



## **College Handbook**

Updated May 2017

# AIM Academy College Handbook

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**AIM Academy**  
is a member of the  
National Association for  
College Admission Counseling  
and subscribes to the Statement  
of Principles of Good Practice.



AIM is a member of the Pennsylvania Association  
of College for College Admission Counseling

**Thank you** to the contributors to this handbook including Mandy Marion and Ginny Maine, two dedicated professionals to whom we owe a great deal of our wisdom and vision. Additional thank you to the incredible College Counseling community for the work and effort that they provide every day to our next generation of young people. Keep the future bright.

2017 Handbook updates by Mike Dunn, Director of College Counseling.



## Introduction & Philosophy

Welcome to AIM Academy's College Counseling handbook. This document has been created to serve parents and students at various points in the college process. It contains an overview of College Counseling services at AIM, and introduces resources and guiding principles that are designed to effectively serve the student along the way.

The handbook has also been developed as a broad reference point for families. Of course, with the ever changing college landscape, it cannot possibly capture everything. Instead, it has been created to instill core principles that are fundamentally less volatile, thus acting as a foundation on which families can build their college process.

### *Helping Make The First Adult Decision*

As aspiring young adults, many high school students enter into the college process with the hopes of making their first "adult" decision. We view this as a vital part of their adolescent growth, and one of the most important decisions they will make in their young life.

The choice to attend college has come under scrutiny in the last few years, but we hold true that a college degree is the most solid track to future fulfillment and success.

Our job is to work directly with students and families to devise a postsecondary plan that makes the most sense and offers the student the highest likelihood of future progress.

### *Relieving The Pressure*

In the past 25 years, the dynamics of the college process undergone significant change. With the advent of College Rankings, and emphasis placed on the importance of the perceived quality of one's college choice, an unyielding amount of pressure has been placed upon our young people. Many students feel this pressure before they even realize what going to college

means. At AIM, we encourage all of our families to take a measured approach. We emphasize the encouragement of college as a possibility where students can make lifelong memories, and learn core skills to serve their future goals.



We view the relief of pressure as one of essential components of our college guidance at AIM, and place this at the center of our message throughout the process. We also encourage families to consider what steps they are taking to help relieve some of the pressure their young student may be feeling.

### *Beginning With The End In Mind*

An area of emphasis for many students is the discovery of one's passion or life-long interest. We see this discovery process as terrific: If a student is able to uncover something they absolutely enjoy in life, then our curriculum is designed to fully support



their efforts in pursuit of their dreams. The truth is, however, that many students are unsure about their future and unsure about a specific passion.

We work to keep both of these types of students in mind: Those who are headed on a more direct path, and those who are headed down a path with a few more detours. Our view is that having a plan in place for when you leave high school is very important. What this plan looks like might be very different for each student, but that is totally fine. We want our students and families to feel confident in their postsecondary options, and that they will lead them toward their future goal.

## Roles & Responsibilities

At the heart of the college process lies the student: Their exploration of self and their future options, and their work to make positive, productive planning decisions for their future. The **Parent** and **College Counselor** also play a central role in this process as supporting adults for the student.

The school also is an essential factor in this process, as it works to deliver instruction that will best support the student to reach their future goals, and uncover their passions and interests. The college process is also about student voice and action in making decisions for their own future, and is a team effort to support the student as they examine their future choices.

### Student

- ▶ Make the most of AIM opportunities, to develop a strong set of interests.
- ▶ Develop a relationship with the College Counselor for advice and guidance.
- ▶ Pursue meaningful summer opportunities.
- ▶ Read as much as possible.
- ▶ Develop strong relationships with your teachers and the AIM staff.
- ▶ Get involved in communities both in and outside of school.
- ▶ Begin to understand the nature of your Learning Difference and how that effects your classroom and life experiences.
- ▶ Advocate for yourself as much as possible.
- ▶ Work to understand the accommodations you need to be academically successful.
- ▶ Talk with the College Counselor about yourself and your goals.
- ▶ Be realistic with yourself: Know your strengths and weaknesses.
  - ▶ Think about why you might want to go to college.
  - ▶ Be an active participant in the college process.
  - ▶ Submit necessary items to colleges in a timely manner.

### Parent

- ▶ Help your student develop independent working habits.
- ▶ Talk with your student about their learning difference, or encourage them to speak with one of AIM's Psychologists about their learning profile.
- ▶ Encourage your student to explore summer opportunities.
- ▶ Provide outlets for your student to complete community service.
- ▶ Maintain an open mind about postsecondary options.
- ▶ Be active in your efforts to relieve stress.
- ▶ Travel to visit colleges with your student. Be sure to not start these visits too early.
- ▶ Educate yourself about financing college and the intricacies of financial aid forms.
- ▶ Communicate directly with the College Counselor about your concerns.
- ▶ Check with the College Counselor about early plans that you might be making for test preparation, campus visits, etc.

### College Counselor

- ▶ Support the student's exploration of themselves and possible postsecondary options.
- ▶ Assist the family in developing a postsecondary plan that positively and productively meets the student's goals.
- ▶ Provide suggestions throughout the college process for resources and opportunities, including: Test preparation, College visits, Understanding support services, Searching for colleges, Understanding grades, classes, and grade point averages, etc.
- ▶ Help students build a balanced college list.
- ▶ Review applications and essays and provide suggestions for improvement before submission.
- ▶ Submit all necessary documentation to colleges in a timely manner.
- ▶ Compose a letter of recommendation for each student.
- ▶ Act as an advocate for the student throughout the college process.
  - ▶ Provide honest, candid opinions and advice to students and families.
  - ▶ Be mindful of a family's financial considerations.

## 21st Century Curriculum - The 4 Threads to the Future

In addition to being college preparatory in nature, AIM's Upper School curriculum is built on our 4 Threads to the Future model. Starting with a core group of Liberal Arts courses, students can take a broad range of courses in Arts + Design, Global Competency + Social Sustainability, Innovation + Entrepreneurship, and Science + Engineering.

They can continue to explore each of the 4 Threads or focus their efforts on a specific single or pair of threads. Students can select elective classes that are built around each Thread, building a substantial resume of thread-related experiences.

### Core Coursework

Throughout their Thread exploration, students continue to work on their core liberal arts requirements that include core college preparatory coursework. This is directly inline with what a vast majority of colleges are looking for in their admissions:

**English-** 4 Years

**Mathematics-** 3-4 Years

**Science-** 3-4 Years with at least 2 labs

**History-** 3-4 Years

**Language-** 2 years of Latin

### Honors Coursework

While many schools offer Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate coursework, AIM further invigorates its curriculum with Honors course offerings. In the past, Honors courses titles have included:

**English-** Honors Shakespeare

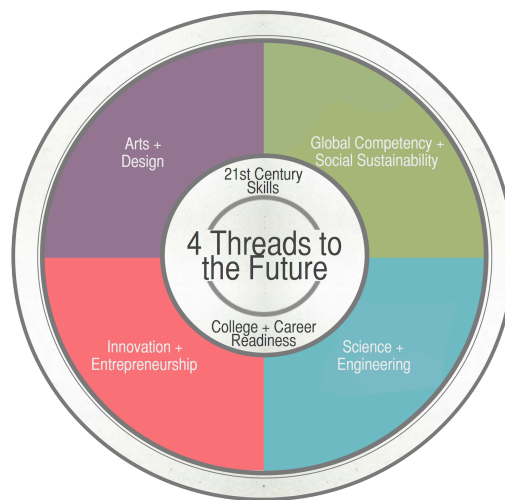
**Mathematics-** Honors Algebra

**Science-** Honors Physics

**History-** Honors Art History

**Arts-** Honors Dramatic Arts

With college preparatory course offerings and additional offerings at the Honors level, the student's path toward postsecondary readiness is an integral part of their AIM experience.



Working closely with an advisor, or the College Counselor, the student should select the courses that offer them the most rigorous track of study.

Colleges prefer to see students push themselves in their coursework. That may mean earning a B in an Honors level class over earning an A in a non-Honors level class, but also building college-ready study skills, core content knowledge, and strong writing skills.

### Dual Enrollment

To further prepare students to be successful at the college level, we have partnered with a number of universities. During Senior year, students take college-level courses at one of our partner schools. The focus of this coursework is to teach students how to be successful in a college classroom, including syllabus management, professor communication, and accessing disability support services. An added benefit is that most courses transfer to whichever future university the student attends.





## Getting Started

The College Counseling office is designed to be a committed resource for students and families throughout the college process. As such, meeting with the College Counselor is an integral part of these considerations.

Many families initially meet with the College Counselor early in their high school career, but it is important to remember that each student is very different, and mandating these early meetings can provide a layer of additional stress that can be petrifying for the student. Particularly in the Freshman and Sophomore years, we encourage parents to set up conferences, have phone calls, and communicate via email directly with the College Counselor. We are happy to answer any questions about all aspects of the process at any time.

We do, however, hold true that families can begin too early in the process. Sometimes students simply are not ready to be talking about college their first year of high school. Allowing students the time to be productive, happy young people is just as important as getting them out and exploring what is next.

### Initial Campus Visits

The campus visit is a crucial part of the college search process (it even has its own section later in this handbook), and many families find themselves motivated to visit as many as possible, as early as possible.

Families should keep in mind that although the campus visit can be a fun and enjoyable experience, it also carries its own stress. Initial college visits should be considered with care and done so in a way that encourages exploration while reducing looming inevitability.



### Digital Resources For Early Exploration

The digital treasure trove of resources for families and students has only increased in the past ten years. There are countless tools available for those looking to explore college, themselves, and the world.



With the college process centered on the student, we encourage our young people to explore themselves, and their interests early on. While we recognize that not every student will discover a “passion” by the time they are 15, we do want students to have some sense of their preferences: *What motivates them in school? Out of school? Where could they see themselves sometime in the future? What kinds of inherent strengths do they see themselves having?*

To help students reflect a bit more, here are some of the digital tools we really like. We recommend families check these out, especially early on in the process. They can be fun for the whole family to participate in, and are often interesting for students to uncover more about what their preferences and strengths could mean:

### Understanding One’s Self & Interests

[16 Personalities](#)- A student friendly take on Myers-Briggs.

[Strengths Test](#)- The digital version of Gallup’s StrengthsFinder 2.0.

### Career & Interest Connections

[O\\*Net Interest Profiler](#)- Connect your interests with possible career clusters, majors, and areas of focus.

[RoadTrip Nation’s The Roadmap](#)- Read about and listen to interviews with professionals who’ve combined their interests into careers they love.

## Timing

Many questions surrounding the college search process are about timing: When students should start visiting campuses, when to start test preparation, what to do with summer time, etc. Without question, timing can be one of the most stress inducing aspects of the process.

To help you understand what to do, and when, we have broken down specific timing dates and tasks into a four-year calendar. You should notice that many of the things emphasized for Freshman and Sophomore years are much less strict in their scope. This allows students to explore much more than the more strict Junior and Senior years.



### Freshman Year

**Get involved** with a club, sport, activity, or volunteer opportunity.

**Begin** to explore your interests while setting some possible goals for your courses.

**Assess** your strengths and interests using some of the tools we provide.

**Set** some goals and make connections with adults to talk about your future.

**Plan** to do something productive during the summer: Go to camp, get a job, volunteer.

**Attend** the summer session at AIM to keep up your math and language skills.

**Read**, read, read. Colleges love readers.



### Sophomore Year

**Target** your course selection with your thread in mind. Consider taking Honors courses.

**Establish** a pattern of commitment in your activities, and strive for leadership.

**Reflect** on your progress as a student. What are your strengths? Where can you improve?

**Explore** opportunities to get involved outside of the community through volunteering.

**Attend** the summer session at AIM to begin preparing for the ACT. Engage in something responsible with your summer.

**Visit** a few college campuses for fun in the nearby area. Take a friend.

**Read**, read, read. Colleges love readers.



## Timing - Later Years

### Junior Year

#### Fall

- College 101 parent seminar
- AIM College Fair
- Complete Psych-Ed testing
- Apply for ACT accommodations
- Fully accommodated ACT practice test
- Focus week college types tour

#### Recommended Family Trip

- Individual college tours of choice

#### Winter

- Individual meetings with students
- School Sponsored ACT prep
- Fully accommodated ACT test #1
- Development of the College Profile and College Road Trip recommendations

#### Recommended Family Trip

- NACAC College Fair

#### Spring

- Individual consultations with students and families
- School sponsored ACT prep

#### Recommended Family Trip

- College Road Trip Suggestions
- Mainline College Fair

#### Summer

- Fully accommodated ACT test #2
- Summer college prep program
- College applications research and essays complete
- Solicit teacher letters of recommendation

#### Recommended Family Trip

- Visits to top 5-10 colleges

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### Senior Year

#### Fall

- Finalize list of eight to twelve colleges
- Complete college essays
- School sponsored ACT prep
- Fully accommodated ACT test 3
- Begin scholarship search
- Complete financial aid forms

#### Recommended Family Trip

- Finish visits to top 5-10 colleges
- Admissions interviews as necessary

#### Winter

- Submit all college applications
- Finalize letters of recommendation
- Narrow scholarship opportunities

#### Recommended Family Trip

- Admissions interviews as necessary

#### Spring

- Selection Celebration day
- Collect IEP and Psych-Ed documentation
- Set up meeting with college disabilities center coordinator
- Final transcripts to colleges

#### Recommended Family Trip

- Admitted students campus tours

#### Summer

- Set-up AIM Advantage tutoring
- Summer orientation and pre-fall programs



## Special Areas to Consider

With the college process being very individualized, it is difficult to say that one process is right for all students. This section is meant address some of the more individual situations that students and families might consider as they approach thinking about their future plans.

### Summers

Many students spend their Middle School years hanging out with friends and spending time with family. These experiences are invaluable to the growth of the young student, and cannot be understated. Summers in Upper School must also be looked at in a similar light, with the addition of students exercising increased amounts of responsibility throughout their US careers.

Considerations when making summer plans:

**Reading.** An essential component of every high schooler's plan and AIM provides a robust summer reading program for this reason.

**Getting A Job.** Colleges really like students who are independent and responsible. Getting a job (even at WaWa) can be invaluable in developing these two traits.

**Summer Programs.** There are countless summer programs on college campuses all around the country. Check out our [ongoing list of Thread based summer programs](#) we like.

### Performing & Visual Arts

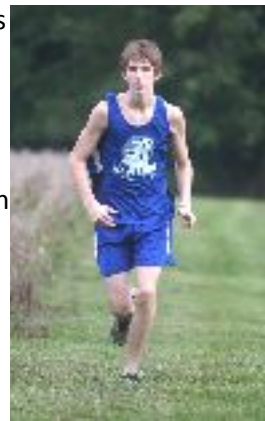
Students involved in the performing and visual arts often have a different track to follow throughout the college process. With an emphasis on portfolios and auditions, students interested in these areas



should meet with the College Counselor and specific arts teacher as soon as Sophomore year to gain an understanding of the requirements involved in these admissions processes.

### Athletics

The student athlete is unique as they work through the college admissions process. While many athletes believe that they will be recruited by big name, top colleges, the truth is that [less than 6%](#) of students who play high school sports will be specifically recruited.



If you are interested in participating in college sports at the varsity level, we recommend [Jeffrey Durso-Finley's Understanding Athletic Recruiting](#), and meet with our Athletic Director very early in your Upper School career.

### Community Service

AIM requires all of its students to complete 100 hours of community service to graduate. We recommend that these hours are used to make the biggest impact on the student and their community as possible. Work to use these hours to explore your interests and dedicate your time to have a variety of experiences.

### Gap Years

In the past decade, the popularity of the Gap Year -- a year taken between high school and college matriculation -- has grown exponentially. We recommend that families undertake the idea of a Gap Year with careful consideration. Many of our students can easily lose motivation within the span of being out of school, and that can lead to unwanted academic regression. If you may be considering a Gap Year, we recommend setting up a meeting with our College Counselor during Junior year to discuss this option.

## Standardized Testing

An important part of the college admissions process is the consideration of Standardized tests. The two major standardized tests are the ACT and SAT. Both exams have played a role in admission for many years, and are a rite of passage for many graduating high schoolers.

What must be at the center of understanding about these tests is that the level of stress they place on students can be overwhelming. Our preparation, and processes are designed to reduce this stress as much as possible.

### Timing

We provide the following testing options at noted times of the year:

- Junior Year Fall- Full ACT Practice Test
- Junior Year Winter- Full ACT Test
- Junior Year Spring- Full ACT Test
- Senior Year Fall- Full ACT Test

### Test Differences

Students often ask about the differences between the ACT and SAT, and why we recommend the ACT. Here are the top reasons why we recommend the ACT:

- It is a cumulative test of HS knowledge versus a critical thinking test.
- There are more sections to gauge student knowledge over a range of topics.
- Timing is more friendly for students with learning and attention issues.

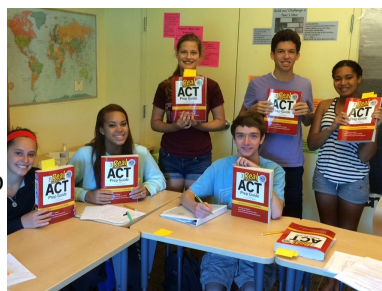
### Accommodations

While, testing companies are the ultimate determiners of which accommodations students receive, we work closely with families to ensure accommodations are appropriate for student learning profiles. Students often take the test at AIM, and over multiple days.

### Preparation

The best way to do well on any standardized test is to prepare, and these tests are no different. AIM offers in-house test-prep tutoring in small

groups, throughout the winter and spring of Junior year. Many families also request independent tutoring, and we keep on hand a list of tutors who our families have experienced success with in the past.



### Practice Exams

The major testing companies offer their own versions of pre-ACT (the Aspire) and pre-SAT (the PSAT). We see these tests as being quite stressful for students, and often costing families undo amounts of extra money. Instead, we provide a practice ACT test in the fall of Junior year before preparation begins. This gives students a baseline on which they can build their future test prep sessions.

### Test Day

The actual day of the test can be quite a stressful experience for many students. We recommend that students go to bed early the night before, eat a good breakfast, drink adequate amounts of water, and arrive early.

We also emphasize not cramming for the test the night before, as the knowledge gained in this short time often yields very few tangible results.

### Test Optional Colleges

The movement to deemphasize testing has grown in the past few years. [Here is the most updated list](#) of schools that have tweaked their admissions and not required testing. The ramifications of not submitting a test in the admissions process must also be considered. This can include an increased scrutiny of course grades and GPA, as well as the student needing to be sure they are taking an active interest in the schools they prefer.

## Cultivating A College List

There are more than 4,000 colleges and universities in the United States, with many unknown to the average student and family. A vast majority of these schools will provide outstanding course options and a terrific education to every student who walks through their doors. The challenge for many students is finding a set of schools that they like and think that they might be comfortable attending after high school.

### *Finding The Right Fit*

The right college is very different for every student, and professional College Counselors see the process of finding the right school as one in which the student is in search of the right “fit” school. With this view, the student must consider academic, social, cultural, financial, and countless other factors. Here are a few attributes we recommend looking at to start:

**Admission Likelihood-** How possible is it that an admission result would be positive.

**Number of Students-** Small (<3K), Medium (3K-10K), Large (10K+).

**Geography-** Region of the United States.

**Distance From Home-** Driving/Flying.

**Location-** Rural, Suburban, Urban, College Town.

**Programs & Majors-** Or types of majors.

**Academic Environment**

**Support Services-** Is this college going to support the student to graduation?

**Campus Culture-** Studious, Balanced, Progressive, Conservative, Stressed

**Demographics & Diversity**

**Social Opportunities**

**Financial Opportunities**

### *The 5+ Model For List Building*

To cultivate a list that is well-rounded and positive for the student, we recommend using the 5+ model. This model starts with four core values that are at the center of the college search, and act as the anchor for the college list.

Using this model, the student is looking for schools that:

- 1) They can be reasonably accepted to.
- 2) They can see themselves being successful.
- 3) Are financially viable for their family.
- 4) Are desirable for them to attend.

With these core values in mind, the student then works to create a list that includes:

### 8-12 Total Schools

5 **Core Schools** that meet adhere to all 4 values.

2 or 3 **Good-Bet Schools** that adhere to values 2-4 but represent a higher likelihood of admission.

2 or 3 **Reach Schools** that adhere values 2-4 but may represent a lower likelihood of admission (any school with less than 30% admission would fit into this category).

### *Digital Tools For List Building*

There are many tools available to families to help them cultivate. Here are a couple that we like:

[Big Future](#)- College Board’s industry leading college search tool.

[Cappex](#)- A scholarship tool that has a dynamic search engine with terrific cross-related school search options.

### *List Building With Scoir*

A familiar high school tool for many students is Naviance. At AIM, we do not use this tool, but have [partnered with Scoir](#), a powerful search tool that allows students to search for schools, build lists, and uncover interesting future options.

Students can sign up for a Scoir account whenever they would like, adding AIM as their school, and inviting parents to recommend schools for their list, while collaborating with the College Counselor.

## College Support Services

Any college accepting federal money (eg. Student Loans) must provide ADA compliant services. The quality of these support services can vary, and must be a consideration for all AIM students.

### *Disclosing Your Disability*

Some students question whether they should disclose their disability in the college process. This is a terrific question, and we see that many students have developed significant determination and advocacy skills as a result of their LD. With these skills being key to college success, we encourage all students to disclose their LD story in the application process if it represents a significant part of their identity. We further encourage students to disclose their profile to the support services office once they enroll at a specific school once they enroll.

### *Independent Access*

Regardless of the level of provided by the college, there are no colleges that will wake the student up and bring them to their offices. Instead, the student must feel comfortable and confident in


their need for support, thus allowing them to independently seek out the help. Building this independence and awareness is a critical part of the college process, as well as AIM's larger preparation of its students.

### *Documentation*

We encourage everyone to check specific college requirements, but most ask for a recent PsycheEd Evaluation with Adult IQ test, and a section dedicated to college recommendations. Throughout the process, we provide families timing updates and evaluator recs as needed.

### *The AIM Advantage*

When our first class graduated, we immediately recognized the limited options for fee-based, or Comprehensive, support programs. To fill this void, we created the AIM Advantage (A2) -- a fee-based support service specifically for AIM graduates. The A2 Director meets with students weekly and focuses on Executive Functioning and accessing existing college supports. A2 enrollees also have access to faculty content specialists.

 <b>UNDERSTANDING COLLEGE DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES</b> <small>A basic guide to understanding disability support services at the college level.</small>			
Immersive	Comprehensive	Coordinated	Compliant
<b>Support that</b> is in all aspects of the school's instruction, teaching methods, and learning environment.  <b>Support for</b> content tutoring, time management, assignment completion, reading, stress, exam accommodations, and other necessary supports.	<b>Support that</b> costs extra money, and is an add-on to a typical college program. Staffed by professionals with special training, and may provide career and/or academic advising.  <b>Support for</b> time management, assignment completion, content tutoring, exam accommodations, notetaking, and other necessary supports.	<b>Support that</b> is available w/o added cost. Staffed by professionals with special training who are dedicated to student success.  <b>Support for</b> time management, exam accommodations, limited content tutoring, limited notetaking support, and other necessary supports.	<b>Support that</b> is available w/o added cost. Limited staffing, sometimes with limited training.  <b>Support for</b> basic accommodations such as extended exam time, and permission to record lectures. Could offer limited additional support.
<b>Colleges:</b> Landmark (VT), Beacon (FL)	<b>Colleges:</b> Adelphi (NY), American (DC), U Arizona, Hofstra (NY), Lynn (FL), McDaniel (MD), U Denver (CO), WV Wesleyan, limited other options.	<b>Colleges:</b> Many options. Eckerd (FL), Franklin & Marshall (PA), Goucher (MD), Kutztown (PA), Millersville (PA), plus many many other options.	<b>Colleges:</b> Any college that receives federal funding.

Partially adapted from the work of Elizabeth C. Hamblet - [www.ldadvisory.com](http://www.ldadvisory.com)



## Applying To College

The actual filling out of the college application is an aspect of the college process that receives quite a bit of attention, but is often overstated. Certainly, a good application is important, as is a good essay and quality letters of recommendation. But any application is truly only as good as the research, thought, effort, planning, and work put in beforehand.

Truly, the application is the culmination of the entire first phase of the college process, leading to the discernment phase, which is often equally challenging if not more so.



### Applications

The industry standard for applications is the [Common Application](#). The CA houses more than 700 college applications, and allows for easy submission to multiple schools. Students are encouraged to sign up for a CA account during the summer of their Junior year, and enter their Senior year with the entire CA complete.

### Good Grades

When students come to talk with us about college prospects, we often start the conversation with their grades. Colleges are learning institutions, and they want to see adept student applicants.

We encourage all students to work hard in school, gaining the core skills to be successful at any college, while building the academic track record that demonstrates their proficiency. These grades and the student's coursework are the foundation of any application.

### Essays

Another aspect of the application is the essay. This 650 word piece of writing allows students to

reveal a part of their profile that would otherwise not be readily visible. We recommend students tell a story that demonstrates something insightful about themselves. Here are [six college essays that we love](#) and feel represent great college-ready writing.

### Letters of Recommendation

A good letter of recommendation can provide important context for any student's application. These letters stem from quality relationships forged over time spent in the classroom and out.

The forging of these relationships should be at the fore of the student's consideration, particularly as they enter the later part of their Junior year and early Senior year.



Many colleges want to see a good range of letters from a variety of current school teachers. We suggest that students request letters from a Humanities teacher, a Math/Science teacher, and an additional important adult in their life (Coach, Rabbi, Youth Group Leader, etc.).

### Activities Resume

Building a basic resume is an important component of the application. Students should work through listing all of their activities, and then translating this list into a more meaningful collection. [Here is a resource we provide](#) to help students through this.

### Summer Bootcamp

To help students through the hectic process of preparing application materials, we have designed an online summer Bootcamp course. Using videoconference, rising Seniors meet in a small cohort to discuss/complete materials and make their Senior year much less stressful.



## Experiential Learning & Demonstrating Interest

The campus visit is often a pivotal part of the college search process for both families and students. There are very few experiences throughout the process that yield as much valuable information as stepping foot onto a campus.

### Experiential Learning

We view the campus visit as a unique experiential learning moment. With preparation, the student can reflect on their visit with some key questions in mind:

**Could I see myself learning with the students I've met on my campus visit?**

**Could I see myself being motivated to go to class on the campus everyday?**

**Could I see myself getting involved socially and actively on campus?**

**Could I see myself consistently accessing the school's support services?**

**Could I see myself connecting with professors in the classes on campus?**

### Fall College Tour For Juniors

To help students begin the exploration process and gain some insights as to the value of the campus visit, we travel with our Junior class each fall to between 7 and 9 local area colleges.

Our goal of this tour is to showcase different types of schools in the Philadelphia region. This means we often visit Temple University, St. Joe's University,

Millersville University, Franklin & Marshall College, Swarthmore College, and a few others.



### Virtual College Tours

For students unable to visit a college's campus, we recommend [taking a virtual tour](#).

### Demonstrating Interest

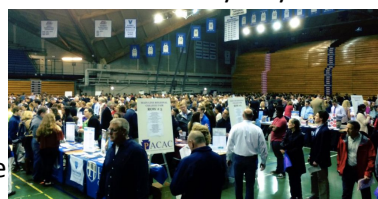
For some colleges, this concept is a critical part of their admissions considerations. They see students who visit campus as much more likely to possibly enroll in the future. Thus, as a student makes contact with the admissions office, their contact is often tracked and added to their file.



While the tracking of demonstrated interest is not true of all colleges, it is, however, of great value if the admissions professional knows the student's face as they are reading their application. Demonstrated interest can act as a powerful value-added aspect to the application.

### College Fairs

These local area events can be an easy way to connect with quite a few admissions professionals all at once. Particularly for schools that are further away, fairs



may be the only opportunity for the student to build this connection. The Philadelphia area hosts two major annual college fairs: The [NACAC College Fair](#), and the [Mainline College Fair](#). These events are free and open to all students.

### Connecting With Admissions Professionals

The connection built between the admissions professional and the student in the college process can be a vital cog in their likelihood of admission. Students are encouraged to connect with admissions folks via email, phone, text, or otherwise. Some students even meet with their admissions representative for coffee. Although informal, these brief meetings can mean a great deal to how the admissions person reads the student's application.

## Affordability

Countless resources point to cost as the top reason students drop out of college. [The Pew Charitable Trust](#) finds that a vast majority of college dropouts are a result of unexpected, or unrealized tuition and/or room and board expenditures. With these facts in mind, approaching the affordability issue of college must be a consideration that families take with serious scrutiny.

### *Understanding Sticker Price*

Colleges often advertise a price that represents the true overall cost to the student. These days, that cost ranges from \$20K-\$60K. What is important to know about these prices is that they are only absolute in some cases. To better understand these prices, we group colleges into 4 main categories:

- 1) **State Schools**- Offer little in terms of additional scholarship aid, because their discount is built directly into their overall cost.
- 2) **Need Only Private Schools**- Offer additional scholarship and grant aid based only on family need. They will ask families to pay what they can pay with very little discount.
- 3) **Merit Providing Private Schools**- Offer deep discounts based on the “merit” of a student’s application. More can be learned about these discounts from [our blog post](#).
- 4) **Community Colleges**- Comparatively very inexpensive institutions serving local area communities around the country.

### *Building A Financially Variable List*

In our work with students and families, we try very hard to encourage holistic consideration of financing college when list building. This inclusive process asks families to use various school’s [Net Price Calculators](#) to determine if a school is a financially viable option.

Similarly, this also asks families to consider some Merit Providing Private Schools even when they may appear to have a more expensive sticker

price. Placing the financial considerations of school cost at the heart of the process allows families ample time to receive and review financial aid award packages, thus making a final matriculation decision that is cognizant of the student’s and family’s financial futures.



### *Scholarships*

Students often view scholarships as a gold mine to be easily unlocked. Unfortunately, many scholarships go unclaimed because of the volume of work required to complete each application.

We view scholarships as a job. If a student spends 3 hours on a \$1,500 scholarship and earns the award, they just managed a \$500 per hour job, which is pretty good pay for anyone.

We keep a small scholarship database on hand for LD specific and some non-LD scholarships we link. [Check out this link](#) to browse our database. We also recommend [Raise.me](#) and [Scholly](#) as outstanding scholarship tools for all students.

### *Financial Aid Workshops*

Each winter, we host an independent college financial aid consultant to come and speak with AIM families, particularly those in the Upper School. While his services are available at a discounted rate for our families, he also provides our free sessions and maintains open availability to speak with families regarding the pursuit of financing college.

AIM’s College Counseling office also offers in-depth consultations to help families examine financial aid award letters, compare award offerings, and consider the future financial health of students.

## College Process Resources

### African-American Student Resources

[HBCU Network](#)- Academically and socially connecting African-American students.  
[United Negro College Fund](#)- Resources and scholarships for African-American students.

### Athletic Recruiting

[College Planning Guide for Student Athletes](#).  
[NCAA's College Bound Athlete Guide](#).  
[NACAC's Get In The Game](#).

### Books We Love

[Fiske Guide to Colleges](#) by E. Fiske  
[How To Raise An Adult](#) by J. Lythcott-Haims  
[Roadmap](#) by RoadTrip Nation  
[The Colleges That Change Lives](#) by L. Pope  
[The Naked Roommate](#) by H. Cohen  
[There Is Life After College](#) by J. Selingo  
[Where you Go Is Not Who You'll Be](#) by F. Bruni

### College Search Tools

[BigFuture](#)- CollegeBoard's search site.  
[Cappex](#)- Another powerful search tool.  
[College Navigator](#)- DOE's data collection tool.  
[The College Wiki](#)- An awesome search tool.  
[Scoir](#)- Our partner list building tool.

[DOE's College ScoreCard](#)- One of our favorite college search and compare tools.

### Financial Aid

[CollegeBoard's CSS Profile](#).  
[Essential Vocabulary](#).  
[Free Application For Student Aid](#) (FAFSA).  
[SALT Money](#).

[First Generation Students](#)- An online community of first-in-the-family students supporting peers.

### Gap Years

[American Gap Association](#).  
[Center for Interim Programs](#).

[General College Vocabulary](#)- All the college vocab you could need and much much more.

### Insights On College For Students With LD

[CollegeWebLD](#)- A fee-based search tool.  
[LDAdvisory](#)- From Columbia's E. Hamblet.  
[Understood.org](#)- Resources by the NCLD.  
[Prep Scholar's LD Support List](#)- A good list to get you started looking at LD support.

### Jewish Student Resources

[Heart 2 Heart](#)- Resources for Jewish students curated by Jewish college students.  
[Hillel.org](#)- Guide for students seeking strong college Jewish communities.

### Latinx Student Resources

[Aspira](#)- Empowering Latino students.  
[Hispanic Assoc of Colleges & Universities](#)

### LD Specific Colleges

[Landmark](#)- Located in Vermont, the original immersive postsecondary LD college.  
[Beacon](#)- Located in Florida, and delivering immersive support for LD college students.

### LGBTQIA Student Resources

[Campus Pride](#)- Building safe campus spaces.  
[Consortium of LGBT College Professionals](#).

[National Association For College Admission Counseling](#)- AIM is a member of this leading professional organization.

### Testing & Preparation

[Magoosh](#)- Quality online test prep.  
[Official ACT Prep Material](#)- Directly from the ACT and also via Kaplan.  
[Official SAT Prep Material](#)- Available through Khan Academy.  
[Schmoop](#)- Student friendly test prep.  
[Union Test Prep](#)- Free and easy to access.

[Understanding Decision Plans](#)- Early Action, Early Decision, Regular Decision, and more.

[Undocumented Students](#)- CollegeBoard's guide to resources and understanding the process.

# AIM Alumni College Acceptance List

Class of 2012-2017 - 72 Total Graduates - \* Indicates a school attended by an AIM graduate.

Adelphi University	Hobart & William Smith Colleges	Rochester Institute of Technology
Albright College	Hofstra University*	Rosemont College*
Alvernia College	Holy Family University	Roger Williams University
American University*	Hood College	Rowan University
Arcadia University	Howard University	Sacred Heart University*
Art Institute of Philadelphia*	Humboldt State University	Saint Joseph's University*
Babson College*	Immaculata University	Sarah Lawrence College
Bard College	Indiana University of Pennsylvania	Savannah College of Art & Design*
Baylor University	Indiana University - Bloomington	Seton Hall University
Beacon College	Iona College	Shippensburg University*
Beloit College	Ithaca College*	Simmons College
Bloomsburg University*	Johnson & Wales University	Slippery Rock University
Bryant University	Juniata College*	Stevens Institute of Technology
Cabrini University*	Keene State College	Stevenson University
Cal Poly State University*	Kutztown University	St. Mary's College of California
Champlain College	La Salle University	Stockton College
Chestnut Hill College	Lasell College	SUNY Oneonta
Clark Atlanta University	Lebanon Valley College	Susquehanna University
Clemson University	Lesley University	Syracuse University
College of Charleston*	Long Island University - Brooklyn	Temple University*
College of New Jersey	Loyola Marymount University*	Towson University
Colorado State University	Loyola University Maryland	Union College
Columbia College Chicago	Lycoming College	University of Alabama
CC of Philadelphia	Lynn University*	University of Arizona*
Curry College*	Marist College	University of Cincinnati
Dean College	Maryland Institute College of Art*	University of Colorado, Boulder
Delaware County CC*	Marymount Manhattan College	University of Dayton
Delaware Valley University*	Mount Saint Mary's University	University of Delaware
Drew University	Manor College*	University of Denver
Drexel University*	McDaniel College*	University of Hartford
Dutchess Community College*	Mercy College	University of Mary Washington
Duquesne University	Millersville University*	University of Michigan
Earlham College	Misericordia College	University of Montana
Eastern University*	Mitchell College	University of New Hampshire
East Stroudsburg University	Montgomery County CC*	University of Pittsburgh
Eckerd College*	Morehouse College	University of the Sciences
Edinboro University of Pennsylvania	The New School - Eugene Lang	University of San Francisco
Elizabethtown College*	Neumann University	University of Scranton
Elon University*	North Carolina A&T	University of South Carolina
Fairfield University	Pace University	University of Tampa
Fairleigh Dickinson University*	Pacific University Oregon	University of the Arts*
Flat Rock Community College*	Penn State University*	University of Vermont
Full Sail University*	Philadelphia University*	Villanova University*
Gettysburg College	Point Park University	Washington College*
Goucher College*	Pratt Institute*	West Chester University
Guilford College*	Quinnipiac University	West Virginia Wesleyan College
Gwynedd Mercy University*	Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute	Western Oregon University
Hampton University	Rider University	Wheaton College
High Point University*	Roanoke College	Worcester Polytechnic Institute*



