Vassar College Alumnae/i Admission Program:
Interviewing Manual

**A copy of the Best Practices Agreement you signed is available at the end of this manual. Please refer to it for additional information.**

Role of the Alumnae/i Interview

For applicants to Vassar, interviews are optional and are conducted by Vassar alumnae/i around the world. The conversational interview is an ideal way for students to learn about Vassar from a different perspective, especially since you are encouraged to share what you have done with your Vassar degree. It is also a good way for the Office of Admission to get information about a student's level of interest in Vassar.

STEP ONE: Setting up the Interview

From November to late February, your AAP Chair will assign students to you through the AAP Portal. Your AAP Chair will contact you when an interview has been assigned to you which should prompt you to log into your AAP Portal for more information.

- Please contact the applicants assigned to you as soon as you view their contact information in your portal. **If possible, avoid using an email address from another college/university.** (This can confuse an applicant.)
- Select a few dates and times when you are available to conduct the interview. The conversation with the prospective student usually takes 45 minutes to an hour.
- We recommend a comfortable, convenient, public place (e.g., a cafe or a library) for a face-to-face interview. Please do NOT meet an applicant in your home.
- If a face-to-face interview is not feasible, you are welcome to do a Skype, Google Hangout, FaceTime, or phone interview if you wish.

**You should still submit an Interview Report even if you cannot reach the applicant or if the applicant declines the interview.**

STEP TWO: Conducting the Interview and Sample Questions

- Greet the applicant.
- Introduce yourself and offer some information such as your Vassar major, your job, if you attended graduate school, volunteer commitments, or other interests.
- Assure the applicant that this is more of a conversation than an interview and that you welcome whatever she/he has to say.
- Put the applicant at ease by asking questions, then connecting their answers to opportunities at Vassar and your own experiences. Choose questions that are open-ended enough for the student to talk about an area of strong interest for him/her. Your questions should help you get to know the applicant and possible ascertain the level of interest a student has in Vassar. Sample questions include:
  - “What is your favorite class/favorite teacher this year?”
  - “What is your favorite subject? Why?”
  - “Which extracurricular activities would you like to continue at Vassar? Are there new activities you would like to try?”
  - “If you were to take a year off before starting college, then what would you do?”
  - “What interests you about Vassar?”
- Keep in mind that this is a conversation! Share information about yourself, too, and let your passion for Vassar show in what you talk about.
- See what questions the applicant has for you. They may be about Vassar, your experience there, and/or what you do now.
- Offer to stay in touch. Give the applicant your name and contact information.
PLEASE AVOID THE FOLLOWING:

- Bad mouthing/speaking negatively about another college or university. Stating “College X sucks” or “College X’s campus culture is terrible” can be very off putting to an applicant.

Instead, if a student asks where else you applied, use it as an opportunity to explain all the ways Vassar was a great fit/experience for you.

Ex) “College X is a great school, but Vassar was a much better fit for me because…”

- Asking overly personal questions. A few examples:
  - “Where else are you applying?”
    (This question may seem innocuous to you, but for many students it makes them uncomfortable because they are concerned their list will make them seem less interested in Vassar.)
  - “What are your test scores/What’s your GPA/What’s your class rank? Do you have a copy of your transcript I can look at?”
  - “Do you have a girlfriend/boyfriend/significant other?”
  - “Do you have a learning disability?”

A student may choose to disclose certain information to you, as is their prerogative. But it should be their decision to disclose certain information.

- Predicting admission decisions.
  - A student may give you a resume with their academic information (test scores, GPA, Class Rank, AP Courses, etc) and ask you what their chances are for admission.

Please do NOT tell them if you think they have a good chance for admission or not.

  - If asked, remind the student you are an alum volunteer and are not part of the admission committee process. You can tell them admission to Vassar is highly selective and then encourage them to reach out to the Admission Office if they have questions about academic credentials.

- Wearing clothing that promotes another college or university.

STEP THREE: Submitting Your Interview Report

Submit your interview report using the online form. When you are in your AAP Portal, click in the name of the applicant for whom you would like to submit a report. A pop up box will appear and at the bottom will be a link to “Submit a Report.”

Please note that comment boxes for feedback will only appear if you select “High Interest,” “Moderate Interest,” “Low Interest,” or “Cannot judge,” indicating that the interview occurred. If you select “Applicant couldn’t be reached” or “Applicant did not show up,” indicating you did not meet with an applicant, then no comment boxes will appear.

If you are experiencing difficulties using the online form, then try using a different browser. If all else fails, you can email your interview report to: vcaap@vassar.edu

On the interview report, you will be asked:

- Applicant’s level of interest in Vassar
- Student's Name
- Student's Applicant ID
- Brief summary of the interview
- Unusual circumstances or experiences of note
- For Regular Decision candidates: If this student were offered admission, then what might convince him/her to choose our college? What might be a major obstacle to accepting admission?
A note about interview reports:

Your interview reports become part of the candidate’s file. However, because interviewers do not (for confidentiality reasons) receive additional information on the candidate (e.g., academic transcripts, standardized test scores), the purpose of the interview is not to determine whether or not the applicant is academically prepared for Vassar, but to provide an opportunity for the applicant to learn more about Vassar from a unique source, an alum, as well as learn more about the student’s interest in Vassar.

It is also difficult, because of the extremely high volume of highly qualified applicants, for an interviewer to assess where any one student falls on the overall scale of candidates. The value of the interview report submitted for the candidate’s file is to provide the Admissions Office with some additional context about a student. Any information on an applicant’s qualities that might raise a concern in the mind of the interviewer is helpful to the admissions officer reading that file.

Alumnae/i Interviews Make a Difference

The Office of Admission has found that interviews have a positive impact on applicants. Here’s a sample of what students have told us:

“My favorite part of the entire admission process was the interview. [It] was quite enjoyable, and I felt as if [the interviewer] was an old friend. The whole thing was about an hour long, but I could have talked with her for at least an hour more. In comparison with other interviews I had, Vassar’s interview was the best experience. Following the interview, I wanted to go to Vassar. I even received a congratulatory email after I was admitted.”

“The campus visit was what made me choose Vassar, plus the alumni interview. [The interviewer] was honestly excited about your school and seemed to actually want me to attend; it was a great feeling.”
Vassar College Alumnae/i Admission Program Best Practices Agreement

To ensure the best experience possible for our prospective students and interviewers please take the time to read the best practices agreement before continuing on to your AAP Portal. By accepting and signing below you are agreeing to follow these best practices as you represent Vassar.

1. The Role of the Alumnae/i Volunteer
   a. Alumnae/i volunteers will abide by the non-discrimination policies established by Vassar College.
   b. Alumnae/i volunteers will abide by the confidentiality policies of the AAP Program and Vassar College.
   c. Alumnae/i volunteers will abide by the best practices established by NACAC and the NCAA.

2. Eligibility
   a. Conflicts of interest, real or perceived, will inform the volunteer’s eligibility, as determined by Vassar College. Such conflicts may include:
      i. Admissions officer or a college counselor
      ii. Immediate family member of current applicants to Vassar College
      iii. Independent college counselor
      iv. For-profit college preparation consultant
   b. An alumnae/i volunteer may not represent more than one undergraduate institution in the same admissions cycle.
   c. Special note for volunteers with children applying to Vassar: You may still volunteer but it is at your discretion to choose how involved you wish to be with the program while keeping your child’s best interests in mind.

3. Expectations for Alumnae/i and Applicant Interactions
   a. Alumnae/i volunteers will strive to create a mutually respectful environment and interaction.
   b. Alumnae/i volunteers will treat all information provided by Vassar College or the applicant as confidential.
   c. Alumnae/i volunteers will not request that applicants provide specific materials (e.g., transcript, application, essays, resume, questionnaire) to their interviewer.
   d. Alumnae/i volunteers should not create any impressions or expectations, positive or negative, about the student’s probability of admission.
   e. Alumnae/i volunteers will ensure that interactions occur in a safe, accessible and neutral location; at a time that is agreed upon by both parties; and that respects the volunteer’s and the student’s commitments to school, work, activities, and family obligations.
   f. Alumnae/i volunteers will not interview applicants with whom there is an existing personal, familial or professional connection.
   g. Alumnae/i volunteers will not initiate conversation that may make a candidate uncomfortable or that is overly personal, whether with regard to the candidate or the volunteer.
   h. Alumnae/i volunteers will use appropriate language.
   i. Alumnae/i volunteers will not use disparaging comparisons of secondary or post-secondary institutions.
   j. Alumnae/i volunteers will not ask the students where he or she is applying.