

Forum

Common application causes more harm than good

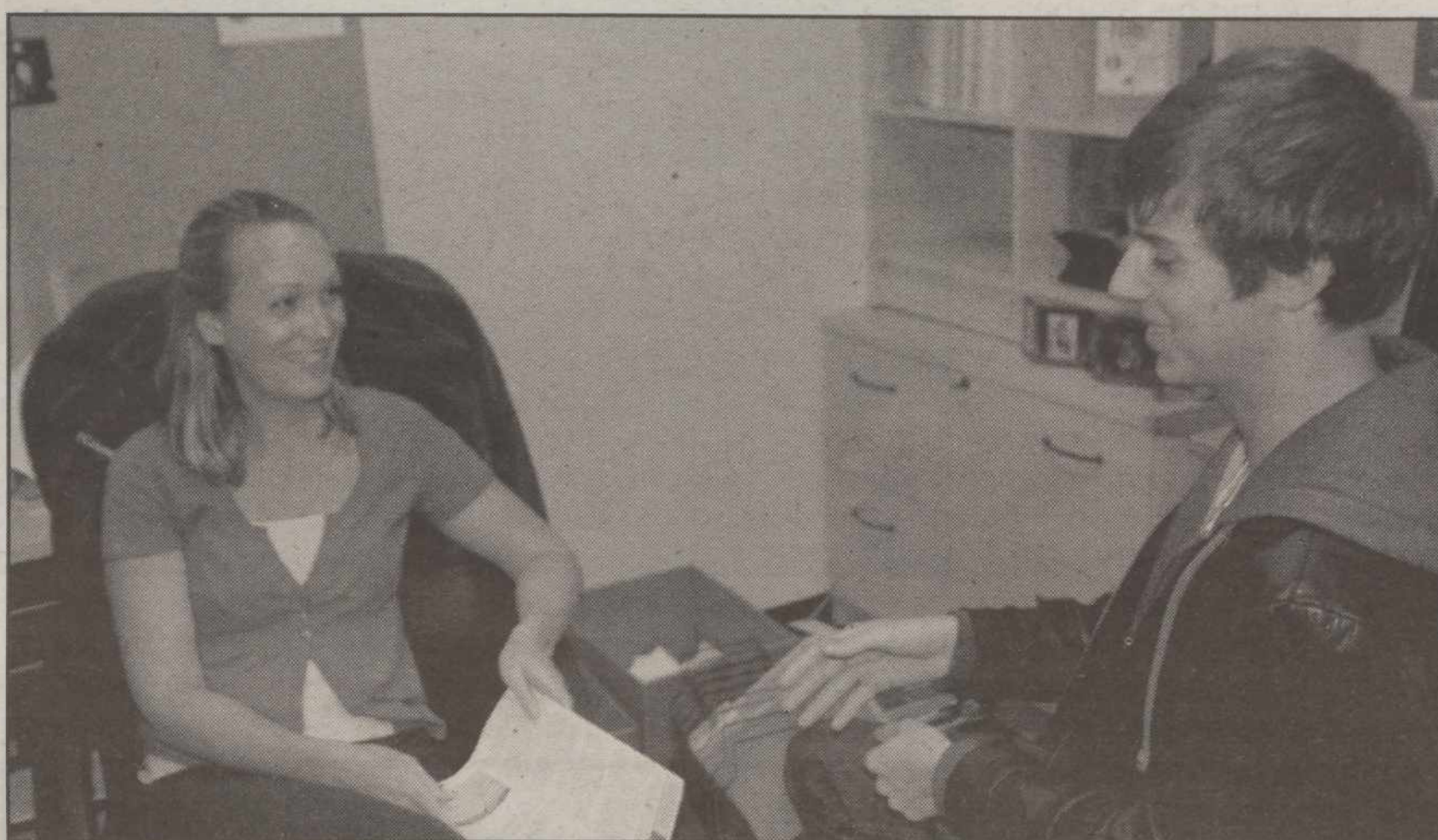
MARY WOOD

For most high school students, senior year is a time of both anxiety and excitement. With the joy of graduation just around the corner comes the burden of applying to colleges. Filling out the applications and waiting to hear the results can be highly stressful, but the Common Application has, in theory, provided a solution: one application for many different schools to provide a more convenient and more holistic way for students to apply to college.

However, it comes with major strings attached. Although much of the Common App process is just what it claims, a generic application between the partner schools, some schools have supplemental applications in addition to the main part of the application. In fact, out of the 391 schools that accept the Common App, 237 require a supplement of some sort.

Now this isn't to say that having some part of an application shared by a variety of schools is a bad idea. Most of the Common App is an excellent resource because it makes the more tedious parts of the application process something that can be done once. Then there is more time for important things, like essays. Who really wants to fill out their name, address, extracurriculars and honors on every single application? It certainly becomes repetitive.

When you begin the writing section, though, is when you encounter the problem. The Common App requires a short



Connor Martin, senior, talks with Jamie Welle, College Center secretary, about the college application process. Many colleges require the Common Application, which allows applicants to apply to many schools using one application. Most of the Common App's partner colleges require additional supplements, often including essays.

answer question about an extracurricular activity and a full-length essay on your choice of a virtually endless number of topics. The supplements for the schools also tend to contain more writing prompts, ranging from short answers to additional full-length essays. Some of these supplements aren't too labor intensive, but others require a lot more work. For example, Stanford University requires many short answer questions as well as three extra essays.

These requirements seem a bit strange for an application that deems itself "common." With schools like Stanford wanting so many additional writing samples, it makes me wonder if they actually place value on the main essay for the Common App.

The best solution to the problem seems to be altering the application. It's

Junk college mail reaches all-time high, wastes time and resources

JENNIFER SITTON

If you just took the PSAT for the first time, you have no idea what you're in for. I'm talking about mail and e-mails galore, because unless you checked the tiny, little box saying you didn't want colleges to

there were four or five a day! Most of them were from obscure, East Coast colleges I'd never even heard of and would never think about attending. These letters were exciting at first, but after receiving so many, they just became a bother.

First of all, do these

those students sit up and take notice.

Second, the PSAT should have a section for students to check which areas of the country they are interested in attending college. I have at least 20 letters from random colleges and universities on the East Coast. I don't want to go any farther for college than Washington or California. I wouldn't even think about going to Vermont! Colleges should consider what students are interested in before they bombard them with information they don't want. They should only continue to send information to students who send back the card requesting it.

In this day and age, students are not only receiving letters for academics from the PSAT, they are receiving letters from colleges for athletics, for theater programs and numerous methods of recruitment from the military. And they are receiving these letters as early as freshman or sophomore year! We shouldn't have to start thinking about college at 14! If you aren't old enough to drive, you aren't old enough to be thinking about college.

Colleges and universities need to back off and narrow down their searches, because my closet is getting full. After this year's PSAT I went shoe shopping in preparation... that empty box is just sitting by the mail slot, waiting.

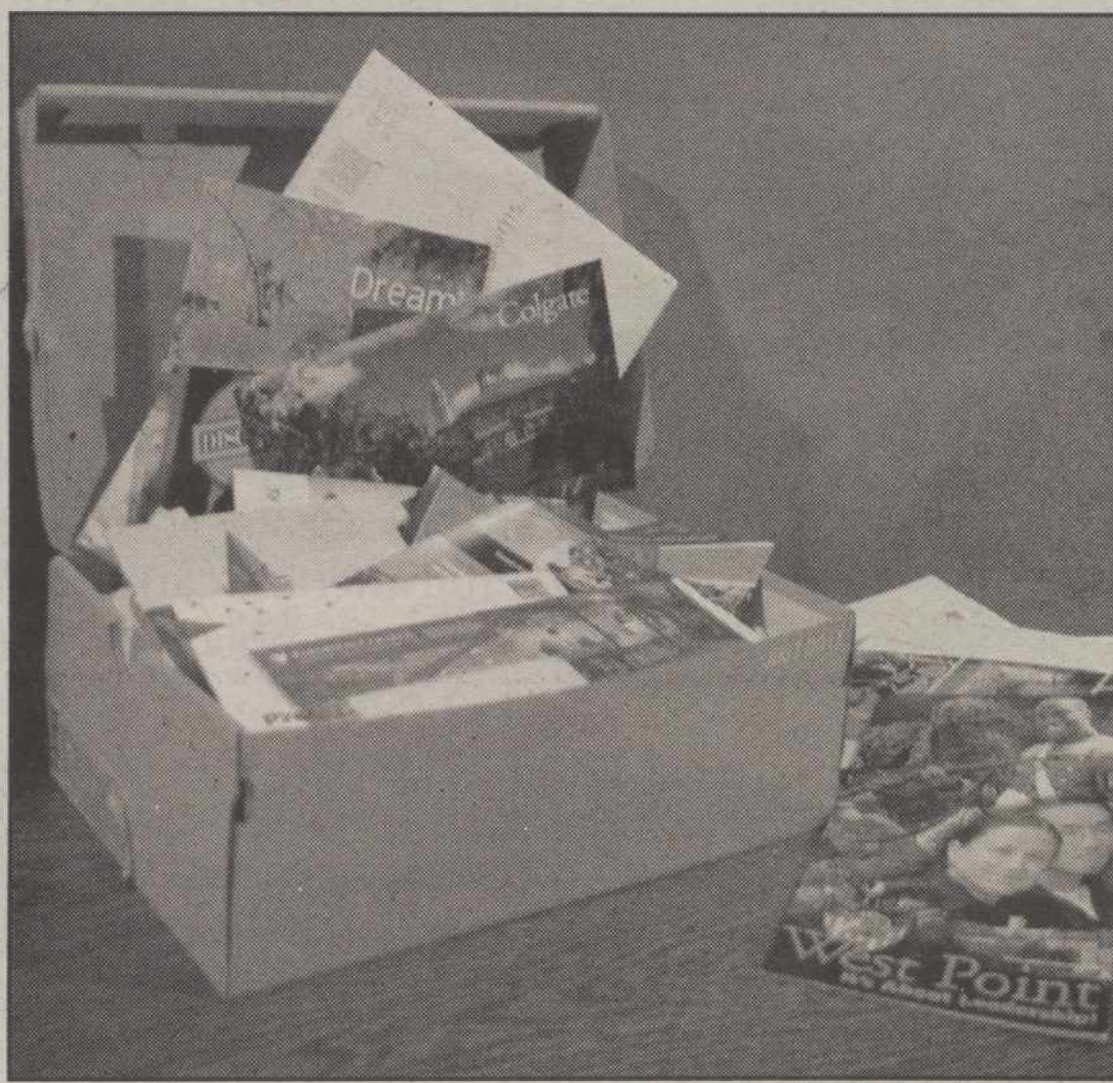


Photo by Libby Kara

A WLHS junior's shoebox overflows with college junk mail. The overwhelming amount of useless mail started appearing after the student took the PSAT for the first time.

contact you, you will have a stack that fills at least two shoe boxes by the end of this year. If you scored exceptionally high, those might be two boot boxes. Or, if you scored on the lower side, they might be sandal boxes.

I'll never forget last year when, a few months after I took the PSAT, mail started arriving from colleges in my name. For a while,

colleges consider how much paper they are wasting by sending out masses of form letters every day? And many of these colleges claim to be very green and environmentally friendly. I love the irony. Maybe instead of sending prospective students paper informing them of how green they are, they should do something for the environment that makes

Amplifier

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