

alia

SAMPLE ROADMAP

COLLEGE ROADMAP

Max H.

Choate Rosemary Hall (day student) · Class of 2028

PREPARED FOR THE H. FAMILY · OCTOBER 2026

Alia Education

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01 — AT A GLANCE

Max’s roadmap at a glance

The Untapped · Choate Rosemary Hall (day student) · Class of 2028 · Started junior fall · Oct 2026

You told us you're worried, and that school has become a fight at home. Here's our honest read: Max isn't behind, he just hasn't started. One year of structure plus one thing he cares about will change both his transcript and his options.

11th	2.9	3.4	$4K
Grade when we started	GPA today	Target by senior fall	Earned reselling sneakers

WHAT MATTERS MOST

1. His grades problem is missing work, not ability. Fix the system first.
2. Second Lace, his sneaker business, is his story. It's real, and it's his.
3. Great colleges want a B student with a clear upward trend. Aim for a trend, not perfection.

THE FIRST THREE MOVES

Oct 2026	Start weekly executive-function coaching and tutoring
Nov 2026	You switch to one weekly check-in
Dec 2026	Zero missing assignments

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02 — MEET YOUR COUNSELOR

Meet Rishi Narula



FOUNDER, CEO, AND LEAD COUNSELOR

Rishi has spent eight years in college admissions, guiding hundreds of students into the most selective schools in the world, including the world's top 50 universities. He holds a BS in Mathematics from Duke and has built tutoring and college counseling practices from the ground up, keeping pace with an admissions and development landscape that changes every year.

8 years
in college admissions

100s
of students admitted to the world's top 50 universities

Narrative first. Rishi builds one compelling story for each student, then designs a coherent application around it, so coursework, summer programs, internships, the activity list and every essay each prove a different part of the same story. He is a teacher at heart, too: he has tutored everything from 8th-grade executive functioning to master's-level linear algebra and computer science, so students know him first as someone who helps them learn. Rishi lives in Brooklyn with his wife and daughter.

INCLUDED IN YOUR CUSTOM PACKAGE

- **A dedicated counselor.** Rishi leads your plan from kickoff to decision day.
- **Regular meetings.** Scheduled around your student's year, and weekly or as needed during application season.
- **Unlimited communication.** Text and email Rishi between meetings, whenever a question comes up.
- **Essay review by former admissions officers.** From the first brainstorm to the final read. Every word stays the student's own.
- **Submission support.** Every application submitted on or ahead of its deadline, with every required piece in place.
- **A living roadmap.** We revisit and update this plan at every check-in, through the final decision.

03 — WHERE THINGS STAND

Where Max stands today

An honest read on every part of the application, and what each one needs.

AREA	TODAY	WHAT WE SEE	STATUS
Academics	**C+/B– average**	2.9 unweighted. Most lost points are zeros for missing work, not low test grades.	Fix first
Course rigor	**Standard**	No Honors courses yet. Macroeconomics is his best class.	Build in 12th
Testing	**Not yet**	No SAT yet. Quick with numbers, so the math should be a strength.	Build
Activities	**Hidden gem**	About $4K reselling sneakers, plus a part-time job. Neither is on paper yet.	Document
Recommendations	**Thin**	No teacher would write strongly for him today. That can change by June.	Build
Voice / essays	**Real**	Funny and blunt. A great essay voice, if he writes it himself.	Strength

IS MAX COMPETITIVE?

Is Max competitive for Syracuse and Villanova today? No. In twelve months, with a junior-year GPA near 3.5, a clear upward trend and his business on paper, those schools become real reaches, and a strong target list opens up. Admissions offices care about direction. A student moving from 2.9 to 3.5 tells a better story than a flat 3.4.

STRENGTHS TO LEAD WITH

- **Hidden business sense.** Runs Second Lace, an online sneaker shop: about $4K made buying, cleaning and reselling pairs, all tracked in a spreadsheet.
- **Smart when it matters to him.** Teachers keep writing the same thing on report cards: “capable, not working.” They're right about the first part.
- **Reliable at work.** Weekend shifts at a sporting-goods store. His manager trusts him with the register.

GAPS WE'LL CLOSE

- **Missing assignments.** Most of the lost points are zeros for work he never turned in, not tests he failed. It's a systems problem.
- **No adult in his corner.** No teacher, coach or mentor outside the family knows him well enough to vouch for him.
- **School is a fight at home.** Every conversation about grades turns into an argument, so nobody has them anymore.

04 — THE HIGH SCHOOL

The high school, and why it matters

Every application is read in the context of its school. Readers compare a student to their classmates, not to the whole country.

Choate Rosemary Hall · Wallingford, CT · Day student

GRADE SIZE	GRADING	RIGOR OFFERED
226 in his grade (fifth form)	**Unweighted GPA on the transcript (A+ = 4.3). No class rank.**	**No AP courses. Honors and Advanced levels instead.**
COUNSELING	**COLLEGE RESULTS**	**CALENDAR**
8 college counselors for ~247 seniors	**Enrolled 2022–26: Villanova 8, Babson 6, Quinnipiac 4, Wake Forest 3**	**Trimesters. Fall-term grades are the mid-year report.**

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR MAX

1. Choate shows colleges a GPA distribution for 11th grade only. This is the year Max is measured against his classmates, so the turnaround has to happen now.
2. Three in four classmates sit at 3.75 or above. A 2.9 stands out, but a climb to the Deans' List (3.5, no grade below B) is a trend readers recognize.
3. Trimesters mean three report cards a year. Each term is a fresh chance to show the climb, and his fall term of 12th grade is the mid-year report colleges see.
4. Counselors here work with about 30 seniors each, so the letter is personal. Max should keep his counselor up to date, so the letter tells the turnaround story.

HOW WE READ THE SCHOOL

School profile. We read the official profile that goes to every college, so we know exactly how rigor and grades are described.

Teacher asks. We time and frame each recommendation request, and give each teacher the evidence to cite.

05 — STORYLINE

Storyline & hook

The #1 factor in application quality. Every piece of the file should tell the same story from a different angle.

THE HOOK

The kid who knows what things are worth.

THE ELEVATOR PITCH, IN THREE SENTENCES

1. Max figured out pricing, sourcing and selling before anyone taught him economics. Second Lace, his sneaker business, proves it.
2. He takes beat-up things and makes them valuable again, including, this year, his own transcript.
3. He wants to study business and entrepreneurship, and he already has customers.

01
The Trader
The Second Lace: sourcing, pricing, customers, a spreadsheet he actually keeps.

02
The Restorer
He takes beat-up things and makes them worth something again. That's the project, and the metaphor.

03
The Turnaround
The grades trend from junior fall to senior fall. Colleges read the trend.

HOW EACH PART OF THE APPLICATION TELLS IT

Activity list	The business first, with real numbers. The shoe drive second. His job third.
Personal statement	"What it's worth": a $40 pair, a $180 sale, and a report card that told a different story
Supplements	Why Syracuse: Whitman's entrepreneurship program and student startup accelerator, named specifically
Recommenders	Macroeconomics teacher, plus the junior teacher who sees the biggest change
Additional information	Three honest sentences on the turnaround, in his own voice

WHAT WE'RE NOT SAYING

× "He's just not motivated."

× "He'll grow into it."

× Excuses, or an essay anyone but Max wrote

HOW WE FRAME THE MAJOR

Business, entrepreneurship or sport management. "Undecided, leaning business" is honest and completely fine.

06 — GRADES & RIGOR

Grades, rigor & academic profile

Readers check two things on a transcript: the grades, and whether the student took the hardest courses available to them.

COURSE PLAN

SUBJECT	11TH	12TH
Math	Algebra II, tutored weekly	Precalculus
Science	Chemistry, tutored weekly	Environmental Science
English	English	The Art of the Essay
History	U.S. History	Political science elective
Language	Spanish III	Spanish IV
Elective	Macroeconomics	Economics, Honors (his strongest)

GPA PATH (UNWEIGHTED)

11th, fall term	11th, winter term	11th, spring term	12th, fall term
2.9	3.2	3.5	3.5+

PLAN OF ATTACK

Missing work	A weekly executive-function session: planner, missing work and a Sunday plan. Goal: zero missing assignments by December.
Chemistry and Algebra II	One tutoring session a week each. Weekly quizzes, so problems surface early.
At home	One weekly check-in with you, and no daily nagging. Our coach handles follow-up, so home stops being the battleground.

We set per-class goals each term and review report cards together. When a class slips, there's a plan within a week, not a conversation in June.

07 — TESTING

Standardized testing

SAT or ACT, when to test, what to aim for, and when to stop.

The choice: SAT. He's quick with numbers. We'll confirm with a practice ACT in March, then commit to one test.

Diagnostic, Mar 11th
Target 1150–1200

SAT #1, Jun 11th
Target 1250

SAT #2, Aug before 12th
Target 1300, if June is close

THE PLAN

- → Starts after missing work is fixed (January). Grades come first.
- → 6 weeks of prep before June: 2 hours a week, focused on math
- → Submit only where the score is at or above the school's middle 50%
- → Otherwise apply test-optional. Syracuse, Villanova and Wake are all optional.

TESTING POLICIES ON THE LIST (2025–26 CYCLE)

SCHOOL	TESTING POLICY	SCHOOL	TESTING POLICY
Syracuse	Optional	**South Carolina**	Optional
Indiana (Kelley)	Optional	**Hofstra**	Optional
Villanova	Optional	**Quinnipiac**	Optional
Wake Forest	Optional	**Elon**	Optional

Bottom line: His whole list is test-optional. A strong score helps, but a weak one never has to be sent.

08 — ACTIVITIES

Activities & signature project

Ranked in the order they'll appear on the application. The first three lines carry the story.

ACTIVITY	TIME	WHAT IT SHOWS
Founder, Second Lace (sneaker resale)	6 hrs/wk · 52 wks	~$4K revenue. Sources, cleans, prices and ships. Tracks it all in a spreadsheet.
The interview closet (signature project)	15 hrs/wk · 2 wks	Shoe drive: 30 restored pairs for a youth job-readiness program
Sales associate, sporting-goods store	12 hrs/wk · 40 wks	Trusted with the register and opening shifts
Business club: pitch competition	2 hrs/wk · 16 wks	Pitches Second Lace once in 11th grade
Rec-league basketball	3 hrs/wk · 20 wks	Four seasons. Kept short and honest.
Family responsibilities	8 hrs/wk · 40 wks	Watches his younger siblings after school. This counts on the application.

SIGNATURE PROJECT · 2 WEEKS

The interview closet

30 restored pairs for teens heading into their first job interviews

Days 1–3	Through your family's network, partner with a local youth job-readiness program that needs interview shoes.
Days 4–11	Run a two-day shoe drive at school. Clean and restore 30 donated pairs.
Days 12–14	Deliver the shoes and run a one-hour “sneaker care” session for the program's teens.

Real-world proof: The program director writes him a short letter, the first adult outside school to vouch for him. The school paper covers the drive.

09 — SUMMERS

Summer strategy

Summers are where the story gets proven. We plan each one a year ahead and edit every program application.

AFTER 11TH

More shifts at work, plus a 3-week community-college business course for credit

Register by April. An A in a college course is real proof he can do the work.

BEFORE 12TH

Grow the business. Run the shoe drive again with a friend.

Gives his application a second, more recent data point

Our rule: Skip the $9K pre-college program. It won't fix the transcript, and readers know that. Real work and one real course will.

RECOGNITION TARGET	PLAN
Pitch competition	One entry, pitching Second Lace
Community-college credit	An A in a college course is real proof
School paper feature	Pitch the shoe drive

December–January. Research programs, labs and jobs together.

February–March. Applications and essays go out, edited by our team.

May. Lock the plan, plus a backup if a program says no.

10 — ESSAYS

Essays

The personal statement, the stories we'll draw on, and how the supplements divide the work.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

“What it's worth”

OPEN
At 13: a $40 thrift-store pair, cleaned with a toothbrush, sold for $180.

TURN
He learns that price is a story people believe.

CRISIS
A report card that tells a different story about him: “doesn't care.”

LAND
He decides to change the story himself, the way he fixes a pair: one scuff at a time.

STORY BANK

- His worst sneaker deal, and what he learned
- The first shoe-drive delivery
- Closing the store alone on a Saturday
- Teaching his little brother to tie a double knot
- The first B+ in Chemistry

SUPPLEMENT THEMES

Syracuse · Why us	Whitman's entrepreneurship program and student startup accelerator, by name
Villanova · Borrowed strength	Handing a pair of shoes to a teen headed to his first interview
Additional information	Three honest sentences on the turnaround, in his own voice

Avoid: Anyone but Max writing it. Readers can always tell. Your job is the calendar, not the commas.

Our process: brainstorm with the student survey, outline, three drafts, then a read by former admissions officers. Every word is the student's own.

11 — COLLEGE LIST

College list & application strategy

THE EARLY-ROUND CALL · OUR BEST FIT TODAY

Syracuse ED: Whitman School of Management.

1. Whitman's entrepreneurship program and student startup accelerator are built for a kid who already runs a business.
2. Syracuse reads the whole file, so a strong upward trend and a real story can carry a reach.
3. Early Decision is where Max's momentum counts most. Early Action schools give the family options by winter.

Reach Top choice + peers

Syracuse
The Whitman School's entrepreneurship program and student startup accelerator

Villanova
Villanova School of Business, close to home

Wake Forest
Small classes, plus an entrepreneurship minor

Target A step below

Indiana (Kelley)
A top business school. Kelley direct admit is the stretch part.

South Carolina
A strong honors college and a sport-management program

Hofstra
Zarb School of Business, near New York City

Quinnipiac
A hands-on business school with small classes

Elon
A nationally known entrepreneurship center

Safety Chosen with you

A thoughtful safety list depends on final grades, budget, distance and must-haves. We build it with the family once those are clear.

Demonstrated interest: Visit Syracuse and Villanova in the spring of 11th grade. Sit in on a Whitman class. Open every Syracuse email: demonstrated interest counts there.

This can change, and should. The early choice is our best fit with what we know today. We revisit it at every check-in as grades, scores, visits and interests evolve. Nothing locks until the student is sure.

12 — REQUIREMENTS

Application requirements

Every school on Max's reach and target list: the round, the deadline, and the writing it takes.

SCHOOL	PLAN · DEADLINE	TESTING	ADMIT RATE	ESSAYS	WHAT'S ASKED
Syracuse	ED · Nov 15	Optional	48.8%	1	Why Syracuse (plus Whitman prompts)
Indiana (Kelley)	EA · Nov 1	Optional	75.9%	1	Kelley Prospect Inventory by Nov 15, for direct admit
Villanova	RD · Jan 15	Optional	28.1%	1	One 250-word essay from five prompts
Wake Forest	RD · Jan 1	Optional	20.8%	3	1 required + 2 optional short responses (do them)
South Carolina	EA · Oct 15	Optional	56.5%	0	No supplement. Honors College has its own.
Hofstra	EA · Nov 15	Optional	68.1%	0	No supplement
Quinnipiac	EA · Nov 15	Optional	77.0%	0	No supplement for business
Elon	EA · Nov 1	Optional	63.3%	3	3 short responses

10
pieces of writing: 1 personal statement plus 9 supplements

8
applications, each with its own portal, checklist and deadline

3+
recommendations per school: counselor and two teachers, plus mid-year reports

How we keep it manageable: essays are mapped across schools so one strong story serves several prompts. Early applications get finished first, then regular supplements are written in batches by theme, and every piece gets a read from a former admissions officer.

Source: Alia college database, latest cycle; admit rates from each school's Common Data Set (fall 2025; Hofstra fall 2024, Quinnipiac fall 2023). Requirements are rechecked each August until he applies. Testing labels: Required, Optional (test-optional), Flexible (policy varies by program or applicant). Safety schools add to these totals.

13 — FINANCIAL AID

Financial aid & cost

How cost factors into the list, which forms are due when, and how the early round affects aid.

What you told us	You want value, and you're open to merit-aid options.
Merit	South Carolina, Hofstra, Quinnipiac and Elon all offer merit scholarships. The GPA climb raises those dollars directly.
Early Decision	ED is binding. Run Syracuse's Net Price Calculator together before November.
Forms	File the FAFSA and CSS Profile (if required) early in senior fall. Some merit awards need them.
Compare	Your Early Action acceptances should arrive with aid offers by winter, so you can compare real numbers.

JUNIOR SPRING
Run the Net Price Calculator for every school on the list

SENIOR FALL
File the FAFSA and CSS Profile. Early-round schools set their own aid deadlines.

SENIOR SPRING
Compare aid offers side by side, and appeal where it makes sense

Need-based vs. merit. Need-based aid depends on family finances and is calculated from the FAFSA and CSS Profile. Merit aid rewards the student's record and is often automatic. Most of the most selective schools offer need-based aid only, so merit opportunities usually sit in the Target column.

We're not financial advisors. We coordinate timing and strategy with the family and, where helpful, the family's financial advisor.

14 — IF PLANS CHANGE

If plans change

Deferrals, waitlists and surprises happen to strong applicants every year. The difference is having the next move ready.

If the grades stall	Re-scope the list in May. More of it becomes Target, and Syracuse stays a reach.
If Syracuse defers	Send a mid-year grade update with a short letter. His fall senior grades are the strongest evidence.
If he's waitlisted	One letter with new grades, plus the shoe drive's second round
This is a late start	Junior fall leaves time to change the transcript, not just explain it. One more term of drift would not.

LATE START & RECOVERY

Starting later isn't a disadvantage we explain away. It's a constraint we plan around: triage what matters most, package what already exists, and protect every remaining deadline.

Deferred

A short update letter in January with real news. Mid-year grades do the heavy lifting.

Waitlisted

One letter of continued interest. A commitment line only for a true first choice.

Denied

The next round is already drafted. We move the same day.

Support runs through the final decision, including waitlist strategy and comparing offers.

15 — TIMELINE

11th grade

2026–27

Meetings every 1–2 weeks

Oct 2026	PSAT/NMSQT
Oct 2026	**Kickoff. Coaching and tutoring start.**
Dec 2026	**Missing work down to zero.**
Jan 2027	**First B+ on a chemistry test.**
Mar 2027	**SAT diagnostic.**
Apr 2027	**Run the shoe drive.**
May 2027	Spring term. Ask two teachers for recommendations.
Jun 2027	Essay brainstorm: survey and questionnaire

15 — TIMELINE

Senior year

Summer 2027 – June 2028

Meeting weekly or as needed in application season

Jun 2027	**SAT. Ask two teachers for recommendations.**
Jul 2027	**Community-college course. Essay draft 1.**
Aug 1, 2027	**Common App opens. Final essay.**
Sep 2027	Early strategy final. Recommenders briefed with evidence.
Oct 2027	**Early Action applications in.**
Nov 15, 2027	**Syracuse ED submitted.**
Dec 2027	Early decisions arrive. Regular supplements done in a batch.
Jan 1, 2028	Regular-decision applications submitted
Mar 2028	Decisions arrive. Compare offers side by side.
May 1, 2028	Commit by May 1
Jun 1, 2028	Final waitlist decisions