

For Students:

What is in your folder?

When an admission committee opens your folder (paper or electronic) to consider your candidacy, they will see the following:

•Your official transcript

Your official transcript from Lawrence Academy will list all your courses starting with Grade 9 (or the year you entered Lawrence), and your term-by-term grade point average.. If you entered the Academy after Grade 9, we will send a copy of your former school's transcript as well. SAT scores are *not* included on the transcript. In assessing your success, colleges will consider the rigor of your courses within the context of Lawrence's curriculum, time on the Honor Roll and other academic awards or distinctions. Improvement in the later years is helpful, *but it will not remove the stigma of a poor record in the first three years.*

•Completed application and essay

The application will include all personal information, extracurricular and athletic activities, jobs you have held, and the like. Colleges look closely at the student's part of the application, particularly, at many schools, the quality of the essay. The overall quality of your application is one aspect of this process that you completely control; take advantage of the opportunity to help yourself. Neatness and spelling count!

•Required supplementary materials

Supplementary materials may include a graded paper or an institution-specific essay. These will vary from college to college. Be sure you check with each institution to make certain you have fulfilled its respective requirements. Supplementary materials may also include LD documentation or information on special needs, if applicable.

•Two teacher recommendations

You will ask two teachers who have taught you, usually in your junior year, to write on your behalf. Both letters should come from teachers who know you well. You should start to consider teacher recommendations from the first day of your junior year, because you will normally request them in May. Your approach to your daily life at Lawrence Academy will do much to determine the quality of your teachers' recommendations. Unless you are pursuing a program in the arts, colleges may not accept a recommendation letter from an art, music, dance or theatre teacher. Be sure to research each college to familiarize yourself with their requirements.

•Counselor Statement

Your folder will include a detailed statement from your college counselor about your work, growth, and involvement both in and out of the classroom at Lawrence Academy. Counselors will present a balanced view of you and your record in as positive a light as possible.

•Lawrence II / Independent Immersion Program

Students who are involved in the IIP are responsible for serving as the liaison between the College Counseling Office and the IIP Director (as well as professional sponsor). The IIP director must be made aware of application deadlines so that he can assist with the completion of the IIP contract and term evaluations. When evaluating the college application for IIP students, admission representatives will be looking for academic depth in the contract and program description. They

are looking for specific authors, concepts, and terms so that they can understand the academic nature of one's senior year at Lawrence Academy.

• **Interview notes**

Many schools view your request for an interview as a sign of interest, and this interest can benefit you in their appraisal of your application. However, other college admission offices offer interviews as a way for you to evaluate the school rather than as a means to evaluate *you*. Regardless, the impression you leave in an interview may become part of your application folder.

• **Additional recommendations**

You may wish to include additional notes or recommendations from coaches at Lawrence if you are an athlete, or from an activity leader if you excel in another area outside of the classroom (music, dance, and the like). *Never send extra recommendations without first discussing it with your counselor. Some colleges simply do not want them!*

• **Lawrence Academy profile**

The colleges will receive a profile of Lawrence Academy describing relevant aspects of the school, our curriculum, and our academic statistics (average SAT scores, grade distributions).

• **Test Scores**

The **SAT Reasoning Test** is required by most colleges. Some also require certain **SAT Subject Tests**. You must always check with the colleges to find out which tests they want; do not rely on guidebooks or other “outside” sources for this information! Even the Naviance Family Connection, though generally very accurate in this regard, may contain a few errors.

Talk with your counselor about which Subject Tests to take and when. Math Level I, for example, should be taken near the end of Math 3. Others will depend on your individual strengths and needs and upon the requirements of individual colleges. Check with them early in the process!

The **ACT** (college admission test of the American College Testing program) is basically a competitor of the SAT, designed somewhat differently. It is accepted in place of the SAT Reasoning Test (and, usually but not always, the Subject Tests) by all colleges, and is preferred by many institutions west of the Mississippi. For many reasons, not the least of which is that some students score higher on it than they do on the SAT, *we very strongly recommend that every Lawrence Academy junior and senior take the ACT, more than once!* It is given at Lawrence Academy in December and February and at Fitchburg High School and other local centers several other times per year. We also strongly recommend that students take the optional ACT Writing Section, as many colleges require this section if you submit the ACT rather than the SAT.

From the fifteen or twenty pages of your application folder, an admission committee will get to know you quite well in a very short time—well enough to decide whether to admit you, deny you, or place you on a waiting list.

The “Most Wanted” Schools

At a majority of the more than 3,000 four-year colleges and universities in the U.S., your test scores are less important than your grades in the admission process. At some institutions, even your essay and recommendations are more important than test scores. These colleges look for

reasons to *accept* an applicant, and one low SAT or ACT score usually will not hurt your chances of admission any more than one weak grade will, assuming the college feels you have other things to offer them. They might see a strong recommendation, an impressive extracurricular record, or a revealing essay and say, “This is someone we’d like to have here!”

However, admission to many of the colleges to which Lawrence students regularly apply as their top choices, *especially those in the Northeast*, has become, as a veteran admission counselor has put it, a hard-nosed numbers game. If you have the grades *and the test scores* they want, you will be *considered* for admission. If you don’t, you won’t. Period. Whereas many colleges in the country will gladly accept the “great kid” who has much to offer other than perfect numbers, the “most wanted” colleges look *first* for perfect numbers and *then* at everything else the candidate has to offer. To have a chance of admission, you need to have it all *throughout your four years of high school*. A great senior fall term will not make up for past shortcomings. As a rough guideline, all your “numbers” need to be in the top 5 percent. Furthermore, your non-academic activities must be equally outstanding. Yes, this system is unfair, all the more so because the over-emphasis on testing is driven largely by marketing interests and the colleges’ perceived need to maintain a high “ranking” in the *U.S. News* ratings and other, similar publications. But it’s the reality, and it cannot be ignored.

These highly selective colleges and universities do make some exceptions to the admission pattern just described, but they are for recruited athletes, potential major money donors (“development cases”), children of alumni, (“legacies”), especially “active” ones—i.e., big donors—and the like. Even with these students, however, no college will accept a candidate who they think will not survive academically. By the way, being a “legacy,” the child of a graduate, generally carries less weight than it did a generation ago at some schools.

If this last section seems like gloom and doom to you, remember that it is concerned with a very small number of colleges! Reach by all means, but always apply to a wide range of institutions.