Thayer Academy

COLLEGE COUNSELING HANDBOOK

for the Class of 2017
To the Class of 2017:

Welcome to the beginning of the college search process. The Pulsifer College Counseling Center is looking forward to guiding you through this exciting journey. We encourage you to embrace this opportunity to explore your values, make important adult decisions, and become more independent. You are bound to learn a lot about yourself, and you will discover that there are a wide range of options available to you after Thayer. But you won’t take these steps alone. This is a partnership with your parents and with Thayer. We are here to advise and support you, to help you make sense of the process while keeping you on task.

We have designed this College Counseling Handbook to assist you in the college search and application process. It covers everything from developing a college list to completing an application to applying for financial aid. It includes important dates to remember, sample forms, various worksheets, as well as countless tips and insights. For each step of the process, there will be parts of this book that you will find useful. We hope you will share it with your parents, bring it to meetings with your college counselor, and refer to it when necessary as you make your way through the year.

Of course, the Handbook is only a resource guide, and often you cannot navigate your way through the options and the contingencies and the strategies without talking through the issues with someone who has experience with this process. That is why we expect you and your parents to be active participants, and we hope to sustain steady contact with you through email, phone, and visits. In our experience, consistent communication is essential to making this process positive and productive.

Please contact us whenever you have questions or need assistance.

We look forward to working with you!

Christine Woods
cwoods@thayer.org
781-664-2218

Thad Robey
trobey@thayer.org
781-664-2222

Nellie Brennan Hall
nbrennanhall@thayer.org
781-664-2227
OVERVIEW OF THE COLLEGE COUNSELING HANDBOOK

We invite you to use this book in the manner that best suits your needs. Please read the following descriptions of each section to determine the ones which will be useful for you at each stage of the college search and application process.

I. Master Schedule
This section gives you a month-by-month outline of where you should be in the college application process. Check it regularly to make sure you’re on track with working on your applications, asking for recommendations, applying for financial aid, etc. It also contains the dates for standardized testing, college counseling meetings, and other important events. A new calendar for your senior year will be mailed to you over the summer.

II. The College Search
This section walks you through the criteria necessary to consider when identifying the best colleges for you. It provides information to guide your search as well as tips on college visits and interviews. Use the worksheets provided to compare colleges and to organize your applications.

III. Applying to College
This section discusses how colleges make decisions and walks you through the variety of admission options available (Early Decision, Early Action, Rolling, etc.). It also explains the parts of the application that come from others (i.e. recommendations from a teacher or counselor). There is also significant time devoted to the Personal Statement, offering advice about choosing a topic, approaches to avoid, and writing do’s and don’ts.

IV. Samples
This section provides a variety of documents related to the college application process and the college counseling process. Please refer to the introduction of this section for more information on what is included.

V. Standardized Testing
This section introduces you to the range of standardized testing that may play a role in your college applications. The section covers the SAT Reasoning Test, Subject Test, ACT, Advanced Placement program, and the Test of English as a Foreign Language. It also offers advice on test preparation.

VI. Extra Information for Special Categories
This section is designed for students who may have special considerations when researching and applying to college. If you have interest in pursuing athletics, performing arts, visual arts, or music, we recommend you read the parts that pertain to your pursuit. This section also addresses students with learning disabilities who wish to apply to colleges that will accommodate their needs.

VII. Financial Aid
This section addresses the basics of financial aid. It explains the differences between need-based and merit-based financial aid; it guides you through the basic steps in applying for financial assistance; and it offers a financial aid checklist to keep you on top of the paperwork and ahead of the deadlines.

VIII. Tips from the Experts
In this last section, we have gathered helpful suggestions from students who have already gone through the college application process. There are some perspectives from admissions professionals, and we have added our own words of wisdom on how to make this experience as positive and productive as possible.
JUNIOR YEAR 2016

JANUARY 2016

Monthly Checklist:
√ Meetings with college counselors begin in Decisions classes and individually.
√ Register for spring SAT.

January 7    College Counseling Meeting for junior parents at 6pm in Thompson Hall
January 8    Registration deadline for February 7th ACT Exam
January 23   SAT Testing Day

FEBRUARY 2016

Monthly Checklist:
√ Attend all small group college counseling meetings.
√ Meet individually with your college counselor.
√ Register for spring standardized tests (SAT, ACT, or SAT Subject Tests).
√ Make arrangements to visit colleges over spring break if desired.

February 5   Registration deadline for March 5th SAT
February 6   ACT Testing Day

MARCH 2016

Monthly Checklist:
√ Meet individually with your college counselor.
√ Register for spring standardized tests (SAT, ACT, or SAT Subject Tests).
√ Continue to learn more about the colleges on your preliminary college list.
√ Visit colleges over spring break if possible.

March 4      Registration deadline for April 9th ACT Exam
March 5      SAT Testing Day

APRIL 2016

Monthly Checklist:
√ Attend all small group college counseling meetings.
√ Meet individually with your college counselor as needed.
√ Register for spring standardized tests (SAT, ACT, or SAT Subject Tests).
√ Continue to learn more about the colleges on your preliminary college list.

April 8      Registration deadline for May 2nd SAT Exam
April 9      ACT Exam Date
April 24     BISCCA College Fair at Milton Academy from 1-4
MAY 2016

Monthly Checklist:  
- Meet individually with your college counselor as needed.  
- Register for spring standardized tests (SAT, ACT, or SAT Subject Tests).  
- Think about making plans for summer college visits.  
- Continue to learn more about the colleges on your preliminary college list.  
- Update prospective college list on Naviance Family Connection.

May 5  Registration deadline for June 4th SAT / SAT Subject Tests  
May 6  Registration deadline for June 11th ACT  
May 7  SAT / SAT Subject Test exam day  
May 22-23  Boston Nat’l College Fair @ Boston Convention & Exhibition Center

JUNE 2016

Monthly Checklist:  
- Meet individually with your college counselor as needed.  
- Plan summer college visits.  
- Continue to learn more about the colleges on your preliminary college list.  
- Update prospective college list on Naviance Family Connection.  
- Watch for College Counseling Office summer mailing.

June 4  SAT / SAT Subject Test exam day  
June 11  ACT Exam Day  
Thayer Academy Graduation

SUMMER 2016

Monthly Checklist:  
- Visit colleges.  
- Register for fall standardized testing (SAT, ACT, and SAT Subject Tests).  
- Continue to learn more about the colleges on your preliminary college list.  
- Complete first draft of college essay.

August  First draft of college essay due to college counselor by email
The college selection and application process is a time of self-discovery and personal growth. You reflect on your life, evaluating what is meaningful and important to your continued academic and personal growth; and you define which college environments will best accommodate these needs. We encourage you to keep an open mind and listen to all of the (sometimes conflicting) suggestions from friends, family, counselors, teachers, and college admission officers. You need to take the time to reflect on the advice and put it into a perspective that is meaningful to you. There are over 3,000 colleges in the country, and many are appropriate for each student.

Choosing your college is an interesting and exciting experience. If you begin early and follow the schedule outlined in this handbook, the process will be manageable and successful. Ask questions whenever they arise and adhere to the deadlines. The students who follow through early and consistently with their college research will have good choices and will make a wise decision for their future.
**THE BASICS**

- Distance from home
- Size
  - Small, medium, large
- Setting
  - Urban, suburban, small town, rural
- Region
  - New England, Mid-Atlantic, Mid-West, Southeast, West, International
- School’s Selectivity
  - College’s admission rate; typical profile of admitted student; average test scores; estimate your chances
- Housing
  - % that live on-campus, off-campus, number of years guaranteed
- Religious Affiliation
- Student Population
  - Co-ed; all female; historically black college, etc.

**THE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE**

- Liberal Arts Curriculum
  - A general, broad education in humanities and sciences
- Specialized Curriculum
  - Focused preparation for a specific profession - i.e. business, engineering, architecture, nursing
- Academic Major/Areas of Study
  - Does the college offer strong programs in your areas of interest? What classes are offered within those programs?
- Academic Requirements
  - Determine the flexibility in choosing classes; core curriculum; distribution requirements; foreign language
- Average Class Size
- Faculty
  - Quality of professors; accessibility; are classes taught by full-time professors?
- Classroom Learning
  - Lecture, seminar, independent study, field trips, labs
- Academic Facilities
  - Laboratories, classrooms, libraries, computers, etc.
- Academic Reputation
  - Strength of overall school; strength of major; success of graduates in career advancement and grad school admission
- Academic support services
  - Tutoring, writing center, faculty office hours, learning disability support, study skills, computer skills
- Special programs
  - Study abroad, internships, co-op, college exchange
- Academic Calendar
  - Trimester, semester, quarter, block
- Advising Program

**CHECKLIST OF CONSIDERATIONS:**

**WHAT SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR IN A COLLEGE?**

What are the essential characteristics that you desire from your college choices? Go through the following list and identify your preferences, making note of any details that will help you while researching schools.
THE EXTRACURRICULAR EXPERIENCE

___ Campus Culture
*Relaxed, competitive; liberal, conservative; school spirit, diverse, fraternities and sororities, party atmosphere, artsy, etc.*

___ Athletics
*Varsity, club, intramural; facilities for athletes & for non-varsity athletes*

___ Visual & Performing Arts
*Available to majors or all students?*

___ Safety
*Colleges are required to supply you with crime statistics*

___ Dining
*Options, meal plan flexibility, cost, quality*

___ Community Service Opportunities

___ Other interests: ___________________________
Often, choosing your schools comes down to a “feeling” you get from the college – a gut instinct that emerges from walking around a campus and talking to students. But before you can reach that point with any confidence, you should take a methodical approach to your research, comparing colleges based on criteria that best match your interests and needs. In the following pages, we provide a worksheet that will allow you to compare a variety of essential characteristics at each of the colleges you are considering. While we list the most common factors that students should consider, you will likely have a few other preferences that do not appear on this worksheet; make sure you add other categories that pertain particularly to you, modifying this worksheet to suit your needs.

You can then use the worksheet on the next two pages to observe the similarities and differences between each college; it should provide you with a foundation from which you can realistically assess each school and feel confident that you are making a wise decision about where to apply and ultimately where to attend.
## College Comparison Worksheet #1

<table>
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<tr>
<th>College Criteria</th>
<th>College #1</th>
<th>College #2</th>
<th>College #3</th>
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<td>Academic Majors &amp; Programs of Interest</td>
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<td>Extracurricular Activities of Interest</td>
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<td>Average Class Size (Faculty/Student Ratio)</td>
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<td>Mid 50% SAT Scores: (Critical Reading, Math, &amp; Writing)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Requirements for Graduation</td>
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<td>% of Students Who Return After Freshman Year</td>
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<td>% of Students that Attend Graduate School</td>
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<td>% of Job Placement in Your Area of Interest</td>
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<td>% of Students in Fraternities or Sororities</td>
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<td>% of Students Living On Campus (# of Years Housing is Guaranteed)</td>
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<td>Cost: Tuition, Room, &amp; Board</td>
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<td>Other Criteria</td>
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## COLLEGE CRITERIA WORKSHEET #2

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II. THE COLLEGE SEARCH

There are multiple ways in which you can gather information about colleges and determine if they suit your needs. Your research should be as exhaustive as possible, using as many of the following resources as possible:

- Discussions with college counselors and Thayer students
- General college guidebooks
- General college websites, including Naviance (see page II-8)
- The colleges’ websites
- Publications from colleges
- College visits
- Meetings with admission representatives who visit Thayer
- Discussions with college students, alumni, faculty, and administrators

Read carefully through the following pages as we cover many of these avenues in more detail.
The College Counseling Office at Thayer Academy uses a program called Naviance. Naviance is an internet-based database that helps students manage their individual college process, communicate regularly with their college counselor, and facilitate the sending of academic credentials to colleges electronically. Students have their own password-protected account that will enable them to use many of the web site's functions, including:

- Comprehensive college search capabilities
- Access to data on every college, including links to college websites, admission office email addresses, and virtual college tours
- College list development and maintenance
- Registration for meetings with college representatives visiting Thayer
- Direct communication with college counselor
- Thayer student admission results at colleges and a GPA/SAT comparison of each junior to those results
- Capability to request letters of recommendation from teachers
- Resume creation
- Scholarship information and search capabilities
- Career exploration and information

College counselors will require students to access this account at different stages of the college process. Students will log on at http://connection.naviance.com/thayer with the login and password supplied by their college counselor. An orientation to the website will be given during College Counseling seminars that take place in January and February as part of the Decisions course curriculum. Parents will receive their own login and password after their child has activated the account.
The internet provides seemingly limitless ways for students to research colleges. Every college has its own website where you can explore everything from academic majors, sports teams, tuition costs, and housing arrangements.

In addition, there are an abundance of websites devoted to guiding you through the college search process. You will find search engines that scan their databases for schools matching your stated preferences. You will find chat rooms where students share their impressions of colleges. You will find sites that will help you understand what it means, educationally, to prepare for a career in such fields as architecture, engineering, nursing, physical therapy, and business. Some of these sites may charge a fee or at least ask you to register, but there are plenty of useful sites that are free and easy to access.

While it would be impossible for us to list all the college-oriented sites in this book, we have provided a list of the ones that Thayer students and students in general tend to use the most as they conduct their search for colleges that match their preferences. Use this list as a starting point, but if you have specific needs that don’t seem to be served by the sites listed here, please consult with your counselor for more direction.

This is a selected list of internet sites that offer college search engines and other college information. Additional resources are available on the Thayer College Counseling website: www.collegeboard.com

  www.petersons.com
  www.princetonreview.com
  www.collegeview.com
  www.colleges.com
  www.campustours.com

  https://quickstart.collegeboard.com/posweb/login.jsp
  *(the access code is given to students on their PSAT score report)*
II. THE COLLEGE SEARCH

COLLEGE VISITS

Colleges offer many options for prospective students and their families who are traveling, sometimes very long distances, to their campuses. Many of these options will be revealed on the college’s admissions website or in a phone conversation with the admission office. You may or may not need to make a formal reservation for a visit, depending on the college. When you arrange to visit a college, remember that this may be your only opportunity to see the college first hand before you make your final decision. You should take advantage of everything available to you while you are there. The standard visit usually includes attending an information session (a presentation given by an admissions professional) and taking a campus tour (usually with a current student). Some colleges have opportunities to sit in on a class, have lunch with current students, stay overnight with a current student, or sit for an interview (see pg. II-14 for more information on interviews), but could also include less structured activities if you plan ahead. Some of those are described below.

- Spend some time in the student center, one of the dining areas, the lobby of a dorm, the athletic fields, or another place that might be important to you. Sit, observe, and talk to students as they walk by.

- Attend an “Open House” event where you can spend the night in a dorm and sit in on several classes. You may have more access to faculty during these types of programs.

- Pick up a copy of the latest campus newspaper to see what is going on around campus.

- Prior to your arrival, set up any appointments you can with members of the community that may be of specific interest to you (learning support office, financial aid office, career services, a department chair, a coach if you are interested in a sport). Come prepared with questions, and then get their business card in the event you have additional questions. Send thank you notes in appreciation of their time.

- Talk to everyone you happen to meet on campus about his or her experiences at the college.

- Try to avoid scheduling more than two schools per day.

- Make every effort to take pictures and write thoughts down as you go about your visit so you can capture your initial impressions of the school. The Journal function in Naviance is a nice way to record your thoughts, impressions, or concerns about each college. Five months from now you may not recall the visit as clearly.

- Remember that you might meet a few students who have negative stories to tell. While these stories may be worth some attention, remember that one person’s experience is not necessarily the only experience. Talking to many people and asking many questions is the best way to a good understanding of the college.

- Sometimes students return from a campus visit with negative feelings towards a school as a result of factors beyond their control. For example, the student did not like the tour guide, or it was a cold, rainy day and your umbrella broke. Do your best to look beyond such factors and focus on the school itself. Keep in mind that had you visited the next day (sunny, warm, and with a different tour guide), your opinion of the school might have been completely the opposite.
On most college campuses, the tour guide is a student selected and trained by the Admissions Office to project a positive image of the institution. Some student guides may be hesitant to contradict the official information provided by the Admissions Office, but most student tour guides are very honest and open about their own experiences at the college. Student tour guides are much more likely to be forthcoming if you, as the visitor, ask good questions. If you are silent throughout a campus tour, you can count on hearing only the information that the student has been trained to provide. So take advantage of the opportunity to communicate in a friendly fashion with the student tour guide and to ask some good questions. Here are some examples of questions to ask:

1. What are the largest and the smallest classes you have taken?
2. Who teaches your courses (professors or graduate assistants)?
3. How many courses are required for graduation? Does the college have a core curriculum or is there flexibility in terms of what I can take to fulfill requirements?
4. When do you have to declare a major? What are the most popular majors?
5. Do many students live off-campus? If so, why?
6. What is the food like? What options do students have for dining?
7. Do students work hard here or is there little studying taking place?
8. What has been your experience with faculty? How accessible are your professors?
9. Can you tell me anything about the (insert department name) department?
10. What’s the biggest issue right now in local campus politics?
11. Are students politically active and aware? Are most students politically liberal, conservative or somewhere in between? How active is the student government?
12. What percentage of students study abroad at some point?
13. What role do fraternities/sororities play here?
14. Is there a good deal of school spirit centered around athletics?
15. Where do students come from? Is this a diverse community? Are different student groups well integrated into the college community?
16. What are the weekends like?
17. What student activities are most popular?
18. Can someone who is not an art/music/theater major get involved in the arts in some way?
19. What do you think is the greatest problem or negative factor about the college?
20. What do you like best about your time here?
21. Why did you select this school? What other colleges did you apply to?
Because you want your child to find a great college match, it is easy to step up and play an active role while visiting a college campus, especially if you have a child who tends to be more reserved. While it is great to be engaged in the tour or information session, it is important to make sure that you are not overstepping your bounds. To help guide you in regard to appropriate practices while on a college campus with your child, we think the following list might be helpful. It is a compilation of thoughts on parent involvement by admissions officers.

The top things parents should NOT do during a college visit (*compiled by Kents Hill School via the NACAC e-list*):

1) **Do NOT** use the word “we” or “I” when discussing your child’s college applications, preferences, or process. For example, “We want to gain admission to your college” or “I am currently filling out the application.” This gives the impression that the student is not driving the process or the parent has more interest in the college than the student.

2) **Do NOT** speak for your child. The student should be the one to sign in at the admissions office and to ask questions about his or her academic or other interests.

3) **Do NOT** embarrass your child. There’s no need to preface a question with, for example, the student’s background at a prestigious prep school or the student’s long list of achievements. Also, don’t ask very specific questions regarding things like mental health support in front of a group.

4) **Do NOT** monopolize the conversation on the tour or information session. Asking a few general questions is great, but firing off a series of questions very specific to the interest of your child is inconsiderate to the rest of the group. Consider a private conversation with an admissions representative at a later time/date.

5) **Do NOT** be negative about the college in public or with your child in the car after the fact. Let the student form his or her own impression.
COLLEGE INTERVIEWS

Colleges have different policies when it comes to college interviews. Usually the policy will fall into one of the following categories:

1. Interviews are not available. Only group information sessions are an option.
2. Interviews may be arranged but are optional and for informational purposes only.
3. Interviews are encouraged or recommended and become part of the application.
4. Interviews are required (only a small percentage of schools).
5. Interviews with alumni are available. These are typically off-campus and close to home. Sometimes these can only be arranged after a student has applied.

If an on-campus interview is offered and you are able to visit, we strongly encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity. It may be very helpful to you. In preparation for your interview, here are some suggestions:

- Be sure you have questions to ask about the college. Try not to ask basic questions about the size of the school or if they have a particular major. If you’re interviewing, you should already have a certain level of interest in the college and know the basics.

- Research the college using brochures you have received in the mail, the college’s web site, resources in the Pulsifer College Counseling Center, etc. Take notes so you can read through them before you go to your interview.

- Find out what type of interview you should prepare for. Will you be meeting with a student or an admissions officer? This could impact the questions you ask.

- Practice answering typical interview questions. This will make you feel more confident when you sit down with the interviewer. One of the college counselors can facilitate a “mock interview” if you want to practice.

- Select appropriate attire so as to make a good first impression. Make sure you are comfortable with what you are wearing.

- The night before, make sure you print out the directions. Do everything in your power to avoid being late.
During the interview, try to relax as much as you can. This is a chance to highlight your personality. Be prepared to talk about yourself and allow your passions and interests to come out. There’s nothing more frustrating to an interviewer than a student who barely utters a word when asked a question. They are there to learn more about you, so let them! Here are some questions that you may encounter:

1. How did you become interested in ________ college?
2. Why do you think you are a good match for this college?
3. What are some of your goals for the future?
4. Tell me something about your school? How do you like Thayer Academy? What have you gained from your time there, educationally or otherwise?
5. What would your teachers say about you as a person? As a student?
6. What is the most significant contribution you’ve made to your school? In what ways do you plan to contribute to a college community?
7. Why do you participate in athletics (or student government, or community service, etc.)?
8. Discuss a class, assignment, or teacher that provided you with a significant learning experience?
9. What has been your favorite subject in high school? Why?
10. What might you study in college?
11. What books or authors have made an impression on you? Why?
12. How have you spent your summers?
13. What is your reaction to a particular current event?
14. How would you describe yourself? How would your friends describe you?
15. Have you ever thought about not going to college? What would you do?
16. How do you spend your free time?
17. What characteristics single you out from other qualified applicants?
18. What is the single most important thing in life for you?
In addition, have questions of your own to ask the interviewer. You are interviewing the college for “fit” as much as it is interviewing you. Prepare questions in advance and bring a notebook with you to refresh your memory if need be. This shows that you are well-prepared. Ideally your questions will reflect the research you have done about the college beforehand. Here are some suggestions:

1. What do you like the most about the college or your experience there?
2. If you could change one thing about this school, what would it be?
3. Why did you decide to attend this school (or work here if it’s a staff member who did not attend the college)?
4. How does the admission process work here? What part of the application is the most important?
5. Are there opportunities for independent work with faculty?
6. What is your policy regarding AP Exam scores?
7. Are there any new buildings being planned?
8. How does the student advising system work?
9. What is your system for course selection?
10. How does the housing selection process work? How will my roommate freshman year be determined?

Other questions may arise based on your particular interests. For example, you may have questions about learning support services, career services, financial assistance, how undecided students select courses, how competitive the music department is, etc. If you need help generating questions, consult with your college counselor.
Due to busy schedules and financial constraints, students often can’t visit all of the schools in which they are interested prior to applying, especially if many schools on their college list are outside of the New England area. As a result, the college fair is a great tool for students as they move through the college search process.

College fairs are large gatherings of college representatives in one central location (often a school gymnasium or a convention center). The representatives could be admissions deans or alumni, and they typically have a myriad of publications to distribute to interested students. It is a wonderful opportunity to ask questions and to take a risk and learn about colleges perhaps you have never heard of before without a significant investment of time or money.

The BISCCA group (Boston Independent School College Counseling Association) provides a college fair in the spring for all independent school students in the Boston area. About 150 colleges and organizations are in attendance, but the only colleges permitted are those outside of New England. Many Thayer students attend each year and find it very helpful.
Whether you attend the BISCCA Fair or another fair in the area, below are some tips as composed by Brennan Barnard for the Concord Monitor and posted on his blog.

**Plan ahead.** Meet with your guidance counselor prior to the college fair season. Ask your counselor for a list of the colleges that will be present so that you can create a list of schools about which you want to gather more information.

**No flybys.** Take the time to stop and speak with the representative at the table. Do not just grab a view-book or free pencil and run for the door. With the surge in applications that many colleges are now experiencing, more and more institutions are factoring “demonstrated interest” into their admissions decisions. They track contact with the admissions office and often prefer students who have shown interest in the college. By filling out the contact cards at the fair tables, your name will be added to the mailing list and the formal relationship with the college has begun.

**Save time and avoid writer’s cramp.** Before you attend the fair, print out a sheet or two of self-adhesive labels with your name, address, phone number, e-mail address, high school and birth date. These can be applied to the contact cards, ensuring that your information will be legible and saving you from writing the information over and over again.

**Know who you are talking to.** Representatives behind each table vary depending on the institution. Often the individual is the regional dean of admissions who will likely be reading your application in a few months. Other times, an alumnus of the college, current student, parent or faculty member will be assisting the admissions office by attending. It is in your interest to understand with whom you are talking and what their relative influence in the process is. Collect business cards so that you can write to the representative and thank him or her for taking the time to speak with you.

**Arrive fashionably late.** Often the crowds are the thickest at the beginning of the fair, and it is difficult to have a meaningful conversation with the admissions counselors. While you do not want to wait to catch them as they are packing up, you will likely stand out more if you can have an in-depth conversation rather than elbow your way through the crowd.

**Highlight your interests.** The flow of information goes both ways at fairs. It is an excellent opportunity for you to gather literature and materials from colleges, but admissions counselors are eager to learn more about you. If you have specific interests in terms of a major, sports team, or other activity, be sure to discuss these with the representative. Chances are, they will make a note on your contact card, and you might be invited to special events on campus or connected with a coach or faculty member.

**Ask thoughtful questions.** Questions such as “Do you have a biology major?” or “Where are you located?” can easily be answered by glancing at the view-book. Instead, think of more probing questions such as “What makes your institution different from your peers schools?” or “How accessible are opportunities for research with faculty?” These thoughtful inquiries will distinguish you among the other students wandering through the fair.

Just as April showers bring May flowers, the energy and time invested in researching colleges and establishing relationships on the front end of this process will pay significant dividends down the road.

*List written by: Brennan Barnard*
About 100 colleges visit Thayer between the months of September and November. The person representing the college is, in most cases, the admissions officer who is familiar with Thayer and will advocate for Thayer students during the application review process. On occasion the representative is a regional representative who may not play a role in the decision-making.

**How do these visits benefit students?**

- Students unfamiliar with the college will have the opportunity to learn more about it. Students more familiar with the college have the opportunity to ask more specific questions about the institution.

- Connecting with this person opens the door for communication further into the year when other questions may surface. Students have someone they know they can contact.

- Students meet face to face with the person who is most likely to handle their file during the application review process.

- By attending, the student is showing interest in the college, which for some colleges is a factor in their review process.

**How do these visits benefit the admission representatives?**

- Admissions representatives have the opportunity to convey information about their college to students who are interested in learning.

- The admissions representative will be able to associate a face with an application when it comes across their desk later in the year.

- In discussions with the college counselors, the admission representative learns more about the Thayer Academy community and the rigorous curriculum available to students. They can bring that information back to the committee when admissions decisions are being made.

In addition to all the benefits listed above, these visits allow the Pulsifer College Counseling Center at Thayer to maintain strong relationships with the colleges in which our students are interested. Communication continues with these colleges as the year progresses.

The schedule of visits is posted on some of the digital signs around campus, on Naviance, on the Thayer Academy web site, and in homeroom announcements. You are encouraged to meet with these representatives whenever interested as long as it does not interfere with a pressing academic responsibility. Sign up for college meetings via your Naviance account. If the meeting takes place during one of your classes, get permission from your teacher at least one day in advance of the meeting. If you are unable to attend one of the meetings that interest you, let your college counselor know so that he or she may convey your interest to the representative and gather materials for you.
Ideally, you should settle on your final list of colleges by October. Your final list should have about seven colleges that range in selectivity from reach to safety. Balance is critical in developing your list if you want to ensure a good range of choices by the end of the admissions process. You should give yourself the opportunity to reach and challenge yourself (don’t sell yourself short!), but also protect yourself with some safer choices because admission to college has its uncertainties. Consult with your college counselor about the selectivity categories into which your colleges fall. We have data and experience that allow us to anticipate how different colleges may respond to your transcript, test scores, and application.

You should plan to have a balanced number of schools in the three selectivity categories: reach, possible, and likely.

**REACH SCHOOLS:**
These are the schools where your academic record places you below the college’s average admitted student. We generally estimate that a student’s chances of admission at a reach school are around 25% or lower. We encourage you to choose a few schools in this category that truly excite you, and then give it your best shot. Remember, though, that more applications to reach colleges do not as a rule generate more acceptances. Put in a strong effort on your application to a few colleges, but do not dilute that effort by spreading yourself thin with applications at a wide span of schools where the odds are not in your favor. You will put more stress on yourself in the fall and, very possibly, set yourself up for broader disappointment in the spring. In your Naviance college list, your college counselor will designate your reach schools as “Far Reach” (less than 10% chance of admission) or “Reach” (25%).

**POSSIBLE SCHOOLS:**
You should apply to at least three mid-range colleges because these are potentially the most appropriate match for you. We classify mid-range schools as places where your chances of admission are around 50%. These are typically colleges where your academic profile puts you in the range of their average student. While your prospects for admission are good, selective colleges are never able to take all the students that fit their “average” academic profile, so never think of these schools as guarantees. The decision will often ride on what you offer beyond academics, the quality of your application effort, and the general competitiveness of the applicants in that particular year. If you apply to schools primarily in the possible category, you enhance the possibility of receiving several admission letters from schools where you will feel comfortable and challenged academically.

**LIKELY SCHOOLS:**
You also need to include at least two colleges where your chances for admission are more likely (75% or better). These are schools where your academic background clearly places you among the top applicants at the college, all but ensuring that a college will admit you for your academic ability alone. You want to have confidence that you will have choices when spring of your senior year rolls around, and identifying a few likely schools that you believe match your main criteria will give you a peace of mind as you wait for admission decisions.

**PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU REVIEW YOUR FINAL LIST OF COLLEGES WITH YOUR COLLEGE COUNSELOR. IF YOU DECIDE TO ALTER YOUR LIST AT ANY TIME, YOU SHOULD ALSO DISCUSS THE CHANGES WITH YOUR COLLEGE COUNSELOR.**

Once you have decided on your college list, you can use the chart at the end of this section to keep all of your applications organized.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COLLEGE NAME</th>
<th>DEADLINE</th>
<th>SAT/ACT REQUIRED?</th>
<th>SAT SUBJ TEST REQ'D?</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATIONS REQUIRED (#, TYPE)</th>
<th>ONLINE APPLICATION?</th>
<th>COMMON APP ACCEPTED?</th>
<th>ADD'L DOCS? (SUPP, 2ND ESSAY, ETC.)</th>
<th>APP FEE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

COLLEGE APPLICATION ORGANIZATION LIST

THAYER ACADEMY PULSIFER COLLEGE COUNSELING CENTER
www.tapulsiferccc.org | www.thayer.org

II. THE COLLEGE SEARCH
From a distance, the college admissions process can seem an impersonal, mysterious operation that results in arbitrary decisions. But while we see admission offices make a few unusual choices every year, we more commonly see admission officers working hard to understand each of the accomplished candidates in their pool, and an admission committee’s decisions typically make sense, given the selectivity and priorities of each school. The burden that rests on you – the applicant – is to give the admission readers an accurate and vivid account of yourself.

With the exception of some large universities, most colleges make admission decisions by committee. Selective colleges do not use a simple formula to determine which applicants get admitted and which do not. Admission representatives know they cannot grant admission to all the students that they see as qualified or interesting; as a result, many colleges employ a multi-step process that allows them to weigh their priorities and evaluate each student individually as well as in the context of the larger pool of applicants. Admission representatives read the application folders closely, record their impressions, make recommendations, and then discuss the candidates in committee meetings where final decisions are rendered. While colleges may differ slightly in their institutional priorities – the types of students they seek and the elements of the application that they emphasize – most of them share fundamental values in their assessment of an applicant’s caliber and potential.
In essence, colleges will be evaluating you in two major categories:

(1) Academic record – transcript & test scores
(2) Personal record – the application

1. ACADEMIC RECORD - TRANSCRIPT & TEST SCORES

The focus is on your high school transcript. Colleges look at all four years of courses and the grades in core subjects. They evaluate the strength of your curriculum: how many years of each subject have you taken? What level are the courses you have taken? Have you maintained or even increased the challenge of your courses through the years? Colleges examine your cumulative GPA but also look for trends in your grades – i.e., steady performance, gradual improvement, drastic drop-off, etc. Finally, in determining the overall strength of your academic profile, colleges may look at your standardized testing, using your SAT, ACT or AP scores as a common denominator that you share with all other applicants.

If your academic record is significantly stronger than the average student admitted at the college, then there is a strong likelihood that you will be admitted on the basis of your academic ability alone; we generally consider these colleges to be likely schools. If your academic background is similar to that of the typical student at the college, then the decision may hinge on what you offer outside the classroom as well as some specific elements within your academic record; we generally consider these colleges to be possible schools. If your academic rating falls below the typical admitted student, then admission will be unlikely and dependent on some special talent or contribution you might make beyond the numbers; we generally consider these colleges to be reaches.
III. APPLYING TO COLLEGE

For most schools, what you do outside the classroom and who you are as a person matter significantly in determining your competitiveness as an applicant. Indeed, if your academic record makes you a solid applicant for admission, but by no means an automatic admit, then the decision very likely could come down to the other elements of your application.

Colleges are interested in what makes you tick, and ultimately they want to know what you will contribute to their campus. Colleges use the application materials as an opportunity to understand and define you. They will seek answers to questions such as:

What are your defining characteristics?
What are your biggest commitments? What are your major passions?
What are your talents?
Have you risen to leadership positions in any areas?
Do you demonstrate intellectual curiosity?

Keep these questions in mind as you work on the presentation of your application – responding to essay questions, listing and explaining extracurricular activities, choosing recommendation writers, etc. The admission directors need to see cohesion in your application. Without much effort, they should be able to identify what you might contribute to their community. To a degree, the admission office should be able to identify with ease and clarity the essential qualities that you offer. Think carefully about your life and what has defined it:

- The accomplishments
- The commitments
- The challenges
- The successes and failures
- Your family situation and background
- The adjectives that best describe your personality

The details within these categories will shape who you are, and through the admission application process you need to articulate those details to the admission committee. Don’t make it difficult for the committee to understand you and your potential. Let your prominent strengths rise to the surface in all of your documenting materials. The rest of this section in the handbook will outline the areas that you need to address in the application. These are the areas where you will bring your personality to life for the admission committee.
III. APPLYING TO COLLEGE

Regular Decision: Most schools offer this option. Typically, students will apply to a college sometime before a regular decision deadline, which usually falls between January 1 and March 1. After the deadline the college reviews all the applications and sends decision letters in March or April. Admitted students have until May 1 to reply to an offer of admission.

Early Action (EA): This plan enables the strongest students to apply to a college early. The deadlines are usually in November, although some may occur in December. Decisions are typically mailed before January 1, but admitted students do not need to make a commitment to attend until the May 1 common reply date. This option is often competitive, and some colleges deny admission to students who they foresee as being too weak given their applicant pool. In many cases, colleges may also defer students to the regular admission pool before making a final decision. In that case, students are considered again as if they were applying during the regular admission deadline. You would not have to submit a new application in that situation, though you would be advised to send new material to keep your file current and to notify the school of your continuing interest. Please note: most colleges with the Early Action option permit students to apply to multiple schools with an Early Action program, but a few Early Action schools will prohibit you from applying to any other colleges through an Early Program (either EA or ED). This is often referred to as Single Choice Early Action or Restrictive Early Action. Do not assume that every college’s program is the same; carefully read each school’s application policies and procedures.

Early Decision (ED): This is a plan for the student who has a first choice college and is a reasonable candidate for that institution. Students admitted under this program are REQUIRED to attend the college and must withdraw all other applications immediately upon notification of admission. Like Early Action, the deadlines are typically in the fall, during November and December, with decisions mailed before January 1. Some colleges that employ Early Decision have two rounds of deadlines, called ED I & ED II. Applying Early Decision can offer some competitive advantage for a qualified student. If you choose to apply to a college Early Decision, you must understand that it's a binding contract. You must sign a statement of intent, and both your parents and college counselor must sign as well. You should not use Early Decision simply as a means to complete the process early or as a strategy to get into a more competitive college. You need to be certain that you will be happy to attend the college, with no regrets about the collegiate options you will be required to forgo (including financial aid awards or possible scholarships from other colleges). Early Decision schools will send you one of three decisions: Admit, Deny, or Deferral. If the college defers you, you are no longer obligated to attend if admitted; you are permitted to apply to other colleges and wait until May 1 to choose which school you wish to attend.

Rolling Admissions: This is the practice of processing an application as soon as the candidate’s file is complete and notifying the student as soon as the admission decision is made. It is to your advantage to submit applications early to colleges with rolling admission as they often fill their class early. Ordinarily it takes at least two weeks to process a completed file and notify the applicant. However, colleges will sometimes take longer to evaluate more of the applicant pool if a candidate is marginal or their applicant pool looks particularly competitive.

*** Navigating these many choices can be a chore and you may face conflicting pressures when attempting to determine which avenues to take. Please consult with your college counselor to evaluate which admission options are the best for you at each college you are considering.
III. APPLYING TO COLLEGE

ELECTRONIC APPLICATIONS

The majority of colleges expect students to apply online via the Common Application or their own online institutional application. This is an efficient and comfortable way for students to apply. Counselors around the country have compiled hints in regards to applying to college via the internet. Here are their thoughts (compiled from the NACAC e-list):

It’s a good idea to:

- Consider using The Common Application (www.commonapp.org), which is accepted by over 500 colleges across the country.

- Create user names and passwords that you’ll remember easily. Even if you’re certain you will remember, record it somewhere (maybe in a word document on your desktop, in the Journal of your Naviance account, or send an email to yourself).

- Disable pop-up blockers.

- Follow directions and complete all steps. On each page and in every pop-up, scroll down to the bottom to avoid missing any information.

- Save your work regularly. You usually have a time limit per web page. If you plan to leave your application for any length of time, use the save or logout feature to store your work and then log back in when you are ready.

- Complete online applications well ahead of the deadline. The closer to the deadline you get, the more use the web site will be in use around the world and the potential for technical problems grows. The site could slow due to excessive use or, even worse, it could crash. You don’t need the added stress!

- Write your personal statement using a Microsoft Word or a similar program before you begin the online application. Most applications allow you to upload a document or copy and paste it into the appropriate boxes online.

- Have someone proofread your work before you send the application. Remember that an online application should not be viewed as an email or another informal means of online communication. This is a formal document. Check the “Print Preview” before sending so you can edit the document according to what the college is going to see.

- Be certain you complete every single step. Sometimes there’s one final “Submit” button that some students forget about or don’t see. Your application will not be sent to the college unless you do so.

- Print out your receipt and keep it. This provides you with a record of your application having been sent along with any identifying information.

- Contact your college counselor and other recommendation writers to request all of your supporting credentials (transcripts, etc) be submitted to the college. Be sure to provide plenty of notice.
THE COMMON APPLICATION

What is it?
The Common Application is a form used by over 500 public and private colleges and universities for admission to their undergraduate programs. It is given equal consideration with the schools’ institutional forms, and many of the institutions use the Common Application exclusively. The information requested on this form is very similar to the questions asked by colleges that don’t use the Common Application.

The Common Application is designed to simplify the admission process for students, counselors, and teachers by reducing the number of forms a student needs to complete. Students complete one Common Application form and send it to all participating colleges where they are applying. Students, therefore, need to write only one essay and ask each teacher to complete only one recommendation form.

How do you use it?
- Using the Colleges section of your Naviance account, look to see how many of your prospective colleges accept the Common Application.
- Go to the Common Application website at www.commonapp.org and create an account.
- Complete the requested information, which you can save and return to as needed.
- Complete supplemental questions for the colleges that require them. This may include a series of short answer questions or an additional essay.
- Submit the application and supplemental essays to colleges via the website. Note: Once you submit your application online to one school, you should not need to alter it (although that option is available)
- Although mostly taken care of electronically, print out Teacher Evaluation Forms and distribute to applicable teachers (refer to pg. III-13 to determine which teachers will need forms)
- Pay application fees electronically as required

What is included in the Common Application?
- Personal Data
- Family Information
- Academic Information
- Standardized Testing Data
- Extracurricular and work experience lists
- Writing: Personal Statement (main essay) and supplemental essays/short answers if Required (see below for more detail)
- Discipline History (see III-15 for explanation)
- Secondary School Report (includes a recommendation from your college counselor)
- Teacher recommendations
- Early Decision Agreement (only required if applying ED to a college)
Supplemental Writing:
Many schools that accept the Common Application will ask for supplemental information. Often, such requests come in the form of short answer or longer essay questions that focus on what you hope to take away from the college and how you may contribute to the community. In general, colleges use this supplemental information to develop a better understanding of your match with the institution, and, in some cases, assess your interest level.

You should take supplemental documents very seriously. If you answer them haphazardly, admission readers will interpret it as a sign of indifference to their school. Further, if you do not fulfill requests for supplemental information, it most often results in automatic rejection.

Here are some examples of supplemental essay questions:
- “How did you first learn of our college and why did you decide to apply?”
- “Describe what you expect your academic journey at College X to include.”
- “Please explain why you have chosen your major, department, or program.”
- “Make a rational argument for a position you do not personally support.”
- “Respond to one of the following quotations...”

How should you approach the Disciplinary History section?
The Common Application (and many other applications as well) asks the student to provide information regarding disciplinary infractions during high school that resulted in probation, suspension, dismissal, or expulsion. This question should be answered honestly. That same question is asked of the school counselor and we will provide an honest answer. If our answers do not coincide, the student will be contacted by the college for an explanation.

If you answered yes to the question, you must include an explanation of the incident and reflect on what you learned. The college counselors are able to help you compose such a letter. Colleges are often forgiving of students who show true remorse and have clearly learned from their mistake.

If an infraction resulting in probation, suspension, dismissal, or expulsion takes place during a student’s senior year, the student should contact the colleges to which they have applied and alert them to the situation within two weeks of the incident. Colleges often request notification be in the form of a letter explaining the circumstances and how the student has learned from the experience. Again, the college counselors can assist a student with this letter.

Families should also be aware that after the two-week time frame has elapsed, their college counselor will contact the colleges on the student’s list and make them aware of the situation. In our professional experience, we have found that honesty is always the best policy.
The Secondary School Report & Mid-Year Report

The Secondary School Report
This is the form that will accompany your transcript when we send it off to colleges. Follow the instructions on page III-14 for information on how to work through this process.

Due to the high volume of applications we process, you must turn in school reports and requests for transcripts at least two weeks before the college’s deadline. Forms with an early January deadline must be in the office by the end of the first week after Thanksgiving, as the Pulsifer College Counseling Center is closed during winter vacation.

Included with every School Report is a letter of recommendation written by the college counselor. The counselor recommendation presents the student in a holistic manner within the school community. In addition to discussing personality traits, interests, hobbies, contributions to the school, and other topics that would help a college get to know an applicant better, the counselor will comment on the student's overall academic experience within the context of the academic rigor that exists at Thayer Academy. Topics such as course selection, trends (or anomalies) in academic performance, unusual circumstances that may have impacted a student’s grades, and how a student is viewed among the faculty, are discussed as needed. To help the college counselor write the best letter possible, students are asked to complete a questionnaire early in their senior year. The questionnaire is located in the student's Naviance account.

The counselor recommendation exists as a way for counselors to advocate for their students. Although considered a confidential document and not shared with the applicant, students can feel confident that the counselor is portraying the student in a positive light.

Mid-Semester Senior Grades
Most colleges need senior grades for applicants in their early decision and early action pools. Thayer does not have a marking period in the fall, so we created a November 1st progress report only for seniors. On November 1st, all senior-year teachers must submit the current grades (no comments) for their students. These grades are only sent to colleges where students have applied within one of the early rounds (deadlines are 12/1 or prior). A new cumulative GPA is not calculated at this point.

The Mid-Year Report
In mid-January, the Pulsifer College Counseling Center will send a report and transcript including first semester grades to all the schools to which you have applied. No form is necessary. At that time, the college counselor can update the college on anything new as it applies to your application (academic or non-academic).
GETTING IT DONE: SENDING TRANSCRIPTS TO COLLEGES - 2016

NOTE: THIS FORM IS UPDATED/DIFFERENT EVERY YEAR

In addition to submitting your application, sending test scores, and requesting teacher recommendations, you also need to make sure the College Counseling Office has everything necessary to get transcripts and counselor recommendations to your schools by the deadline. Below are the steps required to make sure that happens. These steps must be COMPLETED TWO (2) WEEKS PRIOR TO A DEADLINE. If you have early January deadlines, the deadline to follow this procedure is December 4th.

1. If you are applying to colleges that require the Common Application, login to your Common Application account and complete the Education section. Once completed, go to the My Colleges tab and select Recommenders and FERPA. The FERPA Release Authorization must be filled out and submitted. This will allow Thayer Academy to submit educational records to colleges on your behalf, among other things. Be sure to read the full explanation provided so you understand your options. See your counselor with questions if unsure of how to respond.

2. For Common Application schools, log in to your Naviance account and go to “Colleges I’m Applying To.” Complete the box located at the top of the page by inserting your Common Application email address, your date of birth, and clicking on Match. This step connects your Common Application account with Naviance and allows for electronic submission of your supporting documents. If the match process is unsuccessful, please see your counselor.

3. Type up a list of colleges and their deadlines (the same list you gave to your teachers for letters of recommendation is fine). You can also do a screen print of your “Colleges I’m Thinking About” page.

4. Look at the “Delivery Type” column of your “Colleges I’m Thinking About” page. If any colleges have a postage stamp in that column, then they do not accept supporting credentials electronically. Therefore, you must print out the Secondary School Report Forms (aka School Report Form, Transcript Request Form, etc) found online in the application. Fill out the top part and bring these forms and hand them to Ms. Murray. We do not need envelopes.

5. On Mrs. Jones’s desk are three application log binders, one for each of the college counselors. Open your counselor’s binder and find the page with your name on it. Fill out the top of the form and transfer your college list and deadlines to the chart. Regardless of what is in Naviance, this is what we refer to in order to make sure transcripts are going to the right place by the deadline. This step will result in your colleges moving from “Colleges I’m Thinking About” to “Colleges I’m Applying To.”

6. Update your resume in Naviance. Your counselor will use this when writing your recommendation.

7. Complete the senior questionnaire (on the left side of the screen in the “About Me” section).

As the year goes on, you must stay on top of your deadlines (don’t forget that we need two weeks notice prior to a deadline). You also need to keep us updated if your college list changes. Some schools may drop off your list or be added after the fact. All of these changes must be reflected on your page in the application log binder. You do not need to list all of your colleges at once. You can come back periodically to add to it as needed.
Teacher Recommendations:
The Common Application requires at least one teacher recommendation, although some schools may require two. Typically, recommendations need to be from a teacher in an academic subject (i.e. not music, theatre, or art). Admission offices use recommendations to provide them with answers to questions that may help them predict how you will perform in the college classroom and the impact you will have on the community. Specifically:

- How did you arrive at the grades you have?
- What is your role in the classroom?
- How do you interact with other students and teachers?
- How do you approach assignments?
- What are you like beyond your grades?

Which teachers should you choose to write for you?
It goes without saying that you want to choose teachers who will be the best advocates for you. But which teachers are the best candidates for this task? Undoubtedly, you will have your gut instincts on who will work. But when in doubt, or if you are choosing between several good candidates, try to choose teachers that fit as many of the following criteria:

- Teacher with whom you have a good relationship
- Teacher who taught classes in which you were successful
- Teacher you had recently (junior or senior year preferably)
- Teacher you have had more than once or also worked with in a club or activity.
- Teacher who teaches subjects related to one of your future fields of study
- Teachers from different departments (i.e. humanities & sciences)

How does the recommendation writing process work?
1. With your college counselor, discuss the teachers you are considering and make a mental note of which teacher you would consider your “primary” recommender (some colleges only allow submission of one letter).

2. When you have settled on your teachers, approach them as soon as possible and ask if they are willing to write a letter of recommendation on your behalf. Most teachers will gladly agree, though there are circumstances when a teacher may decline your request (they already have too many requests or they feel as though they are not the best person to write the recommendation).

3. Complete the Resume section of your Naviance account which will provide your teachers with information about your involvement and interests. Teachers may ask to have a conversation with you or want answers to particular questions.

4. The majority of Thayer teachers submit letters through Naviance. Follow the instructions on page III-17 depending on the preferences of your teachers.

Extra Recommendations
In some cases, you may seek recommendations beyond what is required by the college. Most colleges are willing to accept them, but always check to make sure. Usually, it is best if the extra recommendation provides new insight into your personality. Applications from non-academic sources (i.e. coaches, religious mentors, job supervisors, etc.) often offer a fresh perspective not found in the required recommendations. In general, steer clear of requesting recommendations from politicians, celebrities, famous alumni, etc., unless the figure knows you very well and is willing to write a substantive letter that demonstrates as much.
As you meet with your college counselor this fall, you will update your college list on Naviance and discuss which faculty members are the most appropriate for academic letters of recommendation (you will most likely need two). **AT LEAST THREE (3) WEEKS PRIOR TO YOUR FIRST DEADLINE**, speak with the teachers you select and ask if they are willing to write on your behalf. Your teachers will tell you whether they are going to submit online or through the mail. With that information, you should follow instructions as outlined below:

**IF YOUR TEACHER IS SUBMITTING LETTERS ONLINE:**

1. If you are applying to colleges that require the Common Application, login to your Common Application account and complete the Education section. Once completed, go to the My Colleges tab and select Recommenders and FERPA. The FERPA Release Authorization must be filled out and submitted. This will allow Thayer Academy to submit educational records to colleges on your behalf. It also gives you the choice to waive your right to see letters of recommendation during this step (we recommend that you indeed waive your right). Be sure to read the full explanation provided so you understand your options. See your counselor with questions if unsure of how to respond.

2. For Common Application schools, log in to your Naviance account and go to “Colleges I’m Applying To”. Complete the box located at the top of the page by inserting your Common Application email address, your date of birth, and clicking on Match. This step connects your Common Application account with Naviance and allows for electronic submission of your supporting documents. If the match process is unsuccessful, please see your counselor.

3. **Do not complete this step until you have confirmed that a teacher will be writing on your behalf.** Scroll to the bottom of the screen. In the Teacher Recommendation section, click on “Add/cancel requests,” and select the teacher’s name from the menu. A quick “thank you” in the corresponding text box would be a nice touch.

4. Go to the “About Me” tab. Complete your resume in your Naviance account. Teachers may wish to use this information when writing your recommendation.

5. Give the teacher a list of colleges to which you plan to apply, along with application deadlines (a screen print from your Naviance account with deadlines highlighted can work). Hang on to a list for yourself, as you will need it to request transcripts (see #5 on Getting It Done: Sending Transcripts to Colleges). It is at that point that your colleges will shift from “Colleges I’m Thinking About” to “Colleges I’m Applying To” in Naviance. Teachers cannot submit letters to colleges unless the colleges are on the “Colleges I’m Applying To” list.

6. Look at the “Delivery Type” column of your “Colleges I’m Thinking About” page. If any colleges have a postage stamp in that column, then they do not accept supporting credentials electronically. Therefore, you must print out the college’s teacher recommendation form (some schools don’t have one), fill out the information on the top, address and stamp an envelope, and give it to the teacher to mail.

**IF YOUR TEACHER IS SUBMITTING VIA THE MAIL:**

1. Make a list of all of your colleges, their due dates, and whether or not they are Common Application schools (a screen print from your Naviance account with deadlines highlighted works well). Also, print your Naviance resume.

2. Go into your Common Application account and print out a copy of the Teacher Recommendation Offline Form (in the Recommenders and FERPA section). If any schools do not take the Common Application, print out that college’s teacher recommendation form and fill out the necessary information. Some colleges will not have a form for the teacher to fill out. In that case, only the letter is mailed.

3. Address and stamp an envelope for each school. Admission office addresses are easy to find in your Naviance account. Do not fill in a return address.

4. Put all of that in a folder with your name on it and hand it to the teacher.
THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

The college essay, also known as the Personal Statement, plays an important role in admissions decisions. It is one of the few opportunities for an admission office to hear your voice and to see your personality come to life. The essay will also give admission readers a glimpse at your writing skills. The impression a college draws from the main essay can have a direct impact on the admission decision. Your essay is an expression of yourself; it is the chance to emphasize what makes you distinct and even unique. The admission office can use the essay as a window into your intellectual vitality and personal passion.

“The personal essayist must above all be a reliable narrator; we must trust his or her core of sincerity. We must also feel secure that the essayist has done a fair amount of introspective homework already, is grounded in reality, and is trying to give us the maximum understanding and intelligence of which he or she is capable. A dunderhead and a psychotic killer may be sincere, but that would not sufficiently recommend them for the genre...

How the world comes at another person, the irritations, jubilations, aches and pains, humorous flashes—these are the classic building materials of the personal essay. We learn the rhythm by which the essayist receives, digests, and spits out the world, and we learn the shape of his or her privacy.

The essay is a notoriously flexible and adaptable form. It possesses the freedom to move anywhere, in all directions. It acts as if all objects were equally near the center and as if ‘all subjects are linked to each other’ (Montaigne) by free association. This freedom can be daunting, not only for the novice essayist confronting such latitude but for the critic attempting to pin down its formal properties...

The essayist attempts to surround a something—a subject, a mood, a problematic irritation—by coming at it from all angles, wheeling and diving like a hawk, each seemingly digressive spiral actually taking us closer to the heart of the matter.”

Philip Lopate

*The Art of the Personal Essay*
What Makes a Good Personal Statement?

1. It has a point (a theme, a thesis, an argument, an insight).

2. It reveals the writer's personality (values, passions, ideas, goals).

3. It is interesting, perhaps even entertaining.

4. It shows depth of thought (reflective, analytical, insightful).

5. It has a distinct, personal voice – use your own!

6. It refers to people other than you; you don't want to come across as too self-centered and we can learn a lot about you from how you see others and interact with them.

7. It has an engaging beginning; it grabs our attention!

8. It has colorful and relevant examples; provide details and examples, steering clear of broad generalizations.

9. It ends on a satisfying, appropriate note.

10. It uses standard English and is grammatically correct. Be sure to proofread meticulously.

11. It answers the essay question.

12. It satisfies the length requirement (not too short, not too long).
Choosing a Topic: The Options

Most colleges give you several essay questions to consider. If you answer one of the Common Application essay questions, you will probably be able to use your essay with most of the other colleges to which you apply. Although the questions will be different from year to year, the Common Application essay questions from 2015-2016 are:

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.

2. The lessons we take from failure can be fundamental to later success. Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?

3. Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?

4. Describe a problem you’ve solved or a problem you’d like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma—anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.

5. Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.

Choosing a Topic: Find Your Voice

When choosing a topic, you should be aware that the majority of students tend to draw their essay topics from a similar pot of ideas. As a result, a core group of essay topics have become common, even clichéd, including:

- Athletic adversity/triumph (especially injuries)
- Trips (international or in the U.S.)
- Community service experiences – often a sub-topic of “Trips”
- Deaths of friends or family members
- Near-death experiences of the student or the student’s friends or family

While we don’t want to discourage you from choosing one of these subjects if it truly represents you, you should work diligently to ensure that the individuality of your experience comes through in the essay. After all, the primary goal of the personal statement is to reveal your personality. The more an essay sounds like every other essay, the less the reader will be able to discern a distinctive personality.

Also keep in mind that the personal statement is not a cover letter for a job, in which you must demonstrate all your strengths and skills. Rather, it is a chance to show the admission committee what makes you human – your values and interests. It is a slice of your life. You do not need to show yourself as flawless; indeed, the more you try to cast yourself as a saint, the less honest and revealing the essay will seem. Let the colleges catch you in the act of thinking and feeling and expressing, so that they can get a glimpse at your depth.
Commonly Used Approaches to Avoid

There is no template for writing an impressive college essay, no format that will guarantee that your personal statement will have a positive impact on an admission committee’s review of your application. The key, though, is to let your voice and perspective emerge clearly, to stand out among the crowd of other applicants. While it is difficult to advise you on how to write, for you must find the approach that best suits you, we can point out some approaches that are overdone and, as such, often undercut an essay’s effectiveness.

1. Predictable:
Perhaps the biggest drawback to choosing one of the topics listed in the previous section is predictability. The stories tend to have similar plots and conclusions. The athletic essays often reflect on intense challenges, hard work, victory, personal accomplishment, or team bonding. Trips are always written about as “eye-opening” ventures. Either the experience allows the student to gain something he/she did not have (i.e. confidence, culture, knowledge, etc.) or appreciate what he/she already has (i.e. money, freedom, education, etc.). In the community service essays, it is typical for a student to write about how impoverished the people are in terms of material wealth, but these people almost always have generosity of heart and are wealthy in other ways. Essays about death often focus on the deceased person’s wonderful traits and how hard it was for the student to say goodbye, while the near-death-experience essays almost always follow the same structure: describe the event (a car accident, a life-threatening disease) and discuss how the student’s perspective on life is changed forever – an inevitable “Carpe Diem” conclusion.

If you fall into predictable patterns, you are immediately restricting your ability to be unique. While your essay does not need to be spectacularly original, you should still try to give a conventional narrative your own unique expression.

2. Simple:
Not surprisingly, students often struggle with finding depth and complexity in a one-to-two page essay. Even the best writers have difficulty moving beyond simple insights that masquerade as serious thoughts. Too often, students depend on what we can call “motto thinking” – short conclusions meant to be pithy lessons, but passing only as empty clichés. Some popular examples:

- Through hard work you can achieve anything.
- I have learned that life is precious; I must live life to its fullest every day.
- It is important to treat everyone equally, because every individual is unique.
- After seeing how others live, I now appreciate what I have.

The above morals, and others like them, may not impress an application reader, nor will they provide evidence of your enlightenment, wisdom or good will. Instead, they will register as ordinary and indicative of your unwillingness or inability to push the analysis of your experience beyond the obvious.
3. Melodramatic:
Overplaying the drama of an experience to give it more significance than it deserves. This tendency occurs commonly in athletic stories of glory, in which the student overcomes an injury or an opponent. It also appears in outdoors adventure tales, when students climb mountains or canoe oceans with organized groups. The story told in the Personal Statement should speak for itself without an over-hyped description. The essay will be powerful if you thoughtfully reflect on what you have learned and demonstrate how you responded to the situation, without exaggeration, excessive “atmosphere,” or a sense of inflated significance.

4. Sentimental:
Personal Statements also can lose their appeal if the story is told in a blatantly sentimental manner. This approach often comes across as anti-intellectual and may even cheapen an emotional event. Too often, the sentimental approach prevents you from really grappling with interesting ideas. You should aim to keep the descriptions of your emotions in check and work to confront the most interesting details and subtleties of the experience. If you provide your readers with the compelling details, then the proper emotions will emerge on their own.

COllege Essay Writing Workshop

Every summer, as a special service to rising seniors, Thayer Academy will offer College Essay Writing Workshops to give students the opportunity to formulate an essay early, allowing them to focus on academics and the rest of the college application process during the busy Fall term. We hope to offer three workshops over the course of the summer of 2014. Families will receive more information in the spring when the dates and times are finalized.
WRITING DO’S & DON’T’S

DO write from your experience with interesting, colorful detail;
DON’T speak in generalities, especially outside your realm of knowledge.

DO use your own voice;
DON’T manufacture a voice with a language and tone that you think admission readers want to hear but doesn’t sound like you.

DO accentuate the positive, even in a difficult situation;
DON’T wallow in self-pity or come across as cynical and difficult.

DO catch the reader’s attention with a funny, shocking, unusual, or intriguing introduction;
DON’T begin with a dictionary definition or a bland lesson learned.

DO Share your essay with various people whose judgment you respect (teacher, college counselor, friend, parent);
DON’T Let someone else write or significantly edit your essay.

DO proofread and make sure your grammar is correct;
DON’T write a quick draft and send it to the college without close scrutiny.

DO write with conviction and passion;
DON’T overdo it to the point where you cast yourself as too perfect, too smart, or too pompous.

DO focus on a special interest or event or characteristic;
DON’T repeat a list of activities or try to cover too much.

DO write crisply and concisely, with precise imagery;
DON’T use flowery or pretentious language.
This section exists to show students and their families the documents they are likely to encounter throughout the college admission process. Below is a description of each sample:

**Thayer Academy School Profile:**
This document is mailed to colleges along with high school transcripts. It helps colleges to understand the academic and social environment at Thayer Academy by highlighting the curriculum, requirements for graduation, and describing the varied backgrounds our students represent. Although not included here, part of the School Profile is a scattergraph which gives colleges a snapshot of the senior class in terms of cumulative GPA and highest combined SAT scores (although exact SAT scores are not included).

**Parent Response Form:**
This document is sent to parents (and available on Naviance) in the hopes that they will take advantage of the opportunity to shed some new light on their child for the benefit of the College Counselor. This additional perspective will be a tremendous help when the College Counselor writes the counselor recommendation.
The Academy has an enrollment of 484 students in grades 9-12, and 214 in grades 6-8 for the 2015–2016 school year. All courses are college preparatory. There are 15 AP courses available to juniors and seniors; there are honors sections (H) and less competitive sections in some subjects. History courses are not available for seniors, but honors classes in those disciplines are. Students attending classes in the video arts lab dock their laptops loaded with Adobe Creative Suite to large monitors. The academy has developed a robust campus-wide wireless access backbone in support of the educational process. In the fall of 2015, Thayer transitioned from an iPad program for all students to a MacBook Air 11” laptop for all students and expanded the use of interactive texts, applications, and exercises into the classroom across the disciplines. All classrooms have Audio-Visual Presentation Systems and many have digital whiteboards to enhance the classroom learning experience. The Hanflig Technology Center is staffed with six full-time technology professionals and has a classroom dedicated to digital training. In addition to the student laptop program, the technology center supports more than 300 computers on campus, which include a robotics lab, along with a fiber backbone video editing lab and two digital language labs in the Middle and Upper schools. Students attending classes in the video arts lab dock their laptops loaded with Adobe Creative Suite to large monitors. The collaborative design lab has state of the art laser cutter, 3D printing and vinyl plotter to support a project driven curriculum. The computer science department has a high-performance computing lab and virtual desktop interface for students to access computing applications off campus.

Thayer Academy places special attention to providing our students with extensive technological resources. To that end, the Academy has developed a robust campus-wide wireless access backbone in support of the educational process. In the fall of 2015, Thayer transitioned from an iPad program for all students to a MacBook Air 11” laptop for all students and expanded the use of interactive texts, applications, and exercises into the classroom across the disciplines. All classrooms have Audio-Visual Presentation Systems and many have digital whiteboards to enhance the classroom learning experience. The Hanflig Technology Center is staffed with six full-time technology professionals and has a classroom dedicated to digital training. In addition to the student laptop program, the technology center supports more than 300 computers on campus, which include a robotics lab, along with a fiber backbone video editing lab and two digital language labs in the Middle and Upper schools. Students attending classes in the video arts lab dock their laptops loaded with Adobe Creative Suite to large monitors. The collaborative design lab has state of the art laser cutter, 3D printing and vinyl plotter to support a project driven curriculum. The computer science department has a high-performance computing lab and virtual desktop interface for students to access computing applications off campus.

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The Academy has an enrollment of 484 students in grades 9-12, and 214 in grades 6-8 for the 2015–2016 school year. Tuition is $42,000 per year. Approximately 35% of Thayer students receive financial aid for a total of over $7 million.

There are 110 academic faculty members, 67% of whom have master’s degrees or beyond. The student-faculty ratio is 6:1. The average academic class size is a range of 13-16 students.

All courses are college preparatory. There are 15 AP courses available to juniors and seniors; there are honors sections (H) in English, history, mathematics, sciences, computer and foreign languages; and less competitive sections in some subjects. Seniors may select from a variety of courses, including 79 electives in English, history, sciences, and the arts. AP English and History courses are not available for seniors, but honors classes in those disciplines are.

Seventeen academic credits plus physical education. Minimum requirements:

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of science
- 3 years of a foreign language
- 3 years of history (including 1 year U.S.
- 3 years of math
- and 1 year modern European history)
- One of the 17 credits must come from the Arts (art, music, drama)

In May, all seniors are required to participate in a four-week community service or career-oriented project either on or off campus.
I V. SAMPLES

NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARS

The class of 2016 has 6 Commended Students and 2 Semi-Finalists in the Merit Program.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT POLICY

Thayer offers Advanced Placement (AP) courses in the following areas: Calculus (AB and BC), Biology, Chemistry, Physics C, Environmental Science, English Language, English Literature, Computer Science (A), U.S. History, French Language & Culture, Microeconomics, Statistics, Spanish Language & Culture, and Latin. AP grades of 3 or better, earned prior to senior year, will appear on the student’s transcript.

SPRING 2015 AP EXAM STATISTICS

As a result of the May 2015 AP exams, 27 students were designated AP Scholars; 9 Scholars with Honor; 15 Scholars with Distinction; and 1 National AP Scholar.

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<th># scoring 3 or better</th>
<th>Exam</th>
<th># taking exam</th>
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AP EXAM TOTALS: 247 exams taken; 212 scored 3 or better (86%)

MOST FREQUENT COLLEGE CHOICES - Classes of ’11, ’12, ’13, ’14, and ’15 (three or more enrollments)

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<tr>
<td>Worcester Polytechnic Institute</td>
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</table>
As we put together the counselor recommendation letter for each student, we seek input from many sources: teachers, advisers, coaches, peers, and the students themselves. All of this we have or will have in the Fall. You know them far better than any of us at Thayer ever will, so this is your opportunity to further our understanding of your child and have a voice in our letter of recommendation. Be funny; be serious; be proud. Feel free to comment at length. You can do this in one of two formats:

- Write a letter of recommendation on behalf of your child and send it to the college counselor
- Answer the questions below

Regardless of your preference, please return it to us by September 30th. Feel free to attach additional pages as necessary.

**STUDENT’S NAME: __________________________________________________**

1. What do you consider to be your child’s outstanding accomplishments during their time at Thayer? Why? Your answer could include a description of overall personal or academic growth/success, or particular events, awards, or projects that stand out in your mind. Feel free to describe several.

2. Describe an activity (extra-curricular, athletic, community, school-related or not) to which s/he has devoted extensive time and effort and what you think s/he has gained from being involved.

3. What are your child’s strengths (academic, personal, social, etc.)? Provide an example or two of when you have seen these strengths in action.

4. On a daily basis, what role does your child play at home within the context of your family?

5. What five adjectives best describe your child. If a particular anecdote pops into your head that would bring an adjective to life for us, please share.

6. Are there any personal or academic circumstances that may have impacted your child’s educational or personal experiences? If so, please explain.

7. In what ways do you think your child will contribute to a college community?

8. Are there any specific colleges you or your child is targeting? If so, why?
Standardizing testing for college admission is an issue that generates many questions and anxiety. Colleges require standardized tests as a means to see how students compare to other college-bound seniors in the country. Most colleges that use test scores for admission purposes realize that different students and groups of students have different testing profiles and will take those into account. It is rare that a test score will make or break a student’s chances, but instead it will be folded into the larger assessment of a student’s academic ability and potential.

College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) Code and ACT Code
Thayer Academy’s CEEB code is 220-425. This number is needed for all test registrations and college applications. When you provide this number as requested during test registration, your scores will be sent to Thayer Academy.

Testing Requirements
Keep track of the testing requirements at each college where you are applying. It is also your responsibility to have test scores sent directly to colleges from the testing service. This can be done when you are registering or at a later date online or by phone.

Most colleges require at least the ACT or the SAT, but some do not. For the schools that require testing, most will take your best scores, even if it means mixing different scores (i.e. SAT Critical Reading score from one test date and the SAT Math score from another test date). Schools don’t have a preference between the ACT and the SAT and will take either one. A smaller number of schools (usually more selective ones) require two SAT Subject Tests.

Score Choice: Students taking the SAT and SAT Subject Tests have the option of sending scores from select test dates (or select Subject Tests) while not revealing others. Students cannot isolate specific sections from different SAT dates. If students do not exercise this option, then all scores on the student’s record will be sent to the college. It is important to note that a small number of colleges do not participate in Score Choice and will require that students submit all of their test scores regardless. Most colleges will select a student’s best scores from all of their score reports anyway and use those when making their admission decisions. Students will need to refer to the specific policies of the colleges on their list.

For a list of colleges that do not require standardized tests as a part of a completed application, go to www.fairtest.org.
SAT Overview *(redesigned for 2016)*:
The redesigned SAT, which will be offered for the first time in March 2016, focuses on the knowledge and skills that current research shows are most essential for college and career readiness and success. It is a three-hour test plus 50 minute optional essay. A student can receive a total score on the SAT of 400-1600. The redesigned SAT has four required test sections, and will be scored in two broad areas: Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (composed of the Reading Test and a Writing and Language Test) and Math (composed of the calculator section and no-calculator section). The Evidence-Based Reading and Writing Section and the Math Section are both scored between 200 and 800.

**READING TEST:** The New SAT Reading Test lasts 65 minutes and is comprised of 4 individual passages and 1 pair of passages. All passages will come from previously published sources and will be related to four different topics: Literature, History and Social Studies, Founding Document or Great Global Conversation, and Science. The pair of passages will be two shorter passages by different authors that address a similar topic or theme. Each passage will have 10 or 11 questions, for a total of 52 questions. In every SAT Reading Test there will be 2 passages which are accompanied by graphics (1 or 2 graphics for each) as well as questions about how the graphics relate to the passage. The New SAT does not feature any sentence-completion questions, vocabulary specific test items, or short passages, as previously seen in the SAT.

**WRITING AND LANGUAGE TEST:** The revised SAT Writing Test is made up of 4 passages and 44 multiple choice questions. Students will have 35 minutes to read the passages and answer the questions in this section. The questions will test knowledge of grammar rules and the elements of effective writing as integrated in the passages. Students will correct errors in sentence structure, usage, and punctuation. Other parts of the passages need to be revised to better express the ideas of the author. This will involve improving the development and organization of the passage as well as correcting errors in language use.

The passages will be 400-450 words in length, broken up into paragraphs. At least one passage will contain an informational graphic. The graphic may be a table, graph, or chart that conveys information related to the passage topic. The topics of the passages always include careers, social studies, the humanities, and science.

**MATH TEST:** The new SAT Math Test will test certain topics in math as well as the ability to use reasoning and critical thinking to solve real-world problems. The SAT groups these concepts into four major areas: Heart of Algebra, Problem Solving and Data Analysis, Passport to Advanced Math, and Additional Topics in Math. There will be a deep emphasis on algebra 1 and 2. The SAT Math Test includes two sections and a total of 58 questions. In the first math section, a total of 20 questions, calculators are not permitted. The no-calculator section will be 25 minutes in length and consist of 20 questions.

Both sections on the Math Test will have two types of questions: multiple choice questions and student-produced responses. Some of the questions will include real-world contexts in areas such as science and social studies. These questions will require the application of reasoning and critical thinking skills to analyze situations, create mathematical models, and find relevant solutions. There will be graphs, charts, and diagrams in some of the problems and answer choices.
ESSAY (OPTIONAL): Given at the end of the SAT and lasting 50 minutes, the essay section aims to test reading, analysis, and writing skills; students produce a written analysis of a provided source text. The SAT essay will be scored on a scale of 2-8 in each three areas: Reading, Analysis, and Writing, yielding a total score range of 6-24. Some postsecondary institutions may require the essay for admission, so it is important to check with each school on your list. We recommend you take the essay portion at least once in the event you apply to a college at the last minute and they require the essay.

Sources: College Board, Ivy Global New SAT (http://sat.ivyglobal.com/essay), and College Admission Testing Guide, Summit Educational Group

THAYER’S SUGGESTED SAT TESTING SCHEDULE

TESTING DATES:
Source: https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register/dates-deadlines

2015-16 SAT Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAT Date</th>
<th>SAT Subject Tests Available (Find Dates)</th>
<th>Registration Deadline</th>
<th>Late Registration Deadline</th>
<th>Deadline for Changes</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Feb. 19, 2016</td>
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<td>May 5, 2016</td>
<td>May 20, 2016</td>
<td>May 25, 2016</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
SAT Subject Tests are one hour tests in a single academic subject. You can take up to three subject tests in one sitting. The SAT Subject Tests are offered during the same testing dates and times as the SAT. You cannot take both the SAT and Subject Tests on the same day. You must register for two different testing days. Tests are offered in the following subjects:

- English Literature
- U.S. History
- World History
- Mathematics Level 1
- Mathematics Level 2
- Biology E/M
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Chinese with listening
- Modern Hebrew
- French
- French with listening
- German
- German with listening
- Spanish
- Spanish with listening
- Italian
- Latin
- Japanese with listening
- Korean with listening
When possible, take tests that are offered near the completion of the appropriate courses.

Only a small number of colleges require Subject Tests for admission. Those that do may require a subject test in a specific discipline if you are applying for a specialized program (i.e. Engineering). Typically, however, students can select any Subject Test they prefer. Make sure you check the requirements for each of the colleges on your list and make your testing plans accordingly. If a college doesn’t require SAT Subject Tests, your scores won’t count against you, though strong scores may give your academic profile a boost. Your SAT Subject Test scores are sent on the same report as your SAT.

THAYER’S SUGGESTED SAT SUBJECT TESTING SCHEDULE

The best time to take SAT Subject Tests is in June, the conclusion of the academic year. At that time, students are taking final exams and all of the course material is fresh in their minds. Students taking AP Exams in May could opt to take the corresponding SAT Subject Test in May.
2016 SAT SUBJECT TEST DATES

Source: https://sat.collegeboard.org/register/sat-subject-test-dates

SAT Subject Tests™ are offered 6 times per year in October, November, December, January, May and June.

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This is a testing program used mostly by colleges in the South and Midwest, but accepted at most colleges in the country in place of the SAT. It is a battery of multiple-choice tests that covers four areas: English, math, reading, and science. There is also an optional writing section that assesses your ability to plan and write a short essay (Thayer students should always register for the essay section). The ACT is scored on a scale of 1-36, and students receive a composite score as well as sub-scores for each subject. Although the overall testing time as compared to the SAT is similar, there are fewer sections that last for longer periods of time. For example, English is 45 minutes, mathematics is 60 minutes, reading is 35 minutes, and science reasoning is 35 minutes.

In the past few years, more students have taken the ACT. In some cases, the material on the ACT may be more suitable to a student’s knowledge and style of learning than the SAT is. For those students who are struggling with the SAT or feeling that the SAT scores do not reflect their ability or success in high school classes, the ACT may be a good alternative. We have seen, however, that students who walk into the ACT without becoming accustomed to it in advance will rarely score significantly better than on the SAT. If students want to explore the option of the ACT, it is recommended that they prepare for it as they would the SAT, at the very least reviewing the material and taking several practice tests.

For more detailed information on the ACT Assessment test, go to www.act.org.

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### 2015 ACT Test Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Date</th>
<th>Registration Deadline</th>
<th>(Late Fee Required)</th>
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<tr>
<td>April 9, 2016</td>
<td>March 4, 2016</td>
<td>March 5–18, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 11, 2016**</td>
<td>May 6, 2016</td>
<td>May 7–20, 2016</td>
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*No test centers are scheduled in New York for the February test date.

**See Non-Saturday testing for information related to this test date.
ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP) TESTING

The Advanced Placement program enables students to challenge themselves with college-level work and, perhaps, achieve advanced standing when they enroll in college. The A.P. examinations are administered in early May. Scores range from one to five, and each college has its own criteria for granting college credit, typically a score of three or better.

For most colleges, A.P. scores do not factor into an admission decision. However, colleges acknowledge that A.P. certified courses are typically very rigorous, and you will get credit for challenging yourself. Thayer reports scores of 3 or higher on your transcript.

If you have taken A.P. exams or expect to take them at the end of your senior year, you should plan to have your scores sent to the college you will attend. In May, when you make a deposit to the college of your choice, you can contact the College Board to forward your A.P. scores to that college to see if you qualify for college credit or placement in a higher-level course. You are not required to send A.P. scores to your college of choice if you do not wish to.

TOEFL: TEST OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The TOEFL is designed for students for whom English is not a native language; it is used to determine the student’s facility with English. The test is four hours long and uses a multiple-choice format in three sections: listening, comprehension, and vocabulary. There are two formats: Internet-based and paper-based testing. Students who have resided in the United States for longer than five years should probably not take the test. Colleges do take a student’s bilingual background into consideration during admission deliberation. If you have questions about whether the TOEFL makes sense for you, speak with your college counselor as well as the admission offices at the schools where you hope to apply.

For more detailed information on the TOEFL, go to www.ets.org/toefl.
**THE STUDENT-ATHLETE**

Can you play intercollegiate sports in college (and do you want to)?

1. Be honest with yourself about your athletic ability, potential, and commitment to the sport.

2. Speak with your Thayer coach, college coaches who have seen you perform, and former players (especially those with similar ability to yourself). Ask them for their perspective on your chances of success in collegiate sports and what you should probably work on to improve. Also get their advice on what to expect from college sports to see if it’s the kind of commitment you really want to make.

3. What is the strength of the athletic programs you are considering? Does the program welcome almost anyone, or does it only consider those it has recruited? Though it’s not impossible to make a team if you haven’t been recruited, many colleges, even ones at the division III level, discourage “walk-ons.”

**Finding colleges that meet your athletic (and academic) needs**

1. Talk to your Thayer coach (or the coach of your out-of-school team) to determine the most appropriate schools for you to consider. Ask if your coach is willing to contact these schools on your behalf.

2. Meet with your college counselor to determine which schools have a proper mix of your athletic, academic, and other preferences. Do not pick a school solely for athletic reasons. If you get injured, don’t make a team, lose interest in the sport, don’t like the coach, etc., you might be left with a school that doesn’t match any of your interests. You also want to insure that you have a reasonable chance of admission. While athletic ability can increase your chances of admission, only a few students are able to get admitted almost entirely on the basis of their athletic contribution.

3. Contact the coaches at the colleges directly, informing them of your interest and your background. It is usually best to do this through an inquiry letter or email. Determine if the coaches have any interest in you, and if they think you could play on their team.
TIPS FOR DEALING WITH COLLEGE COACHES

1. Remember that a coach’s interests don’t always coincide with your interests. A coach wants to put together the best team he can within the parameters of his or her school’s admission standards. A coach has no assurances that all the students on his or her list will be admitted, as the admission office cannot admit everyone. As a result, coaches recruit students with a balance between athletic and academic ability, while also assessing a student’s interest in the college.

2. Though you may trust and like a coach, receive a coach’s promises with a degree of skepticism. Coaches are not supposed to guarantee admission; admission offices make the decisions. A coach may lead you to believe that you are assured admission or are at the top of the recruitment list, but the coach does not have the final say and, in some cases, the coach may actually be hedging bets (saying the same thing to several players). We have seen our share of students receive a lot of attention from a coach, only to see their name moved down the coach’s list at the last hour or their application denied by the admission office.

3. Most college coaches will want you to declare which college is your first choice. Coaches do not want to waste time, energy, and money pursuing a student-athlete who is unlikely to enroll. Many coaches will even encourage (or pressure) you to apply Early Decision, which ensures that you will attend if admitted. These are big decisions, and you should not rush into a decision. Before making any declarations of interest with a college coach, make sure you discuss your situation with your parents, your Thayer coach, and your college counselor.

NCAA ELIGIBILITY CENTER

Website: https://web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter/common/
Phone: 877-262-1492

The NCAA Eligibility Center was established to determine athletic eligibility for student-athletes in Division I or II sports. Using a formula that includes GPA and SAT/ACT scores, the Eligibility Center identifies whether you meet the requirements necessary to play for an NCAA team. While Thayer students rarely have difficulty meeting the requirements, it is essential to complete the process as early as possible, especially if you are planning to make official visits.

To register for the Eligibility Center, you must complete your registration on the NCAA Eligibility Center website and pay the requested fee. Contact the College Counseling Office so that we may submit your official transcript.

The Eligibility Center also requires you to submit SAT or ACT scores directly from the testing agencies. Please arrange to have your scores sent directly to the Eligibility Center by going to collegeboard.com or act.org and selecting “Send Scores.” The NCAA code is 9999.
It is essential that you take the initiative in contacting coaches and getting on their recruiting radar, rather than waiting for them to find you. The best way to get the process started is by sending an interest letter to the coaches at the schools that interest you. It can be a relatively simple piece that announces who you are, what you’ve done academically and athletically, and why you’re interested in the specific school and athletic team. Here is a sample outline for an inquiry letter:

**Paragraph 1:** Declare your interest in the school and the team. Identify that you attend Thayer. State your position, your number of years on varsity, years as a starter, and any significant accomplishments.

**Paragraph 2:** Identify your club team involvement, summer commitments, and any other athletic accolades.

**Paragraph 3:** Describe your academic credentials including overall GPA and SAT or ACT scores. Mention your academic interests and why you are considering this college.

**Paragraph 4:** List any upcoming games or tournaments in which you will be playing where the coach may be able to see you.

**Paragraph 5:** Thank coach and request further information. State that you’ve included your resume. Write that you’ll plan to get in touch in the near future.
The athletic resume should be sent with the inquiry letter. The resume is a more detailed version of your inquiry letter. Though there is no standard format for the design and content of an athletic resume, you should make sure your resume includes information on all of the following areas:

- Your name, address, email address, phone number
- Academic credentials: GPA, summary of classes, standardized test scores
- Thayer teams for which you play and have played (varsity, junior varsity)
- Club teams for which you play
- Number of years as starter and as a player
- Awards (team, league, state, regional, national)
- Leadership credentials
- Statistics
- Summer and off-season commitments in your sport
- References – high school and club sports coaches with contact information
- College counselor – contact information
Many, if not most, colleges today provide academic support services for qualified students. The student, with support of family and members of the high school community, should determine which option is the best given his or her specific needs. Learning support offices at colleges are available to speak to and meet with families to discuss whether that college can fully support the student. Colleges typically offer one of three different levels of support as listed below:

**Comprehensive/structured programs** - Colleges with comprehensive support programs usually require a separate admissions procedure along with the regular college admissions procedure. For these programs, an updated psycho-educational testing report (no more than three years old), including at minimum a WAIS or WISC test and educational testing, will be required. Early contact and application for these programs is strongly recommended. The good programs are small in size and will accept only as many candidates as they can accommodate.

These colleges typically provide a structured program with required elements, such as a pre-college summer session and regularly scheduled sessions with college learning specialists. They assist students with course selection and in negotiating the various demands of college life. They provide assistance with academic tasks such as writing papers and studying for exams. They assist students in gaining access to needed accommodations, such as books on tape, note-takers, extended time for tests, or petitioning for reduced course loads or waivers of requirements. They provide tutoring and content-based assistance in specific course areas. While responsible use of the program is expected from a college student, these programs do provide a level of structure that can assist a student in making a transition to college.

**Coordinated services** - The most common among colleges. Participation is voluntary and students use what they need, when they need it. There is usually a specialized staff that oversees a wide variety of available services. They also work with faculty and the community at large to insure students get what they need.

**Services** - meets the minimum requirements for compliance with governmental regulations. Typically, colleges that fall into this category do not have a staff member on hand who is trained to work with students requiring additional support. Students need to be prepared to advocate for themselves.

Parents and students should be aware that all colleges and universities today are required to provide supportive services and appropriate accommodations for students with learning disabilities who attend the college. However, the existence of such services does not mean that any specific college or university is a good match for an individual student. The type of services and the college or university personnel who provide these services vary considerably from college to college. In addition, general admissions selectivity remains a factor to be considered. For example, Brown University provides good academic support services for students with learning disabilities, but these students must also meet the extremely high general standards for admission at Brown University.

Many colleges have academic support services that are available to all students. Typical resources are Math labs and Writing labs, often staffed by student peer tutors and drop-in tutorial sessions of study groups. Students are expected to initiate requests for assistance, make and keep appointments with tutors, and take responsibility for seeking help when needed.

Here are several suggestions when searching for college programs for a student with learning disabilities:

1) Start your search early.
2) Have a comprehensive, up-to-date (within the last 2 – 3 years) learning disability evaluation.
3) Be able to demonstrate good understanding of your learning strengths and weaknesses.
4) Be able to show that you are a responsible self-advocate.
5) Visit the colleges, the learning support programs, and ask lots of questions.
If the arts are a large part of your world, then you probably want to consider what role you want this talent to have in your life, and even more specifically, in college. Some students want to continue their involvement in the arts but are not interested in making that a main focus in college. But for others, their passion for their craft propels them to consider a more formalized education and even a career in their area of specialization. The next few pages explore the options tied to both of those paths. If you aren’t sure where you land, consider the differences in educational options at the college level:

Different School Settings

Four Year Colleges/Universities: Attending a college or university means a student will be required to take liberal arts courses outside of their major. There is also diversity of majors in the event a student wishes to be in a setting where he or she could easily make a change in concentration without transferring colleges. Auditions/portfolios may or may not be required. Some universities have professional conservatories or art school programs within their institutions. Auditions/portfolios are required for such specialized programs.

Examples include: Boston Univ., Carnegie Mellon Univ., Florida State Univ., New York Univ., Oberlin College, Syracuse University, University of Hartford, Goucher College, Sarah Lawrence College.

Four Year Performing and Visual Art Schools: These colleges only offer degrees in arts-related areas, but typically require some liberal arts courses to graduate. Small and comprised of students with similar interests, there is less flexibility if students lose interest in his or her major.

Examples include: Fashion Institute of Technology, Maine College of Art, Otis College of Art and Design, School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Conservatories: Conservatories are professional schools that focus solely on the teaching of the performing arts. Typically, this is done with very little, if any, liberal arts coursework. Students who take this route are already far advanced in their craft and have often worked with private instructors for several years.

Examples include: American Conservatory Theater, Berklee College of Music, Boston Conservatory, Julliard.

Vocational/Technical Colleges: These institutions exist as a way for a student to gain job-training in a specific field. The end result of these programs tends to be associates degrees, certificates, or diplomas. Some students will go on to acquire a four year degree, but often will use the career-focused education to get right out in the work force.

Examples include: The Art Institutes, Community Colleges.
Different Degree Options

Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)

This degree option is perfect for students who wish to pursue a broad range of liberal arts coursework in addition to an in depth study of their art concentration. Close to half of the coursework will be in the arts, and the other half, if not more, will be in the liberal arts and sciences. This option works well for students who may wish to double major in another field. Often times B.A. art majors do not need to sit for an audition or submit a portfolio to be admitted to that major.

Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.)

This degree option is for those students who want to train as to be professional artists. 70% of the coursework will be in the fine arts whereas 30% will be in the liberal arts. An audition or portfolio is usually required and plays a significant part in the admission decision. Many colleges discourage a double major because of the large amount of time that will need to be devoted to practicing the craft (art studio, music practice room, etc).

*Within the different areas of the arts, you may find different labels for the B.F.A degree. For example, music has the Bachelor of Music (BM), and Architecture has the Bachelor of Architecture (B. Arch). The B. Arch degree 5 years, to complete.*

Remember that art schools vary in selectivity as much as any other colleges. Some art schools are highly selective, and expect to see top level academic credentials as well as significant artistic talent and experience. Other art schools put an emphasis on demonstrated artistic ability, but are less concerned with academic achievement level and test scores. Other art schools are career and vocationally oriented, offering certificate or two-year degree programs on an open-admission basis for any high school graduate.
Have you done a significant amount of visual art work while at Thayer Academy? Whether you plan to major in art or not, we encourage you to create a portfolio of your best work as part of your college application. Colleges view serious work in the arts as a positive accomplishment, even for a student who plans to major in English or Biology. *That being said, it is important to check with each college to make sure this type of additional submission is welcome.* What you have done in the arts may set you apart from other applicants, demonstrating your unique talents and skills. It is important, however, to present your work in a professional manner.

If you plan to earn a **Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree (BFA)**, pay close attention to the details of the portfolio as outlined by the college, as your portfolio will be a significant factor in the admission decision. Generally, the art department will require pieces that fall into specific categories. Work with a member of the Visual Arts Department at Thayer to determine which of your pieces best match what the colleges are looking for. Thayer provides additional support in the form of photographing your work and helping you to organize it in an appropriate manner.

If you plan to earn a **Bachelor of Art Degree (BA)** in the Visual Arts or in another academic area, your portfolio will not be weighed heavily in your admission decision. It may or may not be formally evaluated by the art department faculty at a college, but it can help you to distinguish yourself within the applicant pool.

*Thoughts on Portfolio Submission:*
Most colleges will be looking for a selection of slides or digital images documenting your work, usually about 5 - 20 examples of your work. Keep in mind that colleges have different specifications. For example, some colleges may require original work while others may require digital submission of your work.

If using slides, label each with your name, title of the piece, and dimensions. Number each slide. Attached should be a separate typed slide description sheet that references each slide in numerical order. Include title, identification of media, size, and a brief description of the work.
Other thoughts for art majors:

- Each fall, usually in November, there is a National Portfolio Review Day at an art college in Boston. This is a free event for any interested student who wants to bring a selection of up to 15 works to be informally reviewed by representatives from major art and design schools. We recommend that you attend this event, but be prepared for long lines.

- Attend a summer program at a college level art school prior to your senior year. This may help you decide whether an art school environment, or a liberal arts college with some arts courses, would be the better choice for you.

- In this electronic age, there are opportunities to create and submit a portfolio electronically. More and more colleges are linking up with www.slideroom.com through the Common Application to allow for submission of portfolios. Always check with the colleges to which you plan to apply to identify the method that is preferable to them.

- Keep in mind that even if you are going to major in art, your academic coursework is still very important to a college. You should take five academic courses your senior year and study hard.
The following suggestions are intended as guidelines for any student who has excelled in music (vocal or instrumental) while at Thayer Academy. Not all colleges will have the time to listen to or review additional submissions. Check with each college individually to see if they welcome this extra information.

If you plan to earn a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree (BFA), most schools will require an audition and perhaps an interview. Keep in mind that appearance and attitude matter. Pay close attention to the components of the audition as outlined by the college, as each college may want something different. Some colleges will be very specific in terms of the piece they want you to prepare, while others will only provide guidelines. Work with your private instructor or a member of the music faculty at Thayer to prepare. In the event you cannot audition in person, some colleges may allow you to submit a recording.

If you plan to earn a Bachelor of Art Degree (BA) in music or in another academic area, auditions will most likely not be a part of your application. Although a formal evaluation by the music department faculty may or may not take place, exhibiting your talent in the form of a recording can help you to distinguish yourself within the applicant pool.

Regardless of your intended major, follow the guidelines below in preparing your recording:

**What Colleges Want:**

1. Ideally, a college would prefer a professionally recording. If this is not possible, do what you can to use high quality equipment and record in an acoustically appropriate location. If you are not majoring in music, your own recording will be sufficient.

2. If your recording is in lieu of a live audition, limit the number of pieces you record to what the college requests. As a non-music major, also limit the number of pieces, but try to include some variety so you can reveal your versatility and talent. Be careful not to make it too long.

3. The most common way to submit a recording is through the slideroom website which is linked to the Common Application. Also, some students will create a youtube page and include the link in their application or in an email to the admissions representative working with applicants from Thayer.

4. Create a music resume which includes the following: private instruction, musical accomplishments (both at Thayer and outside of the Thayer community), awards won, etc.
The following suggestions are intended as guidelines for any student who has excelled in theatre while at Thayer Academy and plans to major in theatre (acting, musical theatre, technical theatre, costume design, etc.). Not all colleges will have the time to review additional submissions. Check with each college individually to see if they welcome this extra information.

If you plan to earn a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree (BFA), most schools will require an audition, interview, or a portfolio, depending on your focus. Pay close attention to the components of the audition or portfolio as outlined by the college, as each college may want something different. Some colleges will be very specific in terms of the monologue they want you to prepare, while others will only provide guidelines. Work with your instructors to prepare. You should also plan to submit an 8x10 photograph (head shot) along with your application. Not all colleges require it, but it may help your evaluators to remember your face. This picture should be taken by a professional if possible.

If you plan to earn a Bachelor of Art Degree (BA) in theatre or in another academic area, auditions will most likely not be a part of your application. Although a formal evaluation by the theatre department faculty won’t take place, exhibiting your talent in the form of a resume can help you to distinguish yourself within the applicant pool.

**Thoughts for acting majors:**

Auditions are conducted either on the college’s campus or regionally along with a number of other colleges in locations such as New York, Boston, and Los Angeles. They usually take place during the winter months. Some colleges don’t allow you to set up an audition until your application has been received by the Office of Admission, so we suggest you apply to colleges that require an audition by the end of November. That way you can secure an audition date and location that works best for you. Check with each college for their individual policies.

Punctuality, appearance, and demeanor are all a big part of the audition. Be on time, look the part, and be prepared.

Always be prepared to articulate your passion and desire to major in the dramatic arts. Brief interviews may take place after an audition.
The following suggestions are intended as guidelines for any student who has excelled in architecture while at Thayer Academy and plans to major in it.

If you plan to earn a Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch), prepare to spend at least 5 years in pursuit of the degree and an additional 3 years or so completing the required internship. Upon completion, students must sit for the Architect Registration Examination (ARE) and apply for licensure.

If you plan to earn a Bachelor of Art Degree (BA) or Bachelor of Science Degree (BS) in architecture, that’s a great foundation for graduate study in a variety of fields, including architecture, business, interior design, etc.

**Portfolios**

About half of all architecture programs require a portfolio with an application for admission. At Thayer, we are fortunate to offer architecture classes and therefore have faculty in place to support the development of an appropriate portfolio. Colleges may have different requirements, so be sure to check the specifics of each school’s portfolio requirements about a year in advance.

Generally speaking, colleges will be looking for about 12-16 pieces in a digital format or in their original form. There will probably be a mix of freehand drawings (landscapes, figure drawings, architectural structures, etc) and three-dimensional pieces (sculpture, architectural models, etc) required. If photographs are required, be sure to use a high quality camera so your work can be represented as well as possible. Overall presentation is very important, so be sure to work with an adult on this.

Each fall, usually in November, there is a National Portfolio Review Day at an art college in Boston. This is a free event for any interested student who wants to bring a selection of up to 15 works to be informally reviewed by representatives from major art and design schools. We recommend that you attend this event, but be prepared for long lines.
Occasionally, students embark on the college search process and realize that they are not quite ready to take that next step. Perhaps they need to take a break to recharge (i.e. spend a year working), sometimes they want to broaden their horizons before committing to college for four years (i.e. travel), or some aren’t happy with their college options and want another year to improve their academic record (i.e. a Post Graduate year at a boarding school). Regardless of the reason, this can be a wonderful and sometimes life changing opportunity for students. Because this trend has become more popular over the past several years, there are more viable choices for students than in the past. And contrary to what you might think, colleges are very accepting of students who take this alternative route. When the students do ultimately matriculate, they tend to be more mature, focused, and energized about their studies. They also offer a different perspective in the classroom.

Below is a short list of resources to help you and your family explore this option. If you are interested in following this path to college, please speak with your college counselor.

Companies or individuals who help families explore the options:

- Time Out Associates
  - BOB GILPIN
  - Milton, MA
  - (617) 698-8977

- Center for Interim Programs
  - HOLLY BULL & JOANNA LAZAREK
  - Cambridge, MA
  - (617) 547-0980

A sampling of programs (your college counselor can give you more if interested):

- The Dynamy Internship Year
- National Outdoor Leadership School
- AFS Intercultural Programs
- AmeriCorps
- City Year Boston
- Institute for Experiential Learning
- Global Quest
- Semester at Sea
College is expensive. It is a major investment, and one that usually pays off down the road. But for many families, it is difficult – even impossible – to cover the full cost of college tuition and living expenses. As a rule, it is important not to dismiss a school solely because of its price tag; the “sticker price” of a school is not necessarily the amount that you will need to pay. All colleges provide some type of financial assistance to ease the burden for families that need it, and to reward some students who have earned it.

In general there are two categories of financial aid:

(1) Need based – grant money, loans, and work study awarded based on your family’s financial situation and the feasibility of paying for college.

(2) Merit based – scholarships awarded based on talent and ability in academics or extracurricular accomplishments.

How do you apply for need-based financial aid?

FAFSA: The Free Application for Federal Aid. All colleges require this form. It determines your eligibility for federal financial assistance. Some colleges use it exclusively to determine your EFC (estimated family contribution). It determines “household” income only, which can include a step-parent and exclude a non-custodial parent. It does not ask for home equity data. Based on the data provided through the FAFSA, a Student Aid Report (SAR) is generated, and most colleges use the results of that form to help determine the financial assistance that you will receive.

File your FAFSA online at www.fafsa.ed.gov anytime after October 1st. Beginning with the 2016-2017 school year, students will report income information from an earlier tax year. For example, on the 2017-2018 FAFSA, families will report their 2015 income information, rather than their 2016 income information. Because of this change, most families will be able to download your tax information into your FAFSA form. Make sure you submit the FAFSA before the financial aid deadlines at the schools to which you are applying.

CSS/PROFILE: Some colleges (including many private colleges) require this form, which provides more detailed financial information than the FAFSA, including assets such as the value of your home. Check each college to see if it requires this form. Using the information you provide on the Profile form, the College Scholarship Service prepares a Need Analysis Report that colleges use to shape your Estimated Family Contribution and, thus, the college’s financial aid package.

Pre-register for this form at www.profileonline.collegeboard.com/index.jsp sometime in the fall of senior year and file the rest of the form before your financial aid deadlines.
**Divorced-Separated Parent’s Statement:** A supplement to the PROFILE for the non-custodial parent requested by many colleges. Copies of the completed form should be sent directly to the colleges’ financial aid offices.

**Business/Farm Supplement:** A supplement to the PROFILE required by some colleges if a parent is self-employed or a farmer. This form should be sent directly to the colleges’ financial aid offices.

**Institutional Forms:** a few schools still use their own forms to inquire about financial information. Check with each school to determine the appropriate forms to complete.

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**CALCULATING YOUR FINANCIAL AID AWARD**

**Cost of Attendance (COA):** this total includes a college’s tuition, room and board, fees, books, and travel. It will vary, of course, with each college.

**Net-Price Calculator:** All colleges must provide a net-price calculator on their website which allows families to estimate their COA using standardized inputs (i.e. savings, family size, etc) and the college's financial aid and merit aid methodology. This tool can usually be found in the Financial Aid area of a college web site (although not always easy to find).

**Estimated Family Contribution (EFC):** this is the amount that the college expects your family (the student and the parents) can pay for the upcoming school year. It is based on the data your family provides in the required forms.

**Parental Contribution:** is determined by your family’s net worth, a sum of income and assets. Typically, parents are expected to contribute 5% of their income and assets towards college expenses. Allowances are made for the number of family members, children in college, debts, necessary expenses, taxes, and special circumstances (i.e. illness, older parents approaching retirement, special education needs, etc.). There is no standardized way for colleges to treat the income and assets of step-parents and non-custodial parents; check with each school to understand its expectation.

**Student Contribution:** is determined by a review of the student’s earnings and assets. You are typically expected to contribute 35% of your personal savings and earnings. There is also an expectation that you will contribute a reasonable amount of money from summer work, whether you work or not.
VII. FINANCIAL AID

With your admission letter, or shortly after, colleges will send you a financial aid letter, which will outline the amount of financial aid the school is offering. Most colleges provide a financial aid package that consists of:

1. **Grant money** – these are funds typically provided by the college (and sometimes by the government) which you do NOT need to pay back. Sometimes, merit-based grant money is also included in a predominantly need-based financial aid award.

2. **Loans** – these are typically federally-funded loans (Perkins or Stafford), with low interest rates, which you don’t need to begin repaying until after you graduate. These loans are usually in the student’s name, though loans are also available for parents to assume as well, if desired.

3. **Work-study** – students may also be expected to earn a portion of their college expenses through some form of work-study program on campus. These are designated jobs at the school (i.e., working in the library, food service, athletic center, etc.) that allow students to work part-time. The earnings from these jobs are expected to go toward the costs of college.

Inevitably you will find that colleges can arrive at different EFC totals, because they include different figures or make different allowances; likewise, colleges will probably offer different financial aid packages, either in its composition (the balance between grant and self-help money) or its total value. As you apply for financial aid, you should become knowledgeable about how each school calculates your financial need and how each school constructs a standard financial aid package.

Here’s some terminology to help you understand what colleges may tell you about their awarding procedure:

- **Meeting 100% of demonstrated need**: the college is able to provide enough funding to cover the difference between the COA and your EFC.

- **Gapping**: some colleges do not meet every student’s financial need. Instead, they will provide you partial funding to meet some of your family’s need. This is called “gapping” because there will be a gap left between your EFC and the COA that the college will not help you cover.

- **Need blind**: colleges that are need-blind make admission decisions without regard for the financial situation of the applicant’s family. The admission process is separate from the financial aid process. Your admission decision is based on your merit, while your financial aid is determined by your family’s financial need.

- **Need aware**: colleges that are need-aware may make admission decisions with some consideration of the family’s financial situation; financial aid decisions may also take into account the strength of the student (i.e., a stronger applicant may be awarded a better financial aid package than a weaker applicant – see “gapping” above for more information). In most cases, this will affect the last 10% of the class accepted, or any student placed on a wait list may learn that no funds are available.
Unlike need-based financial aid, merit-based aid is not awarded on the basis of your family’s financial status. Some merit scholarships are granted by foundations and can be used at any college. Some colleges offer scholarships that can only be used at their institution. The money can vary from a small amount to cover books to a medium-sized amount to full-ride scholarships. Merit awards typically target a certain type of student, depending on the types of students that a college wishes to attract. You may find competitive merit scholarships in the following areas:

- Academic excellence
- Leadership
- Specific academic fields
- Racial background
- Athletics

At some colleges, you need to apply for merit scholarships directly. Check with the college to determine the list of scholarships available, and determine what the application process requires.

Some colleges will also offer merit scholarship funds based on the quality of your candidacy. This is a way to discount the tuition and attract students that the college desires. You do not have to apply separately for these scholarships, as the admission office determines who is worthy based on the application for admission.

The other sources for merit-based scholarships are foundations or private companies, which require separate applications and essays. Identifying these types of scholarships is time-consuming, and the competition is usually tough. Do not count on outside scholarships to be your main ticket to college. The financial aid that colleges provide – whether need-based or merit-based – remains the most common means of supporting students. However, if you are interested in researching outside scholarships, here are the best ways to approach it:

- Check frequently with the college counseling office; we get mailings for scholarships and keep file folders of them. Many of these opportunities tend to be local ones. We post all scholarships (of which we are directly notified) on Naviance under Scholarships.

- Go to your local library, which should keep records of scholarship opportunities, both local and national. In addition, the basement of the Boston Public Library houses the Higher Education Information Center (HEIC), where electronic databases of thousands of local and national scholarships are open to the general public. You can input information about you and your family and be matched with scholarships for which you may qualify.

- Use a college scholarship search web site to filter your criteria and get a list of scholarships to which you can apply. These are generally national in scope. We list a few good sites at the end of this section. Naviance also has this resource under the Scholarships tab. The information comes from Sallie Mae. NEVER USE A SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH THAT REQUIRES YOU TO PAY.
If you are applying to a school under a binding, Early Decision program and the financial aid package is important in determining your ability to attend, take a few things into consideration.

First, by applying Early Decision somewhere you are restricting your ability to compare financial packages from various schools.

On the other hand, we have found that most colleges offer adequate funding for families demonstrating need. In a worst-case scenario, if the college is unable to meet your demonstrated need, then that can be grounds for breaking the Early Decision contract, freeing you to follow through on applications to other schools. Please also note, however, that the college involved will typically rescind the offer of admission.
VII. FINANCIAL AID

QUESTIONS TO ASK COLLEGES ABOUT FINANCIAL AID

- Which forms does the college require to determine financial aid eligibility?
- What percentage of students is on financial aid? Need based? Merit based?
- What percentage of students had their full need met?
- What does the typical financial aid package look like? What percentage of the package tends to be grant vs. self-help (loan and work-study)?
- What is a typical work-study commitment on campus?
- What is the average indebtedness for a graduating student?
- Does the financial aid process and packaging change with each year (i.e., does the grant award get reduced while loan is increased)?
- What is the policy towards non-custodial parents and step-parents? Are they expected to hand in any forms? What income and assets are considered? Are they expected to contribute?
- Can the financial aid award apply to study abroad?
- How does the financial aid office handle outside scholarships? Are they credited against the loan portion of your aid, the grant portion, or the family contribution?
- Is the financial aid contingent on a certain academic performance in college?
- What merit-based financial aid (scholarships) is available through the college?
- Does a student need to apply for specific merit-based scholarships, or are they automatically awarded using the admission application materials?
VII. FINANCIAL AID

FINANCIAL AID CHECKLIST & TIPS

✓ Speak with admission officers and, when possible, financial aid officers at the colleges where you plan to apply; inquire about the financial aid process and requirements.

✓ Gather the records you will need to complete financial aid forms (usually includes tax returns, W-2’s, etc.)

✓ Pre-register for the PROFILE in the fall of the senior year. This will open your account, which you can then complete. Go to collegeboard.com to register and complete the application.

✓ Begin completing the FAFSA after October 1st but before deadlines posted by each of the colleges (usually in late January or February).

✓ Keep a list of each college’s admission deadline and financial aid deadline. As with the admission deadlines, make sure you meet financial aid deadlines. If you miss them, you will likely be bumped to a lower-priority list, jeopardizing your chances of receiving financial assistance.

✓ Do not use scholarship searches that charge fees; they are often scams.

✓ Think about applying to a few “economic financial aid safety schools” – a school that meets your academic needs and is affordable. This is often a public university, or a college where you are assured strong merit-based financial assistance based on your academic record.

✓ Wait to receive financial aid awards from all your schools before making a final choice on which one to accept. If you have any questions about your financial aid package – if something is unclear or if it does not meet your needs – contact the financial aid office. Inquire about how they calculated your EFC and your final package. Discuss any special circumstances that they may have overlooked. Financial aid offices can adjust your award if there is new, justifying information. You will need to provide concrete information – not just a vague statement. Most colleges do not negotiate the financial aid offer, or match the offers from other schools, but they are generally willing to consider your situation and try to meet your needs.
USEFUL FINANCIAL AID WEBSITES

**fafsa.ed.gov**
Complete the FAFSA form

**collegescorecard.ed.gov**
A website created by the US Department of Education which helps families compare colleges from a financial standpoint, including which schools will provide the best value relative to cost.

**profileonline.collegeboard.com/index.html**
Preregister for and complete the CSS Profile form

**Fastweb.com, Collegeboard.com, and Pettersons.com**
Search for and apply to scholarships matched to your profile

**Finaid.org**
A good general site to guide you through financial aid process

**studentaid.ed.gov**
How to pay for college, search for scholarships, and avoid scams
The following are thoughts from high school graduates in New England and beyond who completed the college admission process this past year. Their thoughts were compiled from the NACAC e-list. Here’s the advice they want to pass along to the students following in their footsteps:

“Visit your college counselors and get to know them.”

“Organization – You have no idea what a difference it makes. Schedules, folders… anything.”

“Start early. Things can take longer than you think.”

“To set aside time each week of your senior year to dedicate to college things. Don’t delay…Do it TODAY!”

“There are a lot of colleges so take your time and be picky, chances are you’ll be able to find what you want. Also, there are a lot of unique colleges. Take the time to look around a lot.”

“College visits!! Ask questions. Meet with faculty.”

“VISIT. I went to my number one school and disliked it the minute I walked on campus. Campuses are the best way to get a feel for the school.”

“Use the resources you have! If you can’t visit, look on the web site, talk to current students. Learn as much as you can.”

“Start apps ASAP-get them done early no matter what the deadline is.”

“Pay attention to deadlines and stuff. Put a lot of effort into your essay.”

“You don’t have to apply anywhere ED! Only do it if you are totally sure.”

“Double checking requirements before it was too late. For instance, [one school] requires 3 SAT Subject Tests which I hadn’t realized until it was too late for me to have any scores in by the deadline.”

“Pick the number of colleges to apply to based on you, not your friends.”

“Don’t apply anywhere just because your best friend/significant other/dog is applying. That may not be the place for you.”

“Have back-up schools you really like to take off pressure of getting into your #1 school.”

“Enjoy bragging. This is one of the few times in your life where they want you to brag.”

“I wish I hadn’t gotten so stressed out about it. I made myself ill the first semester.”

“Stay in contact with the representatives of your #1 and #2 choice schools. Call them with questions so they get to know who you are.”

“Keep in mind that your parents are as anxious about this as you are. (Maybe more). Be kind.”

“The more you remember the big picture, (i.e. I will go to a good school because all the schools I’m applying to are good), the calmer you’ll be and all of this “college frenzy” won’t be that big of a deal. It’s only a moderately big deal!”

“That it’s not the end of the world if you don’t get into your first choice.”

“The process is hard, time consuming and stressful, nobody will deny that. But when it’s all over, you’ll appreciate every bit of it.”
INDEPENDENT COLLEGE COUNSELING

Thayer Academy is fortunate to be able to devote human resources exclusively to the process of college counseling, and families are strongly encouraged to use those resources to their fullest extent. That being said, some families may decide to seek additional support from Independent College Counselors or companies who specialize in college counseling.

Although it’s not something that families need in order to have a successful college admission experience, some students may find it helpful to have additional guidance. When a third party is employed by the family for this purpose, that does not excuse the student from maintaining regular contact with his or her Thayer college counselor. It is vital for the College Counseling Office to be aware of, at the very least, how the student is progressing and which colleges comprise the student’s college list. This communication will help to insure that students are being advised appropriately.
1. Be visible in the college counseling office; attend meetings once every two or three weeks in the senior year until your applications are complete. Open communication is the key to a successful college process.

2. Save everything. If you throw it away we can almost guarantee you will need it sometime in the future. Be sure to save everything sent to you from the College Board regarding your SAT registration and scores.

3. Use the same name on every document you send to colleges. For example, if you use your formal name on your SATs but use a nickname on your application, those two pieces of information may never match up and your application will be considered incomplete.

4. Fill out your registrations for SAT Reasoning / SAT Subject Tests the same way every time. Occasionally inserting a middle initial can confuse a computer and cause you grief.

5. If you have a special talent - music, drama, athletics, physics, creative writing - pursue that interest with each college. This is not the time to be modest.


7. Develop a filing system for each college; create check-lists with deadlines, things to be done, etc.

8. Use the resources of this handbook. It contains the answers to many of your questions.

9. Read the application instructions and requirements for each college thoroughly. Some colleges have very specific requirements such as a required SAT Subject Test, a required number of years of a particular academic subject, special portfolio requirements for art school candidates. Knowing about and adhering to these specific requirements is your responsibility.

10. Treat each application as if that school were your first choice. Colleges pay attention to your level of interest. They want to admit students who want them. At the same time, don’t fall into the trap of telling every college that they are your first choice.

11. Meet all deadlines. Deadlines are a serious matter. Where possible, submit applications early.

12. Be kind to your teachers. If you need teacher recommendations, choose one or two teachers who know you well. Ask them if they would write a recommendation for you, and supply them with forms (if provided). Make these requests early, and make sure the teacher knows what the deadline is.

13. There is a college for every student who graduates from Thayer Academy. If you pay attention to the guidelines in this handbook, you will be in a position to attend a college of your choice.
1) You have the right to request information from colleges and universities without feeling high pressure tactics to persuade you to apply or enroll.

2) You have the right to accurate information about each institution's academic programs, facilities, and faculty, along with each institution's retention and graduation statistics.

3) You have the right to the names of all accrediting, certifying, or licensing organizations for each institution.

4) You have the right to complete information about all direct and miscellaneous expenses, the types of non need-based and need-based financial assistance provided, and the methods by which eligibility is determined.

5) You have the right to accurate information about all aspects of campus safety, including institutional crime statistics.

6) You have the responsibility to assure that all required items necessary for the completion of your application are received by each institution within the required timeframe.

7) Once admitted to a college or university, you have the right to wait until May 1 to respond to an offer of admission and financial aid (unless you have been admitted under a binding Early Decision program).

8) You have the right to request in writing an extension to May 1 without penalty if an institution requires an earlier commitment (unless you have been admitted under a binding Early Decision program).

9) You have the right to historical information about prior waiting list activity including the number wait-listed, the number ultimately admitted and the availability of housing and financial aid. Colleges and universities cannot require a deposit from you to maintain your place on a waiting list.

10) You have the responsibility to submit a deposit to only one institution—and upon submitting that deposit to withdraw from all other institutions to which you have been admitted.
TOP TEN THINGS PARENTS SHOULD REMEMBER ABOUT THE COLLEGE SEARCH PROCESS

FROM MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

It is good, of course, that students and parents approach this process jointly, but we all know that at its best, the process itself can prepare students for the independence that they will experience in college. The following list contains some possible symptoms of parental overinvolvement.

10. **Remember that this process is not about you.** No matter how similar your children may be to you, they need to make their own decisions and observations.

9. **Support and encouragement are more appropriate than pressure and unsolicited advice.** Allow your children to seek you out and restrain yourself from imposing your viewpoint upon them.

8. **Do not use the words “we” or “our” when referring to your children’s application process.** Those little pronouns are surefire indicators that you have become too involved.

7. **Help them prepare but let them perform.** Encourage them to sleep well and put thought into a college visit, but once on campus, step back and let them drive the experience. This is good practice for the next phase of their lives—adulthood.

6. **Encourage your children to make their own college appointments, phone calls, and e-mails.** When a family arrives at an admissions office, it’s important that the student approach the front desk, not the parents. We notice! Having control over those details gives them a sense of ownership. Don’t be tempted by the excuse that “I’m just saving them time” or “they are too busy”—students will learn to appreciate all the steps it takes to make big things happen if they do them.

5. **Allow your children to ask the questions.** They have their own set of issues that are important to them.

4. **Prepare your children for disappointment.** For many students this is the first time they could face bad news. Remind them there is no perfect school and that admissions decisions do not reflect on their worth as people or your worth as parents.

3. **Never complete any portion of the college application—yes, even if it is just busy work.** That also goes for friends, siblings, counselors, and secretaries. For many colleges, that overstep would be viewed as a violation of the honor policy at the school.

2. **Do not let stereotypes or outdated information steer your children away from schools in which they would otherwise have an interest.** Times have changed and so have colleges.

And the #1 Thing for Parents to Remember about the College Search Process is:

1. **Never, ever, during a college visit buy a sweatshirt or t-shirt from the bookstore in your size—it’s a dead giveaway!**
The mission of Thayer Academy is to inspire a diverse community of students to moral, intellectual, aesthetic, and physical excellence so that each may rise to honorable achievement and contribute to the common good.