The last few pages of this packet are articles that other senior teachers distribute and that former students have found valuable.

**Mr. Foster’s College Essay Writing Tips**

1. **Answer the question.** While this may seem obvious, be sure the words on the page actually and accurately answer the question. If they asked you how a diverse experience that you had will help you contribute to the university, don’t get spend a page explaining how meaningful the experience was and then stop. Instead, spend half a page elaborating on how significant the experience was and then a whole other page saying HOW the experience will help you make University X a better place. In other words, **answer the question.**
2. Be sure to say **HOW** you answered the question. Don’t just list examples of the question’s answer, explain HOW these examples answer the question thoroughly. Here are some ways to do “HOW” writing:
   1. Ask how/why 3 times, like a toddler would. (then answer each one)
   2. Use strong syntax to make “syna-sentences” of already strong “HOW” sentences
   3. Not only say the “positive,” but say how you are not the “negative.”
3. **Be concise but thorough**. Be potent in your writing. Definitely answer the question thoroughly, but don’t ramble. This can be achieved through strong diction and multiple editing/revising sessions with friends, parents and teachers.
4. **Consider your audience**. Keep in mind that the reader of your essay will have had read hundreds of essays like yours. Make your unique, without being cheesy or cliché. Pull at the reader’s heart strings without sounding like a Hallmark card. Also, if the question is asked in second person, you should answer in first person. If it is in third, answer in third.

**Tips Mr. Foster gathered from respectable websites**

* Reveal you preference = Are you an arts person or someone who wants hard-facts science type?
* Values = Indicate what matters to you. How do you perceive yourself?
* Thought process = Are you whimsical, impulse, methodical, gather background information before choosing? They are looking for a pattern (your thinking style, level of intelligence, insight).
* Topics = Reveal who you are (sloppy, general, insincere, tasteless responses can hurt). Focus and be specific on one single event.
* Feature your strengths and weakness
* Focus on quality of your mind or character, like “I am a very \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ person” or tell story about an experience or time when you showed you were a very \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ person. List responsible not Eagle Scout; say committed not played basketball.
* Language should be simple, direct and clear. Make every word count
* Careless spelling, grammatical errors, awkward language, or fuzzy logic will make your essay memorable in a bad way
* Entire application should create a consistent portrait of who you are and what you will bring to their college. The more the pieces of the puzzle support one impression the more confident the and committee will be in admitting you.
* Develop your main idea with vivid specific facts, events QUOTES, examples and reasons
* Avoid clichéd, generic, and predictable writing by using vivid and specific details
* DON’T: Tell them about the charm of their university; tell them what you think they want to hear; include info found elsewhere in the application; sound like autobiography, travelogue or laundry list…YAWN!!!!

**Summerville High School**

**College Planning Checklist**

**Senior Year**

**August - September**

􀂉 Verify that your transcripts are accurate.

􀂉 Discuss your course load, college plans, and test scores with your counselor.

􀂉 Attend Senior Parent Night with your parents.

􀂉 Go to how2winscholarships.com and discuss this article with your parental figures: <http://how2winscholarships.com/college-parents-and-students-discussing-the-three-cs/>

􀂉 Request college applications and information. *If the college has an online version, save to your Favorites so you can access it easily when you are ready to fill it out.*

􀂉 Arrange campus visits with your narrowed down list of 4-5 colleges.

􀂉 Register to take the SAT/ACT at least once during 1st semester

􀂉 Begin searching for scholarships and ways to pay (online and via the GREEN WAVE SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE).

􀂉 Stay organized: File copies of applications and correspondence. Keep your calendar up-to-date tracking important dates and deadlines.

**October**

􀂉 Ask for letters of recommendation to include with your admissions and/or scholarship applications.

􀂉 Work on admissions application essays.

􀂉 Attend college fairs and financial aid nights.

􀂉 “Early Decision” candidates should complete college applications. Submit completed application packets and Transcript Request Forms to Mrs. Tremaine at least one week prior to the deadline date.

**November**

􀂉 Continue completing your college applications.

􀂉 “Early Decision” deadline is often November 1 or 15.

􀂉 Contact the Financial Aid Office at the college you choose to see which Financial Aid forms are required

􀂉 Keep in mind the rush of applications to be mailed before Christmas Break and try to have yours submitted to Mrs. Tremaine before Thanksgiving Break.

**December**

􀂉 Complete applications ideally by December 1. Submit completed application packets and Transcript Request Forms to Mrs. Tremaine at least one week prior to the deadline date.

􀂉 Take SAT and/or ACT one last time to improve scores, if necessary.

􀂉 Stay organized.

**January**

􀂉 Collect family tax information.

􀂉 Complete and submit your FAFSA as soon after January 1 as possible. *Some student aid programs award funds on a first-come, first-served basis until funds are depleted. Waiting too long to submit your FAFSA could be costly.*

􀂉 Fill out and submit required financial aid forms. Follow instructions carefully and make copies.

􀂉 Request Semester grades be sent to any colleges you are still considering and have already applied to. (Mrs. Tremaine)

**February – March**

􀂉 Carefully examine your Student Aid Report (SAR) when it arrives. *A mistake could cause you to miss out on college funding.*

􀂉 Don’t panic if you’re selected for verification. Just provide the college with the documents they need.

􀂉 Stay on top of important financial aid/scholarship deadlines.

􀂉 Respond quickly to college requests for additional documentation.

􀂉 College acceptance and financial award letters start rolling. Report college acceptances to Mrs. Tremaine and Scholarship awards (even those you don’t intend to accept) to Mrs. Newman

**April**

􀂉 Make a decision, most colleges request your reply by May 1, and send your tuition deposit.

􀂉 Notify other colleges you won’t be attending.

􀂉 Mark your calendar with important deadlines (housing, meals, transportation, financial aid, etc.).

**May**

􀂉 Request final transcript be sent to the school you will be attending. (Mrs. Tremaine) These will not be mailed from the school until AFTER graduation. Your school should receive them the 2nd-3rd week of June.

􀂉 Report ALL scholarship (academic, athletic, community, etc) awards to Mrs. Newman, including those you will not be accepting. (For example, if you were offered academic scholarships at several schools, you will only attend one, I still need ALL totals.)

􀂉 Respond quickly to requests and return necessary forms.

􀂉 Make sure those funding scholarships know the address for the Financial Aid Office at the college you will attend.

􀂉 Notify your Financial Aid Office of any additional funding you’ll be receiving (scholarships and loans, etc.).

􀂉 Evaluate student loan lenders and take time to understand student loans, if required.

**Summer**

􀂉 Attend orientation.

􀂉 Complete any college financial aid info received, if you have questions — ASK.

􀂉 Finalize your budget.

􀂉 Notify Mrs. Tremaine immediately if there is a change of plans and your final transcript needs to be sent elsewhere.

􀂉 Send thank you notes to individuals who helped you along the way, including those who funded your scholarships.

􀂉 Check with your roommate to see what large items each of you should bring to the dorm (to prevent duplication).

􀂉 Pack with care knowing you can’t possibly take EVERYTHING you own.

**Time Management Tips**

1.Count all your time as time to be used and make every attempt to get satisfaction out of every moment.

2.Find something to enjoy in whatever you do.

3.Try to be an optimist and seek out the good in your life.

4.Find ways to build on your successes.

5.Stop regretting your failures and start learning from your mistakes.

6.Remind yourself, "There is always enough time for the important things." If it is important, you should be able to make time to do it.

7.Continually look at ways of freeing up your time.

8.Examine your old habits and search for ways to change or eliminate them.

9.Try to use waiting time­­-review notes or do practice problems.

10.Keep paper or a calendar with you to jot down the things you have to do or notes to yourself.

11.Examine and revise your lifetime goals on a monthly basis and be sure to include progress towards those goals on a daily basis.

12.Put up reminders in your home or office about your goals.

13.Always keep those long term goals in mind.

14.Plan your day each morning or the night before and set priorities for yourself.

15.Maintain and develop a list of specific things to be done each day, set your priorities and the get the most important ones done as soon in the day as you can. Evaluate your progress at the end of the day briefly.

16.Look ahead in your month and try and anticipate what is going to happen so you can better schedule your time.

17.Try rewarding yourself when you get things done as you had planned, especially the important ones.

18.Do first things first.

19.Have confidence in yourself and in your judgement of priorities and stick to them no matter what.

20.When you catch yourself procrastinating-ask yourself, "What am I avoiding?"

21.Start with the most difficult parts of projects, then either the worst is done or you may find you don't have to do all the other small tasks.

22.Catch yourself when you are involved in unproductive projects and stop.

23.Find time to concentrate on high priority items or activities.

24.Concentrate on one thing at a time.

25.Put your efforts in areas that provide long term benefits.

26.Push yourself and be persistent, especially when you know you are doing well.

27.Think on paper when possible-it makes it easier to review and revise.

28.Be sure and set deadlines for yourself whenever possible.

29.Delegate responsibilities whenever possible.

30.Ask for advice when needed.

**2014 Actual College Essay Topics:**

[**Barnard College**](https://barnard.edu/)  
“Pick one woman in history or fiction to converse with for an hour and explain your choice. What would you talk about?”

[**Common Application**](https://www.commonapp.org/Login)  
The Common Application is a application used by 549 colleges and universities in the United States and abroad.  
“Describe a place or environment where you are perfectly content. What do you do or experience there, and why is it meaningful to you?”

[**Harvard University**](http://www.harvard.edu/)  
“What [would you] want your future college roommate to know about you?”

[**Pomona College**](http://www.pomona.edu/)  
“What does freedom mean to you?”

[**Rhode Island School of Design**](http://www.risd.edu/)  
“Is there something you love, have to do, can’t stop thinking about? Write about a personal passion or obsession other than visual art or design.”

[**Texas A&M University**](http://www.tamu.edu/)  
“Describe a circumstance, obstacle or conflict in your life, and the skills and resources you used to resolve it. Did it change you? If so, how?”

[**United States Naval Academy**](http://www.usna.edu/homepage.php)  
“Describe a personal experience you have had which you feel has contributed to your own character development and integrity.”

[**West Point (United States Military Academy)**](http://www.usma.edu/SitePages/Home.aspx)  
“Why will you be successful in working with leaders, peers, and subordinates of a gender, color, ethnicity, and/or religion different from your own?”

CMU Centralis Question One

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that there is an implied right to privacy in the U.S. Constitution, and may of our most cherished liberties such as the Fourth Amendment have a “privacy” aspect to them. However, in our current internet era, young Americans in particular do not seem to be overly concerned about their personal privacy, disclosing intimate personal information on Facebook and internet dating sites, as well as important personal financial information for purchases on questionable websites. Furthermore, they do not seem to be concerned about keeping their telephone conversations private, oftentimes using their cell phones in public place to hold very personal conversations without observing who may be listening nearby. The consequences of voluntary disclosure of this personal information could result in job loss, financial loss through identity theft, and the legal acquisition of personal data by surveillance organizations without the protection of the Fourth Amendment.

With these issues in mind, please answer the following two questions:

1. Is personal privacy no longer an important concern for young Americans? Explain your answer.
2. Do we need new laws to protect citizens from government or private invasion of privacy of U.S. citizens since so much personal information is readily available about individual citizens through simple internet searches? Or should we leave it up to each citizen to protect his or her privacy without the benefit of new laws? Justify your answer.

“10 Things Colleges Look for in Applicants” Tuesday, January 15, 2013 7:05 pm, Posted by **[lucybetina](http://edudemic.com/author/lucybetina/" \o "Posts by lucybetina)**

There’s a huge amount of competition for every spot in a college classroom. Here’s a few tips for high school students to make sure they make the grade.

**1. A high school curriculum that challenges the student.** Academically successful students should include several Honors and Advanced Placement classes.

**2. Grades that represent strong effort and an upward trend.**Grades should show an upward trend over the years. However, slightly lower grades in a rigorous program are preferred to all A’s in less challenging coursework.

**3. Solid scores on standardized tests (**[**SAT**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SAT)**,**[**ACT**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ACT_%28test%29)**).** These should be consistent with high school performance.

**4. Passionate involvement in a few activities**, demonstrating leadership and initiative. Depth, not breadth, of experience is most important.

**5. Community service** showing evidence of being a “contributor.” Activities should demonstrate concern for other people and a global view.

**6. Work or out-of-school experiences** (including summer activities) that illustrate responsibility, dedication and development of areas of interest. A job or other meaningful use of free time can demonstrate maturity.

**7. A well-written essay** that provides insight into the student’s unique personality, values and goals.The application essay should be thoughtful and highly personal. It should demonstrate careful and well-constructed writing.

**8. Letters of recommendation** from teachers and guidance counselors that give evidence of integrity, special skill, and positive character traits. Students should request recommendations from teachers who respect their work in an academic discipline.

**9. Supplementary recommendations by adults** who have had significant direct contact with the student. Letters from coaches or supervisors in long-term work or volunteer activities are valuable; however, recommendations from casual acquaintances or family friends, even if they’re well known, are rarely given much weight.

**10. Anything special that makes the student stand out** from the rest of the applicants! Include honors, awards, evidence of unusual talent or experience, or anything else that makes the student unique.

**12 Things That Every College Professor Hates**

I got this email from an Ivy League student when I arrived to give a speech. She was responsible for making sure that I was delivered to my hotel and knew where to go the next day:

Omg you’re here! Ahh i need to get my s--t together now lol. Jk. Give me a ring when u can/want, my cell is [redacted]. I have class until 1230 but then im free! i will let the teacher she u will be there, shes a darling. Perhaps ill come to the end of the talk and meet you there after. Between the faculty lunch and your talk, we can chat! ill take make sure the rooms are all ready for u. See ya!

To say the least, this did not make me feel confident that my visit would go smoothly. I will use this poor student to kick off this year’s list of Professors’ Pet Peeves. I reached out to my network and collected some things that really get on instructors’ nerves. Here are the results: some of the “don’ts” for how to interact with your professor or teaching assistant. For what it’s worth, No. 2 was *by far* the most common complaint.

**1. Don’t use unprofessional correspondence.** Your instructors are not your friends. Correspond with them as if you’re in a workplace, because you are. We’re not saying that you can’t ever write like this, but you do need to demonstrate that you know when such communication is and isn’t appropriate. You don’t wear pajamas to a job interview, right? Same thing.

**2. Don’t ask the professor if you “missed anything important” during an absence.** No, you didn’t miss anything important. We spent the whole hour watching [cats play the theremin](http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=cats+theramin&oq=cats+theramin&gs_l=youtube.3...20637.21240.0.21427.7.7.0.0.0.0.152.551.4j2.6.0...0.0...1ac.1.11.youtube.My6_aMvOms0) on YouTube! Of course you missed something important! We’re college professors! Thinking everything we do is important is an occupational hazard. Here’s an alternative way to phrase it: “I’m so sorry I missed class. I’m sure it was *awesome.”*

If you’re concerned about what you missed, try this instead: Do the reading, get notes from a classmate (if you don’t have any friends in class, ask the professor if they’ll send an email to help you find a partner to swap notes with), read them over, and drop by office hours to discuss anything you didn’t understand.

**3. Don’t pack up your things as the class is ending.** We get it. The minute hand is closing in on the end of class, there’s a shift in the instructor’s voice, and you hear something like “For next time …” That’s the cue for the students to start putting their stuff away. Once one person does it, it’s like an avalanche of notebooks slapping closed, backpack zippers zipping, and cell phones coming out. Don’t do it. Just wait 10 more seconds until the class is actually over. If you don’t, it makes it seem as if you are *dying* to get out of there and, hey, that hurts our feelings!

**4. Don’t ask a question about the readings or assignments until checking the syllabus first.** It’s easy to send off an email asking your instructor a quick question, but that person put a lot of effort into the syllabus for a reason. Remember, each professor has dozens or hundreds of students. What seems like a small thing on your end can add up to death-by-a-thousand-paper-cuts on our end. Make a good-faith effort to figure out the answer *before* you ask the professor.

**5. Don’t get mad if you receive critical feedback.** If an instructor takes a red pen and massacres your writing, that’s a sign that they care. Giving negative feedback is hard work, so the red ink means that we’re taking an interest in you and your future. Moreover, we know it’s going to make some students angry with us. We do it anyway because we care enough about you to try to help you become a stronger thinker and writer. It’s counterintuitive, but lots of red ink is probably a sign that the instructor thinks you have a lot of potential.

**6. Don’t grade grub.** Definitely go into office hours to find out how to study better or improve your performance, but don’t go in expecting to change your instructor’s mind about the grade. Put your energy into studying harder on the next exam, bringing your paper idea to the professor or teaching assistant in office hours, doing the reading, and raising your hand in class. That will have more of a payoff in the long run.

**7. Don’t mess with paper formatting.** Paper isn’t long enough? Think you can make the font a teensy bit bigger or the margins a tad bit wider? Think we won’t notice if you use a 12-point font that’s just a little more widely spaced? Don’t do it. We’ve been staring at the printed page for *thousands of hours*. We have an eagle eye for these kinds of things. Whatever your motivation, here’s what they say to us: “Hi Prof!, I’m trying to trick you into thinking that I’m fulfilling the assignment requirements. I’m lazy and you’re stupid!” Work on the assignment, not the document settings.

**8. Don’t pad your introductions and conclusions with fluff.** Never start off a paper with the phrase, “Since the beginning of time …” “Since the beginning of time, men have engaged in war.” Wait, what? Like, the big bang? And, anyway, how the heck do *you* know? You better have a damn strong citation for that! “Historically,” “Traditionally,” and “Throughout history” are equally bad offenders. Strike them from your vocabulary now. In your conclusion, say something smart. Or, barring that, just say what you said. But never say: “Hopefully someday there will be no war.” Duh. We’d all like that, but unless you’ve got ideas as to how to make it that way, such statements are simple hopefulness and inappropriate in an academic paper.

**9. Don’t misrepresent facts as opinions and opinions as facts.** Figure out the difference. Here’s an example of how *not* to represent a fact, via [CNN](http://www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/12/18/caroline.kennedy.senate/index.html?iref=topnews):

Considering that Clinton’s departure will leave only 16 women in the Senate out of 100 senators, many feminists believe women are underrepresented on Capitol Hill.

Wait. Feminists “believe”? Given that women are 51% of the population, 16 out of 100 means that women *are* underrepresented on Capitol Hill. This is a social fact, yeah? Now, you can agree or disagree with feminists that this is a *problem*, but don’t suggest, as CNN does, that the fact itself is an opinion.

This is a common mistake, and it’s frustrating for both instructors and students to get past. Life will be much easier if you know the difference.

**10. Don’t be too cool for school.** You know the student who sits at the back of the class, hunches down in his or her chair, and makes an art of looking bored? Don’t be that person. Professors and teaching assistants are the top 3% of students. They most likely spent more than a decade in college. For better or worse, they *value* education. To stay on their good side, you should show them that you care, too. And, if you don’t, pretend as if you do.

Read more: <http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2014/08/25/professors-pet-peeves/#ixzz3BnKTWLmE>

**College Ready vs. Out-of-Basement Ready: Shifting the Education Paradigm**

2 JULY 2014 11,711 14 COMMENTS

Last year when my son graduated from college, I asked the question “can you stay out of my basement?” as I believe an important outcome of education is the ability to live out of one’s parent’s basement, that is, the ability to be an independent and contributing member of a society.

The Common Core and most education reforms around the world define the outcome of schooling as readiness for college and career readiness. But as recent [statistics](http://www.slate.com/blogs/moneybox/2014/05/08/unemployment_and_the_class_of_2014_how_bad_is_the_job_market_for_new_college.html) suggest, college-readiness, even college-graduation-readiness, does not lead to out-basement-readiness. [Over 50% of recent college graduates in the US are unemployed or underemployed](http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/04/53-of-recent-college-grads-are-jobless-or-underemployed-how/256237/). The numbers are not much better in other parts of the world.

They are the “boomerang kids,” writes a [New York Times magazine article](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/22/magazine/its-official-the-boomerang-kids-wont-leave.html?msource=MAG10&_r=0) last week. These were good students. They were ready for college. They paid for college (many with borrowed money). They completed all college requirements. They did not drop out. And they graduated from college. But they are back in their parents’ basement for there is no career for them, ready or not.

The reason is simpler than many would like to accept: education has been preparing our students for an economy that no longer exists. Technology and globalization have transformed our society. Machines and off-shoring have led to the disappearance of traditional middle class jobs—jobs our education have been making our children ready for.

The “boomerang kids” are not poorly educated, but miseducated. They were prepared to look for jobs, but not to create jobs. They were prepared to solve problems, but not to identify problems or ask questions. They were prepared to follow instructions, but machines can follow instructions more precisely and more important, with less cost.

Technological changes always disrupt the existing social and economic order, forcing us to redefine the value of talents, knowledge, and skills. What used to be valuable may become obsolete. What was undervalued may become more valuable. We know that in the “second machine age” and “flat world,” we need creative, entrepreneurial, and globally competent workers to compete with machines and less expensive workers who do not have access to the same resources as students in developed countries. But policy makers and other “reformers” today remain dedicated to instilling in our children the outdate knowledge and skills following an outdated education paradigm. As a result, the more successful these reform efforts become, the more “boomerang kids” we will have.

What we need is to shift the education paradigm from preparing job seekers to job creators, from imposing upon children what a small group people defines as valuable knowledge and skills to supporting children to follow their own passion, and from fixing our children “deficits” defined by standardized testing to enhance their strengths. But the dominant reform efforts keep fixing the obsolete paradigm instead of inventing a new one. Worse yet, they discourage and penalize attempts to create a new paradigm.

The Common Core wants your kids to develop career readiness, but ask the question: who is equipped to create the careers they will become ready for?

So my 4th of July suggestion: Stop the Common Core or ready your basement for your college graduates. By the way, I am proud to say that my son does not live in my basement.

Article from a college professor about choosing the right college:  <http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/atlarge/2011/06/06/110606crat_atlarge_menand#ixzz26Aw1qTTe>