

# **Table of Contents**

*Introduction*—Terry Ullram, Director of College Counseling

*The College Counseling Team*

*Overview:*

College Counseling at Watkinson School — Philosophy

Preparing for the College Search

Distinguishing Characteristics of our Program

- Personalization with Students
- Personalization with College Admissions Professionals
- Presentation of our Students to Colleges
- After the Application — Follow-up
- Services for Students with Disabilities
- Commitment

*Nuts and Bolts:*

College Application Information: A Quick Reference

Services Provided by the College Counseling Office

College Planning Calendars: Junior Year — Senior Year

Your College Application File and the Selection Process

Special Applications and Considerations — Athletes and Artists

Visiting Colleges

Early Decision/Early Action Information

Standardized Testing:

SAT Reasoning Test, SAT Subject Tests, and the ACT

Extended Time Testing

Options for an “Alternative Year” Before College

College Counseling Office Procedures for Senior Year

Financial Aid Information



# Introduction to the College Process

Welcome to students and parents, as we begin an intriguing process—one that will involve self-exploration, discipline, the ability to dream, and the emotional maturity to accept the paradox of being both responsible for one's destiny, yet not having ultimate decisions rest in one's own hands. The only way to keep your balance through this process is to throw yourself into it!

Students—You must stand at the helm and guide your college search, even when other forces are influencing your path. I will be standing by your side asking you questions, helping you research answers and assisting you in navigating unfamiliar territory. You own the responsibility to evaluate yourself as a student, based on your past achievements and your aspirations for the future. You also have the responsibility to research colleges, make and keep appointments and complete applications well before the deadlines. It will also be important for you to call colleges to follow up on all of the details. One of the most important skills that you will learn during this process is how to manage the added distraction and challenge of the college search, while maintaining your emotional and intellectual center of gravity in the Watkinson community.

Parents—bear in mind that all we can do to help your sons or daughters is to guide them through this search. As adults in their lives, we owe it to them to let them experience growth—with sometimes accompanying discomfort—inherent in the college search process.

As Director of Admissions at the secondary school level, I was unfavorably impressed with the flashy résumés obviously prepared by someone other than the student—I was looking for the authenticity and a way to understand the unique qualities of each applicant. This is the only way to ensure the appropriateness of a school-to-student match, and to ensure the application process belongs to the student.

This handbook is designed to give Watkinson School parents and students both an overview of the services our office can provide, and the basic information you need in order to navigate the college admissions process. My hope is that you will use this handbook as a resource to better understand the admissions process.

As you embark upon and continue your search, I will be working diligently to help each student find an academic environment where his/her talents will flourish and mature. I will represent each student fairly and honestly—with their best interests in mind—to each college admissions officer. I am eager to help families better understand the college admissions process, and welcome your phone calls and other opportunities to work together. I look forward to meeting with you.

Very truly yours,

Terence J. Ullram  
Director of College Counseling

# **The College Counseling Team**

## **Terence J. Ullram**

*Director of College Counseling  
BS/MA Springfield College*

As Director of College Counseling at Watkinson School since 1999, Terry brings over 35 years of experience in independent school administration and teaching to this position. Having served as Director of Admission and Financial Aid at two boarding schools, and also as Dean of Students, Terry's broad-based background and knowledge of school culture provides a solid foundation for his indepth work with students and families as they begin their college search process.

As one of ten college counselors selected from a nationwide nomination process, Terry was named as a recipient of the "2012 Counselors That Change Lives" award, voted upon by the membership and Board of Directors of Colleges That Change Lives (CTCL). The award is given in recognition of counselors whose dedication to the college counseling profession reflects the mission of CTCL: to promote and support a student-centered college search process. Terry fulfills this mission in his daily work as he mentors each student to find the right college "fit."

Terry is a member of the National Association for College Admission Counseling and the New England Association for College Admission Counseling.

## **Meredith Potter**

*College Counseling Program Manager  
BA Mary Washington College  
MA University of New Hampshire*

Meredith worked as an Admissions Counselor for the University of Mary Washington before pursuing graduate school. After receiving her MA, she moved on to Canterbury School as an English teacher, coach, dorm parent, and eventually Assistant Director of College Counseling.

As Program Manager, Meredith handles a wide array of tasks including coordinating all documentation and communications for the office; organizing the logistics for college nights, retreats, college fairs, test prep classes, and College Now; and attending to a host of other "behind the scenes" responsibilities. She works closely with Mr. Ullram in all facets of operating the program. Meredith loves the diversity and pace of life in the college office; she particularly enjoys working with both students and parents and helping them with all aspects of the application process.

## **Rae Goldstein**

*Coordinator for Services for Students with Disabilities  
Learning Skills Program Faculty  
BS/MS Central Connecticut State University*

Rae came to Watkinson in 1998 with a strong background as a learning skills specialist,

having worked with students K-12 in the Farmington School system, teaching in Virginia, and also serving as director of a residential program for middle and high school students at St. Agnes Family Center in West Hartford.

As Watkinson's Coordinator for Services for Students with Disabilities, Rae serves as our official liaison with The College Board, handling all documentation in conjunction with extended time testing.

As part of the Learning Skills faculty, Rae works primarily with juniors and seniors. The close relationships she develops with her students is of great benefit as they embark on their college search. In addition to the importance she places on her work with individual students, Rae also enjoys the team approach we have here at Watkinson, which provides her the opportunity to work with all of the faculty.

## **College Counseling at Watkinson School**

### **Philosophy**

The College Counseling process at Watkinson involves an ongoing series of interviews, discussions, and evaluations; a thorough and realistic assessment of each student's goals, achievements, academic records, and extracurricular activities; and a powerful presentation to colleges of everything a student has to offer.

Beginning with Tenth-grade Exhibition, and then culminating in the college search process during the junior and senior years, our goal is to enable our students to find the right match with a school that truly "fits."

Our philosophy is to help each applicant take charge of his or her own search; we pride ourselves on helping students and their families understand the admissions process. We strongly encourage each student to dream about the future, set goals to help those dreams come true, and be diligent in their research for the right step after earning a Watkinson diploma.

**We strongly encourage each student to dream about the future and set goals to help those dreams come true.**

# Preparing for the College Search

The following guidelines were developed to aid our upper school students with their college search:

## **Freshman Year**

- Take the most challenging class load you can
- Work hard in your classes—not only for the best grades that you can earn but, more importantly, for the understanding.
- This is the time that you begin to build your GPA for college. Your freshman year grades count!
- Reflect upon your interests—could any of these interests evolve into a passion? Try to take your interests to the next level: try a summer program or have lunch with someone who has the same interest and who has made that passion a career.

## **Sophomore Year**

- Take the optional PSAT in October and practice ACT in May
- Take the most challenging class load that you can, keeping an eye on your GPA.
- Complete your 10th grade Exhibition.
- Consider taking SAT Subject Tests (Biology/US History) — consult with Mr. Ullram
- Research your interest or passion by taking a summer program in that field
- Visit a college! Schedule a group information session and a campus tour

## **Junior Year**

- Check the “Junior Year Timeline.”
- Maintain a strong effort in all your classes and continue to improve your GPA
- Take the PSAT/NMSQT in October and practice ACT in February
- Register with the College Board: [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org). Familiarize yourself with the site’s offerings.
- Begin your college research in earnest by exploring school websites and searching areas of interest to you
- Visit colleges throughout the year. Special Open Houses specifically for juniors are offered at many schools in the Fall and Spring.
- Take the SAT and/or ACT
- Consider taking SAT Subject Tests
- Can you link your passions with a possible career?

## **Senior Year**

- Check the “Senior Year Timeline.”
- What colleges will prepare you for a career involving your passion?
- What colleges will help you find a passion?
- Finalize your application list. Continue to visit schools. Keep in close contact with Mr. Ullram and Mrs. Potter so they can best support you through this process.
- Maintain a strong effort in all your classes throughout the entire year.

Remember, being accepted to the most selective college is not the goal. The objective is to find a program that will help you discover and develop your interests and your passion.

# **Distinguishing Characteristics**

*Personalization with students* — With approximately 50 students in each Watkinson graduating class, we are able to personalize the college process in a way that other schools cannot. Terry Ullram, Director of College Counseling, works exclusively with each student throughout the process, from initial meetings in the junior year to matriculation decisions in the spring of the senior year. With one voice guiding our students, we have a complete overview of every aspect of the college process, and the advantage of providing the very best for each student in a consistent manner.

*Personalization with college admissions personnel* — Over 70 colleges and universities visit Watkinson each fall, and Mr. Ullram recognizes the importance of personally meeting with each college representative (in addition to the students who will attend these information sessions). At some high schools, admissions representatives might meet with a staff person within the guidance office or a parent volunteer—not here. The direct connection Mr. Ullram has with these admissions professionals fosters an excellent working relationship with that college and the opportunity for Watkinson to be up-to-date on their initiatives, developing programs, etc. More importantly, Mr. Ullram has the opportunity to ensure that each of these colleges understands what Watkinson is all about, in addition to discussing specific students directly with each admissions representative. Because of the personal attention we offer admissions personnel, it is not uncommon for schools to send their senior admissions officers (directors, associate directors) to Watkinson for these informational sessions. This provides a wonderful avenue for our students to establish a relationship with a key admissions officer at a particular college of interest.

*Presentation of our students to colleges* — The packet of supporting materials that goes out from our office for each student application is comprehensive and professional. This is not handled in an assembly line fashion—each packet of materials is tailored, as necessary, for a particular school, and is reviewed with meticulous detail before it goes out. Meredith Potter, Program Manager, coordinates all documentation for the College Counseling Office. Watkinson’s transcript and School Profile are extremely “user friendly” and chock full of pertinent information that admissions personnel need in order to accurately assess a candidate’s admissibility. Because our teachers know our students so well, our teacher recommendations offer rare insight— in fact, colleges have commented on the genuine nature and quality of our teacher recommendations. Every teacher recommendation is reviewed by the college office to ensure that all of our students are represented in the strongest fashion possible.

An especially important and unique component of our presentation of each student is the Student Profile, or what is commonly known as “the counselor’s recommendation.” Unlike a teacher recommendation, which is discipline-specific, the Student Profile is the comprehensive narrative outlining the many facets of each individual student: academic, personal, athletic, extracurricular interests, etc. At Watkinson, during the spring of junior year, each student is assigned a primary profile writer. The student will meet with and be interviewed by this individual before the close of the school year. During the summer, the primary Profile Writers Committee, a team of faculty and administrators, meets to write, review and edit the profiles of each rising senior. Mr. Ullram does a final edit in the fall, after meeting with each student. This process ensures that Watkinson’s representation of each student is comprehensive, accurate and balanced.

*After the Application —Follow-up—* at some high schools, once your supporting materials are “out the door,” that marks the end of the school’s involvement in your college process. At Watkinson, it means that we are simply entering yet another phase of the process. We don’t sit back and “play the waiting game.” Mr. Ullram spends a great deal of time speaking directly with admissions personnel during the fall and winter months to track the status of our students’ applications and candidacy. When there is new

**Terry Ullram works exclusively with each student throughout the process, from initial meetings in the junior year to matriculation decisions in the spring of the senior year.**

**Meredith Potter ensures that each packet of supporting materials is tailored, as necessary, for a particular school, and reviewed with meticulous detail before it goes out.**

information about a student that needs to be shared with colleges, our office will take care of that in an expedient manner. This stage speaks again to the level of commitment our office exhibits to ensure that each of our students has as many college options as possible.

*Services for Students with Disabilities*—Students enrolled in our Learning Skills Program (LSP) may face additional challenges when it comes to the college search process. Fortunately, the College Counseling Program works hand-in-hand with the Learning Skills Program to assist students and their families in creating awareness of, and matching learning style with, the college that best serves the specific needs of each individual student. Rae Goldstein serves as our Coordinator for Services for Students with Disabilities, and acts as Watkinson’s official liaison with The College Board (SAT) and the ACT, handling all documentation and communication in regard to student eligibility for extended time testing. Ms. Goldstein’s expertise in this area, as well as her extensive experience as a teacher in LSP and well-established relationships with psychologists in the area, make her an invaluable asset to the College Counseling Team. Conferring regularly with Mr. Ullram, Ms. Goldstein is also in constant contact with students and parents to support them throughout the college process.

**Rae Goldstein, Coordinator for Services for Students with Disabilities, acts as Watkinson’s official liaison with The College Board (SAT) and the ACT, handling all documentation and communication in regard to student eligibility for extended time testing.**

Ms. Goldstein has also developed a comprehensive college preparation timeline expressly for students enrolled in LSP.

*Commitment* — Our college counseling team has a solid understanding and respect for the college process, and approaches their mission with enthusiasm and professionalism. Terry Ullram—Director, Meredith Potter —Program Manager, and Rae Goldstein— Coordinator for Services for Students with Disabilities, work tirelessly on behalf of our students. Their constant desire to improve Watkinson’s college counseling program and their unflagging dedication serve as the foundation for their work in helping students and families with the college process.



# **College Application Info: A Quick Reference**

Watkinson School - CEEB Code 070320

180 Bloomfield Avenue

Hartford, CT 06105

Telephone: 860-236-5618

Main Fax: 860-233-8295

College Office Fax: 860-231-0501

SAT Program Telephone Number: 866-756-7346

ACT Telephone Number: 319-337-1332

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

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

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

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

CSS PROFILE: [css.collegeboard.org](http://css.collegeboard.org)

Your Social Security Number (If applying for financial aid, you will need to know your social security number.)

NCAA standardized test reporting code: 9999

Family Connection: <http://connection.naviance.com/watkinson>

## **College Counseling Office Team:**

- Director of College Counseling - Terence J. Ullram, ext. 130

[terry\\_ullram@watkinson.org](mailto:terry_ullram@watkinson.org)

- College Counseling Program Manager - Meredith Potter, ext. 170

[meredith\\_potter@watkinson.org](mailto:meredith_potter@watkinson.org)

- Coordinator for Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) - Rae Goldstein, ext. 159

[rae\\_goldstein@watkinson.org](mailto:rae_goldstein@watkinson.org)

# Services Provided by the College Counseling Office

Students should get in the habit of checking their Watkinson School email a few times per day.

**Web Site**—Parents and students are strongly encouraged to use the College Counseling Portal. In LMS, click on “College Counseling Portal.” In addition to an online version of the College Handbook, you will find grade-specific information regarding Class News, Downloads and Links. You can access Family Connection (our college database) through our webpage, as well. Log on!

**PSAT/NMSQ**—The PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) is offered to Watkinson juniors each October. Sophomores are invited to sit for this administration as well, though their scores do not factor into the NMSQT competition, which is slated to juniors. The test is administered on campus and proctored by Watkinson faculty. A nominal fee is billed to each participant’s school account. Upon receipt of results from the Educational Testing Service (ETS), Watkinson then forwards the scores and interpretation information to students and parents in mid-December.

**Student and Parent Listservs for the Junior and Senior Classes**—During the junior year, a listserv is established for the students (Watkinson email addresses only) and parents as a means to communicate with everyone throughout the college search process. This has proven to be a very efficient vehicle to help everyone stay on course. It is particularly important for parents to inform Mrs. Potter of any changes to their email address so that we can continue to keep you up-to-date with information from our office. Students should get in the habit of checking their Watkinson School email a few times per day.

**Spring College Retreat**—All juniors are required to attend this one-day retreat, held on a college campus, at the beginning of the spring trimester. In addition to general information regarding the college search, this day of workshops covers résumé and essay writing and interviewing techniques.

Students receiving financial assistance from Watkinson will also receive a percentage of financial assistance for the SAT and ACT prep course offered on campus.

**Standardized Testing**—Summit Educational Group offers SAT and ACT prep courses on Watkinson’s campus at varying times throughout the school year. Students receiving financial assistance from Watkinson will also receive a percentage of financial assistance for these courses. SAT and ACT registration information is shared with the junior and senior classes each fall. The standard administration SAT and ACT tests are NOT administered at Watkinson; however, they are available at area public and private high schools. (Only students who qualify for extended time testing of 51% or higher on the ACT or 100% on the ACT will test here at Watkinson; Ms. Goldstein coordinates all extended time testing.)

We encourage all juniors to sign up for the January SAT Reasoning Test and April ACT.

**Student and Parent Consultations**—Mr. Ullram will meet with each junior, beginning on February 1. Parents are encouraged to schedule telephone or in-person meetings with Mr. Ullram to better facilitate communication in creating a healthy college plan. Each junior and their parent(s) are asked to complete a separate college planning questionnaire by February 1.

**College Programs for Parents and Students**—Over the course of the college search

process, the College Counseling Office offers a total of seven College Programs for students and parents: two in the sophomore year, three in the junior year, and two in the senior year. Students are required to attend these informational sessions; parents are strongly encouraged to join us.

**Sophomore Year** — College Night for Sophomore Students and Parents is held winter trimester, providing an overview of the entire process and setting the stage for what lies ahead. Summit Educational Group also facilitates an SAT/ACT Information Session in preparation for tests to be taken in the junior year. This presentation will compare and contrast the format, content, and skill requirements of both tests.

**Junior Year** — The first College Night for juniors and parents is held in December of the junior year and features a guest speaker who will address the current climate in college admissions. The second College Night is held in January. Students and parents will read this College Handbook, and should be ready to dive into the college process. In addition to discussing basic information about the College Counseling Office at Watkinson, we will review the timeline for junior year, introduce you to our Family Connection web-based college program (see below), and detail all that lies ahead this year as you begin your college process. There will be ample time for questions and answers following the program. The final College Night, held in the spring trimester, focuses on preparing students with the tools they need to finalize their Common Application, hone their essay(s), and further their research in the summer months, in order to be ready to tackle the fall application process when we resume school in September.

**Senior Year** — The first College Night during September of the senior year addresses specifics of the college application procedure and the final countdown for the college admissions process. The final program, conducted by a college financial aid officer, is a workshop-oriented session which focuses on the financial aid process. (This program is held on a Saturday morning in November — attendance is optional.)

Additionally, a student workshop series is held throughout the winter/spring trimester for juniors. Topics include: the college essay, student résumé, college visits/interviews, Common Application, teacher recommendation process, and the student profile writing process. Seniors kick off their year with a workshop at the end of August to prepare for the upcoming application season, followed by workshops in the fall which focus on completion of their applications.

An optional Testing, Accommodations and Support College Night is offered each fall focusing on extended time testing requirements and the special considerations that students with learning differences encounter in their college search. (This night is ideal for sophomore, junior and senior parents and students. Students enrolled in our Learning Skills Program (LSP) will benefit, as will those students who are not in LSP yet might be candidates for extended time testing.)

**Family Connection**—is a comprehensive program you can use to further your research regarding colleges and careers. Family Connection is a service we use in our office to track and analyze data about college and career plans; therefore, it provides up-to-date information that is specific to Watkinson.

Here are just a few highlights of what Family Connection will allow you to do

Extensive research on colleges — with just the touch of a button, students can research colleges and compare schools. You can easily link to college websites directly from Family Connection. You can compare GPA, standardized test scores, and other statistics to actual historical data from Watkinson for students who have applied and been admitted in the past five years. As your prospective list evolves into your actual application list, you will be able to continue to compare very

Over the course of the college search process, the College Counseling Office offers a total of seven College Programs for parents and students; a series of 8-10 student workshops will also be offered.

Family Connection is a comprehensive program you can use to further your research about colleges and careers.

To visit our school's Family Connection site, parents may find the link on the College Counseling Portal of Watkinson's website; students can link directly from the Watkinson start page.

specific attributes of these schools to help you gain additional perspective as you hone your search.

Sign up for college visits – Find out which colleges are visiting Watkinson and sign up to attend those sessions. You will receive an email reminder the day before the scheduled visit.

The college counseling office has been designed to serve as a true resource center for our students.

During the Fall, more than 70 college admissions officers visit Watkinson.

All seniors should track their application status (generally online) to ensure that all pertinent information has been received.

**Personalized College List**—Once the student has had a meeting with Mr. Ullram (see timetable) and the following tasks are completed and/or on file in the College Office—the student and parent questionnaires, draft copy of the student’s résumé, completion of the “Do What You Are” assessment and the “Career Interest Profiler,” and test scores from the student’s first SAT administration (January or later)—Mr. Ullram will work with each individual to design a list of preliminary colleges for consideration. The purpose of this college list is to serve as a first step to aid the student in beginning the college exploration process. This list is subject to change and may require revision as the process unfolds. Students are encouraged to update and change their list on Family Connection.

**College Counseling Resource Center**—Located in the Carriage Barn, Room 905, the college counseling office has been designed to serve as a true resource center for our students. The center is open during the school day. Students may use the Center’s three computers (or their own laptops) to research colleges on the Web and via Family Connection, work on their applications, or to email an admissions officer; scan documents to forward to admissions offices; use the phone to contact colleges; or sign out a college guide or a reference on standardized testing.

**Scheduled Visits by College Admissions Officers**—During the fall, over 70 college admissions officers visit Watkinson. Students and parents may view the schedule on Family Connection. Students will sign up through Family Connection and receive a reminder email prior to the scheduled information session(s). The visits are also posted on the hallway bulletin board outside the Resource Center. Seniors are encouraged to sign up and attend these information sessions—if class time is to be missed in order to attend, students must gain permission from their teacher. (Please note: these meetings are not intended to take the place of an on-campus interview.)

**Supporting Materials Sent to Colleges**—Students submit the “Send Transcript Request” form (aka the “pink sheets”) to Mrs. Potter, who then sends the supporting materials. The supporting materials consist of the student’s official transcript, secondary school report, school profile, teacher recommendations, and the student profile. All seniors should track their application status online to ensure that all pertinent information has been received. Schools require that official standardized test scores (SATs and/or ACT) be sent directly from the issuing organization. The student/parent must contact the College Board (SATs) or ACT to authorize release of the official scores.

Should your application file be incomplete for any reason, the college will send a notification of missing material. Should you receive such a notification, do not be alarmed! Please call Mrs. Potter directly so that we may check our records first, which will allow us to follow up in the appropriate manner. (Many times their notification and our materials cross in the mail or, more often, the college has the necessary materials in-house, but has yet to input the data into their system.) And yes, things do “get lost” in the mail occasionally. But, keep in mind that the Admissions Offices are here to help you! They want your file to be complete. They will be more than happy to assist you in getting things straightened out.

# **Junior Year Timetable**

## **September**

- Welcome Back!
- PSAT Information will be mailed to families, along with SAT prep course information
- It is imperative that you strive to earn the best grades possible—always keeping an eye on your GPA.

## **October**

- Take the PSAT/NMSQT on campus
- Attend Testing, Accommodations and Support College Night (for those interested in extended time testing procedures)
- Register for a test preparation course for the January SAT Reasoning Test
- Submit Contact Information Sheet to Mrs. Potter

## **November**

- Test prep courses begin for the January SAT
- Students—register with The College Board for the January SAT administration. The regular administration SAT may be taken at your local high school. (Students who qualify for 51% + extended time will test here on the Watkinson campus.)

## **December**

- Attend the first Junior College Night for Students and Parents
- PSAT results and test booklets will be distributed to families

## **January**

- The College Handbook will be distributed and should be read this month
- Attend Junior College Night for Students and Parents
- Devote time to completing and submitting (using Family Connection) all of the components of your junior file, in preparation for your first meeting with Mr. Ullram next month:
  - \* Complete “Do What You Are”
  - \* Complete “Career Interest Profiler”
  - \* Complete the first draft of your résumé
  - \* Complete the Junior Student Questionnaire
  - \* Complete the Junior Parent Questionnaire
- Take your first SAT Reasoning Test

## **February**

- Students whose junior files are complete will work on their preliminary college list with Mr. Ullram
- Schedule initial appointment to meet with Mr. Ullram
- Research the ACT at [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)
- Decide on future SAT and ACT testing options (SAT I/ACT and when? SAT Subject Tests?). Mr. Ullram will guide you. Register for those tests to be taken this spring.
- Attend the Junior College Workshops for students
- Begin work on your Common Application rough draft
- Begin thinking about potential colleges you might visit during March break and make appointments to tour and attend group information sessions on campuses; scheduling appointments with professors and coaches is encouraged.

## March

- Visit some colleges during the break — attend the information sessions and go on tour
- Begin thinking of which two Watkinson teachers you might want to ask to write your letters of recommendation. Start a file and begin saving your best work from your classes, graded writing samples, etc.
- Research the ACT at [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)
- Attend our all-day Junior College Retreat

## April

- Attend the National College Fair in Springfield, MA or Hartford, CT
- Finalize your résumé — *be sure to save this on your computer*
- Meet with your Primary Profile Writer
- The entire Junior Class attends the HAISCCA College Fair
- Make your formal requests to the two Watkinson teachers you would like to write your letters of recommendation. A Teacher Recommendation Form will be provided. Present each teacher with your request. (It is best to ask teachers who taught you in the junior year, no earlier.) If they agree to write for you, ask them to sign the form.

## May

- Fine-tune your college list with Mr. Ullram
- Submit your completed Teacher Recommendation Forms to Mrs. Potter
- Finalize the draft version of the Common Application, including your essay; print a copy for yourself and submit a copy to our office
- Attend the May College Night for students and parents

## Summer

- Enter your data from your draft Common Application into the “actual” Common Application that you will use senior year (available online in August)
- Finalize your essay and résumé
- Visit college campuses and attend information sessions
- Review applications for non-Common App schools
- Check on the status of Supplemental Information (essays/forms) required by each of the schools to which you are considering applying
- Check out possible institution-specific scholarships that might be available to you — some of these are due prior to (or are part of) the application process
- Students considering Division I or Division II schools should register with the NCAA Eligibility Center: [www.ncaaclearinghouse.net](http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net) and notify Mrs. Potter
- Register for September ACT (if interested)
- Do your summer reading
- Have a great summer break and be ready to GO in the FALL!!

# Senior Year Timetable

## August

- Summer Senior Workshop (August 24, 9 - 11 am). Final draft of Common Application essay due

## September

- The College Counseling Resource Center is open for your use on a walk-in basis. Come in to work and/or to meet with Mr. Ullram.
- Register for the October SAT and/or ACT (early Sept. registration deadline)
- ACT offered this month
- Attend Senior College Night — students and parents
- Mr. Ullram finalizes each student's profile
- Finalize application list of colleges with Mr. Ullram
- If not yet complete, work on the final version of your résumé (due at end of September)
- Share your final essay/personal statement with one or two faculty/administrators; add your final essay to the Common Application
- Complete the Common Application online; review/complete each college's supplement (only colleges which accept the Common App)
- Review your transcript (at afterschool workshop) for any discrepancies
- Athletes — if there is a chance that you might compete at the college level (D1, II or III), complete the Athletic Recruitment Form found in the Athletic section of each college's website
- NCAA Division I or Division II athletes — Did you register with the Eligibility Center over the summer? If not, you must register as soon as possible and notify Mrs. Potter
- Research financial aid application procedure for your schools of interest—what forms are required and when? FAFSA? CSS PROFILE?
- Begin applying to colleges—check procedures in the College Handbook and pay special note to our listserv notices
- Early Decision (ED)/Early Action (EA) applicants must see Mr. Ullram and Mrs. Potter this month for clarification of guidelines and expectations

## Throughout the Fall...

- College admission representatives will visit Watkinson. Check Family Connection for a complete listing and schedule. Sign up to attend sessions for each college of interest. *Because of these visits, it is imperative that you complete all of your September responsibilities prior to October 1.*
- Keep on top of your application deadlines
- Students are responsible for submitting each completed application along with application fee payment and any supplementary information (i.e. additional essay, supplement, résumé, newspaper articles, DVDs, portfolio, Slide Room, etc.).
- Students are responsible for releasing official standardized test scores (SAT/ACT)
- Starting with receipt of your very first application decision, please be sure to notify Mr. Ullram (cc to Mrs. Potter) of ALL your decisions as you receive word over the coming months. It is crucial for us to have this information in order to follow up

## October

- Every student's Common Application should be finalized by October 1
- Submit the CSS PROFILE as soon as you know the colleges to which you intend to apply—check CSS deadlines!
- SAT and ACT offered this month
- Final application list due
- ED/EA applicants instruct the College Board/ACT to send final testing reports

## November

- November 1: Early Decision/Early Action deadline for applications at some colleges
- November 15: Early Decision/Early Action deadline for applications at some colleges
- College Financial Aid Workshop (optional) will be held on a Saturday morning
- Plan to have the majority of your applications out by Thanksgiving

## December

- December 1: Early Action/Early Decision deadline for applications at some colleges
- Prepare for the financial aid process. Access [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) to establish your PIN and to review the FAFSA Forecaster
- Instruct the College Board/ACT to send final testing reports to all of your colleges which require standardized test results — NCAA Eligibility Center candidates: make sure to include the Eligibility Center (code: 9999) as a recipient
- Finish and submit all of your applications before the winter holiday break!
- Begin researching scholarship opportunities and working on those applications

## January

- File financial aid forms as soon as possible. FAFSA is available online
- Encourage parents to finalize taxes at their earliest opportunity in order for your financial aid documentation to be as thorough as possible upon submission
- January 1/15: Early Decision II deadline for applications at some colleges
- Earn the best grades possible: we send out mid-year reports in February

## February and March

- Continue to work on and submit scholarship applications
- Schedule return visits to those schools you are seriously considering
- Earn the best grades possible

## April

- Decision information will be in hand from the majority, if not all, of your colleges
- Schedule visits to “Accepted Student Days” to help you in making your final decision, and/or plan to stay overnight and attend classes

## May

- May 1: *National Candidates Reply Date* — You must respond to admission offers by this date; **deposit at only one school**. In some cases, colleges have rescinded acceptances of students who have deposited at multiple colleges.

## June

- *Graduation!!*
- One final official transcript will be mailed the last week of June to the college or university where each graduate plans to matriculate



# Your College Application File and the Selection Process

What do competitive colleges and universities seek from their applicants? As might be expected, the answer to that question varies from one school to another. Because approximately 75% of all applicants to competitive colleges meet the academic standards, these colleges often look beyond the objective information (strong grades and scores) of qualified candidates to select the student who will contribute in a significant way to the campus community. One school may place special emphasis on teacher recommendations; another may stress your commitments and contributions outside the classroom. Each school's criteria may change slightly year to year, depending on the needs and priorities of the college in a given year. Despite the differences among the colleges, most admission officers would echo the same advice to students. Some of the most important factors are included below:

**Your Secondary School Record**—Your transcript (your academic history) remains the most important document you will submit. Colleges are interested in your academic experience and your academic potential. They will review the transcript carefully to determine not only how you have performed in the courses you have selected, but how challenging the courses have been, as well. Colleges are anxious to see that you have challenged yourself in a course when appropriate, rather than taking the easier course for the higher grade. Their primary concern will focus on five areas including English, math, science, social science, and foreign language. Colleges are looking for five solid academic courses, plus the arts. They will look for work that surpasses graduation requirements.

Senior year is a critical time for every student, and colleges will look carefully to see that you have enrolled in a challenging selection of classes. While most admission committees will not review a candidate fully until the first trimester senior grades are received, they care very much about the entire senior year.

Colleges offer admission with the caveat, “successful completion of senior year.” We send mid-year reports, which include second trimester midterm grades, in February, and these reports are reviewed as part of the student's application. At the end of June, we also send your final transcript to the college in which you have enrolled. Colleges have been known to rescind their acceptance if a student's grades take a drastic downturn after the student has been accepted.

**Rank In Class**—As a school policy, Watkinson does not calculate a Rank In Class. Along with your application, we send our school profile, which contains a grade distribution, so that colleges can compare you to your classmates within the specific courses you have taken.

**Standardized Test Scores**—Many colleges continue to require the SAT Reasoning Test or ACT, and some will require the SAT Subject Tests. While required, they are not the most important criteria in the selection process. The SAT Reasoning Test is designed to test your critical thinking skills in both the verbal and quantitative areas, as well as your short essay writing skills. The ACT focuses on content. Regardless of the testing vehicle, many able students do not test to their true capability. A strong academic record may often offset a three-four hour testing experience.

However, high scores and a weak academic record often indicate a student who may be perceived by the admission committee as a greater risk.

Your transcript (your academic history) remains the most important document you will submit.

Colleges offer admission with the caveat, “successful completion of senior year.”

We recommend taking the SAT Reasoning Test at least twice: in January of the junior year and again either in the spring or the fall (October) of the senior year—your test schedule will depend upon when you have time to review for the test and also whether or not you will need to take the SAT Subject Test(s). *Most* colleges will look at your SAT test scores from multiple administrations and will then select your best scores from each section (Critical Reading, Math, Writing).

Colleges that accept standardized testing will require the submission of official scores, and it is the students' responsibility to arrange that scores be released directly from the College Board or ACT to the schools to which they are applying.

SAT Subject Tests are required and/or recommended by approximately 160 colleges. Colleges may require several tests—some schools will ask for specific tests and some will give you the option to choose. If you have the option, select those subjects in which you feel the most secure. Please see the teacher of the subject area and Mr. Ullram before registering for this test. Watkinson does not teach to the subject tests, so plan to spend outside time in order to adequately prepare. We urge you to purchase a review book for that specific subject test and request extra help from your teacher. Sample subject test questions are also available online: [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)

Colleges that accept standardized testing will require the submission of official scores, and it is the students' responsibility to arrange that scores be released directly from the College Board or ACT to the schools to which they are applying. You have the option with both the SAT and the ACT to select which specific test administration score(s) you want sent.

*Standardized Test Optional Colleges*—Go to [www.fairtest.org](http://www.fairtest.org). Find “University Testing” and click on “Optional List” (then click on “State”) to find a list of colleges “...that de-emphasize the use of standardized tests.” Consult the key to understand application requirements that may replace standardized test scores.

The way you present yourself through the application is very important and very much within your control.

**The Application**—The way you present yourself through the application is very important and very much within your control. A neatly prepared application that is complete and easy to read shows a level of seriousness on your part. Apply online (on a specific college's web site), or via the Common Application (also available online), which is accepted by hundreds of colleges but may require supplementary information. Regardless of the method you choose, the application is the primary document for you and opens the file for your candidacy.

The application is the opportunity to distinguish yourself within the applicant pool. This is especially relevant if you plan to apply to a highly selective school, since those applications are generally more thorough and demand more personal responses.

It is your responsibility to submit your portion of the application to the colleges before the deadline stated in their materials. Putting the application together, reporting your SAT/ACT scores, writing essays, and meeting deadlines are all indications of a student's readiness to deal with the independence offered at the college level. The College Counseling Office will be happy to help you get organized, assist with particularly difficult questions, and review your final application if you would like. Close attention should be given to “post marked by” and “receipt by” deadlines, to ensure that your application meets each school's deadline, and that Watkinson's materials arrive on time, as well.

Putting the application together, reporting your SAT/ACT scores, writing essays, and meeting deadlines are all indications of a student's readiness to deal with the independence offered at the college level.

**The Essay/Supplemental Essays**—A well-constructed, carefully composed and concise essay indicates your desire to be reviewed as a serious candidate. It is important understand the prompt and be sure that you are addressing it, not simply submitting an essay that you hope will work. Essays written in the junior year are great starting points, but submitting unedited versions of these essays is unwise. Your writing should be current, personal, honest, and a means through which the admission committee can come to know more about you as a person. This is the best opportunity for your voice to be heard. Neatness counts. Writing a draft or two during the spring of junior year is very helpful. Your senior English teacher will be able to guide you in the early Fall with finalizing your essay. Your final draft should be proofed by someone other than you.

*The submitted essay should be flawless.* We ask that you finalize your personal essay over the summer. Then you will begin your work on the supplemental essays—many colleges will require you to write one or two short essays. Often referred to as “hidden essays,” these are equally as important as your main personal essay. Having said this, please make sure that this work is *your* work. Admissions officers will see your English grades over four years, along with your SAT writing score and your actual SAT essay. No matter how much pressure you feel over this essay writing process, maintain your integrity. Do not underestimate the importance of your essay, including the supplemental essay. Essays do get read thoroughly. Admissions officers not only want to see the strength of your writing, they are also evaluating how well you have researched their college. This is a tremendous opportunity to prove to them that you are a great match for their institution (Demonstrated Interest). *Real College Essays that Work*, written by Edward Fiske, is a terrific guide filled with many helpful hints.

**School/Counselor Recommendation Letter - Watkinson’s Student Profile** — The school/counselor recommendation at Watkinson is known as the Student Profile. The Student Profile is a comprehensive narrative outlining the many facets of each individual student: academic, personal, athletic, extracurricular interests, etc. This is where you shine! During the spring of junior year, each student is assigned a primary profile writer. The student will meet and be interviewed by this individual before the close of the school year. During the summer, the profile writing committee, a team of faculty and administrators, meets to write, review and edit the profiles of each rising senior. Mr. Ullram does a final edit in the fall, after meeting with each student. This process ensures that Watkinson’s representation of each student is accurate and balanced.

**Teacher Recommendations**—Each college has its own requirements for teacher recommendations. Some schools will specify a particular subject teacher (English/Science). Unless otherwise noted, we encourage you to choose two teachers from the junior year who know you and know your performance within the context of the classroom. It is not necessary that the teacher know you in other areas. The student profile will touch upon issues of character, special talents, and extracurricular activities. In some cases, you may wish to have an additional letter of recommendation (music teacher, coach, pastor, employer, etc.) but, as a rule of thumb, we suggest two teacher recommendations for every school (even those that do not specifically require two). Start thinking, now, about the teachers you might ask. You will confirm who will write for you in May.

In deciding on the teachers who will submit a recommendation for you, think about your performance in each class, your level of challenge, struggle, mastery in that class, and which teachers really know you as a student. You need not have received an “A” in the class to have a teacher write on your behalf. Keep in mind that many teachers are inundated with requests and must be given adequate notice if you wish them to write on your behalf. For this reason, our office coordinates the teacher recommendation process in the spring of the junior year.

**Extracurricular Activities and Work Experience**—While the academic record remains the most important information you will submit, how you choose to spend your time outside the classroom and how you commit yourself will be of special interest to the admission committee. Some students may be tempted to think that “more = better” in terms of activities, but a long list of clubs and groups has less meaning than your commitment and how your contribution has made a difference to a club or activity. Colleges are interested in your activities both on and off campus. If you have been particularly involved in an exciting opportunity off campus, write about it!

The common misconception that colleges are looking for the mythical “well-rounded” student may be more appropriately understood as colleges hoping to build a “well-rounded” class. There are pockets on every campus for the scholar, the soccer goalie, the actor, the dancer, the musician, the alumni child, etc. Presenting yourself honestly and thoughtfully with an eye toward what makes you unique is most important.

Writing a draft or two of your essay during the spring of junior year is very helpful.

The Student Profile is a comprehensive narrative outlining the many facets of each individual student: academic, personal, athletic, extracurricular interests, etc.

Present yourself honestly and thoughtfully with an eye toward what makes you unique.

# Special Applications and Considerations—Athletes and Artists

Student athletes and artists experience an “enhanced” application process.

Student athletes and artists experience an “enhanced” application process. Not only do these students complete the traditional college application, essay, etc., they must *also* be rigorous in their preparation of additional materials in support of their desire to pursue athletics and/or the arts at the college level. Students who choose this route will have the opportunity to put their organizational skills to the test!

**Student Athletes** — Students who wish to pursue athletics at the collegiate level are encouraged to start researching options early on in their high school career. Aside from working with your coach(es), we suggest all families access the NCAA Eligibility Center website to begin learning about this process: [www.ncaaclearinghouse.net](http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net) In addition, each family should obtain the annual publication “Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete.” A free PDF is available to download online.

NCAA Eligibility Center — Any student considering a Division I or Division II school should register with the NCAA Eligibility Center during the summer prior to senior year: [www.ncaaclearinghouse.net](http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net) Notify Mrs. Potter when you register so we can send in the required documentation.

Research — Be proactive and do your research with each and every college. Make sure that you complete the high school recruiting forms on each school’s athletic webpage. Contact coaches directly (Mr. Ullram can assist you with this). When visiting campuses, plan to set up an appointment ahead of time so that you can meet with a coach while you are there.

Be proactive and do your research with each and every college. Make sure that you complete the high school recruiting forms on each school’s athletic webpage.

Student athletes should complete the recruiting form (prospective athlete questionnaire) found on each college’s athletic website. Then, upload the student’s highlight film, following the school’s specific guidelines, and send that to each college’s athletic office where you will apply. Follow up with an email to the recruiting coach. Mr. Ullram will assist you with this process.

**Performing and Visual Artists** — Students interested in pursuing the arts in college should make their plans known to the appropriate arts faculty member(s) and to Mr. Ullram. Dr. Bovard, Ms. Pelkey, Ms. Powell, and Mr. Nelson will be invaluable in helping you with your preparation to apply — whether it be to craft an arts résumé, to work on compiling a visual arts portfolio or a musical recording, or to assist in preparing you for an audition. Visual arts college representatives will often focus on portfolio preparation when they come for their annual visits to Watkinson. (Visual artists should take note of supplemental information in the Appendix.) In addition, plan to attend the National Portfolio Review Day — [www.portfolioday.net](http://www.portfolioday.net) — which is held annually at the Hartford Art School.

While visual artists will submit a portfolio, performing artists will most likely audition “live,” either on campus or at a regional location. In addition, we encourage all artists (visual, performing, literary) to create their own webpage/online portfolio to include samples showcasing their talents. These samples might include a visual arts portfolio, theater or musical performance, creative writing, etc. Some schools may direct you to a specific site, such as Slideroom. Consult each school’s specific guidelines regarding submission requirements.

All performing and visual student-artists need to be extremely proactive in their research, monitoring all the details along the way, to be sure that they have the specific guidelines for each and every program to which they are applying.

As you pursue these special programs, remember to ask for assistance — we are here to help you through this process.

**As you pursue these special programs, remember to ask for assistance — we are here to help you through this process.**

# Visiting Colleges

Although visiting a college campus can never tell you what it's like to attend the school for four years, it will give you a sense of the atmosphere of the school—something you can't get from a school's catalog. (You've never seen a photo of a rainy day in a catalog!) Every guide book and computer search program may tell you that a certain college is right for you, but if that school doesn't *feel* like it's right for you, it probably isn't. Visiting several college campuses will also help you focus your search on what's important to you. When you see what you like and dislike about one school, it will remind you to look for or avoid those things at other schools.

Depending on a college's policies and on your timing, your visit may include a tour, sitting in on a class, an information session and/or interview. If possible, arrange (through the admissions office) to meet with a professor in a discipline of interest. Plan ahead to make the most of your visit — always call in advance to reserve a space.

**The Tour** — Listen carefully to your tour guide, but remember s/he is giving you one perspective (usually a student's) mixed in with the admission office's party line. Some tour guides are excellent; others are not. Don't blame a school for an inexperienced tour guide and don't be sold on a school just by the skills and personality of a great tour guide.

Ask questions, pay attention to the answers, and don't forget to listen to the questions from others on the tour. Suggested questions to ask of a student tour guide: What did you do last weekend? How well do you know your favorite professor? What would you change if you were president of the college?

Look closely at the facilities. Are they well maintained? Are there places to run around or relax outside?

What are the dorm rooms like? How much of the campus is wireless? How far will you have to go for meals? What about microwaves, refrigerators, and laundry facilities? Is housing guaranteed for all four years? Where will your classes take place? What drives the social scene? Is there a Greek presence on campus? What percentage of students stay on campus on weekends (is it a "suitcase" school), and what activities are available?

Are shopping, restaurants, museums easily accessible? What is the policy on cars? Is public transportation available/accessible?

Can you imagine yourself attending and living at that school for four years?

**Class Visits** — Most schools and professors welcome visitors, but it is best for you to orchestrate a classroom visit through the admissions office. If time permits, try to visit a small seminar-style class and a larger lecture.

**Interviews** — Interviews may be required, optional or unavailable: they may take place on campus with a member of the admission staff or they may be conducted by an alumni/ae representative in our area. The importance of the interview to the admissions process varies considerably from school to school, but it's a good idea to be well prepared and to take every interview seriously. A good rule of thumb is: if an interview option is available, prepare yourself accordingly, and interview! This is yet another way to demonstrate your serious interest in the school and to personalize the process.

Don't blame a school for an inexperienced tour guide and don't be sold on a school just by the skills and personality of a great tour guide.

If an interview option is available, prepare yourself accordingly, and interview! This is yet another way to demonstrate your serious interest in the school and to personalize the process.

## Preparation

Make sure you are well rested and relaxed.

Dress in “nice casual” clothes. Please keep in mind that you only have one opportunity to make a first impression. Make it count.

Be prepared to talk about yourself and your Watkinson experience and to ask questions about the school in an enjoyable conversation. The days of confrontational and trick questions are over, but keeping a recently read piece of literature in mind might be a good idea.

## The Interviewer’s Questions

Be prepared to answer questions about your academic record and interests. Although the interviewer may ask about your grades, s/he is likely to be more interested in hearing about what you’ve learned and why.

The interviewer will also ask about your extracurricular activities, both during the school year and over the summer. Be willing to discuss your interests and experiences in more detail than will fit on your application.

Don’t try to “sell” yourself, but don’t hesitate to bring up accomplishments of which you are proud.

Don’t be afraid to reflect briefly on a weakness or a mistake, especially if you can also describe a positive outcome to your experience.

## Your Questions

Every interviewer will ask if you have any questions about the college. Make sure you do, to show that you’re interested in the college and that you’ve done your research. Start with the questions that matter most to you. Don’t hesitate to have those questions written down in your notes to refer to.

## Questions to Consider

- What are the most important issues on campus?
- What is the strongest program at the college?
- What is the most popular department/course on campus?
- How is the college working to improve itself?
- How big a role do graduate assistants play in the teaching?
- To what other colleges are you most similar?

Be sure to pay attention and be engaged throughout the interview and, if appropriate, respond to the interviewer’s comments!

**Final Note** — *Before the interview*: it is very important that you have read the college’s catalog carefully, and that you have explored their website thoroughly; be sure not to ask basic questions, the answers of which are readily obtained from the general catalog and/or website!

The days of confrontational and trick questions are over, but keeping a recently read piece of literature in mind might be a good idea.

# Early Decision/Early Action Information

An increasing number of Watkinson seniors apply to college through an Early Decision (ED) or Early Action (EA) program each year.

Please note the important distinction between Early Decision and Early Action:

**Early Decision** — Early Decision (ED) means that you apply to just one school using this designation, and that you are committing yourself to enrolling at that school should you be accepted. ED is binding. You should consider applying ED if, and only if, you have one clear first choice college early in your senior year and you are confident that your academic and testing record through the spring semester of junior year represents you in the strongest fashion possible. Whether or not a school is your unequivocal first choice is the primary consideration, but there are other factors as well. Any student considering applying ED should consult with Mr. Ullram as soon as possible.

If you do decide to apply ED, it is in your best interest to continue to complete applications right away for your second and third choice colleges. (If you are deferred or denied, you will be in a much better position by having some other applications already on file.) If you are accepted ED, you will then withdraw your applications at the other colleges. Be aware that at some colleges, if you apply ED or Restricted Early Action (REA), you may not be allowed to apply to any other college under an *early plan*. In other words, you may only be allowed to apply under Regular Decision.

EDI and EDII — Some schools have two rounds of Early Decision applications. The first round (EDI) generally has an application due date in November, and the second round (EDII) due date is in January. You may only have one ED application on file at a particular point in time. You may apply to one school EDI and, if you are deferred, you may then file an EDII application at another school.

**Early Action** — Early Action (EA) gives students the opportunity to apply early (EA dates vary widely and are specific to each institution) to a number of schools, without making a commitment to attend a particular school, should acceptance be granted. This is attractive to many because you are notified earlier of your acceptance status, yet are not obligated to commit until May 1.

Restricted Early Action — A very few schools (Boston College, Yale and Stanford, for example) offer a Restricted Early Action (REA) option. If you choose to apply REA to a school, you may not apply EA or ED to other schools. The important difference to note is that acceptance to an REA school is not binding.

**Chances of being admitted** — Because of heavy media coverage of an “early advantage,” some students have been given the idea that an early application can mask all the gaps in their records. This is not the case. We do not advise students to apply early to schools that are extreme reaches. When in doubt, speak with Mr. Ullram. In many cases, he will call the college to discuss your candidacy.

**Financial aid** — Candidates for financial aid must consider the ramifications an early application may have on their financial aid package. Many financial aid applicants benefit from receiving more than one financial aid offer from which to choose (or among which to negotiate). For obvious reasons, students who are accepted early don’t have this opportunity. While a college will release a student from a binding ED contract for financial reasons, the student wouldn’t have the opportunity to say to his/her first-choice school,

Any student considering applying ED should consult with Mr. Ullram as soon as possible.



“You’re my first choice, but I’ve been offered a lot more money at another school. Is there anything you can do?” Still, some colleges make an effort to offer particularly attractive financial aid packages to their early admitted applicants because they know the students have given up the opportunity to negotiate and because, early in the process, their financial aid budgets aren’t close to being allocated.

### **Advantages to applying ED**

- If you meet the college’s standards for admission, there is a greater chance of acceptance at this time, for you have demonstrated interest in the most sincere way, and the college knows that you will matriculate.
- Students who apply ED and are accepted are finished with the college application process early in the senior year.
- A student who is deferred or rejected in the early round has the advantage of getting that information early in the process with time to apply to other schools with later deadlines (ED II, Regular or Rolling Admission).

### **Advantages to applying EA**

- Many selective colleges have many more admissible applicants than they’re able to accept, and they must deny admission to some of them. In the ED/EA round, long before they have filled their class, a college might be able to admit a higher number of admissible candidates than would be possible to admit later on in the regular round.
- Colleges are as concerned about enrolling a full class as students are about getting into the college of their choice. Demonstrating your strong interest in a college by applying early will likely be viewed favorably.
- Note: Any advantage in the admission process to applying early is only a small advantage; a “reach” school will still be a “reach” no matter when you apply, though it may be less of one. ED/EA candidates who apply to schools in their mid-range are the most likely to benefit from any early advantage.

### **Disadvantages of applying ED/EA**

- Early Decision is binding; many students change their opinions about colleges over the course of the senior year, so if you *do* choose Early Decision, you must be absolutely confident that this is where you want to matriculate.
- In many cases, the college won’t see first trimester grades or fall SAT scores until they become available in November/early December, so, depending upon the deadline date, more emphasis may be placed on earlier grades, test scores, etc.
- The student has fewer opportunities to take the SATs/ACTs.
- Financial awards might not be as generous as Regular Decision

### **Other Information**

- ED/EA plans vary considerably from college to college. Each school’s ED/EA policies and requirements can be found online under “application.” Please read them carefully and make sure you understand them and can abide by them before submitting the application.
- Be careful of the expression, “I know I want to apply Early Decision —I just don’t know where.” This is a strong indication that an Early Decision plan may not be the best idea for you.

**Demonstrating your strong interest in a college by applying early will likely be viewed favorably.**

**Be careful of the expression, “I know I want to apply Early Decision —I just don’t know where.” This is a strong indication that an Early Decision plan may not be the best idea for you.**

# Standardized Testing:

## **Ideal Testing Schedule for Students for the SAT**

- October of sophomore year: PSAT offered at Watkinson
- May of sophomore year: Practice ACT offered at Watkinson
- June of sophomore year: SAT Subject Test if applicable (i.e. Biology, U.S. History)
- October of junior year: PSAT/NMSQT at Watkinson
- January of junior year: SAT Reasoning Test
- February of junior year: Practice ACT offered at Watkinson
- April of junior year: ACT
- May of junior year: SAT Reasoning Test
- June of junior year: SAT Subject Test if applicable
- October of senior year: SAT Subject Test (or SAT Reasoning Test if applying ED/EA)
- November of senior year: SAT Reasoning Test (or SAT Subject Test if applying ED/EA)

**Testing is a highly individual matter. Therefore, please consult with Mr. Ullram to determine your ideal testing schedule.**

NOTE: The standard-timed administrations of the SAT and ACT are not given at Watkinson; students take these tests at their local high school (or wherever they choose to register). It is expected that the testing schedule for some of you will deviate from the one above — in some cases, quite a bit. Early Decision/Early Action applicants with deadlines of November 15 or earlier should take their SAT Subject Tests (as many as the college requires) by the end of junior year, and should take the SAT Reasoning Test in October. SAT Subject Tests can be repeated in November, but there is no guarantee that the college will receive the scores in time for an Early Decision. Testing is a highly individual matter. Therefore, please consult with Mr. Ullram to determine your ideal testing schedule.

## **Sending Scores to Colleges**

1. All SAT Reasoning Test and SAT Subject Test scores will be part of your cumulative testing record here at Watkinson. It is the student's responsibility to contact the College Board directly to arrange for scores to be sent to the colleges to which you apply.

You can call 866-756-7346 or use [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) to send your scores to colleges. Online is the way to go—using a credit card, you can just click on colleges and create a list — it takes about three - five weeks to process, or you can click on “Rush” to expedite (additional fees apply).

2. The first four score reports are included with each registration fee. If you do not take advantage of this option at registration, or you need to have scores forwarded to more than four schools, you will then be charged a fee.

3. If you follow the Ideal Testing Schedule, you can take advantage of the four “free” score reports at your final SAT test administration in October or November of senior year.

4. If you would like to select SAT scores from specific test administrations to send to colleges, Score Choice gives you that option.

5. For a complete and up-to-date listing of all fees (waitlist, telephone rush reporting, scores by phone, etc.) regarding both the SAT Reasoning Test and the SAT Subject Test, your best resource is to go directly to the College Board website: [sat.collegeboard.org/home](http://sat.collegeboard.org/home)

**If test scores are required by your school(s) of application, it is your responsibility to contact the specific testing agency to arrange for scores to be sent.**

## **SAT Subject Tests - Other Information**

- Check each college for testing requirements. Not all colleges require SAT Subject Tests; others require specific SAT Subject Tests. Most colleges will consider the ACT in lieu of SAT Subject Test scores.
- The registration fees for the SAT Subject Tests vary by test.

## **Fee Waivers**

Each fall, our office consults with Watkinson's Director of Financial Aid to determine which junior students are eligible to participate in the SAT fee waiver program. Students who qualify are eligible for two SAT Reasoning Test and two SAT Subject Test administration fee waivers; in addition, college application fee waivers are made available during the senior year. In the fall, Mrs. Potter will notify juniors who qualify for this program. Fee waivers may only be applied in accordance with regular registration deadlines (either via mail or online). Fee waivers will not be accepted for students who register late or elect to test "waitlist." Any questions regarding the fee waiver program should be directed to Mrs. Potter.

## **ACT Information**

The ACT Assessment is designed to assess high school students' general educational development and their ability to complete college-level work. The tests cover four skill areas: English, mathematics, reading, and science reasoning. It is strongly encouraged that students take the ACT *with* Writing. Students generally will test for the ACT in spring of Junior year, or sometimes in October of Senior year. Students may elect to have ACT scores sent from a specific test administration. For further information, access their web site at [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org). Students interested in exploring this testing vehicle should consult with Mr. Ullram.

## **Extended Time Testing**

Extended Time Testing is available for those students who qualify, as deemed by the College Board and the ACT. Rae Goldstein, Coordinator for Services for Students with Disabilities, handles all of the documentation for extended time testing. All current sophomore families are contacted annually to begin a dialogue surrounding extended time testing and accommodations. Ms. Goldstein can assess whether or not the student will need to have any additional psych/ed testing completed in order to meet the documentation requirements for applying for extended time. Ideally, documentation is in place so that accommodations are approved in time for students to take the PSAT/ NMSQT in October of the junior year. Once accommodations have been granted, those students are then qualified for extended time on their SAT tests. Securing extended time for the ACT is also an option.

Students who are granted 50% extended time (or less) are able to go to a standard test site (generally one's local high school, or school of choice). Those students who are granted 51% extended time (or more) on the SAT or 100% extended time on the ACT, test here at Watkinson.

Those interested in extended time testing should plan on attending the annual "Testing, Accommodations and Support College Night" each fall, which focuses on the procedures and guidelines in regard to extended time testing.

Any questions regarding extended time testing, documentation and/or accommodations should be directed to Rae Goldstein, ext. 159, or by e-mail: [rae\\_goldstein@watkinson.org](mailto:rae_goldstein@watkinson.org)

**Students may elect to have SAT and/or ACT scores sent from a specific test administration.**

**Students who are granted 50% extended time (or less) are able to go to a standard test site (generally one's local high school, or whatever school they choose). Those students who are granted 51% extended time (or more) on the SAT or 100% extended time on the ACT, test here at Watkinson.**

## **Options for an “Alternative Year” Before College**

While most Watkinson students go off to college following their senior year, for a few students, a year off before college will add experience and maturity. There are many experiential and internship opportunities in the arts, environmental conservation, education, and community service. There are also some exchange opportunities that allow students to take a “thirteenth year” in another school setting. Some educators have made it their profession to guide students through a planned year of travel, work, and education while living with families in other regions and around the world. Below are some resources that you might find helpful in exploring this possibility. In addition, resources are available in the College Counseling Resource Center.

If you are considering taking a year to explore your interests before college, we strongly recommend that you go through the college admissions process, wait for admission offers, and then defer your entrance to the college of your choice for a year. Colleges are happy to support students making this choice and are eager to welcome students into their community who have had a rich and varied year-off experience.

For those students who feel they would best benefit from an additional year at Watkinson, The Academy at Watkinson might be an appropriate option to consider. Part gap year, part post graduate year, and wholly an extension of Watkinson’s unique educational philosophy, The Academy allows students to work with the program’s Director, Yassine Talhaoui, to carve out the right balance of studying the world, and learning more about themselves during this final academic year at Watkinson. Interested students should speak with both Mr. Ullram and Mr. Talhaoui to learn more about this opportunity.

**For a list of links to over 130 summer opportunities and alternative year offerings, please visit the “Enrichment Opportunities” section on LMS under “Resources.”**

## Is an “Alternative Year” Right for You?

Taking time off before heading to college is becoming a viable option for many students. Contrary to what you might think, most colleges are very open to students who wish to pursue this opportunity.

There is no right or wrong answer to whether or not it is “better” to take a year off before college or to go straight from high school to your freshman year. You will need to do a little soul-searching and examine the pros and cons of each scenario before you can determine if you are a good candidate who could truly benefit from taking an alternative year.

Ask yourself the following question: What comes to the forefront when you think of taking a year off?

- Is it the intrigue of travel, the opportunity to study abroad, or a specific program that has piqued your interest?
- Do you simply not have any idea of what you might want to study in college?
- Are you weary of studying and the pressures of school — do you just need a break from school work?
- Was your high school performance such that an additional year of study (post-graduate year) or experience might be of benefit?
- Do you long to engage in some type of service or humanitarian effort during your time prior to college?
- Does the notion of interning or job shadowing interest you?

You may be able to combine a couple of your interests — for example: travel abroad and interning back home — in order to develop a year of wonderful experiences. As long as you are productive, you will benefit from this period of growth and enrichment!

Examples of what several Watkinson graduates have done during their alternative year:

- Attended a year-long program in Israel
- Enrolled in two NOLS courses, followed by a semester in community college
- Traveled to Ecuador to serve as a teaching assistant
- Attended a study abroad program, followed by working
- Worked, and then returned to Cambodia to do service work (an extension of this student’s summer service-learning trip with Watkinson)
- Served as a “corps member” with City Year ([www.cityyear.org](http://www.cityyear.org))

If an alternative year is something you would like to explore, please take the following steps:

1. Consult with Mr. Ullram — it is imperative that he guide you through this process.
2. Conduct your college search. Choose the colleges to which you want to apply. Go through the application process. Research your alternative year options.
3. Once admitted, choose which college might be right for you.
4. Then, talk with your admissions officer at your college of matriculation about deferring for a year. Know that you will have to deposit at that school by May 1 and, for most colleges, this will not be binding. (Should you decide to attend school elsewhere, though, you will then lose that specific deposit.)

**Conduct your college search. Choose the colleges to which you want to apply. Go through the application process. Research your alternative year options.**

# **College Counseling Office Procedures**

## **for Senior Year**

**Student/Parent Agreement** — In August, prior to the beginning of senior year, each family will receive a packet containing guidelines, release forms, expectations and policies pertinent to the upcoming year. Each student and parent will sign the Student/Parent Agreement, acknowledging that they will abide by the policies therein. Students and parents will also sign a transcript release form that gives our office permission to send supporting documents to the colleges to which a student applies. Without this signed release, we cannot send documents on behalf of students, so its timely return is of utmost importance.

**Authentic Student Communication with Colleges** — Each student must take the reins in the college process. Students may certainly seek guidance from our office, a teacher, or parent in terms of structuring and proofreading, but the communication must be authentic and it must be the student's. Students must craft all portions of their applications, including the essay, résumé, supplements, and email communications with admissions officers.

**Parental Contact with Admissions Officers** — During the application process, some parents have the mistaken notion that they are helping or clarifying, or they might feel a need to make a special case or explain special circumstances by personally calling an admissions officer directly on behalf of their child. This is never the case; in fact, despite the best intentions, a parent's involvement at this stage muddies the waters and can have a negative impact not only on that particular student's candidacy but also on Watkinson's relationship with the institution. Admissions officers—across the board—expect to deal directly with the student or with that student's high school counselor. If there is important information or a sensitive issue that should be communicated, please discuss this with Mr. Ullram.

**Disciplinary Issues and the College Process** — It is Watkinson's policy not to report disciplinary action to colleges on transcripts, in recommendations, or in the student profile. This policy is also reiterated on the School Report of the Common Application. Please be aware, however, that college applications request this information, usually in terms of suspension or expulsion. Watkinson's expectation is that you, the student, will disclose this information and answer all questions of this nature with honesty and integrity. If you are suspended or expelled after applications have been submitted, your first course of action is to speak with Mr. Ullram. Although it is your responsibility to inform each of your individual colleges, Mr. Ullram will assist you in your written communication and discuss options for moving forward. If you were suspended in your freshman, sophomore, or junior years, it is also your responsibility to disclose that information; Mr. Ullram will assist you in formulating an appropriate statement for submission.

**University of Hartford courses** — It is a privilege for qualified students to take part in college courses at the University of Hartford. The goal of this program is to give those students the opportunity to experience and demonstrate success in college-level coursework. This coursework is reflected on your Watkinson transcript and becomes a permanent part of your record here. Please be aware of the University of Hartford's timelines, including start of school, exam week, and deadlines for dropping a class; these timelines do not have any correlation with Watkinson's calendar.

**College Reps on Campus** — Admission officers visit Watkinson during the fall trimester. They are not here to interview you but rather to share information about their college *and* to learn about Watkinson. This is a great opportunity not only to ask questions about the school but to establish a relationship with the admissions person who will be reviewing your file in the months to come. This is one of many ways to show the college that you are genuinely interested in their school. Be sure to peruse the specific college's website before the meeting and have a few questions ready to ask that you couldn't find answers to. Dress appropriately and be ready to let the admissions officer know why you are interested in their college. We strongly encourage you to make a special effort to attend these information sessions. Seniors may be excused from school commitments for these sessions, provided they have permission from the responsible Watkinson faculty member (teacher, coach, etc.). The session lasts approximately a half-hour, and students may come and go depending on their schedule. All college visits are listed on Family Connection. You will sign up on Family Connection and will receive a reminder email the day before the scheduled visit.

#### Procedures

1. Weigh carefully whether your interest is serious enough to warrant the time commitment. If so, sign up.
2. If you will miss a portion of a school commitment, be sure to ask permission of the responsible faculty member.
3. If your plans change, please notify Mr. Ullram or Mrs. Potter.

**Student Application and Essay** — This is your part of the application, and you will want to be proud of what you submit. Allow plenty of time to do your best.

#### Procedures

1. Carefully review each application before beginning. Be sure to note instructions such as specifics regarding the length of your essay or supplements that may be required.
3. Many of the Common Application colleges will ask you to complete a supplement to the application; many times this involves an additional essay. If so, this essay is the perfect vehicle to prove to the school that you are a great match.
4. Seek an objective opinion on your essay. Teachers, advisors or peers can help. You are welcome to submit a draft of your essay to Mr. Ullram to gain his perspective.
5. For electronic submissions, make sure that you print copies of receipts (i.e. payment received, application received) for your records.

**Teacher (and other) Recommendations** — Most colleges require one or more recommendations from teachers who have had you in class. Even if a college does not require teacher recommendations, each student will have two Watkinson teacher recommendations on file.

Meeting with college reps on campus provides a great opportunity to establish a relationship with the admissions person who will (most likely) be reviewing your file.

Each student will have two Watkinson teacher recommendations on file.

## Procedures

1. Read the instructions carefully; some colleges are very specific about which teachers they wish to hear from. If you have some latitude about whom to choose, think about the decision carefully. The teacher who gave you the best grade may not necessarily be the best individual to write for you.

If you plan to ask someone outside of the Watkinson community (a private music teacher, coach, etc.) to also write for you, please see Mrs. Potter for guidelines and procedures.

2. In the spring, the College Office will provide each junior with a Teacher Recommendation Form (yellow). Ask the teachers you would like to have write for you, and have them sign off on your form. Following this timeline allows teachers to plan ahead and to write a thoughtful recommendation. Your teachers have the right to deny your request if they feel they would not be able to write a positive recommendation on your behalf. Return your completed and signed form to Mrs. Potter. Watkinson's College Counseling Office has requested that teachers submit their recommendations by September 1.

If you plan to ask someone outside of the Watkinson community (a private music teacher, coach, etc.) to also write for you, please see Mrs. Potter for guidelines and procedures.

3. All applications will be filed online. Should you have any paper applications, please see Mrs. Potter. She will review all of your forms with you in the fall and determine which forms should be passed along to faculty. Please do not give Mr. Ullram or faculty any forms; all paperwork goes through Mrs. Potter.

You are responsible for knowing which college tests you must take and when they are offered, and for seeing that you are properly registered.

- Each student will also submit a "Pink Sheet" for each college to which they apply. This sheet tells us specifically what your intentions are for each and every school: school's name and mailing address, what type of application deadline and date (Early Decision Nov. 1; Regular Decision Jan. 1, etc.).

**Testing** — *You are responsible for knowing which college tests you must take and when they are offered, and for seeing that you are properly registered.* The SAT Reasoning Test will be given at local area high schools in January, March, May, June, October, November and December, and the SAT Subject Tests will be offered for all of the same dates except March. The ACT will be offered at local area high schools in September, October, December, February, April, and June. Students who are considering early decision/early action applications with November deadlines should take the SAT Reasoning Test in October or ACT in September. (See section on Ideal Testing Schedule, under "SAT Information"). Information concerning the TOEFL and the ACT, which may be accepted in lieu of the SAT Subject Test, is available in the College Counseling Office.

## Procedures

**IMPORTANT: When registering for tests, be sure to list Watkinson's CEEB Code — 070320 — or we will not receive your scores.**

1. Check carefully to see what tests are required by the colleges you are considering. Note the registration deadlines and test dates. We encourage all students to register online.

2. You may also obtain the registration forms for the SAT or ACT from the College Counseling Office. **IMPORTANT: Be sure to list Watkinson's CEEB Code — 070320 — or we will not receive your scores.**

3. When you register for College Board tests for the fall of senior year, you may indicate the colleges to which you want your scores sent; your scores will then be sent to the colleges you have listed about four to six weeks after you have taken the tests.



We suggest that juniors do not indicate any college recipients at registration, as it is far too early to make that kind of determination. Seniors who test in October or November may wish to indicate colleges for receipt of scores if they are absolutely sure that they want a specific school to receive their scores (or if a school requires scores). Each year, more and more schools elect to go “test optional.” Particularly now, with the option to select specific test administrations, it is often to your advantage to see your results first, and then decide whether or not to have official scores forwarded to an institution, and to select the specific scores you wish to send.

4. Information concerning rushing SAT scores is available in the Registration Bulletin, or online at [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)

## **Financial Aid Information**

**Need-Based Financial Aid** — Need-based financial aid exists in an effort to provide access to higher education for qualified students regardless of their financial circumstances. Based on demonstrated financial need, need-based financial aid is used to make up the difference between what a family can pay and the total cost of education (tuition, fees, room and board, books, supplies, transportation, and some personal expenses). In determining what a family can afford, the need-analysis systems work under the principle that students and their parents bear the primary responsibility for financing education costs to the full extent they are able; families are expected to make sacrifices in order to pay for college. The need-analysis formulas evaluate families’ financial situations in an effort to establish horizontal equity—families with similar financial situations should contribute similar amounts of money to educational expenses—and vertical equity—families with differing situations should contribute differing amounts.

There are two primary formulas used to determine a student’s eligibility for need-based financial aid. The Federal Methodology is used to determine eligibility for all federal grants and loans as well as most state aid. The Institutional Methodology, used by many colleges and universities, considers some financial information not taken into account by the Federal Methodology. The College Scholarship Service (CSS) PROFILE is used by many schools to collect the data needed to employ the Institutional Methodology.

The single most important factor in determining aid eligibility for most families is parental income. Other factors include non-discretionary expenses (such as taxes, medical expenses, and basic living expenses), parental assets (usually between 2% and 6%), the student’s assets (approximately 25% each year), and the number of children attending college.

**Application Materials** — Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Used for U.S. government grants and loans, federal work-study, many state grants, and, for some schools, institutional financial aid, this form must be completed by every financial aid applicant.

**College Scholarship Service (CSS) Financial Aid PROFILE** — Used by approximately 250 schools to award institutional aid (grants and loans from individual colleges/universities), this form should be completed only if the college/university to which you are applying requires it.

**Institutional Forms** — Some colleges/universities use their own forms(s) in addition to or instead of the PROFILE. Institutional forms will vary considerably, with some covering only basic biographical information and others asking for detailed financial information.

Need-based financial aid exists in an effort to provide access to higher education for qualified students regardless of their financial circumstances.

**State Forms** — Most states award their grants solely on the basis of the information included on the FAFSA, though some states do require additional form(s). Check your state's Department of Education website to see what opportunities might be available.

**Other Requirements** — Most colleges/universities require other documentation or information from financial aid applicants, including federal tax forms (for the student and the parent(s)), W-2 forms, Divorced/Separated Parents' Statement (see below for more information), and the Business/Farm Supplement (see below). Be sure to send copies of any of these documents directly to the schools that require them; do not include them with the FAFSA or the PROFILE.

**Divorced/Separated Parents** — Many colleges and universities will also require information from the non-custodial parent, with the expectation that s/he will contribute to college expenses to the extent s/he is able. Most of these colleges use the College Board's Divorced/Separated Parents Statement which is available online.

**Business and Farm Owners** — Parents who own a business or a farm, or who are otherwise self-employed, may be required to complete a Business/Farm Supplement in addition to the PROFILE. The form is available from the financial aid offices of the colleges/universities that require the form.

**International Applicants** — Many schools do not offer funding to international students and, as a result, the financial assistance programs for the international student at those schools that do are usually highly competitive. These aid programs are rarely need-blind; academic credentials and geographic diversity are primary considerations in the process. The FAFSA and the PROFILE are not used for awarding aid to international students. Be sure to find out early in the process whether the schools on your list offer aid to international students and, if so, how to apply.

**Early Decision Candidates** — It is critical that ED candidates communicate directly with the college financial aid office. In most cases, you will be required to complete the PROFILE in the fall, and you may also need to complete other institutional forms. The college will give you an estimate of your financial aid package at the time of acceptance. Your aid award will not become official until after you have filed a FAFSA in order to become eligible for the federal and any state programs already estimated in your financial aid package.

**Questions** — If you are unsure about any aspect of the financial aid application process, be sure to seek help immediately. Contact the financial aid offices of the colleges to which you are applying. Each financial aid officer knows his/her own school's particular policies and procedures better than anyone else and is, therefore, in the best position to answer your questions. Be proactive!

**Award Packages** — Once the admissions office has decided to admit a student and the financial aid office has determined that s/he qualifies for financial aid, the financial aid office will put together his/her financial aid package—a combination of several different types of financial assistance:

If you are unsure about any aspect of the financial aid application process, be sure to seek help immediately. Contact the financial aid offices of the colleges to which you are applying.

- *Grants* - Federal, state, and institutional grants are financial aid awards that do not have to be repaid.

- *Loans* — Frequently interest-free during enrollment, student loans must be repaid, with interest, over several years following graduation. Subsidized Stafford Loans and Perkins Loans are need-based loans on which the federal government pays the interest while the student is enrolled in college and for six months after graduation.

- *Work-Study* — The vast majority of financial aid recipients will be expected to hold part-time (usually around 10 hours per week) campus jobs in areas such as the library, academic departments, food services, administrative offices, etc. Please note that work-study will not apply toward the tuition bill at the beginning of the year, as it is paid over the course of the year. It is often most useful for expenses such as textbooks and travel.

Note: Many financial aid packages combine loans and work-study under the heading “Self-Help,” and some schools allow students some discretion as to the ratio of loan to work.

In comparing financial aid awards from different schools, it is important to look not only at the total family contribution but also to compare the types of aid offered; the ratio of grants to self-help (loans and work) may vary significantly. Note: Not all schools guarantee that they will meet the full need of every admitted applicant. Most schools that are unable to fund everyone practice “gapping,” meeting less than the full need of some or all applicants. A very small number of schools employ a financial aid waiting list where some admitted applicants are offered no aid unless more funds become available later in the process. Other schools that are unable to offer aid to some applicants choose to deny admission instead.

**Merit Scholarships** — College-sponsored merit scholarships are awarded to students based on academic achievement (in general or in a specific discipline); geographic, ethnic, or racial diversity; a particular talent (artistic, athletic, etc.); extracurricular involvement (community service, for example), scholarship examinations, etc. They are not based on demonstrated financial need, though, in some cases, financial need is a consideration. Schools differ widely in the number and size of scholarships offered.

Merit scholarships are also available from a wide variety of non-school groups or organizations (for example, churches, corporations, foundations). Information on many such scholarships is available in the College Counseling Office. You are also encouraged to explore other scholarship opportunities via the internet, the public library, etc. Town-based scholarships are also worth investigating.

For recipients of need-based financial aid, merit scholarships will be incorporated into the aid package. Each institution will adjust aid packages according to its own policies, but, legally, schools are unable to use the scholarship to reduce the federally-determined family contribution. Most schools will take one or more of the following approaches:

If the need-based financial aid package does not meet the full need of the student, the scholarship can be used to fill the “gap.”

In comparing financial aid awards from different schools, it is important to look not only at the total family contribution but also to compare the types of aid offered; the ratio of grants to self-help (loans and work) may vary significantly.

**If you receive notification of an outside scholarship after you have received your financial aid award, you must inform the financial aid office of your scholarship. The school will then prepare a revised financial aid award which takes into account the additional scholarship funds.**

The scholarship may replace self-help (loans and work-study) funds.

The scholarship may be used to reduce the institutional grant.

If you receive notification of an outside scholarship after you have received your financial aid award, you must inform the financial aid office of your scholarship. The school will then prepare a revised financial aid award which takes into account the additional scholarship funds.

A note about private scholarship search services: Many promise to locate scholarships for which you are eligible, for a fee— sometimes a very large fee. In most cases, the same information can be gathered for free from Watkinson, colleges, the internet or your local public library.

**Additional Financing Options** — Many colleges offer individual payment plans allowing monthly payments of the annual fees. There are also a variety of loans available to assist in the financing of educational expenses. Individual financial aid offices are typically the best source of information about these programs. Many families who have equity in their homes find that a home equity loan offers the most favorable terms because of the tax advantages. Students are encouraged to be assertive in exploring with their financial aid administrator all possible financing options.

**Taxpayer Relief Act** — Education tax credits and interest deductions are now available for some students. Families are advised to consult with a tax professional to determine whether they can benefit. Information is also available on the department of Education web site: [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)

**Renewal of Aid** — Most colleges guarantee four years of financial aid to all students who initially enroll with financial aid, as long as they file the required application forms and continue to demonstrate financial need. Some schools may alter the make-up of the package as the student gets older (for example, reducing grant aid and increasing self-help), and some schools have academic and discipline-related standards attached to their financial aid awards. If the student's GPA falls below a certain level, for example, his/her financial aid would be reduced or eliminated. Make sure that you understand a college's policies on renewal of aid before accepting an initial award.

### **Resources** —

Federal Student Financial Aid Information Center: <http://federalstudentaid.ed.gov>

Connecticut Department of Higher Education: [www.ctdhe.org](http://www.ctdhe.org)

Fiske, *The Best Buys in College Education*

Peterson's Guides, *The College Money Handbook*

Krefetz, *Paying for College*

The College Board, *College Costs and Financial Aid Handbook*

Cassidy, *The Scholarship Book*

Kaplan, *Scholarships: The Essential Guide*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)

On a final note...

Please be sure to attend our annual Fall College Financial Aid Workshop, held on a Saturday morning in November. This is an incredibly informative session, facilitated by a seasoned college financial aid administrator, and contains valuable and timely information for all parents (even those who have already gone through the process with older children). Particularly in past years, annual changes have impacted how families can best proceed, so it is to your advantage to attend this workshop.

Our annual Fall College Financial Aid Workshop is an incredibly informative session, facilitated by a seasoned college financial aid administrator, and contains valuable and timely information for all parents (even those who have already gone through the process with older children).

## Glossary

*American College Testing (ACT)* - The ACT (along with the SAT Reasoning Test) is one of two standardized tests used by colleges to assess admissions candidates. The ACT resembles the SAT Subject Tests and is composed of four sections: English, Math, Reading, and Science. Students should register for the ACT with Writing, an additional optional section.

*Advanced Placement Tests (AP)* - given in May to students who have completed an AP-level course. Colleges award credit for sufficiently high scores on the test and may use test results for placement in college courses. (Watkinson does not offer Honors-level or AP courses.)

*Candidate Notification Date* - the date by which a college notifies applicants

*CEEB* - College Entrance Examination Board. Watkinson's CEEB Code is 070320

*Class Rank* - Students are ordered from highest GPA to lowest. Watkinson does not rank.

*The College Board* - a not-for-profit organization with a membership association made up of over 6,000 educational institutions. The College Board is responsible for the SAT and the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE.

*College Scholarship Service (CSS)* - an organization under The College Board that processes information—provided by financial aid applicants—and distributes the information to member institutions where students are applying.

*Common Application* - An single online application accepted by over 500 member organizations.

*Demonstrated Need* - The difference between the total cost of attending a college/university (including tuition, room and board, and other expenses) and the family's calculated contribution (Estimated Family Contribution (EFC)).

*Differential Packaging* - Also called "Preferential Packaging," the practice of awarding more desirable financial aid packages to stronger, more desirable students. For example, the total value of two aid packages might be the same, but the package offered to the stronger student might have more grant funds and lower loans.

*Early Action (EA)* - An admission plan used by a wide variety of colleges. Early Action applications are typically due in November, and students often receive admissions decisions by the end of December. Although they receive early notification, students have until May 1 to make an enrollment decision. Under Early Action programs, it is possible for an applicant to be denied admission outright and not be deferred for later consideration.

*Early Admission* - some colleges have programs that allow a student to apply for admission during the junior year. The early admission program at most colleges is reserved for truly exceptional students whose academic preparation and achievement level are sufficient for early entrance to college.

*Early Decision (ED)* - An admission plan under which a student applies to the first-choice college in the fall (usually November) of the senior year and *agrees by contract to enroll in that college if offered admission*. Early Decision applicants are judged on the basis of their junior year test scores and grades.

*FAFSA* - Free Application for Federal Student Aid, used to apply for U.S. Government grants and loans, federal work-study, many state grants, and, for some schools, institutional financial aid. Every financial aid applicant must complete this form for each year of college enrollment.

*Federal Methodology* - The need-analysis system used by the U.S. Department of Education to determine an applicant's eligibility for federal financial aid. It is also used by some states and some colleges/universities.

*Financial Aid* - Another term for financial aid award, it typically consists of Package grants and/or scholarship(s), loan(s), and work.

*Gapping* - The practice of meeting less than a student's full need.

*Institutional Financial Aid* - Financial assistance that comes directly from a college or a university rather than the federal or state government or another "outside" organization.

*Institutional Methodology* - The need-analysis system used by colleges and universities to determine an applicant's eligibility for institutional financial aid.

*Merit-based Aid* - Scholarships, grants, or other aid awarded based on academic strength, artistic ability, leadership, or other special talent.

*National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)* - an organization of college admission and college counseling professionals which aims to help students make the transition from secondary school to college. NACAC members adhere to universal guidelines regarding admissions practices.

*National Candidates Reply Date*—May 1 is the annual deadline date by which all students must make their matriculation decision, and must deposit at one school.

*National Merit Scholarship Program and National Achievement Program* - designed to recognize and award scholarships to exceptionally talented students. Based on results of the junior year PSAT/NMSQT administration.

*Need-based Financial Aid* - Financial aid that is awarded based on demonstrated financial need.

*Pell Grants* - awarded by the federal government to students with high financial need. The amount for which the student is eligible can be applied to tuition at any college.

*Need Blind Admissions* - An admissions policy which does not use financial need as a factor in selecting applicants.

*Need-Conscious Admissions* - An admissions policy that takes into account students' financial need before making admissions decisions. Note: A school may be need-blind for one group of applicants and need-conscious for another group.

*Preferential Packaging* - See Differential Packaging

*PROFILE- The College Scholarship Service (CSS)* - an application required by many colleges/universities to apply for institutional aid. Complete this form only if the college/university to which you are applying requires it: <https://profileonline.collegeboard.com/prf/index.jsp>

*Restrictive Early Action* - REA programs vary, but they generally give students the opportunity to learn of their admission early in their senior year of high school without binding them to the college or university to which they are admitted. Some REA programs allow students to apply early to only one school, while others allow early applications to other EA programs but not to ED programs. All REA programs allow students to apply regular admission or rolling admission to other institutions and give students until May 1 to decide where they will enroll. You must check the specific institution's guidelines.

*Rolling Admission* - an admission program whereby a college announces decisions on applications as each file becomes complete. It is usually advisable to apply early to colleges that have this policy.

*SAR* - Student Aid Report, the report generated after the FAFSA is processed, showing the data that was entered on the FAFSA and the list of schools to which the data is to be sent.

*Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)* - The SAT Reasoning Test measures competencies in three areas: critical reading, math, and writing. Its role in admissions varies widely from college to college

*Self-Help* - The portion of a financial aid package that is made up of loans and work-study.

*Work-Study* - A program in which students hold part-time campus jobs in areas such as the library, academic departments, food services, administrative offices, etc. as part of their financial aid packages.





# Appendix



## Notes

---

## Notes

---