Dear Oliver Ames Senior Class Parents and Students:

This handbook is designed to give students and parents an introduction to the college application process. Many families have been through this process, while others will experience it for the first time. Since the world of college admissions is ever-changing, we encourage you to read through the handbook and begin to familiarize yourselves with the variety of college and university systems across the country. The OA Guidance Department is also available to assist you directly with the college planning process.

In addition to this handbook, Oliver Ames subscribes to Naviance, an internet-based career exploration and planning program that students and families can use to explore career and college options and develop a career plan. To find out more about Naviance, we encourage you to login using the student’s access information: The link can be found on the main OA website under Quick Links.

Guidance Counselors meet with juniors at the end of junior year to show students how to perform college searches and again at the beginning of senior year to start the college application process. We will meet with them multiple other times throughout their senior year to make sure they are moving along with their college applications.

Choosing a college can be challenging and stressful at times, but if you are well informed about your college choices and ask the right questions, you, too, will find your “perfect fit.” We look forward to working with you through the college process!

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SENDING APPLICATIONS

It is the responsibility of the student to make an appointment with their counselor and complete these college-related assignments:

PREPARING THE APPLICATION
Preparing a quality application can result in positive decisions. Many college admission officers report that a surprisingly high volume of applications arrive that obviously had been completed “the night before the deadline.” Remember that neatness, clarity, and creativity are important. Please proofread beforehand!

What will the Guidance Office send?
- Official High School Transcript
- School Profile
- Counselor Recommendation (If requested)
- Secondary School Report

What will your Teacher Recommender send?
- Your letter of recommendation directly to the school

What does the student need to do?
- Fill out and send in the applications, as well as supplements before the deadlines
- Contact College Board or ACT to send official score reports to each school and send TOEFL scores if necessary
- Ask teachers for recommendations in person; let them know what schools you’ve applied to and the deadlines. If you add schools at a later date, let your counselor and teachers know.
- Fill out the College Questionnaire under About Me in Naviance. Your counselors need this information to write your counselor letter of recommendation for you. We request that this form is filled out at least two weeks before your first deadline.

A word about “lost” documents: First, don’t panic. Colleges receive mail in bulk during the application season. Many times, they may write to students or contact them via email reporting that documents are missing. OFTEN TIMES, the documents are in their office, but they have not yet been opened, downloaded, logged into the computer, filed, etc. Rather than panicking, the student should contact the school directly and ask them to double check their files.
COLLEGE PLANNING CALENDAR

Spring of Junior Year
- Utilize Naviance and collegeboard.org to help you in your college search
- Visit Colleges (ideal times are February and April vacations)
- Take Spring SAT (March or May) and/or Spring ACT (April or June)
- Take College Board’s Subject Tests in June as appropriate after discussion with subject teacher
- Speak with one-to-two teachers before summer vacation about writing recommendations for college

Summer into Senior Year
- Visit colleges and schedule appropriate interviews
- Complete the Common Application (available after August 1)
- Rough draft essay ideas
- Complete Senior Questionnaire Form on Naviance so counselor can write rec.

September
- Set up a college planning meeting with your guidance counselor, check your graduation requirements
- Finalize a list of schools
- Register and prepare for the October SAT and Subject Tests if necessary

October
- Submit applications for Early Decision/Early Action to the Guidance Office
- Submit transcript requests as they correspond to application deadlines, 15 school days prior to deadlines
- Make sure the teachers who are writing your recommendation are added to your Naviance account
- Register and prepare for the November SAT and Subject Tests if necessary
- Complete FAFSA as early as possible

November
- Register for the December SAT and Subject Tests if necessary
- Attend Financial Aid Night – Stonehill College

December
- Plan to have all college applications completed and submitted to colleges
- Review progress with your guidance counselor

January
- Review all available scholarships and awards

February
- Check to see that your transcripts have been received
- If you have not made post high school plans, set up a meeting with your counselor
- Listen or check daily announcements for scholarships

March
- Inform your guidance counselor about your admission decisions
- Check community scholarships that you may be eligible for and apply

April
- Make final decision choosing a college or career
- Take the Accuplacer exam for College Placement if needed

May
- Finalize contact with the college you choose to attend, including housing
STANDARDIZED TESTING

EVERY 11th grade student should take the SAT Reasoning test or the ACT. Time and time again students change their minds about where they want to go to college. It is better to have the scores ready rather than to be scrambling at the last minute. The best thing to do is take the tests early so that you have time during the senior year to retake any tests if needed.

Refer to collegeboard.com and actstudent.org for the closest testing center to your home. Registration for each test takes place typically online. You will need to set up an online account. Students may also get a paper registration form in guidance. Please pay attention to deadlines to sign up for the test.

All students for whom English is their second language should plan on taking the TOEFL test even if they have studied English since birth. Many colleges require this test for non-native speakers of English. (The exception to this is usually when the student is taking AP English (www.ets.org).

Test Day Information  YOU MUST BRING A PHOTO ID IN ORDER TO BE ADMITTED.

Students should report to the test center by 7:45 a.m. and bring the following:

- Admission ticket
- Photo identification
- Two No. 2 pencils
- Four-function, scientific or graphing calculator
- Students taking the Foreign Language SAT Subject Test Listening test in November, will need to provide their own CD player and headphones.

It is suggested that Stand-by, unregistered students arrive early. Extra tests will be distributed on a first come-first served basis. Testing typically ends around 1:00 pm.

SAT is offered in September, October, December, March, May, June, and August. See www.collegeboard.org to register. ACT is offered in September, October, December, February, April, June, July. See www.act.org to register.

SAT Subject Tests are given on any SAT test date. Not all colleges require them so check to see if your schools need them. You must register for the Subject Tests. You can take up to 3 tests during any test administration. Colleges usually request a minimum of 2.

When planning to take standardized tests make sure your scores will be available before your first deadlines. Typically you want all testing done by October test dates to be able to apply early action or early decision to colleges.

You can send individual test scores or all your scores to colleges. Most colleges will “superscore” the SAT Reasoning test. Superscoring is the process by which colleges consider your highest section scores across all the dates you took the SAT. Rather than confining your scores to one particular date, these schools will take your highest section scores, forming the highest possible composite score. Colleges do not typically superscore sub sections of the ACT exam.

Test Prep is always a good idea. There is free SAT test prep on www.khanacademy.org which can be customized based on a student’s PSAT scores. ACT test prep is available for $39.95 on www.act.org. Bridgewater State has an SAT test prep class if a student wants more of a classroom experience.
FINANCIAL AID CHECKLIST

September:
☐ Now is also a good time to start thinking about your financial aid needs. Calculate your EFC (Estimated Family Contribution) and consider whether you'll need additional aid from a Loan or grant.

October:
☐ File your FAFSA as soon as possible after October 1. (Estimate the required tax information if your tax forms are still incomplete.) Pay attention to the deadline, since some states require you to submit the FAFSA by mid-February or early March. Keep a photocopy for your records.
☐ Attend Financial Aid Night at Stonehill College.
☐ If your school has a separate application for financial aid or requires you to submit the CSS Financial Aid PROFILE, be sure to submit it by the deadline.

December:
☐ Four to six weeks after you file the FAFSA, you should receive a copy of your Student Aid Report (SAR). The SAR summarizes the information you submitted on the FAFSA and presents the all-important Expected Family Contribution (EFC) which tells you the amount your family is expected to contribute towards your education.

March/April:
☐ Admissions letters should start arriving, followed by financial aid award letters. The award letter describes the types and amounts of financial aid for which you qualify the cost of attendance and your expected family contribution. Wait until you have heard from all the schools before making a decision. Grants and Scholarships do not need to be repaid unlike Loans which do.
☐ If your family's financial circumstances have changed significantly since you submitted the FAFSA, send a letter to the financial aid administrator at the school, requesting a professional judgment review of your case. Describe the change in circumstances, and include documentation if possible.
☐ Compare the financial aid packages from each school. Do not look just at the total amount of aid, but conduct a bottom-line analysis of the net out-of-pocket cost of attending each school. Different schools, for example, may have different costs for room and board.

By the End of May:
☐ Decide which school you want to attend and accept their offer. Also, accept the financial aid award package by signing it and sending it in with a copy of your SAR. Keep a photocopy for your records. The school may also require a nonrefundable deposit to confirm that you will attend.
☐ Apply for education loans (Student Loans and Parent Loans). If you don't receive enough aid from the school's aid package and government loans, investigate Private Loans.

June/July/August:
☐ You will probably receive your first bill for tuition, fees, room and board during the summer. Ask the school about interest-free or low-cost tuition payment plans that let you pay your tuition in monthly installments, instead of a lump sum up front.

Start of School:
☐ If you applied for education loans, the financial aid office will provide you with information about the disbursement of the loan proceeds.
☐ You may be required to visit the financial aid office to complete entrance counseling and to cosign the disbursement check.
☐ If you were awarded a work-study job, visit the student employment office to find an on-campus job.

Assistance with completing the FAFSA - Mass. Educational Financing Authority www.mefa.org or ASA College Planning Center in Brockton 866.891.4716
Campus Visits

No publication, no matter how thorough, can give you a complete picture of a college or university. A campus visit is the best way to see what the college is like. Remember that even though college students may leave for summer vacation, college admission offices are working at full speed. Summer is a great time to explore campuses because the admission office is focused on the arrival of 11th graders and their parents. While you cannot see the school in “full swing,” you CAN see the buildings, walk the campus, and hear about all the academic and extracurricular programs. In addition, many campuses have a summer school session so that you might get a sense of what the school is like with students. Others will hire student tour guides so that you can speak with an actual student while you are visiting.

Most college admission offices are open Monday through Friday (sometimes a Saturday morning) and will offer a tour once or twice a day. Advance planning with the college’s admission office is important to help you make the most of your visit. You should visit the school website for more information on how to schedule your visit. In addition to a tour, some schools will offer a group information session or a personal interview—it depends on the school. Students should take care of ALL offerings. Minuteman hosts a number of college admission representatives in the fall. These counselors travel on behalf of their college or university to meet with students who are interested in learning more about their school. Please note that students need to get permission from their teachers to attend information sessions.

People’s view about college or university can vary widely, so try to talk to as many people as possible. Whether your visit lasts an hour or a day, you should get all your questions answered. Here are some questions to include on your list:

When you talk to students, ask…
- How many hours a week do you study? Is that typical of students here?
- Are campus jobs readily available?
- Are faculty members interested in students & accessible outside of class?
- Do many students go home on weekends?
- Is the food good?
- Is it possible to study in your dorm room?
- What’s the library like as a place to study? To do research?
- What do you like most about this college? Least?
- How easy is it to get the classes you want at registration?
- If you had it to do again, would you still choose this college?

If you attend a class, ask yourself…
- Are students interested in the material?
- Is there time for questions and discussion? Do students participate?
- Am I intellectually challenged by what is taking place in the class?
- Do I feel that the students are learning—either new facts or new ways of thinking about a subject?
- Is there a good rapport between professors and students?
- Would I feel comfortable as a student in this setting?

As you tour the campus, ask yourself…
- Are the older buildings in good repair?
- Are there new buildings as well as older ones?
- Is lab equipment up-to-date and plentiful?
- Are rooms in residence halls pleasant? …quiet enough to study in?
- Are common areas in the residence hall attractive? Are there laundry and kitchen facilities?
- What is the cafeteria like?
- Are the grounds well-kept?
- Is the setting and architecture appealing?
- What is the surrounding town or city like?
- Could I see myself attending this college? Do I feel comfortable here?
Gap Years

It is becoming more and more common for students to take a year off between high school and college. This does not mean a year with nothing to do; in fact, the exact opposite is often true. There are a multitude of exciting opportunities for students to pursue in which they will grow personally and intellectually without being at a college or university. These may include working, interning, traveling, volunteering, exploring, etc.

Students who are interested in Gap year programs should actively research and apply to programs just as they would apply to college. There are dates and deadlines for gap year programs that are important in this process. In addition, students should also apply to college with the idea that they would defer their admission for ONE year. This is a possible option at many colleges (talk to the admission office for more details).

Students who take a gap year will then know that they have a plan for the following fall. If during the gap year the student would like to reapply to colleges in an attempt to gain admission at a different university, they can. The rule is that you cannot deposit (hold a spot) at more than one university at the same time. You can, however, withdraw your spot from one school once you gain admission to another.

Below are some leads to popular gap year programs, however, there are many more sites on the Internet which also explore the possibilities.

Gap Year: www.gapyear.com
Semester at Sea: www.semesteratsea.com
Job Corp: www.jobcorps.gov
City Year: www.cityyear.org
Disney World College Program: www.wdwcollegeprogram.com
Dynamo: www.dynamo.org
The Experiment in International Living: www.experiment.org
Global Routes: www.globalroutes.org
The Center for Interim Programs: www.interimprograms.com/
Leap Now: Lifetime Education Alternatives: www.leapnow.com
The National Outdoor Leadership School: www.nols.edu
Outward Bound: www.outwardbound.com
Peace Corps: www.peacecorps.gov
Spain Exchange: www.spainexchange.com
Taking Off: www.takingoff.net
United World College: www.uwc.org
Working abroad: www.workingabroad.com
Where are you headed: www.timeoutassociates.com
Glossary

Once you delve into the world of college admissions, you will soon find that there are terms and abbreviations that you need to learn in order to fully understand the process. For example, In order to get your B.A. or B.S. in U.S., you need a good GPA, definitely the SAT I and possibly 3 SAT II’s or an ACT, in addition you might need to fill out the FAFSA to know your EFC and be given your CWS, then decide if you are E.D., EA, Rolling, or Regular. Did you get that? If not, read on to familiarize yourself with college admission lingo.

**Commonly used abbreviations and terms:**

**Accuplacer** – The Accuplacer is the college placement test used by all the Massachusetts states schools (two and four year) to determine if you are ready for college-level courses.

**Articulation Agreement** – Agreements made between high schools and colleges to accept high school courses for college credit. Most colleges require a grade of B or better to earn credit.

**ACT** American College Test. This is the SAT’s only true competitor. The format and structure of the tests are similar with the main difference being ACT has a science section. Your counselor can recommend whether to take the ACT instead of, or along with, the SAT.

**AP** Advanced Placement. These are college-level courses offered by AOSR and many high schools in the US. After an AP course is completed, students generally take AP exams, which are scored on a 1-5 scale. Colleges may offer either credit, or advanced standing, to a student who has an AP exam score of 3 or higher in a subject.

**Candidate's Reply Date May 1:** This is the date by which most colleges require an admitted student to commit to attend that institution. Commitment is signified by submission of the enrollment deposit by this date. Students may place a deposit at only one school.

**CEEB Code** College Entrance Examination Board code number. (Every high school has one.) Oliver Ames’s CEEB Code is 221650

**Class Rank** The rating of a student based on an academic comparison with all other students in a class.

**Common Application** A standard application form accepted by more than five-hundred colleges. A student completes one form and submits it on line. Students have access to the Common Application via the internet: [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org). Students are responsible for checking if their schools of choice also require a supplemental application in addition to the common application.

**CSS** College Scholarship Service. This is the organization which processes information provided by financial aid applicants on the PROFILE form and distributes that information to colleges where a student is applying.

**Defer** This is an admissions decision which may be received if a student has applied under an Early Decision or Early Action plan. A "deferral" means that the student has not yet been admitted or denied; the application will be placed in the regular round for another review, and an admissions decision will be sent in March or April. Students who apply Early Decision and are deferred are no longer bound by the Early Decision agreement and may apply to other colleges.

**Division I, II, III** These are designations for college athletic programs. Division I and II programs are the most competitive athletically; these are the only programs that may award athletic scholarships, and potential recruits must be certified by the NCAA in order to be eligible to compete at the college level. Division III programs, most commonly found at the smaller schools, do not require NCAA certification. Potential athletic recruits should meet with their college counselor *early* in the process; to be certain that all the appropriate requirements will be met before graduation, and to insure that students understand the process of working with college coaches.
**Early Action (EA)** A plan whereby application is made and a decision received early in the 12th grade year. Usually, application is made by November 1, and decisions are sent by mid-December. Early Action is a *non-binding* plan: students will not receive a financial aid package until April, at the same time as regular decision applicants.

**Early Decision (ED)** A plan whereby application is made early in the senior year and, if accepted, the student agrees to enroll and withdraw all other applications. This is a *binding* agreement among the student, the college, and the parents. For financial aid applicants, an estimated award is provided in December with the admission decision, and finalized once tax returns are completed.

**FAFSA** Free Application for Federal Student Aid - As the name implies, a no-cost form used by colleges to determine a student’s and family's eligibility for federal financial aid funds. Some (but not most) colleges use this form alone to determine aid awards. See the website: [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

**Financial Aid** Need-based aid offered by the federal government and by colleges; awards generally include *grants* (which do not need to be repaid), *loans* (which must be repaid) and, often, *work-study* (funds earned through on-campus work during the school year). Need is determined through a combination of the **PROFILE** form, the **FAFSA** (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), and the college's own form (if they have one). International students generally complete a different form and are not eligible for federal funds unless they are permanent resident aliens (i.e. have a "green" card).

**GPA** Grade Point Average. A number (such as 3.0), which indicates the average of all grades for courses earned in a term or a year.

**January Admit** Some colleges are offering students acceptance—but not until January (or the second semester). This is becoming a popular option for many colleges and students. Typically the school will offer the student a study option for the first semester, which could include a semester abroad program.

**NCAA National Collegiate Athletic Association.** The governing body for most college athletics. The NCAA must certify an athletic recruit who wishes to compete at the Division I or II level. The web site for the NCAA is: [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org).

**PROFILE** The financial aid form processed by College Scholarship Service and used by some colleges to further define a family's need for financial aid funds. This service carries a fee, so families should include this cost in their budget for college applications.

**PSAT** Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test administered to 10th and 11th grade students each October. The PSAT is the qualifying exam for all National Merit Scholarship programs.

**Regular Decision** The most common admissions plan. Most deadlines for regular decision applicants are in January or February. Note that some school deadlines are earlier. For example, the University of California system schools have a regular decision deadline of November 30!

**Rolling Admission** The practice at some colleges and universities is making decisions on applications as *they are received*. Since, under this plan, colleges are accepting students every day, the later one applies, the harder it may be to get in.

**SAT: Reasoning Test** Formerly called the SAT I. The new SAT consists of three sections: critical reading, writing and math.

**SAT: Subject Tests** Formerly called SAT II’s. *Individual* subject tests (such as Spanish, Biology, and Math) often, but not always, required for college admissions.
TOEFL Test of English as a Foreign Language. This test should be used by students whose native language is not English (regardless of citizenship). The TOEFL exam is offered many times a year at various test centers. Students should register as early as possible at www.ets.org.

Wait List A list of applicants who, though qualified for admission, are placed "on hold." Wait list candidates are usually given the opportunity to decide whether or not they wish to wait for a final decision, which usually occurs over the next several weeks.