

**MCLEAN  
HIGH SCHOOL**

Post Secondary  
Planning Guide

Class of 2008





## THE QUESTION: WHAT'S NEXT?

Life is full of decisions. Some are relatively easy to make, such as what to wear or what movies to see; but making decisions about your future can be confusing. It is difficult to know where to start because there are many things to think about.

While considering your next step, the following 7-step Decision-Making Model will help give you structure, while processing and identifying the necessary information.

### Decision-Making Model

#### **Step One: Identify the Decision to be Made**

Before you begin gathering information, it is important that you have a clear understanding of what it is you are trying to decide. Think about what you want to achieve and state that as your goal. Some decisions you might be facing could include:

1. What do I want to do after graduation?
2. What will I do to prepare for the next phase of my life?
3. What are my short-term and long-term goals?
4. Where do I want to be in five years and what is the best way to get there?

#### **Step Two: Know Yourself (Self-Assessment)**

Before you begin exploring careers and trying to identify jobs and careers which will prove satisfying, you must first get a sense of what makes you YOU – your skills, interests, values and personality characteristics. Your journey of self-knowledge will never end, but to get started, use an interest inventory and other available assessments in the College/Career Center or try Bridges or MyRoad, available for use at school or at home using the MHS password. See page 9 for website addresses, usernames, site ID's and passwords. Questions you may want to ask yourself are:

##### **Skills:**

1. What can I do best?
2. What are my strengths and weaknesses?
3. What are my most prominent skills and abilities?
4. What skill do I want to use on the job?
5. What skill do I need to acquire?

##### **Interest:**

1. What am I interested in doing?
2. What activities have I enjoyed the most?
3. With what kinds of people would I like to go to school/work?
4. What kind of college/job settings would I enjoy?

**Values:**

1. What satisfactions do I seek in a career?
2. In what ways must I be challenged and rewarded on the job?
3. In what type of college/work environments would I be happy?

**Personality:**

1. What personal qualities do I possess that will help me on the job?
2. How will my personal style influence my career choice?
3. How will I get along with my supervisor? Co-worker?

**Dream:** (Dream BIG. Your crazy idea might not be so crazy.)

1. If I could do anything, what would my life look like?
2. What do I feel passionate about?
3. What will my workday look like 10 years from now?
4. What makes you feel energized or connected?

**Step Three: Identify Options**

1. Post-Secondary Education
2. Military
3. Workforce
4. Apprenticeships and Internships
5. Self-employment and Entrepreneurship
6. Other



**Step Four: Gather Information and Data**

1. Examine the information and resources available to you.
2. Visit your counselor, career center, library and the Internet.
3. Network - take advantage of all networking opportunities with peers, recent graduates, parents, staff, college and military reps, business contacts and community members.
4. Identify what additional information and resources you will need.
5. Seek out and utilize new information.
6. Use the Career Connections website for academic and career planning, [www.fcps.edu/DSSSE/CareerConnections](http://www.fcps.edu/DSSSE/CareerConnections)
7. Seek out learning through experience opportunities (volunteer, job shadow, etc.)

**Step Five: Evaluate Options That Will Solve the Problem**

1. Identify the pros and cons of each alternative.
2. Identify the values and needs that are satisfied by each.
3. Identify the risks involved with each alternative.
4. Project the probable future consequences of each alternative.

**Ask yourself:**

1. Will I feel good about this choice? How will my parents feel about it?
2. Will certain risks be involved? Am I willing to take such risks?
3. Will it be satisfying for me? How will I feel about this choice five years from now?

### **Step Six: Select One of the Options**

Based on the information you have gathered and analyzed, you should be able to choose one of the options. Do you have enough information to choose one option over another? If not you might need to do more research. Consult with your parents, counselors, school staff, and experts in your field of interest or other community members. Don't forget to talk with graduates who have experienced a similar option.

### **Step Seven: Design a Course of Action to Implement the Decision**

Having chosen one of the options, you can now begin developing and implementing a plan of action. Confirm that the following have been evaluated:

1. What information or resources are needed to complete each step?
2. What are the obstacles to implementing my decision and how can I overcome them?
3. Identify steps to implement the decision.
4. Identify when to begin and end each step.
5. Identify the information or resources needed to complete each step.
6. Take time to review your course of action and/or change direction if necessary. Remember, not very many courses of action or career pathways are direct. Sometimes it is in the process that we learn what the next step needs to be.

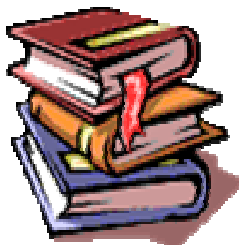
Decision-making is a life long skill, so know you will have a lot of opportunities to practice this important process. The more you are willing to contribute to the process and to be open to the variety of resources and people available to you, the more likely it is you will meet with success! A little luck helps too!

## **The Answer: “Five Gateways + One”**

High school graduation is just around the corner! Most students do not realize that there are different options to consider after high school. These options are called “gateways” and are listed below:

- 1. POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION**
  - 4 year Colleges and Universities
  - 2 year Colleges and Universities
  - Technical and Professional schools and colleges
- 2. MILITARY**
  - Army                      Navy
  - Air Force                Marine Corps
  - Coast Guard
- 3. WORKFORCE**
  - Full-time permanent jobs
  - Combination of two or more part-time jobs
  - Contract service on short-term basis
- 4. APPRENTICESHIPS AND INTERNSHIPS**
  - Carefully monitored work experiences with intentional learning goals
- 5. SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP**
  - Start a business
  - Buy a business
  - Take on a franchise
  - Consult or freelance
- 6. TAKE A YEAR OFF**
  - Work, travel, community service, etc.

# POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION PLANNING



## Why Go To College?

*(Answer: How about...a good job!)*

### **Can't I get a good job now?**

Yes, maybe you could, but statistics are against you:

#### **Census Bureau confirms earning power of higher education**

Just in case you still had some doubts, the U.S. Census Bureau has released data proving the substantial value of a college education in the United States. Workers 18 and over sporting bachelors degrees earn an average of \$51,206 a year, while those with a high school diploma earn \$27,915. But wait, there's more. Workers with an advanced degree make an average of \$74,602, and those without a high school diploma average \$18,734.

Sometimes it's hard to stay in school if you think you need to be working to earn money. But if you finish high school and go on to college, you'll have a wider variety of jobs to choose from, and you'll earn more – especially in the long run.

### **But I don't know what career to go into!**

If you're having trouble deciding what to do, talk with your school counselor and College Career Center Specialist. Ask about taking an aptitude test or interest inventory. And remember, you don't have to know exactly what career you want before you start college; often a year or two of college helps a student explore different subject areas and decide on one.

### **Doesn't college cost a lot of money?**

Think of college as an investment: you spend money now so you can earn more later. Take a look at [www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov) for information about the federal student aid programs administered by the U.S. Department of Education. You can also call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at **1-800-4-FED-AID** (1-800-433-3243)

*Source: U.S. Dept. of Education*

## WHERE TO FIND COLLEGE INFORMATION?

*Information seems to be everywhere: books, magazines, the Internet, newspapers, brochures and mailings. How do you make sense of it all? There are many sources of information you can use.*

- ❖ **College Career Center:** One location for information on two & four year colleges, professional and technical schools, websites, financial aid and scholarships, Internet access, books, videos, and college brochures. See Mrs. Rahn, College Career Center Specialist. The College Career Center website is found on the McLean High School home page: <http://www.fcps.edu/McLeanHS> Open daily 7:30 am – 3:00 pm.
- ❖ **College Catalogs:** The most complete information about a college's academic offerings. Catalogues are available directly from the admissions office of the college or on their website.
- ❖ **College Admissions Counselors:** Over 100 colleges and universities visit McLean High School every year in the fall. Dates of visitation are advertised on the morning news program, through **Keep In Touch**, on the College Career Center website and posted outside of Guidance. Students interested in further information about colleges should attend the sessions. The purpose is to gain information and ask questions. Prepare for the meeting by knowing what questions you want answered. Get a pass from Mrs. Rahn, College Career Center Specialist, and take it to your teacher prior to attending.
- ❖ **College Fairs:** The FCPS fair is held in October at Fair Oaks Mall. A spring fair will be held in April at George Mason University. See the schedule in the College Career Center for further information.
- ❖ **Books:** Located in the College Career Center, these are valuable sources of information to begin making your decisions. Handbooks contain basic data about colleges including addresses, phone numbers, financial aid, admissions information, programs and deadlines. Books such as The Fisk Guide to Colleges, The Insiders Guide and The Best 361 Colleges give a more detailed description of the college experience.
- ❖ **Student Search Services:** Both the ACT and SAT registration forms ask information about you which can be sent to colleges. If you choose to answer these questions, colleges for whom you fit a profile will send you literature.
- ❖ **Internet Access/Computerized College Search:** Students use the Internet for college and career searches. For help see Mrs. Rahn, College Career Center Specialist.
- ❖ **Folks in the Know:** College graduates, parents, teachers, counselors, older brothers and sisters who are in or have graduated from college can describe their firsthand experiences to you. They may also be able to put you in touch with students who have similar interests or faculty members who would be willing to talk with you.

# MCLEAN HIGH SCHOOL COLLEGE CAREER CENTER

College Career Center Specialist: Mrs. Isobel Rahn

703-714-5755      Isobel.Rahn@fcps.edu

Hours: 7:30am-3:00pm Monday-Friday

Website: [www.fcps.edu/McLeanHS](http://www.fcps.edu/McLeanHS)

The College Career Center provides students with information to help them explore educational and career options, make realistic career decisions and establish career goals.

## College Information

- College admissions counselor visits (fall)
- College catalogues, reference books, Internet site information,
- Grade level units for freshman, sophomores, juniors and seniors
- ROTC information
- College files with view books, applications, scholarships
- Bulletin boards with information about testing, issues in the news, college programs

## Test Information

- ACT
- SAT
- TOEFL – Test of English as a Foreign Language
- Bulletin board with test information as well as comparison of test choices

## Financial Aid Information

- FAFSA and CSS Profile information; U.S. Dept. of Education Publications
- Scholarship file
- Bulletin board with scholarship and financial aid information

## Military, Career and Job Information

- Grade level unit for freshman, sophomores, juniors and seniors
- Interest inventories, reference books
- Military information
- ASVAB testing
- Bulletin board with career information and job postings (school year and summer)

## Summer Programs

- Bulletin board featuring community service, travel, courses, etc
- Files and web sites of a variety of activities

Information is available at the MHS website [www.fcps.edu/McLeanHS](http://www.fcps.edu/McLeanHS). Students are free to stop by the Center during the day. Appointments can be scheduled during the school day for parent/guardian.

Fairfax County Public Schools **KEEP IN TOUCH** program allows students and parents to have the most up to date information about all of the above. Check it out on the MHS home page **CLICK TO KEEP IN TOUCH**.

## SELECTED WEB SITES RELATED TO COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

\* [www.fcps.edu/ss/CareerConnections](http://www.fcps.edu/ss/CareerConnections) -FCPS provides a variety of resources for students and their families to assist with career and post high school planning. Some these are web based software programs that require school-specific logins and school Ids. Others are free websites.

[www.act.org](http://www.act.org) - Information on the American College Testing Assessment.

[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) - The College Board homepage includes SAT registration.

[www.collegeboard.com/ap/creditpolicy](http://www.collegeboard.com/ap/creditpolicy) - Information about AP credit and placement policies.

[www.careercruising.com](http://www.careercruising.com) - Research careers and college; **Spanish version available at site.**  
User name: McLean Password: FCPS

[www.mit.edu:8001/people/cdemello/univ.html](http://www.mit.edu:8001/people/cdemello/univ.html) - Links alphabetically to hundreds of college and university homepages.

[www.aucc.ca/index](http://www.aucc.ca/index) - Links to Canadian colleges and universities.

[www.hbcuconnect.com](http://www.hbcuconnect.com) - Information on Historic Black Colleges

[www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com) - Peterson's Guides: includes information on colleges, the application process, and many other links.

[www.kaplan.com](http://www.kaplan.com) - Kaplan's homepage with information on colleges, financial aid and test preparation.

[www.review.com/college](http://www.review.com/college) - Princeton Review's page of information, including many practice SAT questions.

[www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org) - Financial Aid Information Page: free information on financial aid and scholarships; one of the most comprehensive financial aid sites

[www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) - Fast Web: financial search through the web, free scholarship search.

[www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/index.html) - U.S Department of Education: information on the FAFSA and federal student financial aid program.

[www.salliemae.com](http://www.salliemae.com) - Sallie Mae: information on college costs and financing college.

[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) - Information and application for federal aid.

[www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org) - This site will provide you with information about initial eligibility at NCAA Division I and II member colleges and universities

## **IS THERE A RESOURCE GUIDE TO COMPARE THE QUALITY OF SPECIFIC MAJORS AT DIFFERENT UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES?**

The answer is no. However, there are methods a student can use in determining the college that might have the highest quality of instruction for a specific major. \*

- Go directly to the catalogs; look for depth and scope of a program. For example, is the engineering department more theory or more hands-on; is environmental science more science oriented or public policy focused? What are the prerequisites and requirements of the program?
- Email the department and ask questions of particular interest.
- Does the department have national certification?
- Ask the career placement office or department how many of its graduates were accepted into graduate schools and which ones; what corporations recruit on campus?
- How many professors are recognized authorities in their field? How many of them teach undergraduates?
- What are the opportunities for research/internships/co-op experiences?
- Visit the campus and the department you are interested in. Ask pointed questions of students in the departments.
- What are the opportunities for a non-music or non-theater major to participate in music or theater activities?
- If you are planning on majoring in music, drama or visual arts, schedule a lesson and/or attend a class with the professor you would be working with.

**BUT**, in the end, the best college is the one that fits the student best. Since most students change their major, choosing a school strictly by program may not always work.

*\*Many thanks to the NACAC list serve for these suggestions.*

## **MAKING THE MOST OF THE COLLEGE FAIR EXPERIENCE**

- Review college participant list in advance
- Prepare a list of questions
- Allow time to talk with as many college counselors as possible
- Bring bag for materials like view books, applications, business cards
- Compare your college fair experience with another student

## GLOSSARY OF COLLEGE TERMS

- **The ACT** – Tests of educational development in English, math, reading and science. An optional Writing Test is offered.
- **Accepted** – Hooray!!!! The college wants me 😊.
- **Candidate Reply Date – May 1** – deadline students have to reply without penalty to offers of financial aid and admissions.
- **Deferred Admission** - Student has applied early action or early decision and has not been admitted but put into pool of regular decision students.
- **Denied** – Student has not been accepted for admission 😞
- **Early Action** – Applications are submitted in the fall, usually by November 1<sup>st</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup>; students receive notification well in advance of regular spring decisions; decision based on grades through junior year. Not a binding contract; student can continue all other applications. May 1<sup>st</sup> candidate reply date.
- **Early Decision** – Applications are submitted in the fall, usually by November 1<sup>st</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup>; students receive notification early in December; decisions based on grades through junior year. At that time the student agrees by contract to enter that college and withdraw all other applications. If not accepted under this plan, student is usually reconsidered or **deferred** for regular admission.
- **Major/Concentration** – Subject of study in which a student specializes; a series of related courses usually taken in junior and senior years.
- **NCAA Clearinghouse** – In order to participate in NCAA Division I and II colleges, student athletes must submit their transcript, the Clearinghouse “Student Release Form” and ACT/SAT scores. When registering for either test, enter “9999” as one of the college choices to have test scores sent to the Clearinghouse. Transcripts are submitted after 6 full semesters of high school. [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org).
- **Open Admissions** – Acceptance is granted to all who apply.
- **Regular Admissions** – Students are required to apply by a fixed date. Decision letters arrive in the spring. Students must reply by May 1<sup>st</sup>
- **Rolling Admission** – Applications considered as soon as they are received. Notification usually happens in 4-8 weeks, although some colleges/universities may take longer. May 1<sup>st</sup> candidate reply date.
- **SAT Reasoning Test** – Test of critical reading and math abilities given by the College Board. Writing test required.
- **SAT Subject Test** – Tests include Literature, U.S. History, World History, Math, Bio, Chem, Physics, Language (reading only: French, German, Modern Hebrew, Italian, Latin, Spanish), Language (listening and reading: Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Spanish – given only in November).
- **Single Choice Early Action** – Used only at Stanford and Yale. A student can apply to one and only one early action college if applying to one of these institutions.
- **Wait List** – Students who are not admitted with the regular pool of students, but are considered for admission should space become available. Students who are waitlisted should maintain contact with the college to show continued interest. Send any new information, update transcript, inquire about how the wait list is managed, etc.

## WHAT ARE MY CHOICES?

1. **Liberal Arts Colleges**- They tend to develop general knowledge and reasoning ability as opposed to preparation for a particular career.
2. **Universities** – They tend to be a collection of individual colleges, such as the College of Engineering, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the College of Agriculture. A university will usually have a graduate school offering advanced degrees. They will vary in size and tend to offer more majors and have more research facilities than other colleges.
3. **Specialized** – They concentrate their offerings in one or two specific areas such as business, engineering, music or art. Music conservatories fall in this category.
4. **Community Colleges/Junior Colleges** – They are a two-year institution of higher education. Course offerings generally include a transfer curriculum with credits transferable towards a bachelor degree at a four-year college and an occupational or technical curriculum with courses of study designed to prepare students for employment in two years.
5. **Professional and Technical Colleges** – They have a special emphasis on education and training in technical fields. They can offer two-year and four-year degrees. However, not all technical colleges offer a two-year program leading to an associate of arts or science degree.

**Community Colleges In Virginia** – The Commonwealth of Virginia community colleges are public two-year institutions. Community colleges offer technical programs of study that prepare students for immediate entry into the job market. High School graduates are admitted with no minimum GPA and SAT or ACT tests are not required for admission. Tuition is low, and there can be time to work. In addition, community colleges offer general education programs that are the equivalent of the first two years of the bachelor’s degree program. These are called “transfer” programs and students may then enter the bachelor’s degree program at a four-year institution at the third-year level.

- **Academic Program** – leads to an Associate Degree in Arts or Science; students can transfer to a four-year college or go out into the workforce.
- **Occupational/Technical Program** – leads to an Associate Degree in Applied Arts; students can go out into the workforce or transfer to a limited number of colleges.
- **Certificate of Proficiency** – leads to job placement.

### **Five Myths about Community Colleges (from the Virginia Employment Commission)**

**Myth: Students only attend community college because they can’t get in to a four-year university**

**Fact:** Statistics refute this assumption. It may be true that, on average, community college students have lower ACT and SAT scores than university students, but many students attend community college for convenience, family, job, or financial considerations. Community college makes sense, purely for economic reasons. One student will use community colleges in the future because of the sheer cost of a university education. Community college students save on tuition and also on boarding because they can live at home during the first two years of college.

**Myth: A degree from a community college is not as good as a university degree.**

**Fact:** A community college degree can take you straight into the workforce or to an elite four-year university. Community colleges educate 62% of allied health professionals and over 80% of law enforcement officers and firefighters, according to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). Community colleges are not inferior. It is the first choice for many students because the first two years of college are really exploratory anyway and it costs so much.

**Myth: Community colleges are inexpensive, so the education is not high quality.**

**Fact:** Community colleges may be less expensive than four-year universities, but that doesn’t mean you sacrifice a quality education. Classes in honors programs at

community colleges are smaller than university classes. The curriculum is often more in-depth and there is more open exchange between teachers and students. Community colleges tend to be generic brand, but it's just as good a foundation as starting at a four-year university at half the price. Some community college graduates have gone on to Ivy League schools.

**Myth: Community college credits do not transfer to four-year universities.**

**Fact:** The quality of community colleges is getting better all the time. There are more communication (articulation) agreements with four-year colleges for them to award credit for comparable courses taken at community colleges. You need to know what institution you want to attend, pay attention to their requirements, and choose your classes accordingly. The key is careful planning.

**Myth: Community colleges have low academic standards.**

**Fact:** While community colleges offer "open admission" that breeds diversity, all courses are not open admission. In fact, students usually have to take placement tests in order to qualify for college-level work. Technical and special programs have high standards and students compete to enroll. The idea that students go to community colleges because they can't hack it at a four-year university is ridiculous. Community colleges have stringent policies, but also offer students the extra support they need to succeed.

## WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR IN CHOOSING A COLLEGE?

Just what exactly are you looking for? How do colleges make it on to your final list? The first step in the college admission process is to decide and make a list of what factors are important to you about your college experience.

1. **Size** – Would you feel comfortable on a large campus that offers a wide array of activities, social life, and cultural opportunities, but where you could also get lost in the masses and be just a number in some giant classes? Would you like the smaller and individual attention more prevalent at smaller schools...but maybe have fewer choices? Or would you be happy with a little of both worlds at a medium-sized institution?
2. **Location** – Do you care about the area around your college? You can find colleges of all sizes in big cities, suburbs, small towns and pastures. Can you survive at a college where it's cold from October to April or warm/hot year round?
3. **Major** – Do you know yet what field you'd like to pursue as a major? If you have some idea, check with the colleges to see what they offer. There's no point attending a college that does not offer your major.
4. **Distance** – Do you want to leave home? If so, how far would you like to go? Does it matter how often you get home during your college year?
5. **Academic and Special Programs** – If you want a study abroad program, dance degree or ROTC scholarship and your college does not offer it, why are you applying? Do you need support services?
6. **Student Body & Student Life** – Coed or single sex? What kinds of extra curricular activities are there? Do students have similar goals as you do?
7. **Cost** – Have you talked with your family about financing your college education?

## WHAT TRAPS SHOULD I AVOID?

- I'm applying because all my friends are applying there.
- There's only one college that is the right one for me.
- It's as far from home as I can get.
- All colleges are the same.
- I'm going to College Z because everyone in my family went there.
- College Z has a great football team.
- My girlfriend/boyfriend is going there.
- College Y is too expensive.

## WHAT ARE COLLEGES LOOKING FOR?

College admissions counselors may use any or all of the criteria below. **The strength of the transcript is most important.** The order of importance of each criterion that follows varies from college to college. Students should be aware of what each college considers important.

1. **Strength of Curriculum/Transcript** – This includes the number of academic or core courses that you have taken; i.e., English, math, social studies, foreign language, and science. The transcript is the first piece of paper looked at by admissions counselors. First, they want to see what courses you took and then how challenging they were.
2. **Grade Point Average (GPA)** – At many admissions offices, the grade on your transcript will be quickly recalculated into an unweighted GPA, with all As worth four points, taking into consideration only the core academic subject areas.

3. **Standardized Test Scores: SAT Reasoning Test, ACT, SAT Subject Tests, TOEFL** – Test scores can be used for admission purposes and/or placement into freshmen courses.
4. **School/Community Activities/Employment** – Colleges deeply desire active students. They want students who do more than just study. **However, do not confuse involvement with volume. What colleges are looking for is that you were truly invested in one or two activities.** Colleges want contributors, not joiners. All of this becomes your resume.
5. **Application Essay or Personal Statement** – Colleges want an essay for a couple of reasons. One is to learn something about you that the rest of your application does not tell them. They are also looking to gain insight into how you write and think.
6. **References/Recommendations** – Colleges use recommendations to learn things about you they won't learn anywhere else.
7. **Awards/Honors** – Usually indicated on both the application and on your resume.
8. **Interviews** – The interview is required by some colleges, but is encouraged by many. This is the only opportunity an admissions counselor has to connect a face and personality with the information he/she has on paper. During the interview, you have two goals: learning about the college and telling the college about yourself.

## HOW DO I KNOW IF I'LL GET IN?

**There are no guarantees in the college admissions process.**

Year to year and college-to-college, students are admitted and denied, sometimes in a seemingly undecipherable pattern. The number of applicants and the competitiveness of the applicants change over time.

**We suggest that students apply to a wide range of colleges, thereby assuring some degree of choice come the spring.**

Researching and realistically comparing the student's list of courses, GPA, and test scores with the profile of the preceding freshman class can accomplish this. Reach schools should be held to no more than 1-2 of the total; target schools 3-4; probable schools no more than 1-2. Do your research early; don't wait until April of your senior year.

## WHERE DO I FIT?

Each student needs to compare his/her academic profile (grades & standardized tests ACT/SAT) to the profile of the college in order to begin the process of choosing colleges and universities to research. Adjustments for additional academic and non-academic factors will be made at a later time. These are the three levels of selectivity with shades of "in between."

- **TARGET** - A college or university for which the student's academic profile (ACT/ SAT & GPA) is similar to the typical freshman (approx. 6:10 chance to get in)
  - **REACH** - Academic profile is significantly weaker, (approx. 1:3 chance to get in)
  - **PROBABLE** - Academic profile is significantly (approx. 9:10 chance to get in)
- Barron's Profile of American Colleges, Making a Difference in College Admission*

Using data that colleges reported to the U.S. Department of Education, David Hawkins of the National Association for College Admission Counseling crunched application and acceptance numbers for 857 four-year, not-for-profit colleges in the country that accepted more than 1,000 students in 2004. In this chart, only 2.6% of the schools accepted fewer than 25% of their applicants, while 82.5% accepted more than half. **See results at:**  
[http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2006-11-02-collegerates\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2006-11-02-collegerates_x.htm)

Some caveats: Data are from 2004, the latest year available, and because they're self-reported they are incomplete and subject to entry error. Filtering out colleges that accept fewer than 1,000 students cuts out not only scores of colleges with 100% acceptance rates, some with just one student, but also a number of highly selective schools, including conservatories and all-scholarship schools. The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, which is both, accepted 19 out of 330 applicants for a 5.8% acceptance rate.

To check individual schools, including many not on the list, go to the U.S. Department of Education's College Opportunities Online Locator at [www.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cool](http://www.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cool).

## COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TESTS

Most colleges require applicants for admissions to take entrance exams. The tests used are the **ACT** and the **SAT**. Some colleges require the **SAT Subject Tests** in addition to the **SAT Reasoning Test**, while others may want the **ACT with Optional Writing**. If English is not your native language, the college may request the **TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)** in addition to the previously mentioned tests.

However, there are over 700 colleges and universities who have made these exams optional. You can access this list at [www.fairtest.org](http://www.fairtest.org) or see Mrs. Rahn in the College/Career Center.

### TO TAKE THE SAT OR ACT?? THAT IS THE QUESTION!



These are significantly different tests, and in many ways measure different skills. Depending on the student's particular strengths and weaknesses, one may perform much better on one test than the other. **Students are encouraged to take a practice test in both, and then take their best test again.** All but four (4) colleges accept the ACT (Wake Forest, Harvey Mudd, Central Maine and Puerto Rico School for Music.) Both have accommodations for students who qualify. Here are some factors, which may make the difference:

- The SAT has a mandatory writing section; the ACT does not. It is optional.
- The ACT has a science test; the SAT does not.
- The ACT math includes trigonometry; the SAT stops at Algebra II.
- The ACT is entirely multiple choice; the SAT is not.
- The SAT has a guessing penalty; the ACT does not.
- The ACT tests English grammar; the SAT does not.
- The SAT tests verbal and math reasoning skills; the ACT tests what the students have learned in English, reading, math and science.
- The ACT has Score Choice (the student chooses which SET OF scores to submit to colleges); the SAT does not (all scores are sent.)
- The SAT takes 3 hours 45 minutes+; the ACT takes 3 hours.

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

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

## CAMPUS VISITS

It would be unfair – to yourself and to the college – to judge a college just on the basis of its viewbook or website. Visiting or revisiting a college campus will help you make the “right” choice for you. While we realize that it can be very costly to visit all the colleges before you apply, it is essential to visit the colleges after you have been accepted and before you make your final decision. If you cannot visit a college or university before you apply, we suggest you go online for a virtual tour. Also remember, we live in the vicinity of many colleges. Taking tours of local campuses can give you a good idea of what you like and dislike in a prospective college.

### **BEFORE YOUR TRIP:**

- ❑ Go online to find information about campus tours and information sessions. There usually are set days and times.
- ❑ If time permits, arrange an overnight stay in the residence hall. Call the Admissions Office.
- ❑ Inquire about an interview with an admissions counselor. Some colleges will not interview at all. If you do get an appointment, be prepared to ask questions. Come with your resume and an unofficial transcript, which you can obtain from your counselor.
- ❑ Arrange an interview in the financial aid office. Ask a lot of questions. Inquire about their financial aid application process, tuition payment plans and work-study programs.
- ❑ Performing Arts majors should contact the department (music, drama, dance) to arrange a lesson or to attend a class. Visual arts majors should arrange for a portfolio review.

### **WHILE ON CAMPUS:**

- ❑ Take a tour and attend an information session.
- ❑ Walk around on your own and talk to students. You may feel bashful, but chances are they are flattered to tell you about their school.
- ❑ Eat a meal on campus.
- ❑ If you have a strong inclination toward a course of study, visit that department. Interview a faculty person. If you are in the science department, check out the labs. What research is going on? Can underclassmen participate?
- ❑ Find the student placement office. Browse through the publications. Where do students find jobs after graduation? How?
- ❑ Pick up back copies of the campus newspaper. They are very revealing about the issues affecting the student body.
- ❑ Pick up last year’s course offerings. While many colleges list hundreds of courses in their catalogue, it is important to find out what they actually offered. Can you get all the courses you need within four years?

### **AFTER YOU LEAVE:**

- ❑ Write down as much information about your visit as you can remember. Include names of people you met.
- ❑ Record your personal impressions of the college – both negative and positive. Did people seem friendly? Stressed? (Exam time does not count.) Did you like the residence halls? Was it easy to get around?
- ❑ Jot down some comparisons with other colleges. Such as “I liked this better at College A than at College B because ...” The more careful notes you take now, the better prepared you will be when it comes time to make a decision.
- ❑ When you get home, set up a college file. One folder or file per school. Every time you receive information from that college, put it in the file. Keep everything together.

# What Questions Should I be Asking?

It is not about asking questions just to ask, but being sure you are making a decision with all the information. Consider what is important to you. Here are some questions you might consider asking in an information session on campus, at a college admissions counselor visit to MHS, or while doing research on line or in books. \*

## **Admissions:**

- What are the admissions requirements? Describe a competitive applicant.
- What is the procedure to apply?
- What are the application deadlines?

## **Academics:**

- When do I have to declare a major?
- Do you offer an honors program?
- Do you have a study abroad program?
- What academic support services are available to students?

## **Cost:**

- What are the current expenses for tuition, room, board, and fees?
- What types of financial aid/assistance are available?
- What types of scholarships are available and how do I apply?

## **Housing:**

- What types of housing are available?
- Are freshman required to live on campus?
- Is on-campus housing guaranteed? For how long?

## **General:**

- What is important to your institution? What is your mission?
- How large is the campus (number of students and acreage?)
- Is the campus urban, suburban, or rural?
- Is the campus a “suitcase school” where students leave on the weekends?
- What is the political/social/religious environment like?
- Will I be provided with a computer or do I have to bring my own?
- Can I bring a car?
- How many students return after the first year? How does that compare to other colleges?

## **Services:**

- What opportunities are there to get involved (i.e. clubs, organizations, student leadership)?
- What type of security/safety is offered?
- Is there a health care facility on campus and what services are offered?
- Do you have a job preparation/placement service for graduates?

*\*Thank you to the James Madison University Take a Look Open House, 11/13/04*

# YOUR COLLEGE INTERVIEW

## General Interview Tips

- Keep your responses honest! Don't try and fake anything
- Keep cool. Take a deep breath and remain composed.
- If you don't understand the question, ask what the interviewer means.
- Don't pose as an expert on matters you know little about. It's okay to admit you don't know.
- You can say, "I'll have to think that over. Is it okay if I write you about this?"
- Be courteous and tactful.
- Dress appropriately!

**The following questions have been known to open an interview.  
Think about how you would answer some of them.**

## Questions about your high school experience:

- Tell me something about your courses.
- What courses have you enjoyed the most? Been the most difficult?
- What kind of student have you been? Would this change if you have the chance to do it over again?
- Is your record an accurate gauge of your abilities and potential?
- Is there any outside circumstance that interfered with your academic performance?
- How would you describe your high school?
- What is the range of students at your high school? How do you fit in?
- Do you like your teachers? Who was your favorite and why?

## Questions about your extracurricular activities:

- What extracurricular activity has been the most satisfying to you?
- What is the most significant contribution you have made to your school?
- How would others describe your role in the community?
- Do you see yourself as a leader or a worker?
- What do you enjoy doing for fun? Relaxation?

## Questions about your community:

- Tell me about your hometown?
- What has been a controversial issue in your community? What has been your position on it?

## Questions about college:

- What do you hope to accomplish in the next four years?
- What do you expect to get out of college?
- What interests do you hope to pursue in college?
- Have you thought about a possible major? Why would you like to study that?

## WRITING YOUR PERSONAL ESSAY

Your personal essay (if the college requires one) is an important part of the application process. The essay gives you an opportunity to write about yourself as a unique person. This is not a time to be humble and modest. Your goal in writing this essay is to sell yourself to the college and to gain admission. Your job is to set yourself apart from others in the applicant pool.

Your essay gives admissions counselors an opportunity to evaluate your writing and to make an estimation of your ability to contribute to the life of the college. Remember the personal statement is yours. If it looks like Madison Avenue, the admissions committee will probably assume that it is your mother's or father's or secretary's. A "gimmick" essay rarely goes anywhere. The committee will be amused but unimpressed with your candidacy. Write a serious essay from the bottom of your heart in the most mature manner possible.

### ***ESSAY DOS AND DON'TS –***

#### **DO:**

- Plan Ahead – Leave time to write and rewrite your essays with time in between.
- Tie yourself to the college: why you are interested in attending, what can the institution do for you. Be specific.
- Read the instructions carefully. **ANSWER THE QUESTION!**
- Consider the unique features of the institution; e.g., a liberal arts college will be impressed with the variety of academic and personal interests you might have, while an art institute would be most interested in your creative abilities.
- Emphasize what you have learned. Show, don't just tell. Remain the focus of your writing.
- Grab the reader from the 1<sup>st</sup> sentence.

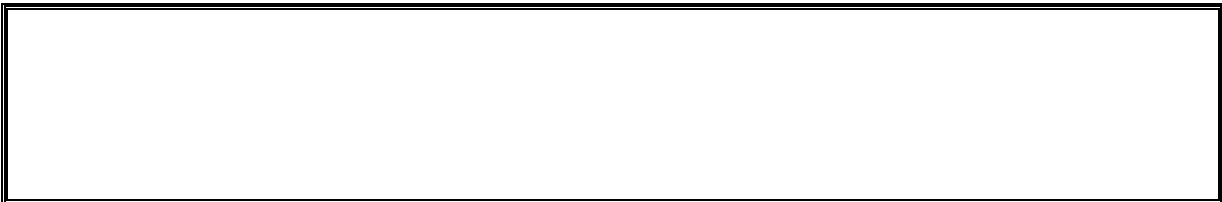
#### **DON'T:**

- Force it, be too funny, sad, cute, or silly; e.g., "I enjoy playing the piano and guitar but not simultaneously."
- Be redundant – essays should not be a rehash of information already provided on other parts of the application or on your high school transcript.
- Let modesty cover up your greatest assets and achievements.
- Worry about trick questions. Your readers are genuinely interested in your answers to the questions.
- Be afraid to confess your anxieties or indecisiveness. Admissions counselors enjoy helping people and can be quite moved by the knowledge that you need them.

### ***REMEMBER!***

The purpose of an application essay is to communicate a sense of who you are as an individual, what you think about yourself and the world, and how you express yourself. No matter what topic you write about, keep the purpose firmly in mind.

***So...be truthful...be yourself...be creative...and in your final draft...be careful.***



## **SAMPLE ESSAY QUESTIONS**

(Taken from recent college applications)

What do you see as the turning point(s) or important events in your life and why do you view them as such?

What is the most critical moral, ethical, or social problem facing America?

Describe your ideal of the honorable person. Feel free to use examples.

If you were given the opportunity to spend an evening with any one person, living, deceased, or fictional, whom would you choose and why?

Please cite and discuss a literary quotation or brief passage that has special meaning to you.

We invite you to reflect on an issue or experience that is significant to you or to your perspective on the world around you. We do not ask a specific question or present a topic for this essay because the subject you choose tells us almost as much about you as the way you discuss it.

Describe a situation in which your values or beliefs caused conflict with someone you respect. How was the situation resolved?

**RESUME** – this is a fictional resume. You may or may not have all or any of these activities. However, the format will help to highlight who you are and what you do.

Any Student  
[anystudent@xyz.com](mailto:anystudent@xyz.com)  
012-34-5678

**Extracurricular/Cocurricular Activities**

- Project Enlightenment, Historical Reenactment Group (11-12)  
Researched Martha Washington, studied her lifestyle and family history in order to perform on the Mount Vernon Estate.
- McLean High School Highlander Band (9-12)  
Member of various sections in marching band – pit and bass line (9-10)  
Assistant Drum Major (11)  
Drum Major (12)  
Member woodwind section, McLean High School Symphonic Band (9-12)
- Virginia Youth Symphony – member woodwind section (9-10)
- National Youth Symphony – member woodwind section (11-12)
- McLean High School chapter of the National Honor Society (11-12)  
Treasurer – Oversee operating budget for induction and other activities through the year. (12)  
Tutor – In school walk in tutoring center (11-12)

**McLean High School Athletics**

- Track and Field (9-12)
- Member (9-11)
  - Manager (12)
  - Varsity Letter (11)

**Work Experience**

- The Gap (11-12)  
Teacher – several woodwind instruments to elementary students

**Academic Honors and Awards**

- National Honor Society (11-12)
- McLean High School Honor Roll (9-12)
- All-State Band 2<sup>nd</sup> chair bassoon (11-12)
- Manager of the Year for Athletics (11)

**Summer Activities**

- Music Camp – Red University (9-10)
- Ocean Research Experience – Black College  
Member of crew on 130’ schooner “McLean Scottie” (10-11)
- Taught at local music camp (11-12)

**Skills**

- Play a variety of instruments – brass, woodwinds, percussion, piano
- Compose music/write marching band drill for field presentations
- Can cook delicious meals without a recipe.

**Hobbies**

- Reading, cooking, listening to music, politics, sailing, collecting posters

## LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION FROM TEACHERS

Many colleges ask you to supplement your application with letters of recommendation. Choose **one** teacher to do all your recommendations unless more are necessary. It is your responsibility to determine what letters, if any, are required. Colleges may specify that recommendations come from:

- Teachers in academic subjects who can speak to your academic strengths.
- Coaches and teachers who can attest to your athletic or artistic talent.
- Counselors who can address your personal strengths, accomplishments, and special circumstances which might impact on an admissions decision; or others, such as club sponsors, religious leaders or employers who can give evidence of your character and leadership ability.

You should choose a person who knows you well enough to write a letter of recommendation that will cite your strengths and abilities. Allow the person sufficient time to write a thoughtful letter. It is helpful to share your resume in order to provide background information about you. **If the letter is to be mailed directly to the college, provide a stamped addressed envelope. It is appropriate to send a thank you note to anyone writing a letter of recommendation.**

Teacher recommendation request forms are available in the Guidance Office.

### DEADLINES

**\*\*Counselor Data Packet\*\***

**\*\*Teacher Letters of Recommendation \*\***

**\*\*Counselors must have your completed packet by these deadlines.**

**\*\*Teachers must have your request for recommendations by these deadlines.**

<b>Application Deadline for College</b>	<b>Deadline to Return Completed Packet to Counselor Deadline to Request Recommendations from Teachers</b>
<b>November 1, 2007</b>	<b>October 1, 2007</b>
<b>November 15, 2007</b>	<b>October 15, 2007</b>
<b>December 1, 2007</b>	<b>November 1, 2007</b>
<b>December 15, 2007</b>	<b>November 15, 2007</b>
<b>January 1 or 2, 2008</b>	<b>December 3, 2007</b>
<b>January 15, 2008</b>	<b>December 14, 2007</b>
<b>February 1, 2008</b>	<b>January 2, 2008</b>
<b>February 15, 2008</b>	<b>January 15, 2008</b>

# **COUNSELOR DATA PACKET**

**(Packet must be turned in no later than four (4) weeks before your earliest deadline. See deadline table on p. 23.)**

Completion of the Counselor Data Packet is required in order for your counselor to submit your transcript, secondary school report, and counselor recommendation.

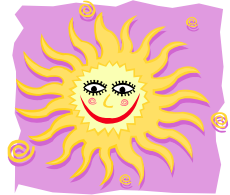
The transcript release form (yellow) allows you to list the names, addresses, type of admission plan and due dates for your applications. The list can be amended at any time. Forms are available in Guidance.

The secondary school report gives your counselor the opportunity to respond to a series of questions posed by colleges and universities, as well as write a recommendation.

The packet gives students opportunities to self assess their lives up to this point. Parent input is also requested. These comments are helpful to counselors as they write their recommendations.

**Packets are available during senior meetings, from your counselor, and from the Student Services office.**

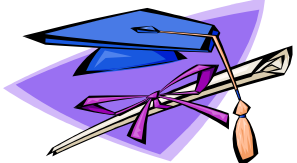
## COLLEGE PLANNING CALENDAR JUNIOR YEAR 2006-2007

<u>September</u>	<u>October</u>	<u>November</u>	<u>December</u>	<u>January</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Register for the PSAT/NMSQT</li> <li>❖ Begin meeting with college admissions counselors in the College Career Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Take the PSAT/NMSQT</li> <li>❖ Attend the College Fair/College Night Programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Consider taking the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery). Administered all year long.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Attend a financial aid workshop if possible</li> <li>❖ Students receive results of PSAT/NMSQT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Begin college search and meet with counselor &amp; College Career Center Specialist</li> <li>❖ Register by mail or online for spring ACT/SAT testing</li> </ul>
<u>February</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>April</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>June</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Register for Senior Classes</li> <li>❖ Begin research for summer programs: volunteering, working, taking classes, traveling</li> <li>❖ ACT February 10</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Begin service academy and ROTC applications</li> <li>❖ Continue researching summer opportunities</li> <li>❖ SAT March 10</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Attend GMU College Fair 4/18, evening</li> <li>❖ Begin/continue scholarship search (e.g. Internet, College Career Center website)</li> <li>❖ Take the TOEFL if applicable</li> <li>❖ ACT April 14</li> <li>❖ Visit colleges 4/2-6</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Take Advanced Placement Tests May 7-18</li> <li>❖ Take TOEFL if applicable</li> <li>❖ Begin NCAA Clearinghouse process</li> <li>❖ Ask for letters of recommendation.</li> <li>❖ SAT May 5</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ SAT June 2</li> <li>❖ ACT June 9</li> </ul> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>

### SUMMER

- Put together a resume; update as needed.
- Visit colleges
- Visit websites for information and/or applications.
- Begin working on your college essays.
- Search for scholarships; use the FCPS Scholarship Resource.
- This is the year to STUDY. Seek help when you need it.
- Register on scholarship website such as [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)

**COLLEGE PLANNING CALENDAR  
SENIOR YEAR 2007-2008**

<p align="center"><b><u>September</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Finalize list of colleges</li> <li>❖ Start filling out college applications</li> <li>❖ Get counselor data packet from counselor</li> <li>❖ Complete ROTC and service academy applications</li> <li>❖ Complete NCAA clearinghouse forms: <a href="http://www.ncaa.org">www.ncaa.org</a></li> <li>❖ File CSS Profile</li> <li>❖ ACT Sept. 15 in Maryland</li> </ul>	<p align="center"><b><u>October</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Search for scholarships</li> <li>❖ Submit early decision/early action applications</li> <li>❖ Submit requests for recommendations and transcripts</li> <li>❖ Attend College Fair and College Night programs TBA</li> <li>❖ SAT Oct. 6</li> <li>❖ ACT Oct. 27</li> <li>❖ <b>Oct. 1 deadline for counselor data packets and teacher recommendation requests (Nov. 1 application deadline)</b></li> <li>❖ <b>Oct. 15 deadline for counselor data packets and teacher recommendation requests (Nov. 15 application deadline)</b></li> </ul>	<p align="center"><b><u>November</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ SAT Nov. 3</li> <li>❖ Schedule interviews or auditions if necessary</li> <li>❖ <b>Nov. 1 deadline for counselor data packets and teacher recommendations (Dec. 1 application deadline)</b></li> <li>❖ <b>Nov. 15 deadline for counselor data packets and teacher recommendation requests (Dec. 15 application deadline)</b></li> <li>❖ Start working on financial aid (FAFSA) using 2006 tax data. Apply for PIN online</li> <li>❖ Complete all applications for regular admission if you've applied early</li> </ul>	<p align="center"><b><u>December</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Receive early decision/action reply</li> <li>❖ Pick up financial aid forms/booklets in the College Career Center – FAFSA, CSS Profile or apply for PIN online</li> <li>❖ SAT Dec. 1</li> <li>❖ ACT Dec. 8</li> <li>❖ <b>Dec. 3 deadline for counselor data packets and teacher recommendation requests (Jan. 1 or 2 application deadline)</b></li> <li>❖ <b>Dec. 14 deadline for counselor data packets and teacher recommendation requests (Jan. 15 application deadline)</b></li> </ul>	<p align="center"><b><u>January</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Submit financial aid (FAFSA) forms after January 1<sup>st</sup> – use online application or paper – <a href="http://www.fafsa.ed.gov">www.fafsa.ed.gov</a></li> <li>❖ SAT Jan. 26</li> <li>❖ <b>Jan. 2 deadline for counselor data packets and teacher recommendation requests (Feb. 1 application deadline)</b></li> <li>❖ <b>Jan. 15 deadline for counselor data packets and teacher recommendation requests (Feb. 15 application deadline)</b></li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b><u>February</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Semester grades mailed to all colleges where applications were sent</li> <li>❖ <b>Avoid Senior Slump. Final Grades Matter!</b></li> </ul>	<p align="center"><b><u>March</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Lots of scholarships</li> <li>❖ <b>Avoid Senior Slump – Final Grades Matter</b></li> </ul>	<p align="center"><b><u>April</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Schedule final college visits March 17-21, 2008</li> <li>❖ Attend spring college fairs and apply to additional colleges if necessary</li> <li>❖ <b>Avoid Senior Slump – Final Grades Matter</b></li> </ul>	<p align="center"><b><u>May</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Take Advanced Placement tests</li> <li>❖ Notify colleges by May 1<sup>st</sup> of your decisions. <b>Deposit to only one (1) college!</b></li> <li>❖ <b>Avoid Senior Slump – Final Grades Matter</b></li> </ul>	<p align="center"><b><u>June</u></b> <b>GRADUATION</b></p> <p align="center">CONGRATULATIONS!</p> 

**ONGOING**

-Continue to work on applications/essays.

**KEEP GRADES UP.** Admission is conditional based on successful completion of Senior Year.

# MILITARY OPTIONS

## 1. SERVICE ACADEMIES

The United States maintains five service academies: the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York; the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland; the United States Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, Colorado; the United States Coast Guard Academy at New London, Connecticut; and the United States Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, New York. The mission of the service academies is to provide the instruction and experience necessary to produce graduates with knowledge, character, and leadership abilities to become career military officers.

**Websites:**

- [www.usafa.edu](http://www.usafa.edu) - U.S. Air Force Academy
- [www.cga.edu](http://www.cga.edu) - U.S. Coast Guard
- [www.usmma.edu](http://www.usmma.edu) - U. S. Merchant Marine Academy
- [www.usma.edu](http://www.usma.edu) - U.S. Military Academy
- [www.usna.edu](http://www.usna.edu) - U.S. Naval Academy

## 2. RESERVE OFFICER TRAINING CORPS (ROTC)

The ROTC program provides you the opportunity to attend a civilian college while studying military leadership as part of a total undergraduate program. ROTC is a college elective, which requires about four hours a week. It is offered at hundreds of campuses. Applications are available upon request from college ROTC units or on the websites.

- [www.armyrotc.com](http://www.armyrotc.com) - Army ROTC
- [www.afrotc.com](http://www.afrotc.com) - Air Force ROTC
- [www.nrotc.navy.mil](http://www.nrotc.navy.mil) - Navy ROTC

## 3. MILITARY ENLISTMENT

Opportunities for enlistment in the military are plentiful. The five services offer over hundreds of schools and thousands of courses of instruction. This training and the experience that follows give the military veteran a real advantage in the civilian world.

Enlisting in military service right after high school is an option. The U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard provide job training in many fields, as well as opportunities for enlistees to take some college-level courses. The services can also help you build a college fund.

The U.S. National Guard consists of two components: the Army National Guard (ARNG) and the Air National Guard (ANG). Its mission is to serve the state in times of natural disaster or civil disturbance, and the nation in time of war. Flexible scheduling makes it possible for you to

combine service in the National Guard with work or school. The Guard meets one weekend per month and two weeks in the summer. U.S. National Guard also offers educational benefits.

Each service sets its own enlistment qualifications. Contact your local recruiters for information or visit their websites regarding qualifications and program opportunities.

**Websites:**

- [www.army.mil](http://www.army.mil) - Army
- [www.navy.mil](http://www.navy.mil) - Navy
- [www.af.mil](http://www.af.mil) - Air Force
- [www.mc.mil](http://www.mc.mil) - Marine Corps
- [www.uscg.mil](http://www.uscg.mil) - Coast Guard
- [www.ngb.dtic.mil](http://www.ngb.dtic.mil) - National Guard

For additional information see the Military Career Guide at [www.militarycareers.com](http://www.militarycareers.com)

## **THE WORK FORCE**

### **FINDING THE JOB**

Successful job hunting refers not only to finding a job, but also finding the best job possible. When employment is plentiful this may not present a problem; but when jobs are scarce, you may have to think creatively and investigate many sources. Listed below are suggested resources:

- Relatives, friends and neighbors
- Counselors and teachers
- High school coordinators of professional technical programs
- Career centers
- Help wanted ads and bulletin boards
- Virginia Employment Commission
- Civil service, county, state and federal agencies
- Private employment agencies
- Walk-in inquiries
- Job fairs
- Trade journals and directories (available in the library)
- Fellow employees
- Contacts made through volunteer activities
- Online job bulletin boards

### ***HOW TO COMPETE SUCCESSFULLY***

- Develop a list of businesses that usually hire people with your skills and ask for an interview. Many job hunters use this approach and most get the jobs they want.
- Do not wait for businesses to advertise. Be assertive.
- Do not underestimate smaller businesses. Most of the workforce is employed by small companies.
- Find out what new businesses are opening in your area and when they will begin hiring.
- Target jobs in rapidly expanding fields.

# PROFESSIONAL TECHNICAL OPPORTUNITIES

## APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprenticeship is an employer's training program. It is a time-honored program combining on-the-job training (OTJ) with related instruction (RI). The result is a skilled craftsperson. When you complete both on-the-job training and related instruction, you become a registered apprentice. Registered apprentices completing a full program receive a State Apprenticeship Certificate upon completion. This certificate is nationally recognized. Over 300 employers sponsor more than 1,200 apprentices in Northern Virginia each year.

### Examples of Apprenticeship Programs:

- Barbering
- Carpentry
- Cosmetology
- Electricity
- Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning
- Machinist
- Nail Technician
- Office Administrative Support Specialist
- Optician
- Plumbing
- Surveying

### Apprenticeship Terms/Definitions

**Apprentice:** Person 16 years or older, learning a trade with on-the-job training and related instruction in accordance with state and federal apprenticeship standards.

**Apprenticeship:** A certified, structured, well defined program of training that combines supervised on-the-job training skills with related instruction training in the classroom.

### Websites

Virginia Community College System  
[www.so.cc.va.us/workforce/ari](http://www.so.cc.va.us/workforce/ari)

Construction Workforce Development Coalition  
[www.futureforcenow.com](http://www.futureforcenow.com)

## HOW DO I COMPLETE THE APPLICATION?

Completion of the application is an important job. Make time in your schedule to make this a priority. The applications that you receive demand that you perform certain tasks and that you alert MHS to perform others. Let us consider this in detail.

### THE STUDENT'S PART:

1. Access an application from the college through the college's web site, or other Internet source, by calling or emailing the Admissions Office
2. Read the application thoroughly. McLean High School will automatically send a Secondary School Report, MHS Profile, Counselor recommendation (if requested) and transcript.
3. If you're completing the application online, **read the instructions carefully and print out all forms necessary to complete the application!**
4. If using a paper application, duplicate it and use the copy as a work sheet. Type it if possible. If not, print neatly using black ink. Do not cross out mistakes or submit it with smudges.
5. Ask for Return Receipt Requested at the Post Office if mailing your application.
6. Answer all questions directly, clearly and accurately.
7. Use N/A (Not Applicable) for questions that do not apply to you.
8. Use correct English and make sure your spelling is correct.
9. Describe your activities fully. Show any leadership roles (offices held, committee chairperson, etc.). If you are a member of an organization, specifically describe any activities in which you participated; i.e., tutoring, organizing, special exhibits, etc.
10. Include non-school related activities such as religious organizations, scouting, hobbies volunteer work, community theater, etc.
11. Describe work experience and responsibilities.
12. If an essay is required make sure that it is thoughtful and technically correct and that it says what you really mean. (See section on essay writing.)
13. Establish your account for your online application if available. If not, print the application out and treat as a paper application.
14. Submit your completed application using a check or credit card well before the deadline.
15. **Keep your counselor informed. At least four weeks before submitting your application, fill out the Yellow Transcript Release Form. Give this form, along with the Counselor Data Packet to your counselor. If teacher recommendations are needed, please request them from your teachers four weeks in advance.**

### **THE COUNSELOR'S PART:**

1. When asked for a transcript, the counselor will send your transcript, including summer school grades through the end of your junior year and a list of your courses in progress; McLean High School profile; Fairfax County Public Schools Profile; resume; and recommendation letter (if requested).
2. MHS will send its own Secondary School Report. **You do not need to use the one provided by your college or university.**
3. Mid-term grades, stating your new grade point average, are sent at the end of the second grading period to every school to which you apply that requests them. If you are taking Advanced Placement courses, a .25 will be added for each course.
4. Your final transcript is sent in June to the college of your choice. This will be indicated on the Senior Survey which is distributed in May.

## **SCHOOL APPLICATION/TRANSCRIPT RELEASE**

**The student is responsible for submitting college applications and fees to the colleges and universities of his/her choice. The student must complete the Counselor Data Packet in order for the counselor to send a transcript to colleges.**

**The first three (3) transcripts are free. Each additional transcript costs \$4.00. Payment must be made at the time of the request.**

**Transcript Release Forms and Recommendation Request Forms** are available in the Guidance Office. To request a transcript, please do the following:

- Complete and sign a Transcript Release Form. Complete information, including college addresses, must be provided on all Transcript Release Forms. You and your parents must sign this form.
- Pay the required fee.
- Note on the Transcript Release Form if the college requires a counselor recommendation. If you request a counselor recommendation, your counselor may request additional information and forms from you.
- If you have additional forms from the college that must be filled out by the counselor, submit those along with the request.
- **All transcript requests must be submitted to the counselor at least four (4) weeks before the transcript is due at the college. See deadlines on p. 23.**

- If the college requires a teacher recommendation, the student must take any required forms to the teacher. **Provide the teacher with addressed, stamped envelopes.** Ask the teacher to send a copy of the recommendation to your counselor for your cumulative file. **It is essential that you inform your teacher and your counselor of the deadlines.**

## **SUMMARY OF THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS**

- Do the groundwork. Review web pages, seek information, and visit campuses.
- Decide where you wish to apply. Select colleges in more than one category of selectivity.
- Access the Internet for college application and financial aid forms and come to the College Career Center for personal help.
- Check carefully for application deadline dates.
- Take the appropriate admissions tests. Does the college want the ACT With Writing? Are the SAT Subject Tests required for admission or placement? Which test, ACT or SAT, do I do better on?
- Make sure that you meet the admissions requirements for the program you want.
- Narrow your choices of colleges to six to eight... Be realistic.
- Submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) starting January 1<sup>st</sup> and, if needed, the CSS Profile.
- Apply to the institution for financial aid, if interested.
- Apply for local and other financial aid, if interested.
- Confirm admission by sending in required deposit.
- Attend orientation. and register for classes.