



PINGRY

COLLEGE COUNSELING
HANDBOOK

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Introduction

This book has been created for Pingry's Upper School students and their parents to make the college selection and application process easier to navigate. Much of the information herein is general and does not apply equally to all colleges and universities. It will serve as a resource or reference for the questions usually asked about the process.

It is our belief that two principles prevail throughout:

1. Each student's best interests are served through good communication among the four parties involved—the student, the school, the parents, and the colleges/universities;
2. Colleges and universities make their decisions on the overall mosaic of the applicant—the student's total secondary school record (academic and personal), extracurricular pursuits, recommendations (counselor, teacher, and supplemental), personal essays, demonstrated interest (campus visits and interviews), and standardized test scores, if required (SAT and ACT Reasoning Tests, SAT II Subject Tests, Advanced Placement Exams, etc.).

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT THE COLLEGE COUNSELING OFFICE. Counselor assignments occur in the junior year.

* For an up-to-date listing of colleges that no longer require the SAT, ACT, and/or SAT subject tests, please go to www.fairtest.org.

Pingry's College Counseling Philosophy

The philosophy of Pingry's college counseling office is that the match between student and college is our most important concern. Therefore, we assist the student in discovering colleges that will allow him or her to attain the best education to achieve the greatest success, and to emerge from the experience as well-prepared as possible to lead a productive, constructive, and satisfying life. With more than 2,500 colleges and universities available, we are certain that many would qualify as good matches. Our function is to guide the student and family in making the best decisions relative to applications and choice. It is fundamental to our thinking that the final decision-making role remains with the student and his or her family.

We believe the more one knows about something, the better one is able to make decisions; therefore, we consider researching colleges and universities **essential** to finding the best match for the student. The research process requires the following elements:

1. reading about various colleges and universities
2. talking with people personally knowledgeable about the institution, such as current and former students, professors, deans, etc.
3. visiting each institution and interviewing (if possible)

Research should be continuous throughout the process and second visits, when feasible, are recommended.

It is recommended that the student submit between six and 10 applications, particularly to schools where admission history of Pingry applicants indicates possible or likely admission.

Students will work jointly with their college counselor to create a vertical list of colleges that includes:

- Reaches - an institution where admission is not likely, but possible;
- Middles - institutions to which admission is a possibility; and
- Likelies - institutions where experience indicates that the applicant is in a category often or usually admitted.

Primary attention should be given to those colleges determined to be possible or likely.

Admission standards and competition pools vary from year to year; therefore, the last two categories may change from year to year.

Not all students are accepted by all institutions to which they apply. Students should have full knowledge of their choice of schools, including the characteristics an institution is seeking in a prospective applicant and how competitive it is for admission to those schools.

Pingry subscribes to the practices and policies articulated in the National Association for College Admission Counseling's (NACAC) Statement of Students' Rights and Responsibilities.

For reasons of confidentiality and privacy, The Pingry School College Counseling Office does not, without prior permission, disclose information that could identify an individual

student during the application process. This policy is consistent with the Family Educational Right to Privacy Act (Buckley Amendment).

General Information

As a college preparatory school, Pingry works to assure that the highest possible percentage of students are accepted to their first-choice colleges. This requires a thorough advisement process by the school, realistic decision making, and active participation by the student and family. Our program guides the student through a series of organized events that will lead to appropriate college choices during the spring of senior year.

FRESHMAN YEAR

Students are strongly encouraged to contribute to the school by participating in extracurricular programs. Freshmen also should develop good and strong work habits and positive attitudes. A freshman college night is held in the spring to answer college admission questions and discuss scheduling options for the student's Upper School academic career.

SOPHOMORE YEAR

Sophomores take the PSAT/NMSQT in October. A sophomore college night is held in the spring to discuss mock admission cases and to assess academic performance. The feasibility of visiting college campuses will be discussed. In June, some students may be ready to take SAT Subject Tests.

JUNIOR YEAR

All juniors take the PSAT/NMSQT in October from which National Merit semifinalists are determined and strengths and weaknesses in scholastic preparation and aptitude are identified.

A junior college night is held in January to explain the college admission and application process and to discuss the relevant criteria in selecting colleges.

In January of junior year, the student will be assigned a college counselor. From January until the end of the year, the student will meet individually and in small groups with his or her counselor. Parents also are asked to meet with their child's counselor.

In the spring, the student identifies and asks two teachers to write letters of recommendation for the fall. (At the start of senior year, they provide their teachers with the appropriate forms.)

The student will be sitting for various standardized tests (see section on standardized tests for specifics). As with any part of the college search process, the student should consult his or her counselor regarding the testing timeline.

The Role of the Student, Parent, and Counselor in the College Counseling Process

Each person in the college counseling process has a very specific role. The student, parents, and college counselor should focus on the phrase, "College is a match to be made and not a prize to be won." This is the goal of the college counseling process.

THE STUDENT

The responsibilities of the student are to:

- keep their college counselor abreast of their individual college search process;
- apply to an appropriate array of colleges, as determined jointly with their college counselor;
- request recommendations from teachers;
- take advantage of the resources available in the college counseling office,
- use their college counselor as a resource;
- advise their college counselor of information requested by colleges, and
- inform college counselors about the final decisions of the colleges regarding admission.

THE PARENT

Parents need to:

- participate in college counseling programs;
- be supportive of the student in the search process;
- let the student be responsible for filing applications, asking for appointments, asking for recommendations, thanking faculty, registering for testing, and writing essays; and
- be an objective participant in the process.

Always keep in mind that your child will be the one going to college and an over-involved parent can often do more harm than good.

THE COLLEGE COUNSELOR

The college counselor will:

- provide up-to-date, current information to parents and students;
- write the counselor letter of recommendation and complete the secondary school report (SSR);
- mail teacher letters of recommendation, counselor letter, official transcript and the secondary school report to all colleges to which a student has applied;
- give appropriate advice and guidance when needed; and
- assist in solving issues/problems that might arise in the application process.

Everything You Want to Know about Standardized Tests

Colleges and universities use as many as four sets of standardized tests—SAT and ACT Reasoning Tests, SAT II Subject Tests, and AP exams—in applicant evaluations. Because these tests are nationally standardized, they serve as common denominators, giving the admission officer a point of direct comparison of all applicants. While some institutions use all available test scores equally, many schools value them differently. For example, some put primary emphasis on the SAT Reasoning Test, others on SAT II Subject Tests, and some use both. AP exam scores are sometimes used for course placement or credit. They do not use the PSAT, unless the scores are National Merit caliber. However the tests are used, they are only part of the mosaic. **Applicants are responsible for having their scores reported to the colleges (via College Board or ACT websites, listed below) as well as to the Pingry college counseling office.**

PSAT/NMSQT

The PSAT Reasoning Test is taken in October by all sophomores and juniors. The test will last two hours and five minutes: two 25-minute critical reading sections, two 25-minute mathematics sections, and one 25-minute writing section. The PSAT serves as practice for the SAT and as a counseling tool. The PSAT/NMSQT is the qualifying test for the National Merit Scholarship program. For additional information about the content of the PSAT/NMSQT, visit the College Board Web site at www.collegeboard.com. Selection for National Merit commendation or semifinalist status is based on a selection index, which changes each year. Students are notified of National Merit, National Achievement or National Hispanic status in the fall of their senior year.

SAT REASONING TEST

The SAT Reasoning Test, offered seven times each year on Saturday or Sunday mornings in October, November, December, January, March or April, May, and June, is taken by juniors and seniors. Students should consult with their parents and college counselor to determine the dates when they should take the test; some students may wish to capitalize on positive PSAT scores, while others may need additional time to prepare. **Each student should create his/her own standardized testing plan.** The March test date often falls during our spring break. Students may sit for the SAT Reasoning test as many times as desired. Most colleges will accept the highest critical reading, math and writing scores, pulled from the various testing attempts. **Test preparation, whether independent or with a tutor, should not be done at the expense of academic or extracurricular achievement.**

ACT

This is a three-hour, multiple-choice exam that yields scores in five areas: English, mathematics, reading, science reasoning, and writing. The five areas also produce a composite score. Unlike the SAT Reasoning Test, the writing component of the ACT is optional. However, a student is best served by taking the writing component at least once, because many colleges require it. The test is offered five times per year. **Students should discuss the possible benefits of taking this test with their counselors.** Unlike the SAT, ACT allows students to send a select number of test scores as determined by the student, instead of the student's entire ACT testing record. For more information, go to www.actstudent.org.

SAT SUBJECT TESTS

SAT Subject Tests are given in 20 areas including languages, sciences, histories and social studies, math, and English literature.

The following table represents subject test availability.

German, modern Hebrew	Available one time/year
Listening tests: Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, and English proficiency	Available in November
All other subject areas	Available six times/year

Each test is one hour and offered on the same Saturdays or Sundays as the SAT Reasoning Test (except for March/April). It is not possible to sit for the SAT Reasoning Test and SAT Subject Tests on the same day. As many as three SAT Subject Tests may be taken at one sitting.

Most colleges do not require SAT Subject Tests, but those that do, require two or three subject tests. **Students should consider taking SAT Subject Tests in May or June based on their curriculum, teacher and counselor input, and academic strengths.** SAT Subject Tests also are scored on a 200-to-800 point scale and designed to show an applicant's grasp of a specific subject. The tests are sometimes used by colleges and universities for placement in freshman courses. Some colleges accept a combination of SAT Subject Tests in lieu of the SAT Reasoning Test for admission purposes; some accept the ACT in place of the SAT Subject Tests.

AP EXAMS

Advanced placement exams are given at Pingry in 23 subjects and used primarily for establishing proficiency, advanced standing in college and/or college credit. Policies vary by institution, so it is important to identify each school's evaluation of AP scores. AP exams are given by subject at specific times during May and scored from five (high) to one (low). **Students may register for AP exams even if they are not enrolled in a formal AP course.**

Testing Timeline

FRESHMAN YEAR

- June The Pingry science department recommends that freshman biology students forego the SAT Subject Tests in biology in favor of taking the SAT Subject Tests in chemistry or physics at a later date. The tested materials in the latter tests more closely overlap the material taught at Pingry.
- However, freshmen, after consultation with their teachers, could sit for the SAT Subject Tests-M biology exam. They should do so only with the advice of the science department and the college counseling staff.
- There might be cases where another SAT Subject Tests would be appropriate. If you have questions call the Upper School office for advice.

SOPHOMORE YEAR

- October PSAT/NMSQT for practice
- May AP exams for students who are enrolled in an advanced placement course
- June SAT Subject Tests
- All chemistry classes prepare students for the SAT Subject Tests in chemistry.
- There might be cases where other SAT Subject Tests would be appropriate.
- If you have questions call the Upper School office for advice.

JUNIOR YEAR

- October PSAT/NMSQT to practice for SAT. Score is also used to determine National Merit Scholarship semifinalist status
- January SAT Reasoning Test
- March SAT Reasoning Test
- May AP exams, SAT Reasoning Test recommended for a second time if warranted
- June SAT Subject Tests
- Possible exams to take:
- Physics (consult with teacher)
- U.S. history (after AP U.S. history or with faculty consultation)
- Math level 1C (after algebra 3/trigonometry)
- Math level 2C (after analysis)
- Foreign language (after level 4)
- There might be cases in which another SAT Subject Test would be appropriate. If you have questions, call the Upper School office for advice.

SENIOR YEAR

- October SAT Reasoning Test or SAT Subject Tests
- November SAT Reasoning Test or SAT Subject Tests
- December SAT Reasoning Test or SAT Subject Tests
- May AP exams

Athletic Information

Many college athletic programs are regulated by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). This organization has established rules on eligibility, recruiting, and financial aid. There are three divisions in the NCAA: Division I, Division II, and Division III.

Students who hope to play Division I or Division II sports as college freshmen must be certified by the NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse. The clearinghouse monitors the admission of student-athletes and verifies that they meet the qualifications established by the NCAA. Students register with the clearinghouse, preferably at the end of junior year, at the following URL: www.ncaaclearinghouse.net. There is a registration fee.

Students must also send SAT Reasoning Test scores to the clearinghouse through the College Board website (code 9999) to qualify for eligibility.

RECRUITMENT

There are specific NCAA rules and regulations regarding visits and contacts between student athletes and college coaches. It is imperative that students understand these rules to ensure they remain eligible for college-level athletics. The NCAA web site is a great source of information.

Send an athletic résumé attached to a cover letter—describing your interest in attending that particular college—directly to the college coach during the fall of the senior year. If you are interested in competing at a high level of play, you should do this during your junior year. The list of schools to which you send this résumé should be created while working with your college counselor, coaches, and parents. Please see the sample résumé in the appendices section.

College coaches keep files of names and addresses and use this database to create their list of potential recruits. Please understand that receiving a letter from a coach or making the list does not constitute admittance to the college. Students are not admitted by coaches; they are admitted by the admission committee.

Items to include in an athletic résumé:

- Name and Social Security number
- Address, phone number, and email contact
- Birth date

- Height and weight
- Academic record – grade average, SAT scores, AP classes, senior courses, academic honors, etc.
- List of athletic accomplishments for both individual and team; years on varsity team, awards won, all-star selections, tournament results, individual statistics, summer camps attended, club teams, etc.
- Pingry and/or club coach contact information.
- Summer plans—camps, leagues, visits to schools, etc.
- Pingry game schedule

Videos/DVDs can be sent too. Remember that if you are in a winter or spring sport, you will want a tape of games played during your junior year. Some coaches like to receive highlight tapes, but most prefer to watch the whole game. Mark the tape with your name, telephone number, uniform number and color, and the date of the game.

NEVER SEND AN ORIGINAL TAPE/DVD. ALWAYS SEND A COPY.

Financial Aid

College costs are extensive and include numerous factors—tuition, room, board, books, fees (student, social, medical, laboratory, athletic, etc.), travel, laundry, entertainment, clothing, telephone, computer, and incidentals. Help is often needed and financial aid is available. A student and his or her family should always contact the financial aid office as early as possible, especially if they plan to visit campus to meet with the college's admission office. (As with admission, appointments with a financial aid representative can be scheduled in advance.) In most cases, financial aid awards and admission decisions are made independently and families should contact both offices.

There are some constants within the topic of financial aid, but many aspects are under regular review and change almost annually. This section will deal with the constants and a few of the less-likely-to-change elements.

The main constant is that many students capable and deserving of a college education are unable to afford the entire cost either when they are paying themselves or when their parents are paying the costs entirely. Most educators agree that post-secondary educational opportunities should exist regardless of economic status. As a result, colleges and universities, federal, state, and local governments, and the private sector have established resources to make the opportunity to attend college available to all who are admitted. Need is the primary consideration and an elaborate designation/qualifications process has evolved. Merit grants also are increasingly available to attract strong candidates with no demonstrated financial need.

Demonstrated need is determined by analyzing the family's resources, which include the intended parental contribution, the intended student contribution, and specific assets. Once the amount of need is established, financial aid offices attempt to meet need for qualified students with a variety of assistance methods:

- I. Grants or scholarships are money that need not be repaid and are given to a candidate to defray basic expenses. Some, like the Pell Grant, are need-based. Some schools offer merit-based awards.
- II. Loans are opportunities to borrow money at varied interest rates for students and/or parents. The following are examples:
 - a. Federal loan program: low interest loans are granted through the college to students who demonstrate need and meet federal guidelines.
 - b. PLUS loan for parents (Parent Loan for Undergraduate Student): available through lenders with repayment to begin 60 days after loan disbursement. These loans are not need-based.
 - c. Stafford loan program: low-interest, federally-subsidized loans allow students who demonstrate need to borrow for education and pay interest that begins accruing after graduation. A second version is unsubsidized with interest payments charged from the time the loan is disbursed.
- III. Work-study guarantees a certain amount of money through a job with the college. This is usually part of a three-part award consisting of grants, loans, and federal work-study. Students may also want to investigate opportunities to earn money as a dormitory Resident Advisor.

Financial-aid applicants are required to file the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) between January and February. Many colleges also require students to

complete The College Board's CSS (College Scholarship Service)/Financial Aid Profile. Some colleges may require an additional form of their own—be prepared to complete up to three forms. Be sure to determine which forms are required by the colleges and universities to which you are applying. Even if you are seeking only student loans, you must file the FAFSA. Information about both the FAFSA and the CSS/Financial Aid Profile is available at the following URLs: www.fafsa.ed.gov and www.collegeboard.com.

In addition to institutional and governmental aid programs, there are many private programs that offer financial assistance to college-bound students. Probably the best known is the National Merit Scholarship Program (NMSQT), eligibility for which is determined by PSAT scores.

The U.S. Armed Services present several options too for reducing costs partially or completely. ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps) scholarships for full or partial tuition are one means of meeting college costs. In addition, tuition is free at the five service academies: the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado; the (Army) Military Academy at West Point (New York); the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut; the Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, New York; and the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

Some institutions offer cooperative programs in which a student alternates between a semester or year of study and a semester or year of work. There are many funds available through the colleges and universities for students with specific qualifications, or through local organizational groups, e.g. service and church groups, Kiwanis, etc.

Native Americans, children of certain veterans or government employees, and other specific groups are often eligible for special governmental or institutional aid. Most colleges also offer a variety of tuition payment plans.

Be wary of organizations that offer to conduct a scholarship search and provide an eligibility determination for a fee. Many of these organizations take unfair advantage of their clientele and conduct less-than-satisfactory searches.

The financial aid officer at each college is a valuable resource for information and assistance.

The most highly-recommended scholarship search program is found at www.fastweb.com. Register online and you will receive applications for scholarships (via email) for which you may be eligible.

Glossary of Terms Most Often Used

ACT	American College Testing program. Students often take the ACT to supplement or take the place of the SAT Reasoning Test.
AP	Advanced Placement: exams given in specific subjects at a specific time on a specific day in May. Results may earn students advanced standing and/or credit in college.
CEEB	College Entrance Examination Board or the College Board. Pingry's code is 310315 .
CLASS RANK	Academic standing of a student within the class. Pingry does not calculate a class rank.
COLLEGE COUNSELING OFFICE	College counseling office of Pingry located in the Upper School office, Martinsville Campus.
CO-OP EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM	A student may attend college for a semester, a quarter, or a year, and then alternate it with a period of employment in a specific field. Students design programs with their faculty advisors.
CSS/Financial Aid Profile	College Scholarship Service calculates and disseminates financial aid information to participating colleges/universities after receiving the completed CSS Profile from an applicant's family. CSS is a service offered by the College Board. Select colleges require both the CSS/Financial Aid Profile and the FAFSA.
COMMON APPLICATION	A standardized application form accepted by more than 250 colleges in lieu of their own application. See www.commonapp.org
DEFERRAL	Response to early decision or early action candidate indicating that the student is not accepted, but will be reviewed as a regular applicant.
EARLY ACTION (EA)	A plan used by some colleges for applicants who wish to apply early (usually by November 1) and to receive an admission decision by mid-December. Acceptance is binding on the institution (as long as academic performance is sustained), but the applicant is not bound to the college and may apply to other colleges (including through those college's EA programs).

SINGLE CHOICE	
EARLY ACTION (SCEA)	A procedure identical to EA, except that the student may only apply to one institution as SCEA; all other applications must be regular decision.
EARLY DECISION (ED)	A widely-used term in which the application is usually made by November 1 and indicated as a first choice with the understanding and commitment that an acceptance obligates the applicant to withdraw all other applications and enroll in that institution; notification is usually in mid-December. ED2 has a later timetable.
ETS	Educational Testing Service; this organization administers, grades, and reports scores of SAT Reasoning, SAT Subject Tests, and AP tests.
FAFSA	The Free Application for Federal Student Aid Application is the required form for federal financial aid. Online version is preferred.
GPA	Grade Point Average; the applicant's yearly GPAs are shown on the transcript for each upper school year. Pingry does not calculate cumulative GPAs.
NACAC	National Association for College Admission Counseling, a professional association of which Pingry is a member and to whose policies and practices we subscribe.
NATIONAL CANDIDATE REPLY DATE	May 1. The date applicants must reply to colleges that have accepted them about whether or not they will attend. Confirmation usually is accompanied by an enrollment/housing deposit. Students may deposit at ONLY ONE SCHOOL.
PROFILE	(a) The student profile is the college counselor's descriptive recommendation letter for the applicant and is sent with each secondary school report and transcript to the college of application. (b) The Pingry profile is a description of Pingry and the applying class sent with the secondary school report and transcript to each college of application.
PSAT/NMSQT	Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test is used as a qualifying exam for National Merit Scholars (commended, semi-finalists or finalists). Some private scholarship groups also use PSAT criteria. It is given once a year, in October, and graded on a 20-80

	point scale.
RECEIPT POSTCARD	A pre-stamped postcard addressed to your home to verify receipt of application materials sent to colleges (see sample in appendix).
ROLLING ADMISSIONS	A plan of reviewing applications as they are received by admissions offices. Decisions are usually returned within four to six weeks of submission.
SAT Reasoning Test	A three-hour plus test that measures developed verbal and mathematical reasoning and writing abilities. Each section (critical reading, math and writing) is scored on a 200-800 point scale with a possible total of 2400.
SAT Subject Tests	Designed to measure knowledge in specific subject areas. Each test is an hour long and three tests may be taken in a single sitting. Each test is scored on a 200-800 point scale.
SCHOOL CODE	CEEB school code for Pingry is 310315
SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT	A part of the application given to the college counseling office to be completed by the college counselor and sent to colleges with the student profile, transcript, Pingry profile, and teacher recommendation letters.
TEACHER RECOMMENDATION	Letters (usually two) written by faculty upon request of the applicant. A form for this is typically included as part of the application materials.
TEST CENTER CODE	The CEEB number designating College Board testing sites. Pingry's number is 31-481.
WAIT LIST (W/L)	Response to an applicant indicating that his/her application is acceptable, but the limit of accepted students has been reached. If there are spaces available after May 1, students may be admitted from the wait list.
3/2 Plan	A program often offered by two institutions whereby a student may achieve a Master's Degree or advanced degree; students typically spend three undergraduate years at one institution, followed by two years of graduate study at another.

Bibliography

THE HOW-TO'S

1. The College Admissions Mystique, Bill Mayher, The Noonday Press, NY
2. Playing the Selective College Admissions Game, Richard Moll, Penguin Books, NY
3. From High School to College: A Critical Transition, NACAC, Alexandria, VA
4. The College Application Essay, Sarah McGinty, College Entrance Examination Board

ANECDOTAL GUIDES (updated annually)

1. The Insider's Guide to the Colleges, The Yale Daily News New Haven, CT
2. Fiske Guide to Colleges, Edward Fiske and Robert Logue, Time Books, NY, NY

GENERAL GUIDE BOOKS

1. Barron's Profiles of American Colleges, Barron's Educational Series, Inc., Happaage, NY
2. College Admissions Data Book, Orchard House, Concord, MA
3. The College Handbook, The College Board, New York, NY (updated annually)
4. The College Handbook Index of Majors, The College Board, New York, NY
5. The K & W Guide to Colleges for the Learning Disabled, Kravets and Wax, Harper Perennial, New York, NY
6. Lovejoy's College Guide, Macmillan, New York, NY
7. The National Directory of College Athletics (men's edition and women's edition) National Association of Directors of Athletics, Cleveland, OH
8. Peterson's Guide to Undergraduate Study, Peterson's's Guides, Princeton, NJ (updated annually)

FINANCIAL AID

1. Don't Miss Out: The Ambitious Student's Guide to Financial Aid, Anna Leider and Robert Leider, Octameron Press, Alexandria, VA
2. The A's and B's of Academic Scholarships, Debra L. Wexler, Editor, Octameron Press, Alexandria, VA
3. Need a Lift? To Educational Opportunities, Careers, Loans, Scholarships, Employment, The American Legion, Indianapolis, IN

COLLEGE MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS BOOK

1. Rugg's Recommendations on the Colleges, Frederick E. Rugg, CA

College Related Web Sites

GENERAL SITES

The College Board online — www.collegeboard.com (register for SATs online, complete CSS/PROFILE online, other related services)

My College Guide — www.mycollegeguide.org (college search, questions and answers, financial aid)

College Net — www.collegenet.com (lists colleges either alphabetically or by state, with links)

College View — www.collegeview.com (search for colleges and financial aid information)

Ecola College Locator — www.ecola.com/college (direct links to 2000 US universities and colleges)

Kaplan Educational Centers — www.kaplan.com (general information, test preparation)

Common Application — www.commonapp.org (common application)

Peterson's Educational Center — www.petersons.com (research colleges, camps, study abroad programs, and careers)

The Princeton Review — www.review.com (APPLY application program, test preparation, and general college information)

Campus Tours — www.campustours.com (virtual tours of many college campuses)

ACT online — www.actstudent.org

FINANCIAL AID

U.S. Department of Education — www.ed.gov/finaid.html

FAFSA — www.fafsa.ed.gov

Fast Web — www.fastweb.com (provides a free scholarship search service)

Finaid — www.finaid.com (provides extensive financial aid information)

Sallie Mae — www.salliemae.com (provides brief, readable explanations of types of aid, as well as a family contribution estimate)

CSS Profile — www.collegeboard.com

Policy on Reporting Disciplinary Information

The Pingry School considers its Honor Code central to the mission of the school. If a college requests information regarding student suspensions, the school believes it is each student's responsibility to disclose the appropriate information in keeping with the spirit of the Honor Code. Students will work with their college counselors, Dean of Students, and the Head of the Upper School to address the issue in a straightforward manner. This kind of honesty is appreciated by all colleges and is not viewed negatively.

However, Pingry recognizes its responsibility to report to any college or university violations of the criminal code, grave disciplinary and/or Honor Code offenses, or cases where patterns of serious behavior persist or where there is an escalation of behavior that causes concern. Further, Pingry will report any significant changes in a candidate's status or qualifications that take place between the time of recommendation and graduation.

After the time of application, the college counseling office will report any significant changes in status including disciplinary actions.

NINTH GRADE (FORM III)

Form III College Planning Timetable

- SEPTEMBER** Sign up and get involved in activities, athletics, and community service projects that interest you.
- Develop good and strong work habits and a positive attitude.
- APRIL** Freshman College Information Night for parents
- APRIL** Register for the June SAT Subject Tests, if appropriate. Students should always discuss testing options with their teacher, advisor, and, if necessary, a college counselor.
- JUNE** SAT Subject Test date, if appropriate. Students should always discuss testing options with their teacher, advisor, and, if necessary, a college counselor.

Welcome to Freshman Year, Form III

The best recommendation for freshman year is to start on the right track academically, socially, and emotionally. This is a great time to be open-minded and take advantage of many opportunities. Be proactive both in and out of the classroom!

BALANCE YOUR SCHEDULE

The freshman year schedule leaves the student with little creativity in selecting courses, but he or she will begin to make more choices in subsequent years. The student's advisor will assist in the process of selecting courses in the years to come. When it is recommended, enroll in honors or advanced placement courses. Remember that colleges are looking for students who are willing to challenge themselves with more difficult courses. However, it is not recommended for a student to remain in advanced courses if he or she is earning a grade of D or lower.

GET INVOLVED

What do you like to do with your free time? What talents do you possess? How can you contribute your talents to the Pingry community? These are important questions that colleges consider when they review applications.

Colleges do not want to see that a student was involved in 10 different extracurricular activities. Rather, they want to see the extent of the student's participation and contribution. Remember, depth of involvement is more important than the breadth of involvement. Students should not worry if the bulk of their time is devoted to activities outside Pingry. Participation is key. Find the activities that excite you and get involved.

TENTH GRADE (FORM IV)

Form IV College Planning Timetable

- OCTOBER PSAT/NMSQT for practice; sign up is done for you.
- MARCH Schedule courses to take advantage of the best opportunities during the next two years.
- Begin talking to teachers about possible SAT II Subject Tests in June.
- APRIL Sophomore College Night for parents.
- Optional ACT practice test scheduled on a Saturday. Material will be mailed home.
- MAY Registration deadline for the June SAT Subject Tests, if appropriate. (Refer to this handbook or contact the Upper School office for guidance.) Register online at www.collegeboard.com.
- AP exams.
- JUNE SAT Subject Tests for sophomores in advanced courses (refer to this handbook for guidance or call the Upper School office).

WHY DO SOPHOMORES TAKE THE PSAT/NMSQT?

The PSAT/NMSQT is normally given to juniors to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship program and to practice for the SAT Reasoning Test. However, research has shown that students who take the PSAT/NMSQT during sophomore year tend to increase their scores during junior year. It is unclear whether the increase is due to academic growth or familiarity with the test format and types of questions.

SHOULD SOPHOMORES TAKE SAT SUBJECT TESTS?

Some students are ready to take SAT Subject Tests at the end of sophomore year. The student should consider his or her preparation and knowledge in a specific subject to decide whether or not to take a subject test. The student may also refer to additional sections of this guide related to testing. If in doubt, the student should contact his or her teacher or the Upper School office.

ELEVENTH GRADE (FORM V)

Form V College Planning Timetable

OCTOBER	<p>Take PSAT/NMSQT exam (sign-up is done for you).</p> <p>Consider videotaping your participation in your fall sport.</p>
DECEMBER	<p>Begin talking with college friends who are home for vacation about their college experiences.</p> <p>Receive PSAT scores and attend related evening presentation with Assistant Head of School and College Director.</p>
JANUARY	<p>Take SAT Reasoning Test if appropriate.</p> <p>Sign up for a college counselor.</p>
FEBRUARY to APRIL	<p>Meet with college counselor for initial college conferences.</p> <p>Begin to research colleges on your primary list and continue discussions with college counselor.</p> <p>Consider videotaping your participation in winter/spring sports.</p>
MARCH to MAY	<p>Meet with college counselor and parents to discuss college plans and process.</p> <p>Attend school-sponsored seminars on the college essay. Continue essay discussions with counselor.</p> <p>Consider videotaping your participation in spring sports.</p>
SPRING VACATION	<p>Visit a variety of schools—different sizes, different locations, and different levels of admission difficulty. It will not be possible to interview at most schools, and further visiting in the summer or the fall of senior year will be necessary. This is optional.</p>
MARCH	<p>Take SAT Reasoning Test (if not taken in January). Continue researching colleges and universities.</p>

MAY

Sit for AP exams and/or SAT Reasoning Test again (if needed). Continue to develop college interest lists.

JUNE

Take SAT Subject Tests (up to three).

Contact teachers whom you would like to write your college recommendation letters in the fall.

Establish contacts with senators and representatives if a candidate for a military academy.

Complete and submit your autobiography to your college counselor.

SUMMER

Continue research.

Visit colleges (make appointments for interviews and tours).

Contact specialized people at colleges, such as coaches, music and drama directors, department heads, etc.

Download a copy of the Common Application; you may want to begin completing it, reviewing the essay topics, and writing a rough draft.

Juniors (Form V) begin individual and group meetings with counselors in February.

How to Research Colleges and Universities

STEP ONE: SELF ANALYSIS

Decide what you seek from your college experience. You must determine your strengths and weaknesses, preferences and biases, secondary-school experiences you wish to duplicate, and new experiences you wish to explore. Once you know what you want—even if it is in the most general terms—then you may start looking for the colleges and universities that best match your interests and goals.

STEP TWO: RESEARCH

Some general reading about colleges precedes in-depth reading about individual colleges. Because no two colleges are exactly the same, you must learn about the variations and combinations (such as the difference between a college and a university) and categories (such as large or small, urban or rural). This stage of research usually is satisfied by reading the commercial guidebooks about colleges and universities (see suggested resources) and visiting the college and university web sites. To accomplish this step, you should select 10 to 20 schools to research. The process will introduce you to some of the differences and variations. You can make better decisions when you learn more.

STEP THREE: ANALYZING MATERIALS

Step three is really an extension of step two—you should read materials prepared by the colleges such as catalogues, viewbooks, and reports. Read these materials cautiously; although informative, they are written to enhance the image of the college. Certain factual/statistical information about an institution can be obtained and compared from the initial research as:

- Size and location (on- and off-campus environment)
- History
- Mission
- Means of achieving mission (curriculum, philosophy)
- Admission requirements and procedures (deadlines, fees, required tests, courses, degree of selectivity)
- Graduation requirements and degrees awarded
- Costs (tuition, room, board, books, fees, travel, incidentals)
- Academic program (distribution requirements, core curriculum, innovative programs, majors, interdepartmental programs, independent study, off-campus and overseas programs, co-op study plans)
- Graduate placement (graduate schools, career counseling, outcome data)
- Social and political climate
- Recreational facilities and availability

- Faculty (level of degrees, accessibility to undergraduates, faculty/student ratio)
- Student body composition (size, academic level, geographic origins, social/ethnic/economic diversity, graduate vs. undergraduate, commuting or residential, suitcase school)
- Honor societies (Phi Beta Kappa, Tau Beta Pi, etc.)
- Campus organizations/activities (role of Greek life, clubs, concerts, guest speakers, athletics, weekend activities)
- Housing (variety, availability for all four years, comfort, can you study there?)
- Rules (cars, visitation, absences, etc.)
- Student government and administrative role
- Calendar (quarters, trimesters, semesters)
- Health and counseling services, services for learning disabled, academic resource centers
- Safety issues

STEP FOUR: COLLEGE GUIDES

Step four leads to more insight into the college or university as a social environment where you will spend the better part of the next four years. Such sources as The Insider's Guide to Colleges and The Fiske Guide to Colleges focus more on life at college and less on statistical information. Like the admission catalogues, these must be read with an open mind as they occasionally overstate.

Playing The Selective College Admissions Game by Richard Moll, former Dean of Admission at the University of California at Santa Cruz, Yale, Vassar, and Bowdoin is an interesting and provocative book. The College Admission Mystique by Bill Mayher, an experienced college counselor, gives an excellent overview of the entire process.

STEP FIVE: PERSONAL OPINION

Talk to those directly involved with the institution. Friends who are currently enrolled, recent graduates, faculty/staff members (including admission interviewers), tour guides, college coaches (be cautious), strangers you approach at the student center, bookstore, or library, and long-term alumni are invaluable sources of information, insights, and opinions. Their personal views usually are most valuable when compared and contrasted. Since each of them is providing a subjective opinion, you will have a better perspective every time you speak with another person. Just like the historian must distinguish fact from opinion, so must you!

STEP SIX: THE VISIT

The visit must be considered as serious research. Before setting foot on a campus, you should thoroughly research the school and decide what information you need to confirm or determine. Record your reactions to all visits—the things you liked and disliked, the highlights of the visit, and the names of people with whom you spoke. Months later, when memories tend to blur, your comprehensive journal will be especially helpful!

You should have an interview where available (see your college counselor beforehand for tips), take a conducted campus tour, and then take time to wander the campus to acquaint yourself with the institution as thoroughly as possible. When possible, stay overnight in a dorm, attend classes, eat with the students, and experience the daily life. (Pingry graduates can be a great resource for this.) This should occur during the second visit, since initial visits are often during vacations when the campus life is largely absent. Remember, the more you know...

How to Visit a College or University

PARENTS

It is Pingry's belief that, because parents are an integral part of the selection process, they must be involved and informed. However, the applicant will have to live with the decision, so his or her role is primary. Parents should be included in first visits, given the opportunity to have questions answered, and serve as sounding boards for the student's reactions, but be secondary in the process. One suggestion is that the student and parent(s) go on separate campus tours, and then compare notes and reactions.

THE INTERVIEW

Most colleges state that the interview is to be an information exchange session wherein the applicant (and parents) may have questions answered and learn about the institution, while the interviewer may learn something about the applicant. Students should know in advance whether the interview is *evaluative* or *informative*. Preparation is essential for a worthwhile interview. The student should research the institution and have specific questions and issues to discuss. Your counselor can assist you in developing a list of questions prior to your interview. Some colleges will not offer interviews; others will encourage or even require an interview. It is important to understand the interview policy at each institution and the types of interviews offered (on-campus, off-campus, alumni. Most colleges will offer information sessions (typically a one-hour presentation) either in place of or in addition to an on-campus interview. Appointments should be made for interviews, information sessions, and tours as early as possible, because schedules fill very quickly. It is the **student's responsibility** to be mindful of all deadlines related to visits and interviews.

Interview hints:

- Dress is important. Students should dress in business-casual attire.
- Be relaxed, friendly, and on time.
- Shake hands firmly, keep good eye contact, and maintain good posture—body language is important.
- Be familiar with the general facts about the college.
- Have a list of questions. Your counselor can help you with this during a practice interview.
- Get a business card from your interviewer and write a follow-up thank you letter.
- Precision of speech is important. Don't be remembered for your "like," "you know," "yeah," and shoulder shrugs.
- Review your grades, activities, and interests at Pingry and don't be afraid to accentuate the positive. The interview is not a place for humility.
- Be prepared to discuss special or unusual circumstances of your life—travel experiences, artistic or athletic talent, community service, and entrepreneurial endeavors.
- Share with the interviewer your excitement about trying something new at college, such as going out for crew, studying astronomy, or taking Mandarin.
- On your interview day, arrange to meet with a coach, activity advisor, or other people of interest.

Potential questions you might be asked during an interview:

- How do you spend your free time?
- Tell me about yourself.
- Tell me about your family.
- Who is your role model and why?
- How would your best friend describe you?
- Describe your perfect day—what would you do?
- What have been your most memorable summer experiences through high school?
- Describe a difficult event or experience in your life and how were you changed?
- How would you describe your ideal college?
- What are your strengths? Weaknesses? How have you turned weaknesses around?
- What motivates you?
- What one word best describes you?
- What have been your favorite books and why? What unassigned books do you enjoy?
- Do you identify with any fictional characters in TV, literature, or movies? Who and why?
- What have been your favorite and best academic subjects in school?
- What do you like and dislike about this college and how do you see yourself fitting in here?

These questions may vary, but generally, institutions have their interviewers gather the type of information described above so that they can get a sense of who you are.

THE CAMPUS TOUR

The campus tour should have two components—informal wandering and chatting with people, and the formal, guided tour.

The following suggestions will help make your tour as complete and useful as possible.

- Visit the library—is it accessible, quiet or noisy, fully-computerized, comfortable? Does it have late weekend hours?
- Get a copy of the school newspaper. What are the controversial issues on campus?
- Look at the announcement boards and posters. What performers and speakers are coming to campus? What clubs and organizations are promoting their activities?
- Visit the bookstore and snack bar. What are students talking about?

- Talk to students on campus. Is the campus climate conservative or liberal? Is everyone alike? Are differences welcomed? Is safety an issue?
- Ask questions about workload, methods of instruction (lecture, small group recitation, technology) and methods of evaluation.
- Ask about professors and teaching assistants (T.A.s). Are they available for office hours and one-on-one assistance?
- Locate the writing center for special help or tutoring opportunities.
- Find out what the campus is like on weekends. Do most students leave the campus?
- Inquire about religious services.
- Discover if there are programs which link students with families in town.
- Visit the best and worst dorm on campus. Is special interest housing available (language houses, quiet floors, alcohol-free dorms, etc.)?
- Ask students about their friends who decided to transfer to another school; what were their reasons?
- Locate the fitness center or sports center.
- Check on computer accessibility in dorms and other locations.
- Ask about the relationship between the college and the nearest town or city.

Senior Autobiography

Please write your autobiography this summer based on the items below. Read them carefully and think about them before writing. Because we guarantee confidentiality—only your counselor will see your work—we ask you to be candid, complete, and open. Think of this as a review of your life to evaluate who and what you are now: your motivations, philosophy, perspective, and influences. Answer frankly and completely—don't be modest! Use your whole life (but with emphasis on your Upper School years) in school and out—your family, your personal life, anecdotes, crises, victories, defeats, etc.

The autobiography is due to your counselor in August (unless you are in a program continuing into August such as AFS or summer college), in which case you must send a postcard or letter by mid-August explaining why you will be late. It will then be due on the first day of school. The cover page must have your name, Social Security number and counselor's name. Mail it to The Pingry School, Box 366, Martinsville, NJ 08836, in care of your counselor.

1. Why do you want to go to college?
2. What unassigned books have you read in the past year and what magazines/periodicals do you read regularly? Why?
3. Where have you traveled and lived (or spent considerable time during summers) and how has it influenced you?
4. What have been your major gains and losses by attending Pingry?
5. In what activities (extracurricular, hobbies, community affairs) are you particularly talented and interested?
6. What academic areas interest you most? Why?
7. What occupations or professions interest you? Why?
8. List (in order of importance to you) honors, prizes and awards you received during the past three years. Explain the most important one.
9. List all elective and appointed offices you have held/hold (in school and out) during the past three years.
10. What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses, both personal and academic?
11. Describe the one personal experience that has given you the most satisfaction.
12. What has been your most outstanding achievement? Why?
(#11 and #12 should not be the same event or experience.)
13. Elaborate on a time when you have been disappointed or failed to reach a goal.

14. What are the most important traits you seek in a friend?
15. What jobs have you held (paid and/or volunteer)? Do/will you work during the school year?
16. Write a paragraph (or more) about someone or something who/which has strongly influenced you and explain why.

Letter to Parents

Dear Parents of Students of the Senior Class:

As we begin to think about the busy fall ahead, Ms. Chatterji, Mrs. Kinney, Mr. Fayen, and I would like to make a request of you. A parental letter of recommendation will be an invaluable addendum to each senior's file as we begin to write the Pingry profile (the counselor's letter of recommendation) for each of our counselees. Because parents have a unique perspective about each student, you may wish to answer questions such as:

- What do you consider your senior's outstanding accomplishments over the past three or four years, and why do you consider them most important?
- In what areas has your senior shown the most development and growth in the last three or four years?
- What do you consider to be your senior's outstanding traits and talents?
- What five adjectives best describe your senior?
- Are there any unusual or personal circumstances that have affected your senior's academic and personal development?
- Is there anything else you consider pertinent and valuable for us to know?

Some parents make the letter a joint effort; others write separate sections. Unlike other assignments of this kind, there is no word requirement, no special format; choose a style that is most helpful to you. Receipt of this letter by late August will be most helpful. We hope you have fun with this task.

Please send your letter to the College Counseling Office at Pingry, P.O. Box 366, Martinsville, NJ 08836. Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Timothy P. Lear
Director, College Counseling

TWELFTH GRADE (FORM VI)

Form VI College Planning Timetable

SEPTEMBER

Register for October SAT Reasoning Test or SAT Subject Tests (if appropriate).

Meet with visiting college representatives, continue research, and submit first college preference list to your college counselor.

Gather additional catalogues, viewbooks, and applications.

Visit college web sites.

Decide which college coaches or activity advisors you will contact.

Videotape fall sports.

Email questions to admissions office or specific professors.

Distribute secondary school reports to college counseling office and teacher recommendation forms to teachers who agreed to write letters for you.

Continue drafting college essays.

OCTOBER

Decide if you will be early decision or early action applicant. If you will be, turn in secondary school report to college counseling office and distribute teacher recommendation forms immediately (October 15 deadline).

Retake SAT Reasoning Test or SAT Subject Tests (if needed).

Have ETS send test scores to all colleges to which you will apply.

Begin work on applications for colleges to which you will apply.

Conclude and submit second college preference list to college counselor.

Turn in any additional secondary school reports and teacher recommendation forms to college counseling office and teachers.

Continue drafting college essays.

NOVEMBER

Sit for SAT Reasoning Test or SAT Subject Tests (if needed).

Finish final college preference list and continue applications.

Turn in all remaining secondary school reports and teacher recommendation forms.

Continue to meet with visiting college representatives.

Confer with counselor and English teacher as you write second and subsequent drafts of college essays.

DECEMBER

Prepare final college priority list with your college counselor (December 5 deadline).

Retake SAT Reasoning Test or SAT Subject Tests (if needed).

Continue to do your best academic work; first semester grades will be mailed to all colleges in February.

JANUARY

Sit for SAT Reasoning Test or SAT Subject Tests (as needed).

Talk with college coaches and activity advisors for final time.

JANUARY to APRIL

Revisit colleges if needed

MAY 1

Notify the college you've decided to attend.

During this process, seniors (Form VI) will meet monthly in small groups with their college counselors. Individual meetings can be scheduled at any time.

Get Yourself Organized

Organization is one of the keys to completing a project on time, and this is certainly the case during the college application process. If you are organized, the process becomes much simpler. Create a filing system with files for the following:

- Each different application
- Testing information
- Secondary school reports
- Essays
- Financial Aid and scholarship information
- NCAA clearinghouse information (if necessary)
- Transcript (unofficial copy)
- Activities
- Autobiography (copy)

Develop a system for keeping track of deadlines. Keep a large calendar easily accessible. Give yourself deadlines prior to the colleges' and Pingry's absolute deadlines. Do not procrastinate!

The Application, Personal Statement and Essays

Because the application is the one aspect of the application process completed solely by the applicant, this category is of great importance to admission counselors. Therefore, the neater, more complete, and more representative it is, the greater value it will have in the evaluation process. It is very much to the applicant's advantage to put time, thought, and effort into it.

As soon as you receive the application, fill in the student sections of both the secondary school report form and teacher recommendation forms and give them to the college counseling office and appropriate teachers immediately. Get a pre-stamped postcard from the post office, address it to yourself, and type an acknowledgement of receipt on the back (See appendix for sample). **All applications, personal statements, and/or essays are to be mailed by the applicant.** The college counseling office will send secondary school reports with the student profile, Pingry profile, teacher recommendation letters, and transcript, so these forms should be properly completed and submitted as soon as possible.

THE APPLICATION

When responding to the information sought on the application, the applicant should answer all items fully, completely, and honestly. Follow directions! Word processing can help, although very legible handwriting is acceptable. When the application is received, photocopy it and do all preliminary work on the copy. When completed, transfer the information to the original, which should then be photocopied for your records (in case the original is misplaced or damaged). Proofreading is critical for spelling, punctuation, and grammar. The application is usually the first impression for the reader and sets the tone for the rest of the folder. You may find it more convenient to use one of the computerized application processes.

ELECTRONIC APPLICATION

The college counseling office can direct students to application software—such as Common Application, APPLY, and College Link—which may be used to apply to multiple colleges. You may also choose to apply online directly to an individual college. Be aware that computer glitches do occur; always keep a paper copy of your applications. Press PRINT before you press SEND.

THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

Often required as part of the application, the personal statement is the means by which the applicant may describe and explain himself or herself to the college or university, so it should be honest, precise, and well thought out. Use your autobiography to prepare your personal statement. The personal statement should present the reader with information about the applicant that will allow the college to evaluate him/her as a student and member of both the school and home communities. It should clearly indicate the kind of person the applicant is by defining and describing the applicant's experiences, expectations, ambitions, hopes, apprehensions, priorities, and biases. It should be an interesting, creative, and comprehensive portrait of the applicant.

The writing sequence should be: (1) outline, (2) first draft, (3) edited draft, (4) revised/corrected draft, and (5) final draft. Once finished, the personal statement may be written on the form provided (sometimes required) or on a separate, attached sheet. Be concise, but content is primary. Others may proofread your work and make criticisms or

suggestions, but the work must be yours! (Experienced readers can tell if undue assistance was given!)

THE ESSAY(S)

Some colleges require an essay in addition to the personal statement. The essay is an opportunity for the applicant to demonstrate four important qualities: his or her facility with language, his or her ability to articulate ideas, his or her depth of thought in response to the essay instructions, and his or her problem-solving skills and analytical ability.

As with the personal statement, the quality of the writing and of the thinking are important, so try to avoid trite topics, clichés, and simplistic writing, and follow the five-stage preparation described above. College admission officers read hundreds of these essays and personal statements (up to 50 a day) each year, so providing them with something out of the ordinary is desired. Write as if your work will be read at 9 p.m. when readers are tired, and try to catch their interest and attention. Be innovative, humorous, mysterious, and/or creative. There is no right answer to the essay question. The reader wants to find you in the essay. How you respond to a person, event, or situation is what is most important, not necessarily a weighty subject.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Students may wish to send:

- An athletic résumé
- An art portfolio
- Copies of published articles/poetry
- Significant news articles

Take great care in choosing supplementary materials. Your counselor can help.

GRADED ESSAYS

Occasionally, you will be asked to include a Pingry graded essay, including teacher comments, with your application materials.

PEER RECOMMENDATIONS

A few colleges will ask for a recommendation letter from a Pingry classmate who knows you well. Give thoughtful consideration to the peer you will choose.

Teacher and other Letters of Recommendation

TEACHERS

Many colleges and universities request or require letters of recommendation from teachers who have taught the applicant in a major course during the last two years in secondary school. Some institutions will want one letter of recommendation and others will want two letters. During spring of junior year or early fall of senior year, you should ask your teachers for letters—select the teachers who you feel know you well and can write about you positively.

Teachers should be asked to write a universal/generic letter that can be photocopied and used for each institution to which you will apply. They should be asked not to make references to a specific institution, unless you are asking them to write for only one college. Letters should be submitted to the college counseling office to be sent with your secondary-school report, profiles, and transcript. When two letters of recommendation are needed, it usually is advisable to select a math/science teacher and a humanities teacher; when only one is needed, go with your strength. Extra recommendation letters may be sent, but they must be of significant value to the readers; they must tell something about you that is not apparent in other parts of your application. When in doubt about letters, consult your counselor.

OTHERS

The major purpose of any letter of recommendation is to tell the admission office about the candidate, so, to be of value, it must offer specific insights and examples about the student. A general declaration of support is of limited or no value—the letter should detail the positive aspects of your personality and give an insight or example not illustrated in the teachers' recommendation or parent letters. Most admission officers consider letters from clergy, alumni who don't really know the candidate, and friends of the family of limited worth.

PARENT LETTER

We invite parents to prepare and submit a letter of recommendation for the applicant to the college counselor. This letter is often of great value to the counselor in preparing the student profile, giving a perspective not normally available to us. In June, we will mail you suggestions for the parent letter.

Letter to Parents

Dear Parents of Students of the Senior Class:

As we begin to think about the busy fall ahead, Ms. Chatterji, Mrs. Kinney, Mr. Fayen, and I would like to make a request of you. A parental letter of recommendation will be an invaluable addendum to each senior's file as we begin to write the Pingry profile (the counselor's letter of recommendation) for each of our counselees. Because parents have a unique perspective about each student, you may wish to answer questions such as:

- What do you consider your senior's outstanding accomplishments over the past three or four years, and why do you consider them most important?
- In what areas has your senior shown the most development and growth in the last three or four years?
- What do you consider to be your senior's outstanding traits and talents?
- What five adjectives best describe your senior?
- Are there any unusual or personal circumstances that have affected your senior's academic and personal development?
- Is there anything else you consider pertinent and valuable for us to know?

Some parents make the letter a joint effort; others write separate sections. Unlike other assignments of this kind, there is no word requirement, no special format; choose a style that is most helpful to you. Receipt of this letter by late August will be most helpful. We hope you have fun with this task.

Please send your letter to the College Counseling Office at Pingry, P.O. Box 366, Martinsville, NJ 08836. Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Timothy P. Lear
Director, College Counseling

Admission Practices and Policies

Admission offices vary in specific priorities, practices, and procedures in evaluating applicants, but there are approximately 12 criteria that most offices consider in varying degrees of importance.

The primary criterion upon which most institutions agree is the level of courses taken during secondary school. Colleges want students who have opted for the broadest and most demanding curriculum they can handle successfully—the days of getting good grades in lesser courses as an admission strategy are past.

The remaining criteria are course grades and overall GPA (information contained in the student transcript); the application, personal statement, and essay(s); school recommendation (student profile); teacher recommendations; SAT score; AP courses; activities; specials (see below); other recommendations; the record of the sending secondary school; and, finally, if required, the interview. Obviously, superiority in each of the categories is most desired, but colleges evaluate the mosaic created by these factors, and demonstrated growth and consistency are very positive in the institution's eyes. Admission officers look at all four secondary-school years, so a consistent or improving trend is desirable. They are seeking evidence of ability, commitment, sensitivity, seriousness-of-purpose, leadership, responsibility, maturity, and the ability to adjust and meet challenges successfully. Remember, they are building a community of unique individuals to develop a well-rounded class.

“Activities” refers to extracurricular participation, both school-sponsored programs and those activities that are not school-organized. Admission offices evaluate a student's activities by considering the student's degree of involvement, his commitment, and his success. Quality participation in activities is far more important than quantity—that is, it's better to have deep involvement in a few activities than to participate in many activities in a superficial way. As a director once said, “Don't tell me you're on the track team; tell me how fast you run!”

“Specials” is a catch-all term referring to any additional considerations that admission offices consider in evaluating a student. Generally, students that fall into particular groups may have an additional advantage in the admission process. For example, some groups that may receive special consideration include legacy students (students who are related to alumni), students of color, students from disadvantaged backgrounds, outstanding athletes, actors, musicians, and applicants with unusual geographic origins.

Most admission offices operate by committee wherein at least two members read the application folder and then present the candidate to the full staff for consideration. Some larger institutions have area directors who read all folders from their area and make decisions on their applicants, taking to committee only those cases they find appropriate. Institutions such as large state universities often operate solely numerically, wherein they put GPA and SAT score (and usually class rank) into a qualification index (mathematical formula) or wherein they consider only those applications that meet minimum numbers (with higher numbers required for out-of-state applicants). In these cases other factors are not usually considered.

Early Decision, Early Action, and Rolling Admission

Many colleges and universities employ practices designed to expedite and facilitate the admission process, allowing the applicant to request decisions prior to the usual April 5 notification date.

EARLY DECISION (ED)

Early decision is a procedure whereby an applicant will submit an application, designated ED, on an earlier-than-regular date (usually between November 1 and December 15). The college or university agrees to make a decision (accept, defer, or reject) by a given date (usually December 15 or January 15). If the applicant is accepted, the institution commits itself to that decision (given continued academic performance) and the applicant commits himself or herself to attend that institution, withdrawing any and all other applications. If rejected, the applicant will no longer be considered for admission. If deferred, the candidate's application automatically becomes a regular application and will be reconsidered later with no commitment from either side. Students applying for financial aid should consider the ED option with great caution because not all colleges make a financial award at the time of ED acceptance.

A student considering an early decision application should know that he or she will be considered primarily on the basis of grades through the junior year. Recently, many colleges have requested senior year grades, and all seniors should be prepared to submit their unofficial grades for college review. The choice of an ED college should come only after thorough research of all other possible preferences.

The advantage of ED is that, if successful, it abbreviates the period of anxiety associated with college admission and clarifies the applicant's plans earlier. There are, however, two drawbacks to early decision. First, the commitment required of the successful applicant means the student cannot change the choice, thus precluding other options. Second, if accepted, an applicant may lose his motivation for school work, suffering a senior slump because he feels as though he has completed the secondary-school stage of education. On the other hand, early acceptance could clear a student's mind of college apprehensions and facilitate increased concentration and interest in learning. A number of institutions offer two or three ED plans, one in the fall and one or two others in the winter.

EARLY ACTION (EA)

Early action is a program offered by some colleges and universities that uses a procedure identical to ED, but does not require the applicant to make a commitment to attend the EA institution if accepted. The applicant may apply to other institutions and decide by May 1, which is the student reply date, but an EA acceptance is binding on the institution—contingent upon continued academic performance.

SINGLE CHOICE EARLY ACTION

Early action single choice is a program offered by some colleges and universities that uses a procedure identical to early decision, but does not require the applicant to make a commitment to attend the early action single choice institution if accepted. The applicant may apply to other institutions under regular decision and decide by May 1, which is the student reply date, but an early action single choice acceptance is binding on the institution—contingent upon continued academic performance. Early action single choice

Processing an Application

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT

- Ask teachers to write recommendations. This should be done in the spring of junior year and reconfirmed in September of senior year.
- Upon receiving an application, or downloading one from a web site, find the school report form and teacher evaluation forms.
- Complete top portions of these forms and give them immediately to the college counseling office and teachers who have agreed to write a recommendation. Sign the waiver if applicable.
 - **Note:** When using the common application, you need to give only one copy to each teacher and one school report to the college counseling office.
- Make copies of everything you mail. When applying online, print a copy for your file.
- All secondary school reports are due in the college counseling office the Monday after Thanksgiving. Early applications and rolling admission applications are due in mid-October.
- Include a self-addressed, stamped postcard with each mailed application so you have a record of its receipt at the college. See sample in the appendix.
- Online applications: If applying electronically, it is imperative that you print any forms the school must send and give them to the college counseling office.
- Send SAT Reasoning Test and SAT Subject Tests scores directly from the College Board to each college. Do this after your last test or on the registration form for your last test. When applying early, see your counselor to determine if your scores need to be rushed.
- Review transcript.
- Keep college list current with the college counseling office. Prior to winter break in December, students will sign their final list authorizing us to send support materials.
- **MEET YOUR DEADLINES!** Notice if due dates are postmarked by or received by.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COLLEGE COUNSELING OFFICE

- Counselors will complete secondary school reports, write a personal profile, advise, and review college list.
- Support materials containing the following will be sent by our office to the colleges to which you apply:
 - Secondary school report
 - Counselor's student profile
 - Transcript
 - Teacher recommendations
 - The Pingry School class profile
 - Return-receipt card

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Creating an Art Portfolio

This guideline is for seniors who have produced a significant amount of visual artwork in or out of school. If you fall into this category, we recommend that you create a portfolio of your best work as part of your college application, regardless of whether you intend to pursue art studies in college. What you have accomplished will often set you apart from many other applicants by demonstrating an unusual talent and skill. What you include in your portfolio, if chosen carefully, can only be to your advantage.

FORMAT

Most colleges prefer a selection of 35mm slides documenting your work. Some colleges will accept your portfolio by electronic transmission.

If submitting slides, include between 15 and 20 in a slide file page. Some colleges require 8 X 10 photos only. Therefore, before you begin to compile your work, check with the colleges for their requirements.

Each slide or photo should be labeled with your name and a number that corresponds to an accompanying list. The corresponding list should identify the medium used and give dimensions, a brief description of the project, and a title. It is a good idea to include your Social Security number on the slides or prints.

Include a brief artist's statement describing your interests and experience in your visual arts studies.

Other formats may be appropriate and advisable depending on the nature of your work and the college you are considering. If you are not sure about the best vehicle for portraying your accomplishments, consult the college counselors, your advisor, and your art teacher.

PROCEDURE

Collect all work completed during high school both in and out of the art program, including sketchbooks, studies, and finished pieces.

Contact a member of the Pingry visual arts department to act as your mentor for this process. Choose a teacher who knows your work best and arrange a time to meet and review all of your work. Consider which pieces may be most important and representative of your achievements. Because some pieces will photograph more effectively than others, choose more pieces than you plan to include in the final portfolio.

Arrange an appointment with a professional photographer. The cost of shooting your portfolio may be as high as five to 10 dollars per slide. Your art department mentor can suggest a photographer, if necessary.

Make sure the photographer has a clear definition of what you want included and how you want your portfolio to look.

Arrange payment directly with the photographer.

Once you have received the slides, arrange to meet with your faculty mentor to review them and make the selections that are most appropriate for your portfolio. The portfolio should most effectively present your talents and interests and give the college an idea of who you are.

Prepare your slides, corresponding list, and artist's statement.

If you are submitting a portfolio to more than one college, you will need to have duplicates made, which should be done when you have made your final selection. Slide duplication can take up to two weeks and cost up to three dollars per slide.

Avoid the last-minute rush. The fall is a busy time for photographers and processing labs, so plan ahead as much as possible. Give yourself at least three weeks to complete your portfolio, from choosing your initial work to sending it to your choice colleges.

