

# FREDERICA ACADEMY

*2018-2019 College Counseling Handbook*





# College Counseling Handbook

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Welcome to the beginning of the college search process. Frederica Academy's College Counseling Center is looking forward to guiding you through this exciting journey.

The mission of the center is to foster students' academic, intellectual, and personal growth while helping them find a college that matches their academic talents and fits their interests well.

Navigating today's college process requires careful planning and preparation. The College Counseling Handbook is designed to help assist students and parents in the college search and application process.

# College Counseling Handbook

## *College Counseling Calendar: Freshmen & Sophomores*

### **August 2018**

- Sophomores: Update résumé in Naviance and complete the Career Interest Profiler
- Attend your scheduled college counseling check-in meeting with Mrs. Nevins

### **September 2018**

- Sophomores: Attend a Naviance Workshop and continue to explore the program

### **October 2018**

- PSAT- October 10th
- Sophomores: Pre-ACT- October 23rd
- Sophomores: Explore Naviance

### **November 2018**

- Sophomores: Attend Sophomore College Night- November 6th
- Sophomores: Explore Naviance
- BQK PROBE College Fair- November 1st

### **December 2018**

- Sophomores: Explore Naviance
- Attend an Understanding your PSAT/Pre-ACT score workshop

### **January 2019**

- Freshmen: Attend a Naviance Workshop
- Sophomores: Explore Naviance

### **February 2019**

- Explore Naviance

### **March 2019**

- Explore Naviance

### **April 2019**

- Plan your summer experience & college visits
- Explore Naviance
- Sophomores: Regular registration deadline for May SAT/SAT Subject Tests- April 5th

### **May 2019**

- Sophomores: AP World History Exam- May 16th
- Sophomores: SAT/SAT Subject Tests- May 4th
- Sophomores: Regular registration deadline for June SAT/SAT Subject Tests- May 3rd
- Plan your summer experience & college visits
- Explore Naviance

### **June 2019**

- Sophomores: SAT/SAT Subject Tests (at FA)- June 1st
- Explore Naviance

# College Counseling Handbook

## College Counseling Calendar: Juniors

### August 2018

- Attend your scheduled college counseling check-in meeting with Mrs. Nevins
- Update résumé in Naviance
- SAT (at FA)- August 25th

### September 2018

- Attend a Naviance Workshop
- Southeast GA Independent Schools College Fair- September 13th
- Regular registration deadline for October SAT- September 7th
- ACT- September 8th
- Regular registration deadline for October ACT- September 28th

### October 2018

- SAT (at FA)- October 6th
- Regular registration deadline for November SAT- October 5th
- PSAT- October 10th
- Pre-ACT- October 23<sup>rd</sup>
- ACT- October 27th

### November 2018

- Regular registration deadline for December SAT- November 2nd
- Regular registration deadline for December ACT- November 2nd
- SAT (at FA)- November 3rd
- BQK PROBE College Fair- November 1<sup>st</sup>
- College Financial Aid Night- November 27th

### December 2018

- SAT- December 1st
- Set up an individual appointment to review your PSAT/Pre-ACT score with Mrs. Nevins

### January 2019

- Junior Class College Night- January 16th

- Regular registration deadline for February ACT- January 11th
- Schedule your individual junior college conference with Mrs. Nevins

### February 2019

- Regular registration deadline for March SAT- February 8th
- Schedule your individual junior college conference with Mrs. Nevins

### March 2019

- SAT (at FA)- March 9th
- Regular registration deadline for April ACT- March 8th

### April 2019

- Regular registration deadline for May SAT- April 5th
- ACT (at FA)- April 13th
- Attend a résumé building workshop
- Schedule college visits during Spring Break
- Plan your summer experience

### May 2019

- Regular registration deadline for June SAT/SAT Subject Tests- May 3rd
- Regular registration deadline for June ACT- May 3rd
- SAT/SAT Subject Tests- May 4th
- AP Exams- May 6th–May 17th
- Plan your summer experience & college visits

### June 2019

- SAT/SAT Subject Tests (at FA)- June 1st
- ACT- June 8th
- Regular registration deadline for July ACT- June 14th

# College Counseling Handbook

## College Counseling Calendar: Seniors

### August 2018

- Submit the first draft of your college essay to Mrs. Nevins
- Regular registration deadline for September ACT- August 10th
- SAT (at FA)- August 25th
- Attend your scheduled college counseling check-in meeting with Mrs. Nevins
- Update résumé in Naviance
- Update “Colleges I’m Thinking About” in Naviance

### September 2018v

- Senior College Night- September 5th
- Southeast GA Independent Schools College Fair- September 6th
- Regular registration deadline for October SAT- September 7th
- ACT- September 8th
- Regular registration deadline for October ACT- September 28th
- Begin transferring schools from your “Colleges I’m Thinking About” list to your “Colleges I’m Applying To” list
- Begin your college applications

### October 2018

- FAFSA becomes available- October 1st
- SAT (at FA)- October 6th
- Regular registration deadline for November SAT- October 5th
- ACT- October 27th
- Visit or re-visit the colleges on your list

### November 2018

- Common Early Decision/Early Action deadlines- November 1st/November 15<sup>th</sup>
- BQK PROBE College Fair- November 1<sup>st</sup>
- Regular registration deadline for December SAT- November 2nd

- Regular registration deadline for December ACT- November 2nd
- SAT (at FA)- November 3<sup>rd</sup>
- College Financial Aid Night- November 27th
- Pay attention to application deadlines!

### December 2018

- Earliest Regular Decision deadline- December 15th
- Check Naviance and college websites for scholarship applications

### January 2019

- Common Regular Decision deadlines- January 1st/January 15th
- Check Naviance and college websites for scholarship applications

### February 2019

- FAFSA preferred deadline- February 15th
- Update Naviance

### March 2019

- Complete all college and scholarship applications

### April 2019

- Notify colleges you are no longer considering
- Re-visit colleges you are considering
- Update Naviance

### May 2019

- Deadline to make a deposit- May 1st
- AP Exams- May 6th–May 17th
- Update Naviance
- Graduation!

# College Counseling Handbook

## Naviance Family Connection



### Website:

www.connection.naviance.com/fredericaaca

**Username:** Email Address

**Password:** As Selected

Naviance Family Connection is a web-based service designed especially for students and parents. Ninth through twelfth grade students and their parents will receive their own log-in information to Naviance, which will help make decisions about colleges and careers. Naviance is linked with College Planner, a service that the College Counseling Center uses to track and analyze data about college and career plans, so it provides up-to-date information that is specific to Frederica Academy.

Through Naviance, students will be kept well informed about the college process. They can explore their college options through the “College Search” and “College Match” tools and can keep track of their applications. Students can view their standardized test scores and GPA, and compare their statistics to past Frederica Academy applicants who successfully applied to the same college or university. Students may also keep track of the colleges/universities visiting Frederica Academy, through the “College Visits” feature on the site.

**Freshmen and sophomores** are encouraged to explore Naviance’s career search and assessment tools, to help broaden their knowledge of the various careers and educational opportunities available. They are also encouraged to utilize the résumé building features, which will allow them to keep track of their work, community service, extracurricular activities, and honors and awards. **Freshmen** and their parents will receive their Naviance

account information after their first semester of high school.

**Juniors** are encouraged to explore the many college search components of Naviance, as well as create their prospective college list under “Colleges I’m Thinking About.” This is an extremely useful feature which allows students to develop a list of schools they intend on applying to. Once students enter their **senior** year, they should begin moving the colleges in their prospective list to an active list, “Colleges I’m Applying To.” This helps Frederica Academy’s College Counseling Center keep track of the colleges each student is applying to and the status of his/her applications.

**Juniors and seniors** interested in exploring scholarship opportunities should regularly check the “Scholarship List” under the “Colleges” tab in Naviance, as new scholarship opportunities will be added weekly.

Through Naviance, **seniors** may also view the status of their teacher recommendations and the submission of all additional documents sent by Frederica Academy.

# College Counseling Handbook

## *The College Search*

Beginning the college search can be a daunting process. Visiting colleges is the best way to determine whether or not you can see yourself attending that school; however, there may be schools you are unable to visit prior to applying. Researching schools is key to developing a list of prospective colleges. The more you learn about a school you are interested in, the easier it will be to determine if that school is the right “fit” for you.

**Naviance** is a great resource to use when searching for colleges. The site can be used to help search for specific criteria you are looking for in a college. The searches conducted through Naviance will allow you to continually edit and monitor your list of prospective schools on your “Colleges I’m Thinking About” list, and it will allow you to compare these schools using the “College Compare” feature.

### College Visits

Spring break is a wonderful time for students to schedule college campus visits. It is recommended that students visit college campuses when the college is in session to get a feel of how the college operates and looks when classes are in session and the campus is full.

College tours and information sessions should be arranged at least 3-4 weeks in advance and can be scheduled through the college’s admissions webpage.

There is a limit of **3** excused absences per year for **juniors** and **seniors** who go on college visits. Students must submit a **Parental Request for Student Absence Form** and speak to their teachers regarding the assignments they will be missing. This absence will only be considered excused if the student submits documentation that the trip was taken for the purpose of considering the college for

admission. The form can be picked up in the Upper School office.

### Interviews

Interviews are recommended, but not required by most colleges. An interview is a great way for an admissions counselor to get to know you better and allow you to share with them why you would be a great addition to their colleges’ campus. Colleges and universities are also utilizing modern day technology by scheduling Skype interviews with students who are unable to visit their campus; they also reach out to their alumni to schedule interviews in their hometowns. It is recommended that students schedule interviews when asked to do so by the college.

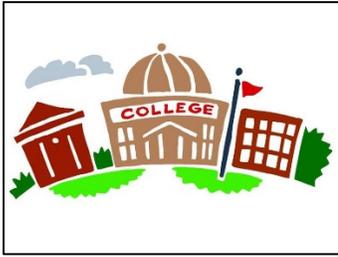
Students who schedule an interview with a school should remember to:

- Dress appropriately
- Be on time
- Use appropriate speech
- Make a list of a few questions to ask the admissions counselor or alumni about the school
- Ask for your interviewer’s contact information to send them a thank you note or email after the interview

It is important to note that the interviewer may never mention your grades or standardized test scores. It is not that they will not be considered for admission, but during the interview, the conversation will most likely be about your interests, what you feel makes you a good candidate for admission, and what you can offer the college as a student.

# College Counseling Handbook

## *The College Search*



### **Common College Admissions Interview Questions:**

- Tell me about yourself.
- How did you learn about our school?
- How have you prepared yourself for college?
- What activities that you have participated in are the most meaningful to you?
- What are your favorite classes and why?
- What is the name of the last book you read for leisure?
- How would your teachers describe you?
- How would your friends describe you?
- What do you like most about our college?
- How do you plan to contribute to our college community?
- What are you interested in majoring in and why?
- What do you do for fun in your free time?
- Tell me about a challenge that you overcame.
- What do you see yourself doing 10 years from now?
- How do you define success?
- What about you is unique?
- What subject in high school did you find the most challenging?
- How have you been a leader or displayed leadership?
- What is a challenge you have overcome?
- Do you have any questions?

### **Additional Details to Consider When Researching Colleges:**

- Campus size (small, medium, large)
- Geographic Location (city, state)
- Size of school (small, medium, large)
- Average number of students per class
- Community and surrounding areas
- Academic programs (majors, joint-degree programs)
- Student body (ratio of men to women, where they're coming from)
- Safety (security, Blue-Light Systems)
- Organizations/clubs (academic clubs, Greek life, intramurals)
- Athletics (NCAA Division, do students attend events?)
- Weekend activities/school events
- College facilities
- Financial aid and tuition (scholarship opportunities)
- Housing (*is housing guaranteed for 4 years?*)
- Meal plans
- Interviews (*are they required?*)
- Application deadlines
- Required standardized tests
- Career services department (*do they help find internships and help with job placement?*)
- Counseling center/office (*hours, staff qualifications*)
- Study abroad opportunities (*requirements, countries*)
- Honor Code
- Retention rate (*what percentage of freshmen return?*)
- Library (*facilities, hours*)

# College Counseling Handbook

## *College Visit Information Sheet*

Name of College \_\_\_\_\_

City, State \_\_\_\_\_

Urban/Rural \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Students \_\_\_\_\_ Tuition \_\_\_\_\_

Initial impression of the college: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is the Application deadline? \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of students accepted \_\_\_\_\_ Freshmen retention rate \_\_\_\_\_

Average GPA (for admitted freshmen) \_\_\_\_\_ Average SAT \_\_\_\_\_ Average ACT \_\_\_\_\_

What is the town surrounding the college, or near to it, like? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What scholarship opportunities are offered? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Is there a separate scholarship application? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the percentage of students receiving financial aid? \_\_\_\_\_

What dorms are available to freshmen? \_\_\_\_\_

Is housing guaranteed for four years? \_\_\_\_\_

Can freshmen have cars on campus? \_\_\_\_\_

How often will I meet with my academic advisor? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the percentage of students that graduate in four years? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the most popular major? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the most popular academic programs? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How large are classes? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the library's hours? \_\_\_\_\_

What pre-professional programs are offered? (Pre-Med, Pre-Vet, Pre-Law, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What activities does the college offer for students? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What sports are offered? (Division I, II, III, intramural) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How does the career services center help students find internships and jobs? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How is freshman orientation planned and organized? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What makes this college unique? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# College Counseling Handbook

## *College Applications*

College admission criteria may vary from one school to another. However, college admissions will tend to focus on the factors below:

1. Rigor/high school curriculum
2. GPA
3. Standardized test scores
4. Essay/supplements
5. Activity résumé
6. Recommendations

### **Official High School Transcript**

Each college you are applying to must receive an official high school transcript. The College Counseling Center will automatically send transcripts to the colleges on the “Colleges I’m Applying To” list in Naviance for each student, as the application deadline approaches. All transcripts will include ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade’s first and second semester grades. Frederica Academy reports only weighted GPAs and numeric averages. Senior grades will only appear if first semester has been completed.

Colleges are also looking at high school transcripts to see how much students have challenged themselves. The rigor of the courses you have selected while in high school are given much consideration by admissions counselors. Colleges want to see that students have taken advantage of the honors and Advanced Placement courses high schools offer. They want to see that students are aware of their strengths and know their potential. For this reason, it is not enough that a student enrolls in an advanced course; how the student performs is just as important. It is best to enroll in an honors or Advanced Placement course that is in a subject you enjoy and are passionate about.

### **Standardized Test Scores**

Please see the Standardized Testing section of the handbook.

### **Personal Statement/Essay**

With each essay or short answer question you submit, you are giving the school more information about yourself; allowing them to see what makes you a unique candidate for admission. Take the time to think of what you would like the admissions counselors to know about you. Each essay you write should be proofed for errors and should be read by an English teacher or the College Counselor.

The essay is an important part of the application. If you are writing about a question asked, please be sure that you have answered the question. If you have selected to write a personal statement, think about how someone who does not know you personally will judge what you have written. The writing section of an application gives you, the student, the opportunity to share information that the admissions counselors do not know from the basic information you have provided them.

Please see the Essays that Worked section of the handbook to view sample college essays.

### **Supplemental Application Material**

Depending on your intended major, you may be required to submit an additional portfolio or perform an audition. It is the student’s responsibility to know what supplemental material or documentation is required by each of the schools to which he/she is applying.

### **Activity Résumé**

The activity résumé allows colleges to learn what you, as a student, do when you are not in the classroom setting. It allows admission counselors to learn who you are as an individual; what your interests, hobbies, passions, talents, and honors are. Résumé workshops are offered throughout the school year for students to work on their résumé with the college counselor.

# College Counseling Handbook

## *College Applications*

A copy of each student's résumé will be submitted on their behalf, along with each official transcript sent to a college. Many schools offer scholarships and awards for various activities listed on a résumé. To qualify for these scholarships, schools must be aware of the activities you have participated in and the awards which you have received.

### **Teacher and Counselor Recommendations**

Each student must ask two teachers to write a letter of recommendation. Students are required to ask their teachers in person to write these letters. Once they have done so, each senior must submit an official request through Naviance.

Frederica Academy recommends that students ask two teachers from two different academic subject areas. Teachers should be from core academic areas, preferably from your junior year of high school. The teachers will be writing about your academic performance, effort, participation, and overall attitude in the classroom setting.

The teacher recommendation letter is an important part of your application. It allows the school to get a glimpse of how you conduct yourself in the classroom setting. Colleges recommend that students and parents do not have access to recommendation letters. All recommendations will remain confidential and should only be read by those whom the letters are written to. **Frederica Academy will not share letters of recommendation with students or parents. This is a College Counseling Office policy.**

Each college a senior applies to will receive a letter from the College Counselor. This letter will mark the student's accomplishments, personality, and overall impact he/she has had on the Frederica Academy community. The

College Counselor may also explain any circumstances that may have impacted a student's academic performance. Again, **Frederica Academy will not share letters of recommendation with students or parents. This is a College Counseling Office policy.**

Below is what Frederica Academy is responsible for submitting to a college and what the applicant is responsible for submitting:

### **Frederica Academy:**

- Counselor Recommendation
- Teacher Recommendations
- Official High School Transcript
- School Profile
- Activity Résumé

### **Student:**

- College Applications (including supplements)
- Application fees
- Essays/Personal Statements
- SAT and/or ACT Score Reports

### **Applications**

The first step in applying to a college is completing an application. Students may complete an online application which can be accessed on the school's website. Applications take time to complete. They are a reflection of the student, and therefore should not be rushed through. Many schools require more than one essay or personal statement. Students should think about what they would like the college to know about them that is not already seen in the basic questions asked.

**Students are encouraged to meet with the College Counselor to go over their applications.**

# College Counseling Handbook

## *College Applications*

### **The Common Application**

The Common Application is accepted by over 400 colleges and universities. This application allows students to apply to schools using one single application and can be completed by creating an account at [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org).

Each school will require students to complete their own individual supplement on the Common Application site. Please keep in mind that these supplements typically consist of essay questions. Like your individual personal statement/essay, much thought should be given to these supplemental essays or questions.

**Students who complete applications through the Common Application should sync their username and password with their Naviance account. This should be done so Frederica Academy can submit all required documentation electronically.**

Please note that the Common Application will not be sent to the colleges you have added to your “My Colleges” section of the application until you have completed the signature page and click **SUBMIT**.

### **Types of Application Deadlines**

**Regular Decision-** Deadline typically falls on or after January 1. Decisions are usually reached by March-April.

**Rolling-** Applicants will receive an admission decision as soon as it becomes available. The earlier the student applies, the sooner a decision will be made.

**Early Action-** Admission decision is not binding. Students may apply Early Action to as many schools as they would like. Students who apply to a school as an Early Action applicant will

learn of their admission decision sooner than under a Regular Decision deadline.

**Early Decision-** This deadline gives a **BINDING** decision. If a student applies and gets admitted, the student **MUST** attend the school. Students are only permitted to apply to **ONE** school as an Early Decision applicant. They may apply to other schools as an Early Action applicant, but must withdraw their applications to those schools if they are admitted into the school they have applied to Early Decision. This deadline typically falls in November and students are usually notified in January. An Early Decision Agreement must be submitted along with the application. This agreement requires a student, parent, and counselor signature. Students should only apply to a college/university as an Early Decision applicant if financial aid/scholarship is not a concern **AND** if it is their number one choice of school.

**Early Decision II-** This deadline typically falls in November-January. Like Early Decision, this deadline gives a **BINDING** decision. It is a good option for a student who would like to apply to a school Early Decision, but would like to take a November or December standardized test.

# College Counseling Handbook

## *Standardized Testing*

Standardized tests are used to assist educators and students in assessing aptitude, ability, and proficiency. Frederica Academy administers the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (**PSAT**) to all sophomores and juniors in October.

**Sophomores** take the test for practice and exposure to the types of questions asked on the SAT, while **juniors** will have a chance to qualify for a Merit Scholarship and test their skills against other students nationwide. National Merit Scholarships are determined each year by an index totaling the verbal, math, and writing numbers of the test. **Freshmen, sophomores, and juniors** are also administered the **Pre-ACT**, a test designed to expose underclassmen to the format of the ACT exam.

Any Frederica Academy student enrolled in an Advanced Placement (**AP**) course is required to take the AP exam for that course in May. AP courses are designed to help students become successful at college level curriculum, while their exams test student knowledge of material taught.

The Scholastic Aptitude Test, more commonly known as the **SAT**, and the American College Testing's assessment, the **ACT**, are used by colleges and universities for admission. These exams are not the only criteria considered for college admission; however, your score provides colleges with a means of comparing applicants, as it is the only standard component in the application process. How an SAT or ACT score is used varies from school to school, and it is the student's responsibility to know what standardized tests are required for each school they are applying to. **It is imperative that students take test preparation seriously. Studying will help better prepare students for the test and help increase scores.**

Please note that Frederica Academy does NOT report standardized test scores to colleges.

**Students must request their test scores be sent to each of the colleges to which they are submitting an application. To do so, please log into your College Board or ACT account via [www.CollegeBoard.org](http://www.CollegeBoard.org) or [www.ACT.org](http://www.ACT.org).**

### **PSAT**

**Sophomores** and **juniors** will be administered the PSAT in October of every year. The PSAT is a College Board exam that is designed to help prepare students for the types of questions seen on the SAT. The exam tests students on evidence-based reading & writing and mathematics. The PSAT's scale is 160-760 for each section. Students will not lose points for incorrect answers; it is advantageous for the student to answer every question on the exam.

Score reports become available in December of the same year and are mailed to each parent.

**Sophomores** will go over their PSAT scores in a classroom setting in January, and can meet individually with the College Counselor to go over their individual scores. **Juniors** will be required to meet individually with the College Counselor to discuss their PSAT score and the steps to take to begin studying for the SAT. It is recommended that each student log into their College Board account and review their online score report. Online reports can be synced with a **Khan Academy** ([www.KhanAcademy.org/test-prep/sat](http://www.KhanAcademy.org/test-prep/sat)) account which students can use to receive additional help in studying for the SAT.

### **Pre-ACT**

**Freshmen, sophomores, and juniors** will be administered the Pre-ACT in October of each year. The Pre-ACT is designed to expose students to the format of the ACT exam. Similar to the ACT, the Pre-ACT contains four sections- English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science. The Composite score of the Pre-ACT gives an estimate of the student's educational development over all of the areas that are

# College Counseling Handbook

## *Standardized Testing*

tested. This score ranges from 1 to 36. Like the ACT, there is no penalty for guessing. Therefore, students are encouraged to answer every question.

Pre-ACT results become available in December of the same year and are mailed to each student. Sophomores will go over their Pre-ACT scores in a classroom setting in January, and can meet individually with the College Counselor to go over their individual scores. **Juniors** will be required to meet individually with the College Counselor to discuss their Pre-ACT score and the steps to take to begin studying for the ACT.

### **SAT**

The SAT is a test that asks you to use your reasoning skills to answer questions on math, reading, and writing. The test emphasizes critical analysis and real-world problem-solving.

The SAT contains two major sections: Evidence Based Reading & Writing and Math, and is made up of five long sub-sections testing writing and language, reading, math (in two sections), and writing. Both major sections are scored on a scale of 200-800, for a total score between 400-1600.

English: There are two English sub-sections which have an emphasis on rhetoric, analysis, and punctuation. These scores of the sub-sections will be combined to create the first section score on a score range of 200-800.

- The writing and language section tests grammatical and rhetorical skills.
- The reading section tests evidence-based reading comprehension skills.

Math: The math section covers topics from pre-algebra through basic trigonometry, with a heavy emphasis on rhetoric and analysis. There is a math calculator and no-calculator section of the exam. The scores of the two math sub-sections

will be combined to create a second section score on a score range of 200-800.

(Optional) Writing: The writing section of the SAT is optional. **Frederica Academy's college counselor recommends that all students take the Writing portion of the SAT.**

*Score Choice* is a feature the College Board has created which allows students to select one test date score to send to the colleges of your choice. However, most colleges will consider a student's best score on each section of the SAT when determining admission. A College Board SAT Score Report will include all SAT/SAT Subject Tests a student has taken, unless the student chooses to use Score Choice.

It is recommended that **juniors** take at least one SAT exam in the spring (March, May, or June), and one in the fall of their senior year (October or November). Every student who registers to take the SAT should prepare for the exam (this means studying!).

Students must register for each SAT they choose to take. They can do so by creating an account through the College Board ([www.CollegeBoard.org](http://www.CollegeBoard.org)). It is the student's responsibility to register for the SATs he/she wishes to take, and to request official score reports be sent to the colleges to which he/she is applying. **Juniors** and **seniors** who register for an SAT exam may choose up to four schools to receive SAT Score Reports for free (at the time of registration). Students will be charged for each additional report ordered.

# College Counseling Handbook

## Standardized Testing

### 2018-2019 SAT Dates & Deadlines

Test Date	Regular Registration Deadline	Late Registration Deadline
*August 25, 2018	July 27, 2018	August 15, 2018
*October 6, 2018	September 7, 2018	September 26, 2018
*November 3, 2018	October 5, 2018	October 24, 2018
December 1, 2018	November 2, 2018	November 20, 2018
*March 9, 2019	February 8, 2019	February 27, 2019
May 4, 2019	April 5, 2019	April 24, 2019
*June 1, 2019	May 3, 2019	May 22, 2019

\*Offered at Frederica Academy

### SAT Subject Tests

Some colleges may require or recommend students take SAT Subject Tests. SAT Subject Tests are one hour in length and test specific subject areas students have been taught in school. Subject Tests are often looked at by colleges because they can be used to consider students' level of readiness to begin taking college level courses in the specific areas tested. It is recommended that students submit 2-3 Subject Tests to the colleges/universities that recommend or require them. Students may take up to 3 SAT Subject Tests on a test date. Students cannot take the SAT and SAT Subject Tests on the same test date.

The typical Frederica Academy student can expect to be prepared to take the following SAT Subject Tests after completing the courses:

Frederica Academy Course	SAT Subject Test
Biology/AP Biology	Biology-M
Chemistry/Chemistry Honors	Chemistry
Physics/AP Physics	Physics
Algebra II/Algebra II Honors	Math I
Pre-Calculus/Pre-Calculus Honors	Math II
American Literature/AP Language	Literature
World History/AP World History	World History
U.S. History/AP U.S. History	U.S. History
Spanish IV/Spanish IV Honors/AP Spanish	Spanish
Latin IV/Latin IV Honors	Latin

### ACT

The ACT is a curriculum based assessment which contains English, Mathematics, Reading, Science, and optional Writing sections. **Though the writing section is optional, Frederica Academy recommends that each student taking the ACT complete the writing portion of the exam, as many schools will not consider an ACT score without a writing section.** Some schools that recommend or require SAT Subject Tests will accept the ACT with writing instead.

Students who take the ACT will receive a Composite Score, which ranges from 1-36. The Composite Score is the average of the English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science scores received on the exam. A separate score is given for the writing portion of the exam. The score received on the ACT can be compared to the score received on an SAT exam by using a conversion chart found under the Understanding Your Scores section of ACT's website.

It is recommended that **juniors** take one ACT exam in the spring (April or June), and one in the fall of their **senior** year (September or

# College Counseling Handbook

## Standardized Testing

October). Students must register for each ACT they choose to take. They can do so by creating an account through the ACT ([www.act.org](http://www.act.org)). It is the student's responsibility to register for the ACT's he/she wishes to take and to request official score reports be sent to the colleges to which he/she is applying.

Students can expect each section of the test to have the following content:

- Math:** Up to trigonometry
- Science:** Charts, data, graphs
- Reading:** Reading passages- prose fiction, social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences
- English:** Grammar usage

### 2017-2018 ACT Dates & Deadlines

Test Date	Regular Registration Deadline	Late Registration Deadline
September 8, 2018	August 10, 2018	August 26, 2018
October 27, 2018	September 28, 2018	October 14, 2018
December 8, 2018	November 2, 2018	November 19, 2018
February 9, 2019	January 11, 2019	January 18, 2019
*April 13, 2019	March 8, 2019	March 25, 2019
June 8, 2019	May 3, 2019	May 20, 2019
July 13, 2019	June 14, 2019	June 24, 2019

\*Offered at Frederica Academy

### AP Exams

AP (Advanced Placement) courses are designed to help students become successful at college level courses, while their exams test student knowledge of material taught. AP exams are administered in May of each year. Every student enrolled in an AP course is **required** to take the AP exam for that subject. AP exams are scored on a scale of 1-5. Many colleges will

award college credit for grades of 3 or better on an AP exam. If a student would like his/her score to be considered for college credit at the college he/she is attending, he/she must request a copy of their AP Score Report be sent to the school.

The College Counseling Center will order all AP exams. Families will be billed for the cost of each exam.

### 2018 AP Exam Schedule

Exam Date/Time	AP Exam
Monday, May 6, 2019 (8am)	AP U.S. Government
Tuesday, May 7, 2019 (8am)	AP Spanish Language
Tuesday, May 7, 2019 (12pm)	AP Physics I
Wednesday, May 8, 2019 (8am)	AP Literature & Comp.
Thursday, May 9, 2019 (8am)	AP Chemistry
Friday, May 10, 2019 (8am)	AP U.S. History
Monday, May 13, 2019 (8am)	AP Biology
Tuesday, May 14, 2019 (8am)	AP Calculus AB/BC
Wednesday, May 15, 2019 (8am)	AP Language & Comp.
Thursday, May 16, 2019 (8am)	AP Comparative Government
Thursday, May 16, 2019 (8am)	AP World History
Thursday, May 16, 2019 (12pm)	AP Statistics
Friday, May 17, 2019 (12pm)	AP Latin

Please use Frederica Academy's school code when registering for each standardized test.

**(CEEB: 110-474)**

# College Counseling Handbook

## *NCAA Eligibility*

www.NCAAEligibility.org



Students interested in playing a sport at the NCAA **Division I** or **Division II** level are encouraged to plan ahead! Each high school is required to submit its courses to the NCAA Eligibility Center for approval. Any course approved by the NCAA will be calculated in a student's GPA for eligibility. Those courses, such as non-academic electives and fine arts electives that are not approved by the NCAA, are not calculated into a student's GPA when being considered for eligibility. Frederica Academy's academic requirements exceed both NCAA Division I and Division II credit requirements. However, each student interested in playing a sport at the college level should inform the College Counselor so a credit evaluation can be conducted.

### **NCAA Checklist**

- Speak to the College Counselor about your desire to be a college athlete
- Discuss recruitment strategies and appropriate Division level with your coach
- Register with the Eligibility Center (NCAA recommends that students register at the beginning of their sophomore year)
- Request an official high school transcript be sent to the Eligibility Center at the end of your junior year
- Have all standardized test scores (SAT and ACT) sent to the Eligibility Center, using test code "9999"
- Request an official high school transcript be sent to the Eligibility Center at the end of your senior year

### **Division I**

- Complete 16 core courses.
  - Ten of the 16 core courses must be completed before the seventh semester (senior year) of high school.
  - Seven of the 10 core courses must be in English, math or science.
- Earn a core-course GPA of at least 2.300.
- Earn the ACT/SAT score matching your core-course
- GPA on the Division I sliding scale
- Graduate high school.

### **Division II**

- Earn a core-course GPA of at least 2.200.
- Earn the ACT/SAT score matching your core-course
- GPA on the Division II full qualifier sliding scale
- Graduate high school



# College Counseling Handbook

## Glossary

There are two types of aid: **need-based** and **merit-based**. Need-based aid is determined by completing the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Merit-based aid is given in the form of scholarship. Scholarships can be awarded to students based upon their academic achievement in high school, standardized test scores, talents, or achievements.

### **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**

The FAFSA can be accessed and completed by visiting [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). The application cannot be filed before January 1 of your senior year. Each college/university will determine an individual amount of aid to offer you. This is determined by assessing your family income, assets, and what they believe is your family's ability to pay for college tuition. Each college has its own priority filing date which you must be aware of. Need based aid may include loans, grants, and work study.

### **Net Price Calculator**

The Net Price Calculator is a tool that students can use to estimate their "net price" to attend a particular college or university.

Net price is the difference between the "sticker" price (full cost) to attend a specific college, minus any grants and scholarships for which students may be eligible. Sticker price includes direct charges (tuition and fees, room and board) and indirect costs (books and supplies, transportation, and personal expenses). Each college's financial aid webpage has access to a Net Price Calculator, so students and parents can get an estimate of the amount of aid a college will provide.

### **Student Aid Report**

Students will receive the Student Aid Report once the FAFSA has been submitted. This report will indicate your Expected Family

Contribution (EFC), or the amount the school believes you can pay. You can get a sense of what your EFC will be by using a financial aid calculator, such as the one available through [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org).

### **CSS Profile**

The CSS Profile is required by many private colleges and considers students for additional aid funded through the individual institution. This profile can be found online at: [www.profileonline.collegeboard.com](http://www.profileonline.collegeboard.com).

### **HOPE Scholarship**

To be eligible for the HOPE Scholarship, students must have earned a minimum GPA of 3.0 in their core subjects, must meet HOPE Scholarship Rigor Requirements, and must be a legal resident of the state of Georgia. The HOPE Scholarship covers a percentage of the tuition at a Georgia state college or university. Students attending a private college/university in Georgia may also be eligible for the HOPE Private Scholarship. This scholarship also covers a percentage of the college/university's tuition. The Zell Miller Scholarship covers full academic tuition, if the student has earned at least a 3.7 GPA in his/her core subjects, meets HOPE Scholarship Rigor Requirements, and has earned a score of at least 1200 on the critical reading and math portions of the SAT or a Composite Score of 26 on the ACT.

Seniors must complete a Georgia HOPE Scholarship and Grant Application to be considered for the HOPE Scholarship. For more information and to complete an application, visit [www.GAfutures.org](http://www.GAfutures.org).

**GAfutures.org**  
Explore. Plan. Succeed.

# College Counseling Handbook

## Glossary

**Admit-** You are admitted into the university! A deposit must be submitted by May 1.

**CEEB Code-** Frederica Academy's College Entrance Examination Board Code is 110-474.

**Deferred-** Students who receive a deferred admission decision are placed into the Regular Decision admission pool. A school which has deferred you may want 1st semester grades or more information from the College Counselor.

**Demonstrated Interest-** Some schools prefer to accept students who have shown a strong interest in the college and its programs. These schools keep track of the number of times a student has visited campus or contacted the admission office. This may be taken into account when considering a student for admission. If you are applying to a school which tracks students' demonstrated interest, it is best to make direct contact with the admission office, and email the regional representative for Glynn County to introduce yourself. Each time you visit campus, you should either stop by the admission office or make an appointment with a counselor.

**Denied-** Unfortunately, the school cannot offer you admission. Students may not re-apply for the same term. If desired, you can attend another school and apply to transfer for another term.

**FAFSA-** The Free Application for Federal Student Aid allows students to be considered for need based aid. The application becomes available on October 1 of students' senior year, and can be accessed and completed by visiting [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov).

**Grant-** Funds that do not require a repayment. Students can receive both government grants and institutional grants.

**Loans-** Funds that must be repaid. Subsidized loans are awarded based on financial need and do not charge interest before payments are due. Unsubsidized loans charge interest before loan payments begin.

**Matriculation-** Students are considered to be matriculated if they are enrolled in a degree seeking program.

**Need-Blind Admission-** Students are considered for admission without the consideration of financial need.

**Need-Aware Admission-** Students are considered for admission with the consideration of financial need.

**Scholarships-** Funds that are awarded from a college or independent organization and do not need to be repaid.

**Senioritis-** Falling into the habit of not putting effort into senior year courses. Senior year is important! On every acceptance letter a student receives, the college will indicate that your acceptance is contingent upon the completion of your current academic program or year. Colleges can, and will, rescind an admission offer if your grades have significantly decreased. Frederica Academy will report first semester grades, if a school wishes to see them, or if the student applies through the Common Application.

**Superscore-** When a college takes a student's highest subscores from different test dates for a new, higher "superscore."

**TOEFL-** The Test of English as a Foreign Language is administered by the Education Testing Service (ETS) and is recommended for students with five years or less of English language usage. Colleges may use the TOEFL score as a replacement for the SAT Critical Reading score and colleges generally list

# College Counseling Handbook

## *Glossary*

TOEFL minimums on their international admissions websites.

**Waitlist-** The college would like more information or did not have enough room for additional students. Instead of denying you admission, the college has decided to place you on a waitlist. To be taken off of the waitlist, you must contact the school. Colleges will be able to notify you of your admission status after May 1. Students should still submit a deposit with an alternate school to meet the deposit date of May 1.

**Work Study-** Student is employed part-time through the college/university and earns money for college costs. Work Study programs are funded by the government and are offered through financial aid packages from colleges.

# College Counseling Handbook

## *College Essays that Worked*

**Title: Auntie El**  
**By: Samuel**  
**College: Hamilton College**

Eleanor, or "Auntie El" as she was called by everyone, was my primary caretaker for the first fifteen years of my life. Auntie El grew up in the blue-collar town of Everett, Mass., never married and lived with my grandmother, who was her older sister. She spent her spare time bowling and looking for bargains on items nobody needed. Auntie El worked for the Gillette Company for 43 years in its South Boston factory as an inspection clerk in the Quality Control Group, scrutinizing the edges of razor blades under a microscope. Auntie El retired in November of 1989, the exact same month and year in which I was born. My parents both had demanding jobs with long hours and therefore needed someone to look after me during the day. Three months after I was born, they still had not found a babysitter, and time was running out. My grandmother volunteered her younger sister, mainly to get her out of the house they were sharing. Auntie El was called in to "pinch hit" on a temporary basis.

Cranky and wheezy from her latest cigarette, Auntie El walked into our house on her first day wearing her flowered apron and carrying a plastic grocery bag in which she packed her clothes for the week — not exactly Mary Poppins. Both my parents did not see this arrangement working, but were grateful for her services until a suitable caretaker could be found. She took care of me for two weeks until she went on a previously scheduled trip to Las Vegas. I guess she must have softened to the idea of caring for me because, halfway through the trip, she called my mother and told her she wanted the job full time. Auntie El started the next Monday.

No longer able to smoke because of my fragile lungs (I was on a respirator for several days after I was born), Auntie El had to find activities to take her mind off cigarettes. She took me on long walks every day and, as I grew older, would play catch with me in the backyard. Her health improved dramatically. We were good for each other.

As the years passed, we became even closer. By the time I was in first grade, she was a faculty favorite at my school and could be found waiting for me every day in the parking lot in her white Cutlass Ciera Oldsmobile with her BINGO plate on the front. She quickly became a school legend when she was the only adult in memory to join the Halloween parade which took us through every classroom in the school in costume. Auntie El wore a witch's hat and a black and orange polka dot apron; I was a fireman.

Through our years together, we had numerous adventures. One night, her nose bled profusely and she could not stop the bleeding. Since my parents were at work, she had to call an ambulance and was forced to take me with her. With the sirens blaring, I hopped in the back, dressed in my red Power Ranger pajamas.

Auntie El's tough, gritty mentality made me a stronger person. She grew up without a father and her family was poor. She and her siblings were taken out of school by tenth grade in order to help support the family. She never missed a chance to point out how hard my parents worked to provide me with great opportunities and called the town in which we lived "la de da land." I always had Auntie El to give me a dose of reality.

The littlest things seemed to pull Auntie El and me together. Our passion for food was a regular topic, and we would have daily discussions on what I had to eat for lunch that day at school.

# College Counseling Handbook

## *College Essays that Worked*

Late at night, I would sneak up to her room and watch episodes of *Everybody Loves Raymond* and would laugh until my parents heard us and ended the fun. No matter where we were, you could always find Auntie El and me laughing about something and enjoying the moment.

In the fall of my freshman year, Auntie El was diagnosed with colon cancer. After a successful operation, she spent some time in a rehabilitation center to regain her strength. On Thanksgiving evening, 2004, Auntie El suffered a heart attack. She fell to the floor, and hit her head. She was found later the next morning, and was pronounced dead. I found out when I heard my mother scream on the phone with the hospital. Auntie El's passing affected our whole family, but it was particularly tough for me. My good friend, my partner in crime and my teacher was no longer with me. Coming home to her every day for fifteen years was something I really enjoyed. Arriving home to an empty, quiet house and having days pass without talking to her was the worst experience of my life. I did not know life without Auntie El.

However, my family and I had to adjust but I did not know how to start over. I found myself thinking about Auntie El a lot and, one day, realized that she was still with me when I would hear her voice in the back of my mind during a test or a game or just when I was making dinner for myself.

More importantly, I realized that Auntie El instilled in me the values that I admired in her. She was genuine, caring and respectful. She taught me to work hard, and be mentally tough for life's challenges. Her perseverance and grit showed me a lot and provided me with the perfect role model for life.

**Title: Untitled**

**By: Joseph**

**College: Tufts University**

When problems arise, I solve them using copper fittings.

I first discovered this versatile building material as a seven-year-old visiting my father's HVAC shop. While waiting for him to finish working one night, I wandered from the modestly finished space at the front of the building to the shop in back, which featured high ceilings and imposing stacks of shelves. I was fascinated by the dusty machines with tubes, knobs, and old cracked nozzles. When Dad found me shoulder-deep in the scrap copper bin--which I later referred to as "the world's coolest trash can"--he determined that it was time to teach me to solder. Thirty minutes later, armed with a bowl haircut, a pair of safety glasses, and a healthy dose of self-confidence, I was ready to take on the world.

From then on, my childhood was a patchwork of failures. I fell into a constant cycle of thinking, designing, building, and rethinking. Common Christmas wish list items included drafting supplies and architectural stencils. Each childhood interest led me back to the shop, where I figured out a way to build it from copper fittings. Learning to play trombone inspired me to design my own instrument. After a faulty mouthpiece and soldering mistakes ruined three prototypes, "The Plumbone," an instrument that could play three distinct notes, became my first successful creation. When a middle school acids and bases project called for building a paper maché volcano, I built a cannon instead. Though my first model failed to "erupt," my second sprayed its contents so far that it left a swath of dead grass in my lawn. While the grass grew back, I built a soapbox car entirely out of copper and steel strut channel only to find myself claiming last place in the annual "Soapbox Derby." Noting that the lightest cars accelerated

# College Counseling Handbook

## *College Essays that Worked*

quickest, I rebuilt my car, replacing steel with PVC pipe, and took second the next year. Having navigated around so many obstacles, I imagined that I could build anything so long as I had copper fittings.

As I matured, however, I began to drift away from my old standby. While attempting increasingly abstract projects, I grew frustrated by the limitations of copper fittings. It felt like the end of an era when I decided to build one last copper item, a small creature that I gifted to my dad.

Leaving the familiarity of copper behind felt like entering a new, entirely foreign world. Embracing the freedom and uncertainty of Python, I began coding my newest idea: a game called "Dive." While the concept proved exhaustingly ambitious, success seemed imminent as I stitched my project together, patch by patch. Yet when I looked through my computer one morning, I realized that "Dive" was gone, wiped inadvertently during a visit to the Apple store. I stared in disbelief at the blank computer screen, wondering if my vision was lost forever.

At this pivotal moment, I realized why copper fittings represent such an important part of my childhood. When my cannon refused to fire correctly, I learned something new about propulsion. When I soldered my instruments incorrectly, I refined my technique. Had I given up every time an idea failed, I would not have learned from my mistakes, and more importantly, I would not have found success. Even if I never solder again, the lessons I learned from copper fittings are the lessons that will guide me through life.

Losing "Dive" remains difficult to accept, yet excitement about the potential in a new game quickly overshadowed my disappointment. Years of faulty designs and unfortunate

accidents have taught me to revise my methods, but not my goals, in the face of failure. With a confidence that only arises after realizing that success was just out of reach and finding the audacity to reach further, I set out to make "Dive 2.0," the best game you'll ever play.

# College Counseling Handbook

## *College Essays that Worked*

**Title: Untitled**  
**By: Bridget**  
**College: Tufts University**

I have always loved riding in cars. After a long day in first grade, I used to fall asleep to the engine purring in my mother's Honda Odyssey, even though it was only a 5-minute drive home. As I grew, and graduated into the shotgun seat, it became natural and enjoyable to look out the window. Seeing my world passing by through that smudged glass, I would daydream what I could do with it.

In elementary school, I already knew my career path: I was going to be Emperor of the World. While I sat in the car and watched the miles pass by, I developed the plan for my empire. I reasoned that, for the world to run smoothly, it would have to look presentable. I would assign people, aptly named Fixer-Uppers, to fix everything that needed fixing. That old man down the street with chipping paint on his house would have a fresh coat in no time. The boy who accidentally tossed his Frisbee onto the roof of the school would get it back. The big pothole on Elm Street that my mother managed to hit every single day on the way to school would be filled-in. It made perfect sense! All the people that didn't have a job could be Fixer-Uppers. I was like a ten-year-old FDR.

Seven years down the road, I still take a second glance at the sidewalk cracks and think of my Fixer-Uppers, but now I'm doing so from the driver's seat. As much as I would enjoy it, I now accept that I won't become Emperor of the World, and that the Fixer-Uppers will have to remain in my car ride imaginings. Or do they? I always pictured a Fixer-Upper as a smiling man in an orange T-Shirt. Maybe instead, a Fixer-Upper could be a tall girl with a deep love for Yankee Candles. Maybe it could be me.

Bridget the Fixer-Upper will be slightly different than the imaginary one who paints houses and fetches Frisbees. I was lucky enough to discover

what I am passionate about when I was a freshman in high school. A self-admitted Phys. Ed. addict, I volunteered to help out with the Adapted PE class. On my first day, I learned that it was for developmentally-disabled students. To be honest, I was really nervous. I hadn't had too much interaction with special needs students before, and wasn't sure how to handle myself around them. Long story short, I got hooked. Three years have passed helping out in APE and eventually becoming a teacher in the Applied Behavior Analysis summer program. I love working with the students and watching them progress.

When senior year arrived, college meetings began, and my counselor asked me what I wanted to do for a career, I didn't say Emperor of the World. Instead, I told him I wanted to become a board-certified behavior analyst. A BCBA helps develop learning plans for students with autism and other disabilities. Basically, I would get to do what I love for the rest of my life. He laughed and told me that it was a nice change that a seventeen-year-old knew so specifically what she wanted to do. I smiled, thanked him, and left. But it occurred to me that, while my desired occupation was decided, my true goal in life was still to become a Fixer-Upper. So, maybe I'll be like Sue Storm and her alter-ego, the Invisible Woman. I'll do one thing during the day, then spend my off-hours helping people where I can. Instead of flying like Sue, though, I'll opt for a nice performance automobile. My childhood self would appreciate that.

# College Counseling Handbook

## *College Essays that Worked*

**Title: Block by Block, Word by Word**

**By: Daniel**

**College: Hamilton College**

You can make almost anything out of LEGOs. You can build miniature spaceships, colorful forts, or cities of blocky skyscrapers that span the basement floor. My favorite was constructing ancient, booby-trapped temples like the ones from Indiana Jones.

In elementary school, I was fanatical about my LEGOs. I would build the medieval castle, complete with the moat and the drawbridge and guard stations and the throne room for the king and queen and their royal dog, Patches. (Coincidentally, Patches was also the name of my dog.) I would kneel for hours, hunched over the hundreds of blocks spread over the carpet, to select just the right piece for each part of the structure.

Once the castle walls were erected and the knights on horseback were set to approach from the other side of the moat, I was done. I didn't really play with the castle afterward. I moved it to the corner so that my sister's Barbie convertible wouldn't crash into it and ruin my little "Ages 3 and Up" masterpiece.

Looking back on my childhood, I was a bizarrely obsessive little kid. For days after building a fort or a spaceship, I would stop and examine that every plastic block was still in place.

It's strange to think that between the age of riding a tricycle and the age of driving a car, I am, in some ways, exactly the same. I don't play with LEGOs anymore, but I am a construction worker of types. Now I write essays and stories and newspaper articles, and I approach it with the same compulsion.

Every word is painstakingly selected with the same intensity I exerted as a child choosing the

right color block. Every phrase is turned around and around in my head like arranging the walls of the castle gate. Every sentence is examined for its structural quality. At my desk — like kneeling over my rug — I craft meticulously.

By writing, I hope to create the grand and intricate images in my mind, to give them some physical incarnation. Inked on a page, a nebulous mass of related thoughts can be forged into something real. A story or essay can be erected as the fulfillment of a single concept. My gratification comes from being able to perfectly embody an idea. This can be frustrating because I've never written anything close to perfect. For as much as I agonize over my words and methodically rework every draft, my ideal eludes me. Still, I return to my desk and keep writing, editing, and rewriting because if I don't return to my desk, I'm sure I'll never write the essays, stories, and newspaper articles that I know I want to write.

You can make almost anything out of words. You can build planet-sized spaceships, long-lost medieval castles, or cities of glass structures that pierce the clouds. If my construction work is solid enough, I believe I will be able to make these worlds — real and imaginary — come alive on paper the way they did on the rug of my basement. So I continue to build — block by block, word by word, sentence by sentence — in the hope that I will end up with something I can put to the side of my desk and examine every once in a while to see that every word fits in place.

# College Counseling Handbook

## *College Essays that Worked*

**Title: Breaking Into Cars**  
**By: Stephen**  
**College: Johns Hopkins University**

I had never broken into a car before.

We were in Laredo, having just finished our first day at a Habitat for Humanity work site. The Hotchkiss volunteers had already left, off to enjoy some Texas BBQ, leaving me behind with the college kids to clean up. Not until we were stranded did we realize we were locked out of the van.

Someone picked a coat hanger out of the dumpster, handed it to me, and took a few steps back.

“Can you do that thing with a coat hanger to unlock it?”

“Why me?” I thought.

More out of amusement than optimism, I gave it a try. I slid the hanger into the window’s seal like I’d seen on crime shows, and spent a few minutes jiggling the apparatus around the inside of the frame. Suddenly, two things simultaneously clicked. One was the lock on the door. (I actually succeeded in springing it.) The other was the realization that I’d been in this type of situation before. In fact, I’d been born into this type of situation.

My upbringing has numbed me to unpredictability and chaos. With a family of seven, my home was loud, messy, and spottily supervised. My siblings arguing, the dog barking, the phone ringing—all meant my house was functioning normally. My Dad, a retired Navy pilot, was away half the time. When he was home, he had a parenting style something like a drill sergeant. At the age of nine, I learned how to clear burning oil from the surface of water. My Dad considered this a critical life skill—you know, in case my aircraft carrier

should ever get torpedoed. “The water’s on fire! Clear a hole!” he shouted, tossing me in the lake without warning. While I’m still unconvinced about that particular lesson’s practicality, my Dad’s overarching message is unequivocally true: much of life is unexpected, and you have to deal with the twists and turns.

Living in my family, days rarely unfolded as planned. A bit overlooked, a little pushed around, I learned to roll with reality, negotiate a quick deal, and give the improbable a try. I don’t sweat the small stuff, and I definitely don’t expect perfect fairness. So what if our dining room table only has six chairs for seven people? Someone learns the importance of punctuality every night.

But more than punctuality and a special affinity for musical chairs, my family life has taught me to thrive in situations over which I have no power. Growing up, I never controlled my older siblings, but I learned how to thwart their attempts to control me. I forged alliances, and realigned them as necessary. Sometimes, I was the poor, defenseless little brother; sometimes I was the omniscient elder. Different things to different people, as the situation demanded. I learned to adapt.

Back then, these techniques were merely reactions undertaken to ensure my survival. But one day this fall, Dr. Hicks, our Head of School, asked me a question that he hoped all seniors would reflect on throughout the year: “How can I participate in a thing I do not govern, in the company of people I did not choose?”

The question caught me off guard, much like the question posed to me in Laredo. Then, I realized I knew the answer. I knew why the coat hanger had been handed to me.

Growing up as the middle child in my family, I was a vital participant in a thing I did not govern, in the company of people I did not choose. It’s

# College Counseling Handbook

## *College Essays that Worked*

family. It's society. And often, it's chaos. You participate by letting go of the small stuff, not expecting order and perfection, and facing the unexpected with confidence, optimism, and preparedness. My family experience taught me to face a serendipitous world with confidence.

**Title: How to Become an Adult**

**By: Michaela**

**College: Johns Hopkins University**

In the US, legal adulthood comes at 18, but it is my understanding that adulthood comes through responsibility, tears, laughter, and most of all: parenthood. It is effortless to watch other people's children grow and flourish, but having my own was a terrifying new world for which I was ill-prepared. I was not ready for my first, Stanley, but now I cannot envision a world without him. Today, I am the proud parent of not one, but seven beautiful, boisterous, carnivorous plants. Within my small family I have four sundews, two Venus flytraps, and one tropical pitcher plant. Of course they have scientific names, but I only use them when I am angry and my inner-parent reveals itself. Many might ask, "How does a person become the parent of seven carnivorous plants?" and I can only answer that with a story, my story.

It was an ordinary Wednesday afternoon when I came home from school only to find a charming plant that resembled a leafless, dew-splattered fern perched on the counter. With the eloquence that only a teenager could muster, I asked my mother, "What's that?" She carefully explained that he was our new carnivorous plant and he was going to be on fruit fly kitchen duty. Over the next couple of weeks my fascination with him grew, and eventually I adopted him as one of my own. In all sincerity, I did not begin as the ideal parent. I would give Stanley water to drink if he looked drier than usual and that was the extent of my nurturing efforts. However, my complacency did not last. Come winter, around his half birthday, Stanley became afflicted with a mysterious ailment. His stems curled and his one delicate green frond dried up. After carefully examining him, I concluded that not only was the lake water I had been using contaminated with some sort of root-eating larva, but my mother's

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African violets had given him aphids. It was then that I was faced with the harsh reality of the situation: I had a plant that I was absolutely obsessed with, but knew nothing about.

In my desperation to keep my sundew alive, I began to contact other plant enthusiasts in an increasingly desperate attempt to help my poor Stanley. To my great surprise, a close friend was also a carnivorous plant caregiver and was well versed in childhood care. His advice, coupled with some new dirt and the stocked shelves of the nearby library's horticulture section, allowed me to nurse Stanley back to health. Stanley regained his strength and shortly after the winter incident, I adopted Simone, another sundew. Then came Diana, my first Venus flytrap. Consequently, the carnivorous plant aficionado was so impressed with Stanley's care that he entrusted me with the care of his carnivorous plants when he left for college. This brought my family's size to the current seven.

My true reward of having Stanley is that he opened the door to the world of botany. I would never have invested so much time learning about the molecular structure or chemical balance of plants if not for taking care of him. I have loved learning for his benefit, whether it be discovering the best fluoride-free water, finding the ideal amount of sunlight, or reading that he uses a form of electrical signaling to improve digestion. I also love the rarity of being Stanley's parent. People have their judgments, but I have also found that most people are genuinely curious and I am always open to questions. Ultimately, I love how Stanley has forced me to be adaptive. That first winter I did not have a "Gardener's Guide to Carnivorous Plants," I simply had my own observations. This was the most significant lesson that Stanley and friends taught me: the universe lacks a guide to the galaxy, and life is all about discovering your own way.

**Title: Five/Seventeen**

**By: Elizabeth**

**College: Connecticut College**

I definitely didn't become an adult when I was five. But it's important I talk about a certain day when I was five in order to make sense of the day I did.

Recently, a freshman at my high school was sitting at my lunch table and started talking about 9/11. By the way he was talking, that infamous day was ancient history to him – something he read about in a textbook, something he expected no one at the table to remember personally.

I closed my eyes. I was downtown that day:

It is my third day of kindergarten at P.S. 89 and the principal has called a sudden assembly. My class lazily files into the auditorium. The principal tells us something bad has happened a few blocks away at the World Trade Center and before I can process this, my dad races into the building, completely disheveled. He grabs my older brother David and me and together we speed out of the school and now I'm scared. Looking up, I see a skyscraper I have passed every day, now with a massive, gaping hole. It's black and red and it almost seems like I'm looking at a picture except I also know my younger brother Andrew attends pre-school at the WTC. The cops wouldn't let us go south to get him, so we start walking, then racing, north. I'm not crying. I feel outside my feelings. The air is thick with something – soot? Dust? My dad tries to rip his dress shirt into squares to cover our mouths, but it won't rip. A stranger walking near us instantly rips his own. Now we are running, me on my dad's shoulders. Now we are alongside a lady we know. Now we are on a bus being handed construction masks which I do not want to wear because they make me feel like maybe I'll suffocate.

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Now it's night. We still haven't heard from my mom or little brother and it is 11 p.m. and we can't go home, if our home is even still standing in Battery Park City. We are staying with the lady we were running with. I am watching TV on a blow-up mattress when finally she calls: my mom. She and my younger brother were evacuated by the Army Corps of Engineers and were safe. She had a late start and had not dropped Andrew off after all...

... Back at the lunch table, I opened my eyes. Someone had clearly just mentioned that I had been there that day. The freshman looked at me with wide eyes. He asked what it was like.

I could have mentioned my fear, the horror of losing possessions, the paralyzing dread wondering whether my mom and little brother were alive. Instead, I found myself talking about the man who ripped his shirt, the construction worker who forced me to wear a mask so I could stay healthy, the generosity of the woman who gave us a place to stay. As a result of that day, my life path was completely altered. I still wonder what direction it would have taken had I not been forced to leave the city.

And yet the day I became an adult wasn't that day in 2001. It wasn't when I was 5. It was in that lunchroom when I was 17, when I realized that I can choose how to remember something. I can choose to find meaning in that day, not in the horror but in other people's kindness. I can't choose what to remember but I can choose how to remember.

It is probably too soon to truly say I am an adult. But something did change in me that day and I feel different – I look forward to continuing to change, to sharing my experiences, and to learning what other people have to teach me.

**Title: A Study in Ambidexterity**

**By: Justin**

**College: Johns Hopkins University**

I was born with an extra hand—kind of. Anatomically, I'm normal. I don't have a third arm protruding from the center of my chest or anything of the sort. I do, however, have the unusual ability to use both hands equally well. When I was little, I thought of my ambidexterity as a fun trick. I always liked to play with people when learning a new skill:

“Okay, now are you right or left handed?”

“I don't know,” I would answer with a comical smile. Or even better, “Pick one for me.”

It's a bit silly, but I enjoyed the simple satisfaction of being different. For me, ambidexterity has always meant versatility. From using my left hand in a restrictive corner while doing yardwork to switch-hitting in baseball depending on the context of the game, my hands give me the flexibility to adapt to my surroundings. As I've grown, however, I've realized that ambidexterity means more than just its quirky face value. It's synonymous with many of the other components of my character.

Ambidexterity is part of who I am, yet it's something few people know I have. It makes sense that only my closest friends know about my dual-handed capabilities. Although I use my talent throughout my day, it usually blends in with the normal functions of anyone else's hands. In this sense, ambidexterity isn't some glaring anomaly: It's only when you realize it's there does it become special.

Similarly, much of who I am remains unnoticed at first glance, not because of insignificance but because of initial perception. Most of the people who know me have no clue I'm valedictorian; I'm the kid making paper airplanes at the end of class. The rest don't realize I “do more than just

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school” but are pleasantly surprised to see me dancing around as Risky Business Tom Cruise for Halloween or just hanging out all over town on weekends. I like to think that ambidexterity helps me juggle these different parts of myself without letting anything go.

In my job as a Little League umpire, I have three distinct identities. To the league manager, I’m the responsible, quick-replying emailer and the primary person for the job. To the coaches, I’m a wave a relief—they know I’m going to make the right call. To the young players, I’m the umpire who gives helpful tips as well as the one they feel comfortable joking around with. Though each of these roles helps me in their own way, collectively, they are the reason I was made the lead umpire of the league.

In terms of academics, ambidexterity means finishing a half-hour phone call trying to understand the complexities of William Faulkner and immediately turning around to text watered-down calculus explanations to help another student. My ability to transition quickly has helped me establish myself as a go-to helper in nearly every subject, but these behind-the-scenes interactions happen away from my teachers’ eyes. Even teachers, however, see the respect other students have for me during class discussions. Outside of class, other students come to me because they recognize that I genuinely want to help guide them toward their own success.

When it comes down to it, ambidexterity means balance. From athlete to academic, from reliable employee to kind-hearted helper, I take on an array of roles in my life. Just as my two hands merge to create a more efficient system, my personal flexibility allows me to handle the many aspects of my life from different angles. Although each part of me is individually effective, my most complete self comes from applying them together. It allows me to become

more than just efficient or well-rounded but a better friend, a more fitting leader, and a respected role model. So now, when I run into the inevitable questions in college applications about who I really am, I can answer clearly: I am ambidextrous.