BELMONT HILL SCHOOL

COLLEGE COUNSELING HANDBOOK

2026-2027

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OFFICE DIRECTORY

Director of College Counseling
Mr. Walker Coppedge
(617) 993-5266
coppedge@belmonthill.org

Associate Head of School, Dean of Faculty, College Counselor
Mr. Michael Grant
(617) 993- 5257
grant@belmonthill.org

Associate Director of College Counseling
Mrs. Jamie H. Phinney
(617) 993-5265
phinneyj@belmonthill.org

Registrar, College Counselor
Ms. Sharon Patton
(617) 993-5224
patton@belmonthill.org

Teacher, College Counselor
Mr. Bennett Pitcher
(617) 484-2600
pitcher@belmonthill.org

Belmont Hill College Counseling Online: www.belmonthill.org/collegecounseling
CEEB Code for SAT and ACT: 220120

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INTRODUCTION: NAVIGATING THE COLLEGE PROCESS

We are excited to support Belmont Hill students and their families through all aspects of the college application experience. But before you can make important decisions about your future, you must revisit your past and take stock of your present. Consider this handbook your guide to the process that will take you back into your personal history as well as deeper into your present - then ultimately deposit you at the threshold of your future.

At Belmont Hill, we have three guiding principles in the college selection process. First, we believe in keeping college admissions firmly in perspective: college is only the next step - not the last one or even necessarily the most important one - in your education and life. Second, we believe that the process is most productive when the student takes the lead, placing parents in supportive roles as determined by the family. Finally, the college counselors at Belmont Hill are best understood as partners who seek to help each boy match with colleges that best meet his needs and interests.

With these three principles in mind, you will find new opportunities and wisdom in the months ahead!

EXPECTATIONS, POLICIES AND ETHICS

EXPECTATIONS

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM THE COLLEGE COUNSELING OFFICE:

- The three most important responsibilities of college counselors are to help students connect with and learn about a range of colleges, to help students understand their realistic chances of admission to a variety of colleges, to help students work to best to present themselves as college admissions candidates at any school they chose to apply to.
- Counselors are available to support and counsel students and families throughout the entirety of the college research, application and selection process.
- Counselors meet regularly with students and, as needed and requested with parents, and are available by telephone, zoom, email and personal office visit to answer students' and parents' questions and address their concerns.
- The College Counseling Office schedules and publicizes college representatives' visits to Belmont Hill.
- Counselors write a positive, thorough, and honest statement about each student on behalf of Belmont Hill School.
- The College Counseling Office manages the transmission of school supporting materials for each students' applications to colleges: the student's transcript (grades 9 through 12, including repeated grades 9-12, if any), the Belmont Hill Secondary School Report (including the

counselor's statement), teacher recommendations, and the Belmont Hill School Profile. ***Please note:*** **Belmont Hill does not send standardized test scores; that is a student responsibility.**

- The College Counseling Office will also transmit all transcripts for any high school work that a student has completed prior to attending Belmont Hill. This includes students who completed 9th grade at another school and then repeated 9th grade when entering Belmont Hill. The Common Application asks students to list any high schools they have attended, including those they may have attended prior to attending Belmont Hill. Colleges in turn will expect students to submit all corresponding transcripts for all high school (grades 9-12) work completed.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF STUDENTS:

- Students are to complete all college office assignments, meet deadlines, and update their MaiaLearning pages.
- Students are to undertake the research and exploration of colleges through college websites, reading, visiting and talking with students.
- Students are to take responsibility for attending an appropriate number of college representative visits at Belmont Hill in the fall of their senior year. They are to determine which classes they can miss without jeopardizing their schoolwork and to ask a teacher's permission at least one day ahead of time if they will miss class due to a college representative visit.
- Students are to identify and apply to at least three "likely" colleges where they have a strong statistical possibility of being admitted and where they believe they will be happy. Having a balanced list is an imperative part of the college application process.
- Students are to take responsibility for knowing colleges' deadlines and requirements.
- Students are to register for standardized tests and have their scores sent to colleges.
- Students are to keep college counselors informed of developments in their college process and plans.
- Designation of Course Level for Self-Reported Transcripts: If a school requires a student to self-report their grades and courses, either on the Common Application or via the Self-Reported Transcript and Academic Record System (STARS), they should reference their official transcript that can be procured from the Registrar. When asked about the level of specific courses, we encourage students to label AP and Advanced Courses accordingly, including any advanced courses beyond the AP level. For non- AP/non-Advanced courses, we recommend that students select Regular/Standard. We send all schools a Belmont Hill School Profile that provides in-depth context of the relative rigor at Belmont Hill more generally. If you have questions about self reporting courses and grades, please see your Counselor or the Registrar.
- Students are to be ethical in their application practices. Each application should be the work of the student, and it should accurately reflect the students' life and work.

HOW PARENTS CAN BE HELPFUL:

- We encourage parents to be as open as possible with their sons in discussing college plans, including tangible issues like finances and logistics, as well as less tangible factors such as a parent's emotions about the family changes ahead and parent's own experience with college admission and attendance (or lack of it).
- We encourage parents to educate themselves about contemporary college admissions pressures so that they can be a productive and realistic support system for their son.

- We believe that parents do well to be encouraging and supportive in the college process, but they should make college applications the student's responsibility as much as possible. Ask your son how he would like you to help, perhaps by making a calendar or college file, or by making arrangements for college visits or registering him for standardized tests. As best you can, follow your son's lead.
- Parents are asked to support an ethical approach to college admission.
- We expect parents to take time to complete the Parent Questionnaire before we begin meeting with their son. Parents know their children better than anyone else does, and their knowledge helps the college process.
- Parents must take responsibility for filling out financial aid forms such as the FAFSA, the CSS Profile and any required institution-specific financial aid forms. If desired, the College Counseling Office is available to advise and support parents in the completion of these forms.

POLICIES

- No teacher, administrator, or staff person is to show any student a recommendation written about him, or about any other student. This policy gives Belmont Hill significant credibility with colleges. Students can trust their college counselors and teachers to be positive in their recommendations.
- Students are to do their own work on applications. They may - and should - ask a trusted teacher or parent or peer to help with proof-reading, but they should be the authors of essays and they should fill out all information in applications. Belmont Hill College Counselors are certainly well positioned to assist students in every way as they complete their applications.
- Belmont Hill will not support students in any unethical dealings with colleges: failing to comply with an Early Decision or athletic agreement, getting unethical help with an application, misrepresenting any aspect of the high school record, double-depositing in May (officially enrolling in more than one college) - such actions and others like them may be considered a breach of the school's Honor Code and could result in disciplinary action.

ETHICS

Breaches of Ethics By Applicants

Any breach of the following ethical principles by the applicant or enrollee, or by the secondary school that sponsors his application, may result in a college's withdrawal of an offer of admission.

- If and when a student has formally enrolled at a college where they were accepted via binding early decision, that student must immediately withdraw all other active applications and also decline any other offers of admission they might have already received, as they agreed to via the early decision agreement. Belmont Hill will not send out supporting materials to any additional colleges after a student has been accepted to and enrolled at a school through binding early decision. We view not withdrawing all outstanding applications after enrolling at a college after an early decision commitment as an honor code violation and will deal with that accordingly. Belmont Hill views this agreement between the student and college as an ethical commitment in the spirit of our mission based on character. The one exception to this rule is if and when a student is awaiting

confirmation of a need based financial aid award at a school to which they have committed early decision.

- By May 1, a student must make a deposit and promise to enroll at no more than one college. Students may, however, retain a place on another college's waitlist after promising to enroll at another college.
- Belmont Hill must report certain changes in status that develop for college admission candidates or admitted students. Occurrences that qualify as reportable "changes in status" include, but are not limited to: failure to qualify for graduation, and convictions and other legal offenses. This ethical obligation continues through a student's Senior year until graduation. In some cases, a student's change in curriculum necessitates reporting to colleges.

Breaches of Ethics By Colleges

Any breach of the following ethical principles by a college may result in the college's dismissal from the National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC). Please alert your college counselors if you notice any unethical college practices.

- When accepting a student, no college may require a deposit or commitment from the student before May 1, except in the case of binding Early Decision applicants. If a college states or implies that you must make a deposit or commitment in order to hold your place in a class, make a request in writing for a deposit deferral until May 1. (*Note:* A college may require a housing deposit before May 1.)
- A college may not officially accept a student before the student has officially applied to the college.
- A college may not require a deposit or commitment from a student in order to retain a place on a waitlist.

BACK TO THE PAST: THINKING ABOUT YOUR STORY

THE JUNIOR QUESTIONNAIRE AND PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

At the end of first semester, members of Form V are asked to fill out a multi-page questionnaire that leads them through some introspection that serves them well in the college process. Juniors who take the most care with this project do themselves a double service: they look inward and also begin communicating outwardly about their life and what is important to them. In addition, the junior questionnaire provides important information to their college counselor, whose statement to colleges about each senior is an important part of Belmont Hill's advocacy for students. Parents are asked to complete a Parent Questionnaire before the college kick off meetings in January.

THE STUDENT RESUME

At the same time that juniors complete their questionnaire, they are also asked to produce a resume. This document is useful on a number of occasions through the second half of Junior year, the summer

that follows, and Senior year. Students should take care to represent themselves effectively and update the resume regularly in the coming months.

COLLEGE COUNSELING MEETINGS

Students have four official meetings with their college counselor between January of Junior year and December of Senior year. Parents may request a meeting with their son's college counselor at any time after the student's first conference. Though the conferences vary according to the interests of students, the primary purpose of each conference is as follows:

- **First Meeting:** Between late January and spring break of the Junior year. In this get-to-know-you meeting, the conversation turns to college only at the end of the meeting. The counselor's goals are to check-in on several elements of the college search (standardized testing, athletic aspirations, and more) and to get a sense of the student's personality, interests, wishes and goals.

- **Second Meeting:** Between spring break and the end of Junior year. Because most juniors now have taken an SAT or ACT, most juniors have visited a few colleges, and junior grades are getting closer to final, the counselor and student can work more seriously with the college list in this meeting. The counselor and student explore MaiaLearning scattergrams together in an effort to be sure that students are realistic in their college lists, and they talk about which college programs will best suit their interest and needs. During and soon after this conference, the counselor will enter a list of colleges in the student's MaiaLearning account and provide their "best guess" (likely, target, unlikely) for each school a student has preliminary interest in.

- **Third Meeting:** September of Senior year. In this meeting, students update their college counselors on events of the summer and their current feelings about college. With a cumulative GPA now available, Senior year courses on transcripts, and final admissions results for the prior year, it is time for an honest conversation about strategy, and counselor and student can do a final sorting of the student's colleges into "Likely, Target and Unlikely" categories. Final decision about Early Action and Early Decision should be close to complete at this conference and the early application list, due in mid-October, should be almost ready.

- **Fourth Meeting:** November of Senior year. This meeting will be used to plan subsequent strategies following early application notifications.

TAKING YOUR HISTORY INTO THE FUTURE

During the summer, on their own or in Common App Express (CAX) class, rising seniors complete a Common Application, due as school begins. This assignment is the most important one of the process, and those students who have made the most of their questionnaire, resume and conferences, will be most ready to do an effective job on their application. A senior's college counselor reviews a student's main Common Application Essay and, if a student requests, any additional writing they will do on their applications. In some cases, students are asked to revise and correct parts of the application. Finally, with

an effective, complete application in hand, it's time for students to finalize their college applications and list.

HOW TO EVALUATE COLLEGES

The second semester of Junior year is the time to begin researching colleges in earnest. Here are some tips for doing a thorough and effective job.

INFORM YOURSELF: Read...think...talk...visit...BUT...

- Don't...read silly websites and tabloids instead of college websites and catalogs.
- Don't...think about glamour and prestige instead of good matches and programs.
- Don't...talk to college "gossips" instead of knowledgeable people you can trust.
- Don't...visit only the most highly selective colleges, instead see a variety.

THINK ABOUT WHO YOU ARE and what works well for you now.

- If you thrive in small classes, don't apply to enormous universities.
- If you are a joiner and a doer, apply to lively campuses with a lot going on.
- If you love close campus communities, be careful applying to urban schools.
- If you want specific research opportunities, do apply to universities that offer them.

INTANGIBLE BUT VERY IMPORTANT: Does the atmosphere of the institution appeal to you? Do you see your people? Would you enjoy living here, with these people, for four years?

ASK GOOD QUESTIONS ABOUT COLLEGES

Some ideas...

Student Enrollment

- How many undergraduates? Graduates? Size of freshman class?
- Retention: What is the % of freshmen who return for sophomore year and what % graduate in 4/5/6 years?
- Other statistics: male/female ratio, % commuter/resident, geographic origin, % underrepresented minority, % on financial aid?

Location and Environment

- Region of the country, urban/suburban/rural setting, nearest city, transportation issues, recreational opportunities?
- Facilities: library, labs, study and practice rooms, fitness center, athletic facilities, art studio, theater?

College Mission and Philosophy

- Religious? Public? Private? Historically Black College or University?
- Mission: Liberal arts, engineering, conservatory (music), fine arts, type of degrees awarded
- Philosophy: Traditional? Progressive? Scholarly? Pre-professional?
- Calendar: semester, trimester, quarter, bock, inter-term, co-op?

Curriculum

- Academic Requirements: core, distribution, open course selection
- Departmental Style: disciplines, interdisciplinary, majors, minors?
- Independent Study: individual tutorials, seminars, research opportunities?
- Special Study Programs: field work, internships, exchange programs, study abroad, joint degree programs, cooperative work, pre-professional programs or advising?
- Standards: accreditation, degree requirements, grading system, honor system?

Admissions

- Deadlines: application, financial aid, special scholarships, decision notification?
- Application Requirements: fee, information form, specific high school courses, recommendations, interviews, supplements?
- SAT/ACT: requirements and deadlines?
- Admission Selectivity: % of applicants offered admission, Belmont Hill admission history (see MaiaLearning), average scores and GPAs of admitted students, % of admitted students in top 10% of class,% of admitted students in top 25% of class?

Academic Environment

- Faculty: % full professors who teach, teaching course load for professors, expectations for teaching/scholarship/advising and other college service, emphasis on undergraduate teaching?
- Faculty/Student Relationships: faculty/student ratio, advising system, committees with student representatives, accessibility of faculty to students, class size, % of classes with fewer than 20 students/over 50 students, opportunities for discussion/student presentation/exchange of ideas?
- Academic Demands: workload, course expectations, types of assignments, academic pressure, competitive or collaborative student style?
- Intellectual vitality: students' attitude toward learning, interest in intellectual, cultural, political, world issues?
- Career Preparation: pre-professional programs, career advising and information programs, % of students who go on to graduate school, graduate and job placement success rates?

Campus and Student Life

- Student Culture: balance of mainstream and counterculture, responses to diversity and differences, importance of money and social standing?
- Student Community: homogeneous or pluralistic, cohesive or fragmented, school spirit, support of athletic and artistic events, controversial campus issues, political and social climate, campus regulations?
- Living Arrangements: residence halls, availability of singles/doubles/suites, apartment style living, roommate selection, dining facilities, single sex/coed dorms, guaranteed housing?
- Campus Activities: fraternities and sororities (and their dominance or not), club and intramural sports, clubs, religious groups, and other ethnic social groups?

Cost and Financial Aid

- Costs: Look at the "student budget" (the comprehensive cost for a year) and the average total debt at graduation
- Financial Aid: awards, grants, loans, work expectations, forms required and deadlines?
- Complete a Net Price Calculator for every school you plan to apply to. This takes only a few minutes and gives you a good idea of the amount of aid you may be eligible for.

HOW COLLEGES EVALUATE YOU

An admission officer's first impression of you often comes from the look and content of your application. Does it show that you care about this college? Or that you know how to put together a correct and effective application? That you can write well? That you took time to proofread your entire application carefully? If your application is sloppy or incomplete, you won't make it to the next stage in the process, which involves the college's evaluation of the factors below in descending order of importance:

1. **Most Important Factor:** Your Secondary School Record. This evaluation involves course selection (how rigorous is the curriculum selected by the student?) and grades earned in 9th through the first quarter of 12th grade (for Early Decision/Early Action candidates) or 9th through first semester of 12th grade (for Early Decision II/Regular Decision candidates). Colleges have various ways of evaluating grades: some calculate a student's GPA according to their own methods, others count the number of the letter grade earned, and some employ numerical systems unique to their institutions. Some colleges "weight" grades in advanced or honors academic classes in this calculation; others do not. The school profile, which is sent to every college our students apply to, includes information about Belmont Hill's grading system and the college counselor's statement addresses this issue in each student's specific context.

2. **Standardized Test Scores**. Many colleges continue to rely on standardized test scores to predict student performance in college. While we recognize that most colleges are test optional these days, testing can still be an important part of a student's application. We encourage students to put their best foot forward in the testing process. Over 1,900 colleges now currently "test-optional;" they either require no test scores at all or offer an alternative option to submitting scores. ***Please note:*** very strong standardized test scores do not compensate for mediocre grades. If you have high test scores and low grades, put more of your time and energy into your schoolwork!

3. **College Counselor Secondary School Report and Statement.** Your college counselor, speaking on behalf of Belmont Hill School, writes a positive, comprehensive statement for each senior. The statement tells a student's high school story, focusing on the student's records, personality, activities and making the best case for the student without ignoring difficulties as they appear in the application materials. Though this statement cannot fully compensate for weaknesses in a student's transcript, it can bring the student to life for the admissions committee, interpret Belmont Hill's academic culture and grading system, and explain extenuating circumstances in a student's record. The counselors are careful to observe confidentiality in their statements.

4. **Teacher Recommendations and Student Extracurricular Involvement.** Belmont Hill's teachers write thorough and thoughtful recommendations for students they have taught and worked with outside of class. Like the college counselor's statement, these recommendations cannot compensate for weaknesses, but can focus on the positive attributes and accomplishments of students in their classrooms. ***Do not request more than two recommendation***s unless you and your college counselor agree that an extra one would strengthen your application. Colleges are more interested in the quality than the quantity of your extracurricular activities. A handful of substantive clubs, sports, or other activities are enough if you have taken leadership roles, gained expertise, or worked hard on projects. Do not try to put together a long list of inactive clubs/activities in order to seem to be a school leader.

5. **Outside Recommendations.** Belmont Hill does not submit outside letters of recommendation. If a student wants to submit a letter of recommendation from someone outside of Belmont Hill, they should request these recommendations either via the Common App, or ask the recommender to send something to an admissions office directly. If a student wants to request a letter via the Common Application, they should do so under the Invite Other Recommender under the Recommenders/FERPA tab for each college that they want that recommendation sent to.

6. **The Essay.** Though the essay rarely gets a student into college or keeps a student out, it is your chance to distinguish yourself in the committee's eyes. You have an opportunity to make a good impression with your writing skills, and your story. Find one or two knowledgeable advisors for this project (ignore all others who are eager to tell you what to write) and use a good proofreader. Take advantage of the essay writing workshop that will take place at Belmont Hill in the spring of your Junior year as well as regular feedback from your counselor in senior fall. There are many resources to help support you as you craft your narrative.

7. **Employment, Summer Experiences, Community Service, Exchange Programs** can be a nice complement to your application depending on the various merits and your achievements in them.

8. **Demonstrated Interest.** At many schools, showing interest (visiting, pursuing interviews, otherwise engaging) will be a factor in a student's overall evaluation. Be sure to visit a wide range of schools, but especially your likely and target schools. We also encourage students to take advantage of the large number of colleges that come to visit Belmont Hill in the fall of Senior year. Attending these visits demonstrates interest and is particularly important if your student is interested in a school that you are unable to visit.

Other Factors:

Interviews. The interview may count heavily or not at all; read your college's materials carefully. Some colleges require evaluative interviews for all serious applicants; at the other end of the spectrum are colleges that do not interview applicants at all. Some interviews are evaluative (having importance to the college evaluating you as a candidate) and some are informative (having importance to the college as a marketing tool). Most colleges are candid about the ways they use interviews; check the websites and college materials. Colleges hold interviews at different times of the year and the application process;

check with admissions offices about procedures and timing. Take advantage of the interview workshop at Belmont Hill in the fall of Senior year.

Supplemental Essays (for Common Application colleges). Many, but not all, Common Application schools require one or more extra essays that are institution-specific. These essays are very important: admission committees will use them to evaluate your level of interest in a variety of topics. Take care to be very specific about your reasons for applying to the college; if a reason could be applied to many colleges (e.g. I like cities and college x is in a city), this is not a good reason. Instead of vague reasoning, mention a specific academic or extracurricular program and explain why you are interested in it. Link your interest to other areas you have highlighted in your application. Schools often care more about their own supplemental essays than they do about the main Common App essay.

Discipline. At Belmont Hill School, we believe in fostering accountability and personal growth among our students. Disciplinary actions are addressed internally, and we do not expect families to report these incidents to colleges provided that the student meets the requirements set forth by the disciplinary committee and maintains good standing in their remaining time at Belmont Hill. Our goal is to support our students in learning from their mistakes, helping them grow into young men of good character.

A Graded Piece of Writing from One of Your High School Classes. Some colleges require you to submit an essay *with the grade and your teacher's comments on it.* For this reason, it is good to save an appropriate one from one of your junior year academic classes.

Additional Recommendations. Generally speaking, we believe that two teacher recommendations and your counselor recommendation more than suffice and students should not feel that they need to solicit additional letters of recommendation beyond that. Your counselor will write a recommendation that speaks to your role more generally within Belmont Hill, and your teacher recommendations will speak to your academic work in their classrooms. If a student feels they want to solicit an additional recommendation from someone outside the Belmont Hill community, they are welcome to do that on their own, but in our experience, more recommendations is not necessarily better, as colleges will often only read a set number of them.

Art, Music, and Creative Writing Portfolios. Some colleges may require them for a specific program, while others may accept them if applicable. Some applicants are now using YouTube, Slide Room, and other sites to house their portfolios. An effective portfolio could have a positive impact on your candidacy, but ask your college counselor and/or the admissions offices for advice on whether you should submit one.

COLLEGE RESEARCH ONLINE

Below is a sampling of some online resources. We recommend visiting college and university websites as first line resources.

Websites: College Views and Tours

Campus Tours: http://campustours.com
Great resource for virtual college tours, webcams, campus maps, college videos, movies and pictures. The college finder allows you to sort through over 3,200 colleges and universities to find schools that are right for you by having you answer questions in a survey in order to narrow down your search.

College Visits: http://www.college-visits.com
Explore tour schedule to colleges in various geographic areas. Affordable and helpful.

Websites: Testing and Test Prep

College Board: http://www.collegeboard.org
SAT, PSAT, CSS Profile, IDOC, and many other services and links.

ACT: http://www.act.org

Fairtest: https://www.fairtest.org
The National Center for Fair and Open Testing is an advocacy organization working to end the abuses and flaws of standardized testing and to ensure that evaluations of students are fair and functionally sound. Also offers a list of the 1650+ colleges that have eliminated or minimized the importance of the SAT or ACT as an admissions requirement.

Kaplan SAT Review: http://www/kaptest.com
Excellent site with many offerings, from an interactive $350 test prep program to less expensive programs and products.

The Princeton Review: http://www.princetonreview.com
Many good products and services - not associated with Princeton University.

There are many good ways to prepare for standardized tests.

Advantage Testing: www.advantagetesting.com

Advantage has been a great local partner to Belmont Hill for over 15 years and offers diagnostic testing for students in June after the sophomore year. Advantage offers virtual test-prep classes for Belmont Hill students starting in January of their Junior year. Additionally, they offer private tutoring for students year round.

Summit: http://mytutor.com

Inspirica: http://inspirica.com

Websites: Athletics

NCAA: https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/
The National Collegiate Athletic Association's information site includes rules and eligibility for the NCAA, comprehensive information about scholarships, recruiting, the clearinghouse, records and statistics of college-level sports, and links to schools by conference, division and NCAA region. If you hope to play Division I or Division II college varsity athletics, you must register with the NCAA. Division III athletes do not need to register.

Websites: Financial Aid and Scholarships

Financial Aid: http://www.finaid.org
Excellent homepage of links to many financial aid related sites. The EFC (confidential self-test to estimate your eligibility for financial aid is a highlight, but there are many other helpful resources, such as a calculator for loan repayment.

Fast Web: http://www.fastweb.com
Lots of help, including auto-emails that alert you to new scholarship opportunities.

American Student Assistance: http://asa.org/plan - provides help for Massachusetts residents completing the financial aid process.

Nellie Mae college loans: http://www.nmefoundation.org

Sallie Mae college loans: http://www.salliemae.com

Massachusetts Education Finance Authority (MEFA): http://www.mefa.org

GAP YEARS

Not quite ready?

1. **Consider taking a post-grad year at a prep school.** You may or may not improve your college admissions possibilities with this strategy, but you will have a great year in the meantime. Most prep school application deadlines are January 10 or 15th. Applying to prep school requires visits to campus, interviews and testing to be completed and received by the deadline.

2. **Apply and get into college, then defer matriculation for a year.** Most colleges will allow this. In the interim, take a "gap year." Visit www.cityyear.org, www.dynamy.org, www.studyabroad.com, or https://sites.google.com/belmonthill.org/officeofglobalexperiences/gap-opportunities for ideas.

Plans for gap years should not be communicated to colleges during the college application process, but rather after a student enrolls in May of his Senior year. *Please note, however,* many gap year programs

require applications during the Senior year, so your gap year research and application process should proceed simultaneously with your college research and application process.

Gap Year Process

While most students will matriculate directly to college in the fall after graduation, some students may consider requesting a gap year from the school they will be attending with hopes to enroll there the following year. While many schools will allow for a gap year after a student has enrolled, you must confirm each school's policy before pursuing one. For students in this situation, the typical process is as follows:

1. By May 1 of the Senior year, formally submit a deposit at the school where the student has decided to enroll.
2. Follow the school's process for requesting a deferral to pursue a gap year. This usually entails a formal email request to the admissions office, speaking to what the student plans/hopes to do over the course of the gap year. Colleges are usually willing to accommodate these requests, assuming a student does not plan to take any formal college courses during the gap year.
3. If a student is granted a deferral for a gap year and plans to take it, they should let their counselor and Ms, Patton know.

IMPORTANT FOR STUDENTS CONSIDERING A GAP YEAR: If a student has been granted a gap year by the college they have enrolled/deposited at, that school will expect the student to enroll one year later. It is also Belmont Hill's expectation that the student will still be enrolling at the school where they deposited and were granted the gap year. If for any reason a student decides they wish to apply to other schools during their gap year (before enrolling at the school they deposited at), they must either formally withdraw from the school where they have deposited and/or get written permission from the admissions office granting additional applications. Belmont Hill will not send as student's application materials (letters of recommendation, transcripts, etc.) to any other colleges when a student is on a gap year unless the student has confirmed that they have formally withdrawn from the college they committed to attend or received explicit permission from the admissions office of that college to apply elsewhere.

CAMPUS VISITS

Campus visits, either virtual or in-person, are a crucial component of your college research. A visit gives you important first-hand experience of a particular campus, and as you may not be able to visit every college that interests you, a visit to one campus can serve as a point of comparison when you read, hear about or see other campuses. If you decide to apply for binding Early Decision to a college, make a special effort to visit the campus before applying. Most colleges have also developed robust virtual visit programming, which we encourage students to take advantage of. These visits are likely to be viewed as an effort to demonstrate interest, something that is *particularly important at target and likely schools.*

WHEN TO VISIT

Ideally, you should visit a college when it is in session, so that you can get a feel for the campus life and the students who attend. But many high school students must visit colleges in the summer, as the demands of school, sports and other activities simply do not allow them the time for many visits during the academic year. Though a summer college visitor loses the opportunity to observe and meet large groups of current students on campus, he gains the opportunity to make connection with admissions offices. He may get a chance for an informal chat with a counselor, and he will certainly be more memorable from small summer groups than from the crush of visitors in the spring and fall. If you visit during the summer or on a college holiday, at least a few current students will be on campus, and you can talk with admissions people about locating them for a conversation if you wish. In addition, your campus tour guide will almost certainly be a current student. Belmont Hill students are encouraged to complete most of their college visits before the beginning of Form VI, although there are one or two long fall weekends that offer additional visit opportunities.

HOW DO I ARRANGE A VISIT?

Most colleges post an electronic RSVP for regular information sessions (group meetings with admissions counselors), campus tours (usually led by current students), other daily or weekly activities, as well as directions to campus, and suggestions for local accommodations. Some of the admissions events do not require or request a reservation, but most do. College websites usually offer an online registration form for prospective students. Info session reservations should be made well in advance of your visit and know that during particularly busy times, popular colleges may run out of space, so it's worth planning ahead if you can. Make separate arrangements to meet with coaches or scholarship coordinators or others of interest. Many colleges also require pre-registration for virtual events.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR VISIT

Try not to visit more than two colleges in one day; blur and burn-out can set in.

- Attend an info session and take a student-led tour at some colleges; feel free to ask about social as well as academic issues. Eat in the student center. Watch those around you.
- Visit the dining hall and student center; listen to conversations around you.
- Wander away from the designated admissions paths and buildings to get a feel for the college setting and facilities.
- Read some bulletin boards, and pick up a recent edition of the college newspaper.
- If college is in session, visit a class, and consider participating in a hosted overnight if it exists (call well in advance to make reservations for this type of event).
- Write down some notes immediately after your visit; campuses often blur into each other.

MOST IMPORTANT: Since many schools pay significant attention to demonstrated interest, please make sure there is a record of your visit, whether in person or virtual.

YOUR SECRET WEAPON:
NOTES FROM THE COLLEGE VISITS

Most of your colleges will require you to complete a supplement to the Common Application and it will be specific to the college that requires it. Most often, you will have to write one more essay on the topic, "**why are you applying to our college**?"

Answering this question well can make a difference in a college's admissions decision. Get a head start on your answer by filling out this form during or immediately after your campus visit, because colleges begin to blur together in your mind as time goes by and the visits pile up. Enlist a parent to other companions to help you ask questions and listen to the answers.

Name of College:

Names of People
An Admissions person you met or spoke to:
Your tour guide:
A student or professor you met:
Other:

Names of academic majors or programs
An appealing major:
An intriguing program (e.g Ethics and Biology):
An especially popular course:
An unusual study abroad program:
Other:

Extracurricular activities (sports, singing groups, etc.)
An activity that extends one you are doing now:
A new activity that you'd love to try:
Other:

The Campus
A striking facility:
An ingenious design:
An appealing tradition:
Your fun favorites:

THE COLLEGE LIST

CREATING A WELL-ROUNDED LIST

The key word in creating a final list of colleges is BALANCE. Balance the selectivity of your colleges, the locations, and - to a certain extent- the sizes and styles. When you arrive on your chosen college campus, you will be almost two years older than you were when you began looking at colleges: build in room for growth and change. Your test scores may go up - or not - and your grades may rise or fall. Your desire to stay close to home may change into a wish for adventure. Coach support may wax or wane. Your parents' financial situation could change. Your favorite "likely" college might experience a hot streak because of a *New York Times* article, making admission suddenly next to impossible. For all of these reasons, and more, you should have a variety of colleges that cross selectivity on your final list.

Let's start with some definitions. References below to Belmont Hill admissions history point to three years of data we have collected. We assign "likely, target and unlikely" categories without reference to such "hooks" as coach support and legacy status. Hooks can change your category, but it is best not to count on that when making your list.

LIKELY: Belmont Hill students with comparable test scores and grades are usually offered admission. Because the admissions picture is constantly changing, students should apply to at least three "Likely" schools.

TARGET: Belmont Hill students with comparable test scores and grades are sometimes admitted, sometimes waitlisted, and sometimes denied.

UNLIKELY: Belmont Hill students with comparable test scores and grades are rarely admitted. We recommend that you have no more than three "unlikely" colleges on your list. It is important to note that schools with admit rates under 10% are highly unpredictable even for our strongest students. This is particularly true in Regular Decision, where these schools will fall into the unlikely category for most students.

We generally do not recommend applying to colleges where no Belmont Hill student with your scores and grades has been admitted (unless you have special circumstances). Alas, that kind of miracle does not usually happen in the college admissions world.

IMPORTANT: Demonstrating your interest at your "Likely" and "Target" schools is as important as it has ever been. We strongly recommend actively doing this early and often. Ways to demonstrate interest include: (1) visit school in person or virtually; (2) sign up for information or webinars on college websites; (3) pursue interviews if available; (4) attend college rep visits at Belmont Hill in the fall of your Senior year.

AN EARLY DECISION MYTH

MYTH: Students should apply early to an "unlikely" school because it is their best shot at admission.

FACT: Applying Early Decision (ED) to a "Target" school (where a student's chance of admission in the regular pool is about 50%) usually offers the most advantage. The student who has only a small chance of admission to an "unlikely" college rarely rises to the top of an ED pool. In most cases, athletes are urged by recruiting coaches to apply ED. If this is the case, discuss the situation with your counselor.

WORKING WITH YOUR LIST

At Belmont Hill, we don't believe in finding one "right" college for each student. We believe in finding many good college matches across various levels of selectivity. After your college counselor gives you preliminary ideas in April or May of junior year, add to it and change them as you wish for several months. Beginning with your second meeting (April/May Junior year) with your counselor, and continuing through your third meeting (Sept/Oct Senior Year), try to narrow your list in your senior fall so that you can concentrate on your Senior year school work along with your applications. You should have a final EA/ED list ready by mid-October. Your EDII/RD list will be due in mid-December, subject to ED/EA admissions.

Vary the selectivity of your college choices as follows:

- Apply to at least three (3) "Likely" schools, colleges to which you are likely to be admitted and where you believe you would be happy
- Apply to a wide range of "Target" schools, colleges where you have a "reasonable" chance of being admitted. Most Belmont Hill students end up attending a "Likely" or "Target" school on their list.
- We recommend limiting your "Unlikely" colleges; those are places you love, but where you have only a small chance of being admitted.

How to define your categories of "Likely, Target and Unlikely"?

- Talk to your college counselor
- Look at Belmont Hill's admissions history with each college, using the MaiaLearning software.
- Remember that college admissions decisions are often unpredictable and make the best decisions you can to hedge your bets in what can be an unpredictable process.
- Know that applying early decision and otherwise showing demonstrated interest can sometimes have a significant impact on what category a school might fall in for a particular student.

USING MaiaLearning

Belmont Hill's College Counseling program uses MaiaLearning to aid students in their college search. Midway through Form V, students are assigned a MaiaLearning password and given access to the platform, which is helpful in a variety of ways, including the following:

- College search -search colleges by factors such as size, location, selectivity, major
- College Look-up: profiles of colleges with links to their websites
- Scattergrams- charges showing anonymous Belmont Hill admissions data from recent years.

ADMISSIONS OPTIONS (Rolling, ED, EA, REA, Regular Decision)

Rolling Decision
Rolling Admissions colleges notify applicants about their admission as soon as they receive and review all of the candidate's application materials. Apply early at these schools as the class fills up as the season goes on!

Early Decision (ED) I and II
Most colleges use this term to signify a binding early decision program. A student applies by an early date (typically Nov. 1 for EDI and Jan 1 for EDII) and agrees to enroll in the college if admitted in December (EDI) or February (EDII). The admissions committee makes its decision based upon your record through Junior year and often asks to see senior MP1 grades. If admitted through EDI or EDII, students must withdraw all other applications and are required to attend that school. Students can only apply to one school EDI. If a student is not admitted EDI, they may then apply to a second ED school in the EDII round.

Early Action
Most colleges use this term to signify a non-binding early action program. A student applies by an early date (usually Nov. 1 or 15), but does not have to commit to enroll in the college if admitted. Students will hear decisions back on these applications in either December or January. Admission is based on your record through Junior year and Senior year MP1 grades.

Restrictive Early Action/Single Choice Early Action
A few colleges have a restrictive early action rule. For most of them, applicants may not apply to another college's binding Early Decision program while also applying to their restrictive early action program. Other restrictions may also apply.

Regular Decision
Regular decision applicants apply by the regular deadline, which is often in January. Notification dates vary by school, but are typically in March.

Common Reply Date/Enrollment Deadline
Almost all colleges require students to accept or refuse admission invitations by the Candidates Reply Date of May 1. Enrolling at more than one institution (double-depositing) is considered a serious ethical breach, and accordingly, Belmont Hill sends only one final transcript per graduate to one college. (*Exception:* Students may ethically retain a place on a waiting list as well as enrolling/depositing at another college).

NOTE: COLLEGE ADMISSIONS OFFICES MAKE CHANGES IN THEIR EARLY DECISION/EARLY ACTION POLICIES FROM TIME TO TIME. THEY OFTEN DO THIS DURING THE EARLY SUMMER. TO BE SURE THAT YOU ARE ABIDING BY A COLLEGE'S ADMISSIONS OFFICE RULES, READ THE COLLEGE'S WEBSITE IN SEPTEMBER OF THE YEAR YOU PLAN TO APPLY.

STANDARDIZED TESTING

MYTHS AND TRUTHS: THE SAT/ACT

TRUTHS:

- The new SAT was intended to reflect more closely the work that students are doing in high school.
- The ACT describes itself as an achievement test in reading, math, and science.
- Some colleges still use standardized test scores in determining admission.

MYTH: A high score on the SAT/ACT guarantees me a spot in a top college.
TRUTH: There are no guarantees in college admissions. Your transcript is more important than your SAT/ACT score. The SAT/ACT score is part of a larger picture in which all pieces of your application fit together. A high SAT/ACT score combined with lower grades, for example, can be a negative factor, as it indicates underachievement.

MYTH: A straight-A student should have no trouble getting a high SAT/ACT score.
TRUTH: Your classroom ability does not necessarily correlate with your standardized test taking ability.

MYTH: I should keep preparing for and taking the SAT/ACT until I am happy with my Scores.
TRUTH: Studies have shown that a student's SAT/ACT scores tend to peak during 3 tries, so your chances of improving your score begin to go down after that. But if you have good reasons to think you'll improve, feel free to try for a fourth time.

MYTH: Now that many colleges are test optional, I don't need to worry about taking the ACT or SAT any longer.

TRUTH: While it is true that many schools are test optional, a strong score can certainly help your application. Some colleges continue to require the ACT or SAT. We recommend that students work to put their best foot forward on standardized tests, positioning themselves to use it if it will help them.

STANDARDIZED TESTING SCHEDULE

FORM IV
MAY/JUNE: AP exams, as appropriate. Preparation and registration through Belmont Hill. Costs of AP exams are passed on to families after the tests.

June Diagnostic Tests: In partnership with Advantage Testing, Belmont Hill offers all sophomores the opportunity to take full-length practice diagnostic ACT and SAT exams. These optional digital tests are taken at home, after school ends in June and are designed to give students an idea of which test might be best for them to prepare for during junior year.

FORM V
OCTOBER: PSAT NMSQT. This optional test is offered to all juniors and is given at Belmont Hill during the school day. Registration is through Belmont Hill. Colleges do not see this test score, but it can, in a small number of cases, qualify students for the National Merit Scholarship Competition. As a line item on your resume, "National Merit Semifinalist" or National Merit Commended Student" is usually redundant with the high SAT scores that such students usually go on to post.

January to March: Virtual test preparation classes offered on Sunday nights through Advantage Testing.

Through Junior Year: Various ACT and SAT test administrations winter and spring. You should consider taking whichever test is most appropriate for you at least two times before the end of junior year. Registration is done online at www.act.org or www.collegeboard.org. Once you register, your account will be used to send your scores as part of the college application process. Some students choose to take a test ahead of this timeline if they feel adequately prepared.

May/June: AP exams, as appropriate. Preparation and registration through Belmont Hill. Costs of AP exams are passed on to families after the tests.

Summer: Continue with ACT or SAT testing if/as appropriate.

FORM VI

October: SAT or ACT, if needed. Send your ACT or SAT scores to colleges in advance of the November application deadline if appropriate. Talk to your counselor if you have questions about whether you should send your scores.

May/June: AP exams as appropriate. Registration through Belmont Hill. Costs of AP exams are passed on to families after the tests.

STANDARDIZED TESTING AT BELMONT HILL

In October, Form VI students are offered the opportunity to take either the SAT or the ACT on campus. Similarly, in October, Belmont Hill offers Form V students the opportunity to take either the PSAT or the ACT on campus. In April, Form V students are offered the opportunity to take either the SAT or the ACT on campus. Pre-registration with our office is required for all of these tests. Students may take one test each season. Students are required to register for national test date tests on their own. Belmont Hill does not handle registration for national test date tests.

STANDARDIZED TESTING EXTENDED TIME REQUEST PROCESS

If a student wishes to apply for extended time on either the SAT or the ACT, he must contact Chanel Nijmeh, Director of Academic Support. *Please note:* Students who qualify for extended time on tests at Belmont Hill **do not automatically qualify** for extended time on the SAT or ACT. **Students wishing to take those tests with extended time must apply specifically to the appropriate testing agency - the College Board (PSAT/SAT/AP) or ACT - in advance.** Approval is not guaranteed and the process can take up to eight weeks. Official approval from the testing agency is required before students can take the PSAT, SAT, APs or ACT with extended time.

REGISTERING FOR THE SAT OR ACT: FAQS

Students and their families are responsible for registering for national test date standardized tests and having their SAT or ACT scores sent to colleges and scholarship programs. To register for a national test date SAT or ACT, please visit https://satsuite.collegeboard.org or https://my.act.org, respectively.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is Belmont Hill's CEEB code?
A: 220120

Q: Does Belmont Hill send my standardized test scores?
A: No. Your account and scores are private- only you and your family have access to them. ACT and SAT send us certain batches of scores for our students, but your score reports must be sent- by you - directly to colleges or scholarship programs.

Q: In the registration process (required for first registration only), how do I know what to answer for some of the questions? (e.g. What is your cumulative GPA? Others?)

A: Just estimate and guess on these questions. The College Board and ACT use them for research purposes, so the information does not need to be exactly correct.

Q: Should I take both the ACT and the SAT?
A: About 30% of students perform significantly better on one test versus the other. We suggest that students take the practice diagnostic ACT and SAT at the end of 10th grade with Advantage Testing to see which test makes most sense to prepare for moving forward.

Q: I am/my student is a junior. To what colleges should we send these scores?
A: Don't send them anywhere. You will send them when you apply to colleges.

Q: I am/my student is a senior. We've already sent scores to colleges, but this new score is higher. Will it automatically go to the colleges where we've sent scores before?
A: Unfortunately, no. You will need to send the new scores to any college you want to receive it.

Q: Can we select only certain scores (the higher ones) to be sent to colleges?
A: Check each college's testing policy on the admissions page of its website. Most schools allow score choice, which gives students the option to choose scores (by test date for the SAT and ACT) to send to colleges. A select small number of schools do not participate in score choice and require applicants to submit their entire testing history. Test-optional colleges do not require standardized testing. A student should research the testing policy for each college to which they plan to apply.

APPLYING TO COLLEGES

TIPS ON COLLEGE ESSAYS

Note: We offer an interactive essay writing workshop for Form V students in the spring to help students approach the various writing they will be required to do for their applications. Each counselor is ready, willing and able to provide as much feedback as any student needs throughout their application process..

- ☐ Write in informal, personal language.
- ☐ Remember that the best essays are imaginative and descriptive, but also tell the reader about you as a student and/or person.
- ☐ Approaching an essay in a very unusual way is a high-risk project; if you can't do it well, be more conventional.
- ☐ Writing correctly is essential, but it isn't enough. Write effectively as well. Consider your audience.
- ☐ Don't feel that you must write about a big event; write about a subject that genuinely interests you or means something to you, and that shows some of your best qualities in action.
- ☐ Use the personal pronouns *I, me, we, us.*

- ☐ Read your essay aloud. Does it sound natural? Does it sound like something you would say? Does it sound like something you would want to read? Are you bored by it?
- ☐ Read your first sentence. Is there a hook? Does it entice the reader to want to read the rest of the essay?
- ☐ Read the first sentence of each paragraph. Does each relate to the previous idea and continue to pique the reader's interest?
- ☐ Your conclusion should add to your essay, not merely rehash what has already been said. Leave your reader with a strong image.
- ☐ As always, show; don't tell.

DO write about...

- ★ Something that interests you academically/intellectually.
- ★ How you have been affected by a person, group or place very different from your familiar haunts.
- ★ How you handled a tense, demanding, exhilarating or frightening situation.
- ★ How a particular relative, employer, neighbor, or friend has influenced you.
- ★ How an ironic turn of events worked out in your favor - or didn't!
- ★ How specific, carefully chosen details of a day or week in your life reveal important things about you.
- ★ Have you experienced or witnessed that influenced you in a major way?
- ★ Your pet peeve or complaint: how does it reveal something about you/your character.
- ★ A small moment in your life that exemplifies or captures your character and personality.

DON'T write about...

- Pick the sport as the "game of life" or "the big game." These topics are cliché. Find a fresher approach to athletics.
- The travelog essay. Adventures on your trip to Europe.
- Your grandparents' immigration story. This is not about you.
- The College Essay essay - talks about writing this essay. A cliché.
- My room is an extension of myself. Too many kids have been there, done that.
- The metaphysical essay. All abstraction, too pretentious.
- How I learned from my mistake. Unless the mistake is very minor, this approach is dangerous.
- The Community Service Trip to [fill in the blank]. This is a very overused topic.

ARTS+MUSIC/ATHLETICS

FINE ARTS/MUSIC SUPPLEMENT

If you have developed a body of work in music, theater, dance, film or the visual arts, you might want to submit a portfolio or Arts Supplement. Before doing so, discuss the idea with your college counselor. You must research whether the schools to which you are applying will accept arts supplements and in what form. Each school asks for submissions in a certain format or electronic medium. Check each college's website for details. By submitting an Arts Supplement, you are placing yourself in a group of applicants with significant achievement in an arts field. If you have simply experimented with some art and found that you have talent, you may not have accumulated enough experience and production or performance

to compete at that level. If this is the case, it is better to include a few photos or a separate resume in the "Additional Information" section of your main application. To determine how best to present your fine arts talent to a college, talk to your college counselor and your art teacher, advisor, director, or some other mentor in your field.

THE STUDENT-ATHLETE APPLICANT

We have a number of students each year who have athletic recruitment play an important role in their college processes and who go on to play a sport in college. If a coach is excited to support a student-athlete through the process, this certainly plays a role for the student as they seek a good fit college.

Where and when do I start?

You almost certainly started years ago, as you put time and energy into building your athletic skills. You may have played in games and summer camps where college coaches trained and/or observed you. During your sophomore or Junior year, depending on the sport, it's time to start having evaluative conversations with your Belmont Hill and/or club coach(es). They can do you the favor of speaking frankly about your chances of playing sports in college, can suggest the appropriate level (Division I, II or III) that suits you best, and they can sometimes even suggest college programs to which you could consider. If your coach tells you that you may be a candidate for college athletics, you must then look to the next step: taking cues from college coaches.

You'll know during sophomore or Junior year or the summer before Senior year that you are a possible college recruit. If you have not been identified and contacted by colleges as a possible recruited athlete, you will have to try to stir up college coaches' interest in you. You can do that by sending emails and highlight videos, by registering on college team websites, or by following other advice that your Belmont Hill coaches offer. If, after having made a number of contacts, college coaches are not showing interest, it is time to wonder if you are likely to be recruited. Your Belmont Hill coaches and club coaches can help you decide whether to stop pursuing that option, shift to a less competitive division, or change your strategy. If you are not going to be recruited, your athletic participation will still be considered as part of your application, but will be more along the lines of an extracurricular commitment.

Admissions Officers Or Coaches: Who Is In Charge?

Whether you are recruited or not, in all sports and divisions, the college's Admissions Office, not the athletic department or the coach, will make the final decision about whether or not to admit you. A college will not accept a student on athletic ability alone if it does not think the applicant can be academically successful at the college, so your high school academic performance and test scores will have a significant impact on your candidacy.

Rules Of Recruitment

College coaches and high school athletes must follow NCAA rules about recruitment; it is your responsibility to learn them (at www.ncaa.org) and to observe them. A student should not make an official

visit to a college unless he is registered with the NCAA (see below) and has sent an unofficial transcript to the coach's office.

Athletic Scholarships

In Division I and some Division II colleges, scholarship money can be awarded to a student who has athletic talent and/or meets certain criteria, regardless of financial need. That said, if the student ceases to meet those criteria, it can be taken away. Very few athletic scholarships offer a "full ride" to a Division I college; unless you are a top athlete in a revenue generating sport, the offers are more likely to be partial. Moreover, only certain conferences -such as the Big Ten, SEC and the ACC -have athletic scholarships, and then only in certain sports. Division III colleges offer no athletic scholarships, nor do any Ivy League colleges.

The NCAA Eligibility Center

The NCAA EC (formerly the NCAA Clearinghouse) was established to determine academic eligibility for student athletes in Division I and II. All students with an interest in Division I or II programs, and especially those interested in making official visits to colleges, are required to register with the NCAA Eligibility Center by spring of the Junior year. To do so, go to https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/, register, and be sure to check the box in "My Tasks" that authorizes us to send an electronic copy of your transcript to the NCAA EC. If you have attended another high school besides Belmont Hill, you will need to submit transcripts from that school as well. The EC will use a formula to determine if you qualify to play college athletics. The NCAA clock starts running the first day of a student's 9th grade year. If a student repeats 9th grade, the first 9th grade year is still considered by the NCAA Eligibility Center.

How To Be A Self-Advocate in the Recruitment Process

- Fill out questionnaires on colleges' websites; promptly return questionnaires that you receive in the mail
- Create an effective athletic resume and cover letter to send to coaches
- Email and or call coaches; don't wait for them to reach out to you
- Create and share a highlight video
- Attend appropriate camps, tournaments, and other events
- Send college coaches game schedules for your varsity and club teams
- You can gauge a coach's interest in you by the intensity of his recruiting through form letters, handwritten letters, phone calls, scouting (coach attends a game), and invitations to official visits.

College Visit Guidelines For Athletes

	DIVISION I	DIVISION III
Visits Per Year	5 official	unlimited
Meet with Coach?	Yes	Yes
Attend Practice?	Yes	Yes
Attend Classes?	Yes	Yes
Meet Players?	Yes	Yes
Expenses Paid By	College	Student
Overnight Stay?	Usually (48 hrs max)	Sometimes

For all questions about recruiting timetable, see calendar:

www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/resources

Tasks For Student-Athletes

SOPHOMORE OR JUNIOR YEAR

- ☐ Get an honest evaluation of taken and college level prospects from coach(es)
- ☐ Ensure academic eligibility (NCAA EC)
- ☐ Identify and contact coaches and assistant coaches from the schools' athletic website (email addresses can often be found in staff directories if not on team page)
- ☐ Build a highlight video
- ☐ Submit online questionnaires
- ☐ Email head coaches and all assistant coaches expressing interest, including a link to your YouTube highlight film, and include your contact information, college counselor's contact information, and that of your coach or coaches.
- ☐ Visit campuses
- ☐ Attend ID camps
- ☐ Keep a file/designate a new label in your inbox for schools with whom you have communicated
- ☐ Send updated transcripts (and testing if required) to coaches as available and requested

SENIOR YEAR

- ☐ Continue to visit campuses as unofficial visits
- ☐ Narrow your list to colleges at which have a realistic chance of being recruited, based on conversations you or coaches have initiated. *Move on if and when needed*

- ☐ Develop your “broken leg” list - a list of colleges that are interesting to you even if you would not be a member of an intercollegiate team. Consider schools that have competitive club programs.
- ☐ Be developing opinions about whether to apply Early Decision or Early Action. Most coaches who ask for a commitment will ask you to apply Early Decision.

GOOD PEOPLE, BAD MOVES

- Overly optimistic or aggressive approach
- Athletes who ignore academic prerequisites
- Optimists who hang on too long and aren’t realistic
- Athletes who don’t promote themselves
- College Coaches who do not communicate effectively and athletes who misinterpret coach communications
- Pessimists who give up too soon
- Athletes who ignore the NCAA rules

TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Most colleges ask for two teacher recommendations from each applicant. You will discuss teachers and recommendations at your second meeting with your college counselor during your junior year, but here are some general guidelines and advice.

- Select 11th grade teachers in core subjects who know you well. You can choose one teacher from 10th grade if you’d like, but typically letters of recommendation are from junior year teachers
- Select teachers who appreciate and know you as a student. You need not be an “A” student in the teacher’s class.
- Talk to your college counselors before asking as they may have specific advice
- Ask early; teachers’ lists can get full. Remember that the deadline for asking a teacher to write for you is in Mid-May of the Junior year.
- Give your teacher a copy of your resume and fill out any forms the teacher asks for.
- The teacher and Ms. Patton will take responsibility for your recommendations from then on and will be sent to each school to which you apply your senior year
- The teacher is not allowed, by school policy, to show you the recommendation. This policy builds Belmont Hill’s credibility with colleges. Because colleges know our teachers are speaking candidly, their recommendations carry more weight.
- Write each teacher a brief thank you note in November, and remember to tell him/her when you get good news from a college.

COLLEGE INTERVIEWS

Some colleges do not give individual interviews; others rely heavily on them. If a college stresses interviews, it is certainly to your advantage to arrange one. The interview offers you an opportunity to demonstrate your interest, but also to learn more about the college.

Remember, whether it is a visit to campus or an interview, the first time a college hears from you should not be your application. Colleges offer several kinds of interviews: on-campus individual interviews with an admissions officer, off-campus individual interview with an alumna or alumnus, and (usually in competitive or scholarship programs) on or off campus interview. Many interviews now take place via Zoom. You should prepare the same way for all of these. We will offer an interactive interview workshop for students in September of Senior year.

At The Interview

- Dress neatly. You do not need to dress formally, but some students do.
- Be prompt!
- Be friendly, relaxed and courteous.
- Don't ask questions that you could answer by looking specifically at the college's website
- Be sure to ask some questions with academic content.
- Try not to be too nervous! The interview is just an opportunity for a school to get to know you better.

Most Important Rule

The interview should be a conversation between two people. Do not answer questions with monosyllabic answers (Yes, no, sometimes). Always try to offer more information; speak your opinions; talk about the things that are important to you. Be honest and open. Don't try to be all things (student, athlete, artist, philosopher, etc) to all colleges. Be true to yourself. Be interested in the interviewer's school.

What to Know Ahead of Time

Read the college's materials and website so that you do not ask questions that have already been clearly answered. Be prepared to talk about your intellect, values, activities and concerns and to ask questions.

Questions to Expect

Practice talking about yourself with confidence but without arrogance. Take the sample interviewer's questions below to an adult friend and practice answering them gracefully.

- What have you liked about Belmont Hill? What would you change about Belmont Hill?
- What is your role and identity at Belmont Hill? Among your peers?
- Talk about a contribution you have made to Belmont Hill.
- What are some of your goals for college and beyond?
- Tell me about a teacher, class and/or activity that you have especially enjoyed.
- What books or authors have made a lasting impression on your thinking?
- What are some critical events in your life thus far? What do you care most about?
- How do you spend your free time? How have you spent your recent summers?
- How would you describe yourself as a student? As a person? As a musician?
- What are you looking for in a college? Does this college seem to be a good match?
- Many students apply to this college. What distinguishes you from others?
- What other colleges interest you? Where else are you planning to apply?

Questions to Ask

- Is it difficult to get into desired classes? Is course registration easy?
- Where are the popular places for people to study? To eat and hang out?
- Would you describe your campus as more competitive or more collaborative?
- Would you describe the campus as liberal, conservative or mixed? Why?
- Who are some of the more popular professors? What are some popular courses?
- Is there a lot of school spirit?
- What is a big campus issue right now? What do you think is most important to students?
- Are there interesting programs or activities that I won't find in your marketing materials?
- How would you describe the pace of life- relaxed, rushed, lively, slow, intense?

PAYING FOR COLLEGE

Paying for college can hurt the pocketbook and confuse the mind. College comprehensive fees (tuition, room & board, fees, books, travel and incidentals) now vary between $40,000 and $100,000 per year, depending on whether you attend an in-state public university or a private college or university. Families should talk together, preferably in advance of the application process, about their ability and desire to pay college costs, and about whether students will assume some of the financial responsibility. Below please find some references, definitions, and suggestions, but these must be taken in the context of your own family circumstances.

USEFUL WEBSITES

https://studentaid.gov Complete the FAFSA here.

https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org Complete the CSS Profile (required by most private colleges and universities) here

www.finaid.org Resources for families planning to apply for college financial aid

www.MEFA.org Massachusetts Education Finance Authority. Numerous publications and webinars to help you through the financial aid application process

https://professionals.collegeboard.org/higher-ed/financial-aid/netprice/participating-schools Netprice Calculator

www.fastweb.com free matching service for college scholarships

www.goingmerry.com One application for many scholarships; resource for exploring various scholarships

FINANCIAL AID

Financial aid is awarded according to a student's demonstrated need. Students demonstrate need by filing one or more of the following forms: the Free Application for Federal Student Aid or FAFSA, which is required by almost every college/university and determines your eligibility for federal financial aid funds, the CSS Profile, which is required by most private colleges, and, in some cases, institution specific financial aid forms (available only from the college and returned directly to the college's financial aid office. *Please note:* Colleges requiring the CSS Profile and/or institutional forms also require the FAFSA.

SHOULD I APPLY FOR NEED-BASED FINANCIAL AID?

It is important to decide carefully whether you will apply for need-based financial aid. If you don't qualify for aid, you should not apply for it, as that could negatively impact your chances of admission at need-aware institutions. To evaluate your chances of qualifying for need-based aid, use the confidential net price calculator at finaid.org and/or on every college's financial aid webpages. If you are planning to apply for aid, please make sure that you meet all institutional financial aid deadlines as failure to do so could result in lower aid, or even no aid at all.

DATES AND DETAILS

The FAFSA: The 2027-2028 FAFSA will be available on October 1. It is best to complete and submit the FAFSA as early as possible. Many schools require you to submit the FAFSA to them by specific application deadlines. Please meet all school specific financial aid deadlines. Failure to do so may result in lower aid or even no aid at all.

The CSS Profile: This document should be completed and submitted by each college's specific financial aid deadlines. The CSS Profile is available October 1. The CSS Profile is more detailed and more onerous to complete than the FAFSA, but provides colleges with a fuller picture of your family's financial status.

Institutional Forms: It is your responsibility to obtain and complete institutional financial aid forms by the stated deadline.

IDOC: Some schools also require that backup documentation for your financial aid forms be uploaded to IDOC. Please be mindful of IDOC deadlines as well.

Ms. Patton is happy to meet with students and/or parents who would like help navigating the financial aid process.

FINANCIAL AID TIMELINE AND CHECKLIST

SPRING, FORM V

- ☐ Complete a confidential net price calculator (found on every college financial aid webpage) to estimate how much need based aid you and your family will likely qualify for.

- ☐ Make sure that at least some colleges on your list offer good financial aid with more grant money than loan money, if possible. Look for this language: “Meets full need;” “Need-blind admissions;” “Grant/gift money”, “does not package loans.”
- ☐ Evaluate your chances of getting scholarship money on top of your need-based money (scholarship money can only be used to offset costs if your college does not/did not meet your full need.
- ☐ We also encourage students who will qualify for a high % of need-based financial aid to actively consider one or more state school options.

FALL, FORM VI

- ☐ **September:** Finalize a college list that considers financial aid.
- ☐ **September:** If you are applying to a binding Early Decision program or making a commitment to attend a particular college in the fall, check your colleges’ websites and make sure to meet all financial aid deadlines.
- ☐ **October:** If you are applying to a binding Early Decision program or are making a commitment to attend a particular college in the fall, fill out the FAFSA and the CSS Profile and submit them by the appropriate deadline.
- ☐ **October:** If the colleges you are applying to require IDOC or institutional forms, please follow through with what is needed and ensure it is completed by all deadlines.
- ☐ **October or November:** Meet all college financial aid deadlines.
- ☐ For ED and other fall commitments, make sure that you receive a written financial aid package before unrolling/depositing.

JANUARY, FORM VI

- ☐ All financial aid applicants: Fill out FAFSA if you have not already done so.
- ☐ All financial aid applicants: Fill out CSS Profile if applicable.
- ☐ Monitor the receipt of materials at college financial aid offices. Make sure your financial aid file is complete as soon as possible and *before* each school’s deadline.

SEEKING MERIT MONEY OR NEED-BASED AID?

If you are Family A, B, or C, it’s important to know the difference between merit and need-based aid each in the college process and *before* you complete your college list.

A. Families Who Qualify for Significant Financial Aid: For a family that qualifies for significant aid (which you know because you have used a Net Price calculator at each school your son plans to apply to), the single most important element of the college search is the college list. The very best money available will come from a college that has accepted you and gives good financial aid. Your list should be carefully chosen with help from your counselor, to include colleges that (1) are likely and possible colleges for you; (2) meet students’ full need; (3) are mostly need-blind;

and (4) package the fewest possible loans (as opposed to grants). Look for that language in the colleges' financial aid webpages, and check the list of No Loans for Low-Income Students at www.finaid.org. Applying Early Decision or Early Action is helpful, as well as pursuing one or more in-state public school options.

B. Families Who Qualify for Some Financial Aid: First, determine whether you will qualify for aid by running your numbers through the Net Price Calculator on several college websites where your son has expressed interest. Every college is required by law to include this on their website. If you do not qualify for aid, we recommend that you do not pursue need-based aid. Instead, turn your attention to merit based scholarships (see additional information on these below). For families who do qualify for some need-based financial aid, your college list should be carefully chosen, with help from your counselor, to include the first three requirements above: (1) include likely and possible colleges for your son; (2) include colleges that meet full financial need; and (3 are mostly need-blind. Applying ED or EA is helpful.

C. Families seeking Merit Scholarships to Supplement Need-Based Aid or Who Do not Qualify for Need-Based Aid: See information below from www.finaid.org. *Important: If you get a need-based financial aid award from a college that meets full need, know that most outside merit scholarships are subtracted from (not added onto) the amount of need-based aid you receive.* If, however, you apply to a college that does *not* meet full need, and have received a need-based award that does not meet your full need, you may be able to add merit money to your need-based award. Use www.fastweb.org to search for scholarships that meet your specific criteria. Do not expect to win large amounts of merit money unless you are a HIGHLY desirable applicant in terms of academic achievement (you would be in the top 5%-10% of their applicant pool) or have some other highly desirable attribute.

FINAID.ORG: HOW TO PURSUE A MERIT SCHOLARSHIP

Merit scholarships are typically awarded on the basis of academic, athletic, or artistic merit, in addition to special interests. Some merit scholarships also consider financial need, but rewarding talent is often the primary objective. In most cases the scholarship sponsor has a set of criteria they use to select the winners from among the qualified applicants. Sponsors can have a variety of goals in offering a scholarship. Some companies offer scholarships as a form of community development, to invest in the future of the communities where they are based. Others offer scholarships to help retain current employees and recruit future employees.

Colleges may offer scholarships to recruit a talented and diverse student body. They may also offer scholarships in specific majors to encourage students to enroll in underrepresented majors (e.g. scholarships for women and minorities in science and engineering). Membership organizations tend to offer scholarships to promote their field or the mission of the organization. Other scholarships may be established to honor the memory of someone who has passed away, to provide a legacy that perpetuates his or her values. The first step is to make sure you qualify for the scholarship. If the application requirements specify that you must have a 3.7 or higher GPA and you have a 3.6 GPA, don't

bother applying. Most scholarship sponsors receive so many qualified applications that they do not have the time to consider applications that fail to satisfy the minimum requirements. You may be a wonderful and talented person, but if your application is not qualified, the selection committee is not going to look at it. The www.fastweb.org scholarship search engine will show you scholarships that match your profile. Using this will ensure that you do not waste your time applying for scholarships for which you are not qualified.

You can help your odds of winning merit scholarships by applying for less competitive scholarships, such as local awards. But don't neglect the more competitive national scholarships, as these tend to be more lucrative.

SEARCHING FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

Searching for scholarships is just the beginning of the scholarship application process, but it is also the most important. If you don't know where to search or how to search, the results can be overwhelming. A smart scholarship search involves strategy, and with these tips, you'll be able to effectively find scholarships that you both qualify for, and have a chance of winning.

- Start searching for scholarships ASAP. It pays to start your search for scholarships as soon as possible. Many scholarships have early deadlines, even as early as August or September of the Senior year. Some even have Junior year deadlines. Start searching for scholarships at an early age. Most students don't start this search until mid-way through their Senior year of high school and, at this point, have missed some significant potential awards.

  When completing a profile for an on-line scholarship search, be thorough, answering every question. Some of the questions may have a long laundry list of attributes and activities but it is worthwhile to read through them carefully. A complete profile will often match twice as many potential scholarships as a minimal profile.

- Apply to a number of scholarships for which you meet the criteria. You can't win if you don't apply. Even if you are extremely talented, your chances of winning any particular scholarship are low, since you are competing with many qualified candidates. To improve your odds of winning a scholarship, apply for more scholarships. Take care to apply only to those scholarships for which you are qualified. If the minimum GPA is 3.5 and you have a 3.4, do not apply as you will not be considered.

- Seek out less competitive scholarships, too. Small, local awards that are not listed in national databases tend to have fewer applicants. Local PTA or Dollars for Scholars scholarships, as well as local cultural and religious organization scholarships are less competitive and can be very lucrative.

Ms. Patton is happy to sit down with any student or parent to help search for scholarships for which the student might be a good candidate.

EARLY DECISION APPLICANTS

Because ED candidates will not have the opportunity to compare financial aid offers, it is important for ED applicants and their parents to estimate as accurately as possible their projected finances for the following year, when the student will enter college. They do this on the FAFSA and CSS Profile forms and, in some cases, on the college's own financial aid forms as well. ED applicants are informed of their financial aid package when they are admitted, assuming the family has completed the financial aid forms in a timely manner.

DIVORCED AND SEPARATED PARENTS

In the case of divorce or separation, both the custodial and the non-custodial parent are required to file a CSS Profile. The FAFSA is completed by the parent from whom the child receives the most financial support. Since colleges view financing a college education to be a family affair, both parents need to provide as complete a financial picture as possible. A parent who refuses to file financial aid forms jeopardizes their son's chance to receive financial aid. If, however, there is no contact with a non-custodial parent and no financial support from that individual, a waiver form can be submitted. Once this form has been submitted, whether or not to offer a waiver is determined by each college.

MERIT OR "INSTITUTIONAL" SCHOLARSHIPS

Institutional scholarships are given by colleges to students who meet certain predetermined criteria, such as academic achievement, athletic ability, or artistic talent. Demonstrated financial need may or may not be a factor. Given by colleges as a means of attracting desirable students, they essentially amount to tuition discounts. Some of these scholarships are awarded through an automatic screening process and some require special applications. If a college does not mention merit scholarships in its literature, ask about them when you visit or when a representative from the school visits Belmont Hill. You can also call the college financial aid office and ask. Not every college offers merit scholarships.

CORPORATE AND ORGANIZATION SCHOLARSHIPS

Groups such as the Rotary Club and some corporations offer scholarships as well, but you should be wary of private scholarships like these if you have financial need. No college will award you more money than the system says you need. For example, if you win a $5,000 scholarship from a local Rotary Club, a college that meets full need will deduct $5,000 from the grant money they have given you.

ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIPS

Lucky - and rare - the athlete that wins a full athletic scholarship at a Division I college (occasionally at Division II, ***never*** at Division III). These awards are given for athletic ability regardless of financial need. Your coaches, parents, and college counselors will help you navigate the sometimes confusing process of college athletic recruitment. Future Division I or II athletes must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center no later than the spring of Junior year.

INTERPRETING YOUR FINANCIAL AID AWARD

Financial aid letters may accompany you letters of acceptance or they may be sent separately. When letters are sent early in the year, some colleges may not specify the exact amount of private and federal

aid they are offering, but will provide an estimated amount instead. You will receive an exact amount in a later letter. Most colleges try to present the awards in a flattering light, so please read these letters very carefully.

- Look at the combination of awards in the "package." It will probably consist of two types of aid: "grant aid" (such as grants that do not need to be repaid) and "self-help" (usually a combination of work study and student loans).
- When comparing financial aid packages, pay attention to your *net cost* to attend each institution after financial aid, and to the *proportion of grants to loans.* Do not be dazzled by the total amount of money a college offers you; focus on how much you will have to pay out of pocket, both as tuition expenses during your college years and as loan repayments in the years following college.
- Look for special conditions or requirements attached to your awards. For example, some institutions require students who receive financial aid to maintain a certain GPA in order to continue to receive merit awards. Sometimes awards are renewable for three more years, sometimes they are not.
- If you have questions or concerns about your financial aid package, if, for example, you feel that it does not meet your needs, call the college's financial aid office. Be polite, not panicky or angry. Most college financial aid officers are helpful and understanding. We have seen some colleges adjust financial aid awards as they have come to understand a family's financial situation more fully. Please be advised, however, that this is not always possible.
- If you are considering more than one college, wait to receive a financial aid letter from each one before making a decision. Though every college will ask you to accept or decline their offer of aid by a specific deadline, they will usually extend the deadline upon your request if you are still waiting to hear from other colleges. The exception to this is if you are accepted ED and your college meets your full demonstrated financial need. In this circumstance, you cannot wait to see if other colleges will offer you better financial aid.
- Once you have made a final decision, do not miss the reply deadline; if you do, your money could go to someone else. The widespread rumor that every year thousands of dollars of financial aid goes unclaimed could not be further from the truth! Don't jeopardize your award by failing to follow instructions or return forms in a timely manner. Then, once you have accepted your offer and your financial aid package, be sure to notify all other colleges that you will not be attending. This will free up your financial aid to be distributed to another student.

Financial aid deadlines and forms are as important as application deadlines, and they vary widely from college to college. Read your materials carefully and meet all deadlines!

AFTER YOU AND THE COLLEGES HAVE DECIDED

Once a college has notified you of its decision, inform your college counselor so that Belmont Hill's records will be accurate. As soon as you are certain of which college you will attend, you MUST email all other colleges to which you have applied and withdraw your application. In many cases, you can do this in your application portal. You are ethically bound to respond to all colleges where you have been

admitted by the Candidates Reply Date of May 1. It is unethical to pay enrollment deposits and make promises to attend two colleges. If, however, you have been placed on a waiting list, it is ok to retain this place while depositing at another college.

FINANCIAL AID/EARLY DECISION DEPOSITS

If and when a student has formally enrolled at a college where they were accepted via binding early decision, that student must immediately withdraw all other active applications and also decline any other offers of admission they might have already received, as they agreed to do via the early decision agreement. Belmont Hill will not send out supporting materials to any additional colleges after a student has been accepted to and enrolled at a school through binding early decision. We view not withdrawing all outstanding applications after enrolling at a college pursuant to an early decision commitment as an honor code violation and will deal with that accordingly. Belmont Hill views this agreement between the student and college as an ethical commitment in the spirit of our mission based on character. The one exception to this rule is if and when a student is awaiting confirmation of a need based financial aid award at a school to which they have committed early decision.

WAITLISTS

Colleges use waitlists in a number of ways; usually they explain their uses in the letter you get placing you on the waitlist. If you are waitlisted at a college, here are a few tips:

- Do not stay on the waitlist just to see if you get in. Stay on the waitlist only if you know you would attend the college if admitted.
- Write a letter of continued interest to the college after receiving word that you have been waitlisted. Make your commitment to the college very clear; promise to attend only if you can do so honestly: “I will attend if admitted.” Include any new honors, awards, grades or activities that might strengthen your candidacy.
- Be in touch with your college counselor to convey your waitlist interests and priorities such that they can advocate for you if given the opportunity.
- Do not count on admission from a waitlist. Get excited about the school you have decided to attend and be sure to enroll at a school by May 1.

RECOMMENDED REFERENCES

We encourage you to reference our College Counseling Website for a range of articles and podcasts.
Comprehensive College Reference Books
The College Handbook, The College Board
Peterson’s Guide to Four-Year Colleges
Scholarship Handbook, The College Board
Barron’s Profiles of American Colleges
Narrative, Subjective College Guidebooks
The Fiske Guide to Colleges

The Best 379 Colleges, Princeton Review
The Insider's Guide to the Colleges, Yale Daily News
Colleges that Change Lives, Loren Pope (profiles of 40 small colleges)
Looking Beyond the Ivy League, Loren Pope
Hillel Guide to Jewish Life on Campus (available at www.hillel.org)

Advice and Insider Information Books

100 Successful College Application Essays, The Harvard Independent
Admissions Confidential, Rachel Toor
College Match: A Blueprint for Choosing the Best School for You, Antonoff and Friedemann
College Visits and College Interviews, The College Board
The Fiske Guide to Getting Into the Right College, Fiske & Hammond
The Gatekeepers, Jaques Steinberg
Harvard, Schmarvard: Getting Beyond the Ivy League into the College that is Right for You, Jay Matthews

Eccentric or Special Interest Books

Cool Colleges for the Hyper-Intelligent, Self-Directed, Late-Blooming, and Just Plain Different, Asher
Barron's Best Buys in College Education, Lucia Solorzano
Guide to Performing Arts Programs, Everett & Topaz, Princeton Review
The K&W Guide to Colleges for the Learning Disabled, Kravets and Wax
The Multicultural Student's Guide to Colleges, Robert Mitchell
Professional Degree Programs in the Visual and Performing Arts, Peterson's Guides
Making a Difference: College and Graduate Guide, Miriam Weinstein (for the idealistic)
Top Colleges for Science, Peterson's Guides
Peterson's Guide to Honors Programs, Joan Digby
The Complete Guide to American Film Schools, Ernest Pintoff
The Rolling Stones Guide to Colleges that Rock