

A GUIDE TO THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS



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Vermont Commons School is committed to finding colleges and universities that best match each student's academic, social, athletic, geographic, personal and individual needs as they move on to higher education. Beginning in the winter of their junior year and working together with the College Counselors, each student evaluates their individual strengths, personal growth, and academic profile and creates a list of colleges to which they will apply during their senior year at VCS. The school utilizes the online program Naviance to assist in the college search process.

Throughout the junior and senior year, the College Counseling Office keeps students and families informed regarding events related to the college admission process through a variety of resources. Numerous colleges and universities visit Vermont Commons each fall and spring. We update the college visit calendar on the Vermont Commons website and on Naviance, in addition to announcing the visits via Upcoming Events e-mails and at Morning Meeting. Parents are always welcome to meet with college representatives when they visit our campus. Students are required to ask for their teacher's permission if they are going to miss class when a college is visiting. Students are responsible for making up all missed work when missing a class due a college visit.

For quick reference:

- Naviance Website: <https://connection.naviance.com/fc/signin.php?hsid=vcs>
- **CEEB and ACT school code: 460 417**
- Our school code is used for registering for the SAT and ACT

NAVIANCE

Vermont Commons makes use of Naviance, an online college application tool. Each junior and senior has an account and is registered with the site by our registrar. Members of the Class of 2019 registered with Naviance in early January 2018 and could begin using the program with the assistance of the College Counselors. Juniors officially begin working individually with the College Counselors in earnest in mid-winter, after the onset of second semester.

Once on Naviance, there are links to numerous college counseling search engines and related websites that are associated with admissions and higher education. The comprehensive nature of Naviance makes it possible for students and parents to link to specific college and university websites as well as other helpful resources.

<http://connection.naviance.com/vcs>

Naviance provides each student with their own personal (private) account that includes individualized information such as standardized test scores and a current grade point average. This information is then available to compare a student's data to past Vermont Commons applicants who have applied to the same colleges and universities via scattergrams. There is also a listing on Naviance of upcoming college and university visits to our school. Our students utilize Naviance to create, update, and navigate their college lists and request transcripts, which the registrar then transmits electronically to the colleges and universities to which they are applying.

STANDARDIZED TESTING:

While standardized testing is not the most important part of the college counseling process, it is an aspect, and college admission officers do utilize the scores as a benchmark to compare students on a national level. For further information on the SAT and ACT, please go to the following websites:

<http://sat.collegeboard.org/home?affiliateId=nav&bannerId=g-cbh-sat>

<http://www.actstudent.org/>

That said there are many institutions that do not require test scores as part of their review. For further information, please go to www.fairtest.org. There are links to the College Board, ACT and Fair Test on Naviance, too.

Recommended timetable for standardized testing for Juniors and Seniors:

September:

- ACT, seniors

October:

- PSAT, juniors (at VCS, all 9th, 10th, and 11th graders take the PSAT)
- SAT or SAT subject tests, seniors
- ACT, seniors

November:

- SAT or SAT subject tests, seniors

March:

- SAT, juniors

April:

- ACT, juniors

May

- AP exams, juniors and seniors
- SAT or SAT subject tests, juniors

June

- SAT or SAT subject tests, juniors
- ACT, juniors

SCORE CHOICE:

Several years ago, the College Board enacted a policy that enabled students to send particular scores to colleges. Please know that this option is only available for test date NOT by test section. For further information on Score Choice, please see the attached link.

<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/sat-score-choice.pdf>

THE STUDENT TASKS INCLUDE...

- Entering the process of searching for colleges and universities with an open mind. Considering institutions that may be unknown to you and your family as you formulate your listing of potential colleges and universities.
- Researching institutions carefully and thoughtfully. Be aware of the admission criteria at those colleges and universities to which you are applying, including knowing all deadlines.
- When it comes time to calling colleges and universities to make your appointments to visit, it is preferable that the call should be made by the student.
- As time and schedules allow, meeting with admissions representatives when they visit our school, visiting campuses and attending open house programs to learn more.
- Checking email with regularity as colleges use email as a method of communication to keep you informed of upcoming events such as open houses, special programs and interview opportunities.
- Making every effort to start the Common Application and your personal essays completed before the onset of the 2018-19 academic year. **The Common Application will “go live” on August 1, 2018**
- Staying in close touch with Marta and Susan regarding your college visits, plans, progress and asking questions as they arise.
- Each VCS student is responsible for submitting his or her standardized test scores to the colleges and universities to which they are applying, and for paying the fees associated with the College Board and the ACT. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the scores arrive on time at the colleges and universities.
- Vermont Commons does NOT send standardized test scores on behalf of the student.
- VCS students are responsible for submitting their own applications, supplements and, if required, portfolio, to the colleges and universities to which they are applying.
- VCS students are responsible for paying the application fees to the colleges and universities to which they are applying.
- Students must complete transcript ALL requests at least two weeks prior to the college/university deadline via Naviance.
- Students must request their letters of recommendation from the faculty who will write on their behalf by **Monday, August 27th, 2018**. Each student is to request two letters of recommendation; it is suggested that those whom you ask be teachers you have had in your junior year or will have in your senior year.
- If the college or university to which a student is applying has individual forms that need to be filled out, it is the responsibility of that student to give the forms to the College Counselors at least two weeks prior to the specified admission deadline.
- Students are to keep the College Counselors informed of acceptances, deferrals, wait lists and denials from the colleges to which they have applied.
- Once a student has received news from all of the institutions to which they have applied and the final decision has been made as to where they will attend, it is an important courtesy that the student notify the other institutions they are no longer interested.

THE PARENTS TASKS INCLUDE...

- Supporting their children as they begin to contemplate life after Vermont Commons School *and recognize that this is their journey.*
- Listening to your children's ideas and concerns as they enter the college counseling process.
- Encouraging your children to make the call to set up the campus visits and tours. If they hesitate, please step in, but it is a good time for them to take the initiative.
- Reviewing Naviance with regularity with your children and keeping up to date on the colleges and universities that they are considering. To access, use your child's email and password. Vermont Commons can provide you with your own password if requested. Please contact Marta, Susan, or Steve to set up.
- Visiting campuses with your children, meeting with the admissions representatives who visit our school, and attending the college fairs in our area.
- Being mindful of our deadlines at Vermont Commons, i.e. that all transcript requests be made at least two weeks in advance of the college/university deadline. We cannot ensure the timely delivery of last minute requests of transcripts.
- Being aware of your children's applications and standardized testing registration deadlines, and ensuring that they're met.
- Ensuring that your children are responsible for sending their official standardized test scores to the colleges and universities to which they are applying. Vermont Commons School does not send official standardized test scores to colleges and universities; this is the responsibility of each student/parent.
- If you will be seeking financial aid, be an on-time applicant. Regularly access VSAC's website for updates: www.vsac.org and keep in touch with the financial aid offices at the colleges to which your child is applying.
- Actively, with your child, pursue scholarship opportunities. Suggested websites (links are also on Naviance) are: www.schoolsoup.com and www.fastweb.com

THE COLLEGE COUNSELOR'S TASKS INCLUDE...

- Working with every Vermont Commons junior and senior and their parents as they create a listing of colleges and universities to apply to; the list should be balanced with institutions that serve as good matches by reflecting the student's academic profile, interests, abilities.
- Introducing each Vermont Commons junior and senior to Naviance and working with them as they utilize our on-line college tools. Answering questions as they arise.
- Providing information and resources and sharing updates about colleges and universities.
- Serving as an advocate on behalf of the student in the college counseling process to the colleges and universities to which they are applying.
- Keeping students and parents informed about visits to our school by colleges and universities.
- Updating students, via our college counseling calendar and Naviance, of upcoming standardized testing dates. Students are responsible for registering themselves for all standardized tests with the exception of the Pre-ACT and PSAT, which the school does for all students in grades 10-11.
- Writing a recommendation on the student's behalf, with a focus on personal strengths and highlighting academic preparation. That letter, our school profile, the student's academic transcript, and the recommendations written by teachers are sent via Naviance by our registrar, Steve Lausier, to the colleges and universities to which each student is applying.
- At the conclusion of the first semester of the senior year, the official school report is sent out with mid-year grades along with a mid-year report.

- As decisions come in, the College Counselors are available to meet with students and their parents to help them consider their options for higher education.
- The College Counselors are also versed in Gap Year and summer program options for students seeking them.

THE REGISTRAR'S TASKS INCLUDE...

- Updating each student's transcript and academic record.
- Answering parents' and students' questions regarding GPA and transcripts.
- Sending out, via Naviance, each senior's official Vermont Commons transcript, school report form, and letters of recommendation to meet the college or university's stated deadline. The submission can be tracked on Naviance.
- Sending out the mid-year report to each college our students apply to at the conclusion of the first semester.
- Sending an official final transcript to the colleges into which the member of the Class of 2019 will matriculate, after they have successfully graduated from our school.

RESEARCHING COLLEGES

- Things to consider include the following: the specific academic program unique to the institution, enrollment, location, public vs. private, academic requirements, religious affiliation, student life, and community atmosphere.
- Enrollment – Vermont is home to one of the smallest colleges in the country, Sterling, with just 125 students. One of the largest universities in the country is Ohio State in Columbus with 64,000 enrolled. Somewhere in between is just the right college or university for you and Naviance will help you find it.
- Location - determine if you would like to study in an urban area like Boston or New York, a rural area like Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, or a suburban area like Burlington.
- Academic requirements – each college's website, under the admissions section, will list its specific requirements for admission, along with the average standardized test scores of those students that it admits.

EARLY DECISION VS. EARLY ACTION VS. SINGLE-CHOICE EARLY ACTION

Please review the link on Naviance (from the College Board's website) that highlights these different plans for a clear explanation, or see Ari.

ROLLING ADMISSION:

This means that a student can apply at any point during the senior year. If a college or university to which you are applying operates with this plan, it is important to inform the college counseling office and the registrar as to the date you wish to submit your application. Depending on a student's junior year grades, students wishing to apply to colleges with rolling admission may be best served by either applying immediately in the fall of senior year (if junior year went particularly well) or waiting to apply until after the mid-year grades are posted in February; in so doing with the latter, the colleges will have a good picture of how the student is doing during their senior year.

FINANCIAL AID:

There are links on Naviance to Vermont Student Assistance Corporation www.vsac.org that will lead you to further information about the financial aid application process. Each fall, VSAC hosts information sessions throughout northern Vermont, and parents and students are strongly encouraged to attend. Vermont Commons will publicize the times and locations of these programs.

SCHOLARSHIPS:

Each Vermont Commons student is encouraged to apply for scholarships to help offset the costs of attending college. There are links on Naviance where students can search for scholarships for which they may be qualified. <http://www.schoolsoup.com/> and <http://www.fastweb.com/>

COLLEGE GUIDEBOOK SUGGESTIONS:

- ***The College Finder*, by Stephen Antonoff**, lists colleges by major, region, etc. Very helpful in helping students find colleges that are the right fit in all ways!
- ***Fiske Guide*, by Edmund Fiske**, is a comprehensive listing of colleges, from the highly competitive to those that admit more than 50% of their applicants. Fiske gives thoughtful commentary in a most insightful way.
- ***The Gatekeepers: Inside the College Admission Process* by Jacques Steinberg** is an inside look into how an admission committee works at an elite college.
- ***Admissions Matters*, by Sally Springer** is chock full of pertinent admissions information and is very timely for juniors, seniors, and their parents.
- ***Colleges That Change Lives* by Loren Pope** is set on the premise that the institution does not have to be a big name to make a true difference in the life of the student.
- ***Harvard Schmarvard* by Jay Matthews** is very interesting take on the world of college admissions.
- ***Guide to Majors* by the Princeton Review** includes complete information on majors with salary guidelines. It is helpful as students consider different careers and programs.
- ***The Portable Guidance Counselor* by the Princeton Review** includes tips, suggestions and guidelines as you navigate the road to college.

UVM PRE COLLEGE-SUMMER

Each student at VCS is encouraged to consider this option.

<http://learn.uvm.edu/high-school-2/>

GAP YEAR PROGRAMS

Please see Marta or Susan for further information if you are considering the possibility of a Gap Year program after graduating from Vermont Commons School.

IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES FOR THE CLASS OF 2019:

Please check the list on the Naviance “home welcome page” for important dates. These dates are posted to the Vermont Commons Community Calendar and will be updated in Turtle Tracks, too. You are encouraged to post them in your personal calendar! They are also on your “welcome page” on Naviance.

Students and parents, you are always welcome to schedule a time to meet with Marta or Susan to discuss college counseling issues and the application process.

Juniors, your planning process begins in earnest in early winter 2019! All students are encouraged to meet with the college and university representatives who visit our school to learn more about their institutions during the fall.