



The Harley School

UPPER SCHOOL

COLLEGE  
COUNSELING

# Introduction and Expectations

Welcome to the College Counseling office at The Harley School! We have put together this guide to introduce you, Grade 11 students and their families, to our approach. We are excited to begin working with you.

Please read these materials carefully, as they contain a wealth of information about our process and advice on how to get started.

## What do we do?

**We work with students to find the right matches.** This is a College Counseling Office, not a College Placement Office. To that end, we will meet with students to help them learn to identify, research, and choose the colleges that meet their needs, but we will not “give them” a list.

**We communicate with colleges about the Harley academic program.** In the fall, representatives from colleges come to Harley to meet with Grs. 11 and 12 students and with the Director of College Counseling to better understand what kind of students this school produces. The Harley School Profile (available online) also helps to communicate what our education provides. In addition, the counselors are responsible for writing the School Report, sometimes called the Counselor Recommendation.

**We provide information.** Using tools such as scattergrams (charts that plot Harley application history using grades and test scores) we help students and families understand the competitive nature of college admissions and help to manage expectations. Students use our web-based programs with our assistance, to assist in crafting a balanced list of colleges.

**We help students create a testing plan.** While there are some general recommendations for standardized testing, testing plans are unique to each student. We will work with students to tailor a plan for the spring of the Grade 11 year and the fall of the Grade 12 year.

## What We Expect: Students

Students should focus on their classes.

Grades continue to be the most significant factor in college admissions decisions, and students must put their classes first.

Students should meet with their college counselor.

Starting in January, students should sign up for a meeting with their assigned College Counselor. Prior to this meeting, students will complete a resume and questionnaire that requires some reflection on high school experiences and hopes for the future. In these early meetings, we will talk about the process, the student's interests, and make suggestions about early research.

Students should visit colleges.

March break is the best time to begin to visit a range of colleges. These “diagnostic visits” should take students to a big university, a small college, as well as both an urban and rural setting. Students will begin to get a sense of what they might like through these visits and will better be able to refine their lists in the spring. Interviews are not recommended at this stage. Just take the tour and see the campus.

Students should check and read emails.

*We cannot stress the importance of this responsibility!*

## What We Expect: Parents/Families/Guardians

### Appropriate Communication.

Please feel free to contact us with questions, comments, and concerns. We do our best to respond to emailed questions within two business days, but our daily priority will remain working one-on-one with students.

### Positive Support.

Whether it is listening to your child, driving to colleges, or just offering a positive word, students need their parents at this time.

### Read our email and attend our meetings.

Please pay careful attention to our mailings and try to attend the meetings we schedule. Almost all of the most frequently-asked questions are addressed in the mail and in the meetings.

### Let go.

Letting your child take the lead role may be the hardest part of the process. However, it is a wonderful opportunity to watch your child take his or her first step towards adulthood. We will be here to help—both students and parents—navigate this exciting process!

# The Family Role in the College Counseling Process

The college process is the perfect chance to practice some of the skills your child will need to be successful in college and beyond. To that end, we use every opportunity to put the student at the center of the experience. That does not mean that parents/guardians should be absent or silent throughout the process. Instead, our program seeks ways to involve parents/guardians at key moments while always encouraging independence in our students. Therefore, the official start of the college counseling process is marked by your child meeting with their college counselor. Parent/family meetings are only scheduled after that first meeting has occurred.

Families are invited, but not required, to set up meetings during the following windows:

## Parent/Family Meeting Window #1

Late January–Early March

Parents are invited, but not required, to make a parent/family meeting after the student and counselor have met. This meeting might include: an introduction to the process, discussion of the testing plan, looking at financial aid opportunities, or conversation about college visits.

## Parent/Family Meeting Window #2

Mid-May

For some, this meeting may be the first parent/family meeting. (See above.) For others, this meeting may include: discussion of the college list, feedback after college visits, looking ahead to summer, examination of financial aid opportunities, or planning for the application process.

## Final Parent/Family Meeting Window #3

End of September–mid-October

Topics that may be covered include: early applications, what to expect during the application process, or finalizing a balanced list.

Parents should reach out directly to Amanda Edelhart at [aedelhart@harleyschool.org](mailto:aedelhart@harleyschool.org) to make an appointment.

Questions that arise between parent/family meetings, after the early round of applications, or at other times during the process can be addressed through the following methods:

### Your student

We would ask that you send your questions, comments, and concerns through your child. Students are our priority during school day and as Grade 12 progresses, we hope to move towards the independent management of their process. This task is a perfect way to help your child learn to develop an agenda: sit with your child and develop a list of questions to be discussed and ask for a report after the meeting. This approach encourages students to take ownership, makes sure everyone is on the same page, and teaches your child a critical skill.

### Email

Sometimes an issue of a sensitive nature arises in between scheduled meetings that you do not feel comfortable sharing with your child. Email communication directly with your child's counselor is best in this situation. We strive to return substantive emails with a thoughtful response within two business days. Whenever possible, emails should be shared with the student so as to provide open communication and encourage empowerment.

### Phone calls

At times, a phone call may best serve the student's situation. Parents are asked to reach out to to schedule a phone call or ask a general question that might be answered quickly.

## Researching Colleges

### 1. General College Guides:

Remember these contain someone else's assessments and views of a given college; do not let one source make a decision for you. We recommend you research each college in several sources, both online and in print, before moving on to the next college. You should consider acquiring your own personal copies of at least one of published guide. Some of our favorites include: Edward B. Fiske's *The Fiske Guide to Colleges* and *Colleges that Change Lives*, by Loren Pope.

### 2. College Kickstart, Web-based Searches, College Websites:

Using online college databases you can filter your search by location, size, major, and cost to find the right matches for you. On a college's own website, you can request materials, take a virtual tour, and browse the curriculum.

Here is a short, and by no means complete, list of useful websites. Stay alert for particularly great college sites; jot down the Internet address and let us know what you have found so we can update our list. Be wary of websites like College Confidential and Reddit that regularly post inaccurate information.

Scholarship Info	<a href="http://www.scholarships.com">www.scholarships.com</a> <a href="http://www.fastweb.com">www.fastweb.com</a>
College Kickstart	<a href="http://www.college-kickstart.com">www.college-kickstart.com</a>
Peterson's Guide	<a href="http://www.niche.com/colleges">www.niche.com/colleges</a>
Big Future	<a href="http://www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org">www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org</a>
Common Application	<a href="http://www.commonapp.org">www.commonapp.org</a>
National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)	<a href="http://www.nacacnet.org">www.nacacnet.org</a>

### 3. College Admissions Officers Visiting Harley:

Many colleges send representatives to Harley in the fall to answer questions and meet with groups of students. An up-to-date schedule of these visits will be available online in Naviance, and will also be posted outside the College Counseling Office and in other visible places in the school. Often, these visitors are the same people who will be reading applications from Harley just a few weeks after their visits. Don't miss the opportunity to connect directly with this invaluable source.

#### 4. Friends:

You may have friends who are either in college or who have already gone through the college process. They are an excellent resource if used with care. Question them about their reasons for choosing certain colleges and avoiding others. See if those reasons fit your idea of preferred colleges; never cross a college off your list merely because a friend did not like it. Think for yourself!

#### 6. Books and Blogs about college admission you might enjoy:

*Looking Beyond the Ivy League and Colleges that Change Lives*

Loren Pope

Pope discusses colleges that provide excellent educational opportunities for a variety of students and helps frame what defines a “good” college.

*Letting Go, A Parents’ Guide to Understanding the College Years*

Karen Coburn and Madge Treeger

This book discusses the joys and challenges of parenting a college-age child.

*The Gatekeepers: Inside the Admission Process at a Premier College*

Jacques Steinberg

This book was written by a *New York Times* reporter who spent a year following an admission officer and several applicants through the admission process at Wesleyan University.

*Where You Go is Not Who You’ll Be: An Antidote to the College Admissions Mania*

Frank Bruni

NYT writer Frank Bruni provides a refreshing take on this complicated process.

Tufts Admissions Blog <https://admissions.tufts.edu/blogs/>

Georgia Tech Admissions Blog <http://pwp.gatech.edu/admission-blog/>

MIT Admissions Blog <https://mitadmissions.org/blogs/>

# Record Your Research

Use these pages as a note-taking opportunity to help define your preferences as you research.

## CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING A COLLEGE

Below are criteria that can be used to evaluate and ultimately choose a college, though some may be more pertinent than others in your search. After reading through this list, I suggest starting a chart outlining which characteristics are **MUST HAVES** and which are **WOULD LIKE TO HAVES**. This can help focus your search at the beginning.

For example, if you have access to good public transportation as **MUST HAVE** it narrows your list of locations quite dramatically!

### 1. STUDENT ENROLLMENT:

**ENROLLMENT:** Small (1,000-3,000), medium (3,000-7,000), large (10,000-15,000). Freshman class size. % Undergraduate students.

**RETENTION:** % of freshmen that eventually graduate or return for their sophomore year.

**BACKGROUND:** Male/female ratio. % Commuter/resident. Geographic origin. % minority. % on financial aid.

**NOTES:**

### 2. LOCATION and SURROUNDINGS:

**LOCATION:** New York, New England, West Coast, Middle Atlantic states, the South, a foreign country. Distance from home. Travel costs and convenience.

**SETTING:** Urban/Suburban/Rural. Weather. Nearest city or countryside. Recreational opportunities.

**FACILITIES:** Library. Laboratories. Study and practice rooms. Student center. Athletic complex. Art studios. Theater. Bookstore. Food sources.

**NOTES:**

### 3. COLLEGE TYPE and PHILOSOPHY:

**TYPE:** 2/4 year. Religious/public/private/historically Black. Coed/Single sex. College/university.

**PURPOSE:** Liberal arts. Technical/vocational institute. Conservatory. Art/design college. Pre-professional for business, education, engineering, fine arts. Degrees offered.

**PHILOSOPHY:** Traditional/progressive. Deeply scholarly/career oriented. Comprehensive.

**CALENDAR:** Semester/trimester/quarter/module. Inter-term program. Accelerated.

**NOTES:**

### 4. CURRICULUM:

**ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS:** Proportion of study dedicated to core requirements/major/electives. Required freshman courses.

**ACADEMIC OFFERINGS:** Majors/minors offered in your areas of interest. Breadth and depth of courses offered in your areas of interest. Interdisciplinary courses. Strong departments.

**INDEPENDENT STUDY:** Individual tutorials. Seminars. Research opportunities.

**SPECIAL STUDY PROGRAMS:** Field work. Internships. Exchange programs. Semester/year abroad study. Joint degree programs. Cooperative work/study plan. Pre-professional programs.

**STANDARDS:** Accreditation. Degree requirements. Grading system. Grading/distribution. Honor system.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Introductory/advanced/specialized courses. Courses for majors/non-majors. Number of courses required for major/ Course availability.

**NOTES:**

## 5. ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT:

**FACULTY:** % with Ph.D. Origin of degrees earned. Original faculty research/scholarship. Teaching course load. Expectations for teaching/scholarship/advising and other college service. Emphasis on undergraduate teaching and learning.

**FACULTY/STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS:** Faculty-student ratio. Advising. Accessibility for conferences, assistance. Departmental clubs, colloquia, committees with student representatives. Class size, average. Classes under 20 students, over 50 students. Opportunities for discussion/student presentation/exchange of ideas.

**ACADEMIC DEMANDS:** Workload. Course expectations. Type of assignments. Academic pressure/competition.

**INTELLECTUAL VIBE:** Student attitude toward learning. Flexibility/structure for learning. Exchange of ideas. Interest in political, social, or world issues.

**CAREER PREPARATION:** Pre-professional programs. Career advising and information programs. % who go on to graduate school. Graduate school and job placement.

**INSTRUCTION:** What types of teaching/learning situations exist? If I know my field of interest, what courses and faculty are available in it? Do full professors teach undergraduates? Is there an advisor system?

**NOTES:**

## 6. CAMPUS and STUDENT LIFE:

**STUDENT BODY:** Diversity and response to differences. Typical/offbeat student. Importance of money/material possessions/social appearances.

**COMMUNITY TYPE:** Homogeneous. Pluralistic. Cohesive. Fragmented. School spirit. Controversial campus issues. Liberal/directive/restrictive social regulations. Political climate.

**LIVING ARRANGEMENTS:** Predominantly large dorms/housing clusters/small houses. Availability of single rooms/doubles/suites/multiple rooms. System of housing allocation/roommate selection. Centralized/decentralized dining. Alternate dining programs. Single sex/coed dorms. Housing guaranteed.

**CAMPUS ACTIVITIES:** Activities related to your interests. Emphasis on social life, fraternities or sororities, sports, or other dominant interests. Clubs and organizations traditional/creative/competitive issue oriented. Presence of religious, ethnic or cultural groups. Cultural opportunities on campus or in the community.

**NOTES:**

## 7. ADMISSIONS:

**DEADLINES:** Application. Notification of decision. Deadline to reply to offer of admission.

**APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS:** Fee. Information forms. Specific high school courses. Secondary school report. Recommendations. Interview. Common Application supplements.

**SAT/ACT/SUBJECT TESTS:** What are the college's testing requirements?

**ADMISSION SELECTIVITY:** % of applicants offered admission.

Average SAT/ACT scores of freshmen. % of freshmen ranked in top 10% of high school class. Freshman class profile.

**FINANCIAL:** Need blind or need aware?

**NOTES:**

## 8. COSTS and FINANCIAL AID:

**COSTS:** Minimum-maximum total costs per year. Student budget for tuition and fees/room and board/books and personal expenses/travel costs. Admission and enrollment fees.

**FAMILY RESOURCES:** What can your family pay toward college expenses? Your earnings and savings.

**AWARDS:** % of students receiving aid. Range of awards. Average award.

**FINANCIAL AID:** Based on need/merit/or funds available. Loan and job expectations. Off-campus work opportunities.

**APPLICATION:** Which forms are required? Deadlines.

**NOTES:**

## 9. INTANGIBLES:

Does the atmosphere of the institution appeal to me? Trust your gut.

# Reevaluate & Balance Your List

The final goal of the college search is to create a balanced list of colleges that fall into four categories.

The terms we use—likely, possible, unlikely, highly unlikely—are relative, not absolute. In helping you determine where a given college falls in that spectrum, we use our best judgment based on experience with recent Harley graduates, national trends, and institutional changes. Changes in academic performance during the Grs. 11 and 12 years may well move certain colleges into a different category, and better standardized test scores taken in Grade 12 can also increase the likelihood of acceptance.

We offer frank advice to help you evaluate your chances of admission at a particular college—not as a judgment of your performance during your time at Harley or your potential as a college student. Ideally, your final list should be constructed so that you will be admitted to most of the colleges on your college list. In the “worst” case, you should still have at least two or three good choices.

Harley keeps extensive statistical data on college results and stays in close contact with admission offices to present students with an accurate assessment of competitiveness. Here are the definitions of the four major categories we use:

## Likely

Harley 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. Note that we do not use the term “safety.” We believe the term “safety” suggests a guarantee that does not exist and sounds like an “also-ran.” We want students to apply to likely colleges that they like!

## Possible

Harley 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, Harley students with similar grades and test scores are not often 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% rate of admission.

## Highly Unlikely

Labeled “Far Reach” in Naviance, Harley students with similar grades and test scores have almost never been admitted in the past. We recommend that your final list of colleges includes at least two colleges in the Likely category, and no more than three colleges in the Unlikely or Highly Unlikely categories. The majority of your colleges should be in the possible category.

It’s also important to note that the most selective colleges in the country will be in the Unlikely category for almost all Harley students. In addition, because these colleges have so many qualified applicants, they’re not concerned with whether a student can do the work—the majority of applicants can do so quite successfully—rather they are focused on creating a class of students who will bring unique talents to their colleges to supplement their stellar academic performance. Your counselor will be able to help you understand why certain colleges fall in a particular category.