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Dear Laurel School High School Students & Parents/Guardians,

Post Secondary Planning can be exciting, but also stressful for students and families. We are pleased to provide you with our Post-Secondary Planning Guide as you begin your journey towards graduation from Laurel School High School, and preparation for beyond. This guide integrates information from many sources and has been written with your possible future goals in mind, whatever they may be. These options include attending a two or four year college, entering the military service or choosing a career option. It is designed to provide you with the most accurate and up to date information available.

This guide will be an important tool throughout your future exploration and decision making process. Of course, the planning process will be accomplished with you and your family as the most significant part of a team effort. The guide is designed to assist you in making good choices in a knowledgeable fashion. One of the most important parts of planning your future is meeting regularly with your School Counselor. Your Counselor will be your greatest resource and can provide you with a wealth of information and ideas in thinking about what is in store for you after you leave Laurel School.

Additionally, the School Counseling Office will advise you about fall and spring college fairs, as well as individual visits by admissions representatives from various colleges and universities throughout the school year. Although the future planning process may seem overwhelming at times, it is an inspiring time full of adventure and possibilities. There are many challenges students and families may face along the way, so it is important to stay organized, communicate regularly, and not be afraid to ask questions. Laurel School strives to meet your individual needs in a unique and supportive way, and our faculty and counselors are ready to assist you in this process. We look forward to working with you and helping you create your future!

Dee Rosenberg Head of School Dear Laurel School Families,

The following pages contain information collected from dozens of resources to give you a preview of what will take place in the coming months and years as your child progresses through high school with us. This document will continue to grow and you will be updated regularly as information becomes relevant.

Beginning in the spring of their freshman year, every high school student will meet regularly with our school counselor. Parent feedback will be elicited at the beginning of and throughout the planning process; our aim is to provide you with a post-secondary planning experience that is tailored to you and your child's needs. If you have any questions, comments or concerns at any point, please let me help you. My email address is Rsmith@thenewgrange.org and you can reach me by phone at 609-584-1800, ext. 242.

In preparation for meeting the needs of Laurel students and families, I have joined and consulted with numerous professional organizations, sought out best practices from successful high schools around the country, and established relationships with admissions counselors from various colleges and universities. We are also part of the relatively new College Guidance Network, which features a treasure trove of free on-demand content and live Q&As with experts in the field of college admissions.

Throughout the post-secondary planning process, you can expect regular communication, prompt responses, and individualized attention that makes our process unique among other schools. Whether your child is interested in exploring trades, the military, or a 2 or 4 year college experience, your family will be guided as closely as you prefer from exploration to application.

Thank you for trusting us with the task of guiding your child through the high school years; it is a responsibility we take very seriously. I look forward to working with all of you!

Sincerely,

Rick Smith, M.A. School Counselor

<u>Differences to Be Aware of Between High School and College</u>

1. There are no IEPs in college.

The laws that govern institutions of higher education are different from those to which high schools adhere. IDEA, ADA, and various other acts are in place to protect students with disabilities at every level of schooling. All of these laws apply to online and distance education courses provided by public and private schools.

Your child's IEP will be instrumental as documentation for services in college, but schools are no longer beholden to its contents.

2. Students must register with the college's office of disability services to receive accommodations in college.

This is separate from the application process; admissions offices cannot accept or request any information about a student's disabilities.

3. Parents are no longer automatically in the loop.

The law protects your child's privacy, and school staff will generally deal solely with the student.

4. Every college is different in terms of support.

There are schools with programs designed for college students with specific learning differences, and all other schools offer varying levels of support.

It is a great idea to contact the office of disability services for any school your child might be interested in attending. You can ask questions about:

- Accommodations that they typically provide
- Documentation requirements for support (these may vary)
- Tutoring services can range from peers to professionals
- Availability of/access to assistive technology
- Availability of writing and/or math labs

Standardized Testing - What to Know

The Laurel Education Group has Level II status with College Board Code Control; this means that we are permitted to administer College Board exams on-site. We can also receive students' scores and will request and secure accommodations on behalf of our students after discussion with parents and IEP teams.

The testing world is changing.

The College Board has indicated that they are developing a shorter, digitally delivered SAT. They are also discontinuing the optional essay after this June. Many colleges and universities have gone "test optional" or "test flexible", especially since Covid-19. This is not to say that test scores aren't utilized as admission criteria at these schools, only that a certain score on a certain test is not required for admission. The bottom line is that if standardized testing does not typically reflect a student's strengths and potential, there are better chances of being accepted now than ever before.

As a Laurel High School student, your child will have the opportunity to take the PSAT, SAT, PreACT, and/or ACT on campus during the school day. It is also your choice to schedule any of these tests at a location closer to home when the time comes. We will keep you informed of testing schedules, plan accommodations with you, and put your child in position to do their best on whichever test they are facing.

Practice exam(s) on campus.

In late 10th or early 11th grade, at least one practice exam will be given to all students for the experience and as a diagnostic measure of college readiness. The PSAT is a practice version of the SAT, and it features Math and Reading & Writing sections.

The PSAT will typically be taken in October of a students' Junior year, but arrangements can be made for alternate administrations. The school counselor will handle registration, and the test fee is paid by The Laurel School. Of course, if you would like to opt your child out of this test that is certainly an option.

Alternatively, the PreACT is a preliminary version of the ACT. It can be administered at any point during a given school year, and after students take PreACT, schools and districts can use ACT® Online Prep to continue preparing for the ACT anytime, anywhere. This is an option that will be explored further, with updates to come.

Personalized testing plans

Typically, strong test-takers take the SAT and/or ACT once before the end of their Junior year and once in the Fall of their Senior year. If the PSAT proves too arduous or overly stressful, colleges that place little to no emphasis on standardized test scores might become your focus and the SAT/ACT can be removed from your plan. We will also offer preparatory work with the accuplacer for students heading to traditional colleges.

Standardized Tests in Focus:

It is important to recognize that standardized tests might not be utilized by all of our students. There are certainly many post-secondary options available to those who opt out of taking these exams; each Laurel student and their parents will be involved in devising a testing plan that is right for them.

Additional information on each test is below, and more can be found on collegeboard.com and ACT.org

PSAT/NMSQT

The PSAT/NMSQT (National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) is a preliminary version of the SAT. 10th or 11th graders take the PSAT/NMSQT test in mid-October. The results of the test reveal areas of strength and weakness and allow students to better prepare for the SAT. It covers three skill areas: Reading, Writing & Language, and Math. Scores on the PSAT/NMSQT are also used to qualify students for the National Merit Scholarship competition.

SAT Reasoning Test

The SAT has long been a popular tool among college admission officials used to gauge a student's readiness for college-level studies. The SAT consists of two sections: Evidence Based Reading & Writing and Math. Students receive a score between 200 and 800 on each section, for a total score out of 1600. There is an optional Essay, which can be discussed while formulating your testing plan.

PreACT

The preliminary version of the ACT differs from the SAT slate in offering a science section. As stated above, the company provides free access to their trademarked online prep materials for the full ACT. An interest inventory is included, and we receive score reports that contain data that may help inform instructional decisions for remaining high school courses.

ACT - American College Test

The ACT was developed as an alternative to the SAT and has grown in popularity among colleges and test-takers alike. It is widely believed in special education circles that the ACT is better suited to reflect the abilities of students with learning differences. The ACT is comprised of four sections: English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science. Students have the option to register for the ACT with or without Writing. Students receive a score out of 36 on each section of the ACT. The four section scores are averaged for a composite score out of 36.

Further information on test-prep options will be presented individually in planning meetings with the school counselor. Call or email Mr. Smith with any questions!

General 9th - 12th Grade College Counseling Timeline

(Some activities will be completed in classes, many with Mr. Smith)

Freshman Year:

- Begin to explore your interests and passions. Get involved in those areas. Invest in extracurriculars, and try to volunteer in areas of interest to you.
- Starting in the spring, meet periodically with the school counselor to explore careers and complete assessments linking interests with potential college majors.
- Use online resources from Mr. Smith to independently research careers of interest.
- Develop strong study skills and work hard to get solid grades.
- Look into summer academic opportunities and service projects.

Sophomore Year:

- Meet with the school counselor to discuss different college options.
- Work with Mr. Smith on informal assessments that help link strengths & interests to various careers.
- Talk with your parents about paying for college, and determine a tuition range.
- If you are interested in applying to a military academy, begin researching the process.
- *Winter*: Consider how you will spend your summer. Use it well! Look into job opportunities or summer academic programs.
- Spring: Work with counselor/parents/IEP team to devise a testing plan
- Look at the websites of your dream colleges. Look at their admissions requirements to begin getting a feel for what they require.

Junior Summer:

- Make the best use of your time during the summer. Find a job or internship, volunteer, or participate in a summer academic program. Do something that interests you!
- Follow schools you like on social media; attend informational sessions (they keep track of your interest!)
- Study for the PSAT by working on strategies, taking practice tests, or taking a prep class.
- Begin studying for the SAT or ACT.
- Read for pleasure (reading is one of the best ways to prepare for standardized tests).
- Begin visiting colleges and researching scholarship opportunities.

<u>Junior Year:</u>

Fall:

• Study for the PSAT. Take at least one full-length timed practice PSAT test.

- · October: Take the PSAT.
- Revisit your standardized testing timeline. Register for the SAT or ACT as needed.
- Take the SAT or ACT if prepared.
- Plan out college visits for the year. You should aim to visit 3-5 colleges.
- Continue to research colleges and build your interest list.
- Attend local or online college fairs. Colleges keep track of your interest & event attendance.
- Research scholarships and make a list of deadlines. Some scholarship deadlines may be during your Junior year.
- Research and apply for summer academic and research programs hosted at colleges.

Spring:

- Schedule a family conference with your guidance counselor.
- Study for the SAT or ACT by working on strategies, taking practice tests, or taking a prep class.
- · Take the SAT or ACT.
- · Attend a local college fair.
- · Visit colleges during holidays or over Spring Break.
- Meet regularly with the school counselor to continue developing your college list.
- · Plan an interesting summer! Look into internships, jobs, or volunteer opportunities.
- Request letters of recommendation from teachers before summer break.

Senior Summer:

- Take the initiative to do something that interests you! This could be an internship, volunteer opportunity, or job. If you know what you want to study in college, do something related to that field.
- · Visit colleges!
- Become familiar with the Common App when it becomes available on August 1st.
- Begin working on your activities list and your college essays.
- Study for the SAT/ACT by working on strategies, taking practice tests, or taking a prep class.
- Register for the ACT/SAT if needed.
- Get organized! Create a master calendar of deadlines (applications, test registration, test dates, scholarship applications, financial aid, housing).
- Research scholarships and begin applying.

Senior Year:

September

- Research the applications of all colleges you are applying to. Ensure you have the correct deadlines for each application.
- Consider applying early to your top schools.
- Begin applications. If applying early decision, keep in mind the deadlines for those applications.
- Send SAT/ACT scores to colleges. It can take up to two weeks for scores to be sent and processed.
- Meet with Mr. Smith weekly to check in and discuss progress.
- Request letters of recommendation by the end of September if needed.

October

- October 1: The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) becomes available. Submit it as soon as possible after this date.
- October 1: CSS Profile Opens. Submit the CSS Profile if required by your school.
- If you are applying "Early Decision" your application may be due as early as *October 15th*. Complete your application.
- · Apply for college-specific scholarships. Some colleges require an additional application for merit scholarships.
- · Visit additional colleges you are interested in.

November

- Submit the FAFSA and CSS Profile (if required).
- November 1 and November 15: Deadlines to submit for Early Action and Early Decision.
- Continue submitting applications with rolling deadlines.
- Begin working on applications with January deadlines.

December

- December 1 and December 15: Deadlines to submit for Early Action and Early Decision.
- Receive early decision/early action decisions.
- Begin submitting additional applications to schools with December 15 February 1 deadlines.
- Write thank-you notes to teachers who wrote recommendations for you.

January

• *January 1 and 15*: Submit additional applications by required deadlines.

• Submit the FAFSA if you haven't yet.

February

• February 1: Submit additional applications.

March - April

- Colleges begin releasing admissions decisions.
- Inform your counselor if you have been waitlisted or rejected by an institution you hoped to attend.
- · Visit colleges where you have been accepted.

May

- May 1: National Candidates' Reply Date Make your decision on where to matriculate by this date. Inform all schools where you have been admitted of your decision.
- Your final transcript will be mailed to your college choice.
- Thank teachers who wrote you letters of recommendation.

College Planning: Helpful Terms

Bachelor's Degree: A diploma earned after successfully completing a required course of study at a college or university. The degree usually takes four years and is abbreviated B.A. (Bachelor of Arts) or B.S. (Bachelor of Science).

Candidates Reply Date Agreement (CRDA): An agreement many colleges follow that gives applicants until May 1 to accept or decline offers of admission. This agreement gives students time to get responses from most of the colleges they have applied to before deciding on one.

Common Application: An online application for admission that is accepted by nearly 500 participating US universities. It can be accessed online at www.commonapp.org. Some colleges also require a school-specific supplementary form.

Core Curriculum: A group of specially designed courses in the humanities, arts, social sciences, and sciences designed to give students a strong foundation in general education.

Cost of Attendance: Represents every educational expense, including tuition, room, board, and other fees. All schools that receive federal funds must list the cost of attendance.

Deferral: A decision by a college to delay a final response to an Early Action or Early Decision application until the regular decision cycle.

Early Action (EA): An option to submit your applications before the regular deadlines. When you apply early action, you get admission decisions from colleges earlier than usual. Early action plans are not binding, which means that you do not have to enroll in a college if you are accepted early action. Most EA plans allow students to apply by November 1 or November 15 and receive an admission decision by December 15.

Early Decision (ED): An option to submit an application to your first-choice college before the regular deadline. When you apply early decision, you get an admission decision earlier than usual. Early decision plans are binding. You agree to enroll in the college immediately if admitted and offered a financial aid package that meets your needs. Most ED application plans allow students to apply by November 1 or November 15 and receive an admission decision by December 15.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC): A number used by your school to calculate the amount of federal student aid you are eligible to receive. Your EFC is not the amount of money your family will have to pay for college, and it is not the amount of federal student aid you will receive. Instead, it is a measure of your family's financial strength and is calculated according to a formula established by law.

FAFSA: Free Application for Federal Student Aid: This is a form completed by current and prospective college students in the United States to determine their eligibility for student financial aid. To request a free copy of Funding Your Education: The Guide to Federal Student Aid, call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1–800–4–FED–AID (1–800–433–3243).

Financial Aid: Money to pay for college. In order to qualify for financial aid, a student must submit a financial aid application and each school has its own deadlines and procedures. There are many types of financial aid, including scholarships, work-study programs, federal grants, and private loans.

General Education (Gen Ed) Requirements: Courses selected from several divisions required for a college degree. These are usually completed during the first two years of college, before moving on to focused course work in major or minor areas.

In-State Student: Describes the status of a student who has established residence in the same state as the <u>public</u> college he or she is attending. In-state students are admitted in greater numbers and pay lower tuition than out-of-state students.

Liberal arts: Refers to academic programs focusing on humanities, social and natural sciences. Liberal arts programs emphasize critical and creative thinking and communication and are non-technical and non-vocational.

Major: A student's major is their primary focus of study, though they are typically also able to take some courses outside of their major. In order to earn a four-year degree a student must formally declare a major.

Minor: A secondary area of concentration, which may or may not be required by an institution.

Need-Blind Admission: A policy of making admission decisions without considering the financial circumstances of applicants. Colleges that use this policy may not offer enough financial aid to meet a student's full need.

Out-of-State Student: A student who is not a resident of the state of the public university they attend. Tuition for out-of-state students at <u>public</u> universities is higher than for in-state students. Residency requirements can vary from state to state, so be sure to research the rules.

Regular Decision: An application option that involves applying by a late fall or early winter deadline in exchange for an admission decision the following spring.

Rolling Admission: An application option by which colleges review and make decisions about applications as they are received. The application cycle usually opens in early fall and may extend into the spring or until the freshmen class is filled.

Student-Faculty Ratio: The number of professors per number of students at a college or university. For example, if a college had 2,400 students and 100 full-time professors, the student:faculty ratio would be 24:1.

Transcript: A copy of a student's cumulative record, requested by all colleges and universities for admission purposes.

Undergraduate: A college student who has not yet received a Bachelor's Degree.

Waitlist: A group of students held in reserve after a college makes its admissions decisions. If openings occur, students on the waitlist may be offered admission.

Yield: The percentage of students offered admission to a college who subsequently enroll.

Sources:

http://blog.ivywise.com/blog-0/bid/132382/College-Admissions-Terminology

Definitions sourced from *The Truth About Getting In* (Katherine Cohen, Hyperion); *Admission Matters* (Springer, Reider, Franck, Jossey-Bass)





The Laurel School of Princeton 800 North Road Hopewell, NJ 08534

(609) 566-6000 info@laurelschoolprinceton.org laurelschoolprinceton.org