



KENT SCHOOL

COLLEGE COUNSELING

College Handbook

Kent School

Mission Statement

As an independent boarding school in keeping with the Episcopal Church, we prepare students for college and for life with a rigorous and comprehensive program. We teach those who strive to grow, nurture striving where it falters, foster academic excellence, and promote understanding of and respect for one another's beliefs and differences.

Motto

Simplicity of Life, Directness of Purpose, and Self-Reliance

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Dear Fifth and Sixth Form and PG Families:

I hope this handbook provides you with valuable information, timelines, and expectations as you embark upon the college search process. While it is a comprehensive outline of the many stages of this process, it is not your only resource. In the months ahead, the College Counseling Office will communicate regularly through email, mailed correspondence, our blog—College Navigator, college seminars, parent workshops, and other platforms.

In keeping with the Kent School mission statement, the College Counseling Office seeks to empower students to direct their own college searches and develop their post-secondary plans by providing the necessary structure, support, advice, reflection and resources. The counseling process is a natural extension of Kent’s educational philosophy, emphasizing independent thinking, introspection, personal responsibility, leadership, and informed decision making. We believe it should be student centered, supportive, and fun—a celebration of each student’s past accomplishments and promise for the future. College represents an important milestone in a student’s life. It is a time for individuation: for students to develop their interests, explore and define their talents, and deepen their personal beliefs and values.

No college search is the same. Our goal is to help each student discover the best academic match, and, in the process, to foster critical thinking and independence. We encourage students to seek excellence and balance in all that they do, to engage the world around them, and to lead rich, full lives in the pursuit of life-long learning and service. Our hope is that the lessons they learn at Kent will serve them well as they transition from high school to college, from childhood into adulthood.

Please do not hesitate to contact any of us in college counseling with questions or concerns. We look forward to working with you throughout the process and to celebrating the accomplishments of our students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shawn Rousseau". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.

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COLLEGE COUNSELING PARTNERSHIP

Responsibilities of the Student, College Counselor, and Parents

Student Responsibilities

- Develop a trusting and open relationship with your counselor, and ensure that he/she is well informed of your academic history and extracurricular interests.
- Read and understand this College Counseling Handbook as well as all other correspondence from the Counseling Office.
- Attend college seminar throughout the junior-year fall and meet individually with your college counselor at several stages throughout this process.
- Research colleges and visit during school breaks when possible. Prepare a college list that reflects your interests across a range of selectivity. At Kent, make every effort to meet with visiting college representatives whose schools interest you.
- Register for Naviance Student and complete all required questionnaires and information.
- Register for and complete the appropriate SAT, ACT (with writing), SAT Subject Tests, and TOEFL. Send official score reports to each college to which you are applying. Kent does **NOT** send test scores.
- Meet all college application deadlines, including those for admission, financial aid and scholarship opportunities. Know and adhere to deadlines set by the College Counseling Office for transcripts, letters of recommendation and other materials.
- Recognize the consequences of disciplinary action and report any disciplinary probation as required.
- Notify colleges, in writing, when withdrawing your regular decision application if you have been accepted under the binding contract of early decision at another institution.
- Confirm your intention to enroll and submit a deposit to only **one** college or university by the national notification date, May 1.
- Maintain a strong academic record and abide by Kent School's expectations through the end of senior year.
- Enjoy your high school experience and maintain a calm attitude throughout the college search process. In the end, you will enroll in an institution that will allow you to thrive both academically and socially.

College Counselor Responsibilities

- Develop a trusting and open relationship with the student. Understand and appreciate his/her many strengths and abilities, both academic and extracurricular.
- Be aware of any academic or personal challenges a student may face.
- Work with the student to develop and refine a college list, providing a balanced list of schools that represent a good "match" for the individual student.

- Write a comprehensive letter of recommendation that accurately and holistically represents the student.
- Provide professional insight about the strengths of individual colleges and universities and how their admissions processes work. Discuss different application options and strategies with the student regarding early action, early decision or regular decision applications.
- Teach Fifth Form College Seminar in the fall to highlight the multiple aspects of the college search and application process, including important deadlines, essay writing, college visits, interviews and more.
- Once the student makes a transcript request in Naviance Student, submit a complete college packet to the appropriate institution (includes the school report, counselor letter of recommendation, official transcript, school profile, teacher recommendations and Secondary School Report).
- Provide resources and host informational meetings about financial aid, athletic recruitment and the performing/visual arts. Also, counsel students on high school course selection and summer enrichment opportunities.
- Personalize the process for each individual student by collaborating and communicating with him/her. Offer guidance and resources so each student can make a well-informed final college choice decision.

Parent Responsibilities

- Recognize that your son or daughter is at the center of this process. Provide unconditional support and celebrate your child's many strengths, talents and interests.
- Keep an open mind as your child researches colleges and universities. Help him/her avoid getting fixated on a particular institution too early in the process.
- Facilitate college visits when possible so your child can gain a broad perspective of the many options and opportunities for higher education.
- Complete the Parent Questionnaire in Naviance Student, a confidential document that helps the college counselor become better acquainted with your child and allows you to bring your thoughts and wishes to the process.
- Avoid taking over the application process and essay writing. This is an opportunity for students' growth and self-knowledge. While they may need help managing some aspects of the process, they need to take ownership of it.
- Be familiar with the information in the College Counseling Handbook and on our website. Communicate directly with the college counselor if you have questions or concerns.

CALENDAR FOR THE COLLEGE PROCESS

FIFTH FORM YEAR

September

- Begin Fifth Form College Seminar.

October

- Take the PSAT (Qualifying test for the National Merit Scholarship).

December

- Register for Naviance Student.
- Take the SAT/ACT combination diagnostic test.

January

- Have individual meetings with your college counselor and begin to create a preliminary college list.

February

- Register for the ACT, which is offered off campus for students who wish to add this to their standardized testing credentials.¹ You should discuss taking the ACT with your counselor before registering.
- Begin researching college choices based on:
 - Your individual needs and goals
 - Your grades, rigor of curriculum, standardized test scores, and nonacademic commitments
- Sign up for Sixth Form courses in the Studies Office; find a balance of courses that are challenging but will also allow you to earn strong grades.
- College Counseling Office hosts the Fifth Form Parents' College Workshop.

March

- Visit colleges during March break. Register for campus tours and information sessions. Consider scheduling an admissions interview if they are offered.

April

- Standardized test prep is offered (for a fee) over the next two months for all interested Fifth Formers.
- The ACT is offered on campus for interested students.
- If you have not already done so, have another individual meeting with your college counselor to discuss (among other things):

¹ Note that Kent School is only an ACT test center in April and October. The closest test centers to Kent are New Milford High School, Torrington High School, Taft or Millbrook.

- Research you've done on your preliminary college list
- Course selections for your Sixth Form year
- SAT Subject Tests to be taken in May or June
- Teacher recommendations and writing the college essay
- Attend the College Fair.

May

- Take the SAT or SAT Subject Tests if you are taking AP exams in that subject (highly recommended for all Fifth Formers).
- Register for the June SAT or SAT Subject Tests. (Consult with your teachers and your college counselor about which subject tests to take.)
- Ask two of your teachers for a college letter of recommendation, preferably one from an English/history teacher and the other from a math/science teacher.
- Continue to meet individually with your college counselor.
- Review preliminary college list with your counselor.

June

- Final exams and end-of-year grades (a strong showing is important!).
- Take the SAT or SAT Subject Tests.
- The ACT is offered in June—off campus—for interested students.
- A summer mailing is sent home to parents of rising Sixth Formers, which will include:
 - A preliminary college list based on your meetings with your college counselor
 - Suggestions regarding interviews at colleges
 - Information on college application procedures

June – August

- College visits and interviews (summer is a busy time for most colleges; call early for appointments). You must call ahead of time to schedule an interview, and you should call or go online to each college's website to check when tours and information sessions are offered. Some schools do require you to sign up for tours and information sessions.
- The TOEFL test is available in many locations for international students. Most international students who speak English as a second language must take the TOEFL. We **STRONGLY** suggest that you take the TOEFL in your home country during the summer; it is VERY difficult to take the TOEFL while at Kent.
- Register for the Common Application, which goes live on August 1.
- Begin working on your college essay (visit the Common Application website online at www.commonapp.org for suggested topics).
- Register for the SAT in October.

SIXTH FORM YEAR

September

- Meet with your college counselor individually to discuss:
 - What you did over the summer
 - College visits and interviews you conducted
 - Changes in your college list
 - Procedures regarding the application process
 - Registering for October SAT
 - Registering for the October ACT
 - Signing the FERPA agreement

September – November

- Visits to Kent by representatives from over 100 colleges and universities. Check the “college visits” section in Naviance Student to sign up to meet with a representative. The meetings are informational—interviews are not offered.
- Continue individual meetings with college counselor and finalize list of colleges.
- If you are applying early (decision/action/rolling), ask your teachers for recommendations in September. Follow up with a thank you note! If you are applying regular decision, ask your teachers for letters of recommendation by the end of October at the latest.
- Once your teachers agree to write letters of support, enter their names in Naviance Student and follow-up with an email thanking them for their support, if you have not already done so.

October

- Register for the December SAT or SAT Subject Tests.
- The ACT is offered in October at Kent for interested students.
- For students applying for financial aid—the FAFSA and CSS Profile are available.
- By October 15 – Students applying Early Decision, Early Action and Rolling Admission must request a transcript through Naviance Student.
- Students applying ED/EA must send official SAT/ACT/TOEFL scores to colleges.
- Students applying Regular Decision ask their teachers for letters of recommendation. Once your teachers agree to write letters of support, enter their names in Naviance Student and follow-up with an email thanking them for the support.
- Update your college list by moving schools from the “Colleges I’m Thinking About” list to the “Colleges I’m Applying To” list.
- If you are applying Early Decision, be sure to have your counselor and parents sign the online [EARLY DECISION CONTRACT](#).

November

- Take the SAT or SAT Subject Tests (this is the only date on which Foreign Language SAT Subject Tests are offered with a listening component).
- November 1 or 15 – Early Decision/Action applications are due at many colleges.
- Your “Colleges I’m Applying To” list should be complete by the end of November.
- Request all transcripts for schools you are applying to regular decision.

December

- Take the SAT or SAT Subject Tests (if necessary). It will NOT be offered again in January, so this is your last chance to take it.
- The ACT is offered off campus for interested students.
- Send standardized test scores to colleges for regular decision applications.
- December 15 – Results of many Early Decision/Action applications come in. Notify the College Counseling Office of all decisions—admit, deny or defer—as you receive them!
- If admitted Early Decision, withdraw all other applications.
- Most regular decision applications should be submitted to colleges or universities by the end of the month.
- Your Common Application list **MUST** match your “Colleges I’m Applying To” list in Naviance Student.

January

- January 1 or January 15 – Deadline for many college applications.
- College Counseling Office automatically submits the mid-year report (fall grades) to all schools where you have applied.
- Monitor the status of your applications and notify your college counselor if any pieces are missing.

February

- If admitted Early Decision II, withdraw all other applications.

April

- Colleges notify students of admissions decisions. **Notify the College Counseling Office of all decisions**—admit, deny or waitlist—as you receive them!
- Decision-making time, based on college acceptances. Some college re-visits will be allowed. (Note that students are allowed three college visit days per year).

May

- May 1 – Deposit due date for **all** colleges and universities. This is the final deadline for sending your deposit and notifying a college that you plan to attend.
- This is also the deadline for notifying colleges to which you’ve been admitted that you will NOT attend.

- Check your mail and email for important messages regarding housing, course registration, and orientation from the college you will be attending. Many colleges now convey this information exclusively online and it is your responsibility to view it and respond as required.

June

- Final transcript is forwarded (you do not need to request this step, it is sent automatically) to the college you will attend for final review. (*Remember that your admission to a college is based on finishing your senior year in good academic standing.*)

MEETING WITH YOUR COLLEGE COUNSELOR

In April of your Fourth Form year, you will be assigned a college counselor, based in part on your counselor ballot. Most students like having the opportunity to choose their counselor, and we do our best to accommodate your first or second choice. If you decide not to submit a ballot, then we will assign a counselor to you. During spring term, you will have a few meetings with your counselor to introduce you to the process. However, most of the individual meetings and focused college discussions will take place during your Fifth Form year.

It's important that you realize that you are responsible for making all appointments with your college counselor. Making an appointment is easy. You can either stop by the College Counseling Office to see Mrs. Irwin in person or email her at irwink@kent-school.edu and let her know your free blocks. Always schedule your appointments with Mrs. Irwin—rather than directly with your counselor—as she maintains our office calendars.

What can you expect during your first meeting with your counselor? You should expect to answer a lot of questions. We are trying to get to know you better, in a relatively short period of time, and that means conducting a kind of “mini-interview.” We will ask you about your classes and academic history, your hobbies and interests, and your personal goals and vision. The good news is that there is no right or wrong answer. The focus is on you, so just be yourself.

We will also begin to talk about college, what you are looking for in terms of size, location, and type of school. Your counselor will help guide you in your research and develop an appropriate list.

College Seminar

In the fall term of your Fifth Form year, you will begin College Seminar. This is a required, non-graded class taught by the college counselors that meets approximately once a week throughout fall term.

You may or may not have your own college counselor teaching your seminar. We all cover the same material, so everyone gets the same information regardless of who leads the class. The seminar covers topics that all students need to know before beginning the college application process. We will cover it from start to finish, including essay writing, asking for teacher recommendations, sending test scores, etc.

Registering with Naviance Student

This will be covered in College Seminar, but one of the most important steps you need to take is to register with Naviance Student, a web-based college advising program. Naviance Student will be a critical tool in your college search as it provides valuable resources for you and your

parents as well as a channel of communication between the College Counseling Office and families.

1) Register

As soon as you receive registration information from the College Counseling Office, please register in Naviance Student.

2) Create a College List

Under the “College Tab,” enter the colleges and universities you are currently considering. Be sure to add your interest level and keep this list updated throughout the process.

3) Search and Research

There are many tools to help you search for the schools that meet your criteria. Once you have schools on your list, continue with in-depth research so you can make well-formed decisions about whether or not to apply.

- “College Search” and “SuperMatch College Search” both allow you to find schools based on specific criteria like size, location, majors offered, etc.
- “College Match” shows which schools have accepted Kent students with academic profiles similar to yours in the past.
- “College Lookup” enables you to enter a specific school’s name and retrieve an information page that includes admissions statistics for Kent applicants as well as the entire applicant pool, contact information for the admissions office, and a link to the external admissions site.
- “Graphs” or “Scattergrams” chart the past four years of Kent students’ admission activity at a specific school and show how you compare to previous applicants from Kent.

4) Complete Student Questionnaire

Every student is required to complete this questionnaire as well as the Personal and Family Information form. These will be invaluable to us when we write letters of recommendation.

Other useful tools in Naviance Student:

- **Resume** – Build and print a resume of your various academic and extracurricular activities.
- **About Careers** - Explore possible careers through surveys about your interests and skills.

- **Links to other websites** – SAT, ACT, TOEFL preparation and registration; NCAA; Common Application; Fairtest (list of test-optional schools), etc.

DEVELOPING YOUR COLLEGE LIST

Where to Begin?

Before you meet with your college counselor, it's good to have at least some sense of what you are looking for in a college. After all, there are literally thousands of colleges and universities from which to choose, so you need to have some idea of what you want.

This does not mean you have to come to the meeting with a list of schools to which you definitely want to apply. In fact, please don't do that. It's our job to help you create a list of schools and to guide you through the process of narrowing that list. What you should do, however, is to think about the following:

Size: Do you want a large university (10,000+ students) or a small college (1,200 to 2,000 students)? How important are class size and student-to-faculty ratio to you?

Location: Do you find cities exciting or overwhelming? Do you think rural settings like Kent's are peaceful and inviting, or confining and boring? Would you like to have easy access to a city without actually being in one?

Region: How important is it to you to stay close to home? Would it be exciting to spend the next four years in a part of the country that is different from where you've been raised and/or educated?

Campus Climate: Do you want an environment that is highly academic? Or, do you prefer a school with an active social scene? In what kinds of activities do you want to participate? How important is diversity to you? Do you want a campus where students are conservative or liberal in their ideas and expressions?

Expenses: How much of a factor is financial aid? This is something you should first discuss with your parents, and then with your college counselor early on in the process.

Types of Schools

Consider, also, the many different types of institutions available to you and the kinds of educational experiences they offer:

Liberal Arts College: A four-year institution that emphasizes a broad undergraduate education. While pre-professional training is frequently available at these schools in areas like business or engineering, they generally require students to take an array of courses in all areas—the arts, sciences and humanities. The liberal arts college experience is often similar to the educational

experience at Kent—small discussion-based classes, the ability to study a range of subjects, close relationships with faculty, etc.

University: An academic institution that grants undergraduate and graduate degrees in a variety of fields, and supports a variety of professional schools like law, medicine, journalism, business, etc. A university is comprised of a number of “schools” or “colleges” and each encompasses a general field of study such as business, arts and sciences, nursing, and education.

Engineering or Technical College: An independent professional school that provides four-year programs in fields like engineering, computer science, and the physical sciences. They are often known as “Institutes of Technology” or “Polytechnic Institutes.” All stress a foundation in the liberal arts to complement the technical focus of study.

Business College: There are a few colleges in the US that are dedicated solely to business. Degrees offered range from applied statistics to economics, finance to marketing, and entrepreneurship to strategic management. As with technical colleges, business schools stress a foundation in the liberal arts.

Service Academies: Federal military academies educate and train commissioned officers for the US Armed Forces. These institutions—West Point, Naval Academy, Air Force Academy, Coast Guard Academy, Merchant Marine Academy—require recommendations and nominations by US Senators and US Congressional Representatives. Students are committed to a number of years of military service after graduation.

Professional School: An institution that provides highly-specialized study in areas such as art, music, dance, photography, and design (e.g., Julliard, RI School of Design, Berklee School of Music).

Your Preliminary College List

After your first few meetings with your college counselor, you will have the beginnings of a list of schools tailored to your specific needs and goals. The following topics will be background for the list:

- Grades - from freshman year onward (including those from previous schools)
- Course choices - level of rigor is considered
- PSAT scores - which predict your SAT results
- Athletics: We will speak with your Kent coach to discuss the likelihood of your being recruited. Students often think that sports can offer them a free pass into college, but that doesn't actually happen very often—and only if you are a recruited Division I athlete.
- Other factors: Are you a legacy at a certain college? Do you need financial aid? Are you a multi-cultural, underrepresented or international student?

When you receive your list, schools will be ranked according to their level of competitiveness:

- **“Far Reach” and “Reach” schools:** Admission will be a stretch, but please keep in mind that there is a big difference between a reach school and a school at which you have absolutely no chance of gaining admission.
- **“Possible” schools:** Mid-range schools where, all things considered, you should have a 50/50 chance of admission.
- **“Likely” schools:** Your qualifications indicate that you are likely to be admitted.

When you review your list, remember that it is individually tailored to you, based on factors that range from grades to standardized test scores. Rankings can and will differ from one student’s list to another. Your preliminary college list will have a lot of schools on it. After researching the different colleges, you will eventually end up with a final list that has a much smaller number of schools. The point is that you have a balanced list, with several “far reach” and “reach” schools, several “possible” schools, and at least two “likely” schools.

Keep in mind that there are many colleges where you’ll be happy and where you’ll be able to fulfill your academic and extracurricular needs and goals. The perfect school does not exist (trust us – we’ve seen a lot of schools), so don’t go out looking for it. The more choices you have that you feel good about, the better.

Researching Colleges & Universities

Once you get your preliminary college list, it’s up to you to research the schools that are on it. In addition to the tools in Naviance Student, there are many resources available to you as you begin your investigation.

A college’s website is a great place to start. Take a virtual tour. Peruse the online course catalog, look at the programs of study, review the admissions requirements, and read student blogs and current newsworthy events.

College guide books can also be very helpful. There are many on the market these days, so pick and choose wisely. Some are better than others. Please see the list of suggested resources at the back of the handbook.

Kent hosts an annual spring college fair in April, which is a great way for you to expand your college options and investigate schools you don’t know much about. Use this opportunity to speak with admissions officers, ask questions and gather information.

You can also talk to current seniors and recent Kent alums about specific colleges. They can be particularly good resources on the inside scoop about what it’s like to apply to and attend

certain schools. Keep in mind, though, that all students have their own biases and opinions; just because one person likes or dislikes a particular college doesn't mean you will, too.

College Reps at Kent

Each fall, Kent brings to campus representatives from over 100 colleges and universities in the US and abroad. Notice of visiting reps will be posted on Naviance Student, outside the College Counseling Office, along the Boardwalk, and in the dining hall. Students must sign up in Naviance Student to meet with a particular college representative. Visits from college representatives are a great way for you to talk to the admissions staff who actually read applications (perhaps yours). If you are really interested in a particular college, then you will want to meet with that college representative—especially if it's your top choice and you are applying early. Many colleges keep track of your interest in their school—meeting with a representative at Kent is a great opportunity to express your interest, especially if you haven't been able to visit the college campus.

A few important notes about these college rep visits:

- Personal interviews are generally not offered by college representatives when they visit Kent in the fall. These are information sessions only.
- You may miss class for a meeting with a college representative. However, you must have permission from your teacher. You are still responsible for class work if you miss a class. Under no circumstance should you ever miss a test!
- If you sign up for a meeting with a college representative, be sure you keep the appointment. Colleges do still visit Kent on Headmaster's Holidays!
- If you have an academic conflict, let your college counselor know ahead of time. We will be sure to let the college representative know why you couldn't be there.
- Do your research and have questions ready to ask. Don't come to the meeting ill-prepared!

Visiting Colleges

Summer is the time when many students visit colleges. Remember, however, that colleges are not in full session in the summer. Without students on the campus it can be difficult to get a true sense of what the school is actually like. There may be a few students on campus, but summer school programs are typically very small and non-residential. Therefore, we recommend trying to visit colleges over March break during your Fifth Form year, and/or during late August or

early September, if possible. These are the best times to get a real taste of what the campus is like when it's in full swing.

Kent allows students to take three days away from school for college visits during their Sixth Form year, with no more than two consecutive days. To maximize the “two consecutive days” rule, many families will choose take a long weekend from Sunday through Tuesday.

Before visiting schools, check online for their tour and information session times. Many schools offer an online registration and limit the number of guests in each session, so plan ahead. If you can't join a guided tour, then you will have the option of a self-guided walk of campus with a map to direct you and describe the various buildings and landmarks. Whatever you do, you shouldn't just drive through campus and call it a day. Many colleges keep track of all the contacts you make with them, so let the admissions office know you're there.

How many schools should you visit? Aim for two a day—many more than that and you will feel tired and overwhelmed. You might want to write down your impressions and take a few pictures of each school. Their distinctive qualities can begin to blur after a while, and you might find yourself confusing them.

College Interviews

If interviews are offered at the colleges you plan to visit, schedule one! Many larger schools don't offer interviews because they don't have the staff (or the time) to conduct them. However, smaller colleges generally do offer year-round appointments for prospective students.

The focus of a college interview won't be on your grades or test scores; your official results will tell that story when you apply. Instead, the interviewer will want to use the time to learn about you as a whole person. You will be asked to talk about yourself—your interests, experiences, goals, etc. Here are examples of questions you might be asked:

- Tell me about yourself.
- How is your college search going? What characteristics are you looking for in a school?
- List five words to describe yourself.
- What do you feel you can contribute to our college?
- In what high school activities do you participate? Do you plan to continue these in college?
- What books have you read recently, both for school and pleasure?
- How do you spend your leisure time?
- What teacher impressed you the most in high school and why? What would that teacher say about you as a student in his/her class?
- What are your favorite courses? What course has challenged you the most?

Be prepared to give descriptive answers to your questions as the interviewer will not be satisfied with brief or generic responses.

A few tips as you prepare:

- Research the school and have a few questions ready to ask. Resist obvious questions that you can easily find answers to on the website. Your interviewer will see right through that! Instead, ask subjective questions that allow you to learn something about the school from the interviewer's perspective and give you a sense of the campus culture.
- Be prepared to take some initiative and highlight your skills, experiences and interests.
- Answer questions to the best of your ability, but don't be afraid to admit it when you don't know something.
- Dress appropriately. You are representing your high school just as much as you are making a statement about yourself as an individual. Be neat, clean and conservative. Turn your cell phone off completely or leave it in the lobby with your parent. Do not bring food or beverage into the interview. No gum chewing.
- Relax and be yourself. Make the most of this opportunity to share about yourself and to learn more about the school.

THE APPLICATION

Once you have your college list narrowed down to a reasonable number of schools and balanced across categories (possible, likely, reach, far reach), then you are ready to begin completing your applications. College admissions officers read all applications thoroughly and consider a range of factors in their evaluations, so you should regard each of your application forms as a vital component of your candidacy.

A complete application file will usually be comprised of:

- Application form
- Application fee
- College essay(s)
- Standardized test scores
- High school transcript(s)
- Secondary School Report
- Teacher recommendations
- Counselor recommendation
- Kent School Profile

College Admissions Plans

After you have completed your college research and before you begin the applications, you should know which admissions plans each institution offers and under which plan you will apply.

- **Regular Decision:** Most institutions have a regular decision deadline that ranges from December 15 to January 15. The college informs applicants of their decisions around April 1, and accepted students are asked to confirm their enrollment decision by May 1.
- **Rolling Admission:** Institutions—particularly state universities—begin accepting applications early in the fall and review candidates’ credentials in the order in which they are received. Most schools will send out their acceptance offers early in the academic year, so it is to your advantage to apply as soon as possible. We recommend that you submit your complete application file by October at the latest—pay attention to “priority” dates and “closing” dates to ensure that your file receives full consideration. Although rolling admission means that you will receive your admissions decision early, you do not have to confirm your enrollment until May 1.
- **Early Decision (ED):** This involves a binding agreement between a student and a college. You may submit only one ED application as this plan is meant for your number one choice. Students generally apply in early November and receive admissions

decisions by mid-December. There are three possible outcomes of ED: acceptance, denial, or deferral to the regular decision round. If you are accepted ED, then you are committed to attend and must withdraw your applications to all other colleges.

- **Advantages of Early Decision:** This is a wonderful option if you are absolutely certain about a particular school and know that it's where you want to matriculate. If admitted, your college application process will conclude early, and you can focus on your senior year. If you are a recruited athlete, your ED application cements your commitment to a coach. If you are applying for financial aid, you may benefit from access to a full financial aid budget before the regular decision round.
- **Disadvantages of Early Decision:** You are required to make an early commitment and, therefore, must be a strong candidate going into your senior year. Financial aid awards in ED are generally estimated and not finalized until the spring. You lose the opportunity to compare financial aid awards since you must withdraw all other admissions applications once accepted ED.
- **Early Action:** This is very similar to Early Decision but without the binding agreement. You may apply to several schools with Early Action plans, but be aware of those with a **Single-Choice Early Action** plan. This has no binding commitment, but requires that you not submit an Early Action or Early Decision application to any other school.
- **Priority Application:** Colleges that use priority applications typically send them as pre-printed forms to students who are on their mailing lists. They often waive the application fee and other requirements. The application is fast tracked, and students may receive a decision within a few weeks. While this can seem like an appealing and simplified process, it is not the best option for every applicant. Please discuss with your college counselor if you are considering a priority application.

Please note that some schools will have other options and restrictions associated with their early admissions plans. Be sure to consult their websites carefully to ensure you know their policies and submit the appropriate application materials on time.

The Student's Application Responsibilities

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Students are responsible for knowing which application forms are required and submitting those forms by the schools' deadlines. Over 600 institutions accept the Common Application, and nearly all of them use Common App exclusively. Be sure to pay attention to any supplemental information—essays or forms—that are required as well as application fees.

TEST SCORES: Many colleges and universities recognize standardized test scores as a reliable indicator of academic success; however, individual institutions will have different requirements. Students are responsible for knowing the specific testing requirements for each institution and for sending official score reports from the testing organizations. Kent does not send student scores!

ED/EA candidates or students with early deadlines: Schools post on their websites the latest test scores that they will accept; most will not accept testing after October. If you are applying to a school with a November 1 deadline, then be sure to request that your scores be sent to your ED/EA school(s) when you register for the SAT or ACT rather than waiting to see your score before you send it or your application will be incomplete and thus not reviewed until mid-November at the earliest.

If you are not applying ED/EA, then it makes sense to complete all of your testing before sending your scores to colleges. Most regular decision and rolling admission plans will accept scores from December testing, and many will also accept scores from January.

TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS: Don't overlook how important letters of recommendation are to your college applications. They give the college admissions committee insight into how you perform in the classroom and add context to the grades on your transcript.

Most colleges require two teacher recommendations, but you need to carefully check each school's requirement. You should ask two teachers who have had you in class during your fifth or sixth form year. Colleges want to hear from teachers who can evaluate your work at a more mature level (not as a freshman or sophomore). Select teachers who know you best as a student. These do not necessarily have to be the teachers who have given you the highest grades; they should be teachers who know you well in the classroom and have seen good effort and attitude on your part.

We recommend, and most colleges prefer, that you seek recommendations from two different academic perspectives—both the humanities (English, history, languages) and math and science. You should ask your teachers for recommendations **at least one month in advance** of your earliest college's deadline and, ideally, before you leave for the summer before your senior year. Many teachers have requests from multiple students and need time to plan if they are to do their best for you. Be clear if you have an Early Decision or Early Action deadline!

Many students also ask about additional recommendations—from advisors, coaches, employers, family friends, etc. The general rule of thumb is that colleges don't want more than they ask for. They do not appreciate receiving extra letters that merely pad your file. However, if you think you have a legitimate reason for sending an extra letter, then speak with your counselor and we will advise you on what to do.

NAVIANCE STUDENT: In order for the College Counseling Office to process your school materials, you need to complete these steps on the “Colleges I’m Applying To” page in Naviance Student:

- Sign the FERPA agreement (with your college counselor)
- Add teacher recommendation requests
- Request transcripts

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS: If you have had significant participation in the arts while in high school—music, dance, theater or studio arts—and intend to pursue arts in college, then you should create a portfolio of your work. A thoughtfully-prepared and well-presented portfolio can give you an advantage in the admissions process. Any supplemental submission should follow the guidelines outlined on each college’s website.

ATHLETICS: If you are interested in playing a sport in college, then you and your family need to become familiar with the recruitment process and the NCAA’s guidelines—the more you know, the better chance you have of making informed decisions. By spring of your Fifth Form year, you should be aware of your responsibilities in this process and communicate regularly with your Kent coach, your college counselor, and the college coaches with whom you are in contact. It cannot be stressed enough that your diligence and initiative are absolutely crucial in the recruitment process.

Visit the NCAA’s website and read the NCAA Guide for College-Bound Student-Athletes to educate yourself on the guidelines:

<http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/future/eligibility-center>

You should register with the NCAA Eligibility Center by the beginning of your junior year. If you hope to be recruited by a Division I or II school and take an official visit to their campus, then you must register and be “pre-cleared” prior to your visit. An “official” visit is an expense-paid visit, which might include a meal, overnight accommodations, and/or travel expenses. You may visit any campus at your own expense at any time, and this is not considered an official visit.

KNOW DEADLINES: Remember that the workload at Kent—especially Sixth Form year—will be demanding. You need to make sure that you have ample time set aside to complete your applications. A rushed job often leads to errors and exclusions and can negatively impact the outcome.

You are responsible for knowing your application deadlines! Your electronic application and materials must be submitted by the deadline and any mailed materials postmarked by that date.

Remember, for schools with rolling admissions, you should submit your applications as early as possible.

SHOW GRATITUDE: Be aware of and show appreciation for the effort your teachers, advisors, coaches, and college counseling staff make on your behalf throughout this process. Take the time to write a thank-you note to each teacher who wrote a letter of recommendation for you—a little gratitude goes a long way.

The College Counseling Office’s Responsibilities

Once you make your official request on Naviance Student, the Counseling Office will submit the following documents for each application:

HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPT: This is the official record of all your courses and grades, and will include your fall term courses for senior year. Our office will send an initial transcript without fall grades first, then submit fall grades over the winter break. We will submit the Kent School transcript as well as any we have on file from previous schools attended in grades 9 – 11.

SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT: Each college requires a Secondary School Report, which explains the rigor of your course load, Kent’s 6.0 grading scale, and other pertinent academic information. There is a Secondary School Report form on the Common App website, and we have also developed and send our own form.

MID-YEAR REPORT: Note that our fall term grades are considered “mid-year” grades. This report is sent routinely to all schools that have received your initial transcript. We do NOT send winter term grades to colleges unless we are asked to do so by you or the college. As with the Secondary School Report, Kent uses its own Mid-year Report form.

SCHOOL PROFILE: We send a profile of Kent to each college. The profile includes a brief description of the school, grade distribution, a report on SAT results, and recent college matriculation outcomes. This information gives colleges a better understanding of our school so they are able to put your achievements in context.

COLLEGE COUNSELOR RECOMMENDATION: The Counselor Recommendation is a very important part of the application file. It puts your achievements at Kent in context and gives colleges a chance to get to know you better, beyond your grades and standardized test scores. We write our own individual recommendations for each student, so the better we know you, the more comprehensive our recommendation will be. This is the primary reason that the Naviance Student questionnaire, your resume and our individual meetings with you are so important!

DISCIPLINARY MATTERS

KENT'S POLICY ON REPORTING PROBATION

It is our expectation that students will respond truthfully and completely to any questions on college applications regarding their disciplinary records. Students who have been placed on probation by the Disciplinary Committee are required to write statements outlining the circumstances of their infractions. These statements must be reviewed by their college counselors prior to submitting them to colleges. The same holds true if a disciplinary infraction occurs after the submission of an application. Kent School complies with the procedures outlined in the National Association for College Admission Counseling's (NACAC) Statement of Principles of Good Practice. The College Counseling Office will provide a written report to colleges of any change of status in academic performance or serious violations of school rules between the time of application and graduation.

Our experience is that admissions committees understand that young people make mistakes, and they thoughtfully evaluate each situation. While the infractions themselves are taken very seriously, they often place even greater emphasis on the manner in which students report and respond to disciplinary actions. A responsible and honest explanation of an infraction can illustrate a student's growth and potential for making a positive impact on a college campus.

WRITING ESSAYS

We *highly* recommend that you write your essay drafts over the summer. When you return to Kent for fall of senior year, you will be extremely busy with classes, activities, and other aspects of the college admissions process. You do not want to add essay writing to your busy schedule! Plan time over the summer to think and write. For many students, just coming up with the essay topic is stressful, so give yourself time to focus your thoughts and decide what you want to say.

Why Are Essays Important?

The essay is the most personal part of your application and the only component of your file over which you have total control. A great essay will not get you admitted if the rest of your application file is weak; however, a poorly written essay will give an admissions committee cause for concern. Your personal essay allows you to:

- Give a sense of who you are beyond grades and scores. A well-written essay adds dimension to your application and allows your voice to come through.
- Highlight your interests, activities, hobbies, etc.
- Expand upon experiences that are partially explained in other parts of the application.
- Demonstrate your writing ability by composing an essay that flows well and is error free.

What Should You Write About?

The Common Application has set prompts that students choose from for their personal statement. You should follow those guidelines for all Common App schools to which you will apply. Other schools will have specific topics or allow you to choose your own; *what* you decide to write about is not as significant as *how* you write. Here are a few tips that might be helpful:

- Tell a story only you can tell—make it personal.
- Be specific and reflective—write in some depth so your essay reveals more about you.
- Don't just write what you think a college admissions committee wants to read. If you do that, then you've missed the whole point of the essay.
- Don't try to be something you're not. It's okay to take some risks, but be careful with humor, creativity or presenting yourself as an expert on a subject if it's not authentic.
- Keep your tone conversational (this isn't a research paper), but use proper grammar and avoid too much slang.

What Should You Avoid?

There are some topics that are highly overused in college essays, and other topics that are highly inappropriate. Unless you have an original take, you should avoid writing about these overused topics:

- How your trip abroad taught you about other cultures
- How your volunteer/community service project changed you
- Scoring the winning goal/touchdown in a big game
- How coming to boarding school changed you
- The impact a parent/grandparent/mentor has had on you

Essay choices that can cross the line and have a negative impact on your application include:

- Any use of profanity
- Drug/alcohol related story
- Boyfriend/girlfriend relationship issues
- Your parents' divorce or highly emotionally-charged subjects
- Mental health issues

A Few More Tips...

These are the basics, but important to pay attention to as you are crafting your essay:

- Follow directions! Make sure you respond to the prompt and pay attention to word count. Most essays are around 500 words—that's about one and a half pages, double spaced.
- Use a font style and size that is easy on the reader's eyes.
- Don't rely on a thesaurus to add words that aren't part of your normal vocabulary.
- Proofread your essay closely! Reading it aloud will help you make sure it flows well, is correctly punctuated, and is free of syntax and spelling errors.
- Ask your college counselor, a teacher, and/or parent to proofread and react to your essay. However, do not allow anyone to revise your work. You should not have a co-author; your words should be authentically yours.

AFTER THE DECISIONS

Receiving an Offer of Admission

You're admitted—Congratulations! Now what? These are the immediate steps you need to take, in this order:

1. Call home to share the great news with your family.
2. Notify your college counselor.
3. Confirm your enrollment decision by either accepting or declining the offer.

The enrollment deadline is May 1. You may deposit at only one school since this indicates your commitment to attend that school. You may not double deposit as this is unethical and can have a negative impact on Kent School's relationship with that college. You should respond to all offers of admission; it is important for colleges to know who's not coming so they can consider their waitlist or take other actions to enroll their class. Politely declining an offer reflects well on you as a mature young adult and on Kent School.

NOTE: If you apply Early Decision, you should receive an admissions decision in mid-December. If accepted, you must confirm your enrollment and promptly withdraw all other applications. If you are deferred or denied in ED, please schedule a meeting immediately with your college counselor so we can discuss your next steps.

Getting Waitlisted

You may choose to remain on one or more waitlists by confirming your intention to hold. You should still go ahead and deposit at one of your accepted schools by May 1 to make sure you have secured a space. If you decide later not to attend this school, you will forfeit your deposit, but at least you will not have left yourself without an option. After the May 1 enrollment deadline, colleges will start to have a sense of whether or not they need to go to their waitlists. This can vary from year to year, making it very difficult to predict a likely outcome for waitlisted students.

If you decide to hold on a school's waitlist, you should take these steps to be considered favorably:

- Be prompt in confirming your decision to remain on the waitlist. Colleges are interested to know who's interested in them, and your quick action makes a statement about how likely you are to enroll if admitted.
- Submit any new information that should be considered—updated grades, honors, awards, and other accomplishments.

- Write a personal letter (email is fine) to the college admissions office emphasizing how much you want to attend the school, why you believe it's the best match for you, and stating that you will enroll if offered admission from the waitlist.
- If the college allows freshmen to enter mid-year, you might consider offering to defer your entrance until January if you are admitted.
- Send a new recommendation, *only* if it adds something new and noteworthy to your file. Do not launch a campaign to blanket the admissions office with letters on your behalf. Keep in mind that too many pieces of paper in your folder can work against you, so don't overdo it. Some schools will specifically ask you NOT to send further information and will not consider it in making a waitlist decision.

Being Denied Admission

This is not easy news to receive, but it is part of the college application process. Try not to take it too personally if you have been denied by a school. Instead, consider your options and focus on those schools to which you have been accepted. Students with balanced college lists typically receive a combination of admissions results, so prepare yourself to handle bad news maturely and gracefully.

Taking a Gap Year

Increasingly, students are taking time off after high school to travel, work, or participate in organized programs. Most colleges look favorably upon students who take a gap year—provided they are doing something meaningful and constructive with their time. This can be a terrific opportunity to gain valuable life experience and renew your love of learning, which will make you a more mature and engaged student when you begin college.

Talk with your college counselor if you are interested in exploring a gap year and would like additional resources. Please be aware that you still need to respond to offers of admission by May 1 if you are planning a gap year. You need to know the procedure for requesting “deferred admission” from the college you have decided to attend.

Will a College Rescind Its Offer of Admission? YES!

It is entirely within a college's right to rescind an offer of admission. When you are accepted, it is with the expectation that you will continue to demonstrate strong academic performance and good citizenship in your school community. The College Counseling Office will automatically send your final transcript to the college where you've deposited. It is also our obligation to notify colleges if you incur any serious disciplinary infractions in your final days at Kent. These situations are reviewed carefully by admissions directors; they may place a student on probation during freshman year or even rescind the offer of admission. Don't let this

happen to you! Finish your Kent career with work and behavior that you, your family, and your school will take pride in.

STANDARDIZED TESTING

Standardized test results are an important factor in the admissions decisions at most selective colleges and universities. In recent years, some institutions have downplayed the significance of scores; however, at most colleges, standardized testing still matters. Some institutions have adopted a test-flexible policy, providing students options on which tests and scores to submit. Others are test optional, allowing students to present application materials without standardized test results.

We have found that students who familiarize themselves with the test formats and utilize the practice material available are generally able to attain scores that reflect their ability. It is important to understand the testing requirements and options, but to also keep it in perspective. Standardized test results are only one component of your college application file.

Kent School is a test center for standardized tests on nationally-determined test dates when school is in session. Dates and registration information are available on the college counseling blog at <https://kentschoolcc.com/standardized-tests/>.

Many Kent students' first taste of standardized testing comes during the fall of their Fourth and Fifth Form years, when they take the PSAT. This test is intended as "practice" for the SAT and is made up of questions from old SAT tests. We administer it for two reasons—it is the qualifying test of the National Merit Scholarship competition, and it gives both you and the College Counseling Office an idea of how well you might perform on the SAT. As a guideline, you can take your PSAT scores and multiply them by ten to get an idea of what your SAT scores might look like.

We also offer a diagnostic test provided by Kaplan in December for all Fifth Formers. The purpose of the diagnostic test is to help students decide which test, ACT or SAT, is best suited for them. Once the student receives his/her results from the diagnostic test, he/she can focus on preparing for one test rather than both.

SAT

The SAT is a test of aptitude that emphasizes critical analysis and real-world problem solving. The test is scored in two major sections: reading/writing and math. Both sections are scored on a scale of 200 - 800, for a total score between 400 - 1600. We strongly recommend that all students also complete the optional essay section, which is scored separately with a range of 2 – 12.

Kent School offers the SAT October through June when school is in session. All students should take the SAT at least once in their Fifth Form year, with most repeating it a few times during the spring and fall. The total number of times a student takes the test depends on his/her

level of satisfaction with the scores. Students have the option to choose which SAT scores (Score Choice) to send to colleges by test day. Score Choice is optional, and if students choose not to use it, all scores will be sent automatically. Please be sure to check with each school you are applying to as some schools ask students to submit all scores while others honor the Score Choice option. It is YOUR responsibility to know each school's policy.

ACT

Like the SAT, the ACT is a nationally-administered standardized test that helps colleges evaluate applicants. The ACT is an achievement exam with four subject areas—English, math, reading and science—as well as an optional writing section. We strongly recommend that students complete the writing section as many colleges will require it. Each section is scored on a 36-point scale; the four subject scores are averaged to produce a composite score.

Kent School offers the ACT exam in October and April. In many cases, students will take both the SAT and ACT in the spring to help determine on which test they will better perform. Most colleges accept the ACT and SAT interchangeably.

SAT Subject Tests

These are one-hour tests in an individual academic subject area that measure a student's command of that subject, independent of particular textbooks or methods of instruction. Tests are multiple choice, and are scored on an 800-point scale. Students may take up to three tests per administration, but may not take both the reasoning exam and subject tests on the same date.

We recommend that most students take at least two subject tests by the time they apply to college. Not all colleges require these tests, but many of the most selective schools will require or recommend them. Be sure you check the specific requirements of each college you are considering.

Here are some general guidelines for taking the SAT Subject Tests:

- If you are taking an AP science course—biology, chemistry or physics—we recommend taking the SAT Subject Test in that particular area in May or June, no matter what grade level you are in at Kent.
- Students in honors-level physics, biology or chemistry may choose to take the SAT Subject Test in these subjects. You should consult with your teacher or the chair of the science department before you make this decision.
- We recommend a foreign language SAT Subject Test for students who have completed three years of study. In November, the SAT Subject Tests in most languages offer a

listening component to measure a student's ability to understand the spoken language. This is a good option for students who are fluent in the language.

- We do not recommend the Latin SAT Subject Test for Kent students who study Latin. Our Latin curriculum is different from the material covered in the test.
- We recommend the Math Level 1 Subject Test if you are in Algebra 2 & Trigonometry or a regular level of Precalculus with Statistics class. We recommend the Math Level 2 if you are in Honors Precalculus with Statistics, pre-calculus or calculus. Math Level 1 is intended for students who have taken two years of algebra and one year of geometry. Math Level 2 is intended for students who have taken two years of algebra and one year of geometry, as well as elementary functions (pre-calculus).

AP Exams

Administered in May, the Advanced Placement (AP) Exams are optional in the college admissions process, but can document a student's strength in a particular area of study. The purpose of the exams is to provide opportunities for students to gain college credit or advanced placement in their college courses.

TOEFL – Test of English as a Foreign Language

The TOEFL is taken by students whose native language is not English. It can be a helpful supplement to the SAT critical reading score. The test is internet-based and is administered at test centers around the world. We recommend that all non-native English speakers register and sit for the TOEFL exam in their home countries during the summer before senior year. More information is available at www.ets.org/toefl.

Test Preparation

Most colleges are likely to view your high school record as the most important criterion for admission. Even though standardized testing is seldom the leading factor in college admissions, it does carry weight with most schools. For this reason, you should be as well prepared as possible when you take the SAT and/or ACT.

Over the long term, a good selection of academic courses, extensive reading, and consistent commitment to your studies are the best strategy. You should also be certain you know the format of the tests: how they are organized, the kinds of questions asked, the terms and concepts used, how they are timed and scored, and some basic rules of test-taking strategy. Sitting for the PSAT in your Fourth and Fifth Form years will help in this regard.

For those who wish to have further practice, ACT and the College Board publish books of sample tests that are available in print and online. Students who have practiced report less anxiety and more familiarity with the tests than students who have not prepared.

Kent, through a partnership with Kaplan Test Prep, offers ACT and SAT prep classes for a fee. For information, go to kaptest.com/college-prep/kent. Suggestions for online resources can be found at the back of the handbook and will be discussed with students during College Seminar.

There are many other guidebooks, online sources, classes, and private tutors; the effectiveness of any resource depends upon the student's learning style and self-discipline. Other than the Kaplan Test Prep, we cannot accommodate students who wish to take outside prep classes or work with private tutors on campus during the academic year. These are best done during the summer months.

ONLINE AND PRINT RESOURCES

There are so many resources online and in print that it can be a full-time search to comb through options and find what's most helpful in your college search. Here are some that we have found to be informative:

General Information Online

www.collegeboard.com

www.gocollege.com

www.collegenet.com

www.petersons.com

www.schoolsintheusa.com

www.collegeviewbooks.com

www.campustours.com

www.unigo.com

www.univcan.ca (Canadian universities)

Financial Aid Information

www.studentaid.gov

www.collegeboard.com

www.IEFA.org

<https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org>

www.finaid.org

www.internationalscholarships.com

www.fafsa.ed.gov

Standardized Test Prep

www.act.org

www.kaplan.com

www.collegeboard.com

www.khanacademy.org/SAT

Applying to Schools in the UK

www.ucas.com

www.ukcisa.org.uk

www.educationuk.org

Guidebooks

Fiske Guide to Colleges, Edward B. Fiske

College Handbook, The College Board

The Complete Book of Colleges, Princeton Review

Book of Majors, The College Board

Colleges That Change Lives, Loren Pope

The Best 381 Colleges, Princeton Review

Profiles of American Colleges, Barron's College Division

The Insider's Guide to the Colleges, Yale Daily News Staff