleges are generally between 620-654 on each section of the SAT or at least 27 composite and above on the ACT. Acceptance rates at these schools are usually between 30 and 50 percent.

**Examples of schools in this category:** *Gettysburg College, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Drexel University, Babson College, Clemson University, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Purdue University-West Lafayette, Ind.*

## **Very Competitive: (4)**

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In general, these colleges don't admit students with a GPA lower than a 2.8. Median freshman test scores at these colleges are between 573-619 on each section of the SAT or 24-26 composite on the ACT.

**Examples of schools in this category:** *Fairfield University, James Madison University, Michigan State University, Temple University, The University of Tampa, St. Michael's College, and Salve Regina University.*

## **Competitive: (3)**

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This category is very broad. Median freshman test scores at these colleges are between 500-572 on each section of the SAT or 21-23 composite on the ACT. Generally the average GPA at these schools is around a 2.7 but some take students with an average as low as a 2.0. Acceptance rates at these schools are usually between 75 and 85 percent.

**Examples of schools in this category:** *High Point University, Merrimack College, Seton Hall University, Southern New Hampshire University, Hartford University, and Westfield State University.*

## **Less Competitive: (2)**

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Included in this category are schools with median freshman test scores below 500 on each section of the SAT or 21 composite on the ACT. Students with a GPA below a 2.0 can sometimes earn admission at a school in this category. Acceptance rates at these schools are usually at least 85 percent.

**Examples of schools in this category:** *Curry College, Mount Ida College, Albertus Magnus College, Plymouth State University, and Palm Beach Atlantic University.*

## **Noncompetitive: (1)**

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This category includes schools with an open admissions policy and might only require successful completion of high school or a GED. At times, schools in the category have limitations of space and limit enrollment when they have reached capacity. Others may require entrance exams to determine class placement.

**Examples of schools in this category:** *Weber State University, Cambridge College, and West Virginia State University.*

## Barron's Ratings & Competitive Levels – 2019 edition

Rating	SAT ERW	SAT MATH	Total SAT (ACT)	GPA*	% Accepted
6	655-800	655-800	1370+ (29+)	3.5-4.0	<33%
5	620-654	620-654	1300+ (27-28)	3.2-3.4	33-50%
4	573-619	573-619	1200+ (24-26)	3.0-3.2	50-75%
3	500-572	500-572	1060+ (21-23)	2.5-2.9	75-85%
2	<500	<500	<1000 (<21)	1.9-2.4	85-98%
1	<450	<450	<900 (<17)	not reported	98-100%

*\*Please note that Tilton School does not report class rank or a cumulative GPA.*

# The Application Process

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Even with a regularly scheduled weekly meeting with your college counselor there is much you will need to do to keep organized and make your process run smoothly:

- Check your email and college admission portals.
- Look for forms you need online:



- Memorize this number: 300-580. It is the College Board (CEEB) school code for Tilton School, and you will need it every time you take a test, request scores, or fill out an application.
- Keep your parents informed. It's important to update your parents during the process so they can be helpful and supportive.
- Don't leave things to the last minute. We have deadlines too, and we want to do the best possible job for you. See us early and get forms to us as soon as possible.

## Early Action and Early Decision Plans

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Many private colleges offer students the opportunity to apply early and receive a decision early, usually just before the winter holidays. Please consult your counselor to discuss the appropriateness of this kind of option. The College Counseling Office requires that students notify us no later than October 1 of their intentions to apply early.

Generally there are two approaches:

**Early Action** refers to a non-binding early admission program. Candidates may apply in November and receive an admission, denial, or deferral in December. Students admitted under this program are not committed and may, if they wish, then file a limited number of other applications. Deferred students will be reconsidered with the regular applicant pool. At some schools (but not all), applying early action can enhance the chances of admission. Tilton School allows students to apply to three early action schools while also applying to the one early decision college. Of course, the student will withdraw all early action applications should they be admitted to the early decision college. A number of colleges ask students to apply under the early action deadline if they are seeking merit scholarships or applying to a limited enrollment program, for example nursing or physical therapy.

**Early Decision** refers to a binding early admission program. Strong candidates who have a definite first choice college may apply in November (submit in October) of senior year and receive an admission, denial, or deferral in December. Admission under an early decision program is a contract to attend that college. Once admitted, a student must withdraw all other applications. Clearly, any student applying early decision must be absolutely certain that he or she is making the right choice; applying early decision simply to avoid the anxiety of waiting until April is a big mistake. At some colleges, applying early decision will enhance the chances of admission, but only if a candidate is already very strong. Applying early will not turn a weak candidate into a strong one, and such an applicant may well receive an early denial rather than an early admission or a deferral. Students deferred will be reconsidered with the regular applicant pool; they are not under binding commitment to attend if admitted in the regular spring pool.

A number of colleges offer a second early decision option (ED Round II), usually with a January deadline, so that senior year grades can be considered. These programs are always changing. Check each college's website.

## **Notification of Disciplinary Infractions to Colleges**

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It is school policy to report to colleges and other educational programs major disciplinary measures taken against a student when infractions involve a serious breach of community standards or potentially harmful patterns of behavior. Major disciplinary measures include, but are not limited to, suspensions and expulsions occurring while the student is enrolled in grades nine through 12/PG. The school letter of recommendation will make note of disciplinary procedures that meet these criteria. Students must respond truthfully when filling out their applications and should talk with their counselor about how to address these issues with the colleges. Please refer to the Tilton School Student Handbook for more information on reporting..

## **Decision Notification**

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Institutions notify students at different time periods during the school year depending on the admission decision process that you choose to apply through.

### **Rolling Admission**

In the case of rolling admission, notification depends on when you submit your application. The turnaround time is typically much shorter the earlier you submit, because there are fewer applications to review earlier in the year. As you approach late November and early December, many of these schools are inundated with applications and may take much longer to respond.

### **Early Action and Early Decision**

In the case of Early Action, Early Decision, and Early Decision II applicants, the college or university is quite clear about their notification date. For the first round of Early Decision and Early Action, a response will usually arrive around December 15. Early Decision II candidates will usually hear in mid-February, although it varies by school.

### **Regular Decision**

Colleges and universities can start regular notification as early as February, although the most selective schools usually notify in late March or early April. The University of California schools will start sending decisions around March 1.

### **Other Notification Plans**

A few schools (Bard College is one example) have programs where they will notify students immediately upon review of their application. It is important that you know the notification policies of each of the schools you are applying to so you know when to expect a decision.

## **National Candidates' Reply Date**

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Students are required to notify the school at which they intend to enroll by May 1. Failure to do so may mean forfeiting your place at that institution. Similarly, you should notify all the schools you were admitted to but do not plan to enroll at that you have selected another institution. It is highly inappropriate to tell multiple schools that you intend to enroll and, if discovered, may also mean forfeiting your place at both institutions. It is, however, acceptable to maintain your spot on a wait list and deposit at another institution. Making your intentions clear is imperative not only to solidify your place at an institution, but to allow institutions to determine how many students they can expect that fall. If you have intentions of deferring your admission to an institution, you must determine that school's deferral plan, as every school has different policies about holding a student's place.

# High School Documents

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There are five items sent from the Registrar and the College Counseling Office for every student to every college: an official transcript, the school recommendation, a school profile, the Secondary School Report form (SSR) and a mid-year report. Information on how and when to request that these items are sent to colleges will be provided in the fall of the senior year. *Please note: standardized test scores (SAT, ACT, AP, SAT Subject Tests) are NOT sent by Tilton School.*

## **1. Transcript**

The transcript is the single most important item in the admissions folder. On it are your course grades from ninth, tenth, and 11th grades. (Your first quarter and then first semester senior year grades are sent as soon as they are available and are extremely important.) Progress reports from the first quarter of the senior year are only sent if requested by a college or university.

## **2. School Recommendation**

The official school recommendation, written by your counselor, represents the collective support of the school community. It is based on reports from teachers, coaches and extracurricular advisors, as well as questionnaires and personal contact. Our goal is to present you in the best possible light while remaining balanced, fair, and honest. You will not have access to this letter, as colleges will lend more credibility to letters to which you have waived your access.

*Waiving FERPA:* The common application form requires you to complete the FERPA Statement before you can match your common application with your SCOIR Account. Your college counselor will help you with this process during a college counseling session. Do not attempt to complete this waiver on your own.

## **3. High School Profile**

The school profile includes information about the curriculum, grading policies, school accreditation and history, standardized test scores, grade distribution by department, and college matriculation data for the past three years. This document is sent to colleges with the Secondary School Report.

## **4. Secondary School Report**

The Secondary School Report form calls for information about the student in the context of Tilton School. Specifically, colleges and universities ask about the rigor of the student's curriculum as compared to other students at Tilton.

## **5. Mid-Year Report**

In February, when first semester grades become available, we automatically send our own Mid-Year Report form with your first semester grades. You do not need to provide the individual school forms to us.

# Testing

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We will register you for the tests Tilton is offering according to your testing plan. We will meet with the whole class in a registration session. You are responsible for making sure the appropriate scores are sent to all the schools to which you are applying; requirements and other testing policies vary significantly between institutions, so please be sure to review testing policies at each school.

Standardized tests are an unavoidable part of the process. Almost all colleges require the SAT Reasoning Test or ACT, and many private selective colleges also require two SAT Subject Tests (there are a few schools that recommend three). Schools do not have a preference as to whether you take the SAT or ACT.

## **TOEFL**

Tilton is not a test center for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Students must arrange for their own transportation to an off-campus test center. Currently, Concord, NH, is the location closest to school and provides limited test dates.



# The Complete Application

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How colleges pull all these parts together and weigh them varies. For most colleges, the order of importance goes something like this:

- Your academic record—the rigor of your curriculum, the grades you’ve earned, and the pattern of grades over four years.
- SAT Reasoning, SAT Subject Test, ACT scores and TOEFL for non-native speakers of English.
- Your personal qualities and extracurricular record as revealed in your application and essay (as well as through comments in recommendations and interviews).
- Letters from the school (teachers and counselor).
- The interview.
- Extra letters.

Any one of these factors, if unusually strong or unusually weak, can become more important than it might otherwise have been. Intellectual curiosity, motivation, discipline, creativity, originality, warmth of personality, self-awareness, maturity, thoughtfulness, and concern for others are all qualities that can be factored into a committee decision. In the end, however, it is not a predictable formula that will determine your admission to a private, selective college.

## Outside Influences

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One of the most difficult and frustrating things to accept about the world of highly selective admissions is that the schools are not just looking for qualified candidates. At the most selective schools, the vast majority of applicants are “well-qualified.” Many other factors, beyond the control of the individual candidate, can come into play in an institution’s final admission decisions. Maybe over-enrollment in the previous freshman class means that a school must accept a smaller class this year. A dramatic increase in the number of applications this year means that the school must become even more selective. Each institution has enrollment goals that it tries to meet, whether it’s replacing a horn section in an orchestra, finding a goalie for the soccer team, or achieving a racially, socio-economically, and geographically diverse community.

### Legacy Status

Most private colleges also try to respond to the loyal support of their graduates by giving an edge to the children of alumni in the admissions process. Being the son or daughter of an alumnus/na will not make much difference for candidates whose numbers are well below the competitive average, but for otherwise competitive candidates, it could provide an extra nudge. Some colleges are more responsive than others to alumni children.

### Artistic Talent

Colleges are interested in special or unusual talents. If you have unusual talent in visual or performing art, you should consider submitting an art supplement. Look for special instructions in application materials; these will vary from school to school. Talk with your art, music, or theater teacher about how to create an appropriate submission. Some schools have different (and earlier) deadlines for submission of such material. Other material, such as writing or independent research projects, should be discussed with your counselor for its appropriateness for submission.

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If you are applying to major in a specific art, music, theater or film program, you may be required to submit additional materials or audition. In these cases, your portfolio or audition will likely hold more significant weight than if you were simply supplementing your application with these materials. Of course, you will still need to meet the academic standards of the particular institution to which you are applying.

### **Athletic Abilities**

The athletic factor is a tougher one. Every year students have their hopes raised by coaches only to find that in the end it wasn't enough. It all comes down to how much a college coach wants you and what kind of relationship he or she has with the admissions office. If you are high on the list they give to the admissions office and are otherwise qualified for admission, it can make a big difference. If a coach tells you that you are on the list, remember that it might be a very long list and you might not be at the top. Remember that if you have contacted college coaches, it is assumed that you are interested in pursuing your sport in college. If you are being recruited by a college coach, keep your counselor informed of how the process is progressing.

# Financial Aid

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## What is Financial Aid?

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Financial aid is help for meeting college costs, both direct educational costs (tuition, fees, and books) and personal living expenses (room and board, personal expenses, and travel). Sometimes students are surprised to discover that financial aid can help them pay for living expenses.

Broadly, there are two kinds of financial aid available: aid based on need, as determined by the College Scholarship Service, federal guidelines, or institutional policies; and no-need or merit scholarships awarded for academic excellence, athletic prowess, artistic talent, leadership, or other criteria.

## Need-Based Financial Aid

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Individual colleges determine financial aid packages based upon the information provided by you on several forms—the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the College Scholarship Service (CSS) profile, and the college’s own institutional forms. These forms will help the financial aid office determine the estimated family contribution (EFC) to the student’s educational costs. The difference between the cost of attending the college and the EFC is the need. The individual college will put together a financial aid “package” designed to meet that need. At most colleges, a package will include a combination of grant, loan, and employment.

Here are the primary kinds of aid:

**Grants** are funds that do not have to be repaid. Grants are usually awarded on the basis of need alone and can come from a variety of sources—Pell Grants (federal money), state grants (usually available only to students attending college in their home state), and grant money from the college’s own resources.

**Loans** must be repaid, generally after you have graduated or left school, and usually have lower interest rates than commercial loans. The amount of these federal student loans are capped to ensure that students are not overburdened with debt when they leave school. There are also federal loans available to parents if their child is enrolled in school at least half-time and makes satisfactory academic progress. Parents may borrow up to the difference between the cost of education and other financial aid awarded. The loan, which is not based on parents’ income, has a variable interest rate and repayment begins immediately.

**College Work-Study Programs** involve earning money as payment for a job, usually one arranged for you by the college. Students normally work up to 10 hours a week in an on-campus job selected by the student. The money comes to the student in the form of a paycheck and can be used for college expenses.

Not every college can meet full need for every student; it is increasingly common for a student to be admitted to a college but denied the full amount of financial aid needed to attend. This practice is called “gapping.” Most of the best endowed colleges guarantee to meet 100 percent of demonstrated need. However, some of these may consider financial need in making a small percentage of their admission decisions. Institutions who don’t consider need are employing what’s called a “need blind” admission policy. Because “need aware” schools only consider need in a very few decisions, it is still a good idea to apply for aid even if you are not sure you will qualify.

## How Does Financial Aid Work?

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You do have to demonstrate that you need aid. “Need” is the difference between what it costs to attend a particular college and what you and your family can afford to pay toward those costs. Your financial aid eligibility is usually equal to the amount of your demonstrated need. Since the amount you are able to pay stays the same whether the costs are high or low, you would be eligible for different amounts of aid at different colleges. In fact, you could end up paying the same amount at a high-cost college as you would at a low-cost college.

So you’ve gotten a couple of award letters and they look pretty good but it’s hard to tell which one is better. Comparing your financial aid offers can be complicated, especially if your awards vary in the type and amount of aid given. The best way to determine the best offer is to do a side-by-side comparison of your aid awards.

**Quantity:** The first thing you want to look at is the “Family Share of Costs” figure, which is the amount of money your family will be expected to contribute. Whether it comes from educational savings or private scholarships you’ve earned, this is the overall cost to attend that institution minus the amount of financial aid offered from the school and the government. You and your family are going to need to decide whether this amount is affordable enough to make attending this college a reality.

**Quality:** Another consideration is the quality of the award. The college that gives you the most aid may not have the best award. Your aid amount may be higher because the costs are higher or because the award is mostly loan-based. Review the “Percent of Award that is Gift Aid” and “Percent of Award that is Loan” figures, which explains the quality of your award. The higher the proportion of gift aid (which is free) to loan (which must be repaid), the better the award.

**Overall Costs:** Lastly, you need to consider the overall costs to attend. You may receive what seems to be a great award but in reality it barely covers the cost of an expensive college so make sure you take the total costs into account. Included in this are direct and indirect costs, which should have already been determined during the financing conversations you had with your parents.

**Explore Your Options:** After reviewing your awards, you may determine that you’re unable to afford a particular college. If that’s the case and you are really interested in attending that school, contact the aid office for help. There’s no guarantee they can increase the amount but if it makes the college unaffordable for you, it’s worth a try to see if they can improve your package.

# Student-Athletes

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## **What is the NCAA?**

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The NCAA, or National Collegiate Athletic Association, was established in 1906 and serves as the athletics governing body for more than 1,300 colleges, universities, conferences and organizations. The national office is in Indianapolis, but the member colleges and universities develop the rules and guidelines for athletic eligibility and athletic competition for each of the three NCAA divisions.

One of the differences among the three divisions is that colleges and universities in Division I and II may offer athletic scholarships, while Division III colleges and universities may not.

If you are a recruited athlete and you want to play NCAA sports at a DI or DII school, you need to register with the NCAA Eligibility Center.

**Junior Spring:** It is extremely important that prospective student athletes read the NCAA Guide for the College-Bound Athlete. Those athletes interested in pursuing Division I or Division II university sports should register with the Clearinghouse by visiting their site at [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org).

Please note that there is a fee attached and the payment is by credit card. During registration, the student should print a request for high school transcript which should be delivered to the College Counseling Office for issuing of Tilton School grades. Similar request forms should be printed for any prior high school attended and sent to that high school for release of their transcript. The Clearinghouse will not accept Tilton School's report of another high school's grades.

Due to the Clearinghouse payment by credit card, parents will need to assist their student in the registration process.

# Sources for More Information

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## Handbooks

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### **1. *The College Handbook*—College Board Publication Orders, Box 2815, Princeton, N.J. 08541**

This publication is probably the single best source of information about a wide variety of colleges and universities. Also available is a companion volume, *Index of Majors*, which indicates which colleges offer which majors. It is published annually.

### **2. *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*—Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 113 Crossways Park Drive, Woodbury, N.Y. 11797**

Contains descriptions of more than 1,400 colleges and universities. Though the information on individual schools is not as detailed as in #1 above, the volume does group colleges into seven broad categories from most competitive to least competitive. We use this rating system when grouping your college list by admission difficulty into the "A", "B" and "C" lists.

### **3. *Peterson's Guide to Four-Year Colleges*—Peterson's Guides, P.O. Box I 2123, Princeton, N.J. 08540**

This book has useful tables of basic information on colleges, a listing of colleges offering selected majors, and a good section of information about major areas of study and the diversity of programs available in each. The bulk of the volume is comprised of in-depth summaries of individual colleges and their programs. These descriptions are quite readable and in many cases give a "flavor" of the college not available from other sources.

## Computer Software

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The school subscribes to a web-based system that gives you access to a criteria-based college search feature. You can find colleges based on selected criteria including school type, location, size of student body, NCAA sports, majors, admissions difficulty, etc. Each student has a user account. College Search Functions and Scattergrams relating Tilton data to the college data are also available to parents as visitors. Go to the Tilton School College Counseling web page at [www.tiltonschool.org/collegecounseling](http://www.tiltonschool.org/collegecounseling) and use the SCOIR link.

## Results of Past Applications From Tilton Students

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This information can be helpful in determining how competitive a particular school may be for a particular student. The SCOIR program shows four years of scattergram data.

# Glossary

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A listing of definitions of terms and abbreviations commonly connected with college application. You should remember that definitions of many of these terms might vary from college to college. Consult specific college catalogs for more detailed information.

## **Advanced Placement Program (APP)**

A service of the College Board that provides high schools with course descriptions in college subjects and Advanced Placement Examinations in those subjects. High schools implement the courses and administer the examinations to interested students, who are then eligible for advanced placement, college credit, or both on the basis of satisfactory scores.

## **American College Testing Program Assessment (ACT)**

Test battery of the American College Testing Program. It includes tests in English usage, math usage, social studies reading, and natural sciences reading. The composite score referred to in some colleges' literature is the average of a student's scores on these four tests.

## **Candidates Reply Date Agreement (CRDA)**

A college subscribing to this agreement will not require applicants offered admission to notify the college of their decision to attend (or to accept an offer of financial aid) before May 1 of the year the applicant applies. The purpose of this agreement is to give applicants time to hear from all colleges to which they have applied before having to make a commitment to any one of them.

## **Common Application**

A form accepted by a number of colleges (more than 800 colleges) in place of their own application. The student is able to complete one application of basic data and a common essay. Most colleges accepting the Common Application have a supplement that must be completed as well. Some require additional essays. ([www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)). Available August 1 and should be completed by August 6.

## **Deferred Admission**

The practice of permitting students to postpone enrollment for one year after acceptance to the college.

## **Early Decision**

Early decision plans are offered to applicants who are sure of the college they want to attend and are likely to be accepted by that college. An early decision application is initiated by the student, who is then notified of the college's decision earlier than usual—generally by December 20 of the senior year. The student, if accepted, is required to enroll at the college.

## **Early Decision Plan (EDP-F, EDP-S)**

Colleges that subscribe to this plan agree to follow a common schedule for early decision applicants. Colleges may offer either of two plans. A student applying under the first-choice plan (EDP-F) must withdraw applications from all other colleges as soon as he or she is notified of acceptance by the first-choice college. A student applying under the single-choice plan (EDP-S) may not apply to any colleges other than his or her first choice unless rejected by that institution. If a college follows either type of plan, applications (including financial aid applications) must be received by a specified date (usually November 1 or 15), and the college agrees to notify the applicant by a specified date (usually December 20).

## **Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test / National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT / NMSQT)**

A shorter version of the College Board's SAT I administered by high schools in October. The PSAT/NMSQT aids high schools in the early guidance of students planning for college and serves as a qualifying test for scholarships awarded by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation.

### **Rolling Admissions**

An admissions procedure by which the college considers each student's application as soon as all the required credentials, such as the school record and test scores, have been received. Once a program is filled no more applications are reviewed. It is best to complete the application with all required documents at the opening date for applications.

### **SAT**

A program of the College Board that provides college entrance tests and services for students planning to go to college. Included are:

#### ***SAT I: Reasoning Tests***

A test of critical reading and mathematical reasoning abilities given at test centers on specified dates throughout the year. Required of substantially all applicants by many colleges and sponsors of financial aid programs.

#### ***SAT II: Subject Tests***

College Board tests in specific secondary school subjects, given at test centers on specified dates throughout the year. Required by only a small number of generally highly competitive colleges, but recommended by many more. Used by some colleges in conjunction with SAT I: Reasoning Tests as admissions criteria; used by others to help determine course placement and exemption of enrolled first-year students from some required courses.

#### ***Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)***

Established by the College Board and the Graduate Record Examinations Board, this test helps foreign students demonstrate their English-language proficiency at the advanced level required for study in colleges and universities in the United States. Many colleges require their non-native speakers to take the test as part of their admission requirements for both the undergraduate and graduate levels. A TOEFL should be taken in March and/or April of the junior year, again during the summer months and, if necessary, in October of the senior year.

## **FINANCIAL AID TERMINOLOGY**

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### **College Scholarship Service (CSS)**

A service of the College Board which assists post-secondary institutions, the federal government, state scholarship programs, and other institutions in the equitable distribution of student financial aid funds. By measuring a family's financial strength and analyzing its ability to contribute to meeting college costs, CSS need analysis services offer a standardized method of determining student need. Found at [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) under "Paying for College."

### **College Work-Study Program (CWS)**

A federally-sponsored program that provides jobs for students with demonstrated financial need. Generally students are paid at least the federal minimum wage, and the jobs are available through colleges as well as public and private nonprofit agencies.

### **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**

A financial information collection document of the College Scholarship Service used by parents of dependent students, or independent students to supply information about their income, assets, expenses, and liabilities. The CSS uses this information in estimating how much money a family is able to contribute to a student's college expenses. Can be used to apply for a Pell Grant. [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov)

### **Pell Grant Program**

A federally-sponsored and administered program that provides grants based on need to undergraduate students. Congress annually sets the dollar range. Students apply directly to the federal government; the FAFSA can be used to apply for a Pell Grant.

### **PLUS Loans**

PLUS loans are for parents who want to borrow to help pay for their children's education. Loans are made by banks and other financial institutions. There is no need analysis, and repayment begins immediately.

### **Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)**

A federal program administered by colleges that provides assistance for undergraduate students on the basis of need.



# Sample Letter: Withdrawing Application

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Sometimes circumstances develop which make it necessary for a student to withdraw his or her application even before receiving a decision from a college. Again it is polite to inform the college of this situation.

Student's Address  
City, State ZIP Code  
Date

Office of Undergraduate Admissions  
Name of College  
Address of College  
City, State ZIP Code

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Earlier this year I filed with you an application for admission to your freshman class. Since my plans for next year have changed, I would like to withdraw my application for admission at this time.

Please accept my thanks for your assistance and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Student's Name

# Sample Letter: Informing College of Decision Not to Enroll

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Some colleges allow a student who is applying for early decision also to apply to other colleges for regular admission. If the student is accepted under the early decision plan, it is necessary to withdraw the other applications. A letter similar to this one may be used for that purpose as well.

Student's Address

City, State ZIP

Code

Date

Office of Undergraduate Admissions

Name of College

Address of College

City, State ZIP Code

Dear Name of Director of Admission,

I was delighted to receive notification of my acceptance as a member of the freshman class. However, since I filed my application with you several months ago, my plans have changed, and I will not be able to accept your offer of admission. I wanted to let you know so that another applicant may be chosen in my place.

Thank you for your consideration and for the honor you paid me with your offer of admission.

Sincerely,

Student's Name



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