



AUSTIN PREPARATORY SCHOOL

101 Willow Street  
Reading, Massachusetts 01867

[www.austinprep.org](http://www.austinprep.org)

# AUSTIN PREPARATORY SCHOOL



## COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDE

# INTRODUCTION

The Office of College Counseling embraces the Augustinian core values of veritas, unitas, and caritas – truth, unity, and love – to guide Austin Prep students through the entire college process. Our team works closely with students to help them explore their unique intellectual abilities, passions, talents, and personal values and identify the colleges and universities that best suit their ambitions and aspirations.

## PHILOSOPHY & APPROACH

- VERITAS (TRUTH)
  - HELP STUDENTS TO FIND THE RIGHT FIT
  - ENCOURAGE THOUGHTFUL AND OPEN-MINDED REFLECTION ABOUT A STUDENT'S STRENGTHS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND ASPIRATIONS
  - DISCOVER AND PURSUE PASSIONS
  - SEEK EXCELLENCE IN ACADEMICS
  - EMBRACE A BALANCED LIST
- UNITAS (UNITY)
  - FOSTER COLLABORATION BETWEEN STUDENTS, FAMILIES AND THE OFFICE OF COLLEGE COUNSELING
  - PROVIDE STRONG COMMUNICATION BETWEEN STUDENTS, FAMILIES, AND COLLEGE COUNSELORS
  - CONSISTENTLY SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE
- CARITAS (LOVE)
  - CELEBRATE STUDENTS FOR WHO THEY ARE AND THE UNIQUE GIFTS THEY HAVE TO OFFER
  - CONSIDER STUDENT'S VALUES, PASSIONS, INTERESTS AND NEEDS
  - MEET STUDENTS WHERE THEY ARE AT

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## I. INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION	2
PHILOSOPHY & APPROACH	2

## II. THE COLLEGE SEARCH PROCESS

TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	5
FINDING YOUR FIT	8
RESEARCHING COLLEGES	9
DEVELOPING A COLLEGE LIST	10
GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR COLLEGE VISITS	11
CAMPUS CLUSTERS	12

## III. COMPONENTS OF COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

WHAT COLLEGES WANT FROM YOU	14
SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT	15
STANDARDIZED TESTING	16
COMMON APPLICATION ESSAY PROMPTS	17
COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ESSAY: DO'S & DON'T'S	18
LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION	19
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERVIEWS	20
SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	21

## IV. INFORMATION FOR SPECIFIC APPLICANTS

INFORMATION FOR ATHLETES	23
INFORMATION FOR PERFORMING & VISUAL ARTS APPLICANTS	24
INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS WHO NEED ACCOMMODATIONS	24
INFORMATION FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS & STUDENTS APPLYING TO NON-U.S. COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES	25

## V. FINANCIAL AID

FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION	27
FINANCIAL AID VOCABULARY	28



# **THE COLLEGE SEARCH PROCESS**

# TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

There are many terms and abbreviations that are commonly used during the college research and application process. It is important that you understand what all these terms and abbreviations mean.

## **General Terms**

- **Associate's Degree**
  - The degree granted by a 2-year college or university after the satisfactory completion of a two-year, full-time course of study (or its part-time equivalent).
- **Bachelor's Degree**
  - The degree granted by a 4-year college or university after the satisfactory completion of a four-year, full-time course of study (or its part-time equivalent).
- **College**
  - An institution of higher learning, especially one providing a general or liberal arts education rather than technical or professional training.
- **Degree**
  - An academic title conferred by universities and colleges as an indication of the completion of a course of study, or as an honorary recognition of achievement. This is what you are working toward during college. Once earned, no one can take it away.
- **Liberal Arts**
  - The academic course of instruction at a college intended to provide general knowledge and comprising the arts, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences, as opposed to professional or technical subjects. An art is also a skill raised to a high level of competence. Liberal arts are composed of eight basic skills: reading, listening, writing, speaking, observing, measuring, calculating, and reasoning.
- **Major**
  - A subject or field of study chosen by a student to represent his or her principal interest and upon which a large share of his or her efforts are concentrated. Students will also need to complete general requirements in order to earn a degree. This varies from college to college.
- **SCOIR**
  - A platform for students, parents, counselors, and colleges focused on finding the right fit through a unified college search and planning network, as well as to electronically submit information to colleges and universities during the senior year application process.
- **University**
  - An institution of learning, having a college of liberal arts and a program of graduate studies together with several professional schools, such as theology, law, medicine, and engineering, and authorized to confer both undergraduate and graduate degrees.

# TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

## **Admissions Terms**

- **Candidates Reply Date**
  - May 1st is the universal date (except if a student is accepted ED) that an applicant has to commit to a college or university. Students need to send in a non-refundable deposit to reserve a space in the class. If any college requests a deposit prior to May 1st, it must be fully refundable until May 1st.
- **Common Application**
  - A single application accepted by over 400 colleges and universities. Some of the schools that accept the common app also require a school specific supplement ([www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)).
- **Deferred Admission**
  - Allows an accepted student to be considered again in the regular decision pool.
- **Early Action (EA)**
  - This is one way for an applicant to receive early notification of a college decision. EA deadlines are usually November 1st, and a decision/notification is usually made prior to January 1st. Decisions could be "Admit," "Deny," or "Defer." If "Deferred," a student is put into the regular pool and his/her application is reviewed a second time. If admitted, the decision is non-binding. In most cases, a student may apply to more than one college EA.
- **Early Decision (ED)**
  - This is another option for early notification of a college decision. ED deadlines are usually November 1st, and a decision/notification is usually made prior to January 1st. Decisions could be "Admit," "Deny," or "Defer." If "Deferred," a student is put into the regular pool and his/her application is reviewed a second time. If admitted, the decision is binding. Be cautious if you know you will be applying for financial aid. A student may only apply to one college ED.
- **Early Decision II (ED II)**
  - The same policies as ED, but the deadlines fall later in the academic year. Typically, ED II deadlines begin January 1st. Students are usually notified mid-February.
- **Regular Decision**
  - Candidates are required to submit their applications by a specific deadline (usually beginning January 1st) and are notified of decisions in the spring. Decisions could be "Admit," "Deny," or "Wait-list."
- **Restrictive Early Action**
  - The same non-binding policy as early action, but college policy dictates that a student may not apply to any other colleges EA and/or ED.
- **Rolling Admission**
  - Institutions review and make decisions on application as application files are complete (accept, deny, or wait-list). Once informed, students typically do have to commit to a college prior to May 1st. When applying to a college with "Rolling Admission," the earlier in the academic year you apply, the better.
- **Wait List**
  - Because colleges cannot predict the number of accepted students who will attend, a wait list is created. Students may be offered admission if a space becomes available. If waitlisted at a top choice, a student should still deposit at another college and should never assume he/she will get off the waitlist.

# TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

## **Testing Terms**

- **ACT (American College Testing)**
  - An admissions test that measures student knowledge in English usage, mathematical usage, reading, and science reasoning. It is recommended that students also take the optional writing component. As stated above, students are typically required to submit a SAT Reasoning or ACT score for evaluation. ([www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org))
- **AP (Advanced Placement)**
  - These tests were designed and developed to evaluate the knowledge of academically strong students who have completed college level work in high school. AP exams are given in specific subject areas and may be used in determining whether or not a student may gain credit or advanced standing in college. These scores are not evaluated in the admissions process. ([www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org))
- **PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test and National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test)**
  - Measures skills in three basic academic areas important for success in college; verbal reasoning, math problem solving and writing skills. This is a practice test that enables students to gauge how they would fare on a standardized college entrance exam. These test scores are not reported to colleges. ([www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org))
- **SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test)**
  - Measures skills in three basic academic areas important for success in college; verbal reasoning, math problem solving and writing skills. The writing section is now optional. Students are typically required to submit SAT or ACT scores for application review. ([www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org))
- **The College Board**
  - The overseeing agency for many tests and services connected with the college admissions process. (Example: PSAT, SAT, AP). It is a non-profit organization governed by college and secondary school members. ([www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org))
- **TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)**
  - The TOEFL is designed for students where English is their second language and whose scores on the SAT or ACT would be affected by the language discrepancy. All students who are not U.S. Citizens must take the TOEFL for college admission even if they attend high school in the U.S.

# FINDING YOUR FIT

Finding the right fit is the most important part of the college search process. The Office of College Counseling helps students reflect on their values, passions, and goals to determine what colleges and universities would best suit them. The goal is to build a balanced list of institutions in which every school is a good fit. Here are some questions students can ask themselves to begin to identify fit:

- How far away do I want to be from home? A car ride, train ride, or plane ride away? (Consider costs for travel home during school vacations.)
- Do I want a small community where I recognize almost every face as I walk around my college campus or would I rather be in a bigger place where I can be a bit more anonymous?
- Do I learn best in larger lectures or do I prefer smaller discussion-based classes?
- Does the idea of attending college in a big city excite or frighten me? How do I feel about living in a more rural or quiet setting?
- What top three academic programs would my ideal college offer? What major or minor am most interested in?
- What top three extracurricular activities would the ideal college have for me?
- What additional features would the ideal college for me have (e.g. writing center, math center, honor code, learning support center, access to a particular religious community)?
- What kinds of people do I like spending time with or want to spend time with in college? Artsy? Athletic? Passionate about helping others? Studious? Social?
- What have I liked most about high school (consider size, extracurricular offerings, relationships with teachers, etc.)?
- What have I liked least about high school (consider size, extracurricular offerings, relationships with teachers, etc.)?
- Is financial aid and affordability an important criteria in my college search?

# RESEARCHING COLLEGES

The easiest way to research a college or university is by looking through the school's website

## MAJORS AND ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS

Most schools will list the majors and minors they offer under the Academics page. They may also categorize each major and minor by academic department. Each academic department is distinct and offers its own unique academic community, resources, professors, and programs.

## ADMISSIONS

The Admissions page will offer a comprehensive breakdown of the admissions process. From application and testing requirements, to critical dates and deadlines, be sure to check out the admissions page to find everything you need to know about applying to the college or university.

## MISSION

The About Us description or school's mission statement can be helpful to understand a particular school's priorities. If the mission aligns with your academic and social values, then the school may be a good fit for you. Looking at the mission statement can also be helpful when writing the "why" essay for a school.

## FINANCIAL AID

College is a major expense for most families. The financial aid page will give you information about cost of attendance, applying for financial aid, school specific scholarship opportunities, and access to the school's Net Price Calculator.

## STUDENT LIFE/DIVERSITY

Academics are important in college, but so is your social experience. The student page offers a good way to discover the type of social environment a school offers. Look for information about housing, clubs, community service, sports, Greek Life, and student diversity.

## HOW TO COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY WITH COLLEGES

- Use the same email address each time you communicate.
- Use an appropriate email address.
- Do not use emojis or abbreviate words like you would in a text message.
- Keep it short. More is not always better.
- Use spellcheck.
- Address admission officer by title, not by first name.
- Put a relevant topic in subject header.

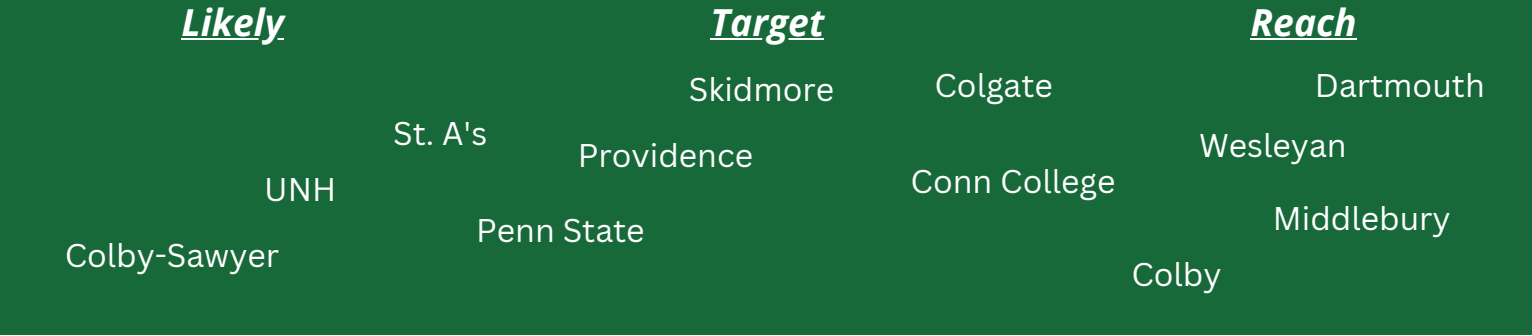
# DEVELOPING A COLLEGE LIST

A word of advice when building your college list...

Think of your college list as a continuum rather than categories of selectivity (likely, target, reach). There are so many factors that play into an admissions office decision. Because every year things shift slightly due to a variety of factors, such as the number of applications received that year, there are really not these nice, neatly defined columns of schools. Some schools may be in between a “likely” and a “target” or a “target” and a “reach”.

## SAMPLE COLLEGE DISTRIBUTION CONTINUUM

- student has 3.89u/4.43w GPA



There are over 5000 colleges and universities in the United States. How do you begin to develop a college list?

Instead of focusing on just college names or on what is already familiar, you should think about college characteristics. How you feel about these characteristics will help you develop a list.

Remember, your list junior year is a working list to help you research colleges. Cast a wide net and reach beyond your comfort zone. Keep a running list in your Scoir account. You don't have to have a final list until the beginning of senior year.

## COLLEGE CHARACTERISTICS TO CONSIDER:

### STUDENT BODY CHARACTERISTICS

Will you be comfortable and fit in? It is usually easy to find your niche in college, but it is helpful to know what the student body is like.

- Diversity (racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, etc.); Religious affiliation; Academic intensity; Political views and activities (liberal vs. conservative; Coed vs. single sex)

### COST

Your college education is an investment in yourself. You pay for something and hope to get something in return (e.g. an education, a good job, social status, etc.). College is also very expensive. As you move along in this process, you must educate yourself about financial aid.

### SELECTIVITY

Selectivity is based on the percent of applicants accepted to a particular college. Admissions decisions are based on many factors, including (but not limited to) academic performance, rigor of curriculum, standardized test scores, activities, essay, recommendations, etc.



### SETTING

What surroundings do you most enjoy? Typically, we think of college settings in three general ways...

- Urban - Campus is immersed into a city (BU, Northeastern, NYU)
- Suburban - Campus is near a city and/or in a larger town (BC, Bentley)
- Rural - Campus is outside a city and is surrounded by nature (UMass-Amherst, Colby)



### SIZE

The undergraduate student population of a college varies dramatically

- Small (1000-3000) (Colby, Connecticut College)
- Medium (3000-8000) (Villanova, Quinnipiac, Fairfield)
- Large (8000-20000) (Syracuse, UVM)
- Very Large (>20000) (UMich, UMD)



### LOCATION

Where would you like to live? Tired of Massachusetts? Want to expand outside of New England? Curious about California? How will you travel from home to college (car, train, bus, airplane)?



### ACTIVITIES

What do you like to do? What are some of the college's traditions? Does the college offer...music, drama, clubs, athletics, fraternities and sororities, etc.?



### MAJORS OFFERED

You may not know what you want to study, but if you think you might want to study, for example, “communications,” you should find colleges that offer “communications” as a major. Many colleges offer “undecided” or “individualized majors” for students who do not know what they want to study, or have a number of interests.

# GET THE MOST OUT OF COLLEGE VISITS

College visits are probably the most fun part of the college application process. When it comes to researching potential schools, there's no better substitute for figuring out if a campus will feel like home. If possible, visit every college that you are strongly considering. No website, guidebook, or testimonial will give you a better feel for a school than seeing it for yourself. Many students change their minds after visiting a campus. Finding the right fit is the most important part of the college search process.

*Adapted from the Princeton Review (<https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/college-visits>)*



## MIND THE CALENDAR

Schedule your visit while school is in session. You won't get a realistic idea of student life in August or during Spring Break. Check the Admissions page on the schools' website to schedule a visit



## MEET THE EXPERTS

Talk to the current students—they may soon be your peers. If they have a problem or complaint, they will probably share it with you. If they love their school, they won't be shy about it either. Come prepared with some questions to ask—specific ones will get you more interesting (and helpful) answers.



## MEET THE OTHER EXPERTS

Stop by the admissions office and introduce yourself. Let them know what interests you about the school so they can direct you to the best place for further investigation. Collect contact information and send a brief, friendly email thanking them for taking the time to talk to you. Colleges do keep track of which applicants have demonstrated genuine interest in the school.



## TAKE A CAMPUS TOUR

While it's the most obvious thing to do, the official campus tour is worth your while. It gives the school a chance to show off its best features. While you're walking around, check out the flyers and bulletin boards and pick up a school newspaper to get a sense of what's going on.



## VENTURE OUT ON YOUR OWN

The official tour will probably steer you clear of the school's less attractive features. Take your own un-official tour by wandering around campus. If there are any facilities that are important to you, find them and have a look for yourself. Make sure your destinations include the library and the first-year dorms.



## BE A STUDENT FOR A DAY OR NIGHT

Some schools sponsor overnight programs in which you can stay with a current student. This is a great opportunity to get a deeper sense of campus life and interact with your potential future friends and roommates. Even if you don't stay over, most schools will allow you to sit in on lectures. Ask the admissions office what classes are in session that day.



## SAVE THE BEST FOR LAST

You'll get better at visiting colleges with practice. As you compare schools, you pick up on the aspects you like and don't like. You also figure out the right questions to ask and the best campus spots to gauge student life. For that reason, visit your favorite schools last, so you'll be in the best position to make comparisons to the others on your list.



## KEEP A RECORD OF EVERY COLLEGE VISIT

If you visit many schools, your memories of them are bound to overlap. Use a note-taking or voice-recording app on your phone, or plain old notebook and pen, to keep track of the details you like and the stuff that you don't like.



## DON'T RUSH TO JUDGEMENT

Try not to base your opinion of a school on bad weather or one boring class. There are bound to be sunny days and more interesting classes. Same goes for overnight visits—you might end up staying with a student who has very different interests than you do. At the same time, trust your gut. Sometimes it's love at first sight. Other times, something feels wrong (even if you can't put your finger on it).

# CAMPUS CLUSTERS

If you are going to be in any of the areas and wish to visit nearby colleges, we have provided this list of area schools to assist in your planning. If you will be visiting a region that is not listed below, but wish to visit colleges in that area, simply contact a member of the College Counseling Office. We would be happy to provide you with some suggestions of schools to visit.

## **BOSTON METROPOLITAN AREA:**

Babson College, Bentley University,  
Boston College, Boston University,  
Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute  
of Technology, Northeastern University,  
Olin College of Engineering, Tufts University,  
Wellesley College (women's)

## **GREATER BOSTON AREA (within one hour of the city):**

Amherst College, Assumption University,  
Brandeis University, College of the Holy Cross,  
Clark University, Mount Holyoke College (women's),  
Stonehill College, Smith College (women's)  
University of Massachusetts-Amherst,  
Wheaton College, Williams College,

## **NEW ENGLAND AREA (CT, ME, NH, VT, RI):**

Bates College, Bowdoin College, Brown University, Colby  
College, Connecticut College, Dartmouth College,  
Providence College, Quinnipiac University,  
Trinity College, University of Connecticut,  
University of New Hampshire, University of Vermont,  
Wesleyan University

## **NEW YORK METROPOLITAN AREA:**

Barnard College (women's), Columbia University,  
Cooper Union, Fordham University,  
New York University, Sarah Lawrence College

## **GREATER NEW YORK CITY AREA (within two hours of the city):**

Drew University, Princeton University,  
Rutgers University, Seton Hall University,  
Vassar College, Yale University

## **CENTRAL NEW YORK AREA:**

Colgate University, Cornell University,  
Hamilton College, Hobart and William Smith Colleges,  
Ithaca College, Skidmore College, Syracuse University,  
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI),  
Rochester Institute of Technology,  
Union College, University of Rochester

## **BALTIMORE/WASHINGTON D.C. METRO AREAS:**

American University, George Washington University,  
Georgetown University, Catholic University,  
Goucher College, Loyola University,  
Johns Hopkins University,  
University of Maryland

## **PHILADELPHIA METROPOLITAN AREA:**

Bryn Mawr College (women's), Drexel University,  
Haverford College, St. Joseph's University,  
Swarthmore College, Villanova University,  
University of Pennsylvania

## **GREATER PHILADELPHIA AREA (CENTRAL AND EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA AND NORTHERN DELAWARE):**

Bucknell University, Dickinson College,  
Franklin & Marshall College, Gettysburg College,  
Lafayette College, Lehigh University,  
Pennsylvania State University,  
University of Delaware

## **RESEARCH TRIANGLE AREA OF NORTH CAROLINA:**

Davidson College, Duke University,  
Elon University, North Carolina State University,  
University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill,  
Wake Forest University

## **FLORIDA (GULF COAST) AREA:**

Eckerd College, Florida Gulf Coast University, St. Leo  
University, University of Tampa, University of South Florida

## **FLORIDA (EAST COAST) AREACO**

Barry University, Florida Atlantic University,  
Florida International University, Lynn University, Nova  
Southeastern University, University of Miami,

## **CHICAGO METROPOLITAN AREA:**

Columbia College, DePaul University,  
Lake Forest College,  
Loyola University of Chicago,  
Northwestern University,  
University of Chicago

## **LOS ANGELES METROPOLITAN AREA:**

California Institute of Technology,  
Chapman University,  
Loyola Marymount, Occidental College,  
University of California-Los Angeles,  
University of Southern California, Whittier College

## **GREATER LOS ANGELES AREA (within two hours of the city):**

Claremont McKenna College,  
Harvey Mudd College (science and math),  
Pomona College, Pitzer College,  
Scripps College (women's),  
University of Redlands



# **COMPONENTS OF A COLLEGE APPLICATION**

# WHAT COLLEGES WANT FROM YOU

## ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

- High School Transcript
  - Grades
  - Rigor of courses
  - Strong junior year
  - Improvement every year
  - Academic Honors and awards
- Testing
  - SAT or ACT Scores (do they match your high school performance?)
  - TOEFL if English is not your first language
  - Test Optional Schools ([fairtest.org](http://fairtest.org))

## ADMISSIONS ESSAY

- A strong, well-written, interesting essay about *you*.
- See "Essay Prompts" and "Essay Do's and Don't's" Sections for more insight

## EXTRACURRICULARS

- Quality over quantity
  - Rather than focusing on the amount of total activities, look to have a deeper participation in a few activities where you are able to take on leadership roles, formal or informal
- Community Service
- Strong summer involvement
  - academic, service oriented, internships and jobs

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strong teacher recommendations
- Strong counselor statement
- Optional outside recommendations ONLY if they shed light on you in a way that no-one else within the school can

## DEMONSTRATED INTEREST

- The amount of contact between the school and prospective student
- The quality of contact between the school and prospective student
- Can be in person or electronic contacts

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Reputation of Austin Prep
- Institutional priorities
- Siblings at the same college
- Alumni connections or legacy

# SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT



**Austin Preparatory School**  
101 Willow St  
Reading, MA 01867  
(781) 944-4900  
[www.austinprep.org](http://www.austinprep.org)

## Official Transcript

Year	Course Name		FINAL	CREDIT	Year	Course Name		FINAL	CREDIT		
2018-2019	Freshman Seminar		P	0.5	2020-2021	Catholic Morality and Social Teaching - H		A	1.0		
	Introduction to Scripture - CP		A	1.0		Creative Writing - H		A	0.5		
	Coming of Age - CP		A-	1.0		English Language and Composition - H		A	0.5		
	Foundations of History/20th Century World - CP		A	1.0		Nationalism and Identity in Latin America- H		A	0.5		
	Algebra 2 - H		B+	1.0		The Giants of Asia - H		A	0.5		
	Biology - H		B+	1.0		Precalculus - H		A	1.0		
	Spanish 1 - CP		A	1.0		Physics - H		A	1.0		
	Illustration		B	0.5		Spanish 3 - H		A	1.0		
	Unweighted Academic Year GPA		3.66	Academic Year's Credits		7.0	Unweighted Academic Year GPA		4.00	Academic Year's Credits	6.0
	Unweighted Cumulative GPA		3.66	Cumulative Credits		7.0	Unweighted Cumulative GPA		3.85	Cumulative Credits	20.0
Weighted Academic Year GPA		3.82			Weighted Academic Year GPA		4.50				
Weighted Cumulative GPA		3.82			Weighted Cumulative GPA		4.21				

Year	Course Name		FINAL	CREDIT	Year	Course Name		FINAL	CREDIT		
2019-2020	Church History and the Sacraments - H		A	1.0	2021-2022	Literature and Religion - H		A	1.0		
	The American Experience (English) - H		A-	1.0		Microeconomics - AP		A	1.0		
	The American Experience (History) - H		A	1.0		Calculus AB - AP		A-	1.0		
	Trigonometry and Geometry - H		A	1.0		Statistics - H		A	1.0		
	Chemistry - H		A-	1.0		Biology - AP		A-	1.0		
	Spanish 2 - H		A	1.0		Spanish 4 - H		A-	1.0		
	Filmmaking		A	0.5							
	Illustration 2		A-	0.5							
	Unweighted Academic Year GPA		3.89	Academic Year's Credits		7.0	Unweighted Academic Year GPA		3.85	Academic Year's Credits	6.0
	Unweighted Cumulative GPA		3.78	Cumulative Credits		14.0	Unweighted Cumulative GPA		3.85	Cumulative Credits	26.0
Weighted Academic Year GPA		4.32			Weighted Academic Year GPA		4.60				
Weighted Cumulative GPA		4.07			Weighted Cumulative GPA		4.31				

**Graduation Date:** May 20, 2022

Signature: Michelle L. Coma

Date Signed: March 09, 2023

- Shows the course name and the level of the course
  - All Art and Design classes are college prep
- Shows only the final grade in each class
- Earn 1.0 credit for year long classes
- Earn 0.5 credits for semester classes
- Reports an unweighted and weighted GPA for each academic year
  - Weighted GPA takes into account level of the course
- Reports an overall cumulative unweighted and weighted GPA

# STANDARDIZED TESTING

## SAT/ACT

All juniors are enrolled in a test prep course designed to prepare them for the SAT and ACT. We require all students to take the SAT or ACT during the school day in the spring.

In addition to the SAT and ACT School Day test, students can also take these standardized tests at other testing sites. Visit [CollegeBoard.org](https://CollegeBoard.org) to register for the SAT and [act.org](https://act.org) to register for the ACT.

## TEST OPTIONAL

Currently many colleges/universities are test optional due to the COVID pandemic. There are also hundreds of colleges that did not require testing as part of the application even before the pandemic. Applying test-optional allows students and enable them to highlight other parts of their application. Colleges have emphasized that applicants without test scores are not penalized in the evaluation process. Visit [www.fairtest.org](https://www.fairtest.org) for a list of test-optional schools.

We still recommend that all students take an SAT or ACT, knowing that applicants will not be required to submit the score to test-optional colleges.

To send or not to send?

- Do your scores match your high school performance?
- How does the reported average SAT and ACT scores for the college compare to your scores?

## ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP)

All students enrolled in an AP course are required to take the AP Exam. Students will be registered and billed for these exams in late fall. The AP Exams are held each year during the first 2 weeks of May. AP Exam scores are not required as part of the admissions process. Depending on the AP score and individual college policies, sometimes students can earn college credit or skip prerequisite classes in college.

# COMMON APPLICATION ESSAY PROMPTS

**“Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.”**

**“The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?”**

**“Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?”**

**“Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?”**

**“Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.”**

**“Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?”**

**“Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.”**

# COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ESSAY:

## DO'S & DON'T'S

### DO'S



DO write about a topic that you want to write about - whether it's something you think is important, that you are passionate about, or which you enjoy.



DO write about yourself. Not your grandma. Not your dog. YOU.



DO be original. If everyone in your senior class could write the same essay as you, choose a different topic.



DO be honest. With yourself and your reader.



DO proofread your essay and have others proofread your essay. The best essays have multiple editors, from family and close friends to college counselors and teachers.



DO realize that spell check is NOT perfect! Check your own essay for spelling and grammatical mistakes before hitting submit! Sometimes the best way to catch errors is to read your essay aloud.



DO remember your audience -- all of the people reading your essay have different ideas about what is funny or appropriate.



DO start your essay early and write several drafts -- this will give you more time for editing and proofreading!



DO honor page limits or word-counts. Just because your essay is long, it doesn't mean it's good.

### DON'TS



DON'T try to be anyone other than yourself in your essay. Are you funny? No? Don't start trying to be funny now!



DON'T just describe a cool experience that you've had (like a trip or a program you participated in). Write about the impact the experience had on you.



DON'T simply rewrite your resume into paragraph form.



DON'T mention the name of another college in your essay.

# LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

## *LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION ETIQUETTE*



- Ask 2 teachers before the end of junior year
  - Teacher recommendation form and request in Scoir will be done during the test prep class
- Talk with this teacher in person to ask for a letter, not via email
- Follow-up with a thank you note

## *COUNSELOR RECOMMENDATION*



Your College Counselor will be writing a letter of recommendation called a written evaluation, which is often an application requirement.



To ensure your counselor is providing the best statement possible, you and your family will be asked to submit the following items: Student College Questionnaire and Parent Questionnaire.



These items will be reviewed during the College Test Prep course and will be due before the end of junior year.

## *TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS*



Most colleges will require at least one teacher letter of recommendation.



The teacher you ask should be a junior year teacher in a core academic subject.



Your counselor can assist you in deciding who to ask. Think about which teachers can speak to your academic ability and present your greatest strengths.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

The interview requirement varies from college to college. The student should research the interview requirements for their colleges, schedule appointments as needed and follow-up with a thank-you note. The interview component may be one of the following:






- no interview (group information sessions only)
- alumni interviews only (off campus)
- optional and informative only
- encouraged or required and are considered a part of the student's application

If an interview is an option, it is recommended that you take advantage of the opportunity to connect with the alumni or admissions office and to demonstrate interest in the particular college.

Be advised that some schools require interviews, some recommend interviews, and for some schools they are completely optional.

We strongly advise that if an interview is recommended, that you take advantage of the opportunity as a way of strengthening your overall application.

## ***PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW***

-  Research the college - read available material and review website
-  Be prepared to talk about particular programs that are a good fit for you based on your interests and talents.
-  Review the common interview questions and practice responses.
-  Have questions to ask that show interest in and knowledge of the institution (avoid asking questions that are answered in the material and/or discussed on the campus tour).
-  Relax and be yourself!

# SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## **Questions about you:**

- Tell me about your high school.
- What are you passionate about?
- What is one of your favorite things to do?
- Who is your hero?
- Tell me about your family.
- What have been some of your goals? Have you reached them? What are your goals now?
- What are you currently reading?
- Describe yourself in three words.
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What activities do you enjoy most outside the daily routine of school?
- Do you have any hobbies or special interests?

## **Questions about College:**

- Why do you want to go to college?
- What are you looking forward to in college?
- What do you hope to major in and why?
- What do you want from an education?
- What do you expect to be doing 7 yrs. from now; 12 yrs. from now?
- What would you do if you didn't go to college?
- If you are admitted here, what can you contribute to this college?

## **Questions about You and the World around you:**

- How would you describe your hometown?
- Tell me something about your community.
- Tell me about your upbringing. What things are important to your parents? On what issues do you have differences?
- What has been a controversial issue in your community? What is your position on it?
- How has living in your community affected your outlook?
- How would you describe your friendships?
- What person, living or dead, would you most like to talk to and what would you talk about?

## **Questions about your high school experience:**

- What courses have you enjoyed the most?
- What courses have been most difficult for you?
- What kind of student are you?
- Is your record an accurate gauge of your abilities and potential?
- How would you describe your school?
- What is your favorite teacher like?
- If you had the chance, what changes would you make in your school?
- What is the most significant contribution you've made to your school?
- How have you grown or changed over the 4 years of high school?

## **High Level Thought Questions:**

- How do you define success?
- How do you respond to academic pressure or competition?
- What president would you most like to meet? Why?
- What pressure do you feel to conform? How have you gone your own way?
- What is the most difficult situation you've had to face?
- How would you describe your most intellectually stimulating experience?

## **Questions about You and the World around you:**

- Are there any books you've read in the last year or so that significantly affected you?
- Who are your favorite authors?
- What are your favorite movies?
- What 3 books would you take to a desert island?
- What is the best book you've ever read?
- Do you have a contemporary hero?
- Do you have any historical heroes?
- How did you spend last summer?
- What do you do with any money you've earned?
- What do you do well? What are your talents?
- What three adjectives would you use to describe yourself?



**INFORMATION FOR  
SPECIFIC APPLICANTS**

# INFORMATION FOR ATHLETES

## NCAA DIVISIONS

### DIVISION I (DI)

- Division I schools have large budgets and elaborate sports facilities. They also give full athletic scholarships. With nearly 350 colleges and universities in its membership, Division I schools field more than 6,000 athletic teams. Division I athletes need to register with the [NCAA Eligibility Center](#). Division I colleges adhere to NCAA eligibility standards as well as their own admissions standards.

### DIVISION II (DII)

- DII schools are usually slightly smaller universities. About 300 colleges make up DII and unlike Division I athletes who can receive full athletic scholarships, most student-athletes in this division are only offered partial scholarships. Division II athletes need to register with the [NCAA Eligibility Center](#). These colleges adhere to NCAA eligibility standards and their own admissions standards.

### DIVISION III (DIII)

- DIII is the largest division with 440 schools. These colleges focus on academic success while offering a competitive athletic environment. Division III rules minimize potential conflicts between athletics and academics and focus on regional in-season and conference play. While Division III schools do not offer athletics scholarships, most Division III student-athletes receive some form of merit or need-based financial aid. Division III athletes do not need to register with the NCAA Eligibility Center.

#### How to Navigate the Recruiting Process:

- Talk to your Austin Prep and club coaches
- Be realistic about your options and consider all divisions
- Create a highlight video and athletic resume
- Be proactive; reach out to coaches at schools you are interested in, keep coaches who have expressed interest updated with any information they might need, and express appropriate interest/excitement throughout the recruiting process.
- Complete recruiting questionnaires on team web sites
- Respond to any letters, emails or calls you receive from college coaches
- Explore the websites of schools that interest you
- Attend showcases or tournaments where college coaches will see you play
- Keep your grades up...ultimately, whether or not a coach can continue recruiting will likely depend upon positive feedback from the admissions office.
- Stay organized; consider keeping a spreadsheet of your contacts at various colleges and any responses you receive.
- Guide or the College Bound Student Athlete:
  - [http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility\\_center/Student\\_Resources/CBSA.pdf](http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/Student_Resources/CBSA.pdf)

# INFORMATION FOR VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTISTS

Students applying to specific art, music, and/or theater programs will likely be asked to complete additional aspects of an application. Many times these programs will require students to complete a portfolio of their work or take part in an audition.

If you plan to apply to a program like this, please be sure to find out the specific requirements needed from each college/university to which you are applying. Be sure to keep your counselor informed and reach out to them with any questions regarding specific school policies or any other questions.

## INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS WHO NEED ACCOMMODATIONS

**Students who have been on a Learning Plan at Austin Prep may be eligible to receive accommodations in college.**

- **What documentation is needed in order to receive academic adjustments?**
  - Each college can determine what documentation is needed to request accommodations.
  - Typically colleges would like some combination of the following:
    - documentation from an appropriate professional: medical doctor, psychologist, or other qualified diagnostician.
    - updated copy of the Austin Prep Learning Plan, Section 504 plan, or IEP.
    - diagnostic testing, which includes both a cognitive and an achievement test should administered within the last three years. Preferred tests include the WAIS-III or WAIS-IV (cognitive tests) together with any achievement test OR the complete Woodcock Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery (both cognitive and achievement tests). This can be done privately or through the student's hometown school district.
- **Will having a disability go against the applicant in the application process?**
  - No, if the applicant meets the essential requirements for admission, a postsecondary school may not deny admission simply because the applicant has a disability.
- **How does the applicant go about asking for accommodations?**
  - If a student wants the college to provide an academic adjustment, the applicant should let the school know about the disability. Most times students will need to contact the Office of Academic Support or Disability Services to find out their process for accessing accommodations. Some examples of accommodations include extended time, assistance with note-taking, testing in a separate setting, and permission to record lectures.
- **What can Austin Prep do to assist in this process?**
  - the disclosure of a disability is always VOLUNTARY. If students wish, they can self-disclose in the admission process. Additionally, with parental and student permission, college counselors can disclose information about a disability in letter of recommendations. Counselors will not do so without student and parent permission.

# INFORMATION FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS & STUDENTS APPLYING TO NON-U.S. COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

International will mean different things at different colleges; be sure to read the international section on each college's website. While some colleges will focus on citizenship as the basis for whether or not a student is international, others will look at your country of residency or where you completed your high school education.

### Proof of English Proficiency:

Most schools will require proof of English proficiency. All schools will accept and most will require the TOEFL. The IELTS is another test of English proficiency and is accepted at most colleges. Please note: *TOEFL and IELTS scores are only valid for two years.*

Some colleges will consider a student proficient if he/she has attended an English-speaking school for the last 3-5 years, and/or SAT critical reading scores of 600 or higher. Students should prepare and plan to take the TOEFL or IELTS regardless of whether a testing requirement is given or not. Accepted score ranges are from 79-120 on the iBT TOEFL. The more competitive the school, the higher the score requirement.

### Visa and SEVIS I-20 Info:

Many schools will require a photocopy of your passport, SEVIS I-20 form and visa during the application process. Consult individual college websites about this requirement. Also, please list the name from your passport on your Common Application.

## APPLYING TO NON-U.S. COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

Do you enjoy other cultures? Are you energized when you find yourself outside of your comfort zone working your way through a frenzy of new experiences? Do you enjoy taking risks? Answering yes to these questions could mean that you are a good fit for college in another country. Whether you are looking just north at Canadian schools or you are looking half way across the globe, students who travel abroad for college tend to be independent spirits who relish new adventures.

## ADMISSIONS PROCESS

Most colleges abroad focus on GPA's and test scores (SAT's, SAT Subject Tests, AP exams, institution-specific, etc.). Colleges and universities overseas can admit a student conditionally, requiring that the student take a subject test or AP exam in the spring with the goal of achieving a specific score in order to pave the way for official acceptance.

## ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

US colleges typically expect you to take four years to graduate. Colleges and universities abroad often only require three years to earn a diploma because they tend not to require as many general, liberal arts courses in order to graduate as the course work is focused on academic major requirements as opposed to electives. Colleges abroad work best for students who have a specific major in mind (or at least a small family of majors).

## FINANCES

Colleges abroad might be more economical than US colleges.

Not only are annual tuition costs less, but if you can also graduate in three years as opposed to four, that is a significant savings, even with travel costs taken into consideration.

## CAREER IMPLICATIONS

In this competitive job market, global awareness and experience can give you an edge with hiring depending on the industry. While the norm is to study abroad for a semester to gain global experience, a job applicant with multiple years in another country, exposure to many different cultures, and possibly some foreign language skills, might set themselves apart.



# **FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION**

# FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION

## *Financial Aid Night at Austin Prep*

*Every year, Austin Prep hosts an evening about Financial Aid presented by the Office of College Counseling. It is highly encouraged that students and families attend during Junior or Senior years. Dates will be announced at the start of each school year.*

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

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the form used by virtually all colleges, universities for the awarding of federal student aid and most state and college aid. There's a lot of federal money available to help you pay for school, but you can't be considered for any of it until you complete a FAFSA. The FAFSA can easily be completed online each year.

To meet the Federal Student Aid deadline, you should apply as early as possible beginning January 1st of each year. Please be aware that schools and states have their own deadlines, which are often in February or March, so you should contact each college or university for exact deadline dates.

For the online application and additional information on the FAFSA, go to the [FAFSA website](#).

## ***CSS Profile***

Colleges, universities, graduate and professional schools, and scholarship programs use the information collected on the PROFILE to help them award private grant and scholarship funds. The PROFILE Application is personalized for you based on the information you give when you register for the service. In addition, you can include explanations about special circumstances on the application so the colleges and programs reviewing your information can make their decisions knowing as much as possible about your family. Approximately 600 private colleges and graduate programs require this additional application. There is a cost associated to apply using the PROFILE.

For more information about the CSS Profile, see the [Profile website](#).

## ***MEFA (Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority)***

MEFA — the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority is a non-profit self-financing state authority, not reliant on state or federal appropriation, that works to make higher education more accessible and affordable for students and families in Massachusetts.

Some resources include:

- Straightforward information and advice on applying for and choosing college financing
- Innovative college savings plans for parents of young children preparing for future education expenses
- Free financial aid seminars and helpful calculators and tools to help you understand your options and plan your college funding strategy
- Information about education loan options

## ***Helpful Financial Aid Telephone Numbers:***

- *Financial Aid Hotline:* 1-800-442-1171
- *Federal Student Information Center:* 1-800-4FEDAID
  - Assistance with general questions regarding the FAFSA
- *College Scholarship Service (CSS):* 609-771-7725
  - Provides information about the processing of a submitted PROFILE
- *Massachusetts Board of Higher Education Scholarship Office:* 617-727-9420
  - Answers questions about the State Scholarship Program
- *Higher Education Information Center, Boston Public Library:* 617-536-0200
  - Financial Aid Counselors are available to help complete forms. No appointment is necessary. Easy access for Boston families.

## ***Scholarships***

Scholarship opportunities for members of the Class of 2024 will come in around fall/winter of their senior year. For an up to date list of scholarships, students should reach out to their College Counselor, or check out the running list of opportunities in Google Classroom. Please pay close attention to deadlines and requirements needed for each scholarship. If you need transcripts or letters of recommendation to be sent on your behalf, please see your College Counselor.

In addition to the scholarships posted, other opportunities may be available at:

- Student's local public high school guidance department
- Parent's place of employment
- Student's place of employment
- Church
- Town sports organizations
- Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts

Some great scholarship websites to consider:

- Going Merry
- FastWeb
- Scholarships.com

# FINANCIAL AID VOCABULARY

- ***Award Letter***
  - Notification of the terms and requirements of the financial aid package offered by a college.
- ***College Scholarship Service (CSS) Profile***
  - A financial aid application required by some schools in addition to the FAFSA. This form was developed by the College Scholarship Service (CSS) of the College Board. (<https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org/>)
- ***Cooperative Education***
  - A program which allows students to alternate college studies with salaried work experience off-campus.
- ***Cost of Attendance (COA)***
  - The annual cost of attending college that is used to determine a student's financial need. It includes tuition, books, fees, room and board, transportation and out-of-pocket expenses. Also referred to as the student expense budget.
- ***Dependent Student***
  - An unmarried student under the age of 24 who has no dependents and who is at least partially dependent on parental support.
- ***Estimated Family Contribution (EFC)***
  - The total amount a student and his or her family are expected to pay toward college costs from their income and assets.
- ***Federal Methodology***
  - A formula established by Congress that evaluates the expected family contribution to determine eligibility for all types of financial aid.
- ***Federal Work-Study Program***
  - A federally sponsored campus-based program that provides employment opportunities for students with demonstrated need.
- ***Financial Aid Package***
  - The total financial aid award offered to the student which may include grants, scholarships, loans, and work study.
- ***Financial Need***
  - The amount by which a student's estimated family contribution falls short of covering the cost of attendance.
- ***Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)***
  - A form distributed by the federal government for use by students applying for federal financial aid programs. The FAFSA is available at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).

# FINANCIAL AID VOCABULARY

- ***Gift Aid***
  - Student financial aid, such as scholarships and grants, that does not have to be repaid and does not require a student's being employed.
- ***Grant***
  - A financial award that does not have to be repaid.
- ***Independent Student***
  - A student who is not dependent on parental support and meets one of several conditions established by the federal government.
- ***Institutional Methodology***
  - A formula used to determine eligibility for college money.
- ***Loan***
  - Money borrowed that must be paid back with interest.
- ***Self-help Aid***
  - Student financial aid, such as loans and federal work-study jobs, that require repayment or a student's being employed.
- ***Simplified Needs Test***
  - A formula used by families whose total adjusted gross incomes are under \$50,000 and who are eligible to file a 1040EZ, 1040A, or no tax return at all.
- ***Student Aid Report (SAR)***
  - A report produced by the U.S. Department of Education and sent to students who have applied for federal student financial aid. It contains either a number called the expected family contribution or a request for further information.
- ***Scholarship***
  - A sum of money or other aid granted to a student, because of merit, need, special talent etc., to pursue his or her studies. Scholarship (or grant) money does not have to be paid back.
- ***Tuition Payment Plan***
  - Alternative method of payment designed by colleges, banks, insurance companies and financial management organizations. Most offer either prepayment or installment options.
- ***Work study***
  - A financial aid program that allows students to earn money by working on campus in an approved program to help pay for college expenses.

# AUSTIN PREPARATORY SCHOOL

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*VERITAS UNITAS CARITAS*