COLLEGE PLANNING HANDBOOK

Part One: Overview & Timeline
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The purpose of this handbook is to provide an overview of the college admissions process. It is important that students and parents carefully read all parts of the handbook and refer to it frequently. This handbook consists of five parts:

- Part One: Overview & Timeline
- Part Two: College Selection & Visits
- Part Three: The College Application
- Part Four: Paying for College
- Part Five: Student-Athletes

For most students, this will be the first truly important decision of your lives. Remember that you are the one going to college. You should be driving this process by being actively engaged in creating your college list, choosing your recommendation writers, and most importantly, crafting your own original applications. Ask for help as you need it – that’s what we are here for – but also know that as a Portledge School student you have all of the resources you need within you to successfully manage this process.

Remember that the goal is to find a good match between you and a college or university. It is tempting to compare yourself with classmates, but a place where one person will thrive might be unpleasant or otherwise inappropriate for another student, even one who is a close friend. Your job throughout this process is to conduct careful self-analysis, recognize both your strengths and weaknesses, and approach, thoughtfully and seriously, the task that lies ahead of you. It is important to keep in mind that the end goal of your high school experience is not just “getting into a good college.” While important, college is just one step on life’s path. Your whole future does not depend on a college’s decision to accept you!

Starting in junior year you, your parents and your college counselor will begin the intensive work of finding a group of colleges that suit your interests, skills, and goals. Although many people will help in this process, the final decision must be yours. Your willingness to do the hard work of applying to colleges on time and meeting all deadlines will demonstrate your readiness for college and the independence that accompanies that step.

During this process you will have a number of tasks which will fall into one of the categories:

1. Think about and identify your strengths, weaknesses, interests, challenges, and goals; in other words – engage in introspection
2. Commit to frequent and honest communication with your college counselor
3. Determine what you are looking for in a college and research many colleges’ offerings
4. Objectively reflect on who you are as an applicant
5. Complete your applications thoughtfully, carefully, and on time
6. Choose the college you will attend
You will hear many, many opinions (often conflicting) about specific colleges from a variety of sources – parents, counselors, teachers, coaches, relatives, well-meaning friends, even the mail carrier! To resist stereotypes and rumors, you must investigate for yourself. As you begin to think about yourself as an applicant, your college counselor will help you sort through statistical information about former Portledge applicants, and recent admissions profiles and trends to assess your chances of being admitted.

In partnership with your parents and college counselor you will be able to successfully navigate the college process. We have outlined each member of the partnership’s responsibilities below.

**Student Responsibilities:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Responsibilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• READ ALL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE COLLEGE COUNSELING OFFICE!</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Check your school email daily</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Maintain an accurate college list in SCOIR</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Adhere to College Counseling Office deadlines</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Communicate with colleges as necessary</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Complete the self-assessments provided in class and on SCOIR</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Research basic admissions criteria for the colleges you are considering</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Visit colleges during school breaks and summer vacation</td>
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<td>• Request at least one letter of recommendation from teacher/s before the close of junior year</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Complete the Common Application and a Personal Statement over the summer before senior year</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Meet with college representatives visiting Portledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Complete applications honestly and accurately, paying careful attention to deadlines</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Proactively update the college counselors on your plans, concerns, questions, progress, and results</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Report standardized testing in the manner recommended by each individual college</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Parent Responsibilities:

- Be open with your child. Discuss college plans, including any financial concerns and/or restrictions openly and honestly early in the process. Share these thoughts with your college counselor.
- Support and communicate with your child and their counselor.
- Be open to new ideas and colleges you may not have heard of before.
- Complete the Parent Input Form. This form adds greatly to our understanding of your child, which in turn helps us to write a better, more informed school statement.
- Be aware of deadlines and other requirements.
- Empower your child to take ownership of the application process.
- Help your child send official test scores to colleges. The College Counseling Office does not send standardized test scores to colleges; official score reports sent directly from the testing agency are usually required and the student is responsible for this important requirement.
- Plan college visits.
- Fill out and file financial aid forms on time if applying for financial aid.
- Keep talking with your child, but also understand there may be times that they do not want to talk about college. Think about creating a weekly college check-in to discuss all college-related issues and ideas and calling a moratorium on daily college conversations.

### College Counselor Responsibilities:

- Discuss college planning and application strategy with the student and the parents and help the student develop a schedule, testing plan, and a balanced college list of good matches.
- Provide information about chances of admission to any particular college.
- Help students access information about visitations, special events, open houses at colleges, deadlines, and standardized testing.
- Prepare a well-written, comprehensive school statement that portrays the student honestly and positively with an emphasis on areas of strength and patterns of growth. Serve as an advocate for Portledge students.
- Support and counsel students and parents throughout the college search, application, and selection process. Be accessible and communicate in a timely fashion.
- Prepare and send transcripts and mid-trimester, trimester, mid-year, and final grade reports to colleges.
## College Planning Timeline & Calendar:

### Freshman Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trimester</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1st Trimester</strong></td>
<td>• Set goals and create a plan for achieving them&lt;br&gt;• Work on time management and study habits&lt;br&gt;• Try out a few clubs and activities and figure out what you like to do&lt;br&gt;• Read often to increase your vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2nd Trimester</strong></td>
<td>• Decide if you are taking any SAT Subject tests; if so, register and prepare!&lt;br&gt;• Plan your sophomore schedule carefully&lt;br&gt;• Plan your summer activities&lt;br&gt;• Attend College Night on January 14th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3rd Trimester</strong></td>
<td>• Assess your progress against your goals – what adjustments do you need to make as a 10th grader?</td>
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### Sophomore Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>• Set goals and create a plan to achieve them&lt;br&gt;• Continue to make time management and study skills a priority&lt;br&gt;• Continue to read regularly&lt;br&gt;• Get or stay involved in clubs and activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>• Take PreACT on November 2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>October</strong></td>
<td>• Take PSAT October 16th; results are available online in mid-December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>• Think about your summer plans; many selective programs have early deadlines. Consider a summer job, internship, or other kind of learning experience&lt;br&gt;• If you are ready and interested, plan to visit a few colleges over spring break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>• Attend 10th grade college night on February 27th</td>
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<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>• Attend 10th Grade College Trip from March 5th–6th&lt;br&gt;• Decide if you are taking any SAT Subject Tests; if so, register and begin to prepare&lt;br&gt;• Plan your 11th grade schedule carefully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>• Assess your progress against your goals – what adjustments do you need to make as an 11th grader?</td>
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### Junior Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>• Set goals and create a plan to achieve them&lt;br&gt;• Get or stay involved in clubs and activities&lt;br&gt;• Create a tentative standardized testing calendar &amp; plan for the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>October</strong></td>
<td>• Take PSAT October 16th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>• Take PreACT on November 2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>November</strong></td>
<td>• Attend College Night for Juniors and Parents (Required) on November 5th&lt;br&gt;• Maintain or improve grades&lt;br&gt;• Assess 1st trimester progress against goals; make adjustments as needed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| December                      | Review PSAT results and confirm standardized testing and preparation plan  
|                              | Continue to focus on academic performance  |
| January                      | Begin weekly college counseling classes  
|                              | **Students:** Complete Junior Questionnaire  
|                              | **Parents:** Complete College Counseling Parent Input Form  
|                              | **Parents and Students:** Read all parts of the College Counseling Handbook  
|                              | Schedule individual student and then student / parent meeting with your assigned college counselor  
|                              | Begin to plan summer activities  |
| February                     | President’s Weekend February 14th–18th: Plan to visit colleges during this break. (Make sure the admissions offices are open!)  
|                              | Schedule individual student and parent meetings with college counselors if you have not yet done so  |
| March                        | Meet with college representatives who visit Portledge  
|                              | **SAT administered on March 14th**  
|                              | Spring Break March 16th-27th: College visits are strongly recommended during this break  
|                              | • These need not be distant visits unless you are vacationing nearby or are targeting a particular geography or college  
|                              | • Try to see one large, one small, one urban, and one rural variation  
|                              | • Sign up for tours and information sessions by visiting individual college websites. Often, hotel and other travel information are available on the “visit campus” pages  
|                              | • Unless you are traveling a significant distance or have fully prepared with a college counselor, **hold off on interviews for now**  
|                              | • Plan 12th grade schedule carefully  |
| April                        | Meet with college representatives who visit Portledge  
|                              | **ACT administered on April 14th**  
|                              | Finalize your summer activities and plans  
|                              | Research colleges using SCOIR to view data on past applicants at schools in which you are interested; read Fiske Guide reviews online for free  
|                              | • Continue to update your college list on SCOIR as you add or delete schools  
|                              | • Discuss and determine whom you will ask to write your Teacher Recommendations with a college counselor  
|                              | • To allow teachers time over the summer to write for you, ask for recommendations before the end of the school year  |
| May                          | Meet with college representatives who visit Portledge  
|                              | SAT and SAT Subject Tests administered on May 2nd  
|                              | Take IB & AP exams  
|                              | Study for Final Exams  |
| June                         | **Take Final Exams**  
|                              | SAT and SAT Subject Tests administered on June 6th  
|                              | **ACT administered on June 13th**  
|                              | If you plan on playing an NCAA Division 1 or 2 sport, complete the NCAA Student Eligibility process on the NCAA website  
|                              | Plan for final summer and fall college visits, now requesting interviews  |
### July - August
- Do something fun and relaxing that refreshes you!
- SAT and Subject Tests administered August 29th
- Continue researching targeted colleges and discussing your choices with your family
- Narrow college list to eight to ten schools with two to three schools in each category of Reach, Target, and Likely. Continue to update SCOIR
- Draft a 500-650 word response to one of the Common Application Essay prompts; send to college counselors for feedback
- Review need for additional standardized testing and register for all fall test dates which may include SAT or SAT Subject Tests in October or November, or ACT in September or October; prepare as needed
- Work on portfolio, audition or sports highlight reel, if applicable
- Research all merit-based and need-based financial aid programs and scholarships, taking careful note of all deadlines
- Create a timeline and organizational document that includes all application requirements and deadlines
- When available, download and review supplements, drafting responses to Supplemental Essays
- Sign up for and attend Summer Intensive classes at Portledge in late August

### SENIOR YEAR

#### September
- Essay drafts and activity grids are due the first day of school
- Focus on academic performance: senior year grades can often be a critical part of a borderline case decision
- Weekly College Counseling classes resume
- **College Night for Seniors and Parents (Required) on September 10th**
- Work on college applications
- Meet with college representatives who visit Portledge (calendar published in SCOIR)
- ED/EA candidates must meet individually with a college counselor in September
- Update college list in SCOIR
- If applying for financial aid, get a FAFSA ID now so that you can file the form as early as October using 2018 tax return information
- **September 30th:** Students must notify the college office of any colleges on their list with an October 15th deadline! Send SAT or ACT scores to these colleges now!

#### October
- **Submit test scores to ED/EA and Rolling schools**
  - Students are responsible for sending scores in the manner that is recommended by each individual college
  - Columbus Day: This may be a good time for one last college visit trip
- **October 20th – Finalize and update your College List in SCOIR**
  - Make sure your application list in SCOIR is accurate; all school forms are sent electronically and without a complete and accurate list, we will not be able to send materials
- **October 20th:** Last date for students to notify the college counselors of their intentions to apply under early deadlines and programs with November 1st deadlines to guarantee that credentials are sent on time
### October

- **October 1st:** CSS financial aid PROFILE available on October 1st; become familiar with it and all financial aid deadlines
- **October 1st:** FAFSA becomes available on October 1st; check individual schools for deadlines but you can now file the FAFSA any time after October 1st using 2018 tax return information
- **October 1st:** Meet with college representatives who visit Portledge (calendar published in SCOIR)
- **October 1st:** Finalize Common Application, essays, and supplements
- **October 1st:** ED/EA and Rolling applications should be submitted in advance of the November 1st deadline
- **October 1st:** Identify possible scholarship opportunities; let college counselors know if you are applying for any scholarships that require support from Portledge so that we can complete necessary school forms

### November

- **November 1st:** Students must update SCOIR and notify the college counselors of any applications with November 15th deadlines to guarantee that credentials are sent on time
- **November 15th:** Students must update SCOIR and notify the college counselors of any applications with early December deadlines to guarantee that credentials are sent on time
- **November 15th:** ED/EA and Rolling applications should be submitted in advance of the November 15th deadline
  - Make sure official test reports are sent from ACT and/or SAT before or by the deadlines
- **November 15th:** Financial Aid Applicants: Begin preparing CSS Profile. The CSS Profile should be submitted by January 1st at the latest
- **1st Trimester:** 1st Trimester grades are sent out
  - Continue to work hard in 2nd Trimester. Mid-year grades are reported to colleges and are looked at prior to final decisions in many cases
  - 2nd Trimester grades may be used to make decisions in the case of waitlist
- **Thanksgiving Break:** Thanksgiving Break is an ideal time to get organized and complete any final application tasks.
- **University of California:** University of California applications due November 30th. SUNY applications should be submitted by December 1st

### December

- **December 19th:** Every student must confirm their final college list (and then update it in both SCOIR and the Common Application) no later than December 20th to guarantee that all credentials are sent for January 1st deadlines
- **December 19th:** Submit test scores to ALL colleges at this time
  - Students are responsible for sending scores in a manner that is recommended by each individual college
- **December 19th:** Thank all teachers for writing letters of recommendation for you.
- **ED I/EA Notification Period:** ED I/EA notification period is typically between December 15th-21st; please let us know of all results!
  - If you are accepted ED: you must withdraw all applications filed at other institutions as per your ED agreement. Please cc: Ms. Crowley, Ms. Krieger-Joven, and Mr. Naftalis when you send withdrawal emails to other colleges
December
- **If you are NOT accepted ED:** you should already have a Plan B in place; if you do not, please see a college counselor immediately!
- *We are available to celebrate and commiserate with you no matter how busy it is!*
- **Double check all financial aid requirements and deadlines and be sure to submit everything on time!**
- **Portledge closes for Winter Break on December 20th; be certain to have everything completed and your SCOIR list 100% finalized by this date**

January
- Financial Aid Forms should be sent to their processing centers ASAP; most financial aid is first come, first served!

March
- 2\(^{nd}\) Trimester grades sent out
- Regular Decision notification period begins

May
- **May 1\(^{st}\) – National Decision/Deposit Day.** You may send a deposit to only one college

June
- Senior Project Presentations, Senior Dinner, Prom & Awards Ceremony
- Graduation Day!
- Final Transcripts will be submitted to only one college. (Make sure all accounts with Portledge are settled)

### 11th Grade College Counseling Class Topics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-evaluation</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College Selection</td>
<td>Completing the Applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Visits</td>
<td>Presenting Your Extracurricular Activities and Interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources and Research</td>
<td>Essays</td>
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<tr>
<td>How Colleges Evaluate Applications</td>
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### 12th Grade College Counseling Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Getting Organized</th>
<th>Supplemental Essays</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Statement</td>
<td>College Application Completion Checklist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Application and Extracurricular Activities Presentation</td>
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</table>

If students have a final college list in SCOIR; have completed the Common Application, including the personal statement, and have submitted standardized testing to all colleges they no longer need to attend college counseling class. Students must be excused individually by a college counselor. If you have not been excused you will need to attend college counseling class every week until winter break.

**We Admit… Guidance From Those Who Do**
Applying to college does not have to be overwhelming! The following principles and guidelines can help make the college admission process more manageable, productive, and educationally appropriate. This guidance is offered by the Education Conservancy, a group of admission professionals committed to calming the commercial frenzy by affirming educational values in college admission.
Principles: These guiding principles are relevant for parents, students, counselors, and admission deans:

- Education is a process, not a product. Students are learners, not customers
- The benefits and predictors of good education are knowable yet virtually impossible to measure
- Rankings oversimplify and mislead
- A student’s intellectual skills and attitude about learning are more important than what college a student attends
- Educational values are best served by admission practices that are consistent with these values
- College admission should be part of an educational process directed toward student autonomy and intellectual maturity
- Colleges can be assessed, but not ranked. Students can be evaluated, but not measured
- Students’ thoughts, ideas and passions are worthy to be engaged and handled with utmost care

Student Guidelines: An admission decision, test score, or GPA is not a measure of your self-worth. And, most students are admitted to colleges they want to attend. Knowing this, we encourage you to:

- Be confident! Take responsibility for your college admission process. The more you do for yourself, the better the results will be
- Be deliberate! Applying to college involves thoughtful research to determine distinctions among colleges, as well as careful self-examination to identify your interests, learning style and other criteria. Plan to make well-considered applications to the most suitable colleges. This is often referred to as “making good matches”
- Be realistic and trust your instincts! Choosing a college is an important process, but not a life or death decision. Since there are limits to what you can know about colleges and about yourself, you should allow yourself to do educated guesswork
- Be open-minded! Resist the notion that there is one perfect college. Great education happens in many places
- Use a variety of resources for gathering information. Seek advice from those people who know you, care about you, and are willing to help
- Be honest; be yourself! Do not try to game the system
- Resist taking any standardized test numerous times (twice is usually sufficient)
- Limit your applications to a well-researched and reasonable number. No more than six should be sufficient, except in special cases
- Know that what you do in college is a better predictor of future success and happiness than where you go to college

Parent Guidelines: An admission decision, test score, or GPA is not a measure of a student’s worth. And, parents should always be mindful of the behavior they are modeling for their children. Knowing this, we encourage you to:

- Recognize that gaining admission to college is merely one step in a process of education that will include your child attending a college where they can maximize talents and growth. Emphasize the education
- Resist doing for your children what they are capable of doing for themselves
- Allow your child to take responsibility for their own part of the college application process
- Be involved in the process, but do not try to control it
- Resist relying on rankings and college selectivity to determine the most suitable colleges for your child
- Realize that researching, selecting, and applying to colleges does not have to be an expensive process
- Resist attempts to turn the process into a status competition. Develop a healthy, educationally based, and family-appropriate approach to college admissions
Consider that gaming the system may not only diminish your child’s self-confidence, it may also jeopardize desired admission outcomes.

Listen to, encourage and believe in your child. Do not use the term “we” as in “we are applying to….”

Discuss the idea of education as an ongoing process, and how selecting a college might be different from buying a product.

Love them enough to let them demonstrate the independence you have instilled in them.

Keep this process in perspective. Remember that student skills, self-confidence, curiosity, and desire to learn are some of the most important ingredients in quality education and successful college admissions. Do not sacrifice these by overemphasizing getting into the “best” college.

This guidance is offered by the following veteran admission professionals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phillip Ballinger, University of Washington</th>
<th>Brad MacGowan, Newton North High School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie Balmer, Dickinson College</td>
<td>Bonnie Marcus, Bard College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michael Beseda, St. Mary’s College of California</td>
<td>David McDonald, Western Oregon University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeff Brenzel, Yale University</td>
<td>Mark C. Moody, Colorado Academy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jennifer Delahunty, Kenyon College</td>
<td>James Nondorf, University of Chicago</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. Antonio Cabasco, Whitman College</td>
<td>Marty O’Connell, Colleges That Change Lives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sean Callaway, Pace University</td>
<td>Bruce Poch, Pomona College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sidonia Dalby, Smith College</td>
<td>Jon Reider, San Francisco University High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doris Davis, Cornell University</td>
<td>Jeff Rickey, Earlham College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melissa Ewing, The Bush School</td>
<td>Kristine Sawicki, Reed College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bill Fitzsimmons, Harvard University</td>
<td>Stuart Schmill, Massachusetts Institute of Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erica L. Johnson, Lewis &amp; Clark College</td>
<td>Michael Sexton, Santa Clara University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maria Laskaris, Dartmouth College</td>
<td>Jim Sumner, Lewis &amp; Clark College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matthew Malatesta, Union College</td>
<td>Steven Syverson, Lawrence University</td>
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