



THE
BEAR CREEK
SCHOOL

College Advising Handbook

2022 – 2023

Names and Numbers

The following names and numbers are frequently requested on college applications.

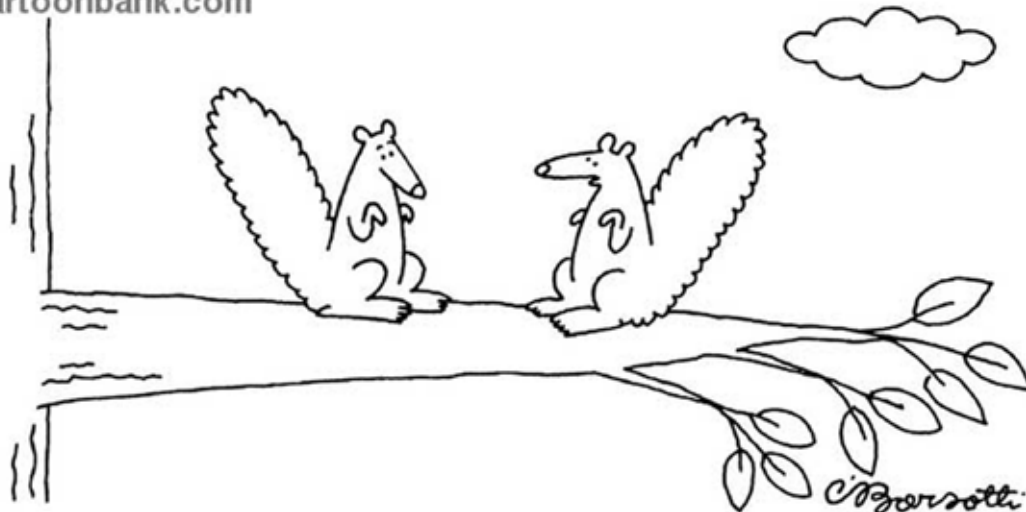
The Bear Creek School

Headmaster: Mr. Patrick Carruth
Upper School Division Head: Ms. Carol Miller
Address: 8525 208th Avenue NE, Redmond, WA 98053
Phone: 425.898.1720
Website: www.tbcs.org
Bear Creek CEEB/School Code: 481592

College Advising Office

Dean of College and Academic Advising: Mrs. Colleen Murray
Phone: 425.898.1720 ext. 533
Email: colleen.murray@tbcs.org

© Cartoonbank.com



"How will you ever know whether you're a flying squirrel if you don't give it a shot?"

2003 The New Yorker Collection from cartoonbank.com. All rights reserved.

Contents

Names and Numbers	2
Contents	3
Early College Planning	4
Calendar of Events	5
Glossary of Terms	7
Overview of the Process	9
Getting Started	11
Naviance Student	11
Some Useful Websites	12
Campus Visit and Interview Tips	13
College Visitors to Bear Creek	15
Can I Get In?	16
Applying	18
Important Things to Remember When Registering for SATs.....	19
Standardized Testing Preparation	20
About Sending Test Scores.....	21
Activities Record/Résumé	22
The Application Essay	24
Recommendations	26
Financial Aid Overview	27
Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)	29
International Students/TOEFL	30
Athletics Recruitment	31
Portfolios	31
The Role of Parents	32
Final Thoughts.....	33

Early College Planning

On the one hand, the be all and end all of a secondary school education is not college admission. The most important goal of sophomore year is to be a good sophomore; the most important concern of juniors should be to be successful as juniors. On the other hand, the early planning that can be accomplished will make a less anxiety-inducing and more productive process during the senior year.

There are many factors involved in getting into position to be a good candidate at the competitive college level, and many of these benefit from—and indeed cry out for—early planning. A strong senior academic record, for example, is built on the foundation of good course selection and academic achievement in ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades. “Late bloomer” is a term that appears often in college recommendations, but the reality at the highest levels of college competition is that there are too many “early bloomers” around to leave much room for the tardy.

Since admission to a competitive college is not simply a matter of grades but also of personal attributes, building a strong extracurricular record should begin early as well, based more on the quality of contribution to activities than on mere quantity.

And since independent colleges, as well as many publics, are getting more and more expensive, starting early to build a strong financial foundation in order to help pay for it all is also a good idea, including savings plans, keeping eyes open for various scholarship opportunities, attending a financial aid information program, etc.

Some means by which to get early information on colleges are to:

- Attend virtual presentations by any of the dozens of college representatives who visit the school or the Pacific Northwest area each year. A good early bird project might be to sit in on the presentation of a small college and one by a large university to get a sense of the differences. Or go to a regional college fair or a college night at a local high school to ask questions and pick up materials.
- Depending on the pandemic and travel restrictions, take advantage of family trips to other regions of the state or to other parts of the country to take a quick spin through a college campus or two to see what they're all about.
- Check “yes” on the PSATs to the question about giving them permission to refer your name and address to “colleges interested in students like you.” This will start anything from a trickle to a flood of often informative mail.
- Search the web which is overflowing with college information sites.

“I read Shakespeare and the Bible, and I can shoot dice. Now that’s what I call a liberal education.”

-Tallulah Bankhead

Calendar of Events

Sophomore Year

- October: Take PSAT for practice.
April: Take PreACT for practice.
May – August: Take advantage of any opportunities to begin familiarizing oneself with what's out there in terms of colleges, careers, etc.

Junior Year

- Take PSAT/NMSQT.
October: Attend selected college presentations during free periods.
Fall: Register for January SAT.
December: Register for March SAT.
February: Register for May SAT. For the latter, think carefully about which subject tests to take, especially any courses taken only in or up to junior year.
March: Write a first draft of a college application essay and have it edited by your English teacher.
Register for June SAT.
Fine-tune and polish your college application essay draft before final exams. Select teachers to write recommendations and give them the required materials so they can write their letters at the end of junior year when anecdotes of you as a student are still fresh in their minds.
Create your college résumé.
Make individual appointments with college advisor to prepare preliminary college lists.
May: Think about teachers to write recommendations.
Write/Phone/Email colleges to request information.
Visit colleges and schedule interviews where available.
January – April:

Senior Year

- Individual meetings with Dean of College and Academic Advising to refine college lists and get help with any related matters.
- Christianity & Contemporary Culture class general meetings with Dean of College and Academic Advising.
- Bi-weekly college apps drop-in sessions with Dean of College and Academic Advising.
- Attend appropriate on and off campus college representative presentations.
- Register for and take SAT, ACT, and/or TOEFL as needed.
- Acquire additional application materials.
- Fill out and give to college advisor all Secondary School Report or Transcript Request forms well in advance of deadlines.
- Complete and submit Early Decision or Early Action application by the deadline.
- Complete and submit University of Washington application no later than November.
- Complete and submit regular applications prior to the deadlines.
- Fill out and submit all financial aid forms by the deadlines.
- Select a college to attend by May 1.

“The problem with the future is that it keeps turning into the present.”

-Hobbes, *Calvin & Hobbes*

Glossary of Terms

- College:** A two- or four-year institution granting undergraduate degrees in one main area, e.g., a liberal arts or a business college; a division of a university, as in a college of agriculture or of arts and sciences, or as in the undergraduate division of a university (e.g., Harvard College of Harvard University); a generic term meaning institution of higher education.
- University:** Usually, an institution composed of several divisions (often called colleges or schools) granting degrees at several levels: B.A., M.A., Ph.D. There are institutions that don't fit these exact models, e.g., Boston College is more like a university, Denison University is more like a college.
- SAT:** The Scholastic Assessment Test, as in SAT (critical reading, math, and writing). SATs are administered by ETS (Educational Testing Service) of the College Board (CEEB).
- PSAT:** The Preliminary or Practice SATs. The entry for juniors into National Merit competition through the NMSQT (National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test).
- ACT:** Accepted by all colleges in place of the SAT.
- AP:** Advanced Placement. Describes a level of course offered as well as the tests themselves by which students receiving a score above a specified level may get credit from the college which they enter.
- TOEFL:** Test of English as a Foreign Language. The most commonly accepted test of English for students whose first language is not English.
- Early Admission:** Admission to college after three years of high school.
- Early Decision (ED):** Program under which a student commits to attend a college if accepted, in return for early notice.
- Early Action (EA):** Similar to ED except that the student is not committed to attend.
- Single Choice**
- Early Action (SCEA):** A system used by a handful of colleges wherein students are allowed to apply to only one institution EA. Normally one may apply EA to more than one place. Note: Some colleges will only accept ED/EA candidates or defer them to the regular review process. Other colleges will accept, defer, or deny. Any early commitment by the student assumes that sufficient financial aid is awarded.

- Rolling Admission:** Wherein an institution processes applications and sends decision letters as applications are received and become complete—can sometimes be “first come, first served.”
- Application Deadline:** Date by which an application must be postmarked or received, depending on policy, and after which application review begins.
- Open Admission:** Admissions policy granting acceptance to all high school graduates without regard to grades or scores.
- Qualification/ Eligibility:** Admission review process based on specific requirements in which all applicants meeting the minimums are accepted.
- Competition:** Admission review process under which qualified candidates compete for spaces, the intensity of the competition based on number of applicants and number of spaces.
- CEEB/ACT/ School Code:** An identifying number for all secondary schools, frequently requested during the college application process. For Bear Creek, the number is **481592**.
- Common Application:** A standardized application form accepted by over 800 colleges and universities around the country wherein the student fills out one application and submits a copy to each college applied to, rather than the same number of individual applications.
- FAFSA:** Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Federal financial aid form used in applying for Pell Grants, student loans, and federal college-based aid—cannot be filled out before January of the year for which one is applying.
- Profile/CSS Profile:** Financial aid form administered by College Scholarship Service of College Board and required by many, but by no means all colleges.
- NCAA Clearinghouse:** Nationwide process by which the eligibility of Division I and II athletes is determined; based on scores and GPA.

“Cauliflower: Nothing but cabbage with a college education.”

-Mark Twain

Overview of the Process

As juniors, you begin the serious phase of planning for college. This is a lengthy and sometimes tedious, but ultimately rewarding task. With careful thought, the whole process should go smoothly. From the start, **get yourself organized**. There will be many details and deadlines to keep in mind. Throughout the remainder of your junior year and during the first semester of your senior year, we will meet from time to time in groups to discuss various topics. In addition, you will have many opportunities for individual conferences.

Your “college record” really began your freshman year, even if that wasn’t at Bear Creek; for some of you it started before that. In addition to the grades that are already a part of your record, you have taken the PSAT and perhaps one or more SATs. Through your high school experience, you are developing a resume and saving examples of your work (i.e., your English essays); you have participated in athletics and extracurricular activities and had experiences in and out of school that are also important for your “record.”

Self-Evaluation

At this point, if you haven’t done so earlier, you should **begin to analyze your reasons for wanting to go to college**. Ask yourself what you expect of a college education. What do you think you would contribute to a college community? Is your chief interest intellectual? Athletic? Social? Prestige? Are you going to college simply because it is expected of you or because you see it as an important part of your life? If, up to now, you have assumed you would go to college as a matter of course, you might find it a useful exercise to formulate and jot down your own reasons. If nothing else, it will get you thinking about the subject, might help you make informed decisions later on, and it will give you a head start in case you are asked these questions in college interviews or on application essays.

Picking Colleges

Some of you may already think you know where you want to go to college, perhaps through parents or friends. This can be a good starting point. There are about 4,000 accredited colleges and universities in this country, and there are wide distinctions among them. In making an intelligent list of colleges, you should consider such factors as:

Size:	Small, medium, or large
Type:	Public, private; single-sex, coed, church-affiliated, secular
Location:	In the country, in a suburb or near a city, in a city
Geographical Region:	East Coast, Northeast, South, Midwest, Mountain West, West Coast, nowhere but Washington, anywhere but Washington
Programs:	Liberal arts, engineering, business, fine arts, etc.

You might also think about such things as whether it is a university or a college, cost factors, and the availability of financial aid, distance from home, etc.

“When you get to a fork in the road, take it”

-Yogi Berra

Where Can You Find the Answers to These and Other Related Questions?

Going online is the easiest. There are many general search sites, as well as each college's own site.

You can always buy one or two **college guides**, such as *Barron's*, *Cass and Birnbaum*, *College Handbook*, *Peterson's*, *Fiske*, etc. These will answer many of your basic questions about each college as well as giving some indication of how competitive the college is.

More specific questions can be answered by looking at the **college catalogs**, many of which are available on a college's website.

Probably the most important way to get information is by **seeing the college for yourself**. You should, therefore, plan to visit as many colleges, or at least types of colleges, as possible. The guides and viewbooks should help you draw up a list of those colleges you wish to visit. If possible, you should plan to make your preliminary visits over the summer. Where appropriate and possible, you should also **schedule interviews with these visits**. A very small number of colleges will conduct interviews at The Bear Creek School, but most do not. They plan on group meetings only. There is little time during the school year for visits or interviews—therefore, you should plan to take care of this over the summer. While it is possible to visit colleges over spring vacation, most highly competitive colleges will not be able to grant individual interviews to juniors at that time. In drawing up a list of colleges to visit, make sure that you **include a range of choices** and not all the same type or level of competitiveness.

For interview appointments, be sure to call well in advance, as much as four weeks prior during busy summer months. Before you show up for your interview, **do your homework**. Make sure that you are informed about the college (such as by reading the viewbook if you have one). Be prepared to answer and to ask questions. Avoid trite questions, which are easily looked up. While answering your questions, an interviewer will also try to get a sense of what you are all about. At some colleges, an interview is not used to evaluate a candidate; others do consider it when reading the folder, but rarely is it a huge factor unless you do or say something grotesque. You will find that no two interviews are alike. Even in the same office, they can vary greatly. You may interview with a staff member, someone from the faculty, or a student. All should count the same, if at all, but there is no set pattern of questions, so be flexible.

Getting Started

During the spring or summer of junior year, start communicating with colleges via email, online or by phone to ask them to send you information and to get on their mailing lists for applications. The material should be useful as you begin planning college visits and interviews. It will also help you focus your interests as you enter your senior year and make it possible for you to use your time more productively in the fall.

Naviance Student

Naviance Student is The Bear Creek School's online college advising website. Naviance Student is a valuable resource for parents and students as they navigate the college application process.

To log in, please visit www.tbcs.org/MyBC/Students (or [MyBC/Parents](http://www.tbcs.org/MyBC/Parents)).

A personal password is required to access *Naviance*. Students are granted access via single-sign-on through the [MyBC/Students](http://www.tbcs.org/MyBC/Students) page on the school website (www.tbcs.org/MyBC/Students). Parents must log in to Naviance with an email address. If you are unable to locate your credentials, please contact Mrs. Paramo, Associate Dean of Academic Advising, at aparamo@tbcs.org.

"...the greatest thing since they reinvented unsliced bread."

-William Keegan

Some Useful Websites

Organizations

www.aaicu.org	American universities abroad
www.actstudent.org	ACT
www.aicad.org	Association of Independent Colleges of Art & Design
www.ajcunet.edu --	Association of Jesuit Colleges & Universities
www.athletes.com --	Athletic scholarships
www.collegeboard.org --	College Board
www.fairtest.org	List of "Standardized Test Optional" colleges
www.heic.org --	Higher Education Info Center
www.nacacnet.org	National Association for College Admission Counseling
www.commonapp.org --	Common Application
www.ncaa.org	National Collegiate Athletic Association
www.toefl.org	Test of English as a Foreign Language

College Information

cappex.com	heic.org
collegequest.com	collegeplan.org
makingitcount.com	campustours.com
embark.com	collegexpress.com
collegenet.com	xap.com
collegeview.com	collegelink.com
gocollege.com	myroad.com
kaplan.com	schoolsintheUSA.com
petersons.com	students review.com
review.com	finduru.com
collegeprowler.com	ucan-network.org

Financial Aid/Scholarships

www.ed.gov/studentaid	nelliemae.org
www.fafsa.ed.gov	salliemae.com
campusdoor.com	www.fastweb.com
teri.org	
finaid.org	scholarships101.com
collegesmart.com	edfund.com
educaid.com	waggledancer.com
fastap.org	scholarships.com
www.wiche.edu/wue	
readysetgrad.wa.gov/college/washington-state-financial-aid-programs	

California

www.ucop.edu	University of California
www.csumentor.edu --	California State Universities
www.csac.ca.gov --	California Student Aid Commission

Campus Visit and Interview Tips

A campus visit can be a very important part of college selection. You wouldn't buy an expensive car without a test drive. A campus visit should be as close to a test drive as you can make it. Depending on your time and travel resources, you should try to visit as many of your college choices as possible, or, at a minimum, at least several different types (small/large, urban/rural, etc.) so that you can get a sense of what suits you best.

During a visit you should, if possible:

- Take a tour to get a feel for the campus atmosphere. Is it compact or spread out? Is it contiguous or divided by sections of the town/city?
- Talk to students (if any are around besides the tour guide). Visit the student center. Check bulletin boards to see what's going on.
- Ask for a copy of the college newspaper or "Activities This Week" flyer.
- If classes are in session, see if you can sit in on one.
- If you are a serious athlete, ask if you can meet with a coach. The same is true for musicians and a music faculty member, biology with science, etc.
- Have a meal on campus if appropriate. What dining options are available?

Interviews

If the college offers interviews and your schedule permits, you should make an appointment for an interview when you set up your visit. **An interview is only part (usually a small part) of the evaluation process.** In most cases, a visit to the campus is more important (for your understanding of the place) than an interview. If they can't schedule one, then visit anyway, but, especially at smaller colleges, make sure that the Admission Office knows you came (they will usually have a visit card for you to fill out).

There is no typical interview. They can vary greatly even within the same staff as personal styles vary. There are interviews by staff, students, faculty, alums, and others (all of which should count equally in the admissions process). There are evaluative interviews and informative interviews, although most are both. Most interviews have a dual purpose: for the college to learn about the student and for the student to learn about the college.

Miscellaneous Tips

Make the appointment by phone or online so your interview time can be coordinated with campus tour schedules, etc. You will almost always be talking to a secretary or receptionist, so don't be afraid to ask about getting to or from other colleges, especially if you're planning to visit more than one in a day. There is nothing wrong (or new), for example, in asking Colby College to help coordinate your appointment there with one you already have at Bates. Ask for directions if you need them. Cancel if you can't make it. **Don't be a no-show.**

Get there in a timely manner so you have a chance to unwind from your trip, use the restroom, etc. When possible, call if you're going to be late.

Learn as much as possible about the college before you go so you can ask useful, intelligent questions. “How many books are in the library?” and “What percentage of the faculty have PhDs?” are **not** examples of useful, intelligent questions. These can be looked up in the catalog.

Dress comfortably but appropriately. Summer tends to be less formal than fall. Some places are stuffier than others. Wear good walking shoes for the tour.

Be prepared to answer as well as ask questions. Know your scores, latest grades, senior year courses, etc., in case they come up. Don’t exaggerate but don’t make things sound worse than they are. Be yourself.

Be flexible. You never know what an interviewer may ask. One might start out with, “Tell me about yourself.” Another might ask, “If you were a vegetable, what would you be?” Yet another might begin with, “What have you learned about this college so far?”

Listen to answers. Prepare some questions in advance if you wish, but don’t get so preoccupied with the brilliance of your next question that you lose the flexibility to react if the interviewer takes the conversation in a different direction.

Don’t enthuse about (or badmouth) other colleges you have visited. Don’t go into a verbal data dump mode. Don’t gush, but don’t be catatonic. Avoid nervous habits like hair twisting, leg bouncing, and so on. Smile. Look your interviewer in the eyes. Demonstrate confidence and approachability.

Don’t feel the need to reveal your innermost college secrets. Dartmouth doesn’t need to know that you’re thinking about applying ED to Brown; Pomona won’t be thrilled to learn that Stanford is your life’s dream.

Show interest even if it’s a practice interview. Signs of indifference or boredom will be noted in the interview report.

Don’t use the interview as an occasion to complain about teachers you don’t like, courses you hated, this school, other schools, other students or (heaven forbid) your college advisor. It’s impolite and unbecoming.

Remember that, in almost all cases, one purpose of an interview is to leave you with a nice warm glow about the college. **It is important not to confuse a good interview with an actual offer of admission.**

Sending a follow-up thank you note to the interviewer is not necessary but is a tremendously thoughtful touch, and one of which interviewers take note.

College Visitors to Bear Creek

Each year, representatives from many colleges and universities visit Bear Creek, primarily in the fall. In most cases, they are here to give a presentation and answer questions for any interested students. Most do not have time to do interviews, since they are usually visiting five or more schools each day.

Students who are free that period are welcome to go to the virtual session. If a college that is high on your list visits, it would be a good idea for you to go, since you will have the opportunity to meet the representative, who will frequently end up being the first reader of your application. If you can't make it, then let the college advisor know so she can put in a good word for you, as in "S/He really wanted to come, but s/he had a biology test."

Some colleges that have visited Bear Creek in recent years:

University of Portland, Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising (LA), Hillsdale College, Northwest College of Art & Design, Dartmouth College, Duquesne University, Emerson College, Wheaton College (MA), Durham University, Linfield College, Calvin University, Santa Clara University, University of Chicago, Northeastern University, Southern Oregon University, Oregon State University, University of Rochester, Hawaii Pacific University, Whitworth University, Western Washington University, Seattle Pacific University, University of Notre Dame, Colorado Christian University, Washington University in St. Louis, Washington State University, University of Southern California, Oberlin College, Southern Methodist University, Southwestern University, Kenyon College, University of Aberdeen, The Evergreen State College, California Lutheran University, Union College, DePauw University, Seton Hall University, Seattle University, Northwestern University, Rice University, Willamette University, Pepperdine University, Whitman College, Occidental College, Biola University, Northwest University, Mills College, Oregon Institute of Technology, Bentley University, Colgate University, Allegheny College, High Point University, Syracuse University, Vanderbilt University, Savannah College of Art and Design, George Fox University, Johns Hopkins University, Davidson College, New York University, Baylor University, Hofstra University, Merrimack College, Arizona State University, Cornish College of the Arts, Gonzaga University, Chapman University, Dickinson College, Loyola Marymount University, Miami University – Oxford, Purdue University, Kalamazoo College, Boston University, Claremont McKenna College, University of California – Irvine, Wentworth Institute of Technology, Sacred Heart University, Les Roches Global Hospitality Management, Reed College, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, University of La Verne, Illinois Institute of Technology, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, University of Colorado Boulder, University of Puget Sound, Michigan State University, University of California – Santa Barbara, IE University – Segovia, Whittier College, Salve Regina University, St. Olaf College, Carroll College, Ringling College of Art and Design, The University of Arizona, University of New Mexico, University of Redlands, Landmark College, University of Washington.

"I can answer you in two words: im-possible."

-Samuel Goldwyn

Can I Get In?

Now, the all-important question of admission: Can I get in? This is a hard one to answer. At the most popular colleges, applications outnumber places 9 or 10 to 1. Hence, as a practical necessity you must **think not only of where you would like to go to college, but also of where you are likely to get in.**

What counts most in admissions? Rarely is it simply a matter of grades; consideration is given to many other factors, although colleges differ widely in how much weight they attach to each. Academically, colleges want to be certain that candidates, on the basis of past achievement and native ability, will be able to be successful (to “thrive”) at their particular college. But over and above this, they are looking for dynamic personalities, people with initiative and leadership, people who are involved in their school and/or community, people who will “add something” to a student body.

Among the chief factors that seem most critical to admission officers are:

Academic Achievement for the Four High School Years

(If you do not at least come close on this one for a given college, you are unlikely to pull much weight with the others.) Academic achievement includes courses taken and grades received. Colleges look not only at your GPA and class standing but also at your academic program. Have you taken advantage of opportunities for advanced courses? Have you demonstrated “stretch” by going beyond minimum course requirements? In what direction do your grades seem to be headed? Did you get off to a slow start but have been getting better each year? Or did you save your sophomore slump for your junior or senior year (a bad idea)?

Standardized Tests

Most colleges have moved to Test Optional, Test Flexible, or Test Blind and may no longer require the SAT or ACT. Few require SAT Subject Tests; some require subject tests for acceptance to a certain major. If you take a test more than once, colleges will usually take your highest individual scores or your highest combined from one test. The impact of scores on the admission decision varies by college.

Recommendations

These come from individual teachers and from the college advisor. In both cases, the colleges are interested in how those who know you regard you as a student and as a person. Teacher recommendations in particular can play an important role in the admission process.

Extracurricular Activities

Here the emphasis is upon quality over quantity, upon genuine contributions to an activity. A top leader, athlete or artist should make out very well if she is academically competitive. Too much is sometimes made of being “well-rounded.” As a general rule, colleges are looking for a “well-rounded” freshman class, but everyone in that class is not expected to be a microcosm of the whole; it is better to be a real contributor in a couple of areas than unremarkable in many.

Miscellaneous Factors

At most colleges, children of alums are given special consideration. Nationality, ethnicity, geography, first generation college family, etc., can also be factored into an admissions decision.

Personal Interview

Not always offered. This varies in importance.

The Application

How seriously did you take the application itself, including the essay(s)?

Your Professional Background and Aptitude

If you are applying to a career program such as business, education, architecture, nursing, communications, physical therapy, etc., the college will want to know how well-suited for and serious about the field you are.

At this point in your planning, it is difficult to predict precisely specific colleges to which you could definitely gain admission. You can, however, begin drawing up a list that contains a range of colleges suitable for you.

There are two primary means by which colleges determine admissibility: **qualification** and **competition**.

With “qualification” it is easier to determine your chances, since specific minimum requirements are listed, and you can see for yourself if you meet them or are within striking distance, in case you are counting on a “late bloomer” senior surge.

With “competition” it is much harder to guess, since your chances depend on many unknowns, not the least of which is how many others will be applying to that college at the same time you are and how they compare to you. But you can make some educated guesses based on recent experience. You want to find colleges that match your qualifications, and which vary in competitiveness.

There are three basic groupings.

1. Reach college: perhaps a long shot. A college for which you may be shooting high.
2. Target: a college at which you are very much in the running with a 50-50 chance or better of gaining admission.
3. Likely: a college where your chances of admission are excellent.

It is crucial that **as much attention be given to the colleges in the reasonable and safe categories as to the top choices**. And this attention should come from the beginning in your planning. The longer you put it off, the greater a problem it will become. When you are making plans for college visits, make sure that you have included institutions in each of the above categories.

Applying

Seniors have advising meetings throughout the fall to go over specific procedures for filling out applications, essays, teacher recommendations, secondary school report forms, etc.

Except for Early Decision or Early Action candidates, most applications are not due until January or February. (UW applications must be submitted in November.) Early Decision plans, offered by many colleges, are for students who are sure of their first-choice college and who agree to accept an offer of admission (financial aid permitting). Early Action works much the same way, except that there is usually no commitment to attend. ED/EA applications are normally due around November 1 or 15, though there are some that are due later. As a general rule, students who feel that their records will improve substantially senior year should not apply early. There are also many institutions which use a rolling admission (or “first come, first served”) procedure.

The **Common Application** can make applying to a number of colleges easier in that you fill out one form, write one essay, and then send each institution a copy. It is **accepted by many but not all** colleges and universities around the country. Admission offices sign a pledge to treat the Common Application equally with their own and not to make any assumptions about your level of interest in the college. To protect yourself, however, you should make sure that the Common Application is not your only contact with a college. (A “contact” is any time a college hears from you – contacting them online, emailing, writing, calling, visiting, etc.)

A couple of tips:

- **Make copies or take screenshots of everything.** Accidents happen and things can get lost in transit.
- **Be aware of approaching deadlines.** Don't wait until the last minute on anything. Plot out the entire process for yourself on a master College Apps calendar.
- **See the College Advisor** for an application or test fee waiver if you receive tuition assistance at Bear Creek.

Important Things to Remember When Registering for SATs

When you register online, the address is www.collegeboard.org.

Be sure that you give your name, address, social security number (if you use it), birth date, etc., in exactly the same manner when you register for each test so that the ETS computer knows you're the same person.

It is important to include The Bear Creek School code – **481592** – otherwise the school will not receive your scores.

Juniors do not need to worry about sending score reports to colleges. You get to send them to four colleges for free, so use them if you wish, but don't spend money now to send them to others. Seniors need to start sending them. Use your four freebies each time you take a test in the fall, but don't spend money to send additional scores until your last test date or December, whichever comes first. All of the scores from past tests will go with the final report.

You will need to have a picture identification card – Bear Creek ID or driver's license or passport.

Please be sure to register by the deadlines otherwise you will have to pay a penalty fee. Early registration will also ensure a better chance of getting your first-choice test center.

Registration for non-standard testing is coordinated through the Academic Advising Office and must be completed well prior to the deadline date.

Once you have your admission ticket, check it immediately. Make sure that all the information is accurate and that you've been assigned to the correct test center. If you have any problems with registration or admission tickets, please see me. We can usually resolve them quickly.

For the ACT, the online registration address is www.actstudent.org.

Taking some or all of the tests junior year gives you a second shot at any or all of them senior year. You will know which ones you like and which you don't, and you can plan accordingly. If you take the same test more than once, the higher score wins.

Students who have a documented learning disability should check with the SSD Coordinator in the Upper School office well before the deadline to ascertain the proper procedures for registering for a non-standard test administration.

Standardized Testing Preparation

The question of whether or not to use an “SAT Prep” or “ACT Prep” service is a personal one, and the College Advising Office endorses no particular organizations or individuals, nor the concept itself. Since many students inquire about it, however, here for your convenience is a list of phone numbers or websites of a few of the individuals and organizations that have sent material and/or that some of our students have used in the past:

Compass Education,	800.685.6986,	www.compassprep.com
Khan Academy,		www.collegeboard.com
Princeton Review,	800.2REVIEW,	www.princetonreview.com
Revolution Prep,	877.REVPREP,	www.revolutionprep.com
Stanley Kaplan,	800.KAPTEST,	www.kaptest.com
Prep Northwest,	425.825-0702,	www.prepnorthwest.com

And one free website worth checking out: www.number2.com.

Some of these have held and/or will hold “classes,” “sessions,” or individual counseling at local schools or colleges. Calling one or more of the numbers or checking the websites listed above should provide you with the necessary information regarding schedules, costs, and availability. Many other such test prep services may be found online.

EduPath is a new application for the iPad and iPhone, and the cost is relatively low.

College Board and ACT offer test prep for free up to a point and for cost beyond that point on their websites. Khan Academy is available via the College Board for free SAT preparation.

More and more colleges are deciding to become “test optional” and a list of those colleges appears on their Fair Test website (fairtest.org). Often the student must send other information in the place of testing.

About Sending Test Scores

It is the student's responsibility to send his or her official test scores to each of the colleges to which he or she is applying. Students do *not* need to send official AP scores as part of the application process.

Sending SAT Test Scores

- Log in to your student account at www.collegeboard.org.
- When you register for the SAT, you may elect to send your scores to up to four colleges at no additional cost.
- To send scores to additional colleges after you have completed testing, select "Send Available Scores Now." This will send a report of *all* SAT scores.
- We do not recommend using SAT Score Choice option.
- California: UC schools will share scores. You only need to send your scores one UC school. If you are applying to one or more CSU school, send your score report to CSUMentor (3594).

Sending ACT Scores

- Log in to your student account at www.actstudent.org.
- When you register for the ACT, you may elect to send your scores to up to four colleges at no additional cost.
- To send scores to additional colleges after you have completed testing, select "Send Your Scores" under the test date you wish to report. Unlike the SAT, the ACT score report contains only one test date. Additional test dates may be selected.
- California: If you are applying to one or more CSU school, arrange to have your scores sent to one CSU school, then use ACT Scores Manager to release your scores to additional CSU schools.

Activities Record/Résumé

As previously mentioned, competitive colleges and universities look well beyond the academic record in making admissions decisions. Having good grades and scores gets you up the front steps; what helps swing the door open is everything else about you that makes you distinctive. Again, whether your strengths lie in athletics, the arts, leadership, community activism, publications or whatever else, what counts is quality over quantity—the depth and importance of your contributions, not how many organizations you belong to. Competitive colleges are looking less for well-rounded students than they are for well-rounded classes made up of a mix of significant contributors.

Most college application forms provide space for you to list your activities. A handful will, in the instructions, ask you to list these activities on the form and not attach separate sheets of paper. Other than for these few, many students find it easier to prepare an activities sheet or résumé, which can be fine-tuned, and to write “see attached” in the spaces on the form.

The exact format you choose (if any) is up to you. The key elements that most colleges look for are the following:

- The activity, in terms they can understand. If there is any question about a term, provide a description.
- The years/grade levels (10, 11 – 12, etc.) when you participated in the activity.
- For many colleges, "The order of their importance to you."
- Positions or offices you have held, such as "captain" or "Assistant Features Editor."
- Awards you have won; specify what they are for (if there is a question).

*"If you wish in the world to advance,
your merits you're bound to enhance.
You must stir it, and stomp it and blow
your own trumpet, or trust me you
haven't a chance."*

-W. S. Gilbert, Ruddigore

"I yam what I yam."

-Popeye

Joe E. Student

home address, city, WA zip code student email phone number

The Bear Creek School, Redmond, Washington, Class of 20xx

GPA (Unweighted): 3.89/4.00 (as of July 20xx) No class rankings

SAT, AP and College Courses Taken:

- SAT: score/1600 (super score) March 20xx (EBRW score Math score) August 20xx (EBRW score Math score)
- SAT Subjects: Math II score/800 Biology score
- AP Scores:
scores: Calculus AB, Calculus BC, English Language & Composition
scores: Biology, U.S. History, Microeconomics
score: European History
- University of Washington Latin 103 (accredited through high school Latin IV)

AP & College level classes planned for 12th grade:

- AP Statistics, AP Literature & Composition, AP Macroeconomics (Independent Study), Multivariable Calculus

Honors, Awards, Athletics, and Music

National: Top 5% nationally 20xx American Mathematics Competition (AMC) 12

Top 2.5% nationally 20xx AMC Competition 10,

Qualified for American Invitational Mathematics Exam 20xx, 20xx

National Honor Society, since 20xx

Washington State:

- 1st Place 11/12 Grade Team member (1 of 4), 20xx WA Math is Cool Masters /championship competition, Elite Division
- 2nd place 9/10 Grade Team member (1 of 4), 20xx WA Math is Cool Master /championship competition, Elite Division

Varsity Baseball Overlake/Bear Creek Growls: 9th (State playoffs only), 10th, 11th, (12th planned); 20xx season Starting player (batter, center field, relief pitcher), .361 batting average and .500 OBP (both 3rd among team starters), 1.05 ERA (5 appearances)

Music: First Class Honors with Distinction, Royal Conservatory Music Development Program Performance Piano Level 8

School Leadership and Community Building:

- House Head, Meitner House (11th & 12th): plan, organize and lead ice breaker activities and various team and community building events for 60+students across 4 upper school grades throughout school year.
- Men's Ensemble Leader and Lead Singer (student driven acapella group, member since 9th grade): recruit members, choose songs, arrange music and harmony, assign roles, facilitate practices and performances with School Music Department
- Math Team Student Co-organizer and College Bowl Anchor (10+ years in school team since 3rd grade): recruit members, host, and co-lead weekly off-campus practices
- School Spirit Promoter / National Anthem Soloist / Student Spirit Club Co-leader (9th – 12th): create energy and lead cheers for school basketball and volleyball games
- Performing Arts, Cast Member and Prominent Roles (10th, 11th): *Beauty and the Beast* (musical), role of _____ (physical comedy and solo/small group singing performances); Choir and Mixed Ensemble (member and soloist since 9th grade)

Work, Volunteering, Educational Enrichments, and Other Activities:

- Independent math tutor, 20xx-present. Coaching 6-8 students from 3rd grade to calculus, including students with learning disabilities
- Junior Associate, YMCA, Summer 20xx.
- Mission trips (20xx Mexico, 20xx Dominican Republic); Vacation Bible School Counselor 20xx, Timberlake Church (Duvall, WA).
- Washington Business Week, summer 20xx. Team "company" CFO and investor pitch presenter.
- Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth Summer Program, Numbers Theory program. Summer 20xx
- Select Baseball FM Baseball Club 20xx-20xx (10 month each year)
- School Debate Team, High School Congressional Debate Tournaments participant 20xx – 20xx
- Young Life Camp, British Columbia, Canada summer 20xx

The Application Essay

Here are a few tips on handling application essays. There are no absolute answers, no “right” essay for every college, and no magic formula for pleasing every admission officer. Many fall under the heading of common sense, but reiteration never hurts.

Be positive about yourself. Make your essay positive and forward-looking. Do not use it to describe all the bad things that have happened to you. You are trying, however subtly, to sell yourself to a college on the basis of your achievements and future promise. You want them to like and admire you more than feel sorry for you. Go with your strengths, not your weaknesses. This is not the time for “I am the sad, forlorn product of an unhappy childhood” or “My grades would be better if all my teachers weren’t so unfair to me.” Applications usually provide space for “factors which have impacted your record,” if you wish to use it, but it should not be your main essay topic.

Be mindful of the image you create. What you write forms an image of you in the reader’s mind. For example, if you choose as your topic the anguish you felt going away to school and how scared and uncertain you were and how you called home every night and burst into tears at the drop of a hat, you’ve created an image. Or “the most significant experience” you have ever had was totaling your car after being dared by friends to drive down the highway with your eyes closed. Or you would contend that “the primary issue facing your generation as it enters the millennium” is in any way centered on the angst of young love. There must be contexts more beneficial than these in which to have your candidacy for college evaluated.

Get off to a good start. Grab their interest right away with a good opening line. Leading off with “I was not an easy baby, colicky and wakeful” or “Let me tell you about my horse” are good examples of what **not** to do.

Be interesting. Admission people read thousands of essays, year after year, so utter originality is hard to achieve, but try to make what you say interesting. If you are writing about your unforgettable grandfather, for example, it will inevitably be one of many grandfather essays, but do your best to make him come across as more unforgettable (and better written about) than the others.

Follow instructions. If it says, “Confine your essay to the space below,” don’t write a four-pager. It will impress them less with your ability to write than with your inability to read. If there is a specific essay topic given, try to some extent to follow along, although you may certainly tailor an essay you write for one college to fit the topic of another. You do not need to start from scratch each time.

Be positive toward the college. Even if the college is your safety school, put the same care and effort into their essay and application as you do with your first choice. Colleges are sensitive about being taken for granted, which is how it may appear if your essay reads like an afterthought and the application is a mess.

Use humor with care. Humor in an application essay is a wonderful but risky tool. Unlike with face-to-face humor, you cannot make a quick adjustment if your attempt is falling flat or offending. You are stuck with it.

Remember your audience. Do not be afraid to take a stand, but keep in mind that being highly opinionated about a controversial topic might make the issue, not you, the focus. Show that you can and do think but are not close-minded.

Be honest. Unless your essay is an obvious effort at creative writing, do not say or imply what you are not or what is not backed up by the facts. A deeply moving essay about your desire to serve humanity, for example, will have a hollow, insincere ring if you have given minimal time to any volunteer effort. Also, do your own work. Getting help and advice from a teacher or college advisor is great, but the essay is supposed to reflect you, not someone else. Admission people read essays in context: a super essay backed up by A's in English class, a rave rec from the English teacher, a strong writing score, and lots of work for school publications will have a greater impact than the same essay with a less obvious frame of reference.

Be careful. How you write, along with what you write, is important. Poor grammar, mechanics or phraseology make a bad impression that can undermine the impact of your message. There is no such thing as a typo; a typo is an uncorrected mistake, so proofread your application carefully. If you use a word processor to make your essays college-specific, don't forget to change the names everywhere they appear, or else you might end up telling Pomona how badly you want to go to Stanford. Watch spelling—misspelling the names of colleges or academic majors will not impress them. Remember that spell-check only tells you that a word is spelled *right*, not that you have used the *write* word to express your thoughts in this *rite* of passage.

Supplementary writings. A piece you have written for any purpose can be a nice addition to an application with two basic caveats: 1) The shorter it is, the more likely it will be read and 2) have someone whose opinion you respect tell you if it is good on a real-world scale, as well as being dear to your own heart.

Take advantage of this exercise. It is normal to look upon these essays as a pain, and to a certain extent they are. But selling yourself is something that, in one way or another, you will have to do the rest of your life, and this is as good an opportunity as any to practice. Your admission file will be full of what others say about you. The essay is one way to add your own voice to the chorus.

Recommendations

Unless you are applying exclusively to UW, UCs, Cal State, or a few other large state universities which don't want them, recommendations are an integral part of the competitive college application process. The most common forms of recommendation are 1) teacher, 2) advisor, and 3) additional.

One or two **teacher recommendations** are required by most colleges. The instructions with each application will specify what they want: only junior or senior year teachers, only "major subject" teachers, whatever. You should put some thought into your choice of recommender(s). The one who gave you the highest grade may not be the best choice. Another may know you better or be more enthusiastic about you. Also, if you have a specific college major in mind, getting an appropriate teacher might be a good idea, e.g., Biology or Chemistry for "pre-med," math for "computer science," etc.

You should do everything you can to **make it as easy as possible** for them to write your recommendation, since most teachers have many to do. By April of junior year, you should, of course, have already "asked" the teacher if he or she would be willing to write a rec for you and received a positive reply. If possible, use the same teachers for all your recs. Exceptions might include having a teacher who is a graduate of one of your colleges write to that college or having a senior teacher write if you applied somewhere Early Decision with junior teacher recs, got deferred and now want something more current. If you change your mind about applying to a college for which you have requested a rec (or if you were accepted to one Early Action or Early Decision and are going), be sure to notify everybody (our Dean of College and Academic Advising and your recommendation letter writers).

The **college advisor recommendation** is essentially a "summary appraisal," weaving together personal knowledge of each student, teacher comments, and key information gleaned from your questionnaire and résumé. Most colleges expect an advisor rec of some sort, especially from a school such as The Bear Creek School.

Additional recommendations are rarely required but might be of value. Some colleges ask for a "peer" recommendation. Others include recs from employers, graduates of particular colleges, parents, persons of consequence, whatever. Their value to your candidacy depends primarily on how well the person writing knows you: the "I've never met her, but her father is a great guy to do business with" genre of letter is of little use. How many, if any, extra letters you solicit is up to you, but if you get more than one, they shouldn't extol all the same virtues—one good letter noting your "conscientiousness and responsibility" is as useful as six.

Financial Aid Overview

Applying for financial aid is optional. There are two basic forms/online applications used for applying for financial aid. The first is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

The second is the College Scholarship Service (CSS) Profile, which is not required by all colleges. This is usually available in September and is filed only for colleges that require it and by the appropriate deadline, normally in November for ED/EA, January or February for regular decision.

There are two basic systems under which financial aid is awarded: **need** and **merit** (or a mix of the two).

- **Need-Based Aid** means it is derived from the amount you "need," a figure that the FAFSA, CSS Profile, and the college's own financial aid office come up with in a process called "need analysis." This is based on family income, assets, how many children in college at the same time, and other variables. At colleges which meet "full need," that's what you get.
- **Merit-Based Aid** goes beyond simple "need" and gives you scholarships (ranging from a token amount to a "full-ride") just for being wonderful. Exactly how wonderful you have to be to get a merit award depends on the college and where you stand in their applicant pool.

Applying for financial aid at a time of rising college costs and shrinking college and government resources means that you have to take this into consideration when you select the colleges to which you plan to apply. It is not enough merely to be admissible; you also must be competitive for financial aid.

There are many sources of information on financial aid, scholarships related to individual colleges, outside scholarships (local and national), etc. Generally, these sources are free (for example via the internet) or of minimal cost, such as a resource book.

Be very wary of any individuals, agencies, or "services" which ask you to pay a lot of money up front on the promise of finding financial aid for you. Make sure the expense is really worth it.

"A bank is a place that will lend you money if you can prove that you don't need it."

-Bob Hope

What is the FAFSA?

Why fill out a FAFSA?

The FAFSA (the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid*) is the first step in the financial aid process. You use it to apply for federal student financial aid, such as grants, loans and work-study. In addition, most states and schools use information from the FAFSA to award non-federal aid.

Why all the questions?

We enter your responses to the FAFSA questions into a formula from the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. The result is your Expected Family Contribution, or EFC. The EFC measures your family's financial strength. It is used to determine your eligibility for federal student aid.

Your state, and the schools you list, may also use some of your responses. They will determine if you may be eligible for school or state aid, in addition to federal aid.

How do I find out what my EFC is?

We will send you a report called a *Student Aid Report*, or SAR, through the mail or the Internet. The SAR lists the information you reported on your FAFSA, and will tell you your EFC.

It is important to review your SAR when you receive it. Make sure all of your information is correct. Make any necessary changes or provide additional information.

How much aid do I get?

Your EFC, along with the rest of your FAFSA information, is made available to all the schools you list in Step Six of the FAFSA. The schools use your EFC to prepare a financial aid package to help you meet your financial need. Financial need is the difference between your EFC and your school's cost of attendance (which can include living expenses), as determined by the school.

If you or your family have special circumstances that should be taken into account, contact your school's financial aid office. Some examples of special circumstances are: unusual medical or dental expenses, or a large change in income from last year to this year.

When do I get the aid?

Any financial aid you are eligible to receive will be paid to you through your school. Typically, your school will first use the aid to pay tuition, fees, and room and board (if provided by the school). Any remaining aid is paid to you for your other expenses.

If you are eligible for a Federal Pell Grant, you may receive it for only one school for the same period of enrollment.

Where can I get more information on student aid?

The best place for information about student financial aid is the financial aid office at the school you plan to attend. The financial aid administrator can tell you about student aid available from your state, the school itself and other sources.

You can also check out these resources:

- www.studentaid.ed.gov
- www.students.gov
- The Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243). TTY users may call 1-800-730-8913.
- Your high school counselor's office
- Your local library's reference section

There may be information available from foundations, religious organizations, community organizations and civic groups, as well as organizations related to your field of interest, such as the American Medical Association or American Bar Association. Check with your parents' employers or unions to see if they award scholarships or have tuition payment plans.



Warning!

Be wary of organizations that charge a fee to submit your application, or to find you money for school. Some are legitimate and some are scams. Generally, any help you pay for you can get for free from your school or the U.S. Department of Education.



FAFSA
FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID
We Help Put America Through School

Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)

What is the WUE?

WUE is the Western Undergraduate Exchange, a program coordinated by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). Through WUE, students in Western states may enroll in participating two-year and four-year public college programs at a reduced tuition level: up to 150 percent of the institution's regular resident tuition. In all cases, WUE tuition is considerably less than nonresident tuition. For answers to many of the commonly asked questions about WUE, visit wiche.edu/askwiche.

Which States and U.S. Territories Participate?

Resident students from the following states and U.S. Territories may participate, if they meet eligibility requirements: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, Guam, and Northern Mariana Islands

Eligibility

Many institutions require evidence of academic performance, such as ACT/SAT test scores or high school GPA or place other conditions on WUE enrollment. Consult the WUE website for details.

Programs Available

Virtually all undergraduate fields are available to WUE students at one or more of the participating colleges and universities. Some institutions have opened their entire curriculum on a space-available or first-come, first-served basis. Others offer only designated programs at the discounted WUE rate. To learn about the wide array of programs available, consult the WUE Savings Finder at wuesavingsfinder.wiche.edu.

For additional details, follow the links to the enrolling institutions' websites.

Application and Admission

Apply directly to the institution(s) of your choice for admission and WUE tuition status. Mark prominently on the institution's application form that you seek admission as a WUE student. More Information about specific programs offered through WUE can be obtained from the admissions office of participating institutions. Information about student eligibility and the operation of the program in any state may be obtained from the state contact offices.

International Students/TOEFL

Procedures for international applicants are to a large degree the same as for U.S. citizens and residents. There are some additional twists, however.

When you contact colleges for information you should always state up front that you are an international student so that any special requirements or forms can be sent to you. Conversely, **if you are a U.S. citizen or resident who lives abroad**, you should state your citizenship or residency status very clearly in your communication, so you get the right forms.

The biggest challenge regards the availability of financial aid. **Financial aid is extremely limited and hard to get.** Many require a “statement of financial resources” before they will accept or enroll you or, in some cases, even mail you an admissions application form. There are also visa forms that they will send you once you have been accepted and have decided to enroll.

Most colleges require the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) if English is not your native tongue. It is internet-based and offered only on certain dates during the school year. If you can arrange to take it at home over the summer, I recommend that you do it. To schedule a test session, you need to make an appointment well in advance and then stick to it, since they won't refund the large test fee.

If you wait until the fall of your senior year to take the TOEFL, unless for some reason you prefer to handle everything yourself including transportation, you should do it through me. I'll coordinate with other students wanting to take the TOEFL around the same time period and make all the arrangements on your behalf. I have information on the test and sample discs with which you can practice.

With the TOEFL, remember that the school does not receive an official copy of the score. **You need to give a copy of your TOEFL score report to the college advisor and to the Upper School Office** so it can be included on your test data sheet. If you get a higher score later, we will replace the lower one.

If you are applying to a university in your home country, make sure that you (and we) know the requirements and calendar of events so we can help you meet any deadlines and provide the proper documents and recommendations.

Athletics Recruitment

Athletic ability, like prowess in the arts or any other extracurricular area, can be a big boost to your chances of being admitted to a competitive college. Every college or university has its own procedures, but in general the following applies:

- **If you are applying to a Division III institution**, athletics scholarships will not be involved. Financial aid is based on need or other “merit,” but not specifically athletics. In most cases, applicants will have to take the initiative in contacting college coaches, due to more restrictive recruitment rules. Writing to a coach late in junior or early in senior year, introducing yourself and asking for information is a good start. If you know the name, write “Dear Coach Smith.” If you don’t, then a letter addressed to “Field Hockey Coach” with the salutation “Dear Coach” works fine (assuming you want field hockey, of course).
- **With Division I and II**, it’s a bit more formalized. If you are a real blue-chip athlete, colleges will probably find you, although a pro-active role on your part, as with Division III, is essential. But with Division I and II, there is one additional element, the **NCAA Eligibility Center**, a central office which validates GPA and standardized test score reports for all athletes to determine their eligibility. You must fill out forms, which you can get from the Upper School Office, and send them in.

Portfolios

Sometimes sending extra “show and tell” materials with your application can be of great benefit, provided it is of quality and is relevant. Follow the instructions (if any) with each application to see how they want such materials handled. Be sure to put your name and social security number on whatever you send in case it gets separated from your application (or if you mail it separately). And, as a rule, if you want it back eventually, you’ll need to enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

If you are applying to a specialty institution (such as Rhode Island School of Design, Lawrence University Conservatory of Music, Tisch School of the Arts at NYU, etc.), a portfolio or audition will be a required element of the process. But even if you are applying to a liberal arts college as a pre-med, having talent of any kind beyond the classroom is a good thing. Just because you send slides of some of your artwork or a recording of you singing your favorite Mozart aria doesn’t mean you’re necessarily going to be an arts major. So, let them see your talent, but first make sure from someone you trust that it’s good.

The Common Application has chosen Slide Room as their exclusive partner to handle arts supplements. This means that colleges hosting an undergraduate admissions process, which require a creative portfolio, can use SlideRoom and the Common Application together. This works perfectly for schools of music, art, architecture, theatre, film, and even non-art schools.

The Role of Parents

Educate yourself. Do not hesitate to ask questions of colleges (admissions, financial aid, coaches, whoever) and expect answers. You want to be sure that your information is up to date. Knowledge is power. Remember to take much of what you read and hear from colleges with a grain of salt.

Be supportive. Be interested. Take an active (but not smothering) role in the process. Be a good sounding board.

Avoid applying too much pressure on your son or daughter. A general rule is that for every parental push there is an equal and opposite reaction from the student.

Establish any broad limitations early in the process (e.g., no college east of the Mississippi, the Rockies, the Washington border; no college that costs more than \$XX,XXX or has co-ed bathrooms; etc.)

Maintain the subtle but real distinction between "hers" or "his" and "our," as in "our" SAT scores, "our" grades, "our" acceptance/denial letters. This helps you keep a more detached perspective on the process, which makes you a better advisor.

Avoid predictions and pronouncements, as in, "Of course you'll get into IVU. Great Uncle Fred's best friend's neighbor was on the board of trustees." This may not turn out to be much help.

Keep track of what's going on. Are forms being procured, filled out, and submitted in a timely manner? Keep in touch with the college advisor.

Insist that copies be made of everything: applications, financial aid forms, etc.

Keep things in perspective. If not getting into his/her first-choice college is the greatest disappointment of his/her life, then s/he is truly fortunate.

And finally, when your new college student arrives on campus to begin his/her career, meet roommates, etc., resist the temptation to make the bed

Final Thoughts

Each student must be responsible for obtaining materials, registering for tests, meeting deadlines, and in general taking charge of his or her own applications. The college advisor's role is to advise, inspire, and provide as much help, information, and support as possible, but ultimately it is the student who will be attending the college. So, the more proactive and responsible a role you play in the process, the more you pay attention and keep your eyes and ears open to what is going on around you, and the more you take advantage of the many opportunities that become available, the more likely in the long run you will be satisfied with the outcome. Many dedicated and caring people are here to help you through this process, as well as to provide support for your candidacy, but in the final analysis it's up to you to play the lead in this production.



"He appears to have eaten some homework."

©2003 The New Yorker Collection from cartoonbank.com. All rights reserved.