

# Middlebury

## Tips for Alumni Admissions Program (AAP) Interviewers

*October 2017*

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# Alumni Admissions Program (AAP) Overview

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- The AAP is an alumni-supported program that assigns and conducts interviews around the world to support the Admissions Office in finding the best candidates for Middlebury
- Overall support for the program is provided by:
  - Joanne Leggett, Special Programs Coordinator for Admissions
  - National Chairs (Shana Mitchell Hopkins '94, Hannah Burnett '10)
- There are 158 Admissions committees worldwide chaired by an alum and comprised of alumni volunteers who conduct interviews

# The Importance of AAP Volunteers

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- Why we need AAP interviews
  - College no longer interviews on campus
  - Majority of candidates are academically qualified thus need to move beyond what is written in the application
- AAP interviews provide
  - A greater emphasis on personal qualities
  - Sense of dimension to an applicant's file
  - Insight into the applicant's passions and how applicants' talents will add to the Middlebury community
- In 2016-17, 2,530 alumni worldwide completed approximately 5,400 interviews on behalf of the Admissions Office

# AAP Basics: How the Process Works

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The AAP Portal is used by committee chairs to assign interviews and for volunteers to submit interview reports.

- ❑ Chairs receive a list of applicants through the AAP Portal and assign interviews to alums in their committee.
- ❑ Alumni volunteers are alerted to assignments via email and applicant information appears in the alum's account through the AAP Portal.
- ❑ Alums contact applicant and conduct interview, either in person or, if farther away, via phone or Skype.
- ❑ Alums submit interview form via AAP Portal. Form is reviewed by Admissions as part of application.

***As a volunteer, it is critical that you check the AAP Portal regularly during the Admissions season. Don't assume that you will get every assignment via email.***

# Setting Up an Interview

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- Contact a student as soon as you get an assignment
  - Contact by email and phone (or text message if you have a mobile number)
  - Provide your contact information and class year in the message.
  - If unable to make contact, and if a cell number is provided, use texting as an option with a message such as *“Hello, I’m a Middlebury College Alumni Interviewer. Please check your email.”*
  - As a general guideline, an applicant should be marked as “non-responsive” after two attempts have been made to contact them, one of which should be a phone call
- Decide on meeting time and place
  - Meet your applicant in a public space, i.e. coffee shop, bookstore or library
  - Exchange cell numbers in case of last minute changes
  - Provide your personal description to aid identification

# Tips on Conducting an Interview

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- Spend between 30 and 60 minutes with an applicant
- Strive to make applicant comfortable so they can put their best foot forward.
  - Think about it as a conversation rather than an interview
  - Start with an easy question
- Ask open-ended questions to avoid “yes/no” responses
- Ask student to expand on answers to gain more insight
- Use interview form as a guideline for interview. Cover:
  - Academic/Intellectual
  - Extracurricular
  - Additional Qualities
  - Middlebury Potential

# Moving Beyond What is on the Application

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- *“We value your recommendations and insights into the applicants you’re interviewing; they are often a significant factor as we make decisions. And, AAP is a way to make a human connection in what often seems like an increasingly technologically-dominated process. It’s a way to share stories.”*
  - Greg Buckles, Dean of Admissions

Therefore, during the interview highlight:

- Intellectual engagement, curiosity, love of learning, creativity, depth of thought, and ability to articulate
- Talent, tenacity, commitment, leadership abilities, and potential to make a positive, significant contribution
  - *Example: Go beyond noting that a student is President of the Spanish Club ; explore what it is about the organization that excites the student and specific ways they demonstrate their leadership*

# Moving Beyond What is on the Application (cont.)

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- Explore extenuating circumstances or items which could be clarified from the application
  - *For example, unique family situation or travel experiences*
- Understand applicant's level of interest in Middlebury
- It is very important that you **NOT** attempt to predict for the applicant the likelihood of his or her admission.
- Do not ask for grades, ratings, test scores, etc. We obtain that information from other sources.

# Questions to Stimulate Great Conversations

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- What have you done that you are most proud of?
- If your best friend picked three words to describe you, what would those be?
- What is something unique that you could bring to Middlebury?
- What areas about you can you improve upon?
- What interests/excites you about Middlebury?
- If you could relive your high school years, would you do anything differently?
- If you could take time off before college, what would you do?
- When you read for fun, why/how do you choose a book?
- What is your opinion on (a current news topic)?

# Interview Form

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## 1. THE APPLICANT

- What are the first few words that come to mind about this applicant following your interview?

## 2. ACADEMIC/INTELLECTUAL QUALITIES

- Tell us about the student's breadth and depth of intellectual curiosity. Does s/he have a passion for learning? Give specific examples if possible. How has the student faced academic challenges and/or created academic opportunities?

## 3. EXTRACURRICULAR

- What are the student's main interests and activities outside the classroom? What has s/he learned from these experiences? Has s/he held any leadership roles? Please comment on the depth of the student's participation and his or her enthusiasm towards the activity. How do you envision the student contributing to the Middlebury community?

# Interview Form, cont.

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## 4. ADDITIONAL QUALITIES

- Is there any additional information we should know about the student? (e.g., family situations, time abroad, obstacles overcome, job, etc.)

## 5. MIDDLEBURY POTENTIAL

- What will this student offer the College? How does s/he see her/himself on campus? Why does s/he want to come to Middlebury? What is his/her degree of familiarity with Middlebury?

# Writing Useful Interview Reports

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- In general, keep in mind:
  - These students are 16-18 years old
  - Remember to not pass judgment on the physical appearance of the applicant
- Style of report forms
  - Share short anecdotes or quotations
  - Comment on aspects that strike you as positive or negative
  - Include notes on context, if known, i.e. student is known in town as “best and brightest” of student leaders
- Length
  - Spend a minimum of 20 minutes writing up your thoughts

# Writing Useful Interview Reports (cont.)

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- Submit reports by the deadlines. Late reports run the risk of being unread. Submit reports for all assigned applicants, even if applicant did not want to meet.
- Consider starting your answer to Middlebury Potential with, “I think that ‘*Name*’ would make a ‘*choose your adjective(s)*’ Middlebury student because.....”
- Ratings
  - Match ratings to your responses and back them up
  - Be wary of “rating inflation,” i.e., really consider whether or not this applicant deserves a “7”
  - Refer to Ratings Scale descriptions

# Ratings Scale

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- 7** truly exceptional interview; student would be a tip-top contributor to campus - one of only a handful each year who are especially compelling personally and/or intellectually, and who could shape this community in exceptional ways; someone who stands head and shoulders above the rest.
- 6** excellent interview; student is clearly above and beyond our routine interviewees, offers ingredients to campus that would have a definite impact on others and on the quality of institution; someone who would be known on campus and be a source of campus pride; a memorable individual.
- 5** very solid interview with qualities that show the student has fulfilled more than our standard expectations; carries the conversation in interesting ways, turns the interview into an asset to his/her candidacy; goes beyond merely responding to questions showing either insight, depth, passion, reflection, wisdom, curiosity, or initiative; someone we'd be happy to have on campus.
- 4** standard interview; student would be a welcome presence on campus and a pleasant addition, but interview was not anything particularly out of the ordinary; student would be a solid citizen, but no stand-out qualities are apparent; appears to be fairly typical of many of our applicants; a "pleasant" interview.

# Ratings Scale, cont.

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- 3** below average interview; student might contribute to campus in one sector or another but overall falls below our average student. While not representative of our average profile, the student is still academically engaged and/or community oriented
- 2** poor interview; student is unlikely to add much to campus; interview was clearly underwhelming; student does not demonstrate a sufficient positive contribution to the vitality, depth, or breadth of the Middlebury community, either personally or intellectually; interview memorable mostly for its lack of appeal.
- 1** bad interview; student did not demonstrate any reason to admit; interview was a clear liability to his/her candidacy; student is not a contender in our pool; intellectual or personal qualities are lacking in ways obvious enough to seriously damage the committee's assessment of the student's candidacy here.
- 99** Unable to assess.

# What More I Can Do to Help

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- Volunteer to complete more interviews
- Do a Skype or phone interview
- Recruit more alumni to AAP
- Volunteer to be a committee chair

# Resources for AAP Volunteers

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- Online resources (found through the AAP Portal)
  - AAP Handbook
    - Examples of strong reports with Admissions comments
    - Policies
  - Mock Interview
  - Frequently Asked Questions
  - AAP Calendar
  - AAP Interview Tips 2017-18
- Other resources
  - Joanne Leggett *aap@middlebury.edu*
  - National Chairs
  - Committee Chairperson

# Thank you!

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“The size and scope of Middlebury's AAP program is unmatched among our peer institutions. The Office of Admissions is proud of the work you do. Thank you!”

*- Greg Buckles, Dean of Admissions*