

Greetings from the Counseling Office



For 50 years our paramount concern has been to best prepare our students for some of the most competitive colleges and universities in the world. Every year, we work with each individual senior to guide them through one of the most challenging decisions of their lives. Here is a brief outline of the college application process.

Senior Class of 2009

The college preparation process really begins in the 9th grade, as students prepare themselves academically for their college career. Throughout high school, we have encouraged our students to take the most rigorous courses, which colleges frequently cite as the most important factor in the admissions process. There are three parts to transcript quality: breadth (a variety of subjects), depth (how challenging the class is), and performance (grades). As the senior year approaches, town halls, individual appointments, and Parents' Night remind students to keep in mind the impending college process. RIS has been especially fortunate to have so many colleges and universities visiting us and holding information sessions, as well as numerous college fairs. This year we received 45 individual college visits and 6 international college fairs. These colleges come from all over the world and offer a wide range of programs to choose from. In a sense, they represent the diversity and excellence of our students. (See Naviance 'College Visit')



When seniors arrive for their last year at RIS, the actual application process begins. First, during individual appointments with their counselors, seniors will start narrowing down which colleges they will apply to. This is perhaps the most lengthy and challenging process for seniors. For the process of selection to be successful, both the seniors and their parents must truly be engaged, and

examine themselves to determine which colleges fit their academic, financial, personal and geographical needs, as well as the parents' wishes. In the counseling office, we often hear of "Dream Schools." These are schools that a student dreams of attending. Most often these are the super-competitive institutions of the Ivy League. However, expectations almost as often do not match reality. For such students, the challenge is to shift the students' (and parents') focus away from lofty goals, toward a more realistic approach. Countless students have gone on to colleges and universities they have never even heard of when they started the process, and have come back to tell us about their extremely successful careers.

Once the senior narrows his/her list down to about 8 colleges, they start completing their applications. These past few years the process has been greatly simplified with Naviance, internet-based software which tracks the progress of students' applications, and the Common Application, which allows students to complete one application for many American universities. Seniors must also ask teachers for Teacher Recommendations, their respective counselors for the Counselor's Recommendation, order transcripts, and take the required standardized tests, such as the SAT, SATII, TOEFL, IELTS, etc. Many seniors also apply to universities in Thailand. These seniors will meet with our Thai counselors Ajarn Churee and Mr. Tawan.

Between October and December, seniors may choose to attend the various workshops offered by the counseling office, such as on applying for financial aid, writing college essays, liberal arts colleges, interviewing, etc.

Once all the materials are collected, seniors send off their applications by mail and online, usually during November and December. Come April, we hope that every senior receives that elusive acceptance letter from their first choice colleges!

Each year, the counselor nominates one student from the graduating class for the prestigious University of British Columbia International Leader of Tomorrow Award, which amounts up to full tuition.

As a parting note, we have asked this year's recipient to share a few tips on the admissions process.

From the lovely 'Mint' (800 perfect score on the SAT Writing!)



"Many times, the admissions process seemed to me a gigantic, daunting task. Here we are, barely of legal age, asked to make a potentially life-altering decision. There is no secret formula to success, except to conquer that tremendous urge to procrastinate. The research and application should be done as early as possible, especially the college essays. College admissions offices receive tens of thousands of essays each year, and they can most definitely tell if a student has put in some effort and consideration. At this point, you have completed most of high school, and your transcript and extracurricular activities are largely beyond your control. The focus, then, should be on your current classes, as well as spending a lot of quality time on your application. Parental involvement is also important—makes sure you and your parents are on the same page. If you feel that you have sent out the best possible application, when April comes, someone will surely feel the same."