

Southington High School

College and Career Planning Guide



School Counseling Department

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SECTION I

POST SECONDARY OPTIONS

College

The term commonly used to describe any institution of higher education. Typically speaking, it is a four year course leading to a bachelor's degree. A college may be part of a university, or it may be independent.

Community / Community-Technical College

State supported two-year colleges offering programs of vocational training certificates and associate's degrees. Community Colleges have agreements in place to support the transfer of students to four year colleges upon completion of the associate's (2 year) degree.

Connecticut community colleges do not provide housing on campus.

University

An institution of higher learning comprised of several colleges. An undergraduate division confers bachelor's degrees and provides facilities for learning to take place through teaching. A graduate division confers masters and doctoral degrees and provides research opportunities.

Liberal Arts College

A four-year institution which emphasizes a broad undergraduate education program. Pre-professional or professional training may be available but is not stressed.

Engineering or Technological College

Independent professional schools which provide four-year training programs in the fields of engineering and the physical sciences. They are often known as Institutes of Technology or Polytechnic Institutes. Many technology and polytechnic institutes offer strong programs in other areas (i.e. business, fine arts, etc.).

Technical School

Public or private institutions that offer terminal occupation programs intended to prepare students for immediate employment in fields related to engineering, technology and the physical sciences. These schools may also offer one-year certificate programs in certain crafts and clerical skills.

Nursing School

There are two kinds of nursing schools. At schools affiliated with four-year colleges, students receive both a B.S. degree and R.N. and have the opportunity of entering the field of nursing administration. At schools associated with two-year colleges, students receive both an Associate Degree and an R.N.

Military Options

The Armed Services is one of the major employers in the nation. It is also a major source of educational training and preparation for entry-level jobs. There are numerous job-training opportunities in the military for both men and women. Representatives from all the services are available to give students information about career training and/or educational opportunities.

1. Recruiting officers of all branches of the Armed Services visit the high school regularly. If you are interested, speak with your counselor.
2. Sophomores, juniors and seniors should consider learning about specific abilities that they have by taking the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). This test is administered once per year at SHS, typically in December. There is no cost to either the student or school district, nor does taking the test obligate the student to enlist in the military.
3. For the student with the goal of college or university education, the military services offer several options to consider. These include:

A) The United States Service Academies

Federal military academies prepare officers for the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard. West Point, Annapolis, and the Air Force Academy require recommendation and appointment by members of Congress, while the Coast Guard Academy uses a competitive application process. Private and state-supported military institutes, however, operate on a college application basis. They all offer degree programs in engineering, technology and other majors with concentration in various aspects of military science. While all juniors should begin exploring possible educational programs following graduation, those interested in the Service Academies must begin as soon as possible to insure that they receive full consideration. The first step in securing an appointment to one of the academies is to complete an on-line Pre-Candidate Questionnaire.

Addresses:

Admissions Office
U.S. Military Academy
West Point, NY 10996
<http://www.usma.edu>

Admissions Office
U.S. Air Force Academy
U.S.A.F. Academy, CO 80840
<http://www.usafa.af.mil>

Admissions Office
U. S. Naval Academy
Annapolis, MD 21402
<http://www.usna.edu>

Admissions Office
Merchant Marine Academy
Kings Point, NY 11024
<http://www.usmma.edu>

The second step is to write to each of your Senators and your Congressman and ask that they consider you as one of their nominees. In this letter you should indicate your first, second, third and fourth choices for academies as well as:

Name, address and telephone number
Date of birth
Social Security number

High school name and year of graduation
Name of your parents

The Coast Guard Academy has an admissions procedure similar to other highly competitive colleges. There is no nomination process involved. Write directly for an application:

Admissions Office

U.S. Coast Guard Academy

New London, CT 06320

<http://www.cga.edu>

Please see your school counselor in the School Counseling Office for more information about applying to a Military Service Academy.

B) ROTC - Reserve Officers Training Corps

ROTC scholarship programs involve a competitive process as well. In addition to the written application, candidates must undergo a physical examination, formal interview and physical abilities tests. The first step is to obtain an application at:

Air Force www.afrotc.com/scholarships

Army www.goarmy.com/rotc/high_school_students/four-year-scholarship.html

Navy www.navy.com/benefits/education/nrotc

C) National Guard

Further detailed information about all of these options is available from your school counselor.

Apprenticeships

Some manufacturing companies and trade professions offer apprenticeships, which are a program of learning while earning. Apprentice programs are typically 2-4 years in length, depending on the skills involved. Students can obtain apprenticeship information from employers or through trade unions and are also encouraged to contact CT Works, which is a division of the CT State Department of Labor. To find a convenient location, visit:

<http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/ContactInfo/CTWorks/Directory.htm>.

Employment

Some students choose each year to directly enter the workforce after graduation. Please seek your school counselor's advice on cover letters, your resume, and possible career opportunities.

SECTION II

COLLEGE AND CAREER PLANNING

A. How to start thinking about the college admissions process

Self-assessment is the critical first-step in learning about whether a particular school is going to be right for you. Until you've spent time thinking about your own needs (academically, socially, and emotionally) you are not really ready to answer the question of whether a particular school is the right match for you. Once you have answered these questions, you will be better equipped to find the schools that reflect your values, needs, and interests.

What Colleges are Looking For

Every college has its own criteria to evaluate applicants, and no two colleges are alike, but colleges will be looking for a mix of the following, weighted a bit differently from college to college:

- **Academic Record/Transcript** – GPA, class rank, consistency, improvement, difficulty of classes, reputation of high school. In short, a strong level of performance in a challenging curriculum represents the ideal mix. Senior year courses and grades are extremely important.
- **Testing** – Standardized tests will be a part of the application at most colleges.
- **Essays** – Most applications will have an essay section, and it is the best way for a college to get to know you and hear your “voice”.
- **Extracurricular Activities** – It's always better to make a commitment to a few activities and get involved in leadership roles, than to join many clubs. Colleges are looking for quality as opposed to quantity.
- **Letters of Recommendation** – These paint a broader, more subjective picture of the student and are important when colleges ask for them.
- **Honors and Awards** - Special recognition for a skill or talent is desirable and you will want to include these honors or awards in your resume.
- **Interviews** – While not always offered, interviews are another way to gain insight into the applicant, and you should obtain one if possible. A recommendation from a college to have an interview should be treated as a requirement.

It is important to remember that admissions committees are not only admitting qualified individuals, but are also building dynamic and diverse classes and may be looking for a candidate with certain specific qualifications. This explains why a seemingly less qualified student might occasionally be accepted over another.

Myths About College Admissions

Myth #1: “SAT scores are the most important piece of the application.”

Fact: Colleges know that your performance in high school is a better predictor of college success than standardized test scores. Colleges certainly scrutinize SAT scores, but there are more students denied who have high testing and modest or low grades than students who have modest testing and high grades. More colleges are offering an “SAT optional” admissions option. For a list of colleges, see www.fairtest.org.

Myth #2: *"Colleges receive so many personal essays that they probably only glance at them."*

Fact: College admissions officers read personal essays with great care. Writing about yourself in a way that reveals your uniqueness is the one significant thing you can do to set yourself apart from others. Don't wait until just before the deadline and dash off anything to get it in the mail. Admission officers notice the care taken in writing the application. A well-written essay can tip the scales in your favor; the personal essay does make a difference.

Myth #3: *"Colleges do not look at the senior year grades."*

Fact: Most college admissions committees analyze not only senior year grades in first semester but also the degree of difficulty of the senior year course of study. As for second semester grades, if there is a significant change in academic performance from January to June, the college that originally accepted you may require summer school work, put you on probation for the first semester of college, or rescind your acceptance on the grounds that you are not the same student they originally admitted.

Myth #4: *"It's important to have as many varied extracurricular activities as possible to impress college admissions people."*

Fact: Colleges are looking for *quality* of involvement rather than *quantity*. They want a well-rounded student body made up of students who are vitally interested in particular activities and who haven't spread themselves so thin that they've demonstrated no depth of commitment to anything. Colleges prefer, for example, the student who was solely a dedicated yearbook editor, rather than the student who dashed in and out of ten activities.

Myth #5: *"It is better to go to a big university that is well known than to a small college that few people have heard of."*

Fact: All generalizations about large versus small schools are dangerous. A large well-known university may be ideal for many students, but some would do better in a smaller, more personal environment. Relationships with professors can make a real difference in your experience and preparation for graduate school. It is important to define the things you want in a college -- to understand yourself, not to be influenced by others' opinions.

Myth #6: *"The financial aid situation is completely hopeless this year."*

Fact: Financial aid continues to be more readily available than you might think in the form of grants, loans, opportunities for on-campus work, and merit scholarships. Don't wait until winter to apply because funds may be depleted by then and financial aid deadlines are serious and inflexible! Please refer to the section on financial aid in this guide.

Myth #7: *"You should go to the most prestigious college to which you are admitted."*

Fact: You should go to the college that "fits" you the best. If it happens to be the most prestigious, that's fine. However, fit has to do with how you feel when you are on campus, how the school matches with your learning style and academic interests and how the professors teach. If the college isn't a good fit, you will be unhappy, regardless of the prestige.

Myth #8: *"Your life will be ruined if you don't get into your first choice college."*

Fact: Thousands and thousands of students each year do not get admitted to their first choice college. Rejection is hard on your ego, but you will not be alone. The vast majority of students who end up at their second, third or fourth choice are happy there, because every school has something to offer. The important thing is to focus on the things that attracted you to those schools in the first place.

B. How to Research Colleges

Choosing Your Schools Strategically

There are many factors that go into choosing colleges that will be right for you. But here are some general guidelines that are helpful as starters:

- **Be realistic** – there are some schools that you just won't qualify for so don't waste your time. Why set yourself up for failure at a college that will be way too competitive for you?
- Choose some schools that are *likely* (or at least seem so), some that are *target* (good fit) and some that are *reach* (long shots). You might have 2-3 of each, at least at first, in order to give yourself every possible opportunity. You can narrow the list before you actually apply.
 - ❖ We hesitate to call any school a "safety school", but your safest schools are those where you are significantly over the averages quoted for admitted students (both GPA and test scores). Your safe schools should be institutions in which you have a sincere interest in attending.
 - ❖ Your target schools admissions requirements fall close to the your GPA and test scores and the colleges admit at least half of their applicants. Your other attributes, such as your extracurricular activities and honors and awards, may increase your chances for acceptance.
 - ❖ Your reach schools are those where you are below their range of test scores and grades **or the percentage of admitted applicants at this college is very small.**

- ❖ You should also include at least one school on your list that is a “**financially safe**” school - a school that you can afford to attend, even if scholarships or financial aid is not awarded.

• **More isn't necessarily better** - There is generally no point in applying to 15+ colleges. Narrow your list intelligently and save yourself and others a lot of time and money.

• **Don't limit yourself to only the well-known institutions** - There are some wonderful colleges whose names you might not recognize, but where you might have a better experience. Check out Naviance and the College Board college search for starters and talk to your high school counselor for ideas.

• **Seek help from your parents, counselors teachers or others who know you** - Talk to older students who attend colleges in which you might be interested.

• **Do your homework** - Research a variety of colleges on the internet and look at the admission process and requirements. Look at the averages of admitted students. Also, look at the Scattergrams/Graphs on Naviance to see how you compare to former SHS applicants.

• **At this stage, don't eliminate a college based on cost** - If you truly like the school, explore all the opportunities for aid before deciding you can't afford to go there.

• **Do your own work!** - This is your process, so take ownership of it. Don't delegate something this important to anyone else, even your parents.

How to Narrow Your Choices

As you start to find colleges that will be good fits for you, here are some factors to consider:

- **Cost** – what will my cost limitations be, if any? Will I need financial aid?
- **Size** – do I want large, medium or small?
- **Rural or Urban** – do I like the city scene, or a more suburban setting?
- **Location** – do I want to travel out of state, or stay close?
- **Campus** – what do I want in a campus? How are the dorms? How is the food?
- **Social aspects** – will I be likely to join a sorority or fraternity? Do the kids stay on campus over the weekend or do most commute? Is it politically liberal or conservative?
- **Academics** – do they have majors that interest me? What is their reputation in those majors? (note that the same school can be rated highly in one major, while not in others). What about class size?
- **Religion** – does the college have a religious affiliation?
- **Sports** – do they have the sport(s) interest me? What Division? Intramurals/Club sports available?
- **Honors programs** – strong students may want to check into special honors programs at the various colleges. There may be scholarships or other incentives associated with honors programs.

- *Special programs* - Are there other special programs involving research, internships or study abroad?

Naviance

SHS students have access to Naviance, a web-based program that includes subsections, such as: *About Me*, *Colleges*, and *Careers*. Every student will use Naviance in the College Application process. Once students receive a registration code from their school counselor, they can register for an account on <http://connection.naviance.com/southington>. Students will have access to complete college searches, career interest inventories, personality type (Do What You Are) , resume building and scholarships.

College Representatives Visiting SHS

During the fall, admissions officers from many schools will be visiting Southington High School. Announcements of these visits will be given in the daily announcements and sent via email. Students must sign up through Naviance, in advance, to attend these visits. A pass will be sent to period one on the day of the visit. It is also your responsibility to check with the teacher of the class you will miss to find out if there is a test/quiz/work scheduled which cannot be missed.

College Fairs

College fairs are an efficient way to get information from lots of colleges at once. **Southington High School hosts a college fair in September** so be sure to attend and visit with colleges that interest you. Over 120 college representatives will be present to answer questions and provide information about their school. Fairs don't replace visits, but they're a good first step in sifting through the wealth of colleges available. If you cannot attend the SHS fair or a college you want to talk to is not in attendance, a partial list of large, registered fairs can also be found at The National Association for College Admission Counseling website at: <http://www.nacacnet.org>.

Preparing for a College Fair

Prior to attending the fair, have some questions in mind that are important to you and that will help you determine which colleges to target. You will often be given cards to fill out so that the college can send you additional information. Jot down notes as well. For the efficiency-minded, type up your own "label" and print multiple copies so that you can leave them with the colleges you are interested in. Set it up to look something like this, but with your information filled in:

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____ Date of Birth ___/___/___
Telephone () _____
Graduation Year _____ School CEEB Code 070690
School Name _____

Academic Interest _____

Email _____

Questions to ask College Representatives (when they visit SHS, at college fairs, on campus)

College representatives, as well as college students themselves, admissions counselors, and faculty genuinely enjoy talking to high school students. They like to share their ideas about the college and they all appreciate students who want to know more about their school. Their answers can help you make a good college match. Here are a few examples.

Students:

How would you characterize the majority of students? What are they like?

What do students like most about the college? Least?

What political, social, or academic issues concerned students last year? How did the administration react? What was the resolution?

Social life and campus activities:

What do students do for fun?

What is the role of fraternities and sororities on campus? If I didn't want to join, would I still have an opportunity for a satisfactory social life?

What role do team sports play in the social life of the college?

Is there a good balance of academics, social life, and extracurricular activities?

What are your alcohol regulations?

Do students feel safe on campus?

Do students generally stay on campus for the weekend, or do they go home?

Campus facilities:

Is there themed housing i.e., learning communities?

Are there single-sex dorms? Co-ed? Suite-style?

What are the types of food plans? Vegetarian? Kosher?

What are the different types of dining facilities available?

Scholarships & Financial Aid:

Are there any merit based scholarships offered?

Aside from the FAFSA, are there other forms to be filled out, such as the CSS Profile?

C. Developing a College Resume

Naviance has a simple resume building tool. Add items each year of high school, so you don't forget anything. This will make your application process much easier.

Make sure to include part time jobs, internships, volunteer hours and organizations, clubs, sports, community and/or religious involvement.

D. College Visits

Over and over again we hear stories about college visits that totally changed a student's opinion about the college. There is simply no better way to get a true feel for the atmosphere, student body, campus and general environment. Some colleges offer group tours, which are very valuable. Other colleges take appointments for more personal tours. Try to visit when school is in session. Sophomore and junior year are excellent times to start visiting different campuses. What a great use of your Spring Break! To set up a visit, check online to see what is available. See if there are options to visit your areas of interest, talk to professors, stay overnight in a dorm, etc. When you visit, evaluate:

- *Atmosphere and culture*
- *School spirit, pride, involvement*
- *Student union and other facilities*
- *Library and research areas*
- *Dorms and eating areas (sample the food!)*
- *Extra-curricular activities*
- *Transportation and parking*

Bring a camera and take photos so you'll remember your trip and what you liked/did not like about the college.

Don't skip the college visits. They can make all the difference in your decision. However, to save cost, it might make sense to visit top choice colleges before applying but save some visits at your lower choices for after acceptances. After all, with luck they may not be necessary! If all else fails, there are virtual visits on most college websites.

E. College Interviews

Obtaining the Interview

Fewer and fewer colleges and universities are offering private on-campus interviews. However, if they do, take advantage of this opportunity to make a positive impression.

Sometimes alumni will interview in your area for the colleges they represent. Some colleges will not offer any individual interview opportunity at all; typically large public schools do not.

Preparing for the Interview

Practice answering these questions out loud, either to a parent or to yourself. Better yet, have a parent or counselor conduct a mock interview with you.

Sample Interview Questions

Why do you want to attend our school?

What is your strongest/weakest point?

What have you done to prepare for college?

How have you overcome a challenge or adversity in your life?

What has been your most rewarding experience in high school?

What do you want to do in the future?

Tell me about yourself. (You should focus on about three things.)

Tell me about your interests/extracurricular activities

What is your favorite book? Who is your favorite author?

Which of your accomplishments are you the most proud of?

If you could meet any important figure in the past or present, who would it be and what would you talk about?

What sets you apart from other applicants? Why should we accept you?

Where else are you applying and why?

Which is your first choice? Why? (try to be diplomatic in your answer)

What do you hope to major in? Why?

Tell us about your family.

How do you spend a typical afternoon after school? Evening? Weekend?

Do you have any heroes, contemporary or historical?

What events have been crucial in your life?

What is the most significant contribution you have made to your school or community?

What is the most important thing you have learned in high school?

What do you want to get out of your college experience?

Questions for You to Ask

Generally the interviewer will allow time for you to ask questions. Even if you don't really have any, find a few to ask. Use this opportunity to demonstrate that you know something about the college.

How to Dress

The proper term for interview attire would be "business casual." Females should wear nice pants or moderate skirts with a conservative sweater or blouse. Males should wear nice pants with a collared shirt; even sporty golf-type shirts with collars are acceptable. Avoid old jeans, T-shirts, sandals, short skirts, fancy outfits, torn or ripped clothing, clothing with slogans, etc.

Be on Time

Always allow extra time to get to your interview. Aim to arrive about twenty minutes early to ensure you have adequate time to fill out any paperwork.

Bring Your Resume

Have your resume with you and bring extra copies. This demonstrates your organization and preparation.

Get the Name or Card of the Interviewer

The interviewer may hand you a business card. If they don't offer one, ask if they have one. This is for the thank you note that you will send.

Demonstration of Interest

Competitive colleges pay attention to whether applicants have demonstrated genuine interest in their college. Did you ask to be on their mailing list? Did you attend their open house? Did you have an interview? Did you indicate anywhere that you truly want to attend their school? While probably not as important as other factors, demonstration of interest could at least be a tie-breaker between you and another similar student.

F. Applying to Colleges

You will need your social security number and Southington High School's CEEB code to fill out all applications, so have them handy. SHS CEEB code = 070690

Your Application

Your application is one of the few things that is seen by an admissions officer directly. The appearance of your application is a reflection on you. Think carefully about your answers and review them. Ideally, have a parent check them. Be truthful, be specific, and be accurate; but don't hesitate to put your best foot forward.

The Common Application

Colleges and universities have worked together to develop and distribute a Common Application. Colleges "join" this effort, and their membership means that they accept the Common Application and commit to considering it equally to their own specific application form. The advantages to students are obvious, in that you fill out the common application and simply submit it multiple times to any member schools you are applying to. What's the downside? Only that not all colleges accept it, and it is a more lengthy application sometimes than the individual college applications on their websites. You can visit www.commonapp.org for a list of the "member institutions" and to view this application. All of Connecticut's 4-year public universities (UCONN and the CT State Colleges such as CCSU) now accept and/or require use of the common application.

Individual College Applications

Check each college's website to find out what procedure they use for applying. If they do not use the common application, they will have their own institutional application for you to use.

Transcripts

Many applications will ask for your classes and grades as part of the form. Be accurate and truthful, because they will still obtain an official transcript in the end. The SHS School Counseling Department will only send transcripts to colleges after the student/parent has filled out and signed a "transcript request form" which is available in the school counseling office or online.

Additional Requirements for Some Majors

Pay special attention to whether your intended major has additional requirements, such as portfolios, auditions, video/film, or additional letters of recommendation.

Fees

Application fees generally range from \$20 to \$100. Four fee waivers are issued to applicants who qualified under the SAT and ACT Fee Waiver programs. The Fee Waiver program is available to juniors and seniors based on economic need. See your counselor for information if you believe you qualify for a fee waiver.

G. SHS College Application Process

To apply to all colleges. . .

1. Log on to <http://connection.naviance.com/Southington> using your *Naviance* username and password. (See your counselor if you need help)
2. Go to the **Colleges** tab in *Naviance* and click on **Colleges I'm Applying To**.
3. Please do the following under the **Colleges I'm Applying To** tab:
 - a. **To add schools** – Click **add to this list** to pick the schools that you plan to apply to so you can begin to track your application status. *You must list all the colleges that you are applying to in order to have your recommendations and transcripts sent.*
 - b. **To request teacher recommendations** – Click **add/cancel requests** under the *Recommendations* heading to formally request a teacher's recommendation letter. *****Only do this after you have asked that individual in person and they said "yes."***** Please check the individual college website to determine how many letters of recommendation are required. Provide the teachers that are writing your letters of recommendation a completed **Teacher Brag Sheet**.
4. A **Transcript Request Form** must be completed and submitted to the School Counseling Department for EACH college application. Submit a completed Southington High School **Transcript Request Form** to the School Counseling Office for each college a ***minimum of 3 weeks*** before your application deadline. If you would like a letter from your counselor (required on the Common Application), please submit a **Counselor Brag Sheet**.
5. Complete any school specific report forms provided, and bring to School Counseling Office along with your transcript request forms.
6. Once you hand in your transcript request forms to the School Counseling Office, the School Counseling Department staff will send your official transcript, schedule, school profile, and Q1 grades. If you request transcripts to be sent prior to the end of the first quarter, the School Counseling Office will automatically send your first quarter and mid-year grades to those institutions.
7. **You (the student) are responsible** for completing the college applications online via the Common Application or the college website(s).

If you are using the Common Application. . .

1. Go to the Common Application www.commonapp.org . You will need to create an account with a username and password in order to complete the privacy notice and match your **Common Application** account to *Naviance*. Add the colleges you are applying to your Dashboard (you must add at least one college to be able to continue)
2. Fully complete the **Education** section in the “Common Application” tab
3. Go to **Assign Recommenders** located under the “My Colleges” tab. Once you have completed the **Education** section completely it will activate your ability to complete the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) consent.
4. Go to the FERPA release and complete. This completes the FERPA release for all of your schools. We recommend that you waive your right to review your letters of recommendation; this is preferred by colleges.
5. Log into *Naviance* and enter your Common Application email address and click on the “match” button. Your transcript cannot be sent if you do not match the two accounts successfully. If you are having difficulty, please see your school counselor for assistance.

H. Standardized Testing

Another selection criterion considered by college admission personnel is a student’s performance on standardized tests. Most selective colleges and universities require candidates to submit scores from either the SAT or the ACT, and some of the most competitive colleges may require SAT subject tests. Make sure you check the specific college website(s) for testing requirements. **Standardized testing is only part of all the information that represents you.** For a list of schools that do not require the SAT, please see www.fairtest.org, and speak with your counselor for advice.

Southington High School *does not* submit SAT or ACT scores to colleges. They must be sent directly from the testing company at www.collegeboard.org or www.actstudent.org. **Don’t forget to take advantage of your four free score reports at the time of test registration.**

The Tests

PSAT/NMSQT

This test is designed for sophomores and juniors to give them an estimate of how they will score on the real SAT Reasoning Test. The PSAT is shorter, but similar in content and approach. It is offered once per year nationwide in October; all grade 10 and 11 students at SHS take the test during the school day. The results you receive as a test taker are very valuable. The PSAT, which is administered by the College Board, is also the basis for qualifying for the National Merit Competition and other merit scholarship programs when taken as a junior. It is not sent to colleges and is not used in the admission process.

The SAT Reasoning Test

The SAT Reasoning Test consists of Critical Reading, Math, and an optional Writing section, which together take about four hours. The bottom line – it’s LONG! Be sure to get plenty of sleep the night before and bring snacks and water for the breaks. Concentrate on staying

focused and watch your pacing. Register for the SAT and view test dates on www.collegeboard.com.

SAT Subject Tests

The Subject Tests measure students' knowledge and skills in a particular subject and their ability to apply that knowledge. Students may take up to three tests on any testing date. Each Subject Test is a one-hour multiple-choice test. Subject tests are only required by some of the most competitive private colleges. Some colleges will accept the ACT with writing in lieu of SAT Subject Tests; check the requirements of individual colleges carefully.

The ACT

The American College Testing (ACT) Assessment is designed to test your skill levels in English, Math, Reading, and Science reasoning. There is also an optional writing test. Students receive four separate scores plus a composite score. Generally, all colleges will accept the ACT with Writing in lieu of the SAT Reasoning Test. Some colleges will also accept the ACT with writing in lieu of SAT Subject Tests; check the requirements of individual colleges carefully. Visit www.actstudent.org for more info.

WHICH TESTS SHOULD YOU TAKE?

All sophomores and juniors take the PSAT/NMSQT in October. **If you are planning to apply to college, you should take the SAT and/or the ACT twice**, once in the spring of junior year and again in the fall of senior year. SAT Subject Tests may also be required; check the requirements of the colleges to which you are applying. You may find that you score better on one type of test than the other. Talk with your counselor in the spring of junior year about these tests. Please refer to this link for an SAT-ACT Score Comparison Chart <http://www.act.org/aap/concordance/index.html>.

WHAT ABOUT TEST PREPARATION?

The best preparation for scoring well on college entrance examinations is to take a strong high school program, to do your homework diligently and to **read regularly** for information and enjoyment. However, if you choose, there are a wide range of test preparation options. Each option is very different in description, time commitment and cost. Check all of your options carefully, and speak with your school counselor.

Some free resources for test prep are as follows:

www.Kahnacademy.org

www.number2.com

www.actstudent.org

www.collegeboard.com

www.ets.org

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Register online at www.collegeboard.com or www.actstudent.org. ***Fee waivers*** are available for those who qualify upon registration for the test. Students who qualify will be sent online fee waivers through the College Board.

HELPFUL CODES

070690: The Southington High School CEEB code

I. Essays

On most college applications, students are given the opportunity to respond to one of several questions or write a “personal statement”. The personal statement is open-ended and provides an opportunity for students to tell the reader something you think is important. Application essay questions have no right or wrong answers. It is the content of the essay and how you organize and support your thoughts that are most important. Your essay should be a clear indication of your ability to think analytically and creatively, communicate your thoughts and serve as a reflection of who you are. It should be written by you and in your voice.

Every spring, the School Counseling Department offers an “**Essay Writing Workshop**” during the school day for any interested juniors. A college representative will be here to discuss essay writing and to give students tips and guidelines about writing their college essays.

J. Types of Admission

As if the process isn’t already confusing enough, there are several types of college admission deadlines.

Regular Admission

This is the standard admission, whereby students submit applications by the college’s regular deadline. Students applying under regular admission will generally be notified of the decision in March or April.

Early Decision - Binding

Have you found a college that is overwhelmingly your first choice? Then if that school offers early decision, it may be right for you. You can only apply under early decision to one college. Usually you and your counselor will sign a contract stating that you understand the binding nature of this admission process. Failure to abide by the restrictions can jeopardize your acceptance to that college and others. Some believe that applying ED can give you an edge at some colleges.

Early Action – Not Binding

Often confused with Early Decision, Early Action is an opportunity to apply early (usually by some November date) and to be notified by around mid-December or January. Under this plan, you can be accepted early, rejected, or deferred to the regular admission pool. If accepted under Early Action, you are NOT obligated to attend and you still have until May 1 to make a decision.

Rolling Admission

Under this plan, applications are considered as they are received and the student is notified of the decision as soon as it is made. A student applying to a college that offers rolling admission is not committing to that college if accepted. There is almost no reason NOT to submit your application early to these schools, as it can only serve to give you an early answer. If accepted, you can relax knowing that you are in but can still wait to see what your additional options may be.

Open Admission

Open admission colleges, such as community colleges or trade schools, admit all interested students with a high school diploma. However, sometimes admission to particular community college programs is more selective and not truly “open”, such as dental hygiene or radiology.

K. Admissions Decisions

Accepted

Student is admitted to the college/university. Most schools will need a response and deposit by May 1st.

Deferred

The college/university determines that more information is needed to make a final decision about a candidate’s application. Often the decision is delayed until new grades and/or test scores are received.

Wait List

This is an acknowledgement by the college that the student is an admissible student; however, due to enrollment size the student cannot be offered admission at this time. It is critical for a student to express his/her interest directly to the admissions officer if they are still interested in the college. It is also very important to follow procedures and deadlines detailed in your letter about remaining on the wait list.

Delayed or Deferred Acceptance

If you have been accepted at a college, you can sometimes arrange to delay your matriculation (attendance) for a year. Any such arrangement must be explicitly set up with the college.

Denied

The student has not met the criteria of accepted students and has been denied admission.

Attending a Community College

For some, attending a community college (CC) can be advantageous and is becoming an increasingly popular option. In fact, over 25% of all first-year college students that graduated from SHS start at CCs. You can better prepare, save money, live at home, and explore majors and careers. SATs and ACTs aren't required but are recommended. CCs generally offer small classes and many at night and/or on weekends. Often, CCs have transfer or "feeder" programs with four year institutions. There may be "articulation agreements" which outline transfer policies and make it easier to transfer smoothly. If this option is of interest to you, you need to research exactly how to make it happen. Connect with an advisor at your local CC(s).

L. Paying for College - Financial Aid

Financial aid is money that is given or lent to students to help pay for their college education. Sources of financial aid include federal and local governments, colleges and universities, and private organizations. Financial aid comes in four forms: grants and scholarships (gift aid), or loans and work-study (self-help aid). The information in this section introduces you to the various types of financial aid and guides you in understanding the process involved in applying for aid.

TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID

There are both ***need-based*** and ***merit-based*** financial aid programs. Need-based financial aid is awarded to students whose families do not have sufficient resources to pay for college; a family's eligibility for need-based financial aid is determined through the filing of federal forms (see Applying for Financial Aid, below), which assess a family's income and assets and ability to pay college tuition. Loans, work study and grants are all sources of need-based aid. Merit-based aid is given to students on the basis of talents, abilities or achievements and is typically in the form of a scholarship.

- **Grants:** Various forms of need-based grants are awarded by both the government and individual colleges. Grants are a form of 'gift aid' for which no repayment is needed. One of the most common grants is the Pell Grant, awarded according to federal guidelines. If a student is deemed eligible for a Pell Grant, his or her college will award the dollars to the student. A student may also be eligible for a Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG), which is a campus-based program administered by the financial aid offices at participating colleges. Many colleges also offer institutional grant monies for families who demonstrate need.
 - **Federal Work-Study:** Like the FSEOG, this is a campus-based program, and participating eligible colleges receive program funding from the Federal government. Through work-study, a student is employed part-time on his or her college campus and is able to earn money to contribute towards college costs.
 - **Loans:** A loan refers to borrowed money that must be repaid by the student or the student's parents. High-need families may based program administered by individual college financial aid offices. The most prevalent loans are the Federal Stafford Loan for students and the Federal PLUS Loan for parents. Stafford Loans can be awarded on a need or non-need basis. *Subsidized* Stafford Loans are awarded to students based on financial need. As such, the government pays the borrower's accrued interest while the student is in school; repayment and interest accrual do not begin until 6 months after graduation. An *unsubsidized* Stafford Loan is non-need-based, and the borrower is responsible for accrued interest throughout the life of the loan. However, as with the subsidized Stafford Loan, this unsubsidized loan also has a six-month 'grace period' after graduation before loan repayment begins.
 - **Scholarships:** Most scholarships are *merit-based*, thus awarded in recognition of academic achievement, special abilities or talents (athletic, musical, etc.), religious affiliation, ethnic or racial heritage, community activities or special interests. Scholarships may come from specific colleges or from private sources.
- Note: A student's financial aid package from a college may be formed by a combination of need-based and non-need-based programs. For instance, a student may qualify for Federal grants, loans and work study as well as receive additional institutional grants and scholarships and/or outside scholarships. Each college reviews a family's financial profile and forms a financial aid package according to the ability and awarding policies of that respective institution.*

Applying for Financial Aid:

- Check out the FAFSA Forecaster (www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov). It is a tool to help families beginning planning to estimate their eligibility for aid.
 - Net price calculators were mandated by the U.S. government in 2011 to provide families with a "good faith" estimate of what the **Cost of Attendance** would be for students. Every college website provides this service.
- Attend the SHS Financial Aid Night in the fall.

- See www.fafsa.ed.gov and have all of your tax information organized to complete the FAFSA (Free application for Federal Student Aid) on-line as soon after Oct 1st of the senior year as possible.
- In addition to the FAFSA, some private colleges also require submission of the **CSS/Profile** with additional financial data. For more information and to complete the form, go to www.collegeboard.com.
- Check the School Counseling and Naviance websites regularly for scholarship opportunities.
- Local scholarships are coordinated by the main office at SHS. A senior assembly is held in January to explain this process.

After your FAFSA form is submitted, you will receive a **SAR** (Student Aid Report) that advises you of your aid status for the year. You will see an **EFC**, or Expected Family Contribution, which represents that amount you are deemed capable of contributing to the student's education for that year. A family's demonstrated financial need is the difference between a college's annual fees and the EFC.

(What it costs to attend) – (What your family can pay) = Financial Need

Check the SAR for accuracy in terms of the information it was based on. Your SAR will be used to advise colleges or other organizations of your aid status. Colleges that accept you will develop financial aid packages (if applicable) based on this information. The FAFSA must be re-filled each year, so you receive a SAR and an EFC each year.

Some colleges will meet 100% of demonstrated need, while most others will not. Colleges who are "need blind" make admissions decisions without regard to a student's financial need. Consult colleges to learn of their individual policies.

Note: Male students who will be 18 at the time they complete the FAFSA are required to register with Selective Service to be eligible for federal and state aid. Students can register for Selective Service at the post office or through the FAFSA form. Call 1-888-655-1825 for more information.

Ultimately, all financial aid decisions are made by the individual college; therefore it is necessary for you to work with the financial aid office at the schools to which you are applying. Students will want to compute and compare the actual four year value of any different scholarships and aids offered and factor this into college decisions.

Financial Aid Links

www.studentaid.org Federal Student Aid Site or call 1-800-433-3243

www.finaid.org Financial Aid Information Page

www.fastweb.com - Financial Aid and Scholarship Search

www.collegeboard.com - College, Career, Scholarship Search, CSS Profile

www.fafsa.ed.gov - online FAFSA application

Looking for Scholarships?? Beware of Scams!!

Some services claim they will search out scholarships for you for a fee. You can do these searches very effectively on your own, so the safest path is to never pay anything for searches.

Here are some slogans that should tip you off to scams:

- Guaranteed or your money back! You can't get this anywhere else!
- You've been selected by... We'll do all the work for you...
- Hold this scholarship with your credit card.... You're a finalist!

SECTION III

STUDENT ATHLETES

As a student/athlete, you need to take control of the college application process. College athletic recruiting is not a science. There are many variables that are out of your control, depending on the sport; what position you play, the college coaches recruitment areas (geography), politics and sheer luck. **MANY THINGS ARE IN YOUR CONTROL.** Competing in college athletics can instantly change with an injury or a health problem. It is important to find a school where you would be happy without the sports. To insure a good college match, you must:

- (1) Take the appropriate college preparatory courses and college admission tests (SAT and/or ACT).
- (2) Register for the NCAA Eligibility Center by the end of your junior year.
www.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter.

- (3) Develop a resume and a cover letter (see examples). Send these to the coaches at the schools YOU are interested in with a game tape if applicable. See your coach and school counselor regarding developing a potential list of colleges.
- (4) Review the recruitment letters that you may have received as a junior. Are there any schools here that interest you? If so, don't wait for them to contact you. Send your cover letter, a resume and a game tape (if applicable- ask your coach). There are specific periods of time (depending on the sport) that coaches are not allowed to make any contact with you. You can send your resume and letter whenever you want. The earlier the better.
- (5) Remember that college recruiters are always recruiting several high school athletes at the same time and very likely they are "talking the talk" to other talented players. You may never really know where you stand on the recruiters' priority list. If a more sought after player agrees to go to a certain school, you may be "dropped" in the recruitment process and not even realize that it has happened. Again, this is why it is important to take the initiative and proactively go after the schools that you feel are a good match.

We suggest that you download the PDF version of the "NCAA Resources" Page:

http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/Quick_Reference_Sheet.pdf

This publication is updated annually by the NCAA and is the most accurate resource for college-bound student-athletes. The guide provides summaries of various NCAA rules and offers guidance on many topics that are important for you to know.

****IMPORTANT – Any student-athlete who wishes to participate in collegiate sports at either the Division I or Division II level MUST be cleared by the NCAA Eligibility Center.****

Note that the rules change and in order to have the most updated information it is important to visit the website. For an updated list of athletic requirements, visit the NCAA website at www.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter. Although the NCAA sets minimum requirements, many colleges will have their own, more stringent, standards for admitting athletes. You must also send copies of your SAT or ACT scores to the Eligibility Center from the testing companies.

Athletic Resume and Cover Letter

When you narrow down your choices, get in touch with the coach. Have a resume (example on following pages) on your sport, along with important facts such as:

SAT scores

GPA

Class rank

Team/individual statistics

Positions played

Camps/club play
Individual and team honors
Years played

Include your high school coach's name and telephone number. When meeting with a college coach, have questions prepared ahead of time to ask him/her. Topics could include:

Coaching philosophy
Team expectations
Tryout process
Scholarships – both athletic and academic

Always be honest with yourself and the prospective coach about your skills and playing ability. Send the coach a copy of a video or DVD of your team play. Send the coach a schedule if you are in season, so that they can see you play. Finally, always follow-up with a phone call or note.

Sample Cover Letter for Athletes

Coach's Name
Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Coach (Coach's Name):

Upon recommendation of my coaching staff, I am forwarding the attached athletic resume to you outlining my scholastic and athletic achievements while a starting varsity soccer and lacrosse player at Southington High School, Southington, CT. I am very interested in attending your school and plan to pursue a degree in Business Administration upon graduation from Southington High in June of 20___. I would be very interested in discussing with you the possibility of participating in your athletic program. For your convenience, I have attached the Southington High School soccer schedule as well as video and several press releases highlighting my accomplishments. I look forward to meeting you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Address

City, State Zip Code
Email Address
Phone Number

Sample Athletic Resume

JASON KLINE

FORWARD (position)

CLASS 2009

Address: 10324 Town Walk Dr.
Southington, CT 06489

Phone: 860-555-1000
E-mail: jumpshot7@access.com
DOB: June 24, 19__
Height: 6'4" Weight: 165 lbs.

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Coach: Jim Dobbs
860-555-5555 Email address
Awards: Basketball – All-League
Team Captain – '08 – '09
2008 stats: -- 27 points/game
-- 11 assists/game
-- 7 rebounds/game

ACADEMIC

High School: Southington High School
720 Pleasant Avenue

Southington, CT 06489
Graduation: Class of 20__
GPA: 92.345
SAT/ACT: 1800 total (600 Critical Reading, 640 Math, 560 Writing)
Honors: Honor Roll Student
2nd place County Science Fair Competition
Student Volunteer of the Month – Mothers Against Drunk Driving

Counselor: Mary Anne Smith (change to your counselor) 860-628-3229/email

REFERENCES

Summer coach: Jim Smith
860-555-5555 Email address
Trainer: John Trainer
203-555-5555 Email address
Teacher: Deborah Johnson (AP English)
860-555-5555 Email address
Employer: Calvin Hobbs – McDonald's
203-555-5555 Email address
Volunteer mgr: Stacey Jackson – Mothers Against Drunk Driving 203-555-5555

SECTION IV

PLANNING CALENDAR FOR JUNIORS

Fall:

- Start getting to know your teachers
 You will be asking for college recommendation letters
- Take the PSAT
 Taking it will qualify you for the National Merit Scholarship Program, National Scholarship Service, and National Hispanic Scholar Recognition Program
- Get involved in extracurricular activities and volunteer work
- Work on and improve your study and time management skills
- Explore potential careers and majors on Naviance
- If a particular college major or field of study interests you, take related electives, if offered
- Attend local college fairs and meet with college representatives who visit your school
- If interested in playing a sport at the college level, make sure you are meeting the requirements set out by the NCAA (www.eligibilitycenter.org)
- Begin researching financial aid and attend Financial Aid Night in October at SHS
- Make a list of colleges that meet your most important criteria (size, location, and distance from home, majors, academic rigor, housing, and cost). Weigh each of the factors according to their importance to you
- If you are interested in one of the military academies, talk to your school counselor about starting the application

Consider taking the ASVAB, offered for free at SHS, to further explore skills and interest

Winter:

- Grades are important, keep striving to do your best.
- Attend an evening presentation, *Navigating the College Process*, for parents and students in February.
- Discuss your PSAT score with your school counselor.
- Begin researching your college choices through Naviance.
 - Add these schools to the list of “**Colleges I’m Thinking About**” in the College tab.
 - Find out if the colleges you are interested in require the SAT, ACT or SAT Subject Tests for admission.
- Check out collegeboard.org for SAT test dates and act.org for ACT test dates
 - If you are interested in taking one of these exams make sure you register on time
- Have a discussion with your parents about post-secondary options.
- Set up a filing system with individual folders for each college's correspondence and printed materials.

- Begin to narrow down your college list
 - Make sure you have all the information you need about the colleges you're interested in (entrance requirements, tuition, room and board costs, course offerings, student activities, financial aid, etc.).
- Make an appointment to see your school counselor.

Spring:

- Attend the College Essay Writing Workshop.
- Review your senior year courses with your counselor.
 - Be sure you are on track to graduate.
 - Consider challenging yourself with honors and AP courses. Colleges look very carefully at the level of difficulty of the courses you take in high school.
- Register to take the ACT and/or SAT/SAT Subject Tests.
- Discuss the college essay with your school counselor and/or English teacher.
- Stay involved with extracurricular activities.
 - Colleges look for consistency and depth in activities.
- Now that you have gotten to know your teachers, think about who you want to write your recommendation letters.
- Inquire about and register for campus visits, tours, and personal interviews at your favorite colleges.
- Take the AP exams in May, if appropriate.
- See your school counselor to apply for on-campus summer programs for high school students
 - Apply for a summer job or internship
 - Be aware of expenses related to college applications, financial aid and testing fees in the fall.

Students interest in any military academy must begin the process in the Spring of Junior year. See your school counselor for more information.

Summer:

- Visit the campuses of your top college choices.
- Consider participating in a summer program on a college campus.
- After each college interview, send a thank you letter to the interviewer.
- Talk to people you know who have attended the colleges in which you are interested, if possible.
- Volunteer in your community or consider a part time job, if possible.
- Compose rough drafts of your college essays.

Once school begins in the fall you can have an English teacher review it with you and make any necessary changes.

- Create a Common Application account. (www.commonapp.org)
- Read and have fun!

SECTION V

GLOSSARY

These definitions are general and it is suggested you check college websites in order to get accurate and up-to-date descriptions of the procedures, programs and practices discussed.

Advanced Placement Program

AP courses are college-level courses offered in high school. After an AP course is completed, students generally take AP exams, which are scored on a 1-5 scale (5 is the highest). Colleges may offer either credit, or advanced standing to any student who has achieved a required score (generally a 4 or 5) on the AP exam.

Associate's Degree

The degree given for completing certain college programs of at least two but less than four years of study, usually in a two year institution such as a community college.

Bachelor's Degree

(B.A. - Bachelor of Arts or B.S. - Bachelor of Science): A degree given for successful completion of required courses (usually spanning four years) at a college or university.

Cooperative Education

A college program in which a student alternates between semesters (or other periods) of full time study and full time employment in related work. The student is paid for his work at the prevailing rate. Typically, five years are required to complete a Bachelor's degree program under the Cooperative Program, but the graduate has the advantage of having completed about a year's practical experience in addition to his/her studies.

CSS (College Scholarship Service) Financial Aid PROFILE

A supplementary form to the FAFSA, required by some private colleges to gain additional information before awarding financial aid. CSS is a division of the College Board devoted to the financial aspects of a college education. CSS processes the PROFILE and distributes the information to colleges. See www.collegboard.com for more information.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Refer to the Financial Aid Section of this guide for more information. www.fafsa.ed.gov. The FAFSA is a financial information document of the U.S. Department of Education used by parents of dependent students to supply information about their income, assets, expenses, and liabilities.

NCAA Eligibility Center (formerly known as the NCAA Clearinghouse):

A branch of the NCAA established to monitor the eligibility of Division I and II college student-athletes. Please refer to Section III, Student Athletes, for more information.

Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC)

Reserve Officers Training Corps programs are conducted by certain colleges in cooperation with the United States Air Force, Army and Navy. Local recruiting offices of the services themselves can supply detailed information about these programs, as can the participating colleges. Refer to Section I , Types of Post Secondary Education for more information.

Transcript

The official complete copy of a student's academic record, including courses and grades.