Guide to COLLEGE ADMISSIONS
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HOW TO START THINKING ABOUT THE PROCESS

The process of applying to colleges has changed dramatically over the past ten years.

With heightened media attention on increasing competition at selective schools and rising tuition costs, it is difficult to know what to think about or where to start. It is not unusual to feel overwhelmed or confused at the beginning of this journey

As you begin this process it is necessary to get in the right frame of mind:

You are in the driver’s seat. Although you will get input from parents, friends, relatives, college counselors and admissions officers, remember that you are the one going to college. Stay focused on your interests, goals and needs.

Keep an open mind and be an informed customer. Do not jump to conclusions based on any one single source of information. Try not to be tempted by a person who loves or hates a school or by the number of stars next to a college in a guidebook. This is an individualized process—what may be appropriate for your friends may not be appropriate for you. Stay focused on yourself and keep a sense of what this process is about: finding the right match for you.

The college process begins with self-evaluation. Until you’ve carefully considered your needs (academic, social, personal), you are not ready to decide whether a particular school is the right match for you. To choose a college wisely you need to pull together some information about yourself. In your first meeting with your counselor many of these questions will be discussed. Your thoughts beforehand will also help you prepare.

ACTIVITIES & INTERESTS

• What activities do you enjoy most? Why?

• How would you describe your role in school, your home and your community?

• What do you do for fun? Relaxation?

• How are you influenced by others? Do you ever feel pressure to conform?

• How do you think others would describe you?

• What would others say are your strengths?

• Your weaknesses?

• What do others expect of you?

• How do you react when your beliefs are challenged?

• How do you make decisions?

GOALS & VALUES

• What values are important to you? Why?

• What relationships are important to you?

• How do you define success? What do you expect of yourself?

• What kind of person do you hope to become?

• How has your background helped to shape who you are today?

• How would you like a college to challenge you?

• What do you expect from your college experience academically? Socially?

SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT

• Have you met your potential in high school?

• How rigorous are your courses?

• Are you interested in a wide range of courses or a narrow focus? Why?

An honest and thoughtful self-evaluation can reveal the qualities you should look for in colleges. It will also prepare you for questions you will be asked in essays and interviews during the admissions process. If you are willing to look seriously at yourself, you can find the colleges that are right for you and present yourself effectively to them.

THE COMMUNITY AROUND YOU

• How do you describe Bryn Mawr, your family and your hometown?

• How has your environment influenced your way of thinking?

• What distresses you most about the world around you? What will you do about it?
BEGINNING YOUR RESEARCH: INVESTIGATING YOUR OPTIONS

Choosing where to apply begins with asking one basic question: what are the characteristics of my ideal college? Is it big or small? Public or private? East Coast, West Coast or in between? Abroad? Liberal Arts or Pre-Professional? Is it close to home or far away? Is the setting urban, suburban or rural? What is the climate? What is the atmosphere—challenging, intense, relaxed or supportive? What kind of curriculum best suits my needs and goals? What kind of environment makes me happy both academically and personally?

Once you have identified some of the factors and criteria that are important to you, develop a preliminary list of colleges to investigate. At the end of your junior year, you may have a list of as many as 30 colleges. That's OK. At this early stage of the process, it is good to cast your net as wide as possible and keep options open. Using the information you have collected, draw up a list of specifications about the colleges that match your characteristics and interests. Then contact these colleges and get on their mailing lists. Follow up with some investigative legwork, including reading brochures with a critical eye, visiting campuses (in real life or via virtual tour on a college’s website) and talking to current students and alumni.

As you research colleges, you will find that there are many colleges and universities that are good matches for you. You should apply to a range of schools that best match your own needs, interests and abilities, and those that present you with appropriate challenges. If you decide to use a guidebook or any other sources, remember to view that source as you would a source for a research paper. (1) What institutions are included or excluded from the publication? (2) What is the primary focus, point of view or objective of the comparison or rating? (3) What special expertise qualifies the author or publisher for the guide? (4) When was the guide published? Is the information still relevant? (5) Does the publication use the same standards to measure all institutions, or do some institutions receive special treatment? (6) Is the publication a serious attempt to inform and help in the college admission process—or was it written primarily to entertain or present offbeat or humorous aspects of the various institutions?

INTERNET RESOURCES & SEARCHES

Bryn Mawr is pleased to be able to offer Naviance Family Connect as an online tool to help you establish preferences, research colleges and build college lists. The College Counseling Office will provide you and your parents with passwords to register for Family Connect at http://connection.naviance.com.

Today, students have limitless resources at their disposal to assist in the college selection process. The Internet is an excellent resource to the college and financial aid search process. Most colleges and universities maintain websites complete with school photographs, maps, video clips and virtual reality tours. They also provide up-to-date information about programs, faculty and facilities. In addition, students can use online tools to identify colleges and universities that fit their criteria and locate scholarship and financial aid opportunities. Most institutions now accept electronic applications. (See the Appendix for a list of recommended Internet resources.)

WEBSITES

Websites can serve as wonderful resources, and while they cannot replace an actual campus visit, they can offer an introduction to a campus that you have never visited. Every college now has a website that you can use to explore their college. Most are extensive, sophisticated and allow you to explore the college in depth. Most now have student-to-student portals, Facebook and Twitter pages, and virtual tours.

COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES

Representatives from over 100 colleges and universities will visit Bryn Mawr during the school year. A representative is usually a member of the admissions staff or a graduate of the college or university—often they are the first reader of your application. Meeting with representatives here on our campus is a priceless opportunity to gain more information about the colleges that interest you or learn about new ones. Even if you have seen a school and have had an interview there, it is wise to come just to make the representative aware of your continued interest.

VISITING CAMPUSES

There are lots of ways to learn about a college, from brochures to websites, but there is no substitute for seeing a college in person! Visiting when school is in session is particularly useful since it gives you the experience of the collegiate atmosphere with its variety of people and activities. It is not necessary to visit a school before submitting an application. However, we highly recommend that you visit a college while it is in session before you commit to enroll there.

Note: Campus life rarely comes alive before noon on Saturdays and Sundays. Therefore, do not plan an early morning visit on weekends if you want to see students.

COLLEGE CATALOGS
One of the most reliable sources of written information about any college or university is its catalog. The catalog is usually published annually and contains a great deal of information about entrance requirements, academic departments, study abroad programs, graduation requirements, scholarships and much more. The College Counseling Office has a large collection of college catalogs that may be used by students and parents. If you wish to have your own copy of a catalog, request one directly from the college that interests you or visit the school’s website.

**COLLEGE GUIDEBOOKS**

Different guidebooks have varying degrees of subjectivity. Most objective guidebooks provide only statistical information, enrollment figures, degrees offered, etc. Subjective guidebooks offer the opinion of the reviewers or even students who are attending the institution. Each book creates a distinctive perspective on the institutions represented within its covers: some publications are better researched and more responsibly constructed than others. You and your family should know that these publications have limited value and should be used only as a supplement to other sources of information. Always keep in mind that the best institution is the one that is right for you, not necessarily the one that appears on a list or in a guidebook.

**COLLEGE FAIRS**

College fairs, in which many colleges are represented, are frequently held in the Baltimore/Washington area. Information about these fairs will be posted in the College Counseling Office and on Naviance. They are often invaluable sources for gathering comparative information and establishing communication with college admissions officers. The National Performing Arts Fair and National Portfolio Day for Visual Artists take place in the early fall; the AIMS College Fair is in the spring.

**SUCCESSFUL CAMPUS VISITS**

**HOW TO PREPARE**

- Appointments for information sessions, tours, interviews and overnight stays can fill up quickly, so call the admissions office as far in advance of your visit as possible. Be prepared to tell them the date and time of day you would like to visit. If you want to stay overnight in a residence hall, ask if arrangements can be made.

- Thoroughly research the college prior to your visit. Write down any specific questions you may have.

- Check with the College Counseling Office to see if any Bryn Mawr graduates are attending the college. You may know one of these students and want to talk with her while on the campus. Bryn Mawr alumnae are always eager to host visitors to their colleges!

- As a family, set the ground rules for college visits. Parents and students will not necessarily have the same thoughts, feelings and impressions of the college. Students may be more interested in “how the campus feels” as a prospective new home base. Parents may be more focused on evaluating issues of campus safety and security and on issues of affordability. Communicate to one another what you hope to accomplish. Open communication will help reduce tension while visiting campuses.

- During your junior year college visits generally will not include an interview or an overnight stay. (Many colleges only offer overnight programs to seniors and juniors are sometimes less able to formulate answers to interview questions.) If, however, the distance you are traveling is great, this may be your only opportunity for an interview. Review your high school record so that you can answer specific questions about your course of study, test scores and activities if asked. In this case, talk with your counselor about a mock interview.

- Try to avoid visiting more than two schools in a given day. Though blistering schedules may sound time-efficient, it is usually very difficult to get a sense of a campus in such a short amount of time. Your frustration with the schedule may negatively impact your assessment of the colleges. In addition, make sure you leave ample driving time between colleges.

- As you are planning your college visits, try to include a college located in the area that is not on your list. You may also want to visit colleges in Maryland or Washington, D.C., even if you are not currently considering these schools. Students and parents are often pleasantly surprised by what they find.
DURING THE VISIT
When visiting a college campus, try to imagine living, learning, and making friends there. Families should take a student-conducted tour and ask questions that will give them a sense of campus life.

• Be a keen observer of all aspects of campus life. Visit the school dining hall, the college student center, specific departments’ student and faculty offices, the bookstore, the campus library, student housing and as many other “gathering places” for students and faculty as possible. Also, see the buildings, theaters or labs that are associated with your special interests as well as the town or city where the school is located.

• Visit classes. Obtain permission from the Admissions Office.

• Contact someone in the department of your interest.

• Talk to as many students as you can.

• When you take the tour, stay near the front of the tour group. If you are far away from the guide the tour will seem less personal and you will miss the opportunity to hear from a current undergraduate.

• Wear comfortable clothing and sensible shoes. You will do a lot of walking, and tours run even in inclement weather.

AFTER THE VISIT

• Send a thank-you note to the people who assisted you. The school may add the note to your file.

• Make notes or keep a small, informal journal of your college visits. Later, these notes will be invaluable as you evaluate schools and make decisions. Whether you visit colleges alone, with your family, or with friends, you should not try to evaluate everything about a college “right on the spot.” Once you are home, compare notes and have a good family discussion. Some students even take photographs to help them remember specifics.

DEVELOPING A LIST OF COLLEGES: RESEARCH, REVIEW, & REFINE

In choosing where to apply, you must eventually face the toughest question of all: will the college choose you? Assessing your record, your strengths and weaknesses and examining the college’s reputation and statistics will give you some idea about your chance of acceptance. Knowing who a college has admitted or denied from Bryn Mawr in the past is also good information to consider, but it’s dangerous to generalize too much from past decisions. Selective admissions can change dramatically from one year to the next. The student who is admitted with grades lower than yours may have had unusually strong recommendations or special talents, or she may have been a child of an alumna/us.

Once you begin to define the characteristics you are seeking in a college and have researched a variety of institutions, you and your counselor will begin to divide the schools into three categories:

• Reaches comprise your first group. They will be the “most competitive” schools and should be chosen carefully.

• 50/50s represents schools at which you have a 50% chance of being offered admission. Each choice should possess the characteristics identified as desirable in the most selective group.

• Likelies are schools where you have a solid chance of being offered admission. These schools should be researched as thoughtfully as your “realistic challenge” colleges.

Do not apply to any college or university that you do not want to attend.

An application to a “likely” college is meaningless if you do not intend to go there under any circumstances. You may find yourself admitted only to these colleges. Therefore you want to be certain that they meet criteria similar to those in categories one and two. Keep in mind that an institution’s reputation is important, but not as important as the educational, geographical and social criteria you have established for yourself.
COMPONENTS OF THE ADMISSIONS FOLDER

Even though there are differences among colleges, the same general criteria are used by all schools to create a well-rounded class.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES—STUDENT RESUME

• Level of community involvement (school, neighborhood, place of worship)
• Summer activities
• Employment

ESSAY

ACADEMIC RECORD

• Quality and range of courses (AP/Honors, electives that are important to you)
• Consistency of performance
• Improvement of performance
• Student performance and classroom participation
• Student's positive impact on the school

RECOMMENDATIONS

• Teachers
• Counselor
• Employer

TESTING PROFILE

• SAT Reasoning Test
• SAT Subject Tests
• ACT

OTHER

• Demonstrated academic talent or scholarly achievement
• Member of an under-represented racial, ethnic, religious or socioeconomic group
• Daughter of alumnus and/or alumna
• Musician, performer, artist, athlete
• Outstanding social contribution
• Unusual background
• Leadership experience

Schools may differ in how they weight the various aspects of an application. However, most colleges consider the following, in order of importance:

• Academic record
• Personal qualities and co-curricular record as revealed in your application and essay
• SAT Reasoning test scores, SAT Subject test scores, and/or ACT scores
• Required recommendations
• Interview
• Extra letters of recommendation

Schools are looking for more than just qualified candidates. At the most selective schools, many well-qualified applicants are not admitted. Factors beyond the control of the individual applicant come into play in an institution's final admission decision. Always keep in mind that 70% of all colleges and universities in the United States admit most of the students who apply.

• Over-enrollment in the previous class may cause a school to accept a smaller class for the upcoming year.
• A dramatic increase in the number of applications may cause a school to become even more selective.
• Each institution has enrollment goals or institutional priorities that it hopes to meet. A school may be in search of a replacement for the horn section of the orchestra, a goalie for the soccer team, or a female scientist for its chemistry program. The school may also be trying to achieve a racially, socio-economically, religiously and geographically diverse community.
• The Early Action/Early Decision policy varies from one institution to the next. At some schools, the admission rate of early applicants is indeed higher than the overall admission rate. At many the opposite is true—the EA and/or ED pools are more competitive. In general, a candidate who would not otherwise be admitted through the regular process will not be offered admission simply because she has applied Early Decision.
A CLOSER LOOK AT THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS FOLDER

THE HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPT

Your high-school transcript is an integral part of the college application. The transcript details academic performance as well as academic and school honors and awards.

The College Counseling Office mails student transcripts to colleges at three different times: when you first apply to a college, immediately after the first semester of the senior year and after graduation. Bryn Mawr does not send quarter grades to colleges unless specifically requested in ED applications.

The following items are included on the transcript:

- YTD/GPA (We do not report cumulative GPA)
- End-of-year grades (exam grades and semester grades are not recorded)
- Honors and AP-level course designations
- List of academic honors: Honor Roll; Cum Laude; National Merit, National Achievement and National Hispanic Recognition honors; and all awards given on Class Day, Awards Day, or at graduation

Because the information on student transcripts is so important, Bryn Mawr will ask juniors to proofread their individual transcripts in the winter of the junior year. You and your parents also have access to the transcript at any time. Should you need to view, request or send your transcript, please give the College Counseling Office 24 hours’ notice.

LETTERS OF REFERENCE

Recommendations from teachers, the school, volunteer directors and employers are a vital part of applying to college. Colleges require references from teachers and the school; other references are optional. Each kind of reference is explained below.

- **Teacher Reference**
  Colleges ask teachers to comment on your classroom performance in a particular subject or discipline. Typically students should expect to use references from the eleventh grade. Most of the time, you will be asked to submit two teacher references. You should choose the teachers who know you the best as a student, will address your strengths as a student and your academic accomplishments, and can give specific examples of your abilities in class. You do not need to choose one teacher from the humanities and one teacher from the sciences. The College Counseling Office will help you choose references during the spring junior-year conferences. You should request references from those teachers immediately after these conferences. The College Counseling Office will be glad to answer any questions families or students have about teacher references.

- **School/Counselor Reference**
  The Bryn Mawr School is proud of each and every student and her individual accomplishments. The counselor recommendation includes information on your academic and extracurricular activities, your responsibilities and commitments outside of school, and any personal circumstances that may need clarification. Faculty and family input is solicited to build a full and complete picture of your academic, social and personal progress. The recommendation is kept confidential.

- **Other References**
  There are often questions regarding additional references from alumni of the college, employers, volunteer directors and the like. These are not required references. In fact, these letters should be added only if the recommender knows you well and can provide information not already detailed elsewhere in the application. The difficulty is that too much additional information can cause an admissions officer to skim the documents. Any positive impact of the additional letter is therefore reduced. You should consult your College Counselor if you have any questions.

THE COLLEGE ESSAY

Your essay is a significant part of your college application folder. It provides you with an opportunity to individualize your application and to reveal yourself in your own voice—more than grades, test scores and even the most considered recommendations can do.

Choosing an essay topic is not easy. Junior year English classes require personal essays. These topics may be reused as college essays, as long as they address the questions asked on the application. Convocation topics have also proven to be wonderful essays.

Both English teachers and College Counselors are happy to read and react to essays and provide assistance.

- **Limit your essays in most cases to one page single-spaced.** (Some schools require shorter or longer essays. You should not exceed the specified length.) They are read quickly by individuals more interested in quality and depth than in length.

- **Answer the essay question that is asked.** It is fine to try to use an essay for multiple colleges, as long as the essay provides the information asked.
Optional essay? Do it—this is your chance to stand up and be counted.

Keep the following advice in mind: it is appropriate to ask a teacher or counselor or parent to react to an essay. However, Fred Hargadon, a former Dean of Admission at Princeton states, “I can’t emphasize enough that the style, flavor, and substance of your essay needs to be your own and to look your own and to sound like you. In a word, your essay (in fact, your entire application) should smell authentic.”

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TESTING

Scores on standardized tests are one part of your application and are reviewed together with the academic record, essay and interview. You should consider applying to colleges that weigh many factors and that have testing ranges into which you will fit comfortably. A growing number of great colleges are choosing to become “score optional.”

COLLEGE APPLICATION: GENERAL TIPS

Admission to private colleges, particularly the more selective ones, is a complex, subjective, and unpredictable process. Decisions are generally based upon a committee’s evaluation and discussion of a candidate’s folder. When a student applies to college, the admissions office collects a number of pieces of information as it makes a decision about an applicant. The application that you fill out is one way your character and personality can emerge to the reader, and it is the one part of the application over which you exercise full control. A careful, thoughtful job on your application can make a difference. College admissions officers often comment on how a poor application has hurt someone’s chances and how a thoughtful, well-presented application has pushed a borderline candidate into the admitted group.

TIPS:

- **Consider your audience.**
  Does the admissions office really want to wade through a dozen extra sheets detailing your every activity or honor since seventh grade? Does he or she want to strain to read impossible handwriting or 6-point font? Of course not. Consider the time constraints of your audience. During reading season, admission officers may have a daily quota of 30 files. Given the 24-hour day and simple math, you can expect each file to be given about 20 minutes. You have 20 minutes of an admission officer’s attention to make a memorable impression!

- **Do not overdo it.**
  It is tempting to tell the Admissions Office everything you have ever done or have been interested in doing. The assumption is that more is better. Try to resist this temptation to pad the application with trivial activities or long-neglected interests. Concentrate on a few quality pursuits and avoid manufacturing quantity.

- **Answer the questions they ask.**
  In your eagerness to write about what you want to write about, do not ignore the question.

- **Be yourself.**
  This is easier said than done. You will drive yourself crazy trying to figure out what you think a college wants to read. There is seldom a right or wrong answer to a question on an application. The committee wants a clear, honest and reflective answer that will tell them something about you as a person.

- **Give yourself plenty of time.**
  Try to manage this process as you would any in-depth school project. Be sure to do the following: have primary materials and research completed early; leave sufficient time to do a rough draft; fill out all forms completely, accurately and according to the specific guidelines provided by the college; and submit everything on time. Last-minute jobs usually read like last-minute jobs.

- **Do not be shy.**
  Submit evidence of your scholarly and creative endeavors if you feel such supplemental information will aid the college admissions offices in gaining a more vivid picture of you and your potential.

- **Make a copy.**
  After you have completed your application be sure to print a copy of it before your hit the send button.

- If you are submitting your application electronically:
  - Don’t hurry—be careful and precise
  - Proof read, proof read, proof read before hitting SEND
  - Make a hard copy for your files
  - Be on the look out for confirmation of receipt.
  - Print it out once you have received it and save for
INFORMATION YOU WILL NEED WHEN COMPLETING APPLICATIONS:

Mailing Address
The Bryn Mawr School
109 West Melrose Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21210
Telephone: 410-323-8800
Fax: 410-377-8963

CEEB Number
210050

Director of College Counseling
Ms. Patricia Whalen

College Counselor:
Mr. Jerald Brown

College Counselor:
Ms. Courtney Watkins

PREPARING FOR THE COLLEGE INTERVIEW

THE COLLEGE CANDIDATE INTERVIEW

College interviews offer you an opportunity beyond the essay to personalize the college application process. Interviews help students evaluate whether a particular college is a good fit, both academically and personally.

Interviews are treated differently by each college. For many years, the interview was a major part of the admissions decision for many institutions. The emphasis on interviews has decreased over the past few years, so it is important to inquire about the policy on interviews at schools you are considering.

Examples of some different policies include:
- Interviews are not a part of the admissions process, and therefore only group information sessions are offered.
- Interviews are given weight in the admissions process, but they are conducted by area alumni/ae.
- Interviews are encouraged and do become a part of the student’s application folder.
- Interviews are encouraged only after an application is filed.

Interviews can take place either on campus with admissions professionals and current undergraduates or in Baltimore with an alumna/us of the school. Regardless of the location, you have a good measure of control over the interview. The goal of the interview is to have a conversation where you and the interviewer learn about each other.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW
- Be ready to identify your strengths.

THE DAY OF THE INTERVIEW
- Be on time.
- Dress neatly and comfortably. No jeans, though nice pants or a skirt are acceptable.
- Know your interviewer’s name and use it during the interview. Ask for the interviewer’s business card.
- Be polite, show interest, and keep eye contact. Also, try to avoid the use of “like” and “um.”
- Remember to be yourself. There are not any right or wrong answers. Colleges are looking for individuals, not types; the only convincing person you can be is yourself.

Interviews may begin with an exchange of pleasantries about the weather, your hometown, other colleges you have visited or by finding out how you heard about a particular college. The interviewers then proceed to ask you a series of open-ended questions that will allow you to expand on your personal interests and experiences. Be candid and positive. Focus on your strengths.

When you have the opportunity to ask the interviewer(s) questions about the college, you should ask questions that show the interviewer(s) that you have “done your
homework” and read the college’s materials. The questions should expand upon the information in the materials or should be about significant and relevant issues affecting the college.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW
• Soon after the interview, please remember to send either a handwritten card or typed thank-you note to your interviewer(s). Include a reaction or two about the college.

COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
• What have you liked or disliked about your high school? What would you like to change?
• What is it like going to a girls’ school?
• What are the courses you enjoyed most in high school?
• What do you hope to major in? Why?
• What is your role in the school community?
• What is the most significant contribution you have made to your school?
• What would teachers say about you as a student? As a person?
• What are your future plans?
• What do you want out of life?
• Why are you considering this college?
• What is it like going to a girls’ school?
• What is the most significant contribution you have made to your school?
• What would teachers say about you as a student? As a person?
• What are your future plans?
• What do you want out of life?
• Why are you considering this college?
• Would you tell us something about your family?
• How do you spend your summers?
• What event or person has had a profound effect on your life?
• What newspapers and magazines do you read?
• What’s your favorite movie? Book? Why?
• Is there someone you like or dislike? Why do you feel that way?
• What is the most important decision you’ve had to make?
• How would you handle the following situation?
• Can you describe a difficult situation you faced or a difficult decision you had to make?

QUESTIONS YOU MAY WANT TO ASK DURING AN INTERVIEW
Before your interview take a moment or two to reflect on the questions you would like to ask. If you are nervous that you will forget them, write them down on an index card and bring them to the interview. (You will impress the interviewer as organized!) As you are preparing your questions remember to consider your audience. If you are having an interview on campus, that person is more likely to have current information/statistics about the university. If your interviewer is a current undergraduate, you may be able to ask questions about student life. If your interviewer is a graduate of the institution, the best questions may be ones that deal with that person’s experience and perspective.

• One of the aspects of Bryn Mawr that I have loved is __________ (i.e. school spirit). Does your university also have __________ (school spirit)?
• Is it difficult to reintegrate into the school after a year abroad? Is it difficult if I decide not to go abroad?
• Are the music/athletic facilities available to students who are not majoring in those fields?
• What were the most significant issues affecting students on campus last year?
• What are some of the most significant changes you have experienced during your time at the college? How have these changes affected student life and study at the college? How did attending Prospective University change you?
COLLEGE TESTING: WHEN, WHERE, HOW

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TESTING

College entrance tests are administered by two organizations: The College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) is a division of the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in Princeton, New Jersey. The American College Testing Program (ACT) is developed and administered by the American College Testing Service in Iowa City, Iowa.

Bryn Mawr students usually take the SAT Reasoning Test and the SAT Subject Tests, and more and more students are taking the ACT. Students should check the specific testing requirements of the colleges to which they are applying. Some colleges require specific test combinations; for example, the ACT and three SAT Subject Tests or an SAT Subject Test in a specific area.

• ACT
This exam is taken in the spring of the junior year and/or the fall of senior year, and may be submitted to the college in lieu of the SAT. This test is a more content/curriculum-oriented test. Students should strongly consider taking the optional writing portion of the ACT.

• SAT Reasoning Test
This exam may be taken in January, March, May, and/or June of the junior year and again in October or November of the senior year. The general rule of thumb is, “More than once, not more than three times.”

• SAT Subject Tests
This exam is usually taken in May and/or June of the junior year and possibly in November of the senior year. The test comprises a series of one-hour exams given in specific subject areas. Bryn Mawr suggests that you take at least three subject tests.

You may choose to take the SAT Subject Test at the completion of the corresponding course. Delays in taking a test often result in lower scores, as skills are diminished with the passing of time.

It is recommended that the SAT in foreign languages be taken only after completion of the fourth level of a language. Please note that there are two types of language exams and that testing dates are limited. Consult your teacher or your college counselor if you need help choosing the right test.

If you are interested in majoring in the sciences or architecture, please talk to your college counselor. You will want to take SAT Subject Tests in Math IIC, Physics, Biology and/or Chemistry.

REPORTING TEST SCORES TO COLLEGES

Releasing and sending scores can be a confusing process. Please consult the College Counseling Office with specific questions.

• What scores are sent?
SAT—the student must check the individual college’s policy regarding which scores should be sent. Some will request all scores, some want only the highest scores.

ACT—Only the ACT from a specified date is sent.

• What scores do colleges consider?
Although all SAT Reasoning Test scores are reported, most colleges consider the highest math and highest verbal and writing scores reported. Colleges do not generally “mix and match” scores for the ACT. Instead, colleges use the ACT with the highest composite score.

Students can reach ETS with requests for additional reports on weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. at 609-771-7600 or by logging on to the College Board website at www.collegeboard.com.

Students may contact ACT at 319-337-1270, weekdays between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., central time, or online at www.act.org.

• Requesting additional score reports
To request additional reports, fill in the appropriate code numbers on the test registration, or make the request online. If you fill in the code numbers on the registration form, four scores are sent for free. If you forget to fill in these college codes, they also can be added on the Correction Form, which is attached to the admission ticket. Add the college codes and submit the ticket on test day.

Scores can be sent to additional colleges for a fee. (Code numbers are available in the registration booklet.)

The Bryn Mawr School code is 210050.

An increasing number of colleges and universities are choosing to go “test optional” or have flexible testing policies.
What is the College Counseling Office responsible for?

The College Counseling Office is responsible for the submission of the following items to colleges and universities on behalf of Bryn Mawr students:

- Transcripts (all necessary Bryn Mawr transcripts as well as documents from other secondary schools and college/university transcripts if requested)
- School Profile
- Counselor Recommendation
- Secondary School Report Form
- Mid-Year School Report Form (after mid-term grades)
- Final Transcript

What are teachers responsible for?

All teachers, including coordinate school teachers, will forward letters of recommendation directly to colleges unless stated otherwise on an application. Teachers have been instructed to maintain copies of recommendations in the event that they are needed at a later date.

Students should request electronic teacher recommendations through Naviance for all Bryn Mawr teachers. Each student should provide each teacher with a pink sheet or College Recommendation Request form. Students should complete the form regarding colleges applied to and pertinent deadline information.

Please note that some colleges require that all application materials be sent in one mailing, or do not have electronic application. If a student is applying to a college with this requirement, she should request in writing on the form that the teacher return all materials to the College Counseling Office for mailing.

It is appropriate for a student to write a thank you note to all teachers who write recommendation letters for her. Teachers also appreciate hearing from the student about colleges acceptances.

What are students responsible for?

APPLICATION

Each student is responsible for sending the student portion of the application materials including biographical information, essay, and appropriate application fees unless otherwise stated on an application. (Some applications may require that all application materials be sent from the College Counseling Office.)

If you are filing an electronic application, make sure that you receive confirmation of receipt from the college admissions office. In addition, print out a hard copy of your application for your files.

TRANSCRIPT REQUESTS

Transcript requests for each college to which a student is applying should be submitted on Naviance Family Connect website.

The counseling staff needs at least two weeks to process an application.

All transcript requests for Early Action or Early Decision applications must be submitted to the College Counseling Office by October 17.

All transcript requests for Regular applications should be submitted no later than November 30.

TEST SCORES

It is the responsibility of the student to determine which colleges require which test scores and to request that scores be sent directly from the Educational Testing Service and/or ACT to colleges.

Standardized test scores do not appear on the Bryn Mawr transcript.

Students should request that SAT scores be sent to colleges in one of the following ways:

1. When registering for an SAT test, (SAT Reasoning or Subject Test) a student can request that up to four colleges receive scores at no additional charge.

2. On the day of test administration, a student can submit the correction form (attached to the admission ticket) on which she designates up to four colleges as score recipients at no additional charge.
3. Scores can be sent to colleges by calling ETS at 800-728-7267 or via online request at www.collegeboard.com. The Additional Score Report Order Form allows you to order reports to be sent to up to eight colleges with a fee per report. Scores will be sent in about five weeks. You may also order “rush reporting” to send scores in two business days with a fee per report plus a single processing fee.

Students should request that ACT scores be sent in the following ways:

1. When filling out an ACT registration form, a student can designate up to four colleges as score recipients at no extra charge. A student may designate as many as two more colleges as score report recipients on the registration form for a fee.

2. All requests to send scores after testing must be submitted to ACT and a fee will be required for Additional Score Reports.

ACT will report only the results for the test date you specify on your request (one test date per report).

A student must wait until after her test to submit an Additional Score Report; scores are available for additional reporting only after they have been added to the computer files (which is usually within three weeks after a test date). Additional score reports for ACT can be sent to colleges in the following ways:

- By mail using the last page of the student guide titled “Using Your ACT Assessment Results” which students receive with their score reports.

ACT printed score reports are mailed about four weeks after the test date.

There are two ways to rush ACT scores:

1. Priority ACT reports are processed one working day after receipt of request and are delivered to colleges three business days later; priority reports may be requested online.

2. Mailgram ACT reports are processed one working day after receipt of request and are delivered to colleges 1-2 business days later. Mailgram reports may be requested by phone (319-337-1313) or online. Archived test dates (before September 2003) are available at additional cost.

**COLLEGE COUNSELING DUE DATES TO REMEMBER**

**OCTOBER 17**
Students must submit SSR and Transcript Requests for Early Decision/Early Action programs with a November 1 or November 15 deadline to the College Counseling Office. This includes University of Maryland Priority Application.

**NOVEMBER 30**
Students must submit all remaining transcript requests to the College Counseling Office.
Academic solid: usually refers to a traditional discipline of English, mathematics, foreign language, science, or social science.

American College Test (ACT): a curriculum-based test prepared by the American College Testing Program. It is used throughout the country by college and university admissions offices and is scored on a scale of 0 (low) to 36 (high).

Bachelor’s degree: the degree earned after the successful completion of required undergraduate courses at a university or college.

Candidate reply date: the date by which a student must notify a college of her/his intent to enroll. May 1 is the National Candidate Reply date.

College: an individual institution that offers undergraduate education or an educational division of a larger university, such as the College of Arts and Sciences.

College Board: a membership organization consisting of representatives from college admissions and financial aid offices and secondary school guidance personnel which contracts with the Educational Testing Service to create and administer its programs (i.e. PSAT, SAT I, SAT II and AP).

College Scholarship Service (CSS): a branch of the College Board that computes information submitted on the Financial Aid PROFILE and estimates the amount students and their families can be asked to contribute toward college cost.

Common Application: a generic application form accepted by more than 400 private colleges and universities in an effort to simplify the application process for prospective students (www.commonapp.org).

Consortium: a group of colleges that work together to offer certain advantages to themselves and their students.

Early Action: an admission option that allows students to apply early in the senior year (usually November) and learn of the decision on their application before the standard April notification date. It is different from Early Decision in that students are not required to accept admission or withdraw other applications if accepted.

Early Decision: a binding admission option that allows students to apply early in the senior year (usually November) and learn of the decision before the standard April notification date.

Educational Testing Service (ETS): an organization that designs and administers tests like the SAT for groups like the College Board.

Enrollment deposit or matriculation fee: a deposit required of accepted students at many colleges and universities to reserve a space in the incoming class.

Financial aid profile: the form on which parents and independent students list all income and net assets for the College Scholarship Service (CSS) so that CSS can estimate the amounts students and their families can be expected to contribute towards college cost.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): a federal form used by most institutions to determine the awarding of federal financial aid dollars.

Legacy: an applicant who is the child of an alumnus/a.

Major: the primary field of specialization or concentration an undergraduate student selects.

Minor: a secondary area of academic concentration which may or may not be required by an institution.

National Merit Scholarship: scholarships given based on students’ junior PSAT/NMSQT scores and other criteria.

Need-blind admission: a policy which guarantees that an admission decision cannot be affected by the financial need of the student in the admission application review process.

Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT/NMSQT): a shortened practice version of the SAT Reasoning Test given during the sophomore and junior years of high school.

Profile: a description of the characteristics of a college’s enrolling class; a description of the secondary school that accompanies each senior’s transcript when it is sent to a college.

Rolling admission: a program adopted by many colleges that allows admissions applications to be evaluated upon receipt and then offers applicants immediate notification of the decision.

SAT Reasoning Test: standardized test offered by the College Board that includes verbal, math and writing sections. Scores are reported on a scale of 200 to 800.

SAT Subject Test: one-hour long subject tests that are administered in a variety of area/disciplines designed to test the level of knowledge of a student.

Selectivity: the ratio of admitted students to total applicants at a given institution.

University: a large educational institution comprised of a number of divisions, including graduate and professional schools.

Wait list: a list of students who are not initially accepted by an institution but who may be accepted at a later date if space becomes available.

Yield: the percentage of students admitted to a college who ultimately attend that school.
INFORMATION, RESOURCES, GUIDEBOOKS & WEBSITES

Libraries and bookstores are excellent places to begin gathering information about colleges.

Bryn Mawr’s College Center has online resources, college information guides, and other information you will find helpful in your research. The Center is open each day from 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

You will also want to check each college’s website and either write or send an email to the colleges you are interested in to request application materials.

The Bryn Mawr Library also has a reserved shelf of selected college related books.

Following is a list of guidebooks and websites. Some of the guides are stronger on presenting the academic and curricular sides of colleges; others are better for gaining a sense of general campus life and environment. Do your research well. Balance what you read. Consult as many of these recommended resources as you can.

Guidebooks

COLLEGE GUIDEBOOKS

KEY: (O) = OBJECTIVE, (S) = SUBJECTIVE

• Barron’s Profiles of American Colleges
  State-by-state listings of more than 1,650 accredited four-year colleges. (O)

• The College Handbook
  Detailed listings of more than 3,200 two- and four-year colleges in the U.S. and Canada. (O)

• The Fiske Guide to Colleges
  Descriptions of over 300 public and private U.S. schools with ratings of academics, social life and overall quality of living. (S)

• Index of Majors and Graduate Degrees
  Descriptions of more than 600 majors, listing nearly 3,000 schools offering them. (O)

• Insider’s Guide to the Colleges
  Student’s-eye views of more than 300 colleges in the U.S. and Canada. (S)

• Peterson’s Colleges with Programs for Students with Learning Disabilities
  Descriptions of more than 800 programs for learning-disabled students with two-year and four-year colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada. (O)

• Peterson’s Four-Year Colleges
  Comprehensive descriptions of more than 2,000 U.S., Canadian and U.S.-accredited foreign colleges and universities. (O)

• Peterson’s Professional Degree Programs in the Visual and Performing Arts
  Comprehensive descriptions of more than 1,000 professional programs in art, dance, music and theater. (O)

• UK University League Tables
  www.theguardian.com

• Peterson’s Sports Scholarships & College Athletic Programs
  College-by-college information on athletic programs at over 1,700 two- and four-year schools. (O)

• Princeton Review: The Best 357 Colleges
  Two-page descriptions of the selected schools based on surveys from over 50,000 students enrolled at the institutions. (S)

• Rugg’s Recommendations on the Colleges
  List of 1,035 colleges and universities sorted by major/occupation. (O)

• Making a Difference College Guide—Education to Shape a New World
  Definitive career-oriented guide for idealists and students who dance to a different drum. (S)

COLLEGE ADMISSION TESTING

• 10 Real SAT Reasoning Tests
  Contains ten actual SAT Reasoning Tests, sample questions from the PSAT/NMSQT and 80 practice questions with answers carefully explained.

• Real SAT Subject Tests
  Contains actual recent tests in 18 subjects; explains how each test is graded and provides the best strategies for various questions.

FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

• College Cost and Financial Aid Handbook
  Explains the financial aid system, how to apply, how to determine what the student must pay and how to make the most of available resources.

• College Money Handbook
  One-stop information source on financial aid at more than 1,800 four-year colleges.
• The Complete Scholarship Book
Alphabetical compendium lists more than 5,000 financial aid sources, both college-specific and general.

• Student Guide to Higher Education & Financial Aid in Maryland

GENERAL

• College Admissions Mystique
By Bill Mayher—An overview of the admission process in plain language.

• Colleges that Change Lives: 40 Schools You Should Know About Even If You’re Not a Straight-A Student
By Loren Pope—40 schools you may not have heard of that develop potential in a wide range of students.

• Looking Beyond the Ivy League: Finding the College That’s Right for You
By Loren Pope—Practical advice on how and why to look beyond well-known schools to choose the best college for you.

• The Smart Girl’s Guide to College
Cristina Page (ed.)—A guide to the college admission process written just for young women.

• The Gatekeepers: Inside the Admissions Process of a Premier College
By Jacques Steinberg—An intimate in-depth look at one college’s admission cycle.

• Harvard Schmarvard
By Jay Matthews—Getting beyond the Ivy League to the college that is best for you.

• College Unranked: Ending the College Admission Frenzy
Edited by Lloyd Thacker—A collection of essays by top admissions professionals

JUST FOR PARENTS

• Almost Grown: Launching Your Child from High School to College
By Patricia Pasick—A guide through the final years of high school and the first years of college.

• College Admissions: A Crash Course for Panicked Parents
By Sally Rubenstone and Sidonia Dalby—A no-nonsense book that gives parents a quick overview of the admissions process.

• 50 College Admission Directors Speak to Parents
By Sandra MacGowan and Sarah McGinty—Advice from seasoned admission professionals.

• Letting Go: A Parent’s Guide to Understanding the College Years
By Karen Levin Coburn—Provides practical information and advice about the physical and emotional challenges of “letting go.”

Websites

GENERAL ADVICE AND COUNSELING

• collegenet.com
A search engine that finds colleges, community and technical schools, using criteria such as geographic region, size of enrollment, majors offered and intercollegiate sports.

• collegeview.com
Profiles of over 3,500 colleges and universities, electronic application forms, career planning tools, and virtual tours of over 200 colleges; college search.

• collegeboard.com
In addition to testing information, this site includes college information for students, parents and counselors.

• petersons.com
Valuable resources on schools from K-12 through graduate study and information on distance learning.

• review.com
Advice on colleges, careers and graduate schools, with a yearly ranking of colleges as determined by college students themselves.

FINANCIAL AID ADVICE AND COUNSELING

• fastweb.com
Financial aid searches with a database of over 180,000 private scholarships.

• finaid.org
A comprehensive and independent guide to student financial aid sources and services.

• http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_sss/welcome.jsp
Provides access to FundFinder, a free scholarship search engine.

• An estimator for the CSS Profile.
• salliemae.com
  Information on education loans; tips on shopping for financial aid.

• nasfaa.org
  Click on “Students, Parents & Counselors” for financial aid information.

• fafsa.ed.gov
  FAFSA on the web.

• profileonline.collegeboard.com
  CSS Profile online.

• collegeboard.org/profile
  CSS Profile.

• fairtest.org
  A website that includes a list of colleges and universities that de-emphasize the use of standardized tests by making admissions decisions without using the SAT or ACT.

• wiredscholar.com
  Scholarship search sponsored by Sallie Mae.

• BlackExcel.org/link4.htm
  Scholarship gateway for minority students.

• www.hsf.net

• college-scholarships.com

• njscacol/finaid.htm
  New Jersey Counselor Association scholarship resources.

• petersons.com/finaid/

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TESTING

• act.org
  ACT web site.

• collegeboard.com
  College Board Online—register for SAT, send scores, SAT Learning Center.

GAP YEAR—AKA DEFERRING COLLEGE AND/OR SUMMER OPPORTUNITIES

• nols.edu
  National Outdoor Leadership School.

• thesca.org
  Student Conservation Association.

• nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps

• cityyear.org
  A corps of 17- to 24-year-olds who work in low-income neighborhoods tutoring kids, running after-school programs and helping to revitalize communities.

• getonthebus.org
  Through the Audubon Expedition Institute, students travel across the country in a yellow bus and learn by doing.

• kibbutzprogramcenter.org
  Kibbutz Program Center; Jewish youth can spend a year on a kibbutz in Israel.

• stint.com
  Offers Christian high school students a chance to travel to Guatemala or the Dominican Republic to do ministry work.

• dynasty.org
  A live-and-work program based in Worcester, Massachusetts.

• timeoutassociates.com
  Independent consultant (Bob Gilpin).

• interimprograms.com
  Independent consultant (Holly Bull).

• leapnow.org
  Independent consultant (Sam Bull).

• studyoverseas.com

ART

• petersons.com/vpa/select/artse.html
  A starting point for students interested in the visual arts, and dance the site lists schools with academic programs in various areas.

ATHLETICS

• ncaa.org
  A general summary of college athletic eligibility criteria and recruiting regulations.

• naia.org
  National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics.

APPLYING ONLINE

• universalcollegeapp.org

• commonapp.org
  An application that is accepted by over 300 institutions.
SPECIAL INTEREST SITES

- catholiccollegesonline.org
  Catholic colleges.

- cccu.org
  Council for Christian Colleges and Universities.

- venturescholar.org
  Website dedicated to the historically under-represented in medicine and related health professions, engineering and other sciences, and math-based careers.

- hillel.org/college-guide
  Click on “Prospective Students and Parents,” then “Guide to Jewish Life on Campus” to get more information about Jewish student demographics and Jewish life on campus.

- bestcolleges.com/resources/college-planning-with-learning-disabilities
  College planning for students with learning differences.

- services.aamc.org/curdir/section3/degree2.cfm
  Combined BA/MD programs.

- collegemotion.com
  Free video virtual tour and video information about colleges, generated, run, and maintained by students.