Senior Fall

Final Lists, Senior Fall Checklist, and Options and Deadlines

Upon returning from the summer break, your focus will be on finalizing your college list, completing your applications, confirming your teacher recommendations, and determining which application process you will pursue. You will complete a Senior Update Survey on Naviance to update your counselor on your summer experiences and then follow up with meetings to discuss your next steps.

Included in this chapter are a few resources to guide you through the fall months. The Senior Fall Checklist is a worksheet designed to help you complete the critical components of your college application. The Balanced College List will help you separate schools by likelihood of acceptance, allowing you to balance your list. The “College Timetable Chart” lets you keep track of important aspects of the applications at individual colleges.

It is vitally important for students to check school email and Naviance on a regular basis, as the College Office will frequently relay important information about tasks and deadlines.

You may wish to apply under an early notification program. Typically, these applications must be completed by November 1 or 15, and a decision reaches you in December or January. You may also want to apply regular decision in which case the application is typically due January 1 or 15 and your decision reaches you early March through early April. Talk to your college counselor about these options.

OPTIONS AND DEADLINES

For every application you complete and intend to send there will be deadlines to which you must adhere in order to become a candidate for admission. They are defined as follows:

Regular Admissions

The student applies by a certain deadline, usually between January 1 and March 1, and is notified of a decision on or shortly after a specific date, most often between early March and early April.
**Early Decision (and Early Decision 2)**

The Early Decision (ED) deadline, often November 1, is much earlier and the student is usually notified of the college’s decision in December or January. One of three decisions is rendered: Accept, Defer, or Deny (with a few variations including spring admit or rarely, a wait list). A student that receives a fall accept to an ED application is bound to attend the college and must withdraw any other active applications. Students’ applications that are deferred are simply put back in the pile and looked at again with the regular pool of applicants. If deferred, they are no longer committed to attending the college should they be accepted later in the year. Some colleges have a policy of denying Early Decision applicants they deem unqualified. While an outright denial can hurt, it does relieve the anxiety of having to wait another four or five months for a decision.

A student may submit only one Early Decision application at a time. However, several institutions have ED1 and Early Decision 2 (ED2) deadlines; the latter are designed to attract students who were not ready to apply in November and applicants who may have been rejected or deferred from another college earlier in the year. Other institutions have Early Decision deadlines that are relatively late — for example, January 1 — which serve the same purpose as ED2. Early Decision candidates must be ready to apply to other colleges immediately in the event that they do not receive an acceptance of their ED application.

 Unfortunately, many colleges now use Early Decision as a marketing tool, designed to make them look more selective. In a nutshell, the result of this practice is that some institutions are easier to get into when one applies early. It is essential to ask admissions offices about their ED policies in this regard. If you do not get a satisfactory answer — which sometimes you will not — speak with your counselor before making any commitment.

**The BB&N College Counseling Office does not advocate submitting an Early Decision application unless you are absolutely sure that the college is THE top choice.** Every year we hear students say “I know I am applying early somewhere, I just don’t know where yet.” Using an early decision application as a strategic maneuver to get into a college earlier without really knowing that it is your top choice is an inappropriate use of the Early Decision program. When you use ED as a strategic maneuver, it can lead to matriculating at a school that you later find is a bad fit and ultimately to a transfer process that is stressful for you and your family. We want you to find a place where you will be happy, and if it takes until the regular decision deadline for you to figure out which school is best, we want you to take that time.

**MYTHS ABOUT EARLY DECISION**

**Myth #1:** Students should apply early to a “reach” school because it is their best shot at admission.

**Fact:** There are many factors to consider when making the decision to apply early and where the student applies early matters as much as simply applying early. Applying to a “possible” school (where a student’s chances in the regular pool are about 50%) usually offers the most advantage. With all the media attention focused on early admission, many colleges experienced increases in their early application numbers and subsequently have become more selective. Students should work closely with their counselor to determine the right plan for them.

**Myth #2:** Even if a student doesn’t have a clear first choice, s/he should still apply early.

**Fact:** If a student doesn’t have a clear first choice, s/he may consider applying to a rolling or non-binding program rather than a binding Early Decision program. Sometimes, there are “likely” or “possible” schools on a student’s list that offer rolling or early action programs and it may help ease the stress of the application process to get an offer of admission before April.

**Myth #3:** Students applying for financial aid should always apply early.

**Fact:** Students applying for financial aid may want to consider non-binding programs so that they will have the option to compare financial aid packages. But if a student has a clear first choice, financial aid should have no bearing on whether s/he applies ED.
Early Action
This plan (also known as “EA”) is similar to Early Decision except that there is no commitment on the part of the student to attend if accepted. A few schools in the United States have adopted an Early Action program that they have named “Single Choice” or “Restricted Early Action.” The Early Action-Single Choice program stipulates that if a student applies EA to any of these schools, they cannot apply under any ED or REA program at any other school. As with any other EA program, if the student is admitted REA, he/she is not required to attend and have until May 1 (see “Candidates Reply Date” below) to make their final decision.

“Rolling” Admissions
Colleges that use rolling admission will review a candidate’s credentials shortly after they are received (usually not before the end of the first high school marking period of the senior year), and will notify the candidate of its decision within a few weeks. The student generally does not have to tell the college whether he or she will be attending until May 1. As a rule, the stronger the student, the earlier he or she may receive a letter of acceptance. Note that in these competitive times, many rolling admissions institutions become more selective as the year goes on. It may be best, therefore, to apply early in the year. Always check with your counselor about timing.

The Candidate’s Reply Date
The candidate’s reply date is the date by which a student must say either yes or no to a single college, and beyond which no extensions are possible. Most colleges have agreed on May 1 as the Candidate’s Reply Date unless the student has applied and been accepted under the Early Decision plan. However, some do not observe it and will ask the student to send a confirming deposit within two or three weeks. If this happens to you, and you do not want to send your money to one college until you have heard from others, you can almost always call or write the college and get an extension, usually until May 1. They may tell you they still want the deposit, but that it is refundable until that time. When in doubt, speak to one of the college counselors. Colleges need and have the right to expect a commitment from an accepted applicant at some point, and a May 1 deadline should give most people enough time to make up their minds. Usually, “making up one’s mind” involves sending a substantial deposit—several hundred dollars—to the college one has decided to attend. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES may deposits ever be sent to more than one college! “Double-depositing” is unethical. We will only send one final transcript to a college at the end of the year. If a college learns that a student has double deposited, the student risks having their acceptance revoked.

Waiting List
The waiting list is a form of “insurance policy” used by many colleges as a hedge against the possibility of unfilled places in an entering class. There is no way to predict a student’s chances of admission from the waiting list, as circumstances and conditions vary each year. Usually, wait lists are not ranked; rather, all wait-list students are reevaluated shortly after May 1. The number of wait-list candidates offered acceptance depends upon the number of places still to be filled. Students should choose to remain on a college’s waitlist only if they are seriously interested in attending that institution. If they are accepted off of a waitlist, students are asked to submit a deposit and at that point the deposit at the other college is lost. If interest is not strong, students should remove their names to give their place to someone else.
SENIOR FALL CHECKLIST

☐ Senior Update Survey: The questionnaire is located in the Family Connection site on Naviance. This document will update your counselor on your summer experiences, the progress of your application, and any campus visits you had. This form will be due in late September.

☐ Transcript Verification/Additional Transcript Forms: Return a signed copy of your transcript after you and your parents have looked it over and confirmed all the information is accurate. Make certain that the college office has a copy of any transcripts from outside BB&N.

☐ Meetings with college counselor: After completing and submitting the senior update survey, you may schedule your first college counseling appointment.

☐ Sign up for tests: Review your testing with your counselor. Be sure to sign up for any tests you need to re-take. The school will not register you for the ACTs, SATs, or Subject Tests—that is your responsibility.

☐ Teacher Recommendation Contract: Collect signatures from teachers who will be writing you recommendation letters. The form will be available in the College Counseling Office mid-Sept.

☐ Essays: Turn in a copy of your essay(s) to your college counselor as a ticket to your first meeting.

☐ Early Application Form: You must submit this form if you are applying under Early Action, Early Decision, or rolling programs. Due date: Early October.

☐ Regular Decision Form: You must submit this form to confirm your FINAL college list.

☐ Additional College Counseling Appointments: It will be important to try and make regular and fairly frequent appointments with your college counselor during your senior fall. The first semester of senior year will be very busy with the process of finalizing your list, completing your applications and your essays. Your college counselor will help you through this process so be sure to keep in close contact with him/her.

☐ Art Supplements: If you are submitting an art supplement, please work with your teacher to meet the appropriate application deadlines. Portfolios should be complete by early to mid October.

☐ Financial Aid: Check requirements and deadlines for each college. The FAFSA and CSS Profile are available online and can be submitted any time during senior fall. We strongly encourage families to submit their FAFSA and college-specific financial aid forms no later than January.

☐ Standardized Test Scores: It is the student’s responsibility to send test scores to colleges either through the college board or the ACT.

☐ Interviews: Research and plan interviews
Referring to your list from the spring of your junior year, narrow your choices based on your research, visits, and conversations with your college counselor.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIGHLY UNLIKELY (0-2)</th>
<th>UNLIKELY (2-3)</th>
<th>POSSIBLE (3-4)</th>
<th>LIKELY (2-3)</th>
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**Likely:** BB&N students with comparable test scores and grades are usually offered admission and an offer of admission is at least 70% certain. However, it is important to apply to several “likely” colleges as the admission picture changes annually.

**Possible:** BB&N students with similar grades and test scores are sometimes admitted, sometimes waitlisted, and occasionally denied. Chance of admission is roughly 50%.

**Unlikely:** Labeled “Reach” in Naviance, BB&N students with similar grades and test scores are less likely to be admitted, except in cases where extenuating circumstances, such as strong coach support or active alumni connections, affect the decision. There is usually a 10%-20% chance of being admitted.

**Highly Unlikely:** Labeled “Far Reach” in Naviance, BB&N students with similar grades and test scores have almost never been admitted in the past.