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FROM THE DESK OF  
DR. STEVEN JONES

Director of the High School



## “But why St. Joe’s?”

When I went to high school, there were basically two options: you either went to a public school or a private school. Of course, within the private school category there were several options. If you were in the public schools, as I was, you went to the school for which you were zoned.

That’s no longer the case. There are many more subcategories within both public and private education, so much so that the public/private distinction is becoming less clear than at any time since the late 19th century. I talk to parents all the time who are not only considering St. Joe’s, but also a charter school, a magnet school, an online/homeschool hybrid, or almost any other arrangement one can imagine. In general, options in education are good for families. Competition improves quality, and having quality choices available to parents is a sign of healthy pluralism. But this pluralism in education poses two challenges. First, not all schools are equal and so parents have to do their due diligence in making sure that their chosen school is not only a fit in terms of mission but also able to deliver the goods. The second problem is the “other side” of how schools go about distinguishing themselves from one another. Many times, it boils down to specialization--a focus on one or two topics or methods at the expense of everything else. At St. Joseph’s, we believe that, while specialization might have its strengths, **there is considerable wisdom in a commitment to a traditional liberal arts education**, especially one that is rooted in the historic vision and practices of the Gospel. It is this educational philosophy that prepares students to understand themselves as citizens in the Kingdom of God and to think of their work as a vocation rather than just a job. The environment at St. Joseph’s is deeply rooted in this understanding of life and the world, with a multitude of opportunities every week for students to connect with God through the Sacraments, as well as opportunities for prayer, devotion, and pastoral guidance.

At St. Joseph’s, we aspire to more than just specialization. We aspire to excellence in every field of human inquiry, from the natural sciences to the social sciences, from physical education to theology. Practically speaking, **specialization is always limiting**. We want our students to discover insights, inspiration, and wisdom in all of their classes, and weaving these elements together is an excellent example of the kind of higher order thinking that a liberal arts education is supposed to develop. Of course, we realize that some students are drawn to specific fields more strongly than others, **but especially in their early years, there is much to be gained from broad exposure to the best of what has been thought and written in a variety of academic disciplines**. Our AP scores and college readiness benchmarks, along with the fact that more than 95% of our students are accepted into **at least one** of their top two college preferences, testify to the value (in every sense of that word) of what St. Joe’s offers.

Consider the **Class of 2021** as a testament to the value of the St. Joseph’s experience: 104 graduates were awarded over \$14 million dollars in college scholarship money; 98% of the class received college merit-based scholarship offers; 29 members of this class were named Palmetto Fellows. Our overall AP pass rate was 93%, an accomplishment that testifies not just to the quality of that program but to our entire approach to educating for excellence. The money spent on a St. Joseph’s education is an investment in not only a child’s preparation for college but also their future. In short, it has an impressive rate of return.