

## **Purpose and Approach to the Counselor Report**

Also called "Secondary Report", "Secondary School Report"

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One component to most private colleges and some public universities' admission applications is the Counselor Report. When students find this form in the college application they are to fill out their portion, sign the confidentiality waiver, and pass the form to Mrs. Hillstrom for completion and mailing, along with the MIHS tracking form and any other required forms. This form is needed for the college to gain further understanding about the individual student and his/her high school.

The Counselor Recommendation comes in several different forms, often unique to the individual college. One portion of the Counselor Report asks questions about the academic standing of the senior student including current GPA (unweighted in our case) class rank, admission test scores, grading scale, the lowest passing mark, and percentage of the previous senior class matriculating to four year colleges and two year colleges. (Colleges also receive a school profile along with each transcript. The profile presents in-depth information about academics, test scores, accreditation, graduation requirements, course descriptions, National Merit Scholars, grading procedures, and symbols used on our transcript). An important part of a Counselor Report is the high school counselor assessment of the course rigor level attempted and accomplished by the student. This shows the college the maximum difficulty of courses available at our high school and how this individual student compares with that benchmark. For a perspective, the form asks how long the counselor has known the student and in what capacity. Most often there is a "check-off" section where the counselor rates the student's ability in academic achievement/potential, extracurricular activities, relationship with peers, respect from faculty, personal qualities and creativity. A final admission recommendation is often found on these forms.

Part of the Counselor Report is to be written by the counselor, in prose form. This portion is often erroneously called the "counselor letter of recommendation". College admission counselors look to this portion for a greater understanding of the individual student. Most often high school counselors use this opportunity to address the following appropriate issues: any parts of the high school transcript that may seem unusual and therefore need clarification (credits earned at other institutions such as through accredited private tutoring schools, Running Start, etc); highlighting honors and AP courses; ESL and Resource courses; knowledge of why there is a "spike" in the transcript; the fact that our school does not give out academic awards; and our unweighted GPA. Intellectual potential, motivation, maturity, reaction to setbacks, issues of integrity, demonstrated initiative, and leadership talents of the student are discussed here as well. This information is important for college admission counselors, since they are assessing the ability of the student to be successful at their college. It would be harmful for a student to be accepted to a college where the academic rigor or course load expectations far exceeded the student's ability and therefore he/she would not be successful at that college. It is our job as high school counselors to help college admission counselors understand the success of the student at our high school. More than once college admission counselors have said "we can deal with 'it' as long as we know what 'it' is".

The second perspective brought forth by the written portion of the Counselor Report deals with the student's character, extraordinary abilities, ability to overcome adversities, learning issues, health, physical or psychological issue, exceptional accomplishments, and relationship or leadership qualities appreciated in a large group of peers. Hopefully the family has chosen to disclose in a personal statement

what learning disabilities, health, or psychological issues need to be addressed at the college. Above all, college admission counselors expect high school counselors to be honest and candid when writing about a student. That is why the Counselor Report form requests the student to waive his/her right to confidentiality. Our MIHS college application tracking form requires the student and parent, if the student is under eighteen years old, to sign the waiver statement as follows: "I request that my MIHS counselor or Mrs. Hillstrom submit a letter of recommendation and/or secondary school report in support of my application to the above named institution if it is required for application. I understand that this statement is confidential and hereby waive any rights to view its content".

Thank you for reading this and showing interest in understanding this important yet often misunderstood portion of the college application.

MIHS counselors