

# **Norfolk County Agricultural High School**



## **College Planning Handbook 2020-2021 CLASS OF 2021**

**Norfolk County Agricultural High School  
Student Services**

# Contents

Introduction.....	1
Senior Year Calendar.....	2-3
Factors to Consider in Creating a College List.....	4-5
The Admissions Process.....	6
Visiting Colleges.....	7
Application Checklist.....	8
Admissions Standards for State Colleges and Universities.....	9-11
Internet Resources.....	12
SAT and ACT Test Dates.....	13-14
Frequently Asked Questions.....	15-16

## **College Application Information**

NCAHS Address	400 Main Street Walpole, MA 02081
NCAHS Phone Number	508-668-0268
NCAHS Fax Number	508-668-3219
NCAHS SAT School Code	222172
NCAHS ACT School Code	222172
SAT - College Board Web Site	<a href="http://www.collegeboard.com">www.collegeboard.com</a>
ACT web site	<a href="http://www.actstudent.org">www.actstudent.org</a>

## **Guidance Counselors**

Guidance Counselors are assigned by the first letter of the student's last name. Counselors are located in Student Services and can be reached at 508.668.0268 and the following extensions or email addresses:

A – F	Ms. Lee Hoegler	x12215	lhoegler@norfolkaggie.org
G – M	Mr. Joe Huff	x12217	jhuff@norfolkaggie.org
N – Z	Mr. Myles McPartland	x12216	mmcpartland@norfolkaggie.org

Heidi Black, Director of Student Services  
[hblack@norfolkaggie.org](mailto:hblack@norfolkaggie.org)

Sheryl Simoes, Administrative Assistant  
[ssimoes@norfolkaggie.org](mailto:ssimoes@norfolkaggie.org)  
508-668-0268 ext. 12207

## Introduction

The process of researching, identifying, and applying to college can appear to be a difficult and overwhelming task during this last year of high school. Our goal is to provide you with information, support, and advice to make this process a positive part of your senior year!

Our role is to provide you with information and tools to assist you in searching for colleges that meet your needs and interests. It is also our role to provide you with information about your progress at our school and the requirements for admission to various colleges and universities. We will assist with recommendations, reviewing applications, answering questions, providing information, and any other help we can give within the school setting. We invite parents to play an active role, understanding that family input is an important part of this process. However, it is important to note that the job of looking for, applying to, and choosing a college remains the student's responsibility. It is up to each student to take the lead in this process.

### **COVID Pandemic-Related Changes:**

The College Admissions process and criteria have changed in the past few years, but especially now, due to the COVID pandemic. Options are opening up before that may have previously not been considered, such as: applying and deferring for a year, starting at a Community College and then transferring to a university, applying to more state colleges and/or colleges closer to home, and taking a gap year.

The guidance staff is here to assist the student through this process to help them to determine what is the best course of action for their goals and needs during this very different time in college and career planning.

## SENIOR YEAR Timeline for Class of 2021 - COVID CHANGES

### September and October

- \_\_\_ Counselors provide lessons on College Process in Career/Tech classes
- \_\_\_ **REQUIRED:** Schedule a college counseling meeting with your counselor in the first 2 months
- \_\_\_ Review your entire college planning folder given out in class
- \_\_\_ Revise/update your College resume for applications and recommendations
- \_\_\_ Narrow choices for college applications
- \_\_\_ Check if colleges are Test-Optional and register for SAT/ACT testing!
- \_\_\_ Visit colleges Virtually or in-person for open house and tours - MAKE an appointment!!!
- \_\_\_ Finalize a list of colleges, determine which schools use Common Application and which do not; begin application and essays and/or supplemental questions
- \_\_\_ Request recommendations (using necessary forms) from teachers/counselors or others
- \_\_\_ **IN NAVIANCE:** Update your college list in NAVIANCE and move final schools to the "Will Apply" List
- \_\_\_ **IN NAVIANCE:** Invite Teachers who will be providing your letters of Recommendation
- \_\_\_ FAFSA Application open; parents can begin filling out.

### November

- \_\_\_ Deadlines begin for Early Action/Early Decision for many colleges
- \_\_\_ UMASS AMHERST EARLY DEADLINE IS 11/5
- \_\_\_ Registration for winter SAT and ACT testing if you can or need
- \_\_\_ Review College Essay w/English teacher, school counselor, or another qualified adult
- \_\_\_ Complete needed Lists in NAVIANCE,
- \_\_\_ IF Necessary, SEND SAT/ACT scores from The Collegeboard the ACT directly to your colleges  
<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat-subject-tests/scores/sending-scores>  
<https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/scores/sending-your-scores.html>
- \_\_\_ Check NAVIANCE: have you listed your teachers, have you listed all the schools you are applying to?
- \_\_\_ Complete Common App or school applications; make an appointment with your school counselor for review
- \_\_\_ FAFSA Application open; parents can begin filling out. <https://studentaid.gov/>

### December

- \_\_\_ Early Action/Early Decision Action deadlines for some colleges
- \_\_\_ IF Needed: Registration for SAT and ACT Testing and send scores
- \_\_\_ FAFSA Application open; parents can begin filling out: <https://studentaid.gov/>
- \_\_\_ Financial Aid/CSS Profile registration for some private colleges should be completed and submitted
- \_\_\_ Begin outside Scholarship Search: Naviance, our internal Scholarship Page,  
<https://www.fastweb.com/directory/scholarships-for-high-school-seniors>

### January

- \_\_\_ Deadline for many regular decision college applications
- \_\_\_ Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) should be filed no later than February 1:  
<https://studentaid.gov/>
- \_\_\_ Begin online search for financial aid information (see websites listed under Resources on the Web)

## **February**

- \_\_\_ Deadlines (2/1-2/15) for many regular college applications
- \_\_\_ Scholarship/Financial Aid search and Completing Scholarship Applications

## **March – April**

- \_\_\_ Most colleges notify applicants of admissions decisions; compare financial aid packages
- \_\_\_ If necessary, visit colleges during spring break to help make final decisions
- \_\_\_ Most Scholarship Applications due

## **May**

**Decide which college you will attend & send in the required deposit no later than May 1!**

**DO NOT MISS DEADLINES OR YOUR SPACE WILL BE FILLED**

- \_\_\_ Contact other colleges who accepted you via email with a “thanks, but no thanks” note, to inform that you have decided not to attend;
- \_\_\_ Decide if you want to DEFER - see your counselor about How to do this
- \_\_\_ Decide if you want to remain on waiting lists; inform colleges
- \_\_\_ See your counselor about your decision, or if you need help with a new application if necessary
- \_\_\_ Deadline for Norfolk Aggie Scholarship – check the Aggie website!

## Factors to Consider in Creating Your College List

### **Admissions Requirements**

What are my grades, GPA, class rank?

What are the average SAT or ACT scores of admitted students?

Is the school a REACH, REASONABLE, or SAFETY for me?

Do they require a foreign language (Many colleges outside of NE MIGHT require 2 yrs of high school foreign language or 2 semesters of College Foreign language)

Does the college have different admissions requirements for by major--Nursing and Engineering majors sometimes have different, more stringent requirements!

What is the percentage of acceptance?

Do they offer merit aid or scholarships?

### **Costs**

How much is tuition, plus room and board, books, and other expenses per semester?

Can my family and I afford this?

Check out the Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) on the college's website to get an idea of cost.

How much financial aid can I plan on, AND how much can I (and my family) take out in loans? Am I willing to look for/apply for scholarships?

What are reasonable costs and debt considering my family situation and how much I will make upon graduating?

Can I work while in school and how much will that cover?

How much money do I want to owe when I graduate?

### **Location**

In-state or out? Within New England or another region?

Can I afford to be multiple states away?

How far do I want to be from my family? How far do I want to travel on weekends if I plan on coming home on weekends/breaks?

Can I live at home and commute (savings: \$5000-\$10,000)?

Do I want to be in a big city, suburbs, or a small, rural town?

### **Student Body**

Size of college:

- Small is less than 5,000 students
- Medium is 5-15,000 students
- Large is 15-30,000 students.?

Can I adjust to a large population after being in such a small high school?

What is the ratio of men to women?

Is there diversity and institutional support for this diversity?

Do the students act and look like me? How important is this to me?

### **Faculty – Extracurricular**

What is the student-faculty ratio?

Can I get extra help if I need it?

What sports are there? Can I participate in some way in sports?

Are there fraternities and sororities? What is social life like?

What other clubs and activities are there that interest me?

How many students stay on campus on the weekends? Is there a range of activities to do on the weekends?

**Academic Program**

Do they have the major that I am interested in? What degrees and certifications are offered? Can I change majors if I decide?

When are the vacations and how is the calendar run – semester or trimester? How many classes will I have to take?

How big are the classes? Do they have internships?

How can I get extra help or tutoring? If I have a disability, can I access services and accommodations?

**Other**

What is the campus atmosphere? Are people friendly?

What is the library like?

How are the dorms? Is there housing for all four years?

How is the food? Is there a health facility on campus?

Is there a career resource center? What is there to do that is fun? How safe is the campus? Could I live here for four years and be happy? Can I picture myself at this school?

## The Admission Process

Colleges and Universities decide, usually by an admissions committee, who will be admitted. **DUE TO COVID, MANY COLLEGES ARE REPORTING THAT THEY WILL BE ASSESSING CANDIDATES MORE HOLISTICALLY, MEANING THEY WILL BE LOOKING AT #3-6 MORE.** Some students are offered admission, some are placed on a waiting list, and some are not offered admission. Schools place an emphasis on different criteria (please note the minimum requirements for entrance to state colleges and universities listed in this booklet) but generally, the important factors are:

1. **High School grades – transcript.** Schools want to see that you have taken the most challenging classes *for your ability and how you performed* in those courses (psst: they want to see good grades)! They will look at the five major areas – English, math, science, social studies and foreign language (see your counselor for info on the foreign language exemption for some colleges and vocational replacements for NCAHS students). Junior and senior year grades are very important, thus, you should concentrate on getting excellent grades.
2. **SAT and/or ACT Scores.** Most colleges require you to take the SAT or ACT, *but not all.* **DURING COVID, MANY SAT/ACT TEST DATES WERE CANCELED. MOST COLLEGES ARE TEST OPTIONAL THIS YEAR.** If you do not test well, a strong academic record (transcript) may often offset a disappointing test score. However, high scores on SATs or ACTs with a poor academic record often is looked at less favorably by colleges. ACTs or SATs should be taken at the end of the Junior year, and/or at the beginning of the senior year. You must register in advance and take them at a local high school: [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) for SAT; [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) for the ACT. A major credit card or fee waiver (see a counselor for a waiver) is necessary for online registration; see page 12 for test fees. Consider taking the ACT if your SAT scores are not as high as you wish. Study for the SAT or ACT by taking practice tests, using Khan Academy, or taking a course offered in your town or here at the Aggie (after school, spring only). Check with colleges to see if they require SAT II Subject Tests and the dates for those tests. You may send your scores to colleges when you sign-up (4 schools for free) or when you submit your application through your ACT or College Board account.
3. **Application Essay.** Most colleges require a short, personal essay (around 500 words) that answers a particular prompt. This should be both well-constructed and carefully composed. Please see your counselor or English teacher for our handout about writing the college essay. Be sure you have the essay carefully reviewed for spelling, grammar, and content by at least one teacher or counselor. Make sure that you answer the question, follow the guidelines as required by the school or Common App, and check for errors. Some colleges will have additional short answer prompts (100 words or less). These “supplemental” essays should also be reviewed by a counselor or English teacher.
4. **The Application.** Most colleges use on-line forms or the Common Application. Save your password and user name when you create your account. Take your time, use proper punctuation, capitalization, and spelling--be neat, accurate, and impressive. All applications should be reviewed by your counselor prior to sending them to ensure proper completion.
5. **Teacher or Counselor Recommendations.** Using the staff recommendation form, ask teachers who know you well and who have knowledge of your work at our school to write a recommendation for you. Give them at least two weeks’ notice and the required information. Ask them to be specific about a particular skill or incident so that you are distinguished from the other applicants. **LETTERS ARE UPLOADED DIRECTLY TO NAVIANCE.**
6. **Extracurricular Activities and Work Experience.** Some colleges value this information, particularly if you are applying to a specialty school such as UMass Stockbridge, or a specific vocationally-orientated program. Highlight all volunteer and work experience that makes you stand out in this area. Use the resume that you developed at school to highlight your activities related to the major you are interested in.

## 6 Visiting Colleges

Students and parents are encouraged to visit prospective colleges and universities. This visit can give you a sense of the school and maybe a way to eliminate or solidify your choices about where to apply.

**COVID UPDATE: MANY COLLEGES OFFER VIRTUAL TOURS. THEY WILL ALSO CONNECT YOU TO A STUDENT AMBASSADOR OR ADMISSIONS REPRESENTATIVE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS. SOME SCHOOLS ARE DOING IN PERSON TOURS, BUT YOU MUST MAKE AN APPOINTMENT.**

Norfolk Aggie will give you an excused absence for visiting a college as long you complete and submit a College Visit Form prior to the visit. You can download the form from our website or see your counselor or Mrs. Ward for the form.

A great time to visit a college is during high school vacations because they have different vacation schedules. It is important to see the college when students are there, so plan visits accordingly.

**To visit a college:** Go to the college website and reserve a spot for an Information Session and Campus Tour. You can request to see particular facilities or departments (as in the Equestrian Center, or Biology Department). If you know a former Aggie graduate at the school, try to meet up with them--it's a great way to get an inside look at a school. As you tour, consider some of the factors that are listed in this booklet in creating your college list while on the tour.

If you cannot arrange a visit to a college that is far away, check to see if a college admissions representative will be in the Boston area and see if you can attend that session.

**CANCELLED DUE TO COVID:** The Aggie hosts admissions representatives from colleges at our school. Please come to these sessions and introduce yourself to the admissions representative.

Plan ahead for college visits taking into consideration the time you may be missing at NCAHS. Remember that all work missed while on a college visit must be made up.

**Interviews:** Interviews are not as common as they once were. If very interested in a school, you can call the Admissions office and request an interview. You may also request a tour of a particular area or an interview within a particular department. Be prepared for the interview by:

- being relaxed
- dressing appropriately
- being prepared to talk positively about yourself and your interests
- being honest about your strengths and weaknesses
- having questions you want to be answered ready (these should not be questions that you can easily get off of the website by yourself such as how many students attend the school, or what majors do you offer?)

## FINANCIAL AID EXPLAINED

There are a variety of ways to get Money for College: Here is a primer on FINANCIAL AID

**1. Federal loans and Grants:** This is money that you receive when your parent/S applies for Federal money from the FAFSA.

**Federal Loans:** money to be borrowed and paid back

- Parents can apply beginning in October through this website:  
<https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>
- These loans are based on your parents' income
- The loans are between \$2200 and \$5500 a year and are in the STUDENT'S name
- Parent reapplies each year
- Subsidized loans: the federal government pays the interest rate
- Unsubsidized loans: student pays interest rate--it is very low
- If a student takes these loans each year, it totals about \$20K-\$30K.
- These loans are paid back 6 months after graduation by the student. The loan repayment can be set up based on income, length of repayment, etc.

**Federal Grants:** Money that is given; NOT to be paid back.

- Pell Grant. Typically to qualify for a Pell Grant, the family has to earn less than \$26K'

**2. Scholarships: Inside and outside Scholarships**

- **Scholarship offered from the College -Inside:** This is money offered from the college you got into (this will come with your admissions letter and/or from the college's financial aid office). Always check to see if the amount is for all 4 years, or yearly. Note what GPA you must maintain to keep the scholarship.

**Outside scholarships that you find:** These are scholarships that you search for using a Google search or scholarship website. Ideas on where to search for scholarships:

- your parents' employers or Union
- your local high school as you have access to any scholarship offered by your town as a resident of the town      - [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)
- your local church      - Google search by your major

**3. Private Educational Loans/Family Savngs/529 College Account/Out-of-Pocket:**

**Whatever is left that you owe is covered by you and your parents** (they will be either taking a loan out or they will co-sign) through outside educational loans from a bank or MEFA, SOFI or other educational financing organizations. Google search for the BEST Educational Loan offers.

**You MUST Give DEPOSIT TO THE COLLEGE BY MAY 1**

## ADMISSIONS STANDARDS FOR THE MASSACHUSETTS STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITY

### Introduction:

The Massachusetts Board of Higher Education adopted higher admissions standards for the Commonwealth's four-year public institutions. These institutions include:

Bridgewater State University  
Fitchburg State University  
Framingham State University  
Massachusetts College of Art  
Massachusetts Maritime Academy  
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts  
Salem State University  
Westfield State University  
Worcester State University  
University of Massachusetts Amherst  
University of Massachusetts Boston  
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth  
University of Massachusetts Lowell

### MINIMUM ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS for MASSACHUSETTS STATE COLLEGES

The admissions standards for the state universities emphasize a strong academic high school background so that students enter college ready to learn. These standards represent minimum requirements; meeting them does not guarantee admission, since campus officials consider a wide range of factors in admissions decisions. Students shall have fulfilled all requirements for the high school diploma or its equivalent upon enrollment. ***It is important to note that admissions standards for each of the state's community colleges differ. Community colleges may admit any high school graduate or GED recipient.***

#### **Freshman Applicants**

The new admissions standards for freshmen applicants have three main parts:

1. 16 required academic courses;
2. a minimum required grade point average (GPA) earned in college preparatory courses completed at the time of application; and
3. applicants must also submit an SAT or ACT score (not required for Community College)

#### **Academic Course Requirements**

Sixteen college preparatory courses distributed as follows are required. (A course is equivalent to one full school year of study. Courses count toward the distribution only if passed.)

English	4 courses
Mathematics	4 courses (Including Algebra II)
Sciences	3 courses (two lab courses)
Social Sciences	2 courses
Foreign Languages	2 courses <b>(see guidance about exemptions for voc students)</b>
Electives	2 courses

**Minimum Required Grade Point Average (GPA)**

The GPA must be achieved based on all college preparatory courses completed at the time of application and should be weighted for accelerated (Honors or Advanced Placement) courses (the Aggie currently does not have Honors or AP courses). **Effective Fall 2001, the required minimum weighted high school GPA is 3.0 for the four-year public campuses based on a 4.0 scale.**

Parents and students should be aware that grades from the Norfolk County Agricultural High School are translated to State College and University Standards, and a 3.0-grade point average at NCAHS does not necessarily mean that the translated GPA will remain the same as colleges will recalculate NCAHS GPA for admissions requirements. Furthermore, most state colleges and universities use the full year, academic grades to determine GPA, and not necessarily all of the vocational classes taken at the Aggie.

**Minimum Grade Point Average (GPA)**

The new minimum weighted GPA for admission to state colleges and for the University of Massachusetts is 3.0. This is calculated at the end of the seventh semester and must be achieved based on all college preparatory courses completed at the time of application and is weighted for accelerated (honors, Advanced Placement, etc.,) courses.

**SAT/ACT Scores**

Applicants must submit SAT or ACT test scores for consideration if they are applying to a state college/university or a UMass school. SAT/ACT scores are NOT required for community colleges.

**Sliding Scale (used when GPA is lower than the minimum required GPA)**

If an applicant's GPA falls below the required minimum for the school, a sliding scale will apply. This scale should be used **only when** an applicant's GPA falls below the required 3.0 minimum for admission to the state colleges/university or UMass.

**Sliding Scale for Freshman Applicants to UMass Schools**

<b><u>HS GPA</u></b>	<b><u>SAT Must Equal or Exceed</u></b> <b>(combined Reading &amp; Math)</b>	<b><u>ACT Must Equal or Exceed</u></b>
2.51-2.99	950	20
2.41-2.50	990	21
2.31-2.40	1030	22
2.21-2.30	1070	23
2.11-2.20	1110	24
2.00-2.10	1150	25

**\*Effective fall 2000, no applicant with a HS GPA below 2.00 may be admitted to a state college or university campus.**

**Sliding Scale for Freshmen Applicants to all other State College or University**

<b><u>HS GPA</u></b>	<b><u>SAT Must Equal or Exceed</u></b>	<b><u>ACT Must Equal or Exceed</u></b>
2.51-2.99	920	19
2.41-2.50	960	20
2.31-2.40	1000	21
2.21-2.30	1040	22
2.11-2.20	1080	23
2.00-2.10	1120	24

## **Mass Transfer Program: Transfers from Massachusetts Community Colleges**

Massachusetts Community Colleges and each of the College and State University campuses participate in a Joint Admissions program through which Community College graduates from designated transfer programs with a 2.5 or higher GPA are guaranteed admissions to a College or State University. To participate, students should sign up for the Mass Transfer program when they enroll at their Community College. Students graduating from a Community College with a 3.0 or better can earn reduced tuition. See this website for more details: <https://www.mass.edu/masstransfer/home.asp>

## **Vocational-Technical Student Applicants**

Vocational-technical students must complete 16 college preparatory courses, distributed in the same manner and with the same minimum grade point averages required of other high school graduates, with the following exceptions:

1. Two vocational-technical courses may be used to fulfill the two required electives.
2. Vocational-technical high school graduates who do not complete the two required college preparatory foreign language courses must complete an additional elective college preparatory course, for a total of three such courses, and satisfy *one* of the following options:
  - Complete at least one Carnegie unit of a foreign language;
  - Complete a fourth Carnegie unit of mathematics or science, which need not be a laboratory course; or
  - Complete one Carnegie unit of computer science.

Note: A Carnegie unit represents a full academic year of study or its equivalent in a specific subject.

This requirement will remain in effect until the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE) implements its requirements regarding foreign language study for vocational-technical students. At that time, vocational-technical applicants for admission to UMass and the state Colleges/Universities will be required to meet MA-DESE requirements for foreign language study.

## **Norfolk County Agricultural High School**

Norfolk County Agricultural High School graduates may meet the Board of Higher Education Admissions requirements by completing:

- 4 years of English
- 4 years of Mathematics
- 4 years of Science
- 3 years of Social Sciences

Additionally, students may complete one or more of the following (depending upon the the number of courses taken in the list above) in order to meet the 16 Carnegie Unit Requirement:

- Animal Anatomy and Physiology and Animal Genetics and Nutrition
- Plant Health Care and Plant Materials

Students should consult school counselors for specific information regarding these admissions standards.

**Resources on the Web:**

<https://www.naviance.com/>

Our Portal to Search for colleges, send transcripts, letters of recommendation.

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

Register for the SAT, comprehensive college information, SAT test prep

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

Register for the ACT, comprehensive college information, ACT test prep

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

Online applications for many colleges--check to see if your school is on their list

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

College search engine for building list

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

College search engine, info about colleges

[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

FREE Application for Federal Student Aid

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

Comprehensive scholarship information

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

Comprehensive scholarship information

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

Comprehensive financial aid information

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

Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority

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

College Information and links

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

College SAT and ACT test prep

### Frequently Asked Questions:

1. Which test should I take, the SAT or the ACT?

This is a harder question to answer because the SAT has changed and includes Algebra II and a writing section. You need to research information about both the SAT and ACT to see which test may be better for you. Take practice tests for both the SAT and ACT (available in the Student Services Office) to see how you do on both of them to help you decide which test is best for you.

2. Do all of the SAT and ACT tests that I take count – and how are they reported to colleges?

For the SAT, Score Choice gives you the option to choose which scores (by test date for the SAT and by individual test for SAT Subject Tests™) you send to colleges—in accordance with an institution's stated score-use practice. You can choose scores from one, several, or all SAT test dates. Colleges and universities will only receive the scores that you send them—your scores will not be released for admission purposes without your specific consent. You can choose to send either ACT or SAT scores, and you can choose which ACT scores to send.

3. How much do SAT or ACT scores count towards admission to college? How should I study for these tests?

It generally depends on the college, however, the first thing that colleges usually look at are your grades, and the level of classes you are taking. So – get good grades and take the highest level of courses you can handle! Most colleges do consider SAT or ACT scores (generally as one of the top two or three criteria for admission), so don't take the tests without studying and taking some practice tests. Remember to do some research and pick the test that is right for you. Study for these tests by reading, reading, and reading, and by practicing, practicing, and practicing. Use study programs available on the SAT and ACT websites, seek other study guides available online or at local libraries and bookstores. There are even courses you can take to help you but some of them are expensive. **Don't take the SAT or ACT without practicing first!** Also, check to see if colleges have waivers for students with disabilities if this applies to you. Some colleges no longer consider SAT or ACT scores for admission. Look at websites for this information.

4. What colleges should I apply to – and how do I know which ones might be best for me?

You should begin your college search by looking for colleges that offer specific programs that you are interested in studying. If you are not sure about what to study, then you should look through this booklet to decide what other factors may be important to you regarding choosing a college. You can look online for much of the information about certain schools, but you should also visit colleges to get an idea of what the setting and students are like. Make an appointment with your counselor to discuss this issue in detail.

## 5. How do I register for the SAT and ACT?

You register online at [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) or [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org).

It will take approximately 30 minutes the first time you register. You will need to upload a picture for ID purposes and a credit card handy. Also, if you are applying for accommodations as a special needs student, you will need to see Ms. Black about applying for testing accommodations prior to registering for the test.

## 6. Are there colleges that will take anyone – and do I have to pass the MCAS in order to go to college?

Yes, there are colleges that will take anyone – your school counselors will help you with this. Community colleges will admit anyone who applies who has received a high school diploma. However, you must pass the MCAS in order to receive a high school diploma.

## 7. Can I visit colleges during the school day, and is that an excused absence?

Yes, you can and should visit colleges. You can get a college visit form from our website or your counselor for a college visit day. You will need to have a note from your parents in order to do this. This will be an excused absence as long as all of your teachers approve the sign out sheet and you get approval in advance from your school counselor.

## 8. When are college application deadlines?

Deadlines vary, and you should learn about early decision, early action, and regular decision and rolling admissions. Every college is different, so you will need to keep this information organized. Many colleges have moved up their application deadlines for the regular decision to January or February. **DON'T BE LATE!** Colleges will usually not accept late applications. Use the application checklist in this packet to help you keep organized!

## 9. What do I do if I don't get into the college(s) of my choice?

Don't panic – go and see your school counselor. Have several choices for colleges, apply to a range of schools, and understand that if a college doesn't accept you, there are other options. Most students are satisfied with the college they attend, but if not, then transferring after the first year (with strong grades) is also an option. Some students decide to start at local community colleges and transfer later if they don't get into the colleges of their choice (this can be very economical too--often saving thousands of dollars). This is a wonderful and affordable option, and there are transfer options to state schools that are very positive (see Mass Transfer program). There is a college for everyone; sometimes it just takes a little patience to find the right one for you.

**NOTES/Questions:**