

# College Advising Handbook

Senior Placement Office  
Scarborough High School  
2024-2025



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# SCARBOROUGH HIGH SCHOOL'S SENIOR PLACEMENT OFFICE

The Senior Placement Office is located at the top of the stairs from Guidance in G142.

Address: 11 Municipal Drive  
Scarborough, ME 04074

Office Phone: 207.730.5030

Office Fax: 207.730.5019

CEEB Code: 200895

## **Mr. Scott Harris**

Senior Placement Counselor

[sharris@scarboroughschools.org](mailto:sharris@scarboroughschools.org)

207.730.5031

## **Mrs. Betsy Henderson**

Placement Office Assistant

Scholarship Coordinator

[chenderson@scarboroughschools.org](mailto:chenderson@scarboroughschools.org)

207.730.5030

## **MISSION**

The Senior Placement Office at Scarborough High School's mission is to advise and support all students preparing for their futures. Each student has their own personal journey through this process. We use a holistic and student-centered approach that encourages students to be self-aware, investigate options, look to the future, and consider what personal success and fulfillment might be for them.

Applying to college is a process of discovering, pondering who you are and who you want to become, and contemplating what role you want to play in the larger world. The transition from high school to college is busy and can be confusing for students. It is an exciting and challenging time with new opportunities, possibilities, and demands. It is a time of anticipation, of saying goodbye to friends and the familiar and moving into the new and the unknown. With everything going on, students could lose sight of what they are trying to accomplish because they are so involved with the tasks and responsibilities that have to be completed. How a student navigates through this process is just as important as where they end up. Students will develop and hone their organization, communication, and research skills.

The Scarborough High School Senior Placement Office has an extensive breadth and depth of experience. We are here to guide and support you as you navigate the college admissions process. Our commitment is to be responsive to students and parents, as well as professional, realistic, and well informed.

## **PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

As we start this exciting process, knowing that you, your parents, and your counselor have specific roles is helpful. This process is a partnership, and it is crucial that members of the partnership clearly understand and accept their role.

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Treat the college process as an opportunity for growth and self-evaluation and gain a better understanding of yourself.
- Check your e-mail frequently.
- Read all communications from the Placement Office.
- Review the Placement Office Handbooks.
- Schedule and attend meetings with Mr. Harris.
- Keep the Placement Office up to date on your plans, progress, and results.
- Communicate regularly with your counselor.
- Research admissions criteria at the colleges you are considering.
- Register for SAT/ACT testing.
- Plan to visit colleges.
- Complete the Junior Questionnaire.
- Attend College Fairs.
- Ask Questions!
- Request letters of recommendation from at least two teachers.
- Meet with college representatives visiting Scarborough High School.
- Complete applications honestly and accurately, noting deadlines.
- Send out test scores to colleges that require them (the Placement Office cannot do this).
- Complete and submit your FAFSA and any additional forms schools might need (CSS and SSAR).

## **PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Be open with your child. Discuss options, including the financial picture and any restrictions, openly and honestly with your child early in the process.
- Complete the Parent Brag Sheet.
- Be aware of deadlines and other commitments.
- Help your child send out test scores to colleges. The student is responsible for sending test scores to the colleges that require them.
- Plan visits. Assist your child in visiting colleges if possible.
- Fill out and file financial aid forms if applying for financial aid (FAFSA, CSS Profile).
- Check with them periodically about the progress of their college application process. But please remember, too, that your child should own the college admission process.
- Help your child to recognize and celebrate strengths. A weekly college check-in is a good way to balance the need to stay on top of the process and encourage students to take responsibility for the process.
- Communicate with the Placement Office. We are here to support and help you, too.
- Remember that students are works in progress and that this search will evolve as they grow and learn about themselves.
- Encouraging independence and individual growth.
- Letting your child lead the process while providing appropriate support.
- Helping to accept outcomes by promoting, modeling, and encouraging resilience

## PLACEMENT OFFICE RESPONSIBILITIES

- Work hard to get to know our students – to understand and appreciate their goals, talents, and interests.
- Discuss post-high school planning with students and their parents and help develop a schedule of next steps and, eventually, a balanced list representing suitable matches.
- Provide information about the chances of admission to particular colleges.
- Provide resources and opportunities for students and families to learn about various colleges.
- Be advocates for our students, presenting their transcripts and official school recommendations to the colleges so they have the strongest chance of being considered favorably.
- Listen to, learn from, and communicate with parents.
- Personalize the process to each individual student.
- Make students aware of visitations, special events, college open houses, deadlines, scholarships, and testing.
- Prepare and send school reports, letters of recommendation, and transcripts to colleges and the NCAA, if necessary.
- Prepare a well-written letter of recommendation that portrays the candidate in a positive and honest light, emphasizing strengths and patterns of growth where appropriate.
- Send Quarter 1, mid-year, and final grade reports to the colleges.
- Staying informed of current trends within college admissions.
- Being attuned to pedagogical issues regarding adolescent development.
- Providing access to information and educational opportunities to students of all backgrounds.
- Encouraging students and families to explore the range of excellent educational opportunities nationally and internationally.
- Encouraging students to carefully research individual colleges and universities' diverse admission requirements, policies, and procedures.
- Creating an open and positive atmosphere that encourages students, faculty, and parents to take advantage of the available resources.
- Understanding and responding appropriately to students' needs promotes self-sufficiency and confidence.
- Providing appropriate support of student writing and applications while empowering students to develop their own voices and make their own choices.
- Promoting experiential learning opportunities, including a gap year, which could complement students' college educations.
- Submitting transcripts, recommendations, and secondary school materials to each college or university reflected on a student's Naviance list.
- Communicating with and being accessible to parents throughout the college search.

## **THINK BIG, ASK YOURSELF ...**

The more self-aware you are in this process, the more effective it will be. However, we understand that you don't know what you don't know. At this early stage, many students don't yet have a clear understanding of what they are looking for, and that's fine. We are here to help in this process of discovery. The first step in the process is looking closely at yourself, your abilities, interests, values, hopes, and aspirations. What are you seeking for yourself and from a college? Be realistic about what you are looking for in a college.

### **EVALUATE YOUR PRIORITIES**

The following questions can help you focus on college selection and admission.

An honest and thoughtful self-reflection can reveal what you should look for in colleges and prepare you for statements you will be asked to make about yourself in essays and interviews when you apply to college. If you are willing to look seriously at yourself, you can find colleges that are right for you and present yourself effectively to them.

### **GOALS & VALUES**

- What aspects of your high school have you enjoyed the most? Would you do anything differently?
- What values are most important to you?
- What do you want to accomplish in the years ahead?
- What kind of person would you like to become?
- Of your strengths, which would you most like to develop? What would you like to change?
- Is there anything you have ever dreamed of doing or becoming?
- What events or experiences have shaped your growth and way of thinking?

### **EDUCATION**

- What are your academic interests? Which courses have you enjoyed most? Which courses have been most difficult for you?
- What do you choose to learn when you can learn independently? What do your choices show about your interests and how you like to learn?
- How do you learn best? What teaching methods and styles engage your interest and effort the most?
- How much do you like to read, discuss issues, and exchange ideas? What has been your most stimulating intellectual experience in recent years?
- What is the most significant intellectual risk you have taken?
- In what areas of skill or knowledge do you feel confident or inadequately prepared for college study? Have your courses challenged you?
- Have you worked up to your potential in high school? Is your academic record an accurate measure of your ability and potential? What do you consider the best measures of your potential for college work?
- Why do you want an education? Why are you going to college?

## **ACTIVITIES & INTERESTS**

- What activities do you enjoy doing?
- Which activities have meant the most to you? Why?
- Do your activities show any pattern of commitment, competence, or contribution?
- How would others describe your role in your school or home community? What do you consider your most significant contribution?

## **THE WORLD AROUND YOU**

- How has your environment influenced your way of thinking?
- How have your interests and abilities been acknowledged or limited by your school and home?
- What do your parents and friends expect of you? How have their expectations influenced the goals and standards you set for yourself? What pressures have you felt to conform?
- Have you ever encountered people who thought and acted differently from the way you did? What viewpoints have challenged you the most? How did you respond? What did you learn about yourself and others?
- How would you enjoy living in a different part of the country or the world? How often do you want to be able to go home? What kind of change in your lifestyle and perspective might be exciting, distressing, and overwhelming?
- What kind of surroundings is essential to your well-being? Are there certain places, activities, locations (rural, suburban, urban), weather, or pace of life that make you happy? Do you prefer a fast-paced environment, an organized environment, or a more serene and relaxed environment?

## **YOU & HOW YOU WORK WITH OTHERS**

- How would people who know you well describe you: Your finest qualities? Your shortcomings? Would you agree with their assessments? How have you grown or changed during your high school years?
- Which relationships are most important to you and why? Describe the people whom you consider your best friends? Your best critics? Your best advocates? In what ways are they similar to or different from you?
- How do you feel about choices and making decisions for yourself? What are the best decisions you have made recently? How much do you rely on others' direction, advice, or guidance? Have you ever chosen anything because it was new or exciting?

## START GATHERING INFORMATION

Research colleges, and take notes as you go. The more colleges you see, the more they can begin to sound the same, but they are not. Note curriculum requirements, faculty-student ratios, retention rates, housing, and strength of the department(s) that most interest you. What about the location, social life, athletics, diversity, community service, etc.? Your notes can be helpful when you need to answer supplementary questions about why you are a good match for a particular college.

As part of your research at each college, check out course requirements for particular programs you may be interested in. If you are applying for engineering, please check for specific math/science high school course requirements. Fine arts or architecture programs may require a portfolio.

## GET ORGANIZED

You will discover that applying to colleges requires time. Time for research, talking to admissions officers, alums, coaches, friends, teachers, and parents, and filling out applications. Getting organized helps reduce anxiety and being overwhelmed by this process.

- Create a new e-mail address to receive college flyers scholarships and to set up your Common App.

**Do not use your @scarborughschools.org account.**

- Set up a binder or Google Drive to stay organized. Include the following items:
  - Notes on the various colleges you are considering.
  - A chart of application deadlines.
  - A record of tests you have taken, dates, and the colleges that require them.
  - A record of your college-related internet accounts, usernames, and passwords.
  - A copy of your resume
  - A copy of your transcript

## GUIDEBOOKS

*The Fiske Guide to Colleges*, Edward B. Fiske, *The Best 385 Colleges*, Princeton Review, *Colleges that Change Lives*, Loren Pope, *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, Barron's, *The College Finder: Choose the School That's Right for you*, Steven R. Antonoff

## PODCASTS

NACAC Podcast Network, Admit It!, Getting In A College Coach Conversation, Admissions Beat

## WEBSITES

Princeton Review: <https://www.princetonreview.com>

Macleans: <https://www.macleans.ca/hub/education-rankings/>

National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC): [www.nacacnet.org](http://www.nacacnet.org)

USDOE College Score Card: <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/data/>



## NAVIANCE

Scarborough subscribes to Naviance, an Internet database that can be helpful in the college search process. Naviance helps students keep track of their prospective colleges and active applications and provides information for over 5,000 colleges and universities.

### LOG IN TO NAVIANCE

Go to <https://student.naviance.com/scarborough> and **Log in with Clever.**

- **Research Colleges:** Naviance can help you research college opportunities.
- **College Search** allows you to search for colleges based on specific criteria.
- **College Lookup** lets you look up specific colleges, where you can review college information, see statistics about Scarborough applications to that college, and link to the college's website.
- **College Compare** shows Scarborough application statistics for a selection of colleges.
- **Scattergrams** charts five years of Scarborough admission activity at specific colleges.
- **Discuss your plans** as you research and make your college plans and regular check-ins with Mr. Harris. Questions? See us in the Placement Office!

### REPUTATION

Please make your own decisions about colleges based on current information. It is easy to be influenced by stereotypes, past reputations, and friends. Gather as much information as you can from multiple sources to get the truest sense of an institution. Different colleges appeal to different individuals for many reasons. Support others' choices and base your opinions on first-hand knowledge of an institution because it is what you put into your education.

**US News & World Report** and similar ranking systems only give a glimpse of a college; they certainly do not rank with your individual needs and talents in mind. Check out Malcolm Gladwell's Revisionist History Project Dillard for a deeper dive into rankings.

## BUILDING YOUR LIST & FINDING YOUR FIT

In developing your list of colleges, you need to make sure the number of schools you will apply to is balanced and reasonable. As you build your list, make sure these are schools you would want to attend.

Assessing your record, strengths, and weaknesses and examining the college's selectivity and statistics will give you some idea. Naviance allows you to compare your academic profile to other applicants to a particular college. However, before you start looking at statistics, take the following steps: Evaluate yourself. What kinds of grades have you earned? What type of testing profile do you have? How rigorous is the curriculum you have selected? Get the facts on the colleges in which you are interested. What is the acceptance rate? What is the middle 50 percent range of SAT scores of accepted applicants? What is the average GPA of admitted candidates? Compare your grades and scores with those of your selected schools.

### WHAT TO CONSIDER

These are some criteria that can be used to evaluate and choose a college.

### STUDENT BODY

**Enrollment:** Total % undergraduate students. First-year class size.

**Retention:** % of first-year students who return for the second year.

**Background:** Male/female ratio. % commuter/resident. Geographic origin. % underrepresented students. % receiving financial aid.

## LOCATION & SURROUNDINGS

**Location:** Geographic region. Distance from home. Travel costs and convenience.

**Setting:** Urban/rural. Weather. Nearest city or countryside. Recreational opportunities.

**Facilities:** Library. Laboratories. Studies and practice rooms. Student Center. Athletic/Fitness Center.

## TYPE OF COLLEGE & PHILOSOPHY

**Type:** 2/4 year. Public/Private/religiously affiliated. College/University.

**Purpose:** Liberal arts. Pre-professional for business, education, engineering, fine arts, etc. Technical or vocational institute. Degrees offered (BA, BS, BFA, etc.).

**Philosophy:** Traditional/progressive. Deeply scholarly/career-oriented.

**Calendar:** Semester/trimester/quarter/module. Inter-term program.

## CURRICULUM

**Academic Requirements:** Proportion of study to general education/concentration/electives.

Required first-year courses or curriculum/distribution requirements in curricular areas/elective curriculum. Degree requirements. Grading system. Grading/distribution. Honor system.

**Academic Offerings:** Majors offered in your areas of interest. Breadth and depth of courses offered in your areas of interest. Interdisciplinary courses and majors. Ability to design own major.

**Independent Study:** Individual tutorials. Seminars. Research opportunities. Special Study Programs. Fieldwork. Internships. Exchange programs. Foreign study. Joint degree programs. Cooperative work/study plan. Pre-professional programs.

## ADMISSIONS

**Deadlines:** Application. Notification of decision. Reply to offer of admission.

**Application:** Requirements. Fee. Information forms. High School courses. Type of application. Secondary school report. Supplements. Recommendations. Interview.

**SAT/ACT:** Many colleges have moved to test-optional policies, meaning they no longer require the SAT or ACT as a part of their application.

**Admission Selectivity:** % of applicants offered admission. Average SAT/ACT scores of first-year applicants. % of applicants ranked in the top 10% of high school class. First-year class profile. Student Yield

## ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

**Faculty:** with Ph.D. Origin of degrees earned. Original faculty research/scholarship. Expectations for teaching/scholarship/advising and other college services. Emphasis on undergraduate teaching.

**Faculty-Student Relationships:** Faculty-student ratio. Accessibility for conference assistance. Departmental clubs and committees with student representatives. Average class size. Opportunities for discussion/student presentation/exchange of ideas. Opportunities for research with professors.

**Academic Demands:** Workload. Course expectations. Type of assignments. Academic pressure or competition.

**Intellectual Vitality:** Student attitude toward learning. Flexibility/structure for study. Interest in issues.

**Career Preparation:** Career advising and information programs. % who go on to graduate school. Job placement.

## CAMPUS & STUDENT LIFE

**Types of Students:** Diversity and acceptance of differences. Importance of money/material possessions/social appearances.

**Community Type:** Homogeneous. Pluralistic. Cohesive. Fragmented. School spirit. Controversial campus issues. Liberal/restrictive social regulations.

**Living Arrangements:** Predominantly large dorms/housing clusters/small houses. Availability of

single rooms/doubles/suites/multiple rooms. Greek life and Greek housing. Housing based on academic or co-curricular interests. System of housing. Allocation/roommate selection.

Centralized/decentralized dining. Alternative dining programs.

**Campus Activities:** related to your interests. Emphasis on social life, Greek life, sports, or other dominant interests. Clubs and organizations. Presence of religious, ethnic, or cultural groups. Cultural opportunities on campus or in the community.

**Retention:** Percentage of first-year students who return for the second year.

## FINANCIAL FIT

**Costs:** Minimum-maximum total costs per year. Student budget for tuition and fees/room and board/books and personal expenses/travel costs. Admission and enrollment fees.

**Family Resources:** What can your family pay toward college expenses? Your earnings and savings.

**Awards:** % of students receiving aid. Range of awards. Average award. No loan program or loans are included as part of the financial aid package.

**Financial Aid:** Based on need/merit/or funds available. Loan and job expectations.

**Application:** FAFSA/CSS/state/college forms required. Deadlines.

## EVALUATE & BALANCE YOUR LIST

The ultimate goal of the college search is to create a balanced list of six to ten schools that fall into four categories based on the likelihood of admission. The terms are relative, not absolute, in determining where a given school falls for you. Your final list should be constructed to be admitted to the majority of the colleges on it. If things don't work out as you hoped, you should still have at least two or three good choices.

**HIGH PROBABILITY (Likely)** - These schools are based on your research of their admission requirements, to which you are 70-100% sure of being accepted and confident you will be able to afford to attend. These may not be your "first choice" schools, but they offer a solid backup plan if all else fails. It makes good sense to plan for all contingencies. **How Many: 2-3**

**MEDIUM PROBABILITY (Target)** – These colleges are those based on your research of their admission requirements, to which you are reasonably (35-70%) sure of being accepted. You are reasonably sure you could afford to attend. It will likely require some analyses of financial aid awards to determine whether or not they are affordable for you to attend. Target schools should comprise the majority of schools to which you are applying. **How Many: 3-4**

**LOW PROBABILITY (Reach)** - Based on your research, their admission requirements are on the upper margins of your academic credentials. These should not be schools that are downright impossible to get into but colleges to which you are 15-35% sure of being accepted. Financially, these schools will likely require a significant grant or scholarship money and loans to be affordable. College admissions decisions can be highly unpredictable. You will most likely need to carefully consider selective schools' financial aid packages to determine if they will be affordable. **How Many: 1-2**

## HOW MANY?

A commonly asked question is, how many schools should I apply to? The best answer: it depends! Depending on how much you are willing to spend on application fees or your ability to narrow your list down. The Common App limits you to 20 schools; even then, that is a lot to choose from. However, if you are looking for a number 6 to 8, schools will give you a good mix of options.

## WHAT ARE COLLEGES LOOKING FOR?

When reviewing students' applications, admissions committees consider several factors: academic rigor, grades, standardized test scores, extracurricular and community-based activities, recommendations, essays, and, in some cases, interviews or demonstrated interest. While colleges differ considerably in how much weight they attach to various factors, the following list will give you a sense of the chief factors that admission counselors look for.

### ACADEMIC PROGRAM & ACHIEVEMENT

College admissions generally look first to the student's course selection during their high school career. Colleges seek students who have taken advantage of the curricular opportunities offered. Although each college has different guidelines on course selection in high school, most colleges are typically looking for:

- 4 years of English
- 4 years of Math
- 3-4 years of History/Social Science
- 2-4 years of Science (including 2-3 years of Lab Science)
- 2-4 years of one World Language
- 1 year of Visual or Performing Arts

Grades are important; colleges will look closely at your transcript to assess your achievements in enrolled classes. Consideration will be given to the rigor of your courses as well. While colleges like to see AP/Honors-level courses in a student's program, you should not get in over your head. Accept your limitations as well as your strengths.

### STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES

Many schools are continuing to be test-optional. For most colleges, having a strong test score can help you in the admissions process. Super-scoring (combining the highest scores from different test dates) happens at many institutions, but make sure you know. It is important to understand colleges' testing requirements, and it is recommended that students plan for and take standardized tests as part of their college application process.

### CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Admissions officers are looking for students who will add to the community and the classroom, and how students spend their time outside the classroom matters. Unique talents, such as musical or athletic skills, community leadership, work, publications, or dramatic or artistic abilities, are all considered. Admission committees favor students who have demonstrated authentic passion and meaningful contributions to their co-curriculars.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Most colleges require recommendations (1 counselor) and (2+) teachers. We recommend that those teachers come from two academic areas and at least one core class teacher. Recommendations help the college better understand the applicant as a student.

### PERSONAL STATEMENT/ESSAY

The essay is an opportunity for you to showcase yourself. Being authentic is critical. As UPenn says on its website: "We carefully read each essay you submit, as they can help us get to know you much better than your transcripts and test scores. While essays are a good indication of how well you write, they are also windows into how you think, what you value, and how you see the world. Your numbers tell us

what kind of student you are. Your essays tell us what sort of person you are—and provide a glimpse into the intangibles you might bring to our community."

### **FINANCIAL NEED**

Many schools are need-blind in making admissions decisions, while others factor in your ability to pay in making an admissions decision.

### **DEMONSTRATED INTEREST**

Some colleges track whether you have visited campus and meet them at college fairs. Expressions of interest can enhance the evaluation of your application. Even as COVID-19 winds down, many colleges still offer virtual information sessions, tours, etc. Engaging virtually is one way to demonstrate interest.

### **INTERVIEW**

Some colleges require an interview, some recommend one, and others leave the matter to the candidate. In all cases, if the school offers interviews, having one is a good idea. It is important to know that if an interview is not required but offered, they will fill up quickly at selective colleges/universities, so keep watch when they open.

### **PORTFOLIOS/AUDITIONS**

It would be best to begin preparing your arts supplement/music audition piece over the summer before your senior year, whether you plan to submit a theater clip, a music clip, or slides of your artwork or photography. If you are applying to a music degree program, please know that an increasing number of music schools are requiring prospective undergraduates to send a pre-screen audition (CD, DVD, web-based platform) before considering them for live auditions. Check carefully for due dates, which sometimes differ from application deadlines and instructions about the desired/required format.

### **EARLY ACTION/EARLY DECISION**

Check out the early plans with the specific institution involved. A student with a clear first choice and strong qualifications at the time of application may be rewarded with early peace of mind. However, changing student preferences can make a binding commitment to attend a particular institution premature and uncomfortable. Students can get swept into the early application frenzy without assessing their prospects. Many selective colleges are filling 40% to 60% of their first-year classes through early programs. Even so, try not to get caught up in the early frenzy; consider your situation carefully with your family and Mr. Harris to determine if applying early is right for you. Any student wishing to apply early must let the college office know by early October to have time to complete the supporting documents.

## **COLLEGE VISITS**

It is a good idea for you to visit the colleges you are thinking of applying to. While it is preferable to visit a college when it is in session, summer visits can also be helpful. Walking on the campus, seeing the dorms, sitting in on a class, reading the school newspaper, and chatting with the tour guide will give you a better sense of what that particular school is like and what matters to the students who go there.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

- Call or check online for tour times or reserve a spot on the tour and information session. Many colleges have a formal information session at a specific time. We recommend you attend this as well as do the campus tour.
- Call ahead to see if the college offers on-campus interviews and try to arrange one (at least 2 weeks in advance). While college admission offices will try to accommodate your needs and requests, it may not always be possible. The earlier you schedule visits, the better your chances of getting the dates and times you prefer.
- Pace yourself. Realistically, you will not learn much if you plan a whirlwind tour. Do not try to visit 22 schools in a week! You are better off visiting fewer schools thoroughly than trying to visit every campus on a 16-college list. An interview and tour at two different colleges and travel time between them are almost always enough for one day.
- If possible, attend some classes and walk around the campus to get a feel for the place. Often, visiting the dining hall and the student center and listening to students talk are other good ways to get a sense of the school's atmosphere. Explore the areas of campus (and the surrounding area) where you think you will spend the most time. Walk around the academic departments that interest you.
- Take notes! Make it a habit to write down information and your impressions. Careful notes will benefit you in two ways: first, they will help you recall the details of a particular school when you have visited several campuses, and second, they will be helpful when an interviewer asks you, "Why do you want to attend this school?" or when an application contains a similar question.
- Even if you are not required to RSVP for a tour or information session, check in with the admission office receptionist when you arrive. You will likely be asked to complete an "Inquiry Card," which officially records your visit. Some colleges consider your campus visit "demonstrated interest."
- If you visit campus during the summer, remember that you can always return in the fall. Colleges may offer the opportunity to visit a class, meet with a professor, or have lunch with students. Your mailbox will be full of invitations to fall receptions, visit days, and off-campus interviews. These are great opportunities to learn more about each college and for them to learn about you or return for a second look.

## QUESTIONS FOR YOUR TOUR GUIDE

Below are some questions you may want to consider asking on the tour. The campus tour is an excellent opportunity to speak with a current student – your tour guide – and get a sense of the college experience from their point of view.

1. How large are your classes? How large are first-year classes? Do you meet regularly with an advisor?
2. What has your experience been with the core curriculum or the distribution requirements? Have you been able to explore different academic departments?
3. Where do you study? Is the library a good place to work or study? What hours do students have access to libraries, computers, labs, etc.?
4. Are there appropriate special services available for students with individual needs?
5. What academic experiences are available beyond the classroom?
6. What percent of students live in dorms? Is housing guaranteed for all four years?
7. Is this considered a safe campus? Are there regular patrols, escort vans, emergency phones, etc.?
8. Is this an openly competitive campus? How are tests and exams administered?
9. Do you meet with professors informally? Have you ever been invited to a professor's home?
10. How tolerant is this community of independence and diversity?
11. What are the most popular extracurricular activities here?
12. What leadership positions in this community do men hold? Women?
13. What do you like best and least about being a student here?
14. Are there single-sex dormitories? Substance-free dorms? "Quiet" dorms? Any thematic housing?

- Are there laundry facilities in each dorm?
15. What are the health care facilities that are available?
  16. What kind of career guidance/service is offered? Is it available to alums?
  17. What kinds of internships are available for students?
  18. Does social life revolve around the campus, or do most students leave on the weekends? What are the major social activities?
  19. What is the role of athletics on campus?
  20. What is the biggest campus issue currently?
- At the end of your visit, ask **yourself** one essential question: "Do I see myself fitting in here?"

## STANDARDIZED TESTING

While many schools continue to be test-optional in the 2024-25 admission cycle, navigating what they mean or want can be confusing. However, having a strong SAT/ACT score can be helpful to you in the admissions process. Know the testing requirements for the college you plan on applying to. All colleges accept the ACT/SAT and do not prefer either test.

Most students will take the SAT/ACT 1-3 times total. Preparing for and taking the test more than three times takes up a lot of energy, so for most students, we recommend preparing for your first test in the winter of your junior year and taking it in the spring of your junior year. Students may take a second/third test in the summer or senior fall. Retake the SAT/ACT as needed. Early Decision/Early Action applicants can usually take the early fall ACT/ SAT and have their scores available for colleges in the earlier round. The December tests are generally the last ones for EDII and Regular Admission.

### TEST PREP

There are many types of test preparation available for the SAT/ACT. These include books, self-paced online courses, in-person, online courses, apps, and one-on-one tutoring. At the very least, familiarize yourself with the format of the exams by using the booklets with sample questions provided by the testing service. Preferably, students should take a full-length practice test and score it. Look over the questions answered incorrectly or not answered.

### REGISTERING FOR TESTS

1. It is your responsibility to register for the SAT or ACT.
2. It is recommended that juniors take the SAT/ACT in the late winter/early spring.
3. Registration is online. You will need a credit card to register.

ACT: <https://my.act.org/account/signin?location=https://my.act.org>

SAT/CollegeBoard: <https://mysat.collegeboard.org/login>

4. **Always use the same name and address when signing up for tests!** If you sign up once as Jane P. Sherman and then use Janie Sherman another time, the computer will treat you as two different people.

### REPORTING TEST SCORES

Be aware of colleges that require official score reports, or if you choose to submit scores, do they then require an official score report? Students will need them sent directly from the testing agency. The Placement Office cannot send official scores.

## SAT vs. ACT

	SAT	ACT
<b>Why Take It?</b>	Colleges use SAT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships.	Colleges use ACT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships.
<b>Test Structure</b>	Reading Writing & Language Math	English Math Reading Science Reasoning Essay (Optional)
<b>Length</b>	3 hours	2 hours, 55 minutes (without essay) 3 hours, 40 minutes (with essay)
<b>Reading</b>	5 reading passages	4 reading passages
<b>Science</b>	None	1 science section testing your critical thinking skills (not your specific science knowledge)
<b>Math</b>	Covers: Arithmetic, Algebra I & II, Geometry, Trigonometry, and Data Analysis	Covers: Arithmetic, Algebra I & II, Geometry, Trigonometry, and Probability & Statistics
<b>Calculator Policy</b>	Some math questions don't allow you to use a calculator.	You can use a calculator on all math questions.
<b>Essays</b>	None	Optional. The essay will test how well you evaluate and analyze complex issues.
<b>How It's Scored</b>	Scored on a scale of 400–1600	Scored on a scale of 1–36

Sourced from <https://www.princetonreview.com/college/sat-act>



## TUITION BREAK – NEBHE

The New England Board of Higher Education's Regional Student Program (RSP) provides New England residents with a tuition break when studying specific majors – not available at public colleges in their home state - at public colleges and universities in other New England states. Programs are available through the RSP at all academic levels. The participating institutions approve the majors yearly and are listed in the annual RSP catalog. <http://www.nebhe.org/>

## NCAA

NCAA has specific requirements for eligibility. Suppose you aspire to play NCAA athletics at a Division I or Division II college. In that case, you must meet their core course requirements by specific deadlines, which can be more complicated if you have repeated a grade or attended an international high school. Students who wish to play a sport in college at Division I, IA, or II levels must register with the NCAA Clearinghouse by the end of their junioryear. You can request your NCAA transcript online. Students for whom Division I or II athletics are a possibility should consult the NCAA's "Quick reference sheet" at [http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility\\_center/Quick\\_Reference\\_Sheet.pdf](http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/Quick_Reference_Sheet.pdf) and with their counselor when choosing classes.

At the beginning of 11<sup>th</sup> grade, you can set up your NCAA account.

1. Register to take the ACT/SAT or both and use the NCAA Eligibility Center code "9999" as a score recipient.
2. (Test score requirements are listed on the website.)
3. Double-check to make sure that you are taking NCAA-approved courses.
4. Request that your official high school transcript be sent to the NCAA Eligibility Center after completing your third year.
5. Before your senior year of high school, check with your counselor to determine the number of core courses that must be completed that year.

More detailed information can be found on the NCAA website. Failure to meet requirements could result in you being unable to play Division I or Division II sports in college. Ultimately, it is your responsibility to ensure you have met the NCAA eligibility requirements.

## ATHLETIC RECRUITING

**Contacting coaches:** It is the student's responsibility to contact coaches at schools of interest to them. Students can draft a letter of introduction to send to college coaches. These letters should include information about the student's academic and personal background and any relevant athletic details. Mr. Harris can review these letters with students if requested. Students can obtain the names and addresses of coaches from the college's athletic offices.

**NCAA CLEARINGHOUSE:** Students hoping to compete at Division I or II levels must be deemed eligible by the NCAA Clearinghouse. Students should go online to [NCAAClearinghouse.net](http://NCAAClearinghouse.net) for more information and forms.

**NCAA INITIAL ELIGIBILITY:** Students should also be aware of specific practical considerations. For example, student-athletes interested in interscholastic sports at any Division I or Division II college or university must meet the NCAA's initial eligibility requirements. Student-athletes should visit the NCAA Clearinghouse website ([www.ncaaclearinghouse.net](http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net)) for details. To be eligible to play interscholastic sports at Division I or II schools, student-athletes must have earned credits in certain core course areas.

## GAP YEAR PROGRAMS

Students may decide to take time away from the traditional academic path going directly from high school to college. As [Middlebury College's website](#) states: "As earning admission to a top college has more and more become an end in itself, and not just a *means* to an end, we can easily lose sight of the primary goal of our education: to discover what it is we truly care about and want to pursue further, and thereby come as close as possible to realizing our potential."

Whether exploring a new interest or building on ignited passions, students can use the Gap Year creatively to shape their future academic experiences and enrich the depth of their learning. Gap Year participants speak enthusiastically about the many benefits of their experiences, such as:

- The maturity and confidence that comes from a year of living independently;
- Renewed enthusiasm for academic challenges and an eagerness to begin college;
- The ability to quickly navigate the transition to their college community and take advantage of opportunities in and out of the classroom from the very beginning;
- An unequalled exposure to career possibilities as well as other cultures, people, and languages;
- A greater appreciation and more nuanced knowledge of the world.

Students who choose to take Gap Years receive the gift of time, especially personal growth and discovery. The learning that takes place this year differs from a traditional academic experience, but in planning and living Gap Years, students acquire invaluable skills for lifelong learning.

### GAP YEAR & ADMISSIONS

Colleges are supportive of the Gap Year; when students return to academic life, they do so with renewed energy, enthusiasm, and focus. Typically, students complete the college application process during their senior year and then apply for a deferral from their selected college. Most colleges will grant deferrals if the student can provide a clear, thoughtful, and specific plan for the Gap Year. Colleges have deadlines to receive these requests, usually sometime in late spring, but colleges generally prefer that students send in these requests as soon as possible after being admitted.

If students apply to other colleges during a Gap Year, they must adhere to their deferral policies. Under most policies, students who wish to apply to schools during their Gap Year should expect to withdraw their deferrals before submitting other applications. Colleges have welcomed students to reapply if they remain interested in the original school. During the Gap Year, the Senior Placement Office will work with students to send transcripts, secondary school reports, and recommendations to colleges when appropriate.

### GAP YEAR ADVISING

As students begin planning their gap year, they learn how to set increasingly specific goals and how to meet them successfully. Once students have identified their goals, we will look for existing programs or develop individualized opportunities. Students (and their parents) review and assess potential opportunities before selecting a gap year program or option. Students and their parents are ultimately responsible for ensuring the safety and suitability of a specific gap year placement. There is no rigid formula for the Gap Year. Each plan is uniquely designed based on the student's criteria, identifying one or two goals to anchor the year. The Senior Placement Office will do its best to research organizations and programs available to our students. It is, however, the student and family's responsibility to make decisions about what types of experiences are best suited to their needs and goals.

## GAP YEAR OPTIONS

The programs listed here are opportunities representing **just some of the possible options**.

- Gap Year Association - <https://www.gapyearassociation.org/>
- AmeriCorps – <https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ Americorps>
- City Year – [www.cityyear.org](http://www.cityyear.org)
- Council on International Education Exchange - <https://www.ciee.org/>
- National Outdoor Leadership School - [www.nols.edu](http://www.nols.edu)
- Outward Bound - <http://www.outwardbound.org/>
- Sea Education Association - <http://www.sea.edu/>
- Semester at Sea - <http://www.semesteratsea.org/>
- Verto Education - <https://vertoeducation.org/>
- Where There Be Dragons - <http://www.wheretherebedragons.com/>
- WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) - <https://wwofinternational.org/>