



# **COLLEGE COUNSELING MANUAL**

— 2024-2025 —

OXBRIDGE ACADEMY

SECTION I:

# INTRODUCTION AND PHILOSOPHY

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The college admission process is a process of learning, growing up, self-discovery, and transition for families and students. Students are faced with life-changing choices and a wide array of opportunities and challenges, and they develop life skills and decision-making tools that will help them build independence with resourcefulness and joy. The College Counseling Department provides support, timely information, and guidance to Oxbridge Academy students and their families throughout this process, from the moment a student enters Oxbridge until they graduate.

In ninth grade, all Oxbridge Academy students are assigned a college counselor. The counselor assists students in making appropriate academic choices, planning their engagement in extracurricular activities, researching appropriate colleges and postgraduation options, and successfully completing the college application process.

Our goal is for Oxbridge Academy students to apply to and matriculate at colleges and universities that will provide an excellent “fit” for them, considering academics, extracurricular activities, majors, career opportunities, location, and other key factors. In addition to a primary college counselor, every Oxbridge Academy student has the support of the Office Coordinator, who guides students regarding NCAA compliance, Dual Enrollment, and Florida Bright Futures Eligibility (including maintaining records related to Florida Bright Futures community service requirement fulfillment).

- Oxbridge Academy’s college counselors adhere to the following principles as they advise students and parents:**
- We provide students with information and guidance about their best options for college, considering each student’s individual academic and extracurricular achievements, interests, needs, career aspirations, and personal preferences.
  - We work diligently to stay current on college admissions trends at the state and national levels and maintain relationships with our college admissions colleagues.
  - We strive to understand the nuances of college admission and to guide students throughout the process.

Most importantly, we believe that, as college counselors, we are advisors for students and families throughout the college admission process, while the driver of this process is the student. It is with this in mind that we have developed this Manual. We hope it can serve as a valuable resource for Oxbridge Academy students, helping them navigate the college admission process and work effectively with their counselor and the College Counseling Office to obtain the most favorable outcomes possible. **Students are responsible for following the policies and procedures described in this Manual.**

SECTION II:

# MAIALEARNING

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- Through their MaiaLearning Student accounts, students in grades 9-12 can:**
- Take college exploration & vocational interest tests to explore career paths, majors, and colleges.
  - Research careers, majors and colleges.
  - Review Oxbridge-specific admission data to determine the level of selectivity of admissions at many different colleges.
  - Access their unofficial transcripts and test scores.

- In addition, MaiaLearning is an essential tool for the following tasks:**
- A. Student Survey for 11th Grade College Counseling Family Meeting** - to be completed by students by February 1 of their junior year. The survey helps counselors prepare for your 11th Grade College Counseling Family Meeting. Please find the survey on your MaiaLearning account dashboard.
- B. Parent Survey for 11th Grade College Counseling Family Meeting (for parents of Juniors)** – to be completed by at least one parent before the 11th Grade College Counseling Family Meeting. Parents can find this on their MaiaLearning account dashboard.
- C. Teacher Recommendations** – Several steps in MaiaLearning are due by March 1 of their Junior year, including:
- a.** Students must ask two teachers of core academic subjects (math, english, science, social sciences, and world languages) to write a strong letter of recommendation for the student.
  - b.** After the teacher agrees, students go to MaiaLearning → Universities → Recommendations. On the Recommendations tab, students download and complete a Brag Sheet for each teacher. The student then selects the teacher, uploads the brag sheet, and sets the deadline for the teacher.
  - c.** The teacher will upload the student’s letter of recommendation to MaiaLearning. In the fall of senior year, the counselor will send the letters of recommendation to all colleges on the student’s **Applying** list in MaiaLearning.
  - d.** Beginning August 1 of their senior year, **students should match the Common Application form with their MaiaLearning Account** (instructions appear in the next section).
  - e.** Maintaining college lists (see below).

**“Considering” and “Applying” College Lists in MaiaLearning**

Students will see two tabs in their Maia accounts, under “Universities” in the menu on the left-hand side of the page, labeled **“Considering”** and **“Applying”**.

**Considering** is an active list that students, families, and the student’s counselor can add to throughout the student’s four years at Oxbridge. There can be as many schools on the list of colleges in *Considering* as a student wishes to add.

Students will work solely on the Considering page from Grade 9 until the summer before Grade 12.

College counselors use the “**Applying**” list on student MaiaLearning accounts to send transcripts, teacher recommendations, and other information to colleges and to track applications and application outcomes.

**During Grade 12, students are responsible for updating their “Applying” list in MaiaLearning. Please complete the following steps:**

- Add to the *Applying* list each college to which you’ll apply **at least 30 days before the college application deadline**.
- When adding colleges to the list, Indicate the appropriate application type, term, application round, application plan, deadline, and request transcript.
- Note the admission outcome on the list within two or three days after hearing from a college.

The College Counseling Office uses the “*Applying*” list on MaiaLearning to submit transcripts and letters of recommendation to colleges on a student’s behalf, so students must match their Maia account with their Common Application account. This ensures that any materials sent by counselors through Maia eDocs are paired with a student’s Common App applications.

**When a student is ready to apply to a college or university, that student must then transfer the colleges from *Considering* to *Applying*, following these steps:**

1. Match your Common App and Maia accounts first! *Instructions for this are on the next page.*
2. Go to your list on **Considering** and click the “**Move to Applying**” yellow boxes of schools you want to apply to.
3. Go to the list you have created on **Applying** and select the Application Type, Term, and Deadline for each college/university on the list. If you are applying to a specific program, also indicate the program.
4. Click the “**Request Transcripts Off**” button at the top of the page.

It is critical that your Applying list in Maia Learning remains accurate and up to date. After August 1, as soon as you know, you are going to apply to a school, and **no later than 30 days before the deadline for which you are applying**, you must add the school to your Applying list.

This timeline ensures that your college counselor has enough time to prepare transcripts, teacher and counselor letters of recommendation, and any additional supporting materials before the deadline for which you are applying. If you wish to add a college to your Applying list, and it is less than 30 days before the application deadline, you must contact your college counselor to discuss this change. It is crucial that your Applying list is accurate; if you are no longer applying to a university on your Applying list, please select the trash can icon to remove it.

**Matching MaiaLearning and Common Application Accounts:**

**Below are the steps to match MaiaLearning and Common Application accounts:**

1. Login to MaiaLearning and click on your photo in the top right.
2. Click the ‘Settings’ tab to view your Application Systems.
3. Then click ‘Click to link your account’.
4. You will be redirected to Common App, enter your Common App login and password (if you do not have a Common App account yet, you will need to create an account at [commonapp.org](https://commonapp.org) before following these steps).
5. Your Maia status will change to “connected” and your CommonApp ID will show on your Maia profile page along with your FERPA Status and Fee Waiver Status.

Click [HERE](#) to watch a video tutorial demonstrating these steps.

**REMEMBER:** You must add colleges to your “Applying” list **at least 30 days** before the selected college’s application deadline!

**Maintaining a Balanced College List:**

When deciding which schools to apply to, students must balance the level of selectivity of the colleges on their list. **We recommend that students create a balanced college list by applying to:**

- At least two “**likely**” schools – institutions where a student is likely to be accepted based on grades, test scores, and other subjective application components.
- Two or more “**target**” schools – institutions where, based on grades, test scores, and subjective components, the student matches the college’s prospective student profile for test scores and GPA.
- One or more “**reach**” schools – institutions where, based on grades, test scores, and subjective components, the student is more likely to be deferred or denied than accepted. **Any college with an acceptance rate below 30% should be considered a reach school on a student’s list.**

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SECTION III:

# STUDENT CHECKLIST BY GRADE

## 9TH GRADE CHECKLIST

CHECKLIST ITEM	✓
1. <b>Get involved!</b> Find a sport, club, volunteer organization, hobby, etc. that you enjoy and want to participate in regularly.	
2. <b>Engage with your teachers in class and beyond;</b> the Oxbridge faculty is one of the best parts of an Oxbridge Academy experience!	
3. <b>Take the in-school PSAT</b> in October at Oxbridge.	
4. <b>Consider and submit course requests for sophomore year</b> ( <i>in second semester</i> ). To maximize college options, <b>pursue the highest level of rigor appropriate for you</b> while also having balance for pursuing extracurriculars, having downtime, and maintaining personal wellness.	
5. <b>Attend a college visit or two.</b>	
6. <b>Fill out a community service log</b> and submit a digital copy to <a href="mailto:monica@oapb.org">monica@oapb.org</a>	

## 10TH GRADE CHECKLIST

CHECKLIST ITEM	✓
1. <b>Stay involved in activities;</b> do not hesitate to try a new activity! Seek leadership roles where appropriate.	
2. <b>Take the in-school PSAT in October at Oxbridge and practice ACT and SAT tests in the spring.</b> Decide if you will focus on the SAT or ACT test throughout your college applications process.	
3. <b>Meet with your college counselor</b> for your family meeting in the spring.	
4. <b>Consider and submit course requests for sophomore year</b> ( <i>in second semester</i> ). To maximize college options, <b>pursue the highest level of rigor appropriate for you</b> while also having balance for pursuing extracurriculars, having downtime, and maintaining personal wellness.	
5. <b>Aspiring collegiate athletes should meet with the NCAA coordinator</b> to ensure that they are on track to meet eligibility requirements.	

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CHECKLIST ITEM	✓
6. <b>Consider and submit course requests for junior year</b> (second semester), selecting the most rigorous class schedule possible.	
7. <b>Attend college visits</b> at Oxbridge Academy.	
8. <b>Fill out a community service log</b> and submit a digital copy to <a href="mailto:monica@oapb.org">monica@oapb.org</a>	
9. <b>Brainstorm how you can use summer to further your postsecondary goals.</b> For example: participate in a summer program, FLVS course, dual enrollment course, arrange a job shadow, or volunteer.	

## 11TH GRADE CHECKLIST

CHECKLIST ITEM	✓
1. <b>Stay involved and take on leadership roles in activities.</b>	
2. <b>Take the school day PSAT/NMSQT</b> in the fall. Decide if you will focus on throughout the SAT or ACT test during college application process.	
3. <b>Format the first draft of extracurricular resume</b> and turn it in to your counselor in December.	
4. <b>Prepare for and take your first SAT or ACT test</b> in late fall or early spring.	
5. <b>Complete the Junior Survey</b> in MaiaLearning.	
6. <b>Ensure your Parent/Guardian completes the Parent Survey</b> in MaiaLearning.	
7. <b>Submit your teacher recommendation requests</b> in MaiaLearning (Spring).	
8. <b>Submit course requests for senior year.</b> Keep in mind, colleges look carefully at rigor in 12th grade too!	
9. <b>Write the first draft of your college essay</b> and turn it into your counselor.	
10. <b>Meet with your college counselor for a family meeting in the spring.</b>	
11. <b>Register for and take/re-take the SAT and/or ACT as needed.</b>	
12. <b>Attend college visits</b> at Oxbridge Academy.	
13. <b>Visit college campuses.</b>	
14. <b>Aspiring collegiate athletes should create a draft of an athletic resume</b> and share with your counselor and <b>meet with the NCAA coordinator, Ms. Monica Hammett.</b>	

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CHECKLIST ITEM	✓
15. Fill out a community service log and submit a digital copy to <a href="mailto:monica@oapb.org">monica@oapb.org</a>	
16. Parents/Guardians and students must submit the Transcript Release Form.	
17. Brainstorm how you can use summer to further your postsecondary goals. Some examples include: Participating in a summer program, FLVS course, dual enrollment course, job shadow, and volunteer.	

## 12TH GRADE CHECKLIST

CHECKLIST ITEM	✓
1. Finalize your college application list and add schools to your “Applying” list in your MaiaLearning account.	
2. Stay involved and take on leadership roles in activities.	
3. Complete remaining standardized testing (SAT and/or ACT) as needed.	
4. Submit Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Application.	
5. Work on and submit college applications by appropriate deadlines.	
6. Submit SSAR, SPARK and/or other additional forms, if applicable.	
7. Submit FAFSA, CSS Profile, and any other financial aid forms requested by colleges by the designated deadlines, as necessary.	
8. Submit SAT and/or ACT scores to colleges that require them (or where you have specifically decided to apply with test scores).	
9. Once applications are submitted, regularly monitor each college’s application portal or status page for next steps.	
10. Apply for scholarships.	
11. Remember to update your MaiaLearning account with the admissions decisions you receive.	
12. Fill out community service logs by graduation day and submit a digital copy to <a href="mailto:monica@oapb.org">monica@oapb.org</a> .	

## SECTION IV: RESEARCHING COLLEGES

### College Visits (Tours and Information Sessions):

College visits are the best way for prospective students to understand a college’s academic offerings, physical campus, community, and culture. Start by visiting colleges or universities locally; if a college or university nearby may be a prospect for your college list, visit! It is inexpensive to gain some perspective on what you want and do not want in a college campus and community. **Ideally, you will sign up for both a tour and an information session on campus (usually one follows the other).** Virtual tours and information sessions are also helpful.

### Six Ways to Make the Most of a College Visit:

1. Eat in the dining hall.
2. Read the student newspaper.
3. Take pictures and notes; it is a good idea to complete your notes later that evening to include other info you want to remember.
4. Take advantage of ‘Recommended’ Interviews – when a college offers and/or recommends on-campus interviews, schedule one! And be sure to prepare for it! Search online for great prep tips (“College Essay Guy” has some good ones on his website).
5. Walk near the front of your tour so you will have plenty of opportunities to chat with your tour guide, who is usually a current student at the school.
6. While you are on campus, ask questions! Click [HERE](#) for a list of great questions to ask during a campus visit.

### Links to College Research Tools:

#### [CollegeBoard “Big Future”](#)

Their website says, “Planning for college does not have to be stressful. Our tools can help you find the right school for you. You can afford college—find out how to keep your costs low.”

#### [College Express](#)

This website includes excellent lists of colleges with strength in particular majors. It incorporates the lists from the well-known book *The College Finder* by Dr. Steven Antonoff.

#### [Fiske Guide to Colleges \(Book and online versions available\)](#)

We have several extra copies of this book in the college counseling office for use in students’ study halls. The Fiske Guide to Colleges is an excellent guidebook focusing on selective and highly selective colleges. It is available on Amazon, in libraries, and from other booksellers. We suggest getting the most current edition of this book, but of course, the prior year’s edition is likely to be helpful, too. You can access an online, interactive version of the Fiske Guide [HERE](#) (guide costs about \$20).

MaiaLearning

Your 24/7 online college counselor! MaiaLearning is used to research colleges and careers, check out admissions data, invite teachers to write recommendations, and to send transcripts to colleges.

Niche

This free online resource publishes and aggregates student reviews of thousands of colleges.

YouTube

Most colleges have their own YouTube channel with excellent videos that can help students get a sense of the culture and/or unique academic programs at that school. Look for a video on your specific interest!

Colleges’ Individual Websites

Colleges’ individual websites are the best place to learn about the school’s academic programs and obtain a list of extracurricular activities offered at that school.

Attending Virtual Events:

Most schools are offering the following two types of online events; we suggest doing both an information session and a tour, whether it is on campus or virtual!

Virtual Information Sessions

- Usually lasts about one hour.
- Includes information on different undergraduate schools within a college or university.
- Includes description of application plans, deadlines, and requirements.
- May describe what they are “looking for” in applicants.
- Many small and medium-sized colleges and universities are offering live sessions, which, in our experience, present a valuable opportunity to learn and have one’s questions answered.
- Many colleges/universities offer Saturday morning sessions, which may present the easiest chance for students and parents to participate.
- **We encourage parents to join their students for these sessions to spark conversation at home after the session!**

Virtual Information Sessions

- May be a video of a student walking around campus leading a tour (usually one hour if so).
- If it is a clickable tour online, it may last 20-30 minutes.

An almost effortless way to learn about virtual visit options at a college is to search online “visit [Name of College].” Additionally, [here are some links to registration for virtual info sessions and tours](#). College is a large investment in your future; do as much research as you can before you make this investment!

SECTION V:  
DEMONSTRATED INTEREST

Why Is Demonstrating Interest Important?:

Many colleges consider the level of interest that a student has demonstrated in their college in making admissions decisions. The colleges want to admit students with a high interest in attending their college, so understandably they like this.

How Do Colleges Measure Demonstrated Interest?:

- 1. Recorded online “clicks”** are a primary way colleges measure interest. Here are some ways to show your interest with clicks:
  - a.** Sign up for colleges’ email lists/newsletters.
  - b.** Sign up for a virtual info session and attend that virtual info session!
  - c.** Open the emails that a college sends to you.
  - d.** Click on links in emails that a college sends to you.
  - e.** Email the admissions officer who covers Palm Beach County or South Florida at a given college when you have a specific question or request for information. **Note:** DO NOT ask a question that you can readily find the answer to on the internet.
  - f.** Once you have applied to a school, login to your admissions portal. This is helpful for two reasons – **1)** you are responsible for confirming that the school has received all application materials, including transcript and letters of recommendation, and **2)** the school may interpret your login as another sign of your interest.
- 2. Visit campus when possible** and sign in with the admissions office.
- 3. Interview an alum or admissions team member** when this opportunity exists (*not all colleges offer interviews*).
- 4. Attend a college’s visit to Oxbridge Academy** (when offered).
- 6. Follow the school on social media.** (Remember, your social media settings should be **private**. Even when your account settings are “private,” we suggest using much discretion in anything you choose to post to social media).

**Note:** Not all colleges and universities track demonstrated interest, but assuming they do may be in your best interest! You can find out whether a college uses demonstrated interest in making admissions decisions by searching online for “Common Data Set” and the school’s name you are interested in; then, you would look for the chart of factors considered in admissions decisions. Students can speak with their college counselor if they have questions about whether a particular college does or does not track demonstrated interest.

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SECTION VI:

## FLORIDA COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

There are 12 Florida state public universities, ranging from small (New College of Florida with 808 undergraduate students) to very large (University of Central Florida with 69,525 total students). These are:

- Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University
  - Florida Atlantic University
  - Florida Gulf Coast University
  - Florida International University
  - Florida Polytechnic University
  - Florida State University
- University of Central Florida
  - New College of Florida
  - University of North Florida
  - University of South Florida
  - University of Florida
  - University of West Florida

**Application Requirements/SSAR Form:**

Each school offers students unique opportunities and educational programs and has different application procedures, deadlines, and forms. **For example, several Florida state schools require the Self-reported Student Academic Record (SSAR).** This self-reporting process is time-consuming but straightforward: Students create an account with SSAR and use a copy of their transcript to enter courses, schedules, grades, and course type.

Following submission of a college application, students will link the SSAR to their applications, typically through their applicant portals – or as part of the application itself, depending on the university. Many schools in Florida require the SSAR. Please check your individual school to be sure you complete this step if it is required. This [link](#) is a great resource for information regarding FL public colleges and universities.

Here is a table we made to help you correctly label your list of courses on the SSAR:

OXBRIDGE COURSE LEVEL	SSAR COURSE LEVEL
Honors Seminar	High Honors
Honors	Honors
Regular/Plus	College Prep
Independent Study, Teacher’s Aide, Peer Tutor, Writing Center Tutor	Regular/Standard

SECTION VII:

## COMMON APPLICATION



Found at [commonapp.org](https://commonapp.org). The latest version for each school year is released on or about August 1 each year. Therefore, early August is a good time to fill out the Common Application. However, students who want to get an early start their junior year can; any information on the Common App tab of the Common App input by a student prior to August 1 “rolls over” to the updated version once released.

We recommend working on your essays in separate documents before pasting them into the Common Application. **Always paste the question you are answering and its word limit at the top of any essay document.**

Use your resume to complete the Common Application activities section. Some colleges may allow a student to upload a resume, and the student should do that and complete the activities section of the Common Application.

Here is a table we made to help students enter their lists of courses on Common Application (*Note: This is the same as the chart on the previous page for SSAR*):

OXBRIDGE COURSE LEVEL	COMMON APP COURSE LEVEL
Honors Seminar	High Honors
Honors	Honors
Regular/Plus	College Prep
Independent Study, Teacher’s Aide, Peer Tutor, Writing Center Tutor	Regular/Standard



## SECTION VIII:

# COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES VISITS TO OXBRIDGE ACADEMY



## Why are College Visits to Campus Important:

College visits are wonderful opportunities for students to meet with admissions representatives from hundreds of colleges and universities worldwide! Often, the representatives who meet with students at Oxbridge Academy are the same representatives who read applications from Oxbridge students. Attending a college visit to Oxbridge allows students to learn about application deadlines, admissions statistics, academic offerings, and student life directly from a college or university admissions office representative.

## How to Register for a Live College Visit at Oxbridge Academy (when offered)

1. Sign in to your MaiaLearning account and click **Events** on the left-hand menu.
2. You will see a list of upcoming college visits. Click on the **Actions tab** next to the college visit you want to attend and click **Attend**.

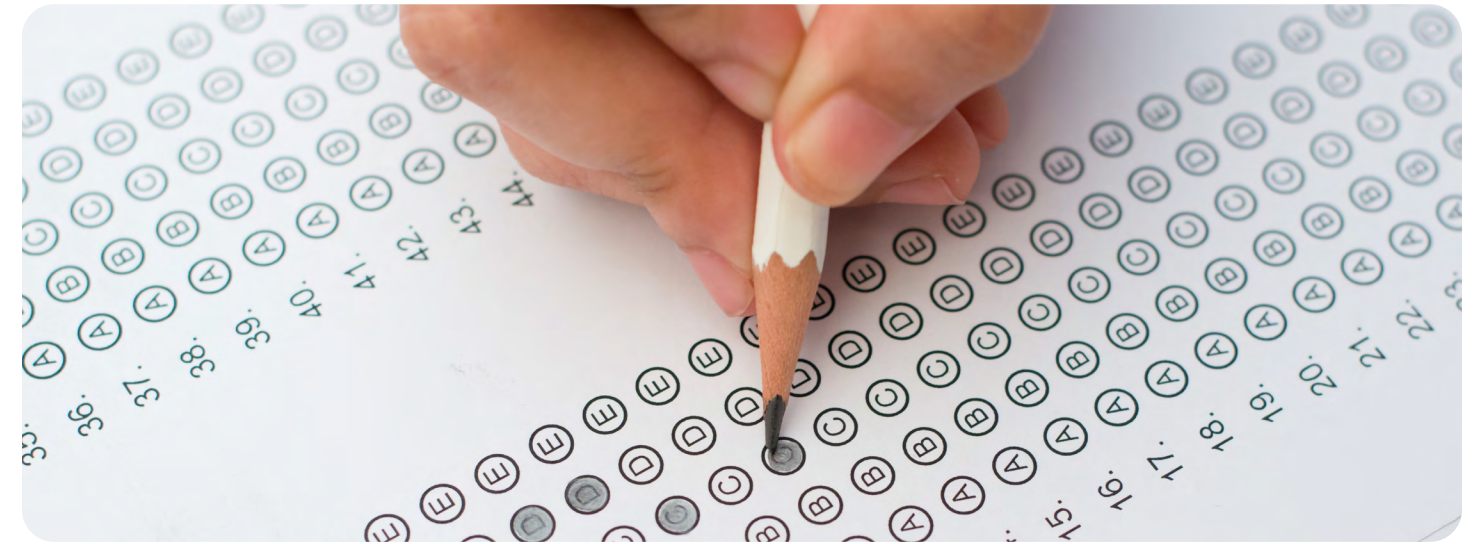
Registration for each college visit closes 72 hours (about three days) before the visit. This allows the College Counseling Office time to plan for adequate seating and to notify the representative of how many students to expect. If you miss the registration deadline for a visit you want to attend, speak with your college counselor, and they will arrange for you to participate in a visit.

## Who Can Attend A College Visit:

All students in grades 9-12 are welcome to attend college visits! We ask that students register for any visit they want to attend at least three days in advance (see steps above) and notify their teacher. Visits with college representatives at Oxbridge Academy are open to students only.

## SECTION IX:

# STANDARDIZED TESTING



## Do I Have To Take The SAT/ACT?:

Many U.S. colleges have commenced or continued test-optional admissions policies, which means that a student can decide whether to submit standardized test scores to be considered as part of their college application.

**Florida's public colleges & universities DO NOT have a test-optional admissions policy, however. It is essential that students applying to these schools take and submit SAT or ACT scores.**

The prevailing wisdom from the 2020-2023 school years is that students with SAT or ACT scores in the middle 50% of a college's test score range for accepted students or scores above this range usually submit their scores for consideration.

## Helpful Links:

A list of test-optional schools can be found on the FairTest website at [www.fairtest.org](http://www.fairtest.org). Please note that this list has been frequently updated after COVID-19.

**Here are links to the websites of the testing organizations:** [ACT](http://ACT) | [SAT](http://SAT)

## Preparing for the Test:

Given that the SAT and ACT are different tests, many students prefer one test over the other. **It usually makes sense to focus prep on one test or the other, rather than to try to prep for both tests.** This can be done at the end of 10th or the beginning of 11th grade.

Most students will take whichever test they choose more than once – two or three attempts at the test is usually a reasonable plan.



Typical Testing Timeline (Start of Grade 9 through October of Grade 11):

October of 9th Grade Year	Take the school day PSAT at Oxbridge Academy as practice and preparation for future standardized tests.
October of 10th Grade Year	Take the school day PSAT at Oxbridge Academy as practice and preparation for future standardized tests.
Spring of 10th Grade Year	Take a practice SAT and ACT test.
Summer following 10th Grade Year	It is common for students to <b>begin prep for the ACT/SAT</b> in the summer following 10th grade.
October of 11th Grade Year	<b>Take the PSAT/NMSQT again</b> —this time, students with high scores can qualify for the Merit Scholarships and other awards.

Accelerated Testing Schedule:

This schedule is recommended for students enrolled in more rigorous courses who have completed at least Algebra 2 by the end of 10th Grade.

August-October of 11th Grade Year	Take a SAT/ACT test for the first time.
Spring Semester of 11th Grade Year	Take a second SAT/ACT test.
Summer following 11th Grade Year	<b>Retake the SAT/ACT as needed.</b> Some students may need to take the test again in the fall of their senior year.

Alternate Testing Schedule:

This schedule is recommended for students who will be best served by having completed a substantial portion of junior year classes before taking SAT or ACT

Early Spring of 11th Grade Year	Take a SAT/ACT test for the first time.
May/June of 11th Grade Year	Take a second SAT/ACT test.
Summer following 11th Grade Fall of 11th Grade Year	Retake the SAT/ACT as needed.

Test Prep Resources:

[Khan Academy](#)  
The SAT Prep offered free of charge through Khan Academy has been shown to raise students’ scores by an average of 115 points with 20 hours of practice.

[ACT Academy](#)  
The ACT organization offers ACT Academy online as a free resource for students to use for prep.

**Tutoring Companies**  
The College Counseling Office has experience with several tutoring companies; we are glad to share ideas for test prep providers directly with families so that they may decide whether one of these companies suits their student’s needs. This information is on the Resources page of MaiaLearning accounts.

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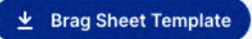
SECTION X:

# TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Why are Teacher Recommendations Important:

Teacher recommendations are an essential part of the college application process. It is beneficial for colleges to hear about a student’s participation in the classroom, effort level on assignments, and interpersonal interactions with peers and faculty through the lens of a teacher who has instructed the student and knows the student well. A push for this effort typically begins in the spring of the student’s junior year when 11th Grade students will do as follows:

Teacher Recommendations Request Process:

1. Politely ask (in person, when possible) two teachers from core academic subjects (English, math, science, social sciences, and world languages) if they would be willing to write a recommendation letter on your behalf.
2. If and when a teacher has agreed to write a letter of recommendation for you, invite them via your MaiaLearning account:
  - a. Sign in to your MaiaLearning account.
  - b. Click on **Universities** (in left menu) and then click on **Recommendations**.
  - c. Click  to download the Brag Sheet Template.
  - d. Complete a brag sheet for each teacher who has agreed to write you a recommendation and save each as a PDF.
  - e. Check the box for the teacher you are uploading a brag sheet for under “**select Teachers for the Recommendation Letter**” (only add one teacher at a time).
  - f. Enter **August 15** as the Deadline for Recommendations.
  - g. Click the “upload link” to upload the PDF of your Brag Sheet for your teacher
  - h. Write a thank you note to the teacher where it says, “**Enter a note for the recommender.**” Click **Save** to submit recommendation invitation. Repeat steps for teacher #2.

You can view a video tutorial of these steps by clicking [here](#).

3. Email your Extracurricular Resume to your two teacher recommenders. Your resume also helps your teachers best advocate for you in their letters of recommendation.
4. Finally, during the first few weeks of senior year, write a note (a hand-written card is a nice touch) to both recommenders, thanking them for the time and effort they put into writing your letter and helping you reach your college admissions goals.

Things to Keep in Mind:

Colleges are looking for recommendations from teachers who know students well and have had them in their classes recently; therefore, students should, if possible, select teachers who taught them during junior year.



**NOTE:** The Common Application and most institutional applications require that recommenders be teachers of **CORE ACADEMIC SUBJECTS** (*teachers who have instructed students in English, math, science, history, or a foreign language*). This means that art, music, debate, Model U.N., yearbook, and P.E. teachers’ recommendations will not be accepted as academic recommendations at most colleges but can be included for additional insight into the student or *if* the student is applying to a program related to one of those subjects.

It is often better to ask the teacher whose class you worked extra hard but from whom you received a “B” grade rather than the teacher of a class where you earned an “A” grade, but the teacher knows you put in little to no work.

Give teachers enough time and follow the timeline provided by your counselor. Some teachers will have quotas for how many recommendation letters they are willing to write each year. This means that, even if you have done well in their class, the teacher may tell you no if the teacher is already writing several other letters of recommendation. Therefore, the sooner this step is followed, the better!

Occasionally, students may wish to include an additional letter of recommendation with their application. Colleges have limited time to review a student’s application, so we suggest consulting your Oxbridge college counselor regarding the decision to include an additional letter of recommendation and the process for doing so.

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SECTION XI:

# STUDENT (ACTIVITIES) RESUMES

Why are Student Resumes Important:

Creating a clear and descriptive resume is an essential and integral part of the college application process for the following reasons:

- Many popular U.S. colleges and universities are residential. Colleges want to know that students will contribute in diverse ways to the community, beyond the classroom.
- Almost all college application forms, including the Common Application form, require a list of extracurricular activities. The resume helps students organize these activities and create short descriptions, which can be copied and pasted onto the application form.
- Many colleges will allow students to upload their resumes or send them via email attachments. This provides students an opportunity to highlight their talents, interests, and accomplishments and offer information that may not fit into the other parts of the application. **It is essential that any resume sent to colleges is well-presented and well-written.**

The following is our resume “worksheet” that we send to juniors.

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## ACTIVITIES RESUME WORKSHEET

Step One - Creating Entries:

Create an entry for each activity you have engaged in since the summer before your 9th grade. Please include the following information in your entries:

- Name of Specific Activity or Undertaking
- Your Title in Activity or Undertaking
- Grades and/or Summers Participated in this Activity or Undertaking
- Average number of hours per week and weeks per year devoted to Activity or Undertaking.
- Your responsibilities and additional details (be specific).

Please be mindful of the tense you use on your resume. If the activity is something you are *still involved in* (Example: “**Work** with club members to identify volunteer opportunities”), use the **present** tense. If you *no longer participate* in the activity, use the **past** tense (Example: “**Worked** with club members to identify volunteer opportunities”),.

On the next page you’ll find some sample resume entries to help guide you in writing your resume.

Resume Entry Examples:

**Oxbridge Academy Admissions** - *Tour Guide & Office Assistant*

Grades 10, 11, 12 (3 hours/week, 36 weeks/year)  
Guide students around the school and campus, share information about Oxbridge’s academic and social life with prospective students and organize admissions office marketing brochures for distribution to parents and student visitors.

**Habitat for Humanity** - *Vice President (12), Communications (11), Active Member (10)*

Grades 10, 11, 12 (2 hours/week, 36 weeks/year)  
Assist the club president in planning our annual Spring Break build trip, recruiting members, relaying our message to the Oxbridge community, and finding local builds to participate. Market the club’s mission and events to the greater school community. Participate in regular house-building and painting projects. Create the Oxbridge Habitat for Humanity Page on Facebook, which promotes our builds, trips, and excursions. Travel to Homestead, Florida, in March 2019 and March 2020 to take part in a week-long neighborhood building project.

Step 2 - Categorizing:

After creating all your entries, decide on your categories and the order in which you want to list them. Some commonly used categories are:

- |                     |                          |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| • ATHLETICS         | • EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES |
| • COMMUNITY SERVICE | • WORK EXPERIENCE        |
| • CLUBS             | • HOME DUTIES            |
| • HONORS SOCIETIES  |                          |

Step 3 - Put It All Together:

- Put your name and address (address is optional) at the top of the page. You may list Oxbridge Academy and its address (3151 N. Military Trail, West Palm Beach, FL 33409) if you would like.
- Add your entries, organizing them by categories.
- Awards and achievements can be included into the description portion of the appropriate entry.

**PLEASE DO NOT INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING IN YOUR ACTIVITIES RESUME:**

- Your GPA.
- The courses you are taking.
- List of references.
- A mission statement or objective.
- Middle school awards or activities. This document is ONLY for high school activities.

On the next page you’ll find a sample student activities resume to help you build out a resume of your own.



Sample Student Resume:

JOHN Z. SMITH  
Oxbridge Academy - Class of 2025

ATHLETICS

**Oxbridge Academy Varsity Shuffleboard Team** - *First Shuttle Pusher*  
Grades 9, 10, 11 (30 hours/week, 48 weeks/year)  
Starting player on team that won State Championship (9th grade), District Championship (10th grade), and District and Regional Championship (11th grade).

**Quidditch Palm Beaches Travel Team** - *Chief Seeker*  
Grades 9, 10 (30 hours/week, 4 weeks/year)  
MVP for the regional championship team. Started for the Quidditch International Competition in Dhaka, summer of 11th grade.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

**All-People United Church** - *Volunteer*  
Summer before Grade 11 (6 hours/week, 10 weeks/year)  
Planned and implemented fund-raising activities. Gave out school uniforms to kids who were unable to afford them. Traveled to the Florida Keys in October 2019 to help with hurricane recovery.

**Young Volunteers of America** - *Patrol Leader (11), Assistant Patrol Leader (10), Quartermaster Rank (9)*  
Grades 9, 10, 11 (3 hours/week, 48 weeks/year)  
Participate in multiple patrol events: archery, canoeing, fire building, flag-pole racing, chariot racing. Organize yearly community church cleanups, attend town meetings in local community, supervise cub scout events.  
**Awards:** Won 1st place in numerous competitions and patrol activities.

WORK EXPERIENCE

**Summer Sundae Shop** - *Ice Cream Scooper, Cashier*  
Summer before Grade 9, 10, 11 (5 hours/week, 50 weeks/year)  
Scoop ice cream. Provide exceptional service for customers and collect money from them.

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

**Bocconi Summer Institute, Milan, Italy** - *Student*  
Summer before Grade 11 (40 hours/week, 3 weeks/year)  
Won Best Student Award in Accounting and Global Taxes course, taught by the world-famous and illustrious professor, Dr. Benito Talini Grasso.

SECTION XII:  
COLLEGE APPLICATION ESSAYS

Many colleges ask each applicant to submit at least one essay (a personal statement) as part of their application so that their admissions team can learn more about that student beyond her grades, test scores, hometown, and list of activities.

When you share your essay with a college, the school’s admissions team is going to make two determinations:

- 1. Can this person write effectively?
- 2. Does this essay make me want to invite this person to join our campus community? (i.e., Are they interesting? Thoughtful? Self-aware?)

Personal Statement/”Common App” Essay:

Most students will write one “personal statement” essay, which will serve as their “main” Common Application essay. This essay can also be submitted to many schools that do not accept the Common Application but ask for a personal statement. A great personal statement usually reveals some of a student’s VALUES, INTERESTS, and some INSIGHT into WHY an activity, routine, or event has been particularly meaningful to the student.

Supplemental Essays:

On the Common Application, many selective colleges ask students to answer a SUPPLEMENTAL essay question (or two, three, or more supplemental essays). These questions commonly include prompts to the effect of: “What attracts you to our college?” and “What are you interested in studying at our college?”

A college may also give students a prompt like the following example – an essay prompt used by Amherst College for the 2019-2020 admissions cycle:

**Option A** - Respond to the following quotation in an essay of 300 words or less. It is unnecessary to research, read, or refer to the texts from which these quotations are taken; we are looking for original, personal responses to these short excerpts. Remember that your essay should be personal and not simply an argumentative essay.

“Rigorous reasoning is crucial in mathematics, and insight plays an important secondary role these days. In the natural sciences, I would say that the order of these two virtues is reversed. Rigor is, of course, particularly important. But the most important value is insight—insight into the workings of the world. It may be because there is another guarantor of correctness in the sciences, namely, the empirical evidence from observation and experiments.” - Kannan Jagannathan, Professor of Physics, Amherst College

A college’s supplemental essays can be found through the Common Application website and are usually available on or about August 1. Students who are successful in the college admissions process usually dedicate substantial time to drafting supplemental essays in August before their senior year.

Tips for Writing an Effective Personal Statement/Common App Essay:

Step #1: Read Examples

Reading examples of great college application essays is a great first step towards writing your own personal statement/main Common App essay.

Step #2: Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a helpful next step in writing a Personal Statement. Click [HERE](#) for a link to some brainstorming exercises developed by Ethan Sawyer, known as “College Essay Guy”. You may also want to gain inspiration from the [“Inside the Yale Admissions Office” Podcast](#).

Step #3: After You Finish Your First Draft

Take a break from the essay, and then go back and re-read it, and make any edits that are appropriate. Consider reading your essay aloud during your editing process. You might notice revisions to be made when hearing it that you would not otherwise notice.

Step #4: Get Feedback

Get feedback from one or two trusted sources: your counselor, the reader you are assigned starting July 15 of your senior year, a friend, or teacher.

Step #5: Implement Feedback

Make revisions based on your readers’ feedback, and then read the new draft. What is great? What should be changed?

Step #6: Revise Again, and Again!

Make more changes! Most great college essays have gone through at least 3 drafts/sets of revisions.

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SECTION XIII:  
APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS & DEADLINES

Application Requirements Checklist:

For an application file to be considered complete, a college or university must receive:

APPLICATION ITEM	✓
A completed application via the <b>Common Application</b> , <b>Coalition Application</b> , or a <b>school-specific application</b> . This application often includes one main essay and may include one or more supplemental essays. In addition, many colleges require additional information, such as the SSAR, SPARK, or SRAR. <b>SUBMITTED BY STUDENT</b>	
<b>SAT score report</b> , sent by the student via <a href="#">collegeboard.org</a> website, or <b>ACT score report</b> , sent by the student via <a href="#">actstudent.org</a> . If standardized test scores are <i>not</i> required by a particular college in the admissions process, the student may choose whether to send or not send these scores, after a discussion with their college counselor. It is important to research the acceptance data of any test-optional schools to which students are applying. <b>DO NOT</b> send a score below the average and median scores reported by that school to any test-optional school. <b>SUBMITTED BY STUDENT</b>	
Official Oxbridge Academy transcript and transcript from any previous high schools*	
Teacher recommendation letters and Common App Teacher Evaluation Forms*	
Counselor recommendation letter and Common App Counselor Recommendation Form*	



**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Some colleges request more information, such as the SSAR, SRAR, SPARK and the Common Application Form. You are responsible for completing and submitting these forms by the designated deadlines!

*\*Item submitted by college counselor, all other items must be submitted by student applicant.*

**You are responsible for submitting the highlighted items above and researching the application and scholarship requirements for each college to which you apply.** Remember, the above list is a general checklist, and many colleges require additional information. It is advisable to create your own spreadsheet to keep track of the application requirements for each college.

About Application Deadlines/Application Plans:

Each college, university, or university system (such as the University of California system) uses different deadlines, and many offer different options to students, each has benefits and drawbacks. The most common types of deadlines are:

**Regular Decision Deadline (RD):** This application deadline is usually the final one offered by the college. Applicants can submit under any application plan elsewhere and have no obligation to attend the school if they are accepted. Students will typically receive their admission decision several weeks to months after the application deadline, generally no later than April 1 of the year that the student will matriculate. **Common RD deadlines are December 31, January 1, January 15, and February 1.**

**Early Decision Deadline (ED):** Through this application plan, a student **agrees to enroll at the college if accepted in the admissions process.** Application deadline is usually earlier than other application options, and colleges give students who apply ED a decision before students who apply RD. Students who apply ED to a college cannot apply to any other colleges ED but may apply to other colleges under other non-binding application plans. **Once students are accepted ED, they are obligated to attend the school and must withdraw any applications that they have submitted elsewhere.** Please note that many colleges who use the Common App indicate the following for ED: “If you are an ED candidate and are seeking financial aid, you need not withdraw other applications until you have received notification about financial aid from the admitting Early Decision institution.” Some schools offer two ED deadlines: Early Decision I and Early Decision II.

**Early Action Deadline (EA):** Application deadline is usually earlier than other options and colleges give students who apply EA a decision before students who apply RD. Students applying EA may apply elsewhere to as many schools as they like under any application plan. Early action is non-binding; if a student is accepted EA, that student is not under any obligation to attend the school.

**Rolling Admission:** Students can submit their application any time within the application period and will receive an admissions decision within a few weeks or months from submission of their application. There is no obligation to attend the school, and students may apply wherever else under any application plan.

**Priority Application Deadline/Date:** The date your application must be received by an admissions office to be given strongest consideration (which may relate to college admission, financial aid, student housing, or some combination of these). **If a school where you are interested in attending lists a priority deadline, the College Counseling Office strongly encourages you to meet that deadline.**

**Restrictive Early Action (REA) / Single Choice Early Action (SCEA):** REA/SCEA application policies require students to submit their applications early and provide them with an admissions decision early, too. This application option does not include a binding commitment to attend but does indicate the student’s high level of interest in the college because the student is restricted from applying to other schools through Early Decision or Early Action plans (often except for public universities such as the University of Florida).

It is **strongly recommended** that you schedule a time to meet with your Oxbridge Academy college counselor at the beginning of your senior year first to review your final list and discuss the benefits and drawbacks of each available deadline and again to review any completed applications prior to submission. A student’s counselor can help the student check the application for errors or areas that can be improved.

### **Sending Standardized (SAT/ACT) Scores to Colleges:**

You are responsible for sending your SAT or ACT test scores to all colleges you are applying to (except any school that is test-optional or permits self-reported scores). Counselors cannot send standardized test scores on behalf of students – they must come directly from the testing agency.

You can log on to your [ACT Student](#) account at [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) or their [College Board account](#) to view all prior test scores and select which score(s) you would like to send (**NOTE: some colleges require that students send ALL their scores**). If a student logs into their respective standardized test portal(s) and is unsure how to send scores to colleges after reviewing the directions on the website, the student is welcome to see their college counselor for assistance in completing the order.

To date, the SAT and ACT will send test scores FREE OF CHARGE to up to four (4) different institutions if the student requests the test scores to be sent prior to the test administration. When a student DOES NOT request to send test scores before ACT and SAT administration, each institution will charge a fee of approximately \$15 per school to which the test scores are to be sent. Please keep in mind that score reports can take around two weeks to be received by schools after being sent, so please plan accordingly.



SECTION XIV:

# COMPREHENSIVE 11TH GRADE CHECKLIST

CHECKLIST ITEM	✓
Stay involved and take on leadership roles in activities.	
Take the PSAT/NMSQT- held mid-October.	
Student Resume – due date is mid-December prior to winter break. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Please email your resume draft to your college counselor; we will be visiting junior English classes mid-November to go over instructions for doing this and resume samples.</li></ul>	
Junior Survey – due in January <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>This will help your school counselor get to know you.</li><li>Please answer all questions completely and honestly. The more information that you provide, the more feedback we can give you regarding suggestions for building a college list and how to best “tell your story” on your applications.</li><li>This survey is to be completed by students, not parents, please.</li></ul>	
Parent Questionnaire – due prior to 11th Grade Family College Counseling Meeting	
Schedule and attend 11th Grade Family College Counseling Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>These meetings will be held in February and March. The Junior Survey (student) and Parent Questionnaire must be completed in student’s MaiaLearning account prior to this meeting.</li></ul>	
Register, Prepare, and Take Standardized Tests (ACT or SAT) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>We recommend taking <i>either</i> the ACT <i>or</i> the SAT twice during your 11th grade year.</li><li>It is your responsibility to register and prepare for the ACT or the SAT.</li><li>Please find test dates and registration links at these links: <a href="#">ACT</a>   <a href="#">SAT</a></li></ul>	
Teacher Recommendations – ask teachers by the first week of March. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ask two core subject teachers from your junior year to write recommendations.</li></ul>	
Common Application Essay – draft due the first week of May <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>List of essay topics becomes available in February or March.</li><li>Please aim to finalize this essay before school starts in August.</li><li>We will discuss the topics and how to strategize once they are announced.</li></ul>	
All student-athletes who are considering competing in college are encouraged to register with the NCAA. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Make an appointment with Mrs. Hammett by sending an email to <a href="mailto:monica@oapb.org">monica@oapb.org</a>.</li></ul>	

(Continued on next page)

CHECKLIST ITEM	✓
College Research – Twice a month, dedicate 1 or 2 hours to this. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Use search tools on MaiaLearning to find colleges that fit your interests. For assistance in learning how to use these tools, ask your counselor.</li><li>Consider which aspects of a college/university are most important to you (including academic programs offered, cost, size, location, and proximity to home, campus environment (college town, urban, suburban, rural), and selectivity.</li><li>Please add schools of interest to your “Considering” list in MaiaLearning.</li><li>Remember to include balance in your list (you may be interested in some highly selective colleges, but balance those by including some schools that are not such a “reach” for you).</li></ul>	
Finalize College List <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Aim to have a (mostly) finalized list of the colleges you are applying by mid-August prior to your 12th grade year.</li><li>You should spend the summer making decisions about where you will apply and finalizing your main college essay (personal statement).</li><li>Visit colleges, when possible, continue online research, have conversations with parents/family, and stay connected with your counselor. Click <a href="#">HERE</a> for information about virtual tour opportunities.</li><li>Ideally, students apply to 6-8 schools, and certainly no more than thirteen. Remember to keep a balanced list.</li></ul>	
Community Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bright Futures (a Florida-based merit scholarship) requires community service hours.</li><li>Keep track of your hours through the community service log.</li><li>If you are looking for online community service opportunities during the pandemic, check out Community Service opportunities on your MaiaLearning account.</li></ul>	
Self-reflection <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The 11th grade year is a valuable time to review your priorities, goals, strengths, weaknesses, interests, and academic achievements. Some important questions to ask yourself as you prepare to apply to college are:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Where do I see myself in two years, four years, ten years?</li><li>What are my favorite subjects?</li><li>What are some careers that interest me?</li><li>When do I feel the most engaged?</li><li>What qualities am I looking for in a college or university?</li><li>What can my family afford? How can I fill any gap between what I need and my family’s resources?</li></ul></li></ul>	

## SECTION XV:

# FINANCIAL AID

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Financial aid can be divided into several types:

### Gift Aid

Gift aid is money that you do not have to pay back. Gift aid can be merit-based or need-based and comes in the form of a scholarship or a grant. Sources of gift aid can be:

- The federal government (such as a Pell Grant)
- A state program (such as the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship)
- A college or university
- A private organization
- An employer

### Federal Work Study

- Government pays for a portion of the student's earnings.
- Need-based eligibility required.
- Students earn a paycheck.
- Earnings do not count against the students' aid eligibility the following year.
- Earnings can be used for any educational expense, not just tuition.

### Student Loans

- Subsidized Loan (Student)
- Unsubsidized Loan (Student)
- PLUS Loan - Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students
- Consolidated Loans

### What is the Difference Between Subsidized and Unsubsidized Student Loans?

Subsidized loans are awarded as part of calculated need. Interest is paid by the federal government while students are in school. Unsubsidized loans are awarded over and above the student's calculated need. Interest must be paid by student while in school or capitalized at repayment.

### Determining Cost of Attendance (COA)

To determine how much aid is needed, you must calculate the total cost of attendance (COA) for each college or university they apply to, and colleges and universities must calculate the Student Aid Index (SAI) for students who request need-based financial aid. Here are some helpful links to financial aid tools and college cost calculators

- [MyIntuition.org](https://myintuition.org/)
- [CollegeBoard "Big Future" Cost Calculator](https://collegeboard.org/bigfuture/cost-calculator/)
- [Department Of Ed. Net Price Calculator](https://www.fl.gov/education/financial-aid/net-price-calculator/)

**Cost Of Attendance** includes tuition as well as fees, room and board, books, and transportation.

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

Colleges use two main forms to determine a student's SAI the **FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)** and the **CSS Profile**. Both forms help colleges determine a student's financial need through a simple formula. The FAFSA is the only application needed to determine eligibility for federal aid and some state aid. It is free for all applicants. Please visit FAFSA at [studentaid.gov](https://studentaid.gov) for deadlines and availability.

### The following information is requested on the FAFSA:

- SSN and Driver's License #
- Taxed Income (federal tax returns) for both students and parents
- Untaxed income, accounts, business, and farm assets
- Household size/number of children in school
- IRS Data Retrieval to import your tax return data
- Prior Year (PPY) Tax Data

### CSS Profile

The CSS Profile is administered by the College Board and required by about 350 institutions, mainly private, in addition to the FAFSA. A fee is charged for submission of the Profile, although fee waivers are available for qualified students/families. This application is needed to determine eligibility for institutional funds and the funds provided by the federal government. Data requested is more extensive than the FAFSA, including:

- Detailed income
- Home value and debt
- Family asset details, including losses
- Both custodial and noncustodial parent information

### Florida Financial Aid and the Bright Futures Scholarship

The State of Florida offers financial support for students. The best known is the **Bright Futures Scholarship**, a merit-based scholarship that is accepted by Florida public and private colleges and universities that opens October 1 of each year. **Students MUST APPLY by submitting a Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA) by August 31 following the student's high school graduation.**

### The FFAA includes:

- Date of student's high school graduation
- Specific course work
- GPA
- SAT/ACT scores Service hour requirements
- Student must be a FL resident and US Citizen or eligible non-citizen

Mrs. Monica Hammett is available to discuss Bright Futures eligibility requirements at the student’s and parent’s convenience. Please schedule a time to meet with Mrs. Hammett using the “**Appointments**” link found under any college counselor’s email signature. Senior students are encouraged to apply after December 1st so that they can first complete their college applications.

Other Florida-based Financial Aid programs are:

**Effective Access to Student Education Grant (EASE)**

The requirements for this non-need-based grant are as follows:

- Student must be a FL resident and U.S Citizen
- Student must be enrolled at FL private college or university

**Florida Student Access Grant (FSAG).**

The requirements for this need-based grant, which can be used at a private or public college or university in Florida, are as follows:

- Student must be a Florida Resident and US Citizen
- Must complete FAFSA
- Awards range from a minimum of \$200 to maximum set by the Florida legislature each year.

**Very Important Links to Access Financial Aid Forms and Resources:**

**FAFSA:**

[fafsa.org](https://fafsa.org)

**CSS Profile:**

[cssprofile.collegeboard.org](https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org)

**Florida Pre-Paid Plans:**

[myfloridaprepaid.com/prepaid-plans](https://myfloridaprepaid.com/prepaid-plans)

In addition to the financial aid resources mentioned in this section, many colleges and universities offer institution-based merit scholarships for a wide range of skills, accomplishments, and characteristics. **Each student is responsible for thoroughly researching the financial aid requirements and merit scholarship opportunities available at colleges and universities.**

**SECTION XVI:**  
**SENIOR YEAR SUCCESS: WHAT WORKS**



- 1. Successful seniors maintain a challenging course load throughout 12th grade.**
  - They do not drop classes that they “don’t feel like taking” anymore – whether they have been accepted to the college of their dreams already or not.
  - They continue to be committed to their classes even once they have been accepted to a college that excites them, because they remember that this college has accepted them based on its review of their 12th grade schedule, and it is the college’s expectation that they will continue to work diligently and successfully in these classes.
  - **Please note seniors must notify colleges to which they have applied of any changes to their academic schedule for 12th grade.** While occasional changes are needed in crises or extremely specific situations, most changes to senior schedules are discouraged once a student has applied to college.
- 2. Successful seniors continue to work conscientiously to earn the best grades that they can.**
  - This means that successful students resist the temptation of “senioritis” which refers to general lack of motivation, less than careful academic work, and general disregard for one’s responsibilities in school and otherwise.
  - **The colleges where a student has been accepted will want to see that student’s final high school transcript. It is essential to ensure that what they see is good news!**
- 3. Successful seniors consciously make good choices in their lives, including online.**



SECTION XVII:

# CHOOSING A COLLEGE

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Congratulations! All your hard work has paid off, and now a choice (or choices) about where to attend college must be made. Here are some suggested steps to help with the decision:

**Set Your Priorities**

What are your goals for the next four years? Correspondingly, what are the most important categories to use to evaluate your college options? Consider the following four categories as helpful ones to use to compare colleges: Academics, Cost of Attendance and Financial Aid, Student Life and Extra-curricular Activities, Location and Distance from Home.

**Visit (or Re-Visit) Campus**

Research the schools on your “short list” by talking to current students and recent graduates. Admitted students’ weekends are great times to see a school for a few reasons. One, there is usually an assortment of panels organized to highlight distinct aspects of the school including academic departments and student life. Second, students at the school are usually made aware that it is a prospective students’ visit weekend—and may make a bit more time in their schedules to speak to prospective students and their families.

**Follow Up with Colleges’ Financial Aid Offices**

Follow up with the colleges’ financial aid offices if you wish to try to negotiate a financial aid award. This is done most often in cases where a student has received better financial aid offers from another college, financial circumstances have changed, or the financial aid award is insufficient.

**Evaluate and Compare the Colleges on Your Final List**

Use a word document, spreadsheet, or paper to compare colleges in categories important to you. The list above (academics, financial info, student life, and location) offers a helpful framework for many students to compare colleges. If you want to add or delete categories from this list because that makes sense for you, go for it.

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SECTION XVIII:

# APPENDIX

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**Fee Waiver Information**

**For College Entrance Exams: ACT and SAT**

If you qualify for a fee waiver, starting junior year, you are entitled to four free ACT tests with a separate code for each and two free SAT tests where the same code will be applied. Please note that late registration fees still apply.

There are additional advantages to registering for these tests utilizing fee waivers. Benefits include the following, see websites provided for more details:

- Unlimited free ACT/SAT score reports to colleges where you apply.
- Unlimited free college applications through Common App and other participating schools.
- Access additional test preparation or score interpretation materials to help improve your performance.

Click [HERE](#) for SAT fee waiver eligibility. Click [HERE](#) for ACT fee waiver eligibility. If you believe you qualify for fee waivers, speak with your college counselor or Ms. Monica Hammett to request them.

**For College Applications**

- [Common Application fee waiver](#)
- [USDA Income Eligibility Guidelines](#) (one option for fee waiver eligibility)
- [NACAC College Application Fee Waiver](#)

**For Enrollment Deposit**

- [NACAC Enrollment Deposit](#)

**Oxbridge Academy Transcript Procedures**

Transcripts are prepared by the Registrar office at the end of every semester. Accordingly, transcript discrepancies must be brought up with the Registrar’s office directly. However, the College Counseling office is always happy to advocate on behalf of students and parents as needed. There are two types of transcripts: **official** and **unofficial**.

Per our policy, an Oxbridge Academy transcript lists only the courses students have taken at Oxbridge Academy and (if applicable) those courses taken through dual enrollment at Palm Beach State College or FLVS. This ensures the accuracy of your academic record. Oxbridge transcripts do not list courses taken at other institutions, including courses taken at other high schools. Instead, the total number of “approved” transferred credits will be displayed under each grade and accounted for under the *Total Credits Earned* summary.

At the start of each academic year, enrolled students’ transcripts entering any grade (including transfer students) will first list the courses in progress. No grades will be displayed until the semester ends. Thereafter, semester grades (not quarter grades) are updated by the Registrar usually within three weeks after the end of each semester. Accordingly, transcripts are updated twice per year, first when the first semester ends and then when the second semester concludes.

After the Add/Drop period in the first semester, unofficial transcripts (not report cards) are uploaded onto MaiaLearning accounts (Maia Drive) for all Oxbridge seniors. All Oxbridge students from the second semester of ninth grade to graduation may request that their unofficial transcript be uploaded to MaiaLearning by clicking [HERE](#).

**Students and parents have equal MaiaLearning access and can find their unofficial transcripts by clicking on MaiaDrive in their MaiaLearning accounts.**

**Process to Request Official Transcripts for 12th Grade Students**

Students in 12th grade must complete a **Transcript Release Form**. This form enables us to comply with state requirements and authorizes the release of academic records to colleges.

Therefore, well before the end of the 11th grade year, each student or parent/guardian should download a copy of the Transcript Release Form from the student’s or parent’s MaiaLearning account, in the Resources section, complete and sign it, and send it to their counselor or to Monica Hammett at [monica@oapb.org](mailto:monica@oapb.org).

Federal and State Law prohibit the release of pupil records without written authorization from a parent or adult student. Accordingly, all transcripts will be placed on hold and will not be released to colleges or universities until parents/students return the original Transcript Release Form to the College Counseling Office.

Students in 12th grade do not need to submit a separate transcript release form for each college they are applying. The completion of one Transcript Release Form allows us to send transcripts to schools on the student’s list in the **Applying** section of MaiaLearning.

It is essential that the application plans that you choose (i.e., early action, early decision, rolling, priority, restrictive early action, or regular decision) are accurately added to your **Applying** list, so that your transcript can be sent by the deadline.

For further information on the “application type” please see the “[College Application Requirements and Deadlines](#)” section of this manual.

**Process to Request Official Transcripts for 12th Grade Students/Parents for Scholarships:**

Students who would like to apply for scholarships while in 12th grade are required to make an online request by clicking [HERE](#). **Due to many last-minute requests, these requests are processed first-come first-served. Requests must be made 30 days before the deadline to ensure that transcripts are sent on time.**

**Process to Request Official Transcripts for NAIA, Clearing House/NCAA Eligibility Center:**

Students invited for an official visit or those getting recruited must register with the NAIA, or the Clearing House / NCAA Eligibility Center for evaluation. Transcripts will be uploaded when a student registers with each website. Accordingly, students are not required to request transcripts for this service.

**Process to Request Official Transcripts for Athletics (All Grades):**

Students being actively recruited by coaches may sometimes be asked to submit a transcript directly to them. If this is the case, students or parents may request an online transcript request by clicking [HERE](#). Unofficial transcripts are available in the MaiaDrive of each student’s MaiaLearning account.

**Process to Request Official Transcripts for 9th-11th Grade Students/Parents:**

Some students consider attending a summer program which will require the submission of a transcript to evaluate the academic standing of the student. In that case, transcripts are sent directly to institutions from Oxbridge Academy. We cannot give official transcripts directly to students or parents, although unofficial transcripts are available upon request on the MaiaDrive in student MaiaLearning accounts.

While most programs require a transcript to be physically mailed to the institutions, there are others that would require counselors to upload the transcript directly onto their website. Whether a transcript is to be physically mailed or uploaded on a website, enrolled students, or parents of enrolled students, who would like to request a transcript for that purpose may request an online transcript request by clicking [HERE](#).



**NOTE:** The registrar’s office has **SEPARATE** systems and procedures for the processing of transcripts usually associated with the transfer of a student into another high school.

# SUMMER CHECKLIST FOR RISING SENIORS

CHECKLIST ITEM	✓
<b>Keep Doing Virtual Tours and Information Sessions for Colleges on Your List</b> This is important! Put them on your calendar and follow through on your commitment to yourself. You might want to ask about the supplemental essay topics during these sessions to potentially get an early start on writing.	
<b>Keep Working on Your Personal Statement</b> Set a July or early August due date for yourself if it has not already been done. Your essay reader will be assigned to you over summer break; please use this excellent resource to revise and refine your main and supplemental essays.	
<b>Update Your Resume</b> Having this document updated will let you transfer entries to Common App activities section and submit the entire document to colleges that request it.	
<b>Create a <a href="#">Common Application</a> account</b> This should be done in the first week of August, when the latest version of the application is usually released. You should fill out as much info as you can.	
<b>Complete the <a href="#">SSAR</a></b> This is important if you are applying to any Florida state schools or other schools that require it- there are some notes in our <a href="#">manual</a> regarding this if you need help.	
<b>Follow the Colleges You Are Planning to Apply to on Instagram.</b> Schools have been making important announcements on this platform and hosting some great sessions with students. So, this platform offers some more opportunities to learn about a school.	
<b>Make A Spreadsheet For Yourself</b> Use Excel or Google Sheets to organize your college research. Make a note of any dead-lines, program information, virtual visit dates, and application requirements.	
<b>Plan for School-Specific Essays</b> If you want to see what last year’s essays were for a school on Common App, look <a href="#">HERE</a> . Sometimes, the essay topics stay the same, but not always.	
<b>Check if a College is Test-Optional</b> <a href="#">FairTest.org</a> as a list of test-optional colleges. You should also check a particular school’s admissions website in case they have made a recent announcement.	
<b>Work on Your <i>Balanced</i> College List</b> See <a href="#">Page 4</a> for more information on developing a balanced College List.	

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CHECKLIST ITEM	✓
<b>Complete Manual Acknowledgement</b> Let us know that you read and understand the policies and procedures described in the College Counseling Manual by <a href="#">completing this very brief online form</a> .	
<b>Submit Transcript Release Form</b> Have your parents sign and return to us via email the Transcript Release form that is available under Resources in Maia Drive. Your counselor cannot send your transcript without this form signed! For most students, returning it before the start of senior year works well – but if you have an earlier app deadline, you should turn it in before then.	
<b>Sign Up For Testing</b> If you are applying to any schools that require testing (ex. public FL colleges and universities), you <u>must</u> submit your test score to those schools. Please sign up for July, August, September, or October testing to have time to send your scores to schools if you have not already tested. Most colleges will allow you to self-report and do not require the official test score with your application, but PLEASE confirm with EACH college on your list!	

# SENIOR FALL APPLICATION CHECKLIST

CHECKLIST ITEM	✓
<b>Link Your MaiaLearning and Common Application Accounts</b>	
<b>Carefully Complete Your College Applications</b> Please submit your college applications carefully. It is your responsibility to meet all requirements that are part of the applications, and to do so on time (we strongly suggest applying by any priority deadline).	
<b>Please verify that all schools where you plan to apply are on your MaiaLearning Applying list at least 30 days before the deadline that you have selected.</b> This is the ONLY way your counselor can send documents to a college by the deadline. NOTE: If applying to a Common App school, it must ALSO be listed under your “My Colleges” tab in your Common App.	
<b>Submit Official SAT or ACT Score Reports</b> If required, to arrive by the college’s application deadline you have selected. Some reports can take up to 2 weeks to arrive.	
<b>Keep An Eye On Each College’s Application Portal</b> Check each college’s application portal to keep track of documents received. Please note that this step is ongoing and note that there can be delays in portals showing documents that the school has already received.	

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CHECKLIST ITEM	✓
<p><b>In the Event of Missing Documents:</b></p> <p>If a college’s applicant portal shows that documents are missing (such as transcripts/letters of rec), please follow these steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Check your <b>Applying</b> list of your MaiaLearning account to make sure the college has been listed.</li><li>2. If the college is listed, check the MaiaLearning Send Summary section to ensure the missing documents have not been sent.</li><li>3. If the documents have NOT been sent, please contact your counselor.</li><li>4. If they have been sent according to MaiaLearning, call the admissions office of the college in question and let them know that the missing document was sent by the school. This often solves the problem.</li><li>5. If it does not, please contact your counselor.</li></ol>	
<p><b>If You Are Invited For an Interview</b></p> <p>We strongly suggest that you accept the invitation, and <b>prepare for</b> that interview. If schools have optional interviews, plan to sign up for interviewing as this can strengthen your application.</p>	
<p><b>Constantly Check Your Email</b></p> <p>Be diligent about checking your email and responding to any emails that need your attention. This is a crucial step. Throughout the college application process, and in college, you are responsible for what is emailed to you by colleges, and your parents will not be copied on it.</p>	
<p><b>Keep Working on Your Remaining Applications</b></p> <p>Aim to complete all your applications before the December holiday break when possible. You deserve the time off around the end of year holidays and your college counselors will be on their break also. If you applied ED, please consider in advance a scenario in which you are not accepted to that school, and work on other schools’ applications before you hear from your ED school in mid-December.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reminder: Please add any colleges with an early January deadline to your <b>Applying</b> list by Dec. 1. This will allow our office time to process these materials before the holiday break.</li><li>• When you receive admissions decisions (admit, deny, waitlist, defer...) please enter the results promptly in your MaiaLearning account. This data is vital for the college counseling program to continue to support future Oxbridge applicants.</li></ul>	

**Oxbridge Academy Procedures for Taking Advanced Placement (AP) Exams**

Oxbridge Academy students’ college acceptances are a testament to the strength of Oxbridge’s Honors and Honors Seminar classes. Colleges have shared with Oxbridge college counselors that they do not expect Oxbridge students to take AP courses and/or exams when we do not offer AP courses.

Though Oxbridge Academy does not offer AP classes, a few students request the opportunity to take AP Exams each year. Thus, Oxbridge has partnered with the College Board® to offer AP Exam administration annually. Accordingly, The College Board® AP exams are typically held and administered by Oxbridge during the first two weeks in May of each academic year.

Oxbridge adheres to the systematic approach as managed by the College Board® including the AP exam fee structure and corresponding exam schedule. The College Board® is continually evolving their practices for the benefit of all students and as such periodically publishes on their website a wealth of pertinent recommendations and/or instruction for exam preparation. Oxbridge supports and highly encourages proper preparation for each exam.

Therefore, if considering taking an AP Exam, students and families are encouraged to initially consult with their assigned Oxbridge Academy college counselor to effectively discuss academic goals that will enhance the student’s profile when considering highly selective colleges.

For additional AP resources, annual updates, and testing tips, please visit The College Board® website and download the Bulletin for AP Students and Parents. For planning purposes, please note that the cost for each AP exam was \$94 in 2022 (student or family is responsible for paying this fee). Oxbridge Academy does not offer AP vouchers.

Students who are prepared to take an AP exam at Oxbridge are required to register to take the AP exam by submitting a registration/permission form. This form is updated every year following the College Board® fee and exam schedule.

**AP Registration/Permission Process:**

1. Speak with college counselor
2. Request an AP registration/permission form from the [College Counseling Office](#).
3. Submit payment to the Oxbridge Academy business office
4. Submit the AP registration / permission form to the College Counseling Office prior to March 5 every year. If submitting after this date, the College Board® imposes a mandatory late fee of \$40 per exam.

