



College Advising
Summer 2019

9th Grade Packet

Included in this packet:

- Letter from College Advising
- Healthy, Productive Approaches to the College Process for Students and Families Prior to 11th Grade



Dear Ninth Grader and Family:

Summer 2019

Welcome to Seattle Academy Upper School!

While there are other topics that require attention as high school begins, we want to introduce the College Advising team. College Advising will introduce itself at students' more informal grade-level advisory meetings during the year ahead. Our goal is that College Advising should greet and give a bit of key information to ninth graders during the coming year.

Along the way, should you become curious about any aspect of college advising or testing, you'll find many answers through the Seattle Academy College Advising page on the Seattle Academy website. This offers answers to common questions, our contact information, and early/limited guest access to the web-based college search program Naviance, the "document library" of which includes various materials.

In addition, College Advising offers two fall events open to all upper school families. The first is an annual college financing meeting on **Tuesday, September 11 in the Theater** (if you can't make it this year, worry not; we promise to repeat it as college nears). The second event, on **Thursday, October 10 in the Theater** is an overview of standardized testing by Matt Steiner, Senior Director at Compass Education Group, who will present to 9th through 11th grade families the role of testing in the college admission process, effective strategies for exam planning and preparation, and the varied landscape of testing policies (e.g. test-optional, score choice, "superscoring," Subject Tests, etc.). Matt has worked in the testing industry for over twelve years and currently teaches graduate level lectures for the UCLA, UC San Diego, and UC Irvine college counseling certificate programs. In their public speaking, Matt endeavors to demystify standardized testing and dispel anxiety about the topic. We realize that Matt's schedule necessitated speaking during a week with an unusual schedule; if you can't make Matt's presentation this year, we promise to bring back Matt in future years. Fear not – it is still early to consider both college financing and testing.

Beyond these resources, once you and your student are well settled in the upper school don't hesitate to email College Advising if you don't find the answers to questions you have. In our office, Taylor Kanemori (tkanemori@seattleacademy.org) is dedicated to answering general ninth and tenth grade college-related questions. Please feel free to direct general questions to her. While the focus of the start of high school should not be college, our office seeks to ensure you get your questions answered.

Students ask us what they should do to get ready for a process that can seem from a distance daunting or mysterious. The answers for ninth graders are easy, and here are several of them. Students, from a college-eye-view, in ninth grade, you should:

- adjust to high school work and life. Despite what the media says, you really do have two years before the college application process starts in earnest (starting earlier, in an official way, can distract from your life at Seattle Academy and can even be actively harmful to college prospects); it's your job in ninth grade to figure out some basics of time management, more challenging work, and new opportunities of all kinds. This attention to self and to experience, and the relative "inattention" to the college process, actually pays dividends in terms of healthy personal development and healthy college outcomes. We will ensure you're not late with anything college-related!
- develop relationships with your teachers. They will be your mentors and advisors through high school. At Seattle Academy, teachers and students know one another inside and outside of class, and you will be glad later if you take care to nurture those relationships from the very beginning of your time here.
- get involved. "Follow your bliss," said the scholar Joseph Campbell, and he was exactly right. The more you can find elements at Seattle Academy and in life about which to be passionate, the more you'll learn and enjoy college and beyond. Activities you genuinely love, versus those manufactured for your résumé, translate more honestly and effectively to colleges as well.
- read the enclosed suggestions sheet with your family for even more perspective.

We believe in "first things first." If you take one step at a time and make the most of each opportunity, the rest of high school and college admission follows naturally and successfully, as both have for many Seattle Academy graduates before you. We have a great deal of experience in college admission and college counseling, and we are dedicated to making sure you don't miss anything along the way. For now, the most important thing not to miss is a happy, fulfilling, and involved first year at Seattle Academy. If things aren't going well, know that there are lots of friendly folks around to help out: We are a few of them. Best wishes for Upper School!

Melanie Reed, Dave Thomas, Misa Kabashima, Stacie Cone, and Taylor Kanemori
Seattle Academy College Advising



HEALTHY, PRODUCTIVE APPROACHES TO THE COLLEGE PROCESS FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES PRIOR TO 11TH GRADE

We're still "deep" in our first year or two of upper school. What can we do now?

- Know that every student (and every family member) is on a **continuum** in the college search... as in life. When the time comes, Seattle Academy will not let you or your student fall behind. A proven record of college advising history, structure, and success informs your student's process.
- Support your student in a **consistent and/or improving academic close to 10th grade** and an equally supportive beginning to 11th grade. What goes on the transcript comes first, before the "college searching."
- Urge students to **save writing** and record interests and activities for a later extra-curricular **résumé**.
- Know that your student's **authentic academic and personal individualism** (academic and co-curricular résumés, so to speak) represents best to colleges, not an overly "planned" and "groomed" package of Something that Looks and Sounds Like the Student but Isn't the Student. Summer activities, for example, need not be expensive and need not be out of the country. The experiences should engage student participants/volunteers, and give them a jumping off point for further (perhaps local?) service.
- Attend **college advising events** (everything from subsequent parent nights to talks on college financing).
- **Read College Admission, from Application to Acceptance, Step by Step** by Robin Mamlet and Christine VanDeVelde.
- **Read Colleges that Change Lives and Looking Beyond the Ivy League** by Loren Pope.
- Families occasionally have questions about spring break or summer **college tours**. These visits can, and should, remain informal at this point, not exhaustive tours of all small Northeast liberal arts colleges. Consider doing a "drive by" of a college at your vacation destination. If your student knows they want to see a particular college, that's great! Plan a trip. If they have no idea, that's fine, too. If your first college visits occur next spring, or even after your student is admitted to a few of his/her colleges, you are not behind.
- As a family, choose to address the newness and seeming ambiguity of an otherwise extremely exciting (and at Seattle Academy, extremely well organized and successful) process in ways that **model great coping and problem-solving skills** for students.
- Please **ask first** before securing outside resources for college support other than test prep. Outside college counseling is uncommon and asking if it's necessary can cut down on confusion for the student and duplication of resources in general.
- **REMEMBER** – you have already started the college search process by attending Seattle Academy.

What happens between now and 11th grade?

- **Students focus mostly on being students.** We can't stress this enough: This deserves and needs more attention than the college search now and in the future. This will pay off in the college search.
- Approximately 150 **colleges and universities visit** Seattle Academy annually. 11th graders may attend (we'll explain as the time approaches).
- Students attend various **college fairs**, including the Colleges that Change Lives Tour/Fair, the National Association of College Admission Counseling (NACAC) National College Fair, and the NACAC Performing and Visual Arts Fair.
- Seattle Academy and its peer schools host an **invite-only independent school college fair** exclusively and intentionally for 11th and 12th graders and their families with well over 100 selective college attendees.
- 10th and 11th graders **take or retake the PSAT**, the outcome of which guides us and families toward possible test prep.
- College Advisors **answer common questions** of 11th graders at meetings in October and lay the foundation for their individual work with families.
- College Advisors **answer questions anytime** they arise (all the while ensuring the application process for current applicants gets significant attention... believe us, you'll be glad for all the attention when your students submit their applications). Taylor Kanemori welcomes general college-related questions from ninth and tenth grade families at tkanemori@seattleacademy.org.
- Just before winter break, College Advising transitions from filing applications with the current 12th grade to working intensely with the 11th grade with **College Kick-Off Events** for 11th graders and their families. These events introduce students and their families to SAAS' web-based college counseling program and arranging individual meetings to address the college search at the most developmentally and academically appropriate, healthy, and advantageous time.

What should we not do now?

- Push your student toward college faster than necessary by discussing college ad nauseam. Even if you're thinking, "C'mon, I know my 10th grader is as interested in this as I am!" --- too much, too early, can backfire. For all kids, burnout on activities is real (college "searching" among them). Seattle Academy draws on years of experience to time its process intentionally to maximize the high school period in which kids are developmentally, emotionally, mentally, and strategically suited for the task.
- Don't get fixed on any one "thing" --- any one type, location, or selectivity of school. We will insist the eventual college list is (strategically) varied.
- Recognize that the genuine (not manufactured) academic and personal record is paramount, obvious, and attractive to colleges.
- Allow the media, the next door neighbor, or the for-profit college "industry" make you crazy or make you feel like you should have done fourteen things already. College Advising is here to tell you when you need to do the first of the fourteen!