

The background is a dark blue gradient with a subtle pattern of white dots. Overlaid on the left side are several concentric circles and arcs in a lighter blue color. Some of these arcs have degree markings, such as 150, 160, 170, 180, 190, 200, 210, 220, 230, 240, 250, and 260. There are also small white arrows pointing in various directions, suggesting a circular or rotational theme.

COLLEGE PLANNING 101

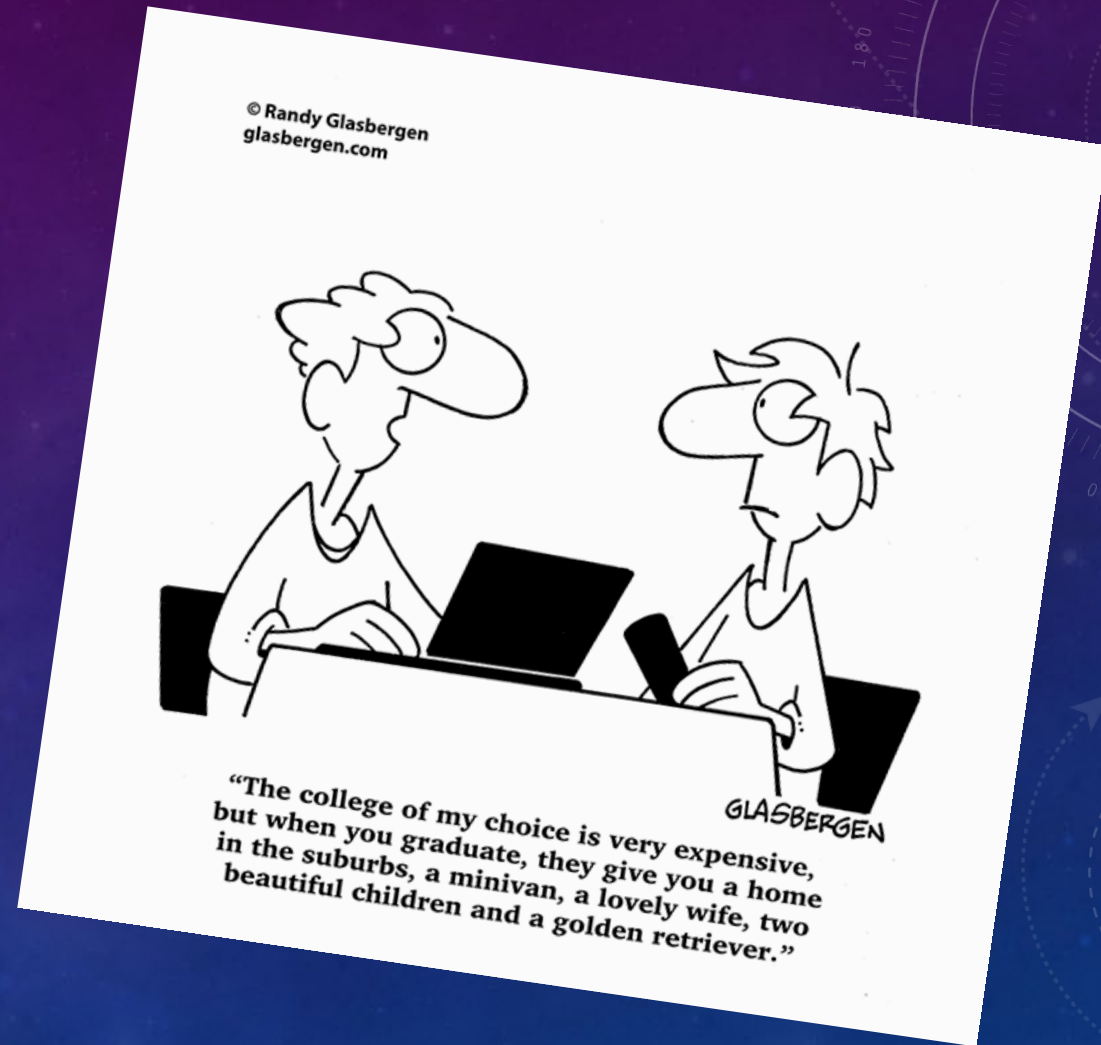
SCOTT HARRIS, SENIOR PLACEMENT COUNSELOR

SHS SENIOR PLACEMENT OFFICE

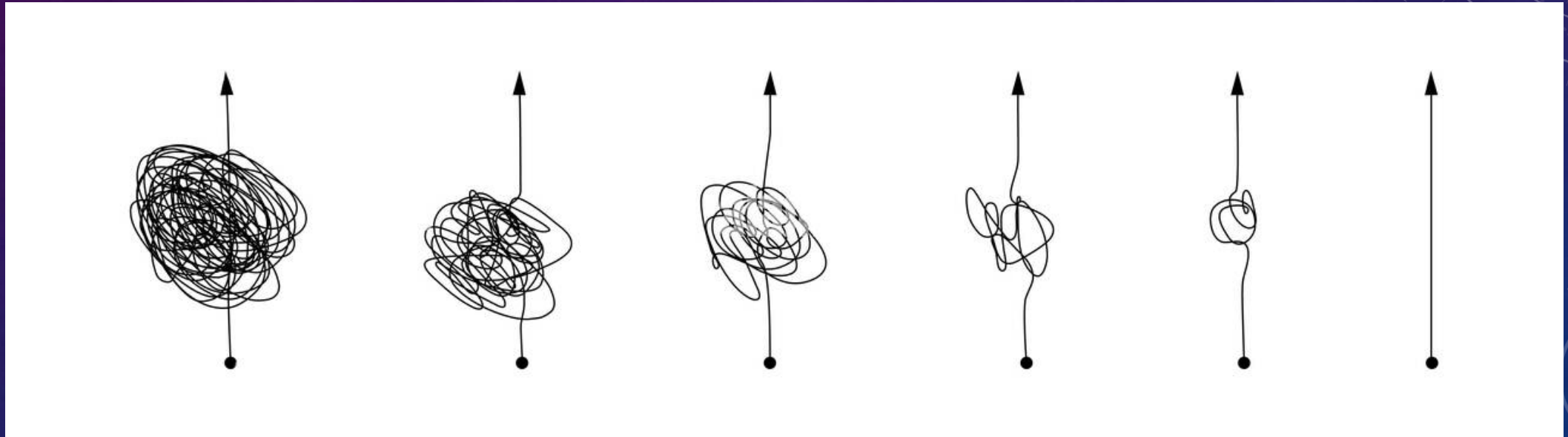
APRIL 27, 2026

TOPICS COVERED

- Senior Placement Office
- SAT and ACT
- Colleges
- Testing
- Financial Aid
 - Scholarships
- NCAA
- Resources



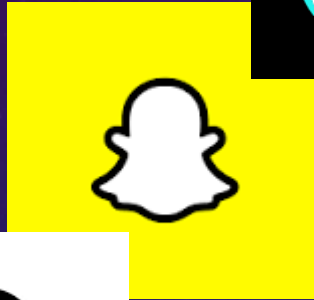
EVERYONE IS ON THEIR OWN PATH



WHEN YOU ASK ABOUT SPECIFICS



START WITH, BUT VERIFY!



- Verify any information you find on the platform with a trusted source!
 - Senior Placement, Counselor, Admissions/Financial Aid Office, FAME, other Advisor.

SENIOR PLACEMENT OFFICE

- G142 Top of the Stairs
- Mrs. Henderson & Mr. Harris
- Drop in or schedule an appointment
- Post-Secondary Planning
- Transcripts
- Applications
- Scholarships
- And more!



WHO DOES WHAT - STUDENTS

- Use the process for self-reflection and growth.
- Stay on top of communication (check email and read Classroom updates)
- Keep the Senior Placement Office informed.
- Research colleges, admissions criteria, and testing requirements.
- Register for and send SAT/ACT scores as needed.
- Visit campuses, attend fairs, and meet college representatives.
- Complete required school forms (e.g., Junior Questionnaire).
- Request letter of recommendations, (add to Naviance, and assign as needed)
- Submit accurate applications on time or early (give a two week buffer).
- Complete financial aid forms (FAFSA, CSS, STARS).

WHO DOES WHAT - FAMILIES

- Have open, early conversations about options, finances, and expectations.
- Complete required forms and stay aware of deadlines.
- Support logistics (test score sending, college visits, financial aid forms).
- Check in regularly while allowing your child to lead the process.
- Encourage independence, growth, and recognition of strengths.
- Promote resilience and perspective as outcomes unfold.
- Stay in communication with the Placement Office for support.

WHO DOES WHAT- SENIOR PLACEMENT

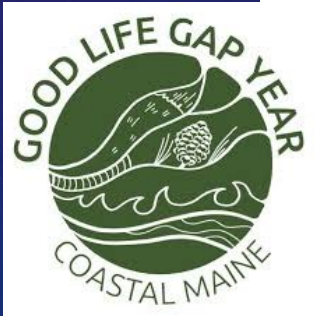
- Build relationships to understand each student's goals, strengths, and interests.
- Submit supporting documents (Transcripts, LORs, School Reports, etc.)
- Guide students and families through planning, timelines, and balanced lists.
- Provide insights on admissions chances and current trends.
- Share resources, events, and opportunities to explore colleges.
- Advocate for students
- Communicate regularly with students and parents, maintaining accessibility.
- Personalize support while encouraging student independence and voice.
- Promote research, exploration, and a broad range of educational options.
- Ensure equitable access to information and opportunities for all students.
- Support student growth, confidence, and development throughout the process.

PARTNERSHIP

As we start this process, know that we each have a specific roles. This process is a partnership, and it is crucial that members of the partnership understand their role in the process.



GAP YEAR OPTIONS



CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS & 2-YEAR COLLEGES

- Free Tuition to Maine Community Colleges!
- No Essays, Letters of Rec, and SATs
- Transfer Options
- Get an Associates Degree or just complete some Gen Eds
- Sports and on-campus housing
- Applications open Early October



UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES (4 YEAR)



- Think about the “Fits”
 - Academics
 - Vibes
 - Financials
- Develop a balanced list, and give yourself options.

BUILDING A LIST

HIGH PROBABILITY (Likely)	MEDIUM PROBABILITY (Target)	LOW PROBABILITY (Reach)	WILD CARD
70-100% of students are accepted and confident that you will be able to afford to attend, and meet or exceed admissions criteria. These may not be your "first choice" schools, but they offer a solid option. Plan for all contingencies.	40-70% of students are accepted. You meet all of the academic requirements and have taken several honors and AP classes. These schools should comprise the majority of the schools to which you are applying.	15-40% of students are accepted. The requirements are at the top of your academic credentials. College admissions decisions can be highly unpredictable.	>5–14% Acceptance rates and formulas don't tell the whole story. A unique Program that strongly aligns with you, even if the odds or cost are uncertain. You apply with clear eyes.
How Many: 2-3	How Many: 3-4	How Many: 1-2	How Many: 0–2

MAKE SURE TO CONSIDER....



- **Competitive Majors**
 - Often Separate Admissions can vary by major (e.g., engineering, nursing, business, CS). Some majors admit directly; others require internal application after enrollment. Changing majors later may be restricted or competitive
- **Admission May Not be the Same Across All Programs**
 - One college can have different admit rates by school/major Example: Arts & Sciences vs. Engineering vs. Business
- **Dual Degree & 3+2 Programs**
 - Options to earn degrees from two institutions (e.g., liberal arts + engineering) Often structured and selective. Requires careful planning from day one
- **Demonstrated Interest Matters (At Some Colleges)**
 - Campus visits, emails, interviews, and engagement may be tracked. Not all colleges consider it—but many smaller/private schools do
- **Financial Fit Is Part of Admissions Strategy**
 - Merit aid and need-based aid vary significantly by school. Net price can differ dramatically from sticker price
- **Holistic Review Is the Standard**
 - Academics, activities, essays, and context are all considered together. No single factor guarantees admission

USING AI

Where AI Can Helpful

- Brainstorm essay topics and refine ideas
- Help students organize activities and resumes
- Explain terminology
- Assist with proofreading

Where to Be Careful

- Essays not or inconsistently reflect the student's authentic voice
- Colleges can often detect over-edited or AI-generated writing
- Inaccurate or outdated information
- Be aware of schools AI policies



WHAT ARE THEY LOOKING FOR?

Academic Program & Performance
Standardized Testing
Engagement Outside the Classroom
Recommendations & Essays



Love of Learning
Leadership (school, family, or community)
Cross-Cultural Engagement
Originality/Creativity
Concern for Others
Academic Enrichment
Sustained Involvement
Impact (regional, state, national, etc. recognition)

THE ESSAY



- Purpose of the Essay
 - Shows who you are beyond grades and test scores Highlights personality, values, and perspective Helps colleges understand fit
- What Colleges Are Looking For
 - Authentic voice (not “perfect” writing), Self-reflection and insight, Clear storytelling with purpose, Deeper understanding of who they are
- What Not to Write About
 - What you “think” they want to read, Generic Achievement, Travel/Service Trips, Traumatic Events, Someone else’s story, Shock Value
- Tips
 - Write an essay they would want to read, be authentic, allow for understanding of who they are.
 - Google “College Essays That Worked”

ACTIVITIES/ENGAGEMENT

- Quality Over Quantity
 - Depth of involvement matters more than long lists Consistency and commitment over time stand out
- Impact & Initiative
 - Leadership roles, creating something new, or making a difference Colleges value students who contribute, not just participate
- Authenticity Counts
 - Activities should reflect genuine interests, not what “looks good” Students don’t need to do everything, just something meaningful
- Types of Engagement
 - School activities (clubs, athletics, arts) Work, internships, or family responsibilities Community service, civic involvement, and hobbies
- Hobbies
 - Independent interests (music, coding, art, fitness, gaming, writing, etc.) count Can show passion, discipline, and creativity outside of school Self-driven projects often stand out
- Family Supports
 - Encourage exploration early, then support focus Avoid over-scheduling, balance matters Let students take ownership of their commitments

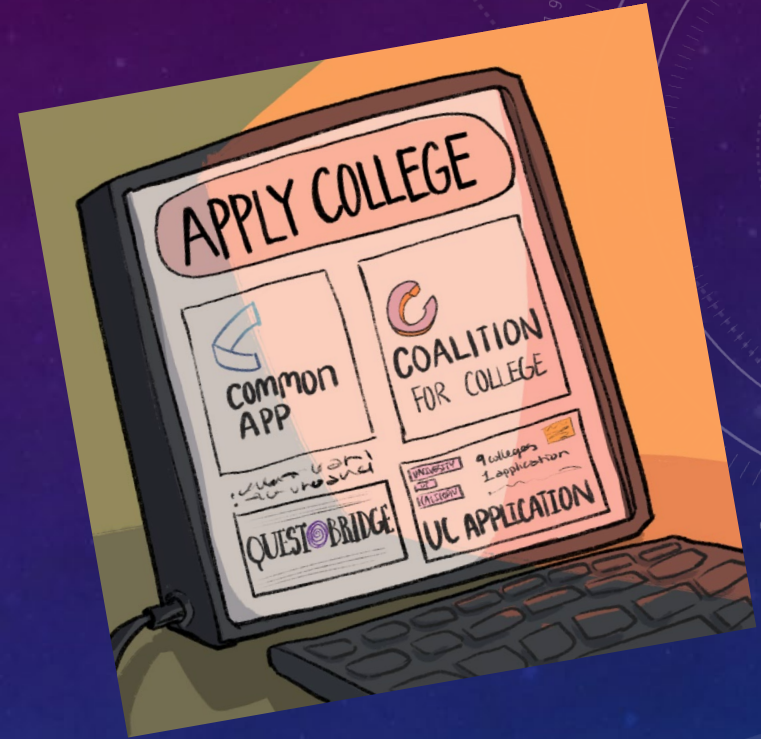
BUILDING A LIST



- Start with Fit, Not Prestige: Focus on academic, social, and financial fit Think in categories: Reach, Match, Likely
- Balance Your List: Low, Target/Match, and High Probability
- Do Real Research: Review majors, internship opportunities, and outcomes Look beyond rankings, focus on programs and support Compare cost and financial aid early
- Keep the List Flexible Preferences often change as students learn more Revisit and adjust the list over time
- Visit Colleges (If Possible): Campus visits help students feel culture and fit In-person or virtual tours both provide insight Pay attention to: campus vibe, student energy, and facilities Ask: “Can I see myself here for 4 years?”
- Engagement During Visits: Attend information sessions and ask questions Talk to current students when possible Take notes, schools can blur together later.

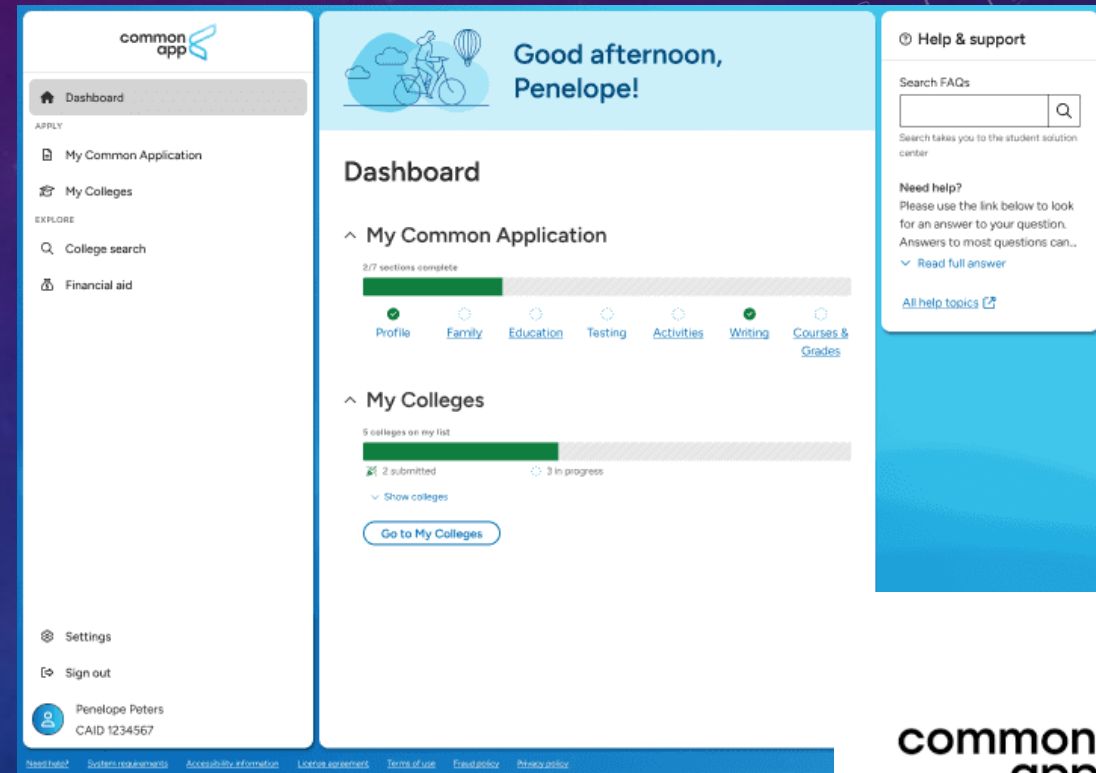
WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Gather Info (due dates, what is needed)
- Application
 - Common App
- Essay(s)
- Letter of Recommendation
- Supporting Documents
 - Transcript, Counselor Letter, School Profile, and School Report (Senior Placement Office)
- Portfolio (depends on program)



THE COMMON APP

- Used by over 1,100 schools, in 50 states, and 20 countries.
- One Application submitted to multiple schools
 - Students create one main application
 - Add Colleges, and complete additional questions
 - Submit individually to each school. Each school has different supplements and different deadlines.
- Students can sign up any time, 2026-27 admission cycle will open early August.



SERVICE ACADEMIES

- High quality education w/ no tuition
- Highly competitive admissions
- Leadership-focused experience
- Service commitment after graduation
- Start early and stay organized



GO ABROAD?

- Broaden your perspective
- Potential cost savings
- 3-year programs
- Do your homework on logistics



APPLYING EARLY

Early Action (EA) – Non- Binding

- Apply early (typically Nov. 1–15)
- Receive decision early (Dec–Jan)
- No commitment
- Students can compare offers, and merit scholarships are awarded more often
- Can apply EA to multiple schools (with some exceptions)

**Recommended
Most Often**

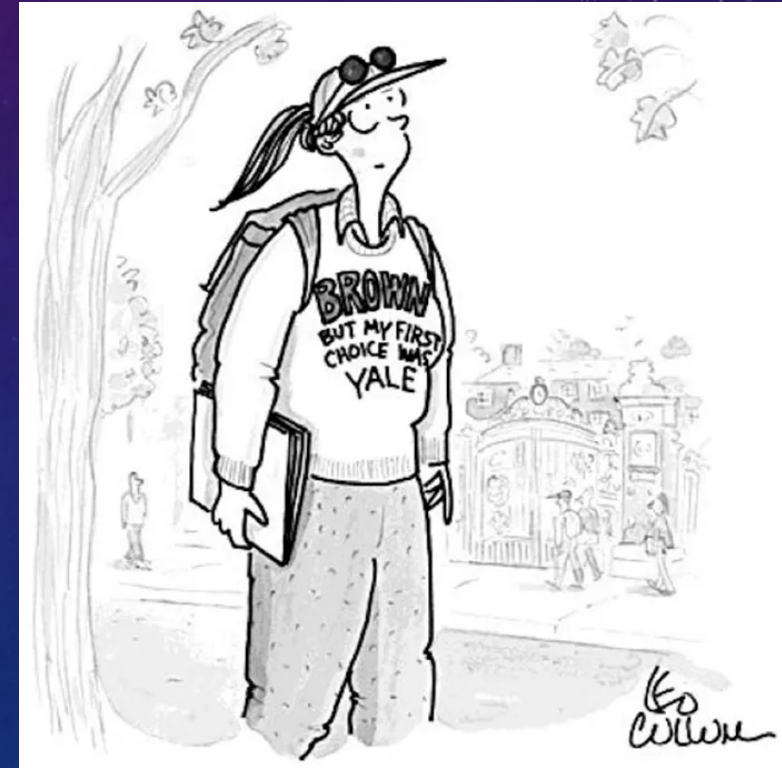
Early Decision (ED) - Binding

- Apply early (typically Nov. 1–15)
- Can apply to only one school, (can apply to others EA).
- Receive decision early (by mid Dec)
- Commitment required if admitted. Must withdraw all other applications
- When ED Makes Sense
 - Clear first-choice college
 - Strong overall fit
 - Family is comfortable with the financial picture

SELECTIVITY DOES NOT REFLECT QUALITY

- Focus On
 - Academic Offerings
 - Available Opportunities
 - Financial Aspects
 - Career & Advising Resources
 - Alumni Outcomes

**Where You Go
is Not Who You Will Be**



STANDARDIZED TESTING

- **Know your options**
- **Understand test-optional policies**
- **Plan your timeline**
- **Prep with purpose**
- **Send scores strategically**

<u>Test-Required</u> •	<u>Test-Optional</u> •	<u>Test-Blind</u> •	<u>Test-Flexible</u> •
Testing is required.	Testing can be submitted or excluded	Testing not used	One of the following must be submitted (ACT/SAT/AP)
Applications will only be reviewed with an SAT/ACT score	Your Choice!	Even if scores are submitted	

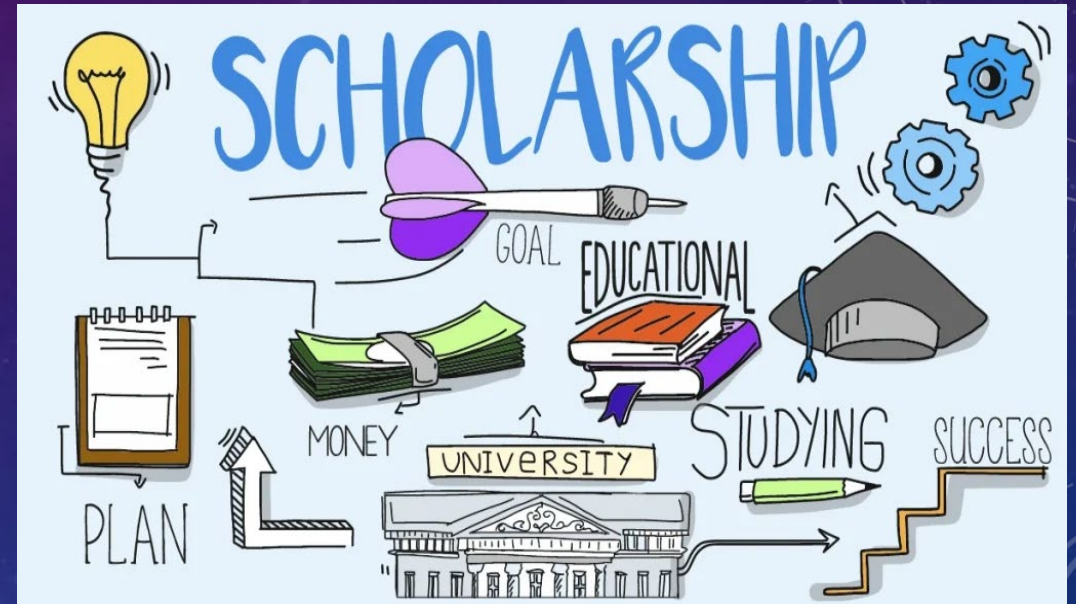
TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID



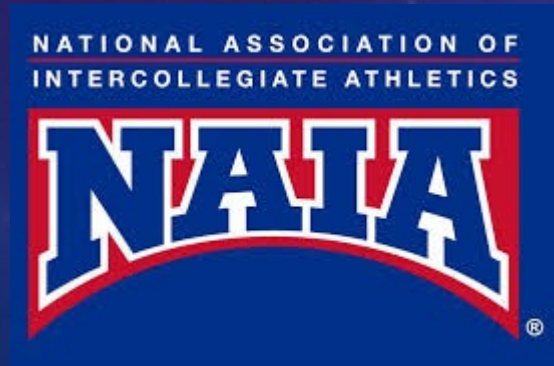
- Grants
 - Need-based aid, typically from federal/state governments or colleges Does not need to be repaid Example: Pell Grant
- Scholarships
 - Merit-based, talent-based, or need-based Offered by colleges, organizations, and private sources Can be renewable or one-time awards
- Work-Study
 - Part-time jobs for students, often on campus Helps cover personal expenses Funded through federal or institutional programs
- Loans
 - Must be repaid with interest Federal loans usually offer better protections than private loans Example: Direct Subsidized Loan
- Institutional Aid
 - Funding provided directly by colleges Can include grants, scholarships, or tuition discounts Often the largest source of aid at private colleges
- State Aid
 - Grants or scholarships from your home state Eligibility and amounts vary by state

SCHOLARSHIPS

- Start early and stay organized
- Focus on local scholarships first
- Treat essays like applications
- Apply broadly and consistently
- Use reliable search tools



COLLEGE ATHLETICS



- Know your division requirements
- Register for eligibility early
(Free Account DIII)
- Academics still come first
- Be proactive in recruiting
- Understand the realities

TIMELINE

Check out the SHS
Senior Placement
Website for a
Comprehensive
Timeline

The screenshot displays the Scarborough High School website. The header is red with the school's logo and name. A navigation bar below the header contains links for 'OUR SCHOOL', 'ACADEMICS', 'STUDENT LIFE', 'STUDENT SERVICES', 'PARENTS & COMMUNITY', and 'LEARNING COMMONS'. The 'STUDENT SERVICES' link is highlighted. On the right side of the header, there are links for 'Faculty & Staff', 'Calendar', 'Building Project', and a search icon. The main content area is white. On the left, there is a sidebar with a 'Senior Placement' dropdown menu. The 'College' option is selected, showing a list of links: 'College', 'Scholarships', 'Financial Aid', and 'Resources & Glossary'. Below this, there is a 'Career Pathways Programs' link. The main content area features a 'College' heading, followed by a row of tabs: 'Timeline', 'Naviance', 'Common App', 'Handbooks', 'SRAR', 'Testing', and 'Letters of Recommendation'. The 'Timeline' tab is active. Below the tabs, there is a 'College Planning Timeline' section with a list of links: '+ 12th Grade', '+ 11th Grade', '+ 10th Grade', and '+ 9th Grade'.

SCARBOROUGH HIGH SCHOOL

Faculty & Staff Calendar Building Project Q

OUR SCHOOL ACADEMICS STUDENT LIFE STUDENT SERVICES PARENTS & COMMUNITY LEARNING COMMONS

School Counselors

Social Work

Senior Placement

- > College
- > Scholarships
- > Financial Aid
- > Resources & Glossary

Career Pathways Programs

College

Timeline Naviance Common App Handbooks SRAR Testing Letters of Recommendation

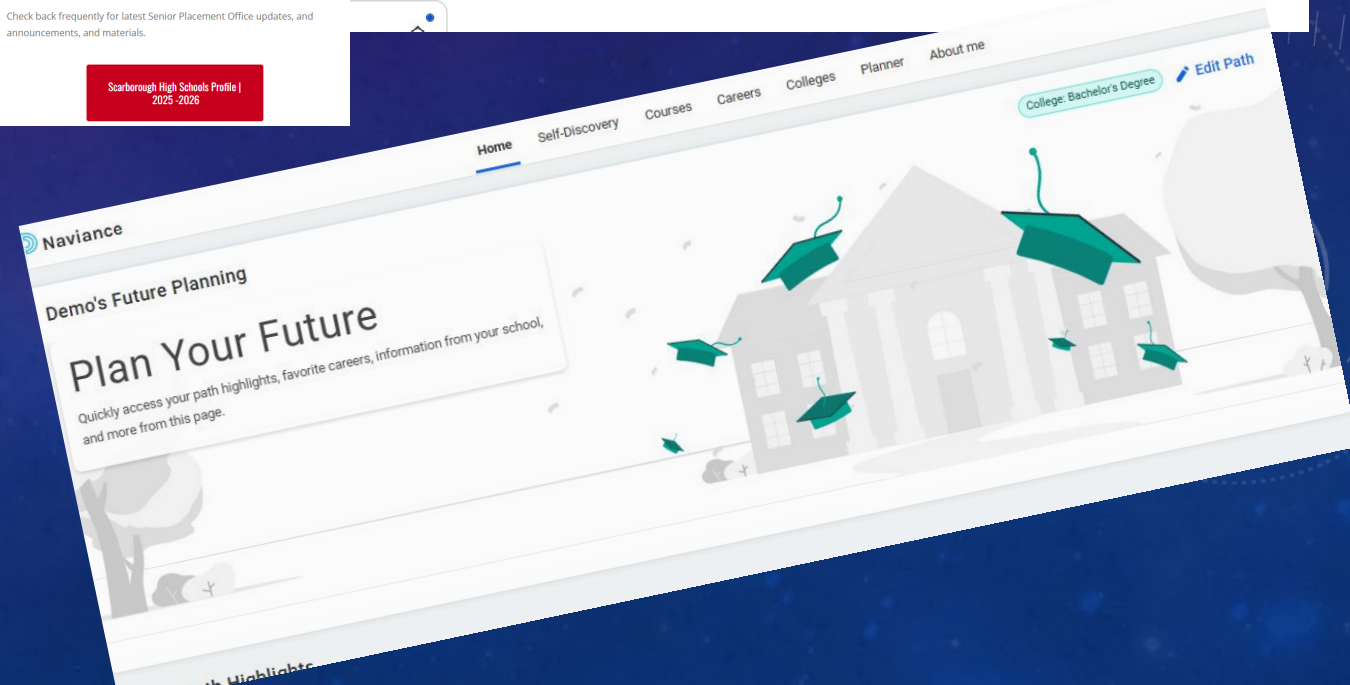
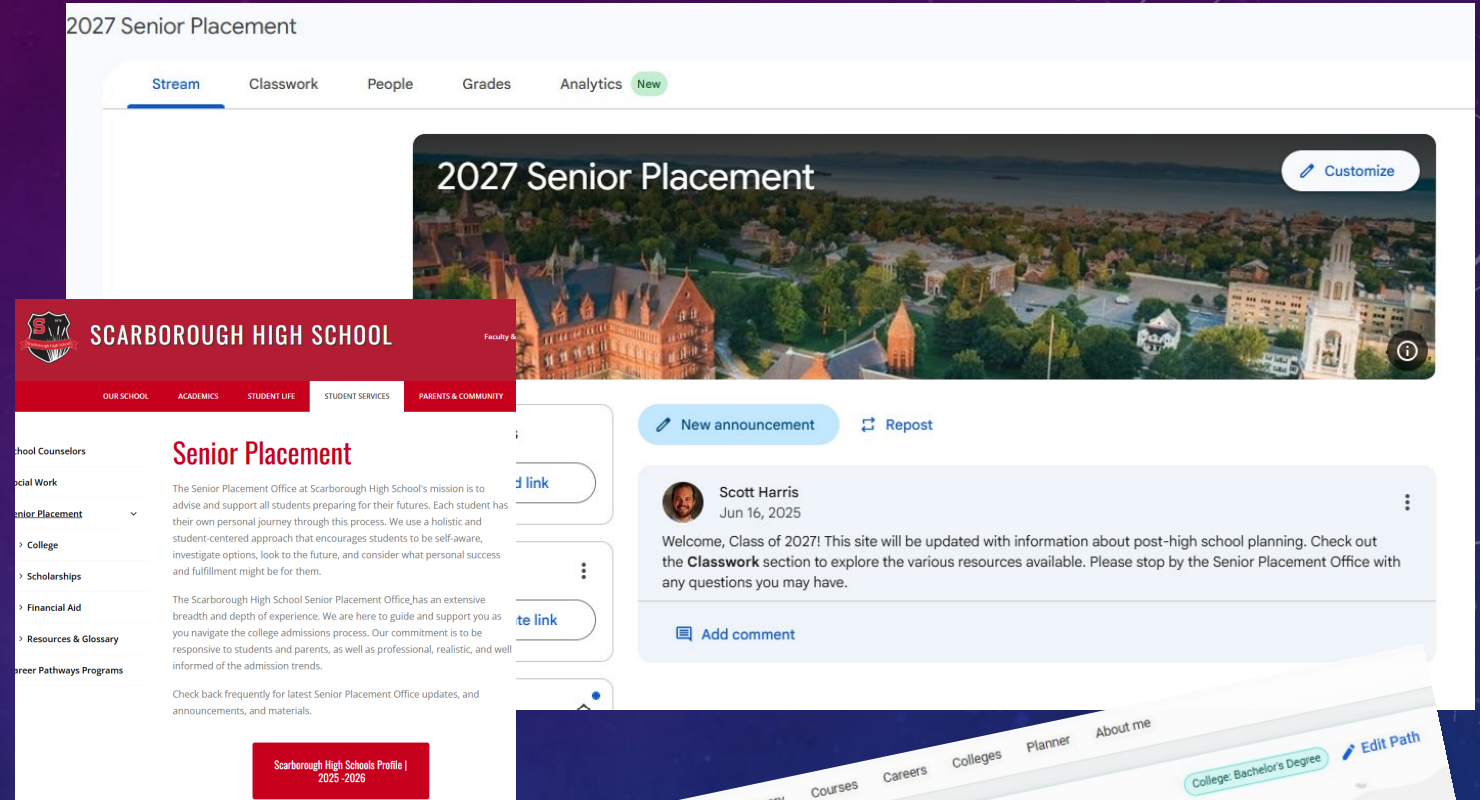
NCAA ELO Opportunities

College Planning Timeline

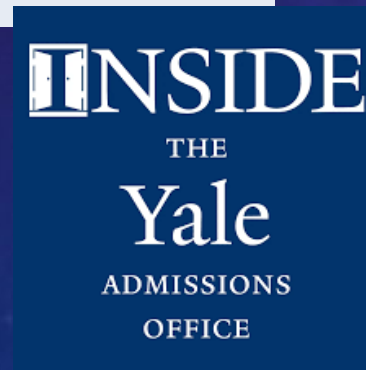
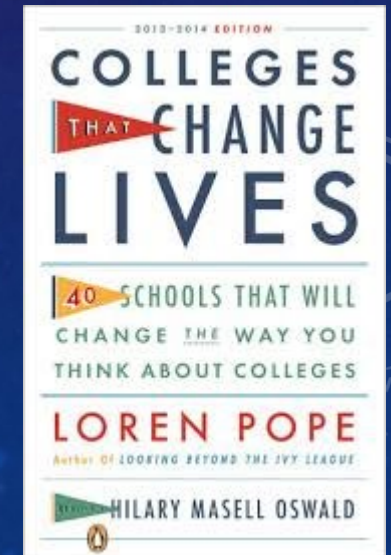
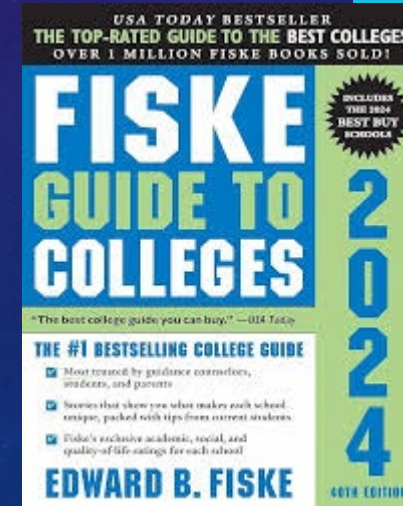
- + 12th Grade
- + 11th Grade
- + 10th Grade
- + 9th Grade

RESOURCES

- Senior Placement Office
- Google Classroom
- Senior Placement E-mails
- High School Website
- Naviance
- FAME



RECOMMENDATIONS



ADVICE

- Help your student reflect on their strengths and values, know thy self!
- Let your student take the lead but assist them as a manager and consultant.
- Be upfront about parameters around the college search (cost, location, etc.)
- Avoid Rankings and focus on “fit”.
- Challenge your definition of what defines a “good school”
- Create a standard check-in time/day
- “Hold your cards close”.



QUESTIONS?

- Please Reach out
- sharris@scarboroughschools.org
- 207.730.5030