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College Advising at Deerfield Academy

Our mission is to advise and support our students as they consider their futures beyond Deerfield. In our student-centered process we urge students to be self-aware as they explore their full range of options. We assist them in preparing authentic applications that highlight their academic accomplishments and talents. All of our work is guided by Deerfield’s core values—respect, honesty, and concern for others.

We encourage students to focus on finding the ‘right college match.’ For our students that means identifying and applying to colleges and universities where they will be intellectually challenged and socially engaged; schools which will encourage and inspire them as learners, thinkers, and citizens.

Applying to college is a process of discovery, of pondering who you are and who you want to become, of contemplating what role you want to play in the larger world. The college search is, in essence, an extended research project, which will require students to look within themselves for many of the answers. Students will learn to identify and assess themselves, to set priorities, and to make major decisions. How a student navigates through this process is just as important as where he/she ends up. Along the way students will develop and hone their organization, communication, and research skills.

The Deerfield College Advising staff has a depth and range of experience unmatched by many schools. We are here to guide and support you as you navigate the college admissions process. We believe that each student has his/her own journey through this process so almost all of our work with students is individualized. Our commitment is to be responsive to both students and parents, as well as professional, realistic and well-informed.

Specific college advising staff responsibilities include:

- Developing a balanced list of prospective colleges based on a student’s performance and stated preferences
- Advocating for all Deerfield students in the college process
- Serving as a resource for parents and students throughout the process
- Estimating chances for admission based on past experience and Naviance data
- Writing an honest letter of recommendation for each student with an emphasis on strengths and growth
- Providing appropriate support to students as they write essays and prepare their applications
- Sending transcripts and recommendations to colleges in a timely fashion based on the list students provide in Naviance
- Maintaining strong, authentic relationships with college admissions officers
**College Advising Office & Staff**

The College Advising Office is located on the second floor of the Main School Building.

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The College Search Process

Ask Yourself...

The more self-aware students are in this process the more effective it will be. If students can be specific about what they want in a college, it is easier to help them identify colleges that fit their criteria. Of course, we understand that many students, especially at this early stage, don’t yet have a clear understanding of what they are looking for and we are here to help them. Many students need some help as they begin to think about themselves as college candidates and try to establish criteria for colleges they want to investigate. Here are a few questions parents and students might begin with. They are, obviously, directed at the student.

- What are your academic interests?
- What are your strengths as a student? In the classroom? Outside of the classroom?
- Have you worked to your potential?
- What activities do you enjoy the most?
- Do your activities show any pattern of commitment, competence, or contribution?
- What do you consider your greatest contribution to your community? (school or local)
- What are the characteristics that you feel are crucial for you in a college?
- Which interests do you plan to pursue?
- How do you want to grow and change?
- What particular facilities are important to you?
- How much of an academic challenge are you looking for?
- Is a particular location important to you? To your parents?
- Do you need academic structure?
- Does the composition of the student body matter to you? Describe.
- Will financial aid be a factor?

Where to Begin to Gather Information

We recommend the Fiske Guide to Colleges, which gives excellent thumbnail sketches of colleges, and the Princeton Review’s Best 379 Colleges. The College Advising Office offers a collection of college resource material. Of course, the Internet is brimming with information. A few sites we have found useful for students are collegeboard.org, gocollege.com, and unigo.com. Lastly, individual college websites provide students with the latest information about their campuses and their admission criteria.

RECOMMENDED COLLEGE GUIDEBOOKS

- The College Handbook, The College Board
- The Fiske Guide to Colleges, Edward B. Fiske
- The Best 379 Colleges, Princeton Review
- Colleges that Change Lives, Loren Pope
- Looking Beyond the Ivy League, Loren Pope
- Barron’s Profiles of American Colleges, Barron’s
- Peterson’s Guide to Four Year Colleges, Peterson’s Guides
**Naviance**

Deerfield subscribes to Naviance, an Internet database that we find to be tremendously helpful in the college search process. Deerfield juniors will be given a password/log-on to access the Deerfield Naviance data in the fall. Naviance helps students keep track of their prospective colleges, active applications, and gives them information about the likelihood of their admission to each college based on the results of previous Deerfield students. Naviance can show students exactly where they fall on a graph of test scores (x axis) and GPA (y axis) of other DA students who applied in prior years to each college. It is important to note, however, when looking at these graphs that “hooked” students (recruited athletes, legacies, underrepresented minorities, first generation college students, and development cases) are not flagged as such and will skew the averages somewhat. The Naviance graphs help students, advisors, and parents to develop a balanced list of “reach,” “possible,” and “safer” schools.

**Selectivity**

Most of our students go on to independent colleges and universities. The biggest hurdle that many of them face is their desire to apply to the same short list of colleges in which most of their classmates at Deerfield, and students at other New England boarding and day schools, are also interested. The Ivy League is setting new records each year for numbers of applications, from all over the world. Many smaller colleges (Amherst, Williams, Colgate, Middlebury, Bowdoin, for example) have benefited from the Ivy overflow and have also become highly, highly selective. It is imperative that students look beyond the Northeast and beyond the standard list in order to consider the full range of colleges available to them. Pay careful attention to two pieces of information as you consider a particular college: What percentage of the students who applied was admitted last year? And what are the average SAT or ACT scores of those admitted and how do they compare with yours.

**Reputation**

A word of caution—please make your own decisions regarding the relative merits of colleges based on current information. It is easy to be influenced by stereotypes and past reputations, but times change and so do institutions! Does this college have the program you are seeking? Is there a good match between your ability and the intellectual life of the college? Remember that different colleges appeal to different individuals for a variety of reasons, and try to base your opinions on first-hand knowledge of a particular institution’s unique characteristics coupled with a realistic understanding of the student’s needs and talents. U.S. News & World Report and other similar ranking systems give only the most superficial glimpse of a college; they are certainly not ranking with your individual needs and talents in mind.
What Are Colleges Looking For?

When reviewing students’ applications admissions committees consider several factors: academic program and grades, standardized test scores, extracurricular and community based activities, recommendations, essays and, in some cases, interviews or demonstrated interest.

The Academic Program and Record

For the majority of our students, academic performance—the courses a student has taken and how well he or she has done in mastering their content—is central to his or her success as an applicant. While colleges like to see depth in every area of the curriculum they understand that scheduling and extracurricular commitments do not always allow for this. Although each college has different guidelines on course selection in high school, the most selective colleges are typically looking for: 4 years of English, 3 or more years of history/social science, 3 or more years of lab science, 4 years of one foreign language, and 4 years of math. It is also important to note that any student interested in applying to any of the University of California schools must take 1 year of the same arts course.

In June after the junior year we will send you a copy of your child’s transcript. While college admissions officers appreciate an improving record, performance all the way through high school will figure in their decisions. Many colleges ask students to indicate a possible major or to apply for specific programs. Obviously, an applicant's academic profile should match the program or major he/she applies for. Students should consult with their college advisor in selecting senior year courses.

Standardized Test Scores

While some colleges will play down their emphasis on standardized testing, we find that they play a significant part in the admission decision at most institutions. At most selective institutions, the average score for incoming freshmen hovers in the high 600’s on all parts of the SAT or 29-30 on the ACT. In the Ivy League and other highly selective schools, median scores are in the 700’s or above 30 on the ACT. Super-scoring (combining the highest scores from different test sittings) does happen at most institutions for the SAT’s, but less often for the ACT’s. While some students are admitted with scores considerably below these above averages, scores in the low 600’s or below 29 may be regarded as troublesome to admission committees at many highly selective schools.

Extracurricular Activities

Because admissions officers are looking for students who will add to the classroom as well as to the community, how students spends their time outside the classroom matters. Special talents, such as musical or athletic skills, managerial accomplishments, work with publications, or dramatic or artistic abilities, are all still weighed in the decisions. We find that admission committees favor a student who has a passion/does something well. While many college freshmen are well-rounded, admissions offices are wary of the student who does things just to build a long list of extra-curriculars for college applications.

Arts Supplements

You should begin to prepare your arts supplement over the summer before your senior year, whether you plan to submit a theater clip, a music clip, or slides of your artwork or photography. Art instructors at Deerfield are available to help students put together their portfolios in the fall of their senior year. Check carefully for due dates, which sometimes differ from application deadlines, and instructions about the desired/required format for your submission.

Recommendations

For most colleges, required recommendations will come from the college counselor and two teachers (of the student’s choosing.) We usually recommend that those teachers come from two different academic areas.
During the spring term of the junior year, students and their college advisor will discuss who to select for their teacher recommendations. Overall, recommendations help the college get a fuller picture and a better understanding of the applicant.

**Personal Statement/College Essays**

Colleges almost always require (yes, some do not) applicants to submit an essay. The essay is an opportunity for the student to showcase themselves. Being authentic is critical. As UPenn says on their website: “We carefully read each essay you submit, as they can help us get to know you much better than your transcripts and test scores. While essays are a good indication of how well you write, they are also windows into how you think, what you value, and how you see the world. Your numbers tell us what kind of student you are. Your essays tell us what sort of person you are—and provide a glimpse into the intangibles you might bring to our community.”

The 2014-2015 common application essay prompts (students choose one to answer and they are capped at 650 words) are:

- Some students have a background or story that is so central to their identity that they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
- Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what lessons did you learn?
- Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?
- Describe a place or environment where you are perfectly content. What do you do or experience there, and why is it meaningful to you?
- Discuss an accomplishment or event—formal or informal—that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.

In addition to the common application essay, many colleges ask very specific supplemental essay questions – some are short answer and some can be another 500-word essay. Each college will list its supplemental questions on their website.

**Legacy/Connections**

The whole question of alumni legacies or influential friends is difficult to gauge, but our general recommendation to students is not to be too proud to take advantage of “connections.” The alumni legacy does count for something; it may tip a candidate into the college when all else seems equal, but it also may only prompt an especially regretful letter of denial. Parents and students are cautioned, however, not to “manufacture connections,” asking for letters of reference from individuals who do not know the candidate well. Many students who are admitted to college have no “connections,” and using “connections” that one really doesn’t have can be a decidedly negative influence on the admission decision. We must also caution you not to rely too heavily on connections; they are obviously no substitute for a strong record and careful evaluation of the right match between student and college.
College Advising Timeline for Students

Freshman Year

Freshman year is more about acclimating to Deerfield and establishing a strong foundation for academic and extracurricular success than it is about applying to college. Our advice to students is to use this time wisely, and to make the most of the opportunities available here at Deerfield. Get involved in activities which interest you. Seek out courses that will appropriately stimulate and challenge you - course selection and how you perform in those courses is key to establishing a strong academic profile. Consequently, spend time speaking to your faculty advisor, the College Advising Office, if necessary, and your parents regarding what you plan on studying.

There are a few areas where students and families could be planning ahead at this time. If appropriate, freshmen may take an SAT II if they have advanced standing in a particular subject. Also, for potential Division 1 or 2 athletes, be sure to check with Vita Thiel if you have questions about NCAA compliance, particularly if you repeated a grade.

Overall, you don’t need to think too much about the details of the college admission process. Instead work hard, get involved, discover your passions, and have some fun.

Sophomore Year

Sophomore students should begin to prepare themselves for the admissions process, not by selecting specific colleges to apply to, but by thorough self-exploration. At this early stage it is helpful to know what one’s personal preferences are, as well as what the college search process ahead will look like. To this end, the college advisors will run trimester based pre-college advising sessions on topics such as personal assessment, understanding testing and making a plan, course selection, and making the most of summer opportunities.

For two weeks in January, college advisors will be available for ad-hoc one-on-one counseling to answer any individual questions students may have. Sophomores can also check with their faculty advisors regarding course selection, review NCAA compliance if they hope to be a recruited athlete, and take standardized testing (SAT IIs), as well as attend the spring college fair in May. Although college visits typically begin in earnest with spring break of one’s junior year, some students and their parents may want to begin touring campuses in the summer between their sophomore and junior years to get a general feel for what colleges will be a “good fit” based on location, size, academic focus, and selectivity. A comprehensive list of colleges for a student will be created in the winter of their junior year.

Junior Year

We begin our work with juniors with our fall term college advising seminar, and then start individual meetings after seniors have submitted their early applications. Students will be assigned randomly to specific college advisors at the end of the fall term seminar; assignments will be posted on the window outside our office. Each college advisor will work with a cross-section of the class.

FALL TERM COLLEGE ADVISING SEMINAR

This is a required seminar for juniors about gearing up for the college admissions/application process, and will meet in late September and early October. Juniors will be divided into small groups and are scheduled for the seminar during one of their free periods. The seminar will:

• Explore the various factors that can influence college choice, such as location, size, proximity to a city, relative degrees of competitiveness and selectivity, and the availability of special programs or facilities.
• Introduce you to Naviance and you will be given your password for this internet database.
• Touch on essay writing, testing, interviews, recommendations, visiting schools, how admission officers make their decisions, and any other concerns that the students in each group may have.
In this seminar the college advisors will stress the tremendous variety of colleges and the fact that the search must be an individual one. By explaining the process in great detail during the junior year, we hope to make each student feel comfortable with this new responsibility and encourage rational, intelligent decisions during the senior year. We are starting this discussion in the junior year so that the student has time to digest a significant amount of information and thoroughly complete a sensible exploration of colleges, a task that is very often time-consuming. Begun now and pursued diligently, the process need not compromise a student’s academic performance during the junior or senior year. It is imperative for students to attend the fall term seminar, for we plan to cover important material, after which each student will be required to complete an Information Form that will guide us in the college advising process.

MEETING FOR PARENTS (MID-JANUARY)
Look for your invitation to a meeting with college advisors in January. Please fill out the Parent Questionnaire prior to the January meeting.

WINTER TERM AND SPRING TERM JUNIOR YEAR
After the early decision deadline, and after you have completed your Information Form, your college advisor will begin having individual interviews with you. After an interview or two we will come up with a list (see CREATING A COLLEGE LIST section below for further details) of 15 to 20 institutions that will satisfy some or all of your requirements, and give our estimations of your chances of admission to particular colleges, using the rough categories: “30% or less,” “50-50,” and “70% or greater.” When the list has been compiled, we will discuss our suggestions with you and send a copy of the list to parents. It is then up to you and your family to research these schools as fully as possible, attempting to be realistic about your qualifications and needs.

For those of you able to visit Deerfield for Parents Spring Weekend (typically early May), there will be a time set aside for us to get together, by appointment. Each year we invite an outside expert to speak to the parents of juniors to offer insights into how a student should approach the task of choosing a college and how the college admission process works. That same weekend, we will host a college fair for approximately 75 college representatives. Advisors are also available at other times by appointment.

LONG WINTER WEEKEND AND SPRING VACATION
This is a good time to make preliminary college visits while college students are on campus. Admissions offices will be in the thick of their meetings and thus tours and information sessions may be limited, but a visit to nearby colleges may help students begin to think about what type of college they might be interested in and why. If possible, visit a larger university and a smaller, perhaps more rural college outside of New England to give you some sense of the variety of colleges there are to choose from.

CREATING A COLLEGE LIST
In the fall of your junior year you are given a questionnaire in which you are asked to answer questions about your high school experience, your life and what you think about when you think about college. You are also asked to write a 400-500 word personal statement (some students will just attach their declaration.) When these are completed and returned to the College Advising Office you will be asked to schedule a meeting with your college advisor.

The preliminary college list is based on a variety of criteria, both objective and subjective, including information supplied in the questionnaire and observations culled from discussions with you, as well as your school records. Some introductory information informing the list will include:

INSTITUTION SIZE
The size of a college or university may impact your opportunities and experiences. The range of majors offered, extracurricular activities, and amount of personal attention will be influenced by the school’s size. Do not forget that you can find small departments within a large school, as well as small schools that are part of a consortium.

LOCATION
The distance of a college or university from your home may be important to you. Is it important that you are in close proximity to your home? Or are you looking forward to living in a different part of the
country? Have you always dreamed of living in a warm weather climate or abroad? Do you prefer an urban area or small town?

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS
Academic programs are more than just majors. They can also be educational philosophies and teaching methods. Do you like hands-on learning and/or classic great books study? Although many of you may not have a specific field of study you know you want to pursue when the college search process begins, we’ll still want to get a sense of particular academic areas of love and loath to develop your initial list.

STUDENT LIFE
While an academic match between you and a college is of the utmost importance, the student life of a campus will also be important. Are you looking for a big sports school, Greek life, active community service, a cappella groups?

DIVERSITY
Racial, religious, and socioeconomic diversity affect the education you will receive. For example, is it important to have a critical mass of international students, or students with a range a range of political affiliations?

Summer Before Senior Year

Research
Research the colleges on the list from your college advisor and any other institutions that interest you. Use a college guide such as Fiske because it will give you some subjective information not available on websites or in a college’s written materials. Take notes as you go—colleges can begin to sound the same but of course they are not. Note curriculum requirements, faculty-student ratios, retention rates, housing, strength of the department(s) that most interest you, location, social life, and any other criteria that are important to you—such as athletics, diversity, community service, etc. Save your notes; they can be helpful when you need to answer supplementary questions to the Common Application about why you are a good match for a particular college.

As part of your research at each college be certain to check out course requirements for particular programs in which you may be interested. For example, if you are planning to apply to any of the University of California campuses you must have a full-year fine arts course during high school. If you are applying for engineering, please check for specific math/science high school courses and/or math/science SAT Subject Test requirements. Fine arts or architecture programs may require portfolios; what format would they prefer? What’s the due date?

Naviance
Whenever possible, we submit transcripts and recommendations electronically using Naviance. This means that it is essential that you keep your Naviance account up to date. Please follow the Naviance instructions, including completing the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act section on the Common Application after August 1. During the summer you will be able to keep a list of colleges you are considering in your Naviance account. After you return to school, you and your advisor will narrow this list down to the schools to which you wish to apply and then activate the list, a critical step in being certain that all of your forms get to the right college at the right time. In addition, we’ll be asking your teachers to submit their recommendations electronically to Naviance so that all of your materials reach colleges at the same time.

Visits and Interviews
Determine a visit plan with your parents, and call the colleges to make appointments to visit and interview, if possible. Select schools from each category on your list that you are most interested in visiting.

Most large colleges will not offer interviews but many small liberal arts colleges will. Take advantage of the opportunity to interview. Not only is it a chance to learn more about the college, but it will also give you an
opportunity to talk about your academic and extracurricular interests. These interviews are not difficult—most Deerfield students are poised, articulate, and comfortable speaking with adults. You will shine! And interviews demonstrate to the college your sincere interest, which at many colleges today is very important. It is important to express your serious interest at all schools you are considering, even the 50% and 70% schools.

Interviews are either evaluative or informational. In an evaluative interview, the interviewer will assess you as a candidate and write a report for your admission file. An informational interview is non-evaluative and primarily for you to learn more about the college. To prepare for an interview, research the college’s offerings in your academic area of interest and have a few prepared questions. Be ready to speak about your academic and extracurricular interests. Practice a mock interview with a college advisor or parent pretending to be the admission officer. After an interview, write a thank you note (hand-written is nice), mentioning specific things you liked about the college.

**Teacher Recommendations**

While, generally speaking, it is preferable to ask for letters of recommendation in person, your teachers will understand if you email them. Feel free to ask them at the end of your junior year, or to email them over the summer, especially if you plan to file an early application. Be sure your email is full and complete—not simply a request for a letter. If you have questions about which teacher(s) to ask consult with your college advisor.

**ACT/SAT Preparation**

Some preparation and review is advisable and discipline is required. Here are a few free or inexpensive ways to study for the SAT or ACT:

- Get a book of practice tests and take one. Score it and go back over the questions you got wrong. Is there a pattern to the kind of problems you missed? Can you learn to do these types of problems?
- Sign up for the SAT question of the day on the College Board website. You will get an SAT question and answer each day in your email.
- Both the College Board website and the ACT website offer tips and practice test questions. Both publish test prep books. Another suggestion for test prep books for ACT and SAT are by author Brian Leaf.

Find more test prep information in the Standardized Testing section of this handbook.

**Organization**

The college admission process will demand your best organizational skills. To begin with, organize all the information you have received from colleges into file folders either actual or virtual. As you become interested in a college, learn about its application process. Do they accept the Common Application? If so, do they have a supplement? What testing does the college require? Is the ACT or SAT optional or required? Are SAT Subject Tests required? How many? How many teacher recommendations, if any, do they require? Make a checklist on the inside of the file folder for each college where you plan to apply or devise your own online tracking system. The checklist should include a place to record the date you sent the application, the supplement, your test scores, and teacher recommendations.

**Email**

Your college advisor would like to hear from you during the summer. Please contact us at our Deerfield email addresses and provide us with an update of your visits and thinking about college. Of course, as mentioned above, we want to help with essay topics and/or revisions as you begin writing your essays.

**Common Application & College Essay**

We strongly recommend that you start to fill out the Common Application this summer. The updated common application should be available online in early August.
Summer is the time to begin to tackle this project. Your objective is to tell them something about yourself that they do not know from the rest of your application. That means that you do not want to write a resume or write about an abstract topic that is hard to grasp in 500 words. Instead, try to find a story about you that illustrates something you want colleges to know. Finding a good topic is the hardest part. Start brainstorming. Send your advisor a couple of your best ideas and the two of you can decide which idea has the most potential. Write a first draft, and feel free to send it to your advisor for some feedback. We don’t want you to spend hours on it and have us tell you in the fall that we really don’t think it will work. By the time you return to Deerfield we hope that you will have a third or fourth draft that we can look over. You may also want to consult with one of your English teachers or your advisor. Try to limit the number of people who look at your essay; too many editors tend to muddy the waters. The College Board has some helpful information on writing an effective college essay.

**Fall of Senior Year**

In the fall, your college advisor will ask for another Information Form and conduct another round of individual interviews with you in order to share the thinking that has taken place over the summer. At that time you will narrow the list of colleges to which you will apply. (In past years the average number has been 8-10).

Throughout the fall, representatives of college admissions offices will visit Deerfield. Most of these sessions will be held in groups, a few will be individual interviews—some are used as selective measures, most are simply informational. All college visits are advertised on the college advising bulletin board. Also, if a student has entered a college of interest in Naviance, we will send them an email alerting them if any school on their list visits...**another reason it is critical for students to keep the Naviance account up to date!** It is the student’s responsibility to arrange with teachers to be excused from class when necessary.

Weekends (especially the Fall Weekend holiday) and Thanksgiving vacation can be used for further college visiting if appointments are scheduled in advance. Many recruited athletes are also asked to visit for “recruitment weekends” in the fall. Deerfield’s policy for seniors is to only allow two missed school days for college visits. Remember also that students will need to use time in the fall for study and to write their applications, so spread out college visits accordingly.
Early Decision/Action Plans

Early Decision is a plan whereby the student who knows where he or she wants to go and seems well qualified can apply, usually by November 1 or 15, and receives a decision in December. There now exist numerous, confusing variations on this theme including Early Action, Single Choice Early Action, Rolling Admissions, and Early Decision II. Our advice: check out any of the early plans with the specific institution involved. A student with a clear first choice and strong qualifications at the time of application may be rewarded with early peace of mind. But, changing student preferences and dramatic academic improvement can make a binding commitment to attend a particular institution both premature and uncomfortable. And many students get swept into the early application frenzy without realistically assessing their prospects for early admission. (Almost half of our early candidates are deferred or rejected; only a few of those deferred are later admitted to that college.) Students who wish to file an early application must feel that they are a strong candidate based on their freshman, sophomore, and junior year record and test scores. And remember that many colleges are now rejecting a larger number of early candidates rather than simply deferring them. Try not to get caught up in the early frenzy; give your own situation careful thought. Any student wishing to apply early must let the college office know by October 1, so that we have time to complete the paperwork in support of that application.
College Visits

Whenever possible it is a good idea for you to visit the colleges to which you are thinking of applying. While it is preferable to visit a college when it is in session, summer visits can also be helpful. Walking on the campus, seeing the dorms, sitting in on a class, and chatting with the tour guide will give you a better sense of what that particular school is really like and what matters to the students who go there. A campus visit gives you the opportunity to see what you have previously only read about in guidebooks.

SOME QUESTIONS YOU MAY WANT TO ASK YOUR TOUR GUIDE OR INTERVIEWER

• Why did you choose this college? Did you apply early – why or why not?
• How do professors teach the classes?
• How available are your professors? Have you ever had lunch with a professor?
• What are some of the best school traditions?
• What are the campus issues that students have talked about most this year?
• What is the music/film/drama/art scene here like?
• How prominent a role does sports/Greek life play in the social life here?
• How large are your classes?
• How competitive is the student body?
• What do you like best about your experience and education here?
• What would you change about the school?
• What are the study abroad opportunities?
• What are weekends like? Do students stay on campus? What are the most popular weekend activities?

Scheduling a College Visit

Information about scheduling a college visit can be found on the college website. A visit to a campus generally consists of a tour and an information session. Sometimes students have the opportunity to sit in on a class or interview; sometimes there are opportunities for overnight stays in the fall. Whether you are planning on taking a tour or are hoping to sit in on a class, college visits must be planned. You should never just “drop in” in hopes of scheduling a meeting. Likewise, even if you just want to take a walk around the campus and have lunch in the cafeteria, it is in your best interest to let the admissions office know you are there – sometimes this means filling out an information card at the front desk. Many colleges like to know that students are interested in their school; a visit to the campus demonstrates interest.

At Deerfield, seniors are allowed two missed class days for college visits. We ask that students let us know of a college visit well in advance by filling out the “Request to Miss Classes” form located under the FORMS & ESIGNOUT tab of the Daily Bulletin webpage.
Standardized Testing

At the most highly selective colleges/universities standardized testing remains an important factor in admission decisions. A few institutions downplay the importance of scores, and some (test optional schools) have eliminated test requirements entirely, but even those schools may use test scores for athletic or merit aid evaluation. Because standardized testing is so important at most colleges it is critical that you understand testing requirements.

- **PSAT/NMSQT** is the Preliminary SAT National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. It is given in October to our sophomores and juniors, and Deerfield handles the registration. You do not need to sign up for the PSAT. Scores from the junior year are used for National Merit Scholarship Qualification (NMSQT), and are for student, advisor and parent reference only. These scores are not sent to colleges.

- **The SAT** is the most common college admission exam in the Northeast. The exam consists of critical reading, mathematics, and writing sections, and currently requires four hours to complete. It is administered six times a year on campus between October and June. The College Board is changing the SAT test beginning in the spring of 2016; thus, affecting any student graduating in the class of 2016 and beyond. The college advising office will prepare for this change and work with students to make the transition in tests as smooth as possible.

- **SAT Subject Tests** are often referred to as SAT IIs. These are one-hour, multiple choice exams that test your knowledge of specific academic subject areas such as foreign language, math, sciences, history, and English literature. Students can choose which tests to take and the tests are offered six times per year, on the same dates as the SAT except in March when only the SAT is offered. Foreign language subject tests include a listening section only on the November exam. Many highly selective colleges require two SAT subject tests in addition to the SAT (or ACT—see below). However, many colleges don’t require any subject tests. It is important to know whether or not you will need subject tests (and which tests you may need) so be sure to check the admission websites of the colleges you are considering. Although three subject tests can be taken in one sitting, often students just take one or two. We recommend that you feel well prepared for any tests you take.

- **ACT (American College Test)** is an alternative to the SAT and more popular than the SAT in some parts of the country. It is a content-based test with sections on reading, English, math, science, and writing. The ACT requires students to answer more questions in less time than the SAT, so speed is important. Many students find the test more straightforward. Research shows that 60% of students do about the same on both tests, 20% do better on the ACT, and 20% do better on the SAT, so it may be worth taking both to see which test is better for you. Students can submit the ACT instead of the SAT, the SAT subject tests, or both, depending on the college’s application requirements. All colleges accept the ACT and have no preference between the ACT and SAT.

We offer a free ACT practice test for students who would like to try it to see if it might be a better test for them. For practice test dates, see your college advisor. The ACT is offered in September, December, and April at Deerfield.

**NONSTANDARD AND EXTENDED TIME**

Students with documented learning differences may need testing accommodations, e.g. extended time. To receive special accommodations on tests administered by the College Board or ACT, you must apply for these accommodations. Generally speaking, in order to apply for testing accommodations the following criteria must be met:

Current documentation of your learning difference must be on file at the school.

Students who “meet the requirements” for special accommodations on the SAT or ACT must use these same accommodations in school, on a regular basis, in all classes.
It is best if these accommodations have been in place for at least four months of the school year before applying to the College Board or ACT for accommodations.

Students in need of testing accommodations should begin by contacting Mrs. Cabral, Study Skills Coordinator to initiate the process for on campus accommodations. Once 4 months have passed, Mrs. Thiel, Testing Coordinator, will contact the student and parents directly to initiate the process with the College Board and ACT. Any questions regarding testing accommodations should be directed to Mrs. Thiel.

More information about SAT testing accommodations and disability documentation guidelines can be found at www.collegeboard.com/ssd or, for the ACT, at www.act.org/aap/disab.

**Testing Timeline**

Your college advisor will help you decide which tests to take and when.

**FRESHMAN AND SOPHOMORE YEARS**

- Register for and take any SAT Subject tests for which you are qualified in June.
- Sophomores take the PSAT in October. Deerfield will register all students.

**JUNIOR YEAR**

- October – PSAT (Last time Deerfield will register students.)
- December/January – Some juniors may decide to register for and take the SAT, subject tests, and/or ACT exam.
- April – Possible test date to register for and take the ACT
- March – Possible test date to register for the SAT and SAT subject tests. The March test date usually falls during spring break so cannot be taken at Deerfield; register for a test site near home.
- May and June – SAT test dates should be used to take the SAT or SAT subject tests. The ACT is also offered in June. The June test dates fall after the end of the school year so cannot be taken at Deerfield; register for a test site near home.

**SENIOR YEAR**

Retake the SAT, SAT subject tests, and ACT as needed. Early Decision/Early Action applicants can still take the September ACT or October and November SAT exams and have their scores available for colleges in the early round. The December tests are usually the last ones that can be used for ED 2 and Regular rounds.

**WHEN TO TAKE SAT II’S?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In order to take:</th>
<th>You should be finishing:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>Jr Yr English</td>
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<tr>
<td>US History</td>
<td>US History (grade 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics Level I</td>
<td>Algebra II or standard Pre-Calc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics Level II</td>
<td>Honors Pre-Calc or higher</td>
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**Test Optional/Flexible**

It seems a growing number of colleges are testing optional or testing flexible. Test Optional schools may not require any tests at all, or they may require an alternate submission (graded writing sample) to substitute for standardized tests. Test Flexible schools will require some form of standardized tests, but students can decide what combination of those tests to submit (i.e. SAT Math section score, SAT subject test in Biology, and AP score in US History.)

It is a fallacy to believe that only less selective schools are testing optional. Testing optional schools include Bates, Bowdoin, Smith, and Wake Forest. Hamilton College is a Test Flexible school. For an up-to-date list of test optional institutions, check out the Fair Test website at [www.fairtest.org](http://www.fairtest.org).

**Test Preparation**

Familiarity with the organization and types of questions on any standardized test will be helpful, as it will allow a student to focus on the content of the questions without having to spend extra time during the exam to figure out the directions. Some basic and common-sense strategies are useful in preventing extra stress and wasted time during those important hours.

There are many types of test preparation available for the SAT, the SAT subject tests, and the ACT. These include books that students use to prepare on their own, computer software, websites, and commercial courses. At the very least, students should familiarize themselves with the format of the exams by using the booklets with sample questions provided by the College Board. Preferably students should take a full-length practice test and score it. Look over the questions answered incorrectly or not answered. Are there specific areas in which a student can improve? How well was the test time managed? There are sample questions and test taking tips on the College Board and the ACT web sites. All contain practice questions, as do many of the test preparation books one can find in bookstores or online sites like Amazon.

**TEST PREP SERVICES AT DEERFIELD**

An important free tool to help with test preparation at Deerfield is Academic Approach. It requires a password, which will be distributed via email to all students by the Academic Dean’s Office. Academic Approach is an online test service that Deerfield subscribes to and is available to all students. Students can use Academic
Approach either by themselves online, or if they sign up for one of our term based Standardized Test Prep courses, they will utilize Academic Approach with a group of their peers at a regularly scheduled class timeline.

Some students are motivated to prepare on their own, while others may find that they are more comfortable and confident with a formal course and instructor. To that end, Deerfield works in partnership with both Princeton Review and Kaplan Test Prep services to offer fee-based test prep classes on campus for the PSAT, ACT, and SAT. Both of these companies offer scholarships for those who cannot afford the fee associated with taking one of these test prep courses. A schedule and instructions on how to sign up for these test prep courses are available in the college advising office.

Although there is considerable debate about the benefits of test prep, we have seen enough students raise their scores significantly that we have come to believe that some preparation is valuable.
NCAA Guidelines

NCAA has specific requirements for eligibility. If you have aspirations to play NCAA athletics at a Division I or Division II college, you must meet their core course requirements by certain deadlines, which can be more complicated if you have repeated a grade or gone to an international high school. Students who wish to play a sport in college at the Division I, IA, or II level, must register with the NCAA Clearinghouse by the end of their junior year. You can request your NCAA transcript online. NCAA registration must be filed before students leave for summer vacation. NCAA eligibility rules for students enrolling in college on or after August 1, 2016 are changing, and students for whom Division I or II athletics are a possibility should consult the NCAA's “Quick reference sheet” at http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/Quick_Reference_Sheet.pdf and with Mrs. Vita Thiel when choosing classes.

Repeating a Grade

The NCAA has certain deadlines by which you must complete classes during high school. THIS IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT: Repeating a grade does not extend NCAA deadlines for completion of these requirements. Therefore, you must plan your courses carefully if you’ve repeated a grade. Further, when repeating a grade upon entering Deerfield, you may lose NCAA credit for one or more classes—often in English, occasionally in math—taken at your previous school. If NCAA deems that two courses duplicate each other, they will deny credit for one. Hence, if two English courses could be deemed duplicative, we recommend you double up in English in your junior year by adding a senior-level English.

One way to avoid doubling up is to request an early determination by the NCAA. The NCAA will consider this only in your junior (or third) year (see “Juniors” below). Overt interest from a college can be a powerful catalyst. If a college is interested in you, please let the NCAA know as soon as possible. The college can then act on your behalf, in facilitating an early determination of eligibility, which could eliminate the need for doubling up on a course (i.e. English). Final approval is based on a completed transcript.

What You Need to Do

FRESHMEN AND SOPHOMORES

- Start planning now!
- Work hard to get the best grades possible.
- Choose NCAA-approved classes.

Juniors (or Students in Their Third Year of Eligibility)

1. At the beginning of your third year, log on to the NCAA Eligibility Center website at eligibilitycenter.org and register.
2. Register to take the ACT, SAT or both and use the NCAA Eligibility Center code “9999” as a score recipient. (Test score requirements are listed on the website.)
3. Double-check to make sure that you are taking NCAA-approved courses.
4. Request that your high school official transcript be sent to NCAA Eligibility Center after completing your third year of high school.
5. Prior to registration for your fourth year of high school, check with the Academic Dean’s office and the NCAA Eligibility Center to determine the number of core courses that need to be completed that year (i.e., before your window of eligibility closes).

More detailed information can be found on the NCAA website. Failure to meet requirements could result in you not being able to play Division I or Division II sports in college. Ultimately, it is your responsibility to ensure you have met the NCAA eligibility requirements.
Naviance Family Connection

Students register for Naviance in the fall of their junior year, and parents typically sign up in January. Naviance will be a critical and helpful tool in your college search; this page describes steps of the college process that you will need to complete through Naviance. We will be submitting all materials electronically this year to help streamline the application process, as well as be more environmentally conscious!

Register for Naviance Family Connection

1. Email Ms. McCarvill, jmccarvill@deerfield.edu, if you need a registration code.

2. Go to Naviance, and bookmark this page! Note: You must use your Deerfield email address as your username.

3. Update the list of colleges you’re considering. Under “colleges I’m thinking about,” you should enter the list of colleges and universities that you’re currently considering. To add colleges:

   4. Click on “add to this list”

   5. Click on “lookup” and search for the college you want to add. If the college is not on the list, use the search function or browse by alpha.

   6. Click on “add colleges” once you’ve entered all of the schools you want to add (if you do not do this step, the colleges will not be added to your list!)

7. To delete colleges, check the box in front of the college’s name, and click “remove from list”

8. Review options. Once you sign in, you’ll see the options available to you. To move from one section to another, click the links.

9. About Me – this section allows you to store information about your college process and track the list of colleges you’re considering and eventually applying to.

10. About College – this section allows you to research colleges (see below)

A few notes about the “my profile” section: The GPA listed for returning students is through junior year; new students will not have a GPA. Test scores will be updated for all students as new test scores are received from College Board.

- **Research Colleges**: You can use Family Connection to help you research college opportunities.
- **College Search** allows you to search for colleges based on specific criteria
- **College Lookup** lets you look up specific colleges, where you can review college information, see statistics about Deerfield applications to that college, and link to the college’s website.
- **College Compare** shows Deerfield application statistics for a selection of colleges
- **Scattergrams** charts five years of Deerfield admission activity at specific colleges.
- **Discuss your plans**. As you do your research and make your college plans, be sure to touch base regularly with your college advisor. Your college advisor has access to your account. Any questions? Ask your college advisor!
- **Complete the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** section on the Common Application website (after August 1). Once completed, enter your Common Application username and password on your Naviance account. This information is used only for the purpose of electronic submission of your recommendation forms and transcripts to colleges. In order for us to submit teacher recommendations, it is in your best interest to waive your rights. You must have confidence the teachers you ask to write on your behalf will be fair and accurate in recommending you in a positive light to college. Colleges tend to take the recommendation more seriously when rights have been waived, and they know the recommendation is secure and confidential.
Financial Aid and Scholarships

What You and Your Parents Need to Know

Much has been written in recent years about the spiraling costs of higher education, the price tag ranging from $60,000 to $80,000 at many state colleges and universities, to $250,000 or more at many private institutions of higher learning. The good news is that almost all colleges and universities offer financial aid to admitted students and families that demonstrate financial need so that these educational opportunities remain within reach. You and your parents need to sit down and discuss how you as a family are going to pay for college, and it’s important for you to research financial aid programs as you do your college search, if financial aid will be part of your planning. It’s better to ask questions during the planning stage rather than be taken by surprise at the end of the process. With the economic downturn of the past several years there has also been a national debate emerging about the relative value of a college education and whether the burden of college loans, part of all financial aid packages offered by colleges, is worth it. Again, those are questions that you and your parents will need to talk about as you move through this process.

Important Terms to Know

• **Financial Aid** refers to need-based monetary awards given to you by a particular college after an evaluation of your family’s financial situation and a determination that your family will be unable to pay for the costs of that particular college. This need-based aid has nothing to do with your academic record and depends almost completely on you and your family’s aid application and current federal tax forms. At most colleges and universities today 60% or more of the student body receives some form of financial aid so colleges are working hard to make their educational opportunities open to all potential students. It’s also important to keep in mind as you do your planning that, even though most colleges state that they are “need blind” as they evaluate and admit or deny candidates for admission, the fact of the matter is that only a small handful of well-endowed colleges are truly “need blind” in their admissions. Most colleges and universities today are “need aware” as they evaluate and admit their class each year because they are working with finite financial aid budgets. That is why it is especially important for students who know they will be applying for financial aid to look at a broad range of admission selectivity in their college search.

• **Financial Aid Packages** refer to the way that aid will be awarded to you and your family. There will be a “family contribution” that will include a Parent Contribution and a Student Contribution, often from summer earnings. There will be an institutional grant, scholarship money that you do not have to pay back. And then there will be Student Loans that you will be expected to take out and then pay back after you finish college. Frequently you will be expected to work a few hours each week in a college work/study job that you’ve chosen from the offerings posted in the Financial Aid Office. Financial Aid Packages can vary significantly from college to college. You want to do a lot of preliminary research so that you know what you’re getting into before you apply and before you receive a decision.

• **Merit-based Scholarships** are institutional monies awarded by individual colleges and universities, often for outstanding talent in some particular area. These scholarships could reward outstanding academic records, extracurricular attainments in the arts, community service, or strength of character. Demonstrated financial need does not usually factor into these merit awards and all applicants at a college that offers them are considered during the application evaluation period. Sometimes referred to as tuition discounts, these merit awards are a way for less selective colleges to attract really talented students to their respective institutions. There may also be named merit scholarships at a particular institution that require a separate application. College admissions websites often list these scholarships, and you can always ask college admissions representatives about the opportunity for merit awards at their respective colleges. A good rule of thumb to keep in mind: the more selective the institution, the less likely merit awards will be given.
• **Local/Area Scholarships** may also be available from your home state or your local community. Local civic organizations may have smaller yearly awards to help local families handle the cost of college. While these scholarships sometimes go exclusively to local public school students, it certainly doesn’t hurt to inquire about the application process, either through the various civic groups or at the local public high school. Be aware that colleges will sometimes use part of this scholarship money to reduce the grant or apply it to your loan, so you won’t see the entire value applied to your family contribution.

• **FAFSA** stands for “Free Application for Federal Student Aid” and is required by every college and university if you are an aid applicant. It is the universal application from the US Department of Education, and both student and parents need to fill out the form online after establishing an account at fafsa.ed.gov. You will each need a PIN, and you will need to file your FAFSA between January 1 and February 1 in order to be eligible for Federal financial aid. Deadlines are crucial in this process—don’t jeopardize a potential financial aid award because your forms have not been prepared in a timely fashion! Don’t get sucked into fafsa.com or fafsa.net sites, either, that will try to charge you for filling out the forms—it’s a FREE application!

• **The CSS Profile** is offered by the College Board and may be required by some colleges and universities who need or want more extensive financial information from your family than the FAFSA provides. You must register online, and you will need a credit card because you do have to pay to have your profile sent to each of the colleges that require it. Check the financial aid websites at the specific colleges where you will be applying to find out if the CSS Profile is required. Make sure you and your parents meet all deadlines.

• **Divorced or Separated Parents** will have to complete Non-custodial Parent forms for both the FAFSA and the CSS Profile. Most colleges expect both biological parents to contribute to the costs of a child’s college education, so there are confidential forms that are required. Failure to complete the forms could jeopardize a financial aid award, so make sure you keep both of your parents informed and aware of deadlines if they are divorced or separated. Consult the individual financial aid offices if issues about this arise.

• **International Students** applying for financial aid need to be aware that the competition for financial aid is incredibly competitive and that many American colleges and universities do not have any financial aid in their budgets to bring in needy international students, or that there are caps on just how much aid they can offer to deserving international students, often at 50% of the costs of the institution. You need to ask these questions of college admissions officers as you do your preliminary college search: Is there aid for international students? Is there a cap or a limit on how much aid there is for an admitted international student? How many international students are admitted each year to your institution, and how many are receiving financial aid? Answers to these questions are vital to know as you go through this process.

If you are an international student applying for financial aid you will need to file the International Student CSS Profile and have it sent to the colleges to which you are applying, and then supply each college with your parents’ most recent income tax return from your home country, translated into English and converted to US dollars, or a certified statement of earnings from your parents’ employers if there is no tax return. Some college financial aid offices may require additional information, so be sure to consult each individual financial aid office to see about eligibility and any other special requirements.

Colleges require Affidavits of Support and Certification of Finances for international students (particularly ones who are not seeking need based financial aid). Most banks have ample experience with providing such documentation and will guide you accordingly. The Certification of Finances will provide documentation that you and your family have the financial means to provide funding for four years of tuition, room and board, as well as other expenses. Please note that
colleges require original documents. Students can find the International Student Certification of Finances Guidelines on most college websites.

- **A Financial Aid Calculator/Net Price Calculator** is now required by the US Attorney General's Office on every college financial aid website so that you can plug in the numbers for both student and parent, taken from recent income tax forms, bank statements, etc., and get a rough estimate of what you and your family may be expected to pay. Your parents will probably want to handle this part of the process but it’s a good way for them to see the huge variations in financial aid awards that you will see from college to college. Be aware that Deerfield Academy is often more generous with financial aid than the vast majority of colleges will be. Every college website has a Net Price Calculator, so take advantage of the opportunity to take an early peek at what your future education will cost.

- **The New York Times Interactive Chart on Student Indebtedness** provides some interesting comparisons of current college tuition costs and student indebtedness after four years. You can search for colleges and find their place on the chart and then compare with other colleges you might be interested in. The chart is available at: [http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/05/13/business/student-debt-at-colleges-and-universities.html?_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/05/13/business/student-debt-at-colleges-and-universities.html?_r=0)