



WESTMINSTER

SCHOOL AT OAK MOUNTAIN

The Path  
Westminster College Guidance Program  
2017-18

# THE PATH

## Components of The Path

The Westminster college guidance program seeks to help parents and students see the admissions process as a path by which students come to know who they are, how to face reality, and how to launch out of the home and into the freedom of adulthood.

Here are the components of the plan for this year:

1. **College Events:** A series of discussions to help parents and students start thinking about life's next step.
  - a. 11th/12th Grade college Admissions Panel at 7:00 on August 29 **in S-180**
  - b. 11th/12th Parents Panel on the college process at 7:00 on September 28 in the upper school atrium
2. **The Journey:** A step-by-step checklist of what you need to do and when.
3. **Readiness:** There will be meetings during the enrichment period to help students work through the College Path. We will devote time to the following for students:
  - a. Decision Grid-factors to take in to consideration when choosing a college
  - b. Financial Planning-information on how to pay for college
  - c. The Application Process-looking at what it takes to apply to colleges
  - d. Scholarships-familiarity with the different types of scholarships offered
  - e. Standardized Testing-what test to take and when to take it
  - f. College Essay-writing a better essay for a prospective college

## What can you expect from your college advisor?

The advisor will walk you through how to get ready for college and how to qualify for college. He will know what colleges you are interested in and what majors you are considering, as well as your academic credentials, standardized tests scores, community involvement, reputation in the community, and personal values. Your college advisor is an advocate that will fight for you, who rests in the fact that God has a plan for you, and at the same time is energized to see that plan unfold over time.

The advisor will also encourage you to pursue the path that God has laid out for you. He will ensure that you are considering your own identity and God's calling as you make college decisions. Your advisor will expose you to different colleges and universities as well as the different facets of college life. He will make sure you are on track in the admissions process by arranging meetings throughout the year to keep track of your progress.

Additionally, parents are a vital element in college decisions. So your advisor will listen to them as well. He will keep your parents informed of how you are progressing through the college admissions process. Parents will be provided with information and helpful tools to assist them as they make plans for your departure.

Finally, it is your advisor's job to make sure each prospective school knows about the unique character of Westminster. He will establish relationships with admissions counselors and will make sure all relevant colleges and universities have an up-to-date profile of the WSOM.

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## The Journey to College: A Check List

### **Freshman Year: Looking in the Mirror**

1. Take a **Personality Test** through the enrichment period in the first nine weeks. Take a look at the [Knightly Herald article by Abigail Mathis](#)
2. Attend seminars during enrichment period to discuss the personality test results.
3. Get involved in co-curricular activities to see what areas you would like to commit to over high school.
4. Attend decision-making seminar "Developing Identity" during the enrichment period.
5. Attend decision-making seminar "Facing Reality" during the enrichment period.
6. Read "Five Kinds of Colleges" on the website during the enrichment period
7. Begin your résumé. For an example of one click [here](#).

### **Sophomore Year: Facing Reality**

1. Continue building your résumé. For an example, click [here](#).
2. Take the PSAT/NMSQT on October 11 (for more information see Standardized Tests Page).
3. Work on writing the college essay during the enrichment period.
4. See the GPA worksheet handout and link.
5. Take **ACT** on June 9, register by May 4
6. Take **SAT** on June 2, register by May 3

## Junior Year: Narrowing the Options

1. Attend 11th/12th Grade College Admissions Panel at 7:00 on August 29 **in S-180**
2. Attend 11th/12th Parents Panel on the college process at 7:00 on September 28 in the upper school atrium.
3. Prepare for the SAT, ACT, PSAT/NMSQT during the enrichment period.
4. Continue building your résumé. For an example, click [here](#).
5. Take either the ACT or the SAT at least twice.
  - ACT dates and sign-up deadlines
    - test on September 9, register by August 4
    - test on October 28, register by September 22
    - test on December 9, register by November 3
    - test on February 10, register by January 12
    - test on April 14, register by March 9
    - test on June 9, register by May 4
    - test on July 14, register by June 15
  - SAT dates and registration deadlines
    - test on August 28, register by July 28
    - test on October 7, register by September 8
    - test on November 4, register by October 5
    - test on December 2, register by November 23
    - test on March 10, register by February 9
    - test on May 5, register by April 6
    - test on June 2, register by May 3
6. Attend a career trip, possibly shadowing a potential occupation.
7. Attend on-campus visits from various college representatives.
8. Attend one of the following college fairs.
  - NACAC College Fair at Jefferson Convention Complex on September 17
  - The Christian University and College Fair at Briarwood High School on October 26
8. Go on the College Tour, September 11-15. Take a look at the Knightly Herald Article by Ethan Shaw.
9. Schedule a personal college guidance meeting with Mr. Herring by May 1 and be prepared to discuss the above plus the following:
  - Co-curricular activities
  - Leadership roles
  - Making contributions in high school
10. Take the PSAT/NMSQT on October 11 (at Westminster for no charge)
11. Continue to make college visits second semester and into the summer as needed.

## Senior Year: Making the Decision

1. Keep up your grades in all of your classes!
2. Attend 11th/12th Grade College Admissions Panel at 7:00 on August 29 **in S-180**.
3. Attend 11th/12th Parents Panel on the college process at 7:00 on September 28 in the upper school atrium.
4. Schedule an admissions checklist meeting with Mr. Herring by October 5.
5. Accomplish the following before the meeting:

- Read the Common Application page on the school website, if your college choices are a part of the Common Application. To see if your prospective college is included click here.
  - Select 3-5 preferred colleges.
  - Create an account with each college or through the Common Application.
  - Request a transcript. It must be signed by you and a parent if you are under the age of 18.
  - Request teacher recommendations.
  - Finalize your résumé.
  - List acceptance deadlines.
  - List housing deadlines.
  - List scholarship deadlines.
  - List college ministry opportunities.
4. Register for the SAT and/or ACT by September 8, including any remaining SAT subject tests that you need to take. Take either the ACT or the SAT at least twice.
- ACT dates and sign-up deadlines
- test on September 9, register by August 4
  - test on October 28, register by September 22
  - test on December 9, register by November 3
  - test on February 10, register by January 12
  - test on April 14, register by March 9
  - test on June 9, register by May 4
  - test on July 14, register by June 15
- SAT dates and registration deadlines
- test on August 28, register by July 28
  - test on October 7, register by September 8
  - test on November 4, register by October 5
  - test on December 2, register by November 23
  - test on March 10, register by February 9
  - test on May 5, register by April 6
  - test on June 2, register by May 3
5. If helpful and appropriate, attend a college fair.
- NACAC College Fair at Jefferson Convention Complex on September 17
  - The Christian University and College Fair at Briarwood High School on October 26
6. Attend the résumé seminar during the enrichment period
7. Be aware that early decision deadlines are between October 1 and November 1.
8. Usually applications need to be completed by October or November for early action, but check with the colleges where you are applying for a specific date.
9. Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which opens in October
10. Sign up for your final meeting with Mr. Herring by March 1.

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## Painting Your Self-portrait: A Guide to College Admissions

This document will provide you with a general understanding of what colleges are looking for. Remember that some schools like Alabama or Auburn emphasize GPA and standardized test scores more than other criteria listed. Others like Furman and Davidson use the GPA and standardized test scores as a benchmark for admissions and then turn to the essay, recommendation, and community involvement. Once you have read this document, reread the "5000 Choices" pages to see what different colleges require.

**Developing Your Self-portrait:** College admission is a competitive process that is won by demonstrating uniqueness and distinction. Colleges are looking to create a diverse population of extraordinary students. Thus, simply seeking to portray yourself as the best student may not be as helpful as demonstrating that you are different from the crowd.

Don't see this as a game to win, but as a path to discover where God wants you to serve in life's next phase. With this perspective you might actually discover the process is quite edifying.

**An Objective Portrait:** There are certain numbers that serve as metrics that schools use to determine how you measure up against other students. Remember, these numbers may tell the score, they do not tell your story. You need a more complete portrait to do that.

1. Grade Point Average (GPA): This is developed by averaging your semester grades earned during your freshman through senior year. At Westminster we weight provide a weighted GPA.
2. Standardized Tests Scores (ACT, SAT or PSAT)

**The Portrait of a Westminster Graduate:** As a graduate of Westminster, you have attended a school where graduates average a 29 on the ACT, students are required to study logic and rhetoric. You have written and defended a Junior and Senior Thesis. You have read the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Inferno*, excerpts from the *Lives* of Plutarch and excerpts from the *Federalist and Anti-federalists Papers*. You have studied Latin since third grade and have learned history and literature through the Harkness method, which has forced you to go beyond memorizing facts to develop your own opinions about the issues you have confronted. For help with understanding the distinction of a Westminster graduate take a look at the [Westminster Graduate Profile](#).

Colleges are looking to see how distinctive your high school was in at least the following areas:

- Academic standards
- Types of classes
- Curriculum

**A Distinctive Portrait:** Below is a general checklist for how to paint a portrait that will really set you apart. However, we recommend you get beyond the checklist. Don't merely look for service projects to impress schools. While this is certainly better than playing video games for four years, selective schools and competitive scholarship programs want to believe you know who you are and what you want. They want to see that you are genuinely ready to serve and lead. To do this, you must know your interests and passions and pursue them fervently.

1. Activities or community involvement: What did you do with your free time?
2. Personal essays: Can you articulate who you are and what you want?
3. Recommendations: What do teachers and counselors see in you that is unique and extraordinary?

For more information on developing your self-portrait, go to the [Common Application page](#).

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## The Common Application

The Common Application is a general application for admission to 517 member colleges and universities in 47 states and the District of Columbia, as well as Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and United Kingdom. Most of the schools included on the Common Application are private schools. Most state schools are NOT included on the Common Application, though there are some exceptions.

Click [here](#) to see the member colleges and universities.

### **Elements of the Common Application**

1. College list  
As students select colleges they are interested in, the Common Application will provide the information of that particular college or university and the information the applicant will need to complete. Once they have chosen, the college advisor will be able to check in to see what information needs to be completed.
2. Personal information
3. Family information
4. Academics
5. Standardized test scores (though official tests scores need to be sent from the agency directly to the college)
6. Résumé  
The résumé should include school and co-curricular activities as well as any work or volunteer experience.
7. Writing sample  
You will need to write a roughly 250 word essay. Some schools require other writing supplements. Once you have chosen to apply to a particular college, the Common Application will provide any relevant supplemental writing requirements.
8. Application fee  
Payment is required before the application can be sent.

9. School forms

You will provide email addresses to the Common Application for recommendations from your teacher and counselor (which is your advisor). Your advisor will provide a school profile and vital information to the selected colleges. Your advisor will also be able to see what colleges have been selected and track the progress of your application.

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## Standardized Tests

### **SAT (Scholastic Achievement Test)**

The SAT is an internationally recognized college admission test that shows colleges what you know and how well you can apply it. It tests your knowledge of reading, writing, and mathematics. The SAT is an aptitude test aimed at testing reasoning and verbal abilities, rather than grade-specific content. See [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) for more information.

### **ACT (American College Test)**

The ACT is an achievement test, measuring what you have learned in school. The ACT has up to five components: English, mathematics, reading, science, and an optional writing test. See [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) for more information.

Recommendations for the ACT or SAT tests:

1. Begin taking the ACT or SAT at the end of sophomore year. There is no penalty for sending scores to colleges early in your high school career. Colleges realize you will do better over time and will take the higher scores.
2. Take both the ACT and SAT multiple times. Ideally, you should take at least one of them four times.
3. Choose to stay with the test that is best for you.
4. Don't worry about test preparation until you have taken the ACT or SAT once or twice.
5. Some colleges superscore, meaning they take the very best scores of each of the sections taken, rather than taking the average of the sections (called "composite"). To see which colleges superscore click [here](#).

### **PSAT/NMSQT (National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test)**

The PSAT/NMSQT is a preliminary version of the SAT. Not only does the PSAT help prepare you to take the SAT or ACT, a great score on the PSAT can also open the door to National Merit Scholarships and other awards.

Westminster provides this test to the sophomores and juniors in mid-October. This test, which only counts toward college scholarship the junior year, could get you more money than any other college scholarship. There are tutors and classes available to help you prepare for the PSAT/NMSQT, but they are not recommended until junior year. See [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) for more information.



### **CLT (Classical Learning Test)**

The CLT is being offered as an alternative to the ACT or SAT tests for private and classically trained students. The test focuses more on aptitude and not a specific body of knowledge. For more information about this, see [the CLT exam](#). To find schools that accept the CLT, click [here](#).

### **Resources available for Standardized Testing:**

All Pencils Down-ACT/SAT/PSAT tutoring [www.allpencilsdown.com](http://www.allpencilsdown.com)

Becky Cox -ACT Tutoring [205-907-4400](tel:205-907-4400)/ [cliffbecky@bellsouth.net](mailto:cliffbecky@bellsouth.net)

Faye Nichols -Test Preparation and Consulting [205-823-2166](tel:205-823-2166)/ [www.fayenicholsact.com](http://www.fayenicholsact.com)

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## Financial Advising

### **Need-based Financial Aid**

Two instruments are used to determine how much financial aid you can receive. They are the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the CSS / Financial Aid PROFILE. The FAFSA is generally used for determining eligibility for federal, state, and institutional need-based aid. At private institutions, a supplemental application like the CSS / Financial Aid PROFILE may be necessary for need-based aid.

All incoming college students should expect to contribute something towards their own education costs. How much a student's family will be expected to contribute depends on their financial situation. This is called your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The FAFSA is the form the U.S. Department of Education requires to determine your EFC. The government conducts a need analysis based on financial information, such as income, assets, and other family information, which you (or your parents if you are a dependent student) will be asked to provide. A federal processor then examines your application and sends the results to the colleges where you have chosen to apply.

You should never pay a fee to file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or have someone fill it out for you. However, the College Board does collect a fee to process the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE. You should only submit a PROFILE if your college or scholarship program instructs you to do so. The College Board provides free assistance should you have questions about the process, the application, or the questions found on the application. You should never pay a fee to receive this assistance.

### **Scholarships**

Most of the scholarships that a student will receive as an incoming freshman will come directly from the university or college where the student is applying.

There are three types of scholarships.

1. Merit or academic-based scholarships are typically awarded on the basis of academic, athletic, or artistic merit. Some merit scholarships also consider financial need, but rewarding a student's performance is the primary focus.
2. Major-specific scholarships are given to those who have shown academic excellence in a particular

subject, with the restriction that this subject must become the student's major. These types of scholarships are usually offered by an individual college.

3. Demographic scholarships are awarded based on factors that have little to do with education or school activities. That's not to say that these scholarships make no consideration of merit or need, only that the primary determinant is some characteristic of the student like race, gender, or religion.
4. Independent Scholarships not associated with a particular college typically offer smaller amounts of money and involve tremendous amount of work on the student's part. The application process usually involves providing academic information, standardized test scores, a resume, and writing an essay. Be aware of scams in this process.

### **Types of Scholarships:**

#### **General Scholarship Websites**

[www.fastwebb.com](http://www.fastwebb.com)

#### **Scholarships for Alabama Colleges/Universities**

[www.auburn.academicworks.com](http://www.auburn.academicworks.com)

[www.scholarships.ua.edu](http://www.scholarships.ua.edu)

[www.samford.edu/admission/scholarships](http://www.samford.edu/admission/scholarships)

[www.bsc.edu/admission/scholarships.cfm](http://www.bsc.edu/admission/scholarships.cfm)

[www.uab.edu/students/paying-for-college/](http://www.uab.edu/students/paying-for-college/)

#### **Some scholarships may require nomination from Westminster**

Alabama Boys State

[www.alboysstate.org](http://www.alboysstate.org)

Alabama Girls State

[www.alabamagirlsstate.org](http://www.alabamagirlsstate.org)

Alabama Governors' School

[www.alabamags.org](http://www.alabamags.org)

Birmingham Christian Magazine

[www.birminghamchristian.com](http://www.birminghamchristian.com)

Distinguished Young Women (Shelby County)

[www.shelby.al.distinguishtdyw.org](http://www.shelby.al.distinguishtdyw.org)

Furman Scholars

[www.furman.edu/Furman-Scholars-Program](http://www.furman.edu/Furman-Scholars-Program)

Jefferson Scholars Foundation

[www.jeffersonscholars.org](http://www.jeffersonscholars.org)

NHS Scholarship

[www.nhs.us/students/the-nhs-scholarship](http://www.nhs.us/students/the-nhs-scholarship)

Shelby County Leadership

[www.leadershipshelbycounty.com](http://www.leadershipshelbycounty.com)

#### **Grants**

This is money the government provides for students who need it to pay for college. Grants, unlike loans, do not have to be repaid. Eligible students will receive a specified amount each year under this program. Your FAFSA will be used to determine your eligibility for any grants. You can see an example of a grant offered at the University of Alabama [website](#).

#### **Work Experience Programs**

Work experience or an on campus job is a form of financial aid that offers students a part-time job. The smooth hiring process and flexible hours make this option desirable for many students. See Berry College's

[website](#) for an example.

## College Tiers

For a student, it could be said that in life's next step after high school, there are over 5000 Choices. Those choices can be divided into:

### 5 Categories

Elite - Highly Selective - Regional Liberal Arts - Large University - Vocational

One Image-bearer

“There is a narrative arc that honestly tells the tale of someone young who honestly makes his or her way to someone old. Each is a story of immaturity, of longings, of choices made over time that grow into a longer life. There is a point, there is a reason to get up in the morning, and that telos slowly but honestly begins to orient the praxis, the way that becomes a life.” -Steve Garber

“The campuses themselves sparked unique curiosity: the breathtaking view from Covenant’s Lookout Mountain, the gorgeous Swan Lake overlooked by Furman’s impressive bell tower, and the imposing Gothic facades of Berry’s Ford Complex offer a few examples. Each of these, in its own way, calls out clearly with a sense of home. The student’s difficult task, however, was to begin to discern which of these voices—if any—spoke most clearly to his or her mind. Do UGA’s multi-faceted research opportunities and student body of 26,000 seem most appealing? Or does Covenant’s intimate, isolated Christian learning community immediately strike a chord? The realization arrived that the American college experience comes in just about any package one desires, with a spectrum that encompasses a multiplicity of options.” -Ethan Shaw (Class of 2015)

**Category 1: Elite** (Less than 9% of applicants are accepted)

- Ivy League Schools: Harvard, Yale Dartmouth
- The Emerging Research Schools: Stanford, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Service Academies: United States Military Academy, United States Naval Academy

Requirements:

- Average ACT 33/SAT 1400
- Stellar Academic Record
- Remarkable College Essay
- A Distinctive Personal Angle
- Over \$40,000 per year

**Category 2: Highly Selective** (Between 9 and 30% of applicants are accepted)

- Little Ivies: Amherst College, Bowdoin College, Wesleyan University and Williams College, Bates College, Colby College, Hamilton College, Middlebury College, Trinity College, Tufts University, Colgate, Haverford, Swarthmore, and Vassar
- Top Liberal Arts: Davidson, Vanderbilt
- Top Public Universities: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of Virginia, William and Mary

Requirements:

- Average ACT 33/SAT 1400
- Stellar Academic Record
- Remarkable College Essay
- A Distinctive Personal Angle
- Over \$20,000+ per year

**Category 3: Regional Liberal Arts**

- Liberal Arts: Emory, SMU, Baylor, Wake Forest, Furman, Samford University, Rhodes College, Berry College, Millsaps College, Belmont University

Requirements:

- Average ACT 31/SAT 1300
- Strong Academic Record
- Well-Written College Essay
- Over \$20,000 per year

**Category 4: Colleges/ Universities**

- Auburn University, University of Alabama, Mississippi State University, University of Mississippi, University of Georgia, University of Tennessee, University of Texas, Texas A&M University

Requirements:

- ACT 20
- GPA 3.0
- Under \$10,000 per year

**Category 5: Vocational**

- Attending a junior college, taking a gap year, entering the military, direct to workforce

**Herring's Checklist For Seniors** due by October 1 to Mr. Herring

1. I have read the Common App Page. \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_no
2. Select and list 3-5 colleges.
3. I have created an account with each college/university or sign up through the Common App.
4. I filled out the biographical information for my list of colleges.
5. I filled out a Transcript Request Form for each of the colleges on my list and turned it in to Mrs. Messer.
6. List teacher recommendations.
7. List acceptance deadlines for each of the colleges on my list.
8. List scholarships deadlines for each of the colleges on my list.
9. List ministry opportunities at each of the colleges on my list.

Student Signature\_\_\_\_\_

**Herring's Checklist For Juniors** due May 1 to Mr. Herring

1. List co-curricular activities.
2. List leadership roles.
3. How and where are you making a contribution in high school?
4. List the dates you have taken the ACT and/or SAT.
5. What standardized test do you take next and when is the deadline to sign up for the test?
6. What is your cumulative GPA.

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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## Online Resources

College Admissions: for parents and students  
Getting into college: an insider's guide / Vanderbilt University  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKARNadxshU>

Financial Aid: for parents and students  
an insider's guide / Vanderbilt University  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vBSKt7SkYE>

Writing recommendations:  
an insider's guide / Writing a good college recommendation / Vanderbilt University  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DpZI8GQVOlo>

GPA Calculator: for parents and students  
<http://gpacalculator.net/high-school-gpa-calculator/>

## Sample Résumé

Personal Information:  
5008 Cheshire Drive  
Birmingham, Alabama 35242  
email8@bellsouth.net

School Information:  
Westminster School at Oak Mountain  
5080 Cahaba Valley Trace  
Birmingham, Alabama 35242  
Email: bherring@westminsterknights.org

### Academics

GPA:	4.0/4.0
Weighted GPA	4.4/4.0
SAT Test Scores:	
Critical Reading (3/05)	750
Math (3/05)	630
Writing (6/05)	720

### Academic Activities and Honors

- Outstanding Performance in the National Latin Exam (9)
- “Summa Cum Laude” Award for National Latin Exam (10)
- Second Place in Latin Reading Competition at statewide Latin convention (10)
- Nominated for Alabama Girls’ State (11)

### School Activities

- Secretary/founding member of Student Council (10-11)
- Member of Beta Club (10 and 12)
- Secretary of Thespian Club (10)
- Participated in school’s spring drama production (9-11)
- Member of Swing dancing club (12)
- Senior Grand Tour (12)

### Community and Church Activities

- Service at Palmer Home orphanage (9)
- Church missions work in Longmont, CO (11)
- Weekly inner city tutoring program (10-12)
- Birmingham Belles service club (11)
- Service at high school’s Annual Fund dinners (10-12)

### Work Experience

- Babysitting (9-12) average of 2 hours per week
- Summer Nanny (11) 10 hours per week
- Tutor (12) 1 hour per week

### Interests and Hobbies:

- Violinist (8 years)
- Tennis
- Running
- Dance- ballet and tap



## College Vocabulary: A Guide to the Jargon

**Application Fee:** This is a non-refundable fee charged to prospective students for applying to a particular college or university. An average fee is around \$50.

**CSS / Financial Aid PROFILE:** An acronym for the College Scholarship Service PROFILE, which is an application distributed by the [College Board](#) in America. It allows college students to apply for financial aid. It is primarily designed to give member institutions of the College Board a closer look into the finances of students and their families. It is much more detailed than the [FAFSA](#).

**Common Application:** This is a general application for admission to 517 member colleges and universities in 47 states in America and the District of Columbia, as well as Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and United Kingdom. Most of the schools included on the Common Application are private schools. Most state schools are NOT included on the Common Application, though there are some exceptions.

**College Admissions Counselor:** The person in charge of advising and screening prospective and incoming students at a particular college.

**FAFSA:** The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is the form used by the U.S. Department of Education to determine your expected family contribution (EFC) by conducting a need analysis based on financial information such as income, assets, and other household information. The form is submitted to and processed by a federal processor contracted by the U.S. Department of Education, and the results are electronically transmitted to the financial aid offices of the schools that you list on your application.

**College Visits:** College admissions counselors usually visit high schools in the fall semester. This is an opportunity for sophomores, juniors, and seniors to meet with admission counselors and learn about the schools they represent. Information discussed includes scholarships, entrance requirements, tuition, financial aid, majors, and activities offered (intramurals, Greek life, clubs, and organizations).

**Financial Aid:** This is any money that the government or other organizations give or lend you so you can pay for college. To qualify for financial aid, you must complete the required applications.

**Grants:** Financial rewards that are given to you at no cost and do not have to be paid back in the future.

**Scholarships:** A sum of money or other aid granted to a student on the basis of merit or need for pursuing studies at a college or university.

**Test-Optional Schools:** Institutions like Wake Forest and Furman that de-emphasize the use of standardized tests and make admissions decisions without reference to scores on the SAT or ACT.

**Liberal Arts College:** A college with an emphasis on undergraduate study in the liberal arts and sciences. The curriculum aims to impart a broad general knowledge and develop general intellectual capacities, in contrast to one focused on professional, vocational, or technical knowledge.

**University:** An institution of higher learning granting degrees in many different fields of study. Universities typically offer both undergraduate and graduate degrees. This is in contrast to a liberal arts college where there is more emphasis on undergraduate studies.

**Decision Types:** There are several time frames for applying and accepting admission to college.

**Early Action:** A type of early admission process for admission to colleges and universities in the United States that is not binding. Unlike the regular admissions process, early action usually requires students to submit an application by November 1 of their senior year.

**Early Decision:** A binding decision to accept admission to a college. A student who is accepted as an early decision applicant must agree to attend the college.

**Regular Decision:** The normal process by which students apply to college in accord with published deadlines. Most colleges provide admissions decisions no later than April 1 of the senior year.

To know the advantages and disadvantages of these decisions go to <https://professionals.collegeboard.com/guidance/applications/early>.

**School Profile:** A document that translates your transcript into terms college admission offices can use to compare your record to those submitted from other high schools. It also helps application readers evaluate your performance relative to other students in your school.

**Transcript:** A record of the courses you have completed in high school, the credit earned for each course, and each course's final grade. It also includes personal information used for identification purposes and usually a grade point average (GPA).

**Recommendations:** Teacher letters intended primarily to convey the teacher's classroom experience with you. It is used to give colleges an idea of how you are likely to perform academically. These recommendations serve a different function from the counselor recommendation, which is meant to provide a broader view of you as a person.