

Responsibilities in the College Selection Process

Underlying Beliefs

The college selection process is a collaborative process where balance must be achieved between a student's aspirations and practicality. The counselor helps to achieve balance by knowing his or her counselees during the long-term high school working relationship. Additionally, the counselor takes into consideration a student's interests, needs and abilities during the decision-making process. An open line of communication between a student, the counselor, and a student's parents is necessary to help facilitate the best individual fit and match in a successful college search. The process is student-centered with appropriate family involvement and counselor support where the focus is on the individual student and what will serve him or her best in the college transition process.

(Additional specific information [i.e. timeline, testing dates, websites, etc.] about the college selection process is located in the College Planning Guide distributed to each student during a Junior Planning Conference.)

Student Responsibilities

It is the student's responsibility to take the initiative in becoming the leader in the college selection process. Counselors serve as expert resources for the student. To aide in the process, guidance services are established beginning in freshman year with a primary goal of helping a student learn to identify his or her individual talents and strengths through guided activities and interest inventories. While students can count on the support of their parents and counselor, they must be the ones to actually engage in the college selection and decision making process.

Open communication is the key to a successful college search. A student should:

- 1) Establish a positive working relationship with his or her counselor. This relationship begins second semester of eighth grade and continues through senior year. Plan to meet with their counselor as often as needed – some appointments are pre-arranged based on guidance services, additional appointments need to be scheduled by the student.
- 2) Begin the process with self-awareness. Take planned activities seriously and actively participate in career exploration and research. Share information with his or her parents. (Copies of the PLAN Test; PSAT test; COPPS Interest Inventory; and Harrington – O'Shea CDM Interest Survey will be returned to the students.) Learn to understand themselves (i.e. likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, skills, talents, etc.) before embarking on the college selection process.
- 3) Carefully complete a self-survey in junior English class, which is used as an in-depth assessment of values as the beginning of the process. (The information supports details about a student's participation in school activities, time spent away from school, interests and family values used in a student's letter of recommendation.)

- 4) Showcase their writing ability by actively participating in the junior English class assignment of writing a college essay for practice.
- 5) Prepare to attend a Junior Planning Conference (JPC) with his or her parents to learn about the entire college selection process and begin to develop a list of college options.
- 6) Enthusiastically engage in researching colleges. Use college guidebooks, surfing the college website, using appropriate college search engines (Naviance – HC college matriculation data and the Discover Program – information on college majors), visiting campuses, meeting with college representatives at Central, using links from Guidance webpage, etc.
- 7) Register for and complete necessary standardized tests (ACT/SAT) in a timely fashion. Make sure official test scores are sent to each college directly from the testing agency to ensure their application is complete.
- 8) Narrow college choices. Work closely with his or her counselor to determine the number of applications that will be appropriate.
- 9) Write and revise a personal statement or essay, when required, and seek input and guidance from an English teacher and/or their counselor. (Guidance support services are provided to assist with essay writing – counselors will be available during lunch hours during five weeks in September and October.)
- 10) When required, need to request teacher recommendations in a timely fashion. (Remember to write a thank you note to the teachers for taking the time to write a letter for you.)
- 11) Take the time to complete all college applications comprehensively and in a timely manner. Be responsible to secure applications that are either available on the college web site or through the Common Application website. (The majority of applications submitted are online. It is best to create, use and record the same username and password for all application accounts.)
- 12) Plan ahead and meet deadlines. Be aware of both internal Guidance Office deadlines for the transcript request form as well as the specific college application due dates.
- 13) Seek continual support from his or her counselor for the entire college selection process – keep lines of communication open, follow up by mailing transcripts, 7th semester transcripts when needed, financial aid information, if needed, and information on scholarship opportunities.
- 14) Keep their counselor informed of college admission decisions, scholarships, and final matriculation decision.

Parent Responsibilities

The parent role is to provide support and encourage the student as he or she learns accepts responsibility for the college application process and final matriculation decision.

Open communication is the key to a successful college search. A parent should:

- 1) Establish a positive working relationship with your student's counselor. (This relationship begins second semester of eighth grade and continues through senior year.) Contact your student's counselor via email or by phone as often as needed. Help, by reminding your student to check in with his or her counselor.

- 2) Encourage your student to share information with you after guided activities for career exploration and self-awareness through interest inventories are completed. (Sophomore and Junior Group activities in the fall.)
- 3) Ask your student to share materials from junior English classes – self-study, practice college essay, and forms to be completed when requesting a letter of recommendation from a teacher. (Copies of forms on Guidance website page.)
- 4) Prepare to attend a Junior Planning Conference in spring of junior year. (Review materials mailed prior to the meeting to start thinking about the process – i.e. size of school, location, financial considerations, major interest, etc.)
- 5) Use the Naviance Program along with your student to discuss family values in the college selection process.
- 6) Arrange to visit college campuses and encourage your student to journal his or her impressions when touring. Share in this experience and process.
- 7) Remind your student to, and assist with, the registration process for standardized testing.
- 8) Review your student’s list of pros and cons in narrowing college choices. (Include financial concerns – make it a family discussion after student provides research.)
- 9) Attend financial aid night, if applicable, (in December) to learn about the process - all families are encouraged to file the FAFSA to gain eligibility for need and merit funds.
- 10) Assist your student in meeting deadlines. Serve as managers to help organize the process. (Checklist for specific steps included in the College Planning Guide.)
- 11) Communicate with your student’s counselor. Feel free to contact the counselor at any point in the process. Encourage your student to seek help as often as needed as well and to keep the counselor updated on the process.
- 12) Help foster independence in your young adult. (This process provides an excellent opportunity for the family to define new roles as his or her student heads off to college.)

Counselor Responsibilities

Experienced counselors at HCHS share their expertise on college counseling with their students, parents, and colleagues. Each counselor participates in ongoing professional growth each year to remain current in trends, procedures and programs. Networking opportunities (including traveling to and visiting college campuses) with other counseling colleagues, as well as with college admission representatives, is a priority in the Guidance Department. Each counselor knows his or her students and establishing a positive and strong working relationship that starts in eighth grade and continues through graduation night as they present each individual student with his or her diploma. The counselor provides balance in the search and brings expertise to the college selection process. Each counselor will always serve his or her students in an ethical, fair, consistent and compassionate manner.

Open communication is the key to a successful college search. Each counselor will:

- 1) Establish a good working relationship with each assigned counselee and encourage students to come in for help as often as needed, minimally four times a year for freshman through juniors, and as often as needed in the college selection process for seniors.

- 2) Facilitate guided activities that promote self-awareness for each student focused on a student's abilities, interests and values. Learn about each counselee's interest and abilities and share additional information relating to possible college majors.
- 3) Review each student's self-survey and compile it with impressions during the four-year relationship to write a letter a recommendation, when required. Write a comprehensive and thoughtful letter that discusses how a student has managed his or her high school's academic, co-curricular and cultural environment.
- 4) Assist a student, when needed, with a college essay.
- 5) Prepare for an individual Junior Planning Conference for each counselee including providing materials based on each student's needs – athletic information, portfolio information, audition information, interview tips, support services, if needed, etc.
- 6) Serve as a resource for college choices. Work with each individual student based on his or her needs, abilities, interests, and talents to ensure a balanced list of colleges.
- 7) Review test scores from previous testing and discuss registration for standardized testing.
- 8) Follow-up with students after initial JPC to monitor the narrowing process of college choices including the list of colleges, application process, essays, resumes, decision deadlines – EA/ED, remind students of scholarship opportunities and provide financial information, when needed.
- 9) Encourage students to have personal essays reviewed by the English Department for grammar and mechanics. Review the essay for depth of subject matter. (Guidance services include assistance in the brainstorming ideas for an essay, format for resume writing, and review of essays for content and clarity. Counselors will be available during all lunch periods for five weeks in September and October to assist with essay writing.)
- 10) Encourage and support students to request letters of recommendation from teachers, when required.
- 11) Coordinate the admission process including the prompt mailing of the secondary school report, transcript, and letters of recommendation, signature page, etc.
- 12) Advocate for each student's best interests. Serve as the point person when communicating with college admission professionals. When appropriate, in conjunction with the Director of Guidance, support the student's candidacy for admission by contacting the college admission representative.
- 13) Openly communicate with each student and parent. Record college admission decisions for each counselee and maintain college matriculation data prior to each senior exodus meeting.