

QUINCE ORCHARD HIGH SCHOOL
Counseling Department

2009-2010 School Year

Dear Student:

CONGRATULATIONS, you are a senior! This is the beginning of the busiest and most important year of your school career. Your first task is to graduate. You must keep track of your credits, student service learning hours and HSA scores. Work hard and smart to achieve the very best grades.

Your second task is to decide what you want to do after you leave Quince Orchard High School. This packet has the information you need to apply to college or trade and technical schools. You must read each section carefully.

The Quince Orchard Counseling Department has the resources to help you in the process of exploring and applying to colleges and post-secondary institutions.

Your **COUNSELOR** has much to offer.

- Advises about researching and investigating post-secondary education.
- Advises on what tests (SAT/ACT/Accuplacer) you need to prepare for and take.
- Provides information about potential schools that "work for you."
- Supports and advocates for you through letters of recommendation.

The **CAREER CENTER COORDINATOR** manages a wealth of resource information.

- Provides research materials and programs, books, videos, catalogs, etc.
- Offers assistance with college and career program searches.
- Offers college and local scholarship applications and financial aid materials.
- Provides college testing materials and career assessment test information.
- Provides information on college fairs, HBCU admission events, etc.

The **REGISTRAR** assists in sending supplemental application materials.

- Mails official transcripts.
- Collects transcript fees.
- Maintains deadlines.

GOOD LUCK!

The Quince Orchard Counselors

COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS AT QUINCE ORCHARD HIGH SCHOOL

1. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

If you do not have a Social Security Number, get one immediately. Most schools file all records under the Social Security Number.

2. SAT/SAT II/ACT/TOEFL TESTS

It is the student's responsibility to apply for and take the necessary tests for college admission. Registration is completed on-line or forms are available in the Career Center for those who prefer to mail them. Counselors and the career coordinator will help you decide which tests are necessary. You must check with individual colleges when deciding on SAT II's. All test scores must be sent directly to the college from ETS or ACT. Quince Orchard **DOES NOT** send copies of SAT's/ACT's to colleges.

3. WRITE AND/OR VISIT SCHOOLS

You must write, call, or obtain from the school's website an application and information for college admission. If you plan to visit a college, it is suggested that you make an appointment for an interview. Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) will allow **THREE** excused school days for seniors to visit colleges providing permission has been granted from teachers and the administration **in advance**. Hints for a successful campus visit are included on a separate sheet.

4. APPLICATIONS/ESSAY

YOU NEVER GET A SECOND CHANCE TO MAKE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION. Your application is the first impression the admissions counselors will have about you. Make it the best you are capable of doing!

Print the application and use the copy as a working draft. Ask an English teacher to check all essays for structure and grammar. Type all information unless hand-written is specified. Use black ink. Read all the instructions before you transfer the information to the original application. Keep the draft copy in a safe place.

A tip sheet for writing college essays is included in this packet.

5. COMPLETED APPLICATION

It is the responsibility of the student to complete applications and submit them **directly** to the college either by mail or on-line through the schools website. Be sure to get all information in by the required deadline. Be aware, for some schools the application

process is done in steps (University of Maryland, for example) and have several parts that are due at different times.

6. **TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

Some schools require a teacher recommendation. If the school has a special form, please provide the teacher with a QOHS Teacher Recommendation form (included with this packet), the college's teacher evaluation form, and a business size envelope to the teacher. The envelope should be addressed to the college/university and include postage. Be sure to give the teacher a realistic deadline; 15 days is recommended. The teacher will mail the letter of recommendation directly to the school. Please work with the teacher directly when you need a letter and/or form for your school.

7. **COUNSELOR RECOMMENDATION**

Many schools require counselor recommendations. Some will provide a special form; others will want the recommendation on school letterhead. Be sure to complete the 'Self Evaluation' form found in this packet and return it to the registrar along with your transcript request if you will be need your counselor's recommendation.

8. **SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT/PERSONAL DATA**

Some schools have a Secondary School Report included with their application. If the report is with your application, complete both the college's form and the QOHS Secondary School Report included with the Senior Packet and submit both to the registrar.

9. **TRANSCRIPTS/MID-YEAR REPORTS/FINAL TRANSCRIPTS**

A 'Permission to Release Information' form (yellow) is included with this senior packet. It **must** be signed by the parent, and returned to the registrar when students submit their first request for a transcript. A transcript consists of final grades only - reflecting grades 9, 10, and 11; and a profile of our school.

Two official transcripts are provided free of charge. Additional transcripts are available at \$3.00 each up to 5 (after 5 the fee will be \$5 per transcript). The fee is given to the registrar in cash or check made payable to QOHS. When you submit your transcript request to the registrar, an 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 11 envelope addressed to the college and stamped with a minimum of \$1.05 must also be submitted (metered postage is not accepted). Please allow a minimum of 15 school days for transcripts to be prepared. Students must adhere to the 'Deadlines for College Applications' that is included in this packet. If a student does not submit a transcript request before the deadline, the registrar's office **will not** guarantee that the transcript will be received before the college's deadline. Transcripts are prepared in the dated order of the requests. An application is not a complete package until a transcript is sent.

Some schools require a mid-year transcript/report to be sent after the initial transcript. Students should submit any forms that the college requires and provide a stamped legal sized envelope prior to the completion of Semester 1. There is no charge for mid-year transcripts.

Final transcript must be sent to the college that the student will attend. Final transcript request forms will be distributed to seniors in May. They should return the forms to the registrar prior to graduation, along with a \$1.00 fee to cover the cost of postage and processing. Final transcripts are mailed in mid-July.

10. DEADLINES

Colleges and universities do not make exceptions to their deadlines! Refer to the registrar's deadlines on the next page when requesting your transcripts and/or recommendations.

DEADLINES FOR COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

To ensure that your applications are postmarked to meet deadlines, follow the schedule below (there will be no exception to the dates listed).

October 8 for November 1
October 22 for November 15
October 29 for December 1
November 19 for December 15
December 1 for January 1
December 16 for January 15
January 7 for February 1
January 22 for February 15
February 4 for March 1
February 23 for March 15

CLOSED DATES (No Applications Accepted)

October 30
November 11
November 25
December 22
December 23

YOUR HIGH SCHOOL CODE IS 210564

TYPES OF ADMISSION

Early Decision - a plan in which students apply in October/November and learn of the decision in December or January. This is suggested only for students who are academically very strong, know definitely which school they want to attend, and agree to matriculate to the school that accepts them.

Early Action - differs from early decision in that students are not required to accept admission or withdraw other applications if accepted. Students may apply to more than one early action program.

Early Notification - a program in which students must file their applications by December 1st in order to receive an admission decision by February 1st.

Rolling Admission - a program in which applications are evaluated upon receipt and applicants are quickly notified of the decision. Applications are considered until spaces are filled. Submitting your application early is encouraged

Regular Admission - a program used by most schools. January 1st is the deadline for applications and the student is notified during the week of April 1st. A "fat" envelope generally means that you have been admitted and a "skinny" envelope generally means that you were denied.

We wish you all "fat" envelopes!





HINTS FOR A CAMPUS VISIT

A campus visit is highly recommended. Before you visit the campus, consider some of the options below. It is also important to develop a list of questions and plan for specific activities in order to accomplish your goals.

- Meet with an admissions officer.
- Verify admission requirements (tests and high school preparation).
- Discuss your chances for success.
- Obtain a school calendar and a catalog, if you don't already have them.
- Determine college costs.
- Ask about financial aid opportunities as well as deadlines, forms required, etc.
- Meet with faculty in your academic area of interest.
- Ask questions about academic requirements/offerings.
- Attend a class to get an idea of typical size, teaching style, academic atmosphere.
- Ask about placement records for graduates in the field you might study.
- Identify career planning services for undergraduates.
- Tour the campus. (Be sure to check out the dorms, dining hall, library, etc.)
- Talk to students about the general academic environment and the study commitment necessary for success.
- Find out what student activities (clubs, organizations, intramurals, etc.) are available.
- Inquire about campus life and social activities.
- Investigate transportation options

The College Interview

The Basics

A college interview is a chance to show that you're more than just test scores and grades. It's an exchange of information—you learn about the college and the college learns about you. It can last anywhere from 30-60 minutes.

There's More Than One Type of Interview

Interviews vary depending on the school, student, and particular situation. You could find yourself interviewing with an admissions officer, a student, or an alumnus. Other, less formal, interview situations include group information sessions with admissions staff and current students, and high school and local college fairs. If you plan on attending a music, drama, or dance school, plan on performing an audition or submitting a portfolio.

Special-Interest Sessions

If you plan to pursue specific interests in college, such as sports or clubs, you might find it helpful talk to current students and faculty members.

- **Sports:** If you're an athlete and want to play on a college team, arrange a meeting or a phone call with the coach. Bring your scrapbook, statistics, or other information that will help give a clear picture of your talents. Consider asking your high school coach to send a letter to the college on your behalf.
- **Specific fields of study:** Talk to students who are majoring in your desired field and make an appointment with a faculty member or advisor in the department. If you schedule a campus visit, be sure to sit in on a class.
- **Activities:** If you plan to participate in an activity, such as the newspaper, band, or radio station, speak to students who take part. It's a good way to find out what the people are like and what your chances are of getting involved.

Why You Should Interview

The interview is one of many factors in the admissions decision. Most colleges don't require an interview; however, there are many benefits to meeting face-to-face with an admissions officer. For example, perhaps you:

- Feel your college application can't possibly convey your warm and shining personality.
- Are interested in the college, but want to learn more about its study abroad opportunities, science program, or whatever else interests you.
- Want to explain why your grades slipped.

Interviews and the Admissions Process

The interview is just one of many factors in the admissions decision. Admissions directors usually say that the interview is rarely the deciding one. Still, if a borderline student turns out to be impressive, the interviewer has the authority to write a letter in support.

Nervous? Don't Be.

It's not the third degree and there's no pass or fail. Unless you show up in a t-shirt and cut-offs and spew profanities, chances are the interview is not going to make or break you. As long as you've prepared and practiced, you'll probably make a good impression.

Be Your Own Best Advocate

The staff learns about you from a slew of papers: your transcript, test scores, and application. While your essay and recommendations can offer an impression of who you are, words on paper can reveal only so much. The interview is your chance to be your own advocate by talking positively about your interests and enthusiasms, to show your personality, and to boost your chance of admission.

Discuss Special Circumstances

The interview is a good time to explain a hitch in your transcript or discuss any personal circumstances that affected your studies. Problems that you may find difficult to write about in the application are often easier to discuss with a sympathetic admissions counselor. For example, perhaps:

- You may not be the best math student, but it never stopped you from taking AP[®] Calculus—tell the interviewer why you persisted despite such difficulties.
- During sophomore year, your parents divorced, and your academic work took a downturn.
- You have a learning disability and need to make extra effort with every assignment.

It's Okay to Ask Questions

Asking questions shows that you're interested in the college and what the admissions officer has to say. You should always have a question in mind about the college or your major field to show that you have a deep interest in attending the school. The interview is your chance to be your own advocate You can also ask a general question, such as, "Do you have any advice for me?"

Plus, asking questions can help you discover characteristics that colleges can't convey in a catalog. If an interviewer asks, "Why did you choose Florida University?" ask back, "What do you think draws students here?"

Things to Avoid

Don't

- Be late
- Memorize speeches—sound natural and conversational
- Ask questions covered by the college catalog
- Chew gum
- Wear lots of cologne or perfume
- Swear or use too much slang
- Be arrogant—there's a fine line between being confident and boasting
- Lie—it will come back to haunt you
- Respond with only yes or no answers
- Tell the school it's your safety
- Be rude to the receptionist or any other staff you meet
- Bring a parent into the interview
- Refuse an interview—this is usually noted

Writing Your College Essay

A Service of
RANDOLPH-MACON COLLEGE,
A coeducational, liberal arts college
In Ashland Virginia

Introduction

If you are like most students, you see the college essay as another hurdle that you must jump on the way to being accepted at the college of your choice. In fact, the essay is not a hurdle but a **rare opportunity**; it is a chance for you to "talk" directly to the college's admissions committee and to help them "see" you as a thinking and feeling person, rather than simply a set of impersonal statistics. Except for the interview, it is your only chance to share your thoughts, insights, and opinions; to highlight your accomplishments; and to convey your maturity and outlook on life. If you see the college essay in this way - as an opportunity - then it is clearly worth the effort to put some extra time, thought, and energy into writing it.

Purpose of the Essay

The college essay is extremely important for two major reasons:

1. It enables the college admissions office to evaluate your communication skills. Through your essay they can assess the clarity of your thinking and your ability to convey your thoughts in written form.
2. It enables the admissions office to learn more about you as a person, beyond what grades and SAT scores can convey. A well-written essay can speak worlds about your attitudes, feelings, personal qualities, imagination and creativity. For the admissions staff, it adds another important piece to the puzzle because it distinguishes you as an individual, different from any other student who is applying.

Choosing a Topic

The choice of a topic is frequently not an issue, because many colleges and universities will either give you a topic to write about or present several rather specific topics from which you must choose. Other colleges may simply "suggest" broad general topics or give you total freedom to write about something that interests or concerns you. Regardless of whether you must respond to a prescribed topic or come up with one of your own, here are a few general hints about the most effective way to approach your topic:

- Narrow your topic and try to be as specific and illustrative as possible
- Relatedly, the easiest topic to write about is yourself. No one knows more about you than you. Since one important purpose of the essay is self-revelation, it is no place to be shy or modest, although you should not exaggerate. If you choose to write about yourself, remember that little incidents and facts are often the most revealing of character and outlook.
- Do not be afraid to write about something you think is a little different. A unique topic or approach is often refreshing to a college admissions officer who has been reading applications all day. Further, an unusual or off-beat essay is an excellent way to show your creativity.

Preparing to Write

Before actually sitting down to write a first draft of your essay, spend some time organizing your thoughts. Develop a framework for your essay so it will have a smooth and logical progression from one idea or incident to the next. Consider your purpose in writing, what you want to convey, and the tone that you think is most appropriate for the topic. Decide on a style that is comfortable for you, not one that you think the college admissions committee prefers. Finally, remember that organizing your thoughts and deciding on a framework does not mean you must be overly rigid at the start; leave room for flexibility and creativity as you actually begin writing.

Writing the Essay

You do not have to get it right the first time! Instead, write the first draft of your essay with the main focus on content - communicating your thoughts. Then set it aside for a day or two, reread it with a fresh perspective, and make any necessary changes. This is also the point at which you should consider matters of organization, style, grammar, spelling, and tone. Once you have rewritten your first draft, you may wish to try it out on your family, friends, English teacher, or guidance counselor. While the final product and final "voice" should be yours they may be able to offer helpful suggestions for technical or other improvements.

Within this general outline for actually writing the essay, there are some "do's" and "don'ts" which I would like to highlight:

Do's

- Do think "small" and write about something that you know about.
- Do reveal yourself in your writing.
- Do show rather than tell. By giving examples and illustrating your topic, you help bring it to life.
- Do write in your own "voice" and style.

Don'ts

- Don't write what you think others want to read.
- Don't exaggerate or write to impress.
- Don't use a flowery, inflated, or pretentious style.
- Don't neglect the technical part of your essay (grammar, spelling, sentence structure).
- Don't ramble - say what you have to say and conclude.

Your college essay, along with your high school record, standardized test scores, an extracurricular involvement will provide the bases upon which the college makes its admissions decision. A thoughtful, well-written essay can affect in a very positive way that final decision. Keep this in mind and take full advantage of the opportunity which the college essay affords you.

John C. Conkright
Dean of Admissions
Randolph-Macon College

College applications: How much do senior year grades matter?

by C. Mackenzie

We're all familiar with the sentiments - laziness, apathy, boredom. They aren't unique to any one person or activity in particular, but they become especially prevalent towards the end of high school. The phrase 'senioritis' wouldn't exist if it weren't so tempting to kick back and relax during your last year, especially after a decade of compulsory education. However, keeping up with your schoolwork and extracurriculars can have some practical benefits, which include helping to prepare you for the college workload in general, and against academic burnout. Additionally, as some college admissions require you to list your senior year courses during the application process, by under-performing in your classes you could actually be jeopardizing your application status, even if you have already been accepted. So senior year grades do matter - albeit to a slightly lesser significance than they had prior to the college application - in the sense that it shows if you're willing to commit to a level of performance regardless of whether or not you're being 'watched'.

Now, more than ever, students entering US colleges need remedial coursework to catch them up to the collegiate level. It isn't so much that they never learned it, but that they allowed their skills - usually math or English - to atrophy once they satisfied whatever exams were required of them. Beyond these exams, which are usually in the junior year of high school (but which vary statewide; in New York they're called the Regents) a student is at some liberty to choose which courses they will be taking their senior year, and many opt for an easier year.

While most colleges aren't so stringent as to demand particular courses during your last year, it becomes a matter of foresight and preparation to take courses that will at least reinforce the accumulated knowledge that got you into college in the first place. What some colleges are doing is to ask for which courses you're taking prior to your senior year to see precisely how easy is the street you intend to take - and taking courses that test your acquired skills not only reflect well on the application, and in potential interviews, but they'll also keep you honed for the upcoming semester. Some schools also require mid-year reports from guidance counselors to keep the admissions office on track of the academic performance of accepted applicants.

Taking courses your senior year, and doing well in them, also presents the opportunity to take a proactive approach towards preparing for college. While maintaining your academic skills is a good practice, you can take it a step farther with Advanced Placement classes, which earn you college credit depending on your grade on the AP exam(s). Also, taking demanding courses during your senior year also benefits you by training you to deal with academic burnout - an experience many college freshman struggle with towards the middle of the semester, and in no small part because they'd forgotten how to handle a heavy workload.

I know it sounds trite and unnecessarily onerous, like the types of things parents would tell you when you were a kid ("Eat your vegetables because they build character, and I told you to"). But you could reach a balance that's right for you - such as taking less overall courses your senior year, but taking APs instead of the normal ones - and you'd still look okay for prospective schools. Of course, the more APs you take, the easier it will be for you in school - finally, for the first time in school, initiative actually has a tangible payoff, and not in the 'extra credit' kind.

There are sometimes recourses to taking classes in the traditional sense, too. For instance, sometimes it can be negotiated with your high school to offer class credit for an academic internship, which is usually in the field of your choice. It's best arranged prior to your senior year, so you should be prepared to commit to it; all you need to do is look online, or in the classifieds, for a local business (a law firm, or for a court, or shadowing doctors, et cetera) that are interested in high school interns. You could always inquire in person if they aren't directly advertising. Have them write a letter to your school stating their desire to work with you, and your weekly responsibilities, and if your school gives it the 'okay' you could be excused for a number of class hours for the internship. Or check out dual-enrollment courses in a local community college - you may be able to complete courses with the same function as APs, while getting a taste of the real thing.

In short, the grades you get in your senior year of high school do more to keep tabs for colleges than they do offer you updates on your academic standing - after all, your academic world is poised to change within a short span of months. But there's little you can do about the situation but make the best of it - and by looking for productive and unique ways to spend your senior year, you may be doing more to impress colleges even if you'd kept up the schoolwork!

RESUME OUTLINE FOR COLLEGE RECOMMENDATIONS

*Please include the following **typed** information on your resume.

- **Colleges Interested in Applying to**
- **School Activities** - Please include a brief description of each activity and the grades in which you participated (for example, sports, cougar TV, drama productions, etc.).
- **Special Honors and Awards Received** - Include each honor and/or award received (honor roll, National Honor Society, AP exams, lettering in sports, etc.)
- **Community Involvement** - Include a description of each community service activity that you participated in and the dates of the community service (cleaning the parks, helping in the soup kitchen, etc.)
- **Employment** - Briefly describe any job experience that you have and the dates of employment for each job.
- **About you**
 - Choose three adjectives that you feel best describe you and explain why.
 - If you had to write your own recommendation, what would you write about yourself? Why?
 - Does your academic record accurately measure your academic ability? Why or why not? Have any unique issues affected your performance in school?
 - Describe an adversity that you have overcome (personal issues, family matters, etc.). How has this adversity made you stronger?
 - What are some of your hobbies or interests? Briefly describe each.
- **Plans for Senior Year** - What activities do you plan on being involved in during senior year (homecoming committee, SADD, sports, etc.)?
- **Plan for your Future** - What is your intended major? Why?

SELF-EVALUATION

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

It is important that you respond to all of these questions. The information will help your counselor write a letter of recommendation for your applications. Please write on the reverse side if you need additional space. Submit this form to the registrar.

DESCRIBE YOUR ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL STRENGTH.

WHAT IS YOUR INTENDED MAJOR? _____

WHAT CONTRIBUTION CAN YOU MAKE TO THE COLLEGE THAT WOULD MAKE THEM WANT TO ACCEPT YOUR APPLICATION?

DESCRIBE A REWARDING HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: ACADEMIC, EXTRACURRICULAR, OR PERSONAL.

HOW DID YOU FULFILL YOUR STUDENT SERVICE LEARNING REQUIREMENTS?

IF YOU WROTE YOUR OWN RECOMMENDATION, WHAT WOULD YOU WRITE ABOUT YOURSELF?

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR HOBBIES OR INTERESTS?

IS YOUR ACADEMIC RECORD AN ACCURATE MEASURE OF YOUR ABILITY? WHY OR WHY NOT? HAVE THERE BEEN ANY UNIQUE ISSUES WHICH MAY HAVE AFFECTED YOUR SCHOOL PERFORMANCE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE YOUR COUNSELOR TO SHARE WITH YOUR COLLEGE?

LIST THREE ADJECTIVES TO DESCRIBE YOURSELF.

HOW WOULD YOUR TEACHERS DESCRIBE YOU?

*****Please attach a resume of your activities/work*****

QUINCE ORCHARD HIGH SCHOOL
15800 Quince Orchard Road
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20878

TEACHER RECOMMENDATION

It is the student's responsibility to request letters of recommendation. Please give teachers notice (15 school days) to write your letter of recommendation in order to meet the college deadline noted below.

Today's Date

Student Name: _____

Teacher Name: _____

I am making application to the following college(s):

College	Deadline Date	Date Mailed
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Teacher, please type your letter of recommendation on school letterhead.

Please mail a copy of my recommendation in the stamped envelope which I have addressed to the college and included with this request.

**Use this request form for each person you ask to write
a letter of recommendation.**

(Additional copies are available in the Registrar's office.)