

College Counseling Handbook





SAINT JOSEPH'S
CATHOLIC SCHOOL • EST 1993

Dear Students and Families,

Applying to college can be an intimidating and stressful time no matter where you are in the process. Our goal is to help guide you through the process of college selection by providing suggestions for college planning throughout your high school years and to assist you with your transition into this new world. It is our goal that you will not only enjoy your future college experience but also the process that leads you there.

This Introduction to College Counseling Handbook was designed to give you a better understanding of the College Counseling Program here at Saint Joseph's Catholic School (SJCS), as well as assist you in your college search and application process. This handbook includes an introduction to the program; responsibilities of the student, parent, and college counselor; a college planning timeline; college selection and application process; financial aid information; glossary of terms; policies; forms and other helpful items.

College preparation begins as soon as you enroll in a high school level course. The formal, one-on-one college advising process begins during the second half of the junior year. This allows more than enough time for thorough research of colleges at a realistic point in the student's career here at SJCS. The best college preparation is to be a fully involved student at SJCS and to take advantage of all of the wonderful opportunities and challenges that are available in this school and the community at large.

It is important to note that we have intentionally not included specific items dealing with COVID-19 and how that impacts College Admissions in this handbook. Since this information is constantly changing and evolving, we will communicate these issues with you throughout the school year via emails and individual meetings.

Please view this handbook as a guide and know that there is always someone in the College Counseling Office who can assist you in this venture. This handbook was developed with the help of many schools affiliated with SACAC and NACAC.

Sincerely,

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Introduction to College Counseling at SJCS

The College Counseling Program is offered to assist every SJCS student in selecting and gaining admission to colleges. The College Counseling Program begins during a student's freshman and sophomore years with general information provided in a large group setting and some individual/family meetings for course selections. Formal and individual guidance by the College Counseling Office begins during a student's junior year—primarily during the second semester. Beginning during the spring of the junior year and continuing throughout the fall of the senior year, the college counselor will assist students in finalizing their college choices, completing applications, and obtaining school recommendations when required by colleges. All college applications should be reviewed by the College Counseling Office, where the students' college counselor will review them online with the student present and then send out transcripts (including senior schedule), letters of recommendation, and school profile in one packet.

In addition to providing practical assistance, the college counselor will encourage students to be open-minded, considering various types and locations of colleges; to aim high in seeking college admission while remaining realistic about their chances of admission; encouraging college visits; and assisting students in meeting all obligations and deadlines set by both the colleges and SJCS. Since there are over 4,000 colleges and universities—all with different deadlines and requirements—it is ultimately the responsibility of the student to know, abide by, and discuss with the college counselor each college's deadlines and requirements.

The College Counseling Office will schedule numerous visits from college representatives throughout the fall and encourage students to visit colleges as well during school breaks or, with proper permission, during school. A list of on campus college visits is available on SCOIR and the SJCS website during the fall of every year.

Attending a quality preparatory school alone does not guarantee college admission. Admission is based upon several factors such as success in academic classes, rigor of courses taken, SAT/ACT scores, recommendation letters, extracurricular activities (looking for level of participation rather than number of activities), evidence of leadership, personal interviews, and character. The College Counseling Office is here to help students put forth the best application possible and assist through the entire process of obtaining college admission and enrollment.

Responsibilities: Who Does What?

Initiative in the college search and application process is the responsibility of the students and parents. The college counselor is here to assist the families in this process. The students are responsible for researching colleges, completing all applications by the deadlines set by the colleges and SJCS, requesting teacher and/or counselor recommendation letters their junior year, submitting all transcript requests to the College Counseling Office before deadlines—giving the office at least one month to review the application (with the student) and gather all other needed documents to send out with the transcript. Failure to submit applications and requests by deadlines can negatively impact the students' chance for acceptance into a college.

Responsibilities of the Student:

- Thoroughly research and investigate colleges of interest, including visiting each (or as many as possible) to which the student plans to apply.
- Obtain application materials and submit applications in a thorough and timely manner, meeting all deadlines set by both the colleges and SJCS (remembering to give your counselor at least 30 days for transcript requests and essay reviews).
- Register for all required standardized testing and, when applicable, have official score reports sent directly to the colleges from the testing agency. **Please note that SJCS cannot send official test scores.** However, many colleges now accept self-reported test scores for initial consideration. Please check with your college for their policy. Please refer to page 53, #8, for more information.
- Request recommendations from teachers and your college counselor making sure to give each writer sufficient time to complete (at least 30 days).
- Notify the College Counseling Office in writing if the student wishes to have any additional information, such as updated grades, sent to the college during the course of the year.
- Verify with each college that all application items were received and if necessary, follow up with the College Counseling Office.
- Take the initiative in seeking out the college counselor for advice/guidance as needed.
- If applicable, register with the NCAA and/or NAIA in order to participate in college sports.
- Respond to all offers of admission and financial aid by the appropriate deadlines.

- Research thoroughly the availability of all scholarship and financial aid opportunities at each college to which the student plans to apply as well as search for outside/private scholarships.
- Abide by *The Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities* and *The Statement of Principles of Good Practice* of the National Association for College Admission Counseling, especially with regard to honoring commitments to colleges, the candidates reply date, and early decision agreements.

Responsibilities of Parents:

- Facilitate the student's college search, especially regarding visits to the college, which are critical to the process.
- Discuss honestly and openly with the student your thoughts, wishes, and preferences—especially regarding financial issues.
- Make appointments for a college counseling meeting with the college counselor as needed or desired.
- Submit all forms required of parents, especially financial aid forms, including the FAFSA, CSS Profile, and State Scholarship Forms (i.e. Palmetto Fellows).

Responsibilities of the College Counselor:

- Meet with the student in the spring of the junior year to help the student assess his or her thoughts on the size, type, and location of colleges he or she wants to consider.
- Assist the student in creating a balanced list of appropriate colleges and help the student estimate chances of admission.
- Assist the student with the application including the essay as requested.
- Write the counselor recommendation letter if a part of the college's application process.
- Meet with the student for follow up meetings throughout the year as requested by the student and/or family.
- Respond to student and parent questions and concerns and meet with them for college counseling meetings as requested.
- Saint Joseph's will, when requested on the institution's application (counselor recommendation section), report student conduct records to colleges and notify colleges of any significant changes in the student's academic or personal status between the time of application and graduation. This includes, but is not limited to, serious disciplinary violations, honor violations, probation, suspensions, dismissal, or a significant drop in grades. Disclosing such sanctions does not automatically disqualify a student from being accepted by a college. However, it does give a student the opportunity to discuss the incident and how the

student's life has been affected by the incident. With that in mind, we insist that students who have been suspended or have serious disciplinary violations disclose these when requested by the college. Furthermore, we request all students who have been suspended or have any other serious disciplinary violations to write a letter to all colleges to which they are applying.

College Planning: Four Year Overview

Freshman Year

- Begin to build strong academic, language, mathematical, and critical thinking skills by taking challenging courses. Look at what Honors and AP courses are offered and discuss taking these courses with your teachers.
- Take your studies seriously and focus on your grades! This is the beginning of your cumulative grade point average which is reported to colleges.
- Become involved in your high school. Explore extracurricular activities and begin thinking about leadership opportunities at your school and in your community.
- Utilize Scoir to record your extracurricular activities, leadership positions, community service, honors, awards, summer experiences, and jobs
- Attend the Freshman & Sophomore College Counseling Night and the individual course scheduling conferences that are offered in the spring.
- Consider attending a Seminar Series: Conversations with Counselors program to ask any questions you may have.
- Evaluate your grades each quarter and determine what you are doing well and where you need to improve. Make an appointment with your teachers as needed. Remember that you are building your record for college admission beginning in your freshman year.
- Freshmen will take the PSAT 8/9 for practice (please see school calendar for dates). Utilize this practice test to become more familiar with the test format and the types of questions found on the PSAT. You may also want to visit the College Board website at www.collegeboard.org for more information on the PSAT 8/9.

Sophomore Year

- Evaluate your performance and your interest in each academic area. Continue to take challenging courses (Honors and AP). Remember to balance taking challenging courses with your commitment and ability to perform well in them.
- Stay involved in extracurricular activities that interest you. The level of involvement and accomplishment is most important, not the number of activities. Continue to record these activities in Scoir.
- Consider attending College Fairs (see College Financial Aid, Scholarships, & Events section on the College Counseling page of the SJCS website for dates and times).
- Consider attending a Seminar Series: Conversations with Counselors program to ask any questions you may have.
- Prepare to take the PSAT in October. Utilize the practice tests to become more familiar with test format and the types of questions found on the PSAT. You may also want to visit the College Board website at www.collegeboard.org for more information on the PSAT.
- Take the PSAT in October. This is practice for the SAT and for the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. However, sophomores may be eligible for one of the National Recognition Programs with a qualifying score on this test. For more information about eligibility criteria, visit bigfuture.org/NRP. The test date is on the

SJCS school calendar.

- If you are traveling near any colleges, consider making an informal visit there.
- Attend the Freshman & Sophomore College Counseling Night and the individual course scheduling conferences that are required in the spring.
- Use your summer wisely. Consider taking a summer course or participating in a special program related to your field of interest. Think about volunteering or getting some work experience.

Junior Year

August

- Evaluate your performance and your interest in each academic area. Continue to take challenging courses (Honors and AP). Remember to balance taking challenging courses with doing well in them.
- Focus on your academics remembering that junior year grades are very important to college admission committees.
- Update the activities list that you began as a freshman in Scoir.

September

- Make use of the college planning resources available in the College Counseling Office, as well as those on the Internet.
- Attend the Greenville County College Fair (see College Financial Aid, Scholarships, & Events section on College Counseling page of the SJCS website for dates and times).
- Consider attending any College Counseling Seminar Series programming that is relevant to you.
- Prepare for the PSAT that will be taken in October. Remember, juniors who score exceptionally high on the PSAT may be considered for participation in the National Merit Scholarship Program and/or one of the National Recognitions Programs.
- Numerous college representatives will visit SJCS in the fall. Obviously, schoolwork must come first, but try to attend a few for colleges of particular interest to you. Make sure to review the College Representative visiting schedule on SCOIR to see the dates and times that the colleges will be visiting. Make sure to discuss attending these visits with your teacher in advance to determine if you can be released from class. Remember you must sign up in SCOIR at least one day prior to the scheduled visit. Listen to the college representatives' presentations and ask questions about your particular interests. Pick up information and sign the cards provided by the reps so that you will be added to the schools' mailing lists.
- Be sure to be an active participant in class to set yourself up for success when asking for letters of recommendations from your teachers in the spring.

October

- Take the PSAT on the national test date (see school calendar).
- Begin to establish criteria for the type of college that you would like to attend. Begin thinking about preferences in broad terms (location, size, programs, etc.). Use college guides and talk to family, friends, and teachers about their college choices

and experiences.

- Consider using Fall Break to visit colleges.

November

- Evaluate your first quarter grades and determine what you are doing well and where you need to improve to meet your academic goals for the year. Make sure to meet with your teachers as needed. Remember, your transcript (which is provided to colleges) will document all high school level coursework and grades.

December

- Study thoroughly for exams and attend any extra help sessions that your teachers offer.
- PSAT student reports are available online. Read the information carefully to interpret your performance.
- Use your Cumulative Weighted GPA (formally CWA) and PSAT scores to determine your academic eligibility for your colleges of interest.

January

- You and your parents should plan to attend the Junior Class College Counseling Night that will be held in late January/early February. This meeting is extremely helpful in your college planning!
- Look ahead to spring break for possible opportunities to visit colleges.

February

- Begin SAT/ACT preparation and register for the SAT Test and the ACT Test this spring.
- Schedule an initial parent-student meeting with your college counselor to discuss your college selection and application process as well as your senior year schedule.

March

- Make the most of the College Match program which is conducted during class time in the spring—complete required questionnaires & suggested research/assessments/etc.
- Continue your college search.
- Begin thinking about which teachers you will ask to write letters of recommendation on your behalf and discuss with your college counselor.
- Begin to consider essay topics and look for opportunities to use an essay for more than one application. Consider signing up for the College Counseling Office's College Essay Workshop that takes place in the Summer!
- Attend the NACAC College Fair (see College Financial Aid, Scholarships, & Events section on the College Counseling page of the SJCS website for dates and times).
- Utilize your spring break for college visits and/or consider utilizing the college visit mini-mester.
- When you visit college campuses, be sure to ask questions, talk to college students, and keep a notebook of what you liked and disliked about each campus.

April

- Make your requests for teacher recommendation letters and let your college counselor know what requests have been made. All teacher recommendation letters will be submitted to the College Counseling Office.
- Prepare for your AP Exams, if applicable.
- Consider taking the ACT Test.

May

- Consider taking the SAT Test.
- Take AP Exams, if applicable.
- Prepare for all your final exams.

June-July

- Take (or retake) the SAT Test (June) and/or ACT Test (June and/or July).
- If you are considering playing sports in college, make sure that you register with the NCAA Eligibility Center at www.ncaa.org and/or NAIA at www.PlayNAIA.org.
- Spend your summer productively. Colleges like to see that you have spent your summers doing something productive (summer job, community service, etc.).
- Visit colleges that you did not see during the school year.
- If needed, schedule another student-parent visit with your college counselor in July and/or August.
- Complete your [Self Reported Academic Record \(SRAR\)](#) for the courses that have been completed or will be attempted (e.g., senior year courses in progress) for high school credit. The SRAR was started in your College Match programming.

General Expectations

By the end of your junior year, you should have completed the following:

1. *Met with your college counselor a minimum of one to two times.*
2. *Taken the SAT Reasoning Test and/or ACT Test at least once. We recommend taking both the SAT and the ACT one time each and then repeating whichever test you scored higher with.*
3. *Established a preliminary list of potential colleges and update Scoir with this information.*

Senior Year

August

- Attend the College Counseling Office's College Application Boot Camp.
- Consider taking the SAT especially if you are applying Early Decision, Early Action, or to any Rolling Admission schools.
- Note all registration deadlines for fall SAT and ACT tests and complete registration promptly.
- If needed, plan to attend a SAT/ACT Prep Course.

September

- If you haven't already done so, schedule a meeting with your college counselor to discuss your final list of college choices and discuss application deadlines.
- Attend sessions with college representatives who visit SJCS (see SCOIR for dates and times).
- Attend the Greenville County College Fair (see College Financial Aid, Scholarships, & Events section on the College Counseling page of the SJCS website for dates and times).
- Consider attending any College Counseling Seminar Series programming that is relevant to you.
- Make final decisions regarding Early Decision and Early Action options. Know the deadlines for each college to which you are applying.
- Consider scheduling an interview with the colleges on your list.
- If you have not already done so, consult with your college counselor to review your college essays. It is strongly recommended that you work closely with your college counselor on all of your essays; making sure to start this process early!
- Attend, with your parents, the Senior Class College Counseling Night and the Paying for College Night (late September/early October).
- Send test scores to all schools to which you are applying.

October

- If you have not already done so, complete all Rolling Applications.
- Meet with your college counselor to complete final reviews of your college essays.
- Meet with your college counselor to review your online college application prior to submitting it to the college/university. The college counselor will send your transcripts, all letters of recommendation (if applicable), and any other school related forms to your college/university. Please be aware that if you do not follow this process, you may not receive the maximum benefits of the College Counseling Program.
- Adhere to the October 15th SJCS deadline for all Rolling, Early Action, and Early Decision applications. Please note that colleges may have earlier deadlines that you need to adhere to.
- Make sure that you give your Transcript Request Form to the College Counseling Office at least one month prior to the college's application deadline or one month prior to when you want your transcript packet sent out.
- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) opens October 1. Please see the Financial Aid Section for more information on this. Note financial aid application deadlines for each of your colleges and complete the FAFSA as soon as possible. Colleges' financial aid deadlines must be met or aid may not be available. Please note that some colleges have additional financial aid forms that they need you to complete. Please be aware of this and comply with all deadlines. For the online FAFSA form visit www.fafsa.ed.gov
- If you plan to seek financial aid and are applying to private colleges and selective state universities, complete the CSS PROFILE. Visit the College Board website at www.collegeboard.org to get more information and to see if your college(s) require this form.

- Review private scholarship opportunities by visiting the SJCS College Counseling website page, SCOIR, or one of the following websites: GoingMerry.com, Fastweb.com, and/or ScholarshipExperts.com.
- Some competitive scholarship applications have deadlines this month. Consult with the College Counseling Office as you complete the application requirements and be sure all recommendations are completed by the required deadline.
- Retake the SAT/ACT Tests, if applicable.

November

- If you have not already done so, finish all remaining college applications.
- Meet with your college counselor to review your online college application prior to submitting it to the college/university. The college counselor will send your transcripts, all letters of recommendation (if applicable), and any other school related forms to your college/university. Please be aware that if you do not follow this process, you may not receive the maximum benefits of the College Counseling Program.
- Retake the SAT/ACT Tests, if applicable.

December

- December 1st is the SJCS deadline for all remaining applications.
- Request Mid-Year Transcript for all applicable colleges.
- Devote time and energy to prepare for your first semester exams. Attend review sessions scheduled prior to exams.

January-February

- Meet with your college counselor for your mid-year review
- Mid-year transcripts sent to colleges—if requested by student.
- Early Decision/Early Action deferrals should submit additional information to the colleges to update their applications.
- If you are placed on deferment or wait-list status, please see your college counselor to establish a plan of action. Requesting an interview with the college is highly recommended.
- Complete all scholarship applications that have not been submitted.
- If you have not already done so, you should verify that colleges have all necessary materials from you and let the College Counseling Office know the status of this check.

March

- Colleges, who do not have Rolling Admissions, usually begin notifying Regular Decision applicants of admission decisions. Notifications begin in early March and continue through April 15th.
- Notify the College Counseling Office of all decisions you receive. If you are placed on a wait-list, additional information to update and support your application may be sent at this time—speak with your college counselor!
- Showing strong interest by staying in touch is important!

April

- If necessary, attend special days and weekends planned for accepted students to visit colleges to help in your decision. If you have not already done so, make sure that you visit the college/university. It is highly recommended that you visit the school prior to accepting.
- Final admission notification letters are received. Notify the college you will attend prior to May 1st as well as notify all other colleges of your decision with regard to their acceptances. This helps colleges predict their yield and make decisions relating to wait-list candidates.
- Contact the financial aid office at the college you will attend with questions concerning your financial aid package.
- Prepare for AP exams to be held in May.

May

- You must inform every college of your acceptance or rejection of their offer of admissions or financial aid by May 1st.
- One single deposit to your choice college must be received by May 1st.
- If you wish to remain active on a wait-list, additional steps should be completed by May 1st. Please see your college counselor for assistance.
- Meet with your college counselor to complete your College Acceptance Survey. This survey is extremely important and must be completed in order to ensure that your final transcripts are sent to the correct colleges. It also includes scholarship offers and college matriculation.
- Take AP and final Exams.
- Graduation!

June-July

- Final transcripts will be sent to colleges. Make sure that you have met with your college counselor to ensure proper delivery of your transcripts.

Phases of the College Search and Application Process

Overview for Saint Joseph's Students

PREPARATION:

The Preparation phase formally begins when a student enters the ninth grade. However, coursework taken during the middle school years may have an impact on the path they take in high school and can even impact a student's high school transcript and possibly their cumulative grade point average that is recalculated by the colleges. The courses taken during the freshman and sophomore years serve as the foundation that prepares students for grades eleven and twelve. During the freshman and sophomore years, students are encouraged to participate in discussions with their teachers, peers, family, youth leaders, and others to explore careers and interests. They also plan which courses they will take during their high school career. All SJCS freshmen take the Preliminary Scholastic Achievement Test 8/9 (PSAT) (please see school calendar for date). All SJCS students take the Preliminary Scholastic Achievement Test (PSAT) to practice for the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test in the fall of their sophomore year and again in the fall of their junior year as part of the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. However, sophomores and juniors may also be eligible for one of the National Recognition Programs with a qualifying score on this test. For more information about eligibility criteria, visit bigfuture.org/NRP.

EDUCATION:

The Education phase mostly takes place in the junior year, when each student and family begins to meet with the college counselor in big group meetings and during individual conferences. These meetings begin taking place during the second semester of the student's junior year. At these meetings the students and parents become acquainted with the different facets of the college investigation, application, and admissions process. Topics include how to investigate colleges, timing of testing, admission plans, types of applications, the college visit, the essay, the interview, and recommendations.

EXPLORATION:

The Exploration phase begins in the fall and early spring of the junior year and usually continues through the summer. This is the period of time when the student and his/her college counselor brainstorm together and separately in order to develop a list of colleges (somewhere between 15-20) that broadly fit the student's college selection criteria as previously articulated to the counselor. In addition to colleges suggested by the college counselor, students will probably accumulate other ideas through participation in the college search programs available on the Internet, through meetings with college representatives at the school, college fairs, from various reference materials available in the College Counseling Office, and through suggestions of parents, family, and friends.

INVESTIGATION:

The Investigation phase begins shortly after and sometimes during the time the student is assembling the exploration list. At this time the student is researching, learning and often visiting schools of interest. For students who are able to quickly whittle down their lists, this is a relatively short period of time. For others, this process is much longer, sometimes stretching into the fall of senior year. There is no right or wrong length of time for this process; it should be viewed as the length of time that is needed for each individual student. However, students and families do need to pay close attention to college and SJCS application deadlines.

APPLICATION:

The Application phase may begin as early as July in the summer before senior year or as late as November of senior year. This phase consists of obtaining all necessary applications and submitting them by the colleges' and SJCS's deadlines. This will also include requesting letters of recommendation (completed during the spring of junior year), submitting Secondary School Report forms to the College Counseling Office, and sending test scores to all schools to which the student applies, if applicable. It also may include writing one or more essays and participating in an interview with an admission representative or college alumnus.

SELECTION/DECISION:

The Selection/Decision phase is different for each student. For those who have applied under the Early Decision Application option and have been accepted, the decision is easy and often over early in the senior year. For others who have many choices or who are on a wait list, the process is longer and may ultimately stretch into the summer months. Most who have applied under the regular application option will have several acceptances from which to choose and will make a final decision by May 1st. Those students who pursue the wait list could make their final decision during late spring or summer.

TRANSITION:

The Transition phase is the period of time between when seniors are accepted by the college they will be attending and the completion of their first full year as a student at that institution. At first, this period is characterized by getting used to the idea of change and leaving your school and home. Later, it is truly experiencing these changes first hand. Joining a Catholic organization at your college and finding a church is vital in assisting you with making this transition. Parents and students should keep the lines of communication open so that they can help each other through this time of transition.

HELPFUL TIPS TO REMEMBER:

- ✓ Contrary to popular belief, you are NOT searching for "the perfect college". The truth is that there are many colleges that are a "good fit" for you.

- ✓ It is very common for students to change their mind about some of their college criteria during their senior year. For instance, you might think you want to stay close to home, but by February you have decided you want to move further away. Or, you might think you want a larger school, but after winter break decide that a smaller school is really best for you. For this reason, it is a good idea to have a variety of colleges on your application list.
- ✓ The place your best friend or your boyfriend/girlfriend chooses may or may not be the best place for you. Assess your needs and desires and work to find the right place for YOU.
- ✓ It is best to visit the colleges before you apply, however, this may not always be possible. If you cannot visit before you apply, try to visit as soon as possible after you apply. For colleges with a selective admission process, one of the factors the admissions office may consider is whether you have shown interest in the college by having an “official” visit.

The following pages in this section will provide you with a more detailed look into the college search and application process and will include some of the following topics: college representative and campus visits, completing college applications, creating your Activities List, essay writing, admission interviews, letters of recommendation, college admission decisions, and the junior guide.

Maximizing College Contact

College Visitors:

During the fall of every school year, representatives from colleges all over the country will visit Saint Joseph's. Their express purpose is to generate interest in their schools, provide a great source of up-to-date information and specific admission requirements for their institution, and to learn more about Saint Joseph's (students, community, and curriculum). Oftentimes, these individuals are the regional counselors who will be in charge of reviewing the applications from SJCS and surrounding schools; they will probably be the "first reader" of your application file.

It is important that you try to meet them and take the opportunity to make a positive impression on them. It's a wonderful chance to "personalize" your application by putting a "face" with your file—these representatives will often be advocating for you in the admission committee meetings, and the fact that they have actually met you can be an important "tip" factor. Every year there are several of these representatives who state that they remember meeting a particular student when they came to SJCS and that they really went the extra mile in advocating on their behalf or just called to check in on these students to see if they could assist them any further in the college application/selection process. While this isn't an interview, it is important that you present yourself well. Be prepared, curious, and invested in the process. Don't ask routine questions that could be answered with a quick glance at the homepage on their website. However, even if you haven't had time to prepare, come anyway and find a way to demonstrate your potential interest. If it's a school you've never heard of, but it is in an area of the country that you are interested in, please come and gather more information about this college or even region. There are over 4,000 colleges and universities in the US and you have probably not heard of most of them.

You must register in SCOIR in order to attend one of these college rep visits. Please make sure to register online through SCOIR prior to the day of the visit. **In addition, you need to get your teacher's permission (please see the College Counseling Policies Section for further information regarding this process).** When seeking permission from your teachers, be polite and use good judgment. If it's the last class before a test or quiz (or it's a test/quiz day), then obviously that would not be an appropriate time to miss class—even if the college is your first choice. If this is the case, you can simply stop by the College Counseling Office either before or after class to meet the representative and pick up some literature. Ultimately, it is up to teachers to allow you to go, so approach the opportunity with appropriate thoughtfulness. If you are given permission to miss part of class, don't take advantage of this opportunity; if there is still time left in class when the visit is over, go back to class. The College Counseling Office does take attendance at these visits. Please see the policy section for further guidelines regarding this process.

College Nights:

Many colleges hold “Intro” nights at local high schools and hotels; these events are usually a blend of formal presentations, question-and-answer sessions, and informal chats with students and families at the end. These events are usually open to all students and you will often be notified of these meetings in advance if you have requested information from any of the colleges presenting. The College Counseling Office will also post these events on the school website as we become aware of such events. This is another excellent opportunity to demonstrate interest, learn more about the schools, and acquaint yourself with representatives who may read your file in a few months. We also recommend following up the next day with a brief email telling the representative how helpful the presentation was.

College Fairs:

College Fairs are a great opportunity to learn and gather information from a lot of different colleges. These fairs are especially helpful when you are beginning your college search process as you will have the opportunity to meet with representatives from colleges all over the nation. We encourage students to speak with as many representatives as they can and to leave their contact information with the colleges that they are interested in.

We highly recommend that you attend the Greenville County College Fair in the fall of every year. You will be sent information regarding this fair each fall. Furthermore, we encourage you to explore <http://www.nacacnet.org/> for information regarding virtual as well as in-person college fairs throughout the country.

A college fair is a great opportunity to get more information about colleges that interest you and to ask questions of college representatives. But getting the most from a college fair takes a little planning ahead. Here are some tips from high school and college counselors:

Do Your Homework: If you have a list of institutions attending, decide which college booths you want to visit most, and research them beforehand. If a list is not available, know what kinds of colleges – large or small, public or private – interest you. “You can’t walk around like you’re in a shopping mall,” says Steve Munger, former Director of College Counseling at The John Cooper School. “Set up a game plan.” Then you won’t waste time on institutions that may or may not fit your needs. “Treat a college fair like a buffet dinner,” advises Susan Hallenbeck, former Director of Undergraduate Admission at Saint Leo University (FL). “There will be more that you can possibly take in, but then again, not everything is to your taste.” Experienced buffet diners know that it’s best to scope out their choices before they start filling their plate. Savvy students can do the equivalent by looking over a list of college fair participants before the fair.

Prepare Your Own Cards: Most colleges will ask you to fill out a card to receive more information. Don't waste time during the fair filling out cards when you could be talking with college representatives who are ready to meet you. Print some cards of your own before the fair, including your name, address, telephone, graduation year, school name and code, academic and other interests. When colleges ask you to fill out their card, give them one of yours instead! You can also print this information on labels and just place it on the colleges' cards.

Don't Just Collect Literature: Forget about trying to pick up as many color brochures as you can. If all you want is some basic information on a few colleges, you could stay home and request that by phone or postcard!

Ask Questions: Write down any questions you have from your research and bring the list with you. However, advises Munger, "You shouldn't go to a college fair armed with questions that you can find by looking at the college handbook." And as Del Gustafson, former Dean of Admission at Gettysburg College, points out, "You're talking to a real person, someone who has information at their fingertips." It's an opportunity for interaction – something you're not going to get from the written literature. Some things you can ask about: extracurricular activities, special traditions/events on campus, what kinds of students the college is looking for, what percentage of students receive financial aid, and other concerns unique to your interests and situation.

Bring Your Parents: Larry Griffith, formerly with Gonzaga College High School, suggests that students take their parents, "but don't stay with them." Instead, go in different directions, then meet afterwards to compare notes. Also, make sure to check out the schedule of information sessions: many fairs have sessions on the search process, applications, financial aid, and other issues run by experts in the field. These sessions are a great place to ask general questions about the college admission process.

Make a Good Impression: Remember that the representatives you meet could be the same people who will see your application in a few months. Make sure to look the representatives in the eye and give them your full attention. "An impressive thing to do," says Griffith, "is to get business cards from the representatives, then write each one a letter to thank him or her for their time and reiterate your interest in their college. Also, get to the fair on time. It may seem a minor point, but being punctual gives you the time to get the most out of the experience."

Have Fun: When you have seen the colleges on your list, go back and explore the other colleges there. You may find an interesting one you had not considered before. Be adventurous! Don't just focus on 'name' schools, you may find that a school you've never heard of offers the exact major, extracurricular program, etc., that you're seeking.

Follow Up: By the time the fair is over, you'll have a bag filled with information about colleges – and a possible case of information overload. Don't succumb to the temptation of just piling all those brochures in some obscure corner of your bedroom. If you're feeling overwhelmed, take a day or two away from the college search. Then get out all of those brochures, along with the notes you took while at the fair, and read through them. You may find that some colleges aren't as interesting as you first thought. Others only look better the more you research them. For those colleges, follow up by filling out the information cards in the brochures or by starting to schedule college visits.

Visiting Colleges:

You wouldn't buy a new pair of shoes without trying them on, nor would you buy a car without test-driving it first. Likewise, a student needs to make a campus visit before making a sound decision about a school. You simply cannot get a feel for a college from the catalog and view book alone. View books, virtual tours online, and slide show presentations at college nights can only give you so much (please note that these items are essential in beginning your search) and remember that these materials are designed by the marketing division of the colleges to "sell" the colleges. Visiting schools in which you are interested is certainly the best way to get to know them and to know what you will really want in your undergraduate experience. You may have a strong preference for a certain type of school (i.e. large, public university) when you first start the college search process; however, many students change their minds after really experiencing/visiting a college campus firsthand.

Pointers for Making Your Visit More Productive:

When to Start: Spring Break can be an ideal time to start your college visits, since many colleges will be in session and you will be able to see real student life. If time and budget permit you to travel, by all means do so. But if not, we are lucky to have many representative institutions nearby so that you can visit "like" or similar type schools before investing in expensive trips. Colleges/Universities such as Clemson, Furman, USC, Winthrop, and Belmont Abbey can easily be visited during a one-day trip. In these short trips, you can see a large state university, a liberal arts college, a Catholic university, etc. Even if you are certain that you will be leaving this area to go to college, these local visits will give you valuable information about certain types of school environments that would be the best fit for you.

Pros and Cons of Summer Visits: Summer visits are easiest for many families, and will give you a sense of the location and perhaps a chance for an on-campus interview. They will also get you on the college's "radar screen" which can be a factor in the admissions process, because some schools do look much more favorably upon students who have visited. However, summer visits won't enable you to see what the

students are like, and this is really important. If possible, initial summer visits should be followed up when colleges are back in session, but definitely before you commit to attending that particular college/university. For the most part, fall visits should be carefully targeted; this is the time to concentrate on top-choice schools (some for a second time) and perhaps to spend an overnight or a day attending classes with a current student. Please note that many of you will be carrying very demanding course loads during your senior year and scheduling numerous college visits in the fall will add to your stress level.

The main message here is to start your visits early!

Ingredients for a Successful College Visit:

1. Do not schedule more than two schools per day. Give yourself time to roam the campus before or after your tour. Visit the colleges' websites for tour times and information sessions. You can also call to inquire about the availability of interviews on campus (if information is not on the website).
2. Sign in with the admissions office. Make sure there is a record of your visit. Complete a visitor's evaluation form if provided. Some schools use "demonstrated interest" as an admissions factor, so make sure they know you have been there.
3. Note the name of the admissions officer with whom you meet. Write a thank you note or email and plan to use that contact for further correspondence.
4. Pick up a copy of school newspapers and other publications to take home with you. Also scan bulletin boards. This is all great evidence of what is really happening on campus and it will help you to get a sense of atmosphere and tone.
5. Take a good look around you. Ask yourself: "Can I see myself here in a year from now?" How are the students dressed to go to class? How are they dressed to hang out? How do they interact with each other? In other words, are they walking/eating alone or in groups? As they walk across campus, do they stop and chat, walk in pairs, etc. Does everyone look/dress the same? Does that make you feel comfortable or bored? Please note that there is no right or wrong answers to these questions—they are only right or wrong in terms of what you are looking for.
6. Talk with students on your own, without parents or others around; their answers may be more candid and a better barometer of actual campus friendliness.

7. Make time to visit the student union and, if possible, try to sample some food in the dining hall.
8. Pay attention to walking distances: some colleges with small enrollments may have very spread-out buildings and thus feel much larger than some state universities with huge enrollments but well-laid out campuses.
9. Visit the community surrounding the campus. What appeal does it have? Are stores and movies accessible without a car?
10. Take notes. You may think that you will remember each campus, but they do begin to blur together in your mind. Take along a memo pad and jot down your impressions right after your visit. Months later, these impressions will be a big help when you need specific answers to the “why this college” question that appears on almost every application!
11. Trust your “gut” feeling!

Questions to Ask:

1. How large are most of your classes? What’s the largest class offered?
2. Who teaches the classes (teaching assistants or professors)?
3. How much personal contact do the students have with the professors?
4. Does the school have a core curriculum? If so, how restrictive is it? Is there a world language requirement? How difficult is it to get the classes you want?
5. What are the most popular majors? When do you have to declare your major? Does it hurt your application to select “undecided”?
6. If you apply to a particular division within the college (i.e. engineering or business), how hard is it to transfer to another division?
7. What are the housing options? Are freshmen required to live on campus? Is there guaranteed housing for freshmen? Are some dorm rooms better than others? Do the dorm rooms have Wi-Fi? How many students live off campus?
8. Do many students study abroad? How easy is it to maintain housing eligibility when you return?
9. How important are fraternities and sororities? Do Greeks and independents mingle?
10. What is a typical weekend like on campus?
11. Are athletics important? Do students support the teams?
12. What do students complain about the most?
13. Can freshmen have a car on campus? How is the campus/local transportation system?
14. Make sure to ask student guides: What other colleges did you apply to? What made you choose this college? If you could change one thing about this college, what would it be? What do you like best about your experience here?

What is your experience with your professors? Have you ever been to a faculty member's home? What is your average class size?

Please see your College Counselor to obtain a handout with additional questions to ask during a college visit.

College Applications

Creating the Application List:

During the end of your junior year (and continuing throughout the summer), you should be narrowing down your list of colleges to which you have been investigating. The goal is to have a list of about five to eight colleges to which you will apply. The list should contain colleges that you would attend if accepted. You should examine the list in terms of selectivity and variety. Do the schools meet your criteria, at least in some way? They may not all meet all of your criteria, but there should be a few good reasons why you are interested in the college.

You should make sure that, based on the information you have been given, you are *likely* to be admitted to a few of the colleges, you have a **50/50 chance** at a few and a few may be a *“reach”* for you, academically. Do not forget to consider applying to Honors Programs at schools where you may qualify for the program. Honors Programs at larger universities can provide a much more personalized and challenging education for students who are capable. If you are looking for academic scholarships, you will be more likely to qualify for them at a college where your academic record is better than most of the students. This is one of the reasons to be sure you have some *“likely”* schools on your list.

Remember, this is the list of colleges to which you will apply. It means you are strongly considering the schools, but you may yet decide that some of them do not meet your needs. After you are notified of your admission status you will have the information which will allow you to decide where you will enroll.

How many colleges should I apply to:

We generally recommend that a student should submit applications to between four to eight colleges. There are certainly some cases where more or less applications may be advisable.

Ideally, you should know the colleges to which you are going to apply when you return to school in August of your senior year. You and your parents should have already met with your College Counselor during the second semester of your junior year and possibly even over the summer; however, if you have not, then you should do so as soon after school starts as possible to discuss the specific application process for your colleges.

You must research your college choices and find out their policies on Early Decision, Early Action, and Rolling Admissions. You should also know their policies regarding notification dates and deposits. Early Action schools do not usually require a commitment until May 1st; however, they may require a deposit for housing or to hold your place in the class. Remember, you cannot double deposit—submit an enrollment deposit to more than one institution. Doing so could result in all colleges rescinding their offers of acceptance.

When and How to Apply:

You (the student) are responsible for completing all online college applications. Read carefully. Clearly and correctly fill out all the information requested. Use your full name and do not use nicknames (and make sure we have the same name on your transcript). Most colleges require a non-refundable fee to process an application. Fee waivers are possible if students are eligible for fee waivers on the SAT/ACT tests. Please check with the College Counseling Office if you think you qualify.

Allow plenty of time to do your essays so that you can revise them as needed, preferably starting them in the summer before your senior year. Have your parents, College Counselor, and someone proficient in grammar review your essays. Please note that in order for them to have time to do this, you must complete them and submit them well in advance of your college application deadlines.

You must request letters of recommendation from your teachers in person using the Teacher Recommendation Form (located in the College Counseling Office) as well as inform your College Counselor of which teachers you have asked. Please note that you must give your teachers enough time to complete your letter—at least one month prior to the college’s application deadline. All letters of recommendation will be submitted to the College Counseling Office where they will be reviewed and sent directly to the requested college. Students and parents will not be shown the letters of recommendation.

You must complete and submit a Transcript Request Form and indicate on the form if you need the College Counselor to complete a letter of recommendation. Again, this form must include all colleges you would like your transcripts and/or letters of recommendation sent to. Please note that no transcripts or letters will be sent without this signed and completed form. You can pick one up in the College Counseling Office. Please remember that all letters will be sent directly to the colleges of your choice and will not be given to students or parents.

Further notes:

Observe the deadlines listed in this handbook.

Have all SAT and/or ACT score reports sent to your colleges (if and where applicable) and remember to indicate that Saint Joseph’s is your high school on your registration forms. Keep a record of the names of colleges to which you have directed the SAT/ACT to send scores.

While your parents may be willing to help you facilitate this process, you should make contacts with the college.

Getting Organized:

Once you have gathered all the information about the application process, you should organize that information. One way to do so is to create a form that will allow you to see at a glance all of the information about the requirements for application at each of the colleges to which you are considering. The form should include a column for each of the following: Type of Application, Application Fee, Application Deadline, Date to Submit Application to College Counselor, Essay or Personal Statement, Recommendations, Standardized Test Requirements, Test Scores Sent, Date to Submit Transcript Request to College Counselor and Date Submitted Request. Create a row for each of your colleges and then list the information about deadlines and required forms for each college.

Create a file folder for each college and place information you have received from the institution in the folder so you always know where to find it. You will want to keep copies of anything you send in the mail. If you send applications online, print a copy before you send the form. Make note of when you sent materials so that if they become lost, you will be able to track them. Please note that the College Counseling Office sends most items electronically which are tracked via SCOIR.

Completing the Application: Do's and Don'ts:**DO'S:**

- o Be Yourself.
- o Show grace and charm in your writing and personal dealings.
- o Answer the questions they ask.
- o Answer the questions they ask in the space or length they require.
- o Consider your audience. Does the admissions officer want to wade through dozens of extra pages of padded activities, recommendations from people who don't really know you or overly long essays? No, but he/she does want evidence of a specific talent, so provide that.
- o Give yourself plenty of time to do a good job.
- o Be prepared to demonstrate a genuine interest in the schools to which you are applying. If you can't, then you should probably reconsider your list.
- o Keep an accurate record of all contact with the school. When a local interviewer calls to set up an interview, it is critical that you do not lose or forget information regarding their name, job, or location of the interview.
- o Write to the admissions office if something about your file changes or you have new information. This way it will be put into your file. Calling is not an effective way of communicating new information.

DON'TS:

- o Be shy OR arrogant, pushy or presumptuous.
- o Invent information or take credit for things that are not yours.
- o Over-load your file. Add extra sheets only if it is absolutely necessary.
- o Ask to have access to your recommendations. You have this right under the FERPA/Buckley Amendment, but we recommend that you waive it.
- o Allow others to complete/submit your application for you.
- o Submit documents to the colleges yourself without first talking with your college counselor. In most cases, your college counselor will do this for you which will help in tracking what is sent to each college.
- o Apply to schools you would never attend.
- o Forget to write thank you notes to people who helped you—teachers, admissions officers, interviewers, etc.

When listing activities on your application, be sure to arrange them in decreasing order of importance. Either you can avoid chronology altogether and arrange all your high school activities in order of importance, or you can begin with senior year, listing all activities in order of importance, and proceed down the chronological line from there.

Traditionally, student government, sports, school publications, and community service have been considered “important” activities; however, importance is by no means confined to these areas. In general, colleges are looking for leadership, commitment and longevity, talent, accomplishment, and maturity. A job or significant responsibility at home would qualify as an important activity; as would any recognized work in the arts.

Remember that colleges look for that “spark” in a candidate. Make sure that you highlight your “sparks” effectively.

Important Application Reminders:

- ✓ The Secondary School Code is **410902**. It is a good idea to memorize this!
- ✓ Approach applications individually, completing one at a time. Remember to do as much work over the summer as possible; you will be thankful that you did!
- ✓ Check the website regularly and listen to morning announcements. Sign up for College Rep visits early and don't forget to get a pass from your teacher prior to attending the visit. See Policy Section for further details regarding this process.
- ✓ Obtain your Social Security Number as applications usually need this information. It is a good idea to memorize this.

- ✓ Plan college campus visits and interviews well in advance. If you are going to miss class days, you must inform the attendance office and your teachers.
- ✓ Read all emails and check SJCS website and Instagram page regularly.
- ✓ Save a copy of all letters of acceptance and scholarship offers. You will need this information for the end of the year Graduation Survey.
- ✓ Make note of and do not miss any university or College Counseling Office deadlines.
- ✓ Please do not hesitate to see your College Counselor for any questions regarding the college admissions process. No question is insignificant!

Activities List

Nearly all colleges ask students to list the activities in which they participated during high school (the day after 8th grade to the current time of application). Furthermore, a list like this can and will be used for various items such as scholarship applications, award nominations, job applications, and counselor recommendations. It is very important that students have a complete listing of this information in one convenient location. We strongly encourage students to utilize their Scoir account for this. Since students have access to Scoir beginning in the summer before high school, it is the perfect platform to record these activities.

Adding Extracurricular Activities to Scoir

This section has four categories for you to consider: Work Experience, Athletics, Community Service, and Clubs & Activities. Please make every effort to add anything that falls into these categories beginning from the day after 8th grade up until the present day.

This is your chance to brag about yourself, so don't be shy. To record your activities, experience, and achievements:

1. Log into Scoir.
2. Click on "Me" at the top, then "View Profile"
3. Scroll down to "Activities & Achievements" on the left side navigation
4. Click the **+ Add** button
5. You'll be presented with a window to select the category of your entry, add a title, select grades participated, report hours per week and weeks per year (use your best guess here), and add a description of the entry
6. When you're finished, click **Save** (If you need to edit your entries, you can click the blue pencil [edit](#) icon beside the entry)

**On rare occasions, some students may need to submit a formal résumés to a particular program or scholarship. If you are asked to complete a formal résumés, please see your college counselor for a résumés writing guide and example résumés.*

Essay Writing

An essay can show what a student cares about. Writing that shows a real interest or passion sends a positive message to college readers. Résumés and activity lists tend to be a fairly dry representation of an individual's outside interests. The college essay is the only part of the application over which the student has a measure of control. Because most admission officers are looking for ways to admit students they want (and what they seem to want are different kinds of students; not clones), an essay that presents a unique and interesting individual can be a powerful tool in the student's favor.

Another aspect of the essay is that it highlights a student's ability to use language correctly and appropriately. Many admission readers are turned off by an abundance of errors in usage, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Even if the ideas presented are praiseworthy, an essay filled with these problems might get a cursory read or give the reader a negative feeling overall. Attention to correct writing won't win the day for an essay, but it will allow the reader to concentrate attention (remember the value of time) on the ideas presented rather than on side issues.

There are several other points that can add to the importance of the essay as well. It allows students to give an explanation. Maybe there's a good reason for a mediocre grade in a course, or a reason that the student has played only on the junior varsity soccer team. College readers often aren't aware of much of the context in a student's file, and the essay gives the student an opportunity to fill in the gaps. Also, it may be the only place in the application in which a student can add a personal touch to the more objective numbers in the file. The essay can also be a good spot for a student to express ideas and opinions. Remember that colleges are looking for students who can show thinking beyond the superficial. Expressing an idea or opinion doesn't make it true. Good thinking and writing requires support for opinions and ideas.

Many college applications ask questions requiring short answers and also ask one or two essay questions, requiring longer answers. Frequently the applicant will be able to choose from several topics for the longer essay. It is important to answer all short answers and essays...even if the college states that they are optional. Answering these items will give you the best chance to stand out from the sea of applicants with similar grades and test scores. So get started early!

Why Are Essays Important?

Your essay brings you to life, filling in the personality behind the test scores and grades. It can show that you are different from other applicants with the same scores and qualifications. Your essay makes your personal impression—especially important if you were not able to interview.

An Admissions Officer said, “Your essay is less important than the SAT and GPA, but it is sometimes the most decisive document in the application. It can make a student with average credentials stand out in the applicant pool.”

Is An Essay Going To Get You In?

Probably not if the other qualifications are not there...curriculum, grades, extracurricular activities, and often test scores. But a poor essay definitely can keep you out, and if you are on the bubble, a great essay can maybe swing the pendulum in your direction.

What Are Colleges Looking For In Essays?

Michael Steidel, Dean of Admission at Carnegie-Mellon University, says they are looking for...

- Interesting information about the applicant which just doesn't jump out of the things he/she wrote on the application or obvious from the high school record.
- Something of the “fabric” of the student. What the student believes is important...how he/she spends their time...the essence of the individual.
- Some take on what they are truly interested in and whether or not we can further their pursuit of that interest...a good match?

Avoid The Following Topics:

- COVID
- Comparing a sport to the great game of life
- Death
- My trip abroad
- How my school failed me
- My favorite coach
- How the community service project I just invented made me realize how lucky I am
- Controversial political topics
- Over-discussed social topics

Rit Fuller, former Director of Admission at Hamilton College, comments, “The creative college application essay writer will look beyond current popular culture for inspiration. There was a very popular Robin William’s movie in the 80’s entitled *Dead Poet’s Society* with an even more popular Latin expression used throughout, ‘Carpe Diem’ or ‘Seize the day’. That year it seemed there were a million application essay writers whose missions were to ‘Seize the day’! Perhaps they did, but did it help them seize a spot in the college of their choice? Probably not!

Pre Writing Strategies:

The following writing strategies were developed using materials from the University of Houston and the University of Kansas.

Free Writing:

Begin by sitting down at a desk with a pen and paper in hand. With a topic in mind and a timer set at ten minutes, begin writing. Spend ten minutes writing about your topic and don't worry about grammar, style, spelling, or penmanship.

Your goal is to write without stopping, even if you're only writing "I can't think of anything to write." Eventually you will get tired of writing this and you'll begin writing down ideas you can use. After about ten minutes of writing you can reread your text and circle the topics and examples that you wrote about.

Looping:

Looping is a technique that employs free writing. Follow the guidelines under the free writing section and then move on to the following steps:

1. Read your first free write and circle all interesting topics, ideas, phrases, and sentences.
2. Pick one of the circled items you would be interested in pursuing further.
3. Free write for another ten minutes on the circled topic.
4. Read your second free write and circle all interesting topics, ideas, phrases, and sentences.
5. Repeat steps one through four between three and five times.

After several rounds of looping, you have some specific information regarding a topic which may give you the basis for your essay.

Don't:

- ✓ Wait until the night before the application is due
- ✓ Try to be funny if you're not
- ✓ Use Thesaurus words
- ✓ Be "cute"
- ✓ Exceed the word or page limit
- ✓ Use the name of the wrong college in the essay
- ✓ Make silly mistakes
- ✓ Be cynical and/or critical...colleges will wonder if that is the personality you will bring with you
- ✓ Have someone else write your essay.

Do:

- ✓ Follow directions exactly
- ✓ Answer the question
- ✓ Consider your audience
- ✓ Tell a story...one only you can tell and in your own voice
- ✓ Be concise...more is not better
- ✓ Type your essay, unless otherwise directed (if not part of an online application)

- ✓ Proofread
- ✓ Write in your own words
- ✓ Let the college know what you value and how you think
- ✓ Write about something you like and care about
- ✓ Use spell-check
- ✓ Write, rewrite and rewrite the essay...put it away for a few days and then look at it again
- ✓ Paint a picture of the real you...not who you think they want you to be
- ✓ Let the college know how you were affected by the topic or experience if appropriate
- ✓ Be mindful that your application should be consistent with your future goals
- ✓ Be truthful, honest, let it come from your heart
- ✓ Bring to your college counselor early so that you have plenty of time to work on revisions. Ideally we recommend at least two to four weeks prior to your submission date.

In the words of Richard Avitabile, former Director of Admission at New York University, “Personal essays are a powerful way for the students to get the attention of the application reader. Especially in larger places, where we don’t get to meet every applicant, the essay is really a chance to see more about the person behind the grades and scores. The more personal the essay topic, the more we learn. However, I disagree with the school of thought that encourages ‘baring one’s soul’ in the essay. Keep the topic positive and full of ways that you will contribute to our college. Powerful essays do touch on the soul—help us to know what makes the student joyous—and tell us about hopes and dreams.”

You are also encouraged to pick up a complete Essay Writing Packet with additional tips and sample essays from the College Counseling Office as well as attend the SJCS College Counseling Office’s College Essay Workshop in the Summer.

Interviews:

Students are often confused about the role an admissions interview plays in the admissions process. The truth is that the interview is treated very differently from one college to another. It is best to check with each school you plan to apply to in order to determine if an interview is required, recommended, or even considered in your review.

The interview is essentially intended to affirm the rest of your application file. Don't fret over it, but be sure to do the following five things:

1. Determine if the interview is considered as part of the process, and get it scheduled early during your senior year.
2. Read the information in this handbook regarding interviews.
3. Rely on your counselor for support and to practice in an interview "role play" situation, if it is helpful to you.
4. Study your program and the things that first interested you in the school, and be prepared to answer why you feel it is a good fit for both you and the institution.
5. Be yourself and relax!

Important Steps for Students Regarding Interviews:

1. Preparation:
 - a. Not all colleges and universities offer interviews. As you research schools, visit their websites or call the admissions office to inquire about interviews.
 - b. Narrow down your choices and schedule the interview.
 - c. First Choice Last: Practice your interview skills at colleges that are far down on your list of preferred choices, and leave your first choice until last. Those of you who are shy will have a chance to practice vocalizing what your usually silent inner voice tells you. The rest of you will have the opportunity to commit your inevitable first blunders where it won't count as much.
 - d. Research the college you are interviewing with. The interviewer will expect you to have general knowledge about their college/university. Read the school's catalog; memorize a few facts, special attributes, exchange programs with other schools, anything that might pertain to your interests or future activities.
 - e. Bring a résumé or activities list. Interviewers (especially if they are alumni volunteers) often do not have any information about you prior to the interview. Providing a résumé is a convenient way to familiarize the interviewer with your activities and generate questions.

2. Possible Questions and Topics: Please see the end of this section for an additional list of possible questions.
- a. In anticipation for your interview, it is helpful to practice answering some of the standard questions that your interviewer is likely to ask:
 1. How did you find out about their school?
 2. What characteristics or factors are important for you in selecting a college—size, location, majors, etc?
 3. Have you visited the school? If so, you might discuss that experience.
 - b. The interviewer will want to know what makes you “tick.” Some possible questions might involve you discussing:
 1. Your academic background—favorite classes, level of classes, etc.
 2. Extracurricular activities both inside and outside of school. Which activities are the most meaningful to you?
 3. Family background
 4. Major and career interests
 - c. The probing questions:
 1. Who has been a role model for you and why?
 2. How do you feel you are most/least prepared for college?
 3. What activities or organizations do you plan to get involved with in college?
 - d. Your Turn!
 1. Rather than passively allowing the interviewer to ask all the questions and direct the conversation, participate in this process by assuming an active role. A thoughtful questioner will accomplish three important tasks in a successful interview: demonstrate interest, initiative, and maturity for taking partial responsibility for the content of the conversation; guide the conversation to areas where you feel most secure and accomplished; obtain answers.
 2. Be sure to have some questions already prepared that you would like to ask. Topics might include:
 - If an alumni volunteer is interviewing you, ask about his or her college experience. Why did he or she choose to attend this particular school?
 - Student life on campus
 - Internship opportunities
 - Financial Aid
 - Diversity and geographies of the student body
 - Special traditions
 3. When posing a question: make a statement about you, your interests, etc; add the relevant facts you know about the college from reading the catalog; and end with your question on that subject. For example: Art is a very strong interest of mine...I see no commercial art courses in your catalog...if I wanted to develop this interest, does one of

your exchange or neighboring colleges offer commercial art? Informed questions are seen as an indication of your thoughtfulness, interest, and care.

3. The Big Day:

- a. Arrive Early. You want to walk into that interview calm, cool, collected, and smiling. Give yourself some time to explore the campus, become familiar with your surroundings, or just spend a few minutes relaxing before the interview begins.
- b. Relax! The interviewer expects you to be nervous, and that's okay. He or she is eager to get to know you and is almost always on your side. An experienced interviewer is aware that you may be inexperienced at interviewing and will try to put you at ease.
- c. Dress neatly and comfortably.
- d. Know Yourself...your cumulative weighted GPA, your test scores, your academic areas of interest, etc. If you are undecided about your major, feel free to say so (70% of college students change their intended majors), but it is wise to recognize that you are going to college to learn and to think through some areas that you would like to explore, competencies you would like to develop, projects or situations that intrigue you, etc.
- e. Be Honest! You and your interviewer know that everyone has strong and weak points. You can learn a great deal about the college in an interview. In many cases the interview may not carry much weight in the final admissions decision, but it is important to have your questions answered and leave as good an impression as possible.
- f. If your parent or friend accompanies you to the college, plan to have the interview alone. Most admissions officers prefer to talk with your parents after talking with you (if at all), rather than during the interview.
- g. After your interview, send a thank you note to your interviewer, either typed on plain paper or handwritten on tasteful stationery. Restate something particular you learned from the interview or include something you had neglected to mention at the time. The key here is to distinguish yourself in a positive way from the thousands of other applicants whose application folders might all look suspiciously identical to a bleary-eyed admissions officer.

Additional Sample Interview Questions:

1. At this point, what achievements are you most proud of and why?
2. If 4 or 5 of your peers were describing you to me, what adjectives would they use?
3. Do you have any special interests that you feel are unusual or especially important to you?
4. What activities are you involved in and why? Which do you enjoy the most and why?
5. What do you do during the summer?
6. If you could exist during any period of time (excluding the present and the future), what era would you choose and why?
7. If you could be any character from literature, who would you be and why?
8. Why would I select you as a friend?

9. What do you see as the major problems of living in this century? Do you see any solutions to any of these problems?
10. Describe your school community.
11. What courses are you taking?
12. Which courses do you enjoy and why?
13. Which courses do you dislike and why?
14. Describe the contributions you have made to your high school.
15. Describe the contributions you have made to your community.
16. Why do you want to go to college?
17. What do you hope will happen to you within four years of college? What changes do you think will occur?
18. Describe what, in your mind, would be the ideal college environment.
19. Why do you think our college might be an appropriate match for you?
20. Describe your attitude towards academics. Do you expect it will change in college?
21. What contributions will you make to your college community?
22. What motivates you to learn?
23. Would you describe yourself as a leader or a follower and why?
24. What qualities do you most admire in others?
25. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and greatest weaknesses?
26. What would you like to change about yourself?
27. What would you like for the admissions committee to know about you that they might not glean from the application documents?
28. In your life and relationships with your family and friends—to what do you hold value? What's important to you?
29. What is the latest book you read for pleasure (not a required academic assignment)?
30. Given the opportunity to interview an influential person from another era, whom would you choose, why would you choose them, and what questions would you ask?

Remember the interview is not meant to be an intimidating experience. Think of it as having a conversation or discussion with someone.

*Mock interviews are available upon request from your college counselor.

Letters of Recommendation:

Teacher recommendations can be one of the most important supplements in your application file. It is the teachers who provide the colleges with insights about your intellectual self. They will describe your work habits, your academic passions, and your idiosyncrasies. Colleges rely heavily on teacher recommendations to give flesh to the statistical skeleton they see on your transcript.

Unfortunately, because of the rush of tasks attached to the application, students' thinking about recommendations is too often hurried and incomplete. During the spring semester of your junior year is when you should begin to think about teacher recommendations. In whose course have you excelled? Who knows you best as a student? Do any of your teachers know you well outside of the classroom as well? Of your teachers, who is most likely to write forcefully and eloquently about you?

Listed below are pointers that will help direct your thinking about teacher recommendations.

1. While each college may have its own particular demands, most colleges ask for two teacher recommendations, frequently requiring that one be written by your junior or senior English teacher.
2. While selecting your recommenders, think of balance. If possible, try to pick one from humanities or social sciences and one from mathematics or natural sciences. Two recommendations from the same department may prove redundant. However, if you are applying to a STEM related college or major, you may be required to submit a letter from both a math and a science teacher.
3. A number of institutions, particularly large state universities, do not require individual teacher recommendations. Read the instructions for each application carefully. If letters are not required, but are accepted, you may want to send one or two. It is very important to follow the college's rules regarding letters of recommendation, and it is ultimately up to you to know and follow each college's rules regarding such.
4. Do not confuse teacher recommendations with counselor recommendations or Secondary School Reports (SSR's). Check the headings of each form.
5. Ask a teacher directly if she/he will write a positive recommendation for you. If he/she agrees, then provide him/her with your Teacher Letter of Recommendation Request Form (these forms are kept in the College Counseling Office). Never leave a request in a mailbox or on a desk.
6. If a teacher declines, do not feel rejected or slighted; she/he may simply not know you well enough to write a full and convincing letter on your behalf.

7. Make sure you inform your recommenders of all deadlines and of any special circumstances.
8. We highly recommend asking your teachers for letters of recommendation prior to the end of your junior year. This will allow teachers to spend more time on the letters.
9. Be thoughtful. As you receive news from the colleges, thank your recommenders. Good recommendations require considerable time and effort; the teachers have vested interest in your applications.

Please remember that because there are so many colleges and universities (over 4,000), it is ultimately your responsibility to know which of your colleges require, allow, or refuse letters of recommendation and/or special forms as well as how many they prefer and/or accept for each applicant.

Admission Decisions

What is reviewed in your file in an Admission's Office:

Most competitive institutions build a “folder” for the applicant. This record contains all of the materials collected by the college from each applicant. The folder usually contains materials similar to those listed below. The materials you submit as part of the application procedure represent your chance to tell your story. These materials should be completed and designed to impress the institution with your abilities. The list of “required” materials should be interpreted as the minimum set of credentials needed to gain admission. Additional materials which more clearly define your candidacy can and should be submitted.

- o Reviewer's Notes
- o Application for Admission
- o Student Essay
- o High School Counselor's Recommendations
- o Other Recommendations
- o Secondary School Report
 - Transcript
 - GPA Information
- o Secondary School Profile
- o Curriculum Description of the High School
- o Standardized Test Score Reports
- o Student Activities List
- o Interview Notes
- o Telephone Conversation Notes

Who Reviews the Folder:

At some institutions, admission is determined by a formula. Standardized test scores, high school average, and/or rank in class information may be used in the formula. Formula driven admission procedures are used in some state supported schools. Admission is offered to those students whom the formula indicates are qualified for admission. However, in most competitive institutions, admission folders are individually reviewed by one or more staff members and decisions are made after a complete reading of the student's record.

Borderline cases are typically reviewed by an actual committee which will discuss each student individually. And some colleges use a combination of both!

The Evaluation of Your Application: What Matters:

Keep in mind that real people in admissions offices are trying to imagine a three-dimensional you from the papers in front of them. While there is no secret formula that ensures success in gaining admission to any school, there are some factors we know contribute to the way in which admissions officers make fine distinctions between seemingly equally qualified candidates. They generally consider the following, though not always in this particular order:

- o Grades
- o Rigor of curriculum (including senior year schedule)
- o Standardized test scores
- o Essays
- o Unusual talents or achievements
- o Strong recommendations
- o Extra-curricular activities
- o Community involvement
- o Obligations to in-state students
- o Geography, gender, family ties, ethnic heritage

Other Factors:

- o Over-enrollment in the previous year may force that school to accept a smaller class the next year or for several years
- o Enrollment goals in general may define the particular needs of the institution
- o A significant increase in the number of applicants may make it unusually competitive
- o Early Action/Early Decision policies as well as the yield in any given year

“Admission to private colleges, particularly the more selective ones, is a complex, subjective and unpredictable process...When a student applies to college; the admissions office collects a number of pieces of information to consider as it makes a decision about an applicant. The application that you fill out is one way your character and personality can emerge to the reader, and it is the one part of the application over which you exercise full control.” -*Marlborough School’s College Handbook*

How are Decisions Made:

The question most frequently asked by parents and prospective students is: How are admission decisions made? At most competitive institutions, the education credentials of each applicant are evaluated by one or more skilled admission professionals. In making a decision regarding admissibility, reviewers evaluate many facets of the application packet (order of importance in the evaluation process is specific to each institution) including:

- o The Secondary School Grade Point Average. Some institutions will look only at academic courses while others will include all courses. Academic courses are generally defined as those in the social sciences, natural sciences, english, math, and foreign languages.
- o The nature and type of courses taken. The evaluator attempts to make an assessment of how difficult of a program the student completed. Did it include rigorous preparation in english, writing, mathematics, etc? Students who pursue the most rigorous academic program that their secondary school has to offer are highly regarded. However, please note that the student must do well in the program. The school profile sent by the high school with each application provides an overview of the curriculum.
- o The record of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. While most applications for admission ask for information on these activities, they rarely allow the applicant to provide a full description of their level of involvement. Many students opt to include a résumé of activities (if allowed by the college) as a way of providing greater detail on the nature of these activities. The applicant résumé is particularly useful for this purpose. Many admission professionals hold the opinion that it is preferable to have been very involved in a few activities, rather than marginally involved in many activities. Participation at the leadership level is of particular interest as it demonstrates dedication, focus and ability to act responsibly.
- o Performance on SAT or ACT.

Once I've Made My Decision, What Should I Do:

After all of the decisions are in and you've worked through the grueling last stages of your decision process, your final step is to notify each school of your decision. The Candidate's Reply Date is May 1st. You should notify each school in writing of your intentions. You should do this no later than a postmark/received date of May 1st. You must check with each specific college to determine if the deadline is a received date or a postmark date. Please note that most colleges use an online form which must be submitted by May 1.

If you decide to take a "gap year" (a year break between high school and college) to travel or pursue another interest, you can write all of the colleges to which you were accepted and ask them for a deferred acceptance until you are ready to enroll. Many colleges will grant these deferrals if you provide them with a valid reason for the break.

Please note that you must notify your college counselor of where you were accepted and where you intend to enroll. This is vital as the counselor will need this information in order to send final transcripts to your school of choice. Failure to do so will result in a delay of final transcripts being sent.

What Should I Do if I Have Been Wait Listed:

Once the application process is complete and decisions are pending, you might find yourselves on a Wait List. Directors of Admissions have no way of knowing how many people will take their acceptances. In order not to overshoot or undershoot their desired yield, colleges will maintain a Wait List for qualified students. They can only go by statistics from previous years. Typically, a school must accept twice as many students as needed to fill the freshman class. In the event that they need more students to round out the freshman class, they will draw from this list, usually at the beginning of summer. A Wait List provides the college with a list of qualified students who continue to be interested.

This is the time that supporting documentation is welcomed. Letters from alumni, development sponsors, trustees, and heads of schools are best sent at this time. Although no institution likes to feel bullied and each Wait List is different, colleges do like to “reward” their supporters when they can. If there is a choice between a candidate with special advocates and a student with identical academic credentials without such advocacy, the first candidate has an edge.

Please know that some lists are real and institutions know they will need to “go to the list” even before they receive their May 1st deposits. Other lists are cosmetic and are used as a nice way to say “sorry” to people who have strong advocates. Finally, the purpose of some lists is to encourage students to consider transferring to the institution their sophomore year.

If you are Wait Listed, you should immediately notify your college counselor. Your counselor will guide you through this process. Your counselor will have you contact the school and document your desire to remain on their Wait List. Your counselor will meet with you at least one to two times to determine the appropriate course of action for you.

If by May 1st, you have not been taken off of a Wait List, you have several choices. You can accept an offer from a school who has accepted you and take your name off of the Wait List at the other college(s). If you want to stay on the Wait List and do not mind possibly losing a deposit, you can decide to stay on the Wait List even though you have made an enrollment deposit elsewhere. There is a chance that your preferred college will admit you over the summer. If this happens, you would need to notify the school where you made a deposit and let them know that you will not be enrolling there as anticipated.

Know the Students’ Rights and Responsibilities in the College Admission Process (as defined by the National Association for College Admission Counseling [NACAC]). [Click here to a link](#) to a PDF.

This is an extremely trying decision and one that you should make with great care. If you are placed on a Wait List, please see your counselor immediately so that you can be given a copy of the Wait List Procedures, a list of frequently asked questions regarding this process, and a chance to develop a personalized plan of action.

Student Athletes

NCAA Rules and Compliance:

1. The NCAA Manual is nearly 500 pages long and there is a rule governing just about everything. One chapter is devoted strictly to the recruiting of high school students or as the NCAA defines them: Prospects.
2. A student becomes a prospect when they start classes for the 9th grade. A student becomes a recruited prospect when a college either provides him/her with an official visit or places more than one telephone call to the prospect or family or when a coach visits the prospect or his/her family anywhere other than on the college campus.
3. An official visit is when a college invites a senior prospect to campus for a paid visit. A prospective student-athlete may take a maximum of five expense-paid visits to Division I institutions, with not more than one permitted to any single institution. A senior prospect is only allowed five official visits, so a highly recruited prospect will need to be selective and make informative choices. This restriction applies regardless of the number of sports in which the prospective student-athlete is involved.
4. Some coaches will request transcripts and test scores in advance to determine a prospect's academic record. At times, the overall academic record might make a coach "back off" a student and not invite him/her to come to campus if he/she does not appear to have the grades to become a qualifier or meet admission standards.
5. Any prospect (9th-12th grade) may take as many unofficial visits as they like. This is when the prospect pays his/her way to campus for a visit.
6. Each sport has different recruiting calendars, which places restrictions on when they may or may not visit with a prospect face to face. Football and basketball are the most restrictive. There are times when football and basketball coaches may come to the high school to meet with the counselors and/or athletic director or coach, but may not have any contact with the prospect.
7. College coaches can generally meet with prospects at the high school anytime, but can only do it three times during the school year.
8. Only core courses are used in the calculation of the grade point average for the NCAA. Be sure to look at SJCS's list of NCAA approved core courses on the NCAA's Eligibility Center Website to

make certain that the courses you are taking, or are planning to take, have been approved as core courses.

9. The best thing for everyone involved in the recruiting process is education. If a prospect and parents become educated with the rules and ask questions, they will be in control and can sort through all of the information presented to them from different coaches.

10. A great resource is the Guide to the College-Bound Student-Athlete. This book summarizes the rules and regulations in an easy-to-read format. It includes guidelines relating to recruiting, eligibility, financial aid and college freshman eligibility requirements for Divisions I and II. A printable version of the guide can be found by visiting the NCAA website at www.ncaa.org.

NAIA Eligibility:

Several years ago the NAIA began registering high school students for NAIA eligibility. To play NAIA sports, every student must be registered with the NAIA Eligibility Center. Please visit www.PlayNAIA.org to learn more.

One important factor to remember is that every single one of the athletes who play competitive intercollegiate athletics must be admitted!

Junior Year Guide

Self Assessment: Who are you?

It is easy to just go to the college that someone else thinks is great. But will it serve your needs? Will it be the right “match” for you? The only way to know is to spend some significant time engaging in self-assessment. By doing so, you will come up with the criteria that is important to you as you search for the colleges that are a good fit for you. You will also want to spend some time thinking about career choices and possible major fields of study. Although you do not need to have a final choice of career or major selected (most high school students do not know exactly what they want to study in college or what they want to be for the rest of their lives), some thought about those choices will help you decide what college best suits you.

The PrinciplesYou Assessment in SCOIR (<https://app.scoir.com>) will assist students in determining what careers they may be interested in and what colleges offer the majors needed for those careers. Later in this section you will also find some questions to help you consider career and college choices. There are also a number of terrific internet websites that can help as well. The Fiske Guide is a wonderful resource book that contains information on over 200 colleges and universities. There is also a section on “Sizing Yourself Up” which contains a very helpful self-assessment survey. Other sites to check out are: www.collegeboard.org, www.act.org, and www.princetonreview.com. They each have sections on career choices and on searching for colleges.

If you would rather not use an electronic source, just carve out some quiet time from your schedule and take the following steps to help you think about a career choice:

Step One: Think About Your Likes and Dislikes (Self-Assessment):

1. Past successes, accomplishments, achievements
2. Outside interests—work and fun
3. Skills and abilities—past work experience, formal and informal
4. Values—consider what you want out of life, what do you value
5. Needs—what sort of work will bring you satisfaction
6. Lifestyle preferences—fast-paced or quiet environment, work with people or alone

Step Two: Investigate Careers that are Available to You:

1. Gather information about occupations—your college counselor can help you
2. Talk with people you know about their careers
3. Participate in an internship

Step Three: Integrate What You Learned from Step One and Step Two:

1. Share the information you obtained and your thoughts about it with someone who knows you well (parent/counselor/youth leader)
2. Identify alternatives
3. Assess risks and benefits of your choice

College Criteria:

Now you are ready to think about college criteria. Answer the following questions about yourself:

1. What are your strongest/weakest academic areas?
2. PSAT/SAT/ACT scores—what do they tell you about your strengths and your weaknesses?
3. What has helped you to learn—small class sizes, hands-on projects, great teachers, etc.?
4. What part of the country do you want to live in? Does learning about a brand new part of the country excite you? If so, this is the time to explore.
5. What size city do you like or do you prefer small towns or rural areas?
6. Is cost a limiting factor? If so, do not forget that financial aid and scholarships may be able to assist you with this issue. You should start discussing financial issues with your parents to better help guide your process.

Answer these questions about what you want from a college:

1. What size, type, location, and surroundings do you want?
2. What sort of academic challenge is right for you?
3. Do you want to follow a specific program of study?
4. What sort of athletic, social, religious life do you want available to you?

Remember, decisions are rarely made in a vacuum. You will need to explore and investigate before you make any decisions. You will want to discuss your thoughts with counselors, teachers, parents, friends, youth leaders, etc. Allow yourself to include many possibilities at this stage!

Investigate Your Options:

When you took your PSAT tests, you may have indicated that you would like for colleges to contact you with information regarding their school. What should you do with information that you receive from colleges? You should glance through all literature and see if anything interests you. If it does, read more about that institution. You may want to complete the reply card that

may have come with the literature and send it back to the college. This will place you on their mailing list. If the college did not interest you, pass this information on to someone you think may be interested.

One of the best places to search for college information is on the Internet. SCOIR has great search tools available to you. They will also provide you with a link to the website for that institution as well as the address, phone number, and e-mail address of the admissions office at that school.

Once you connect to the website for a college, look for a section on “admissions” or a section for “prospective students”. This is likely where you will find all the information you are seeking. If you like what you see, either sign up to receive more information online or send an e-mail to the admissions office asking to be placed on the emailing/ mailing list.

If you will be using your email for your college search and application process, review your email address and consider changing it if it could leave a poor impression with the admissions office. Remember, you want to present yourself as a serious student! Using your SJCS school email is often a good choice.

Corresponding with Colleges via E-Mail—Using Proper E-Mail Etiquette:

(this advice originally appeared in a Washington University newsletter for counselors.)

DO:

- Remember that your email addresses may be added to your admissions file.
- Choose an appropriate e-mail address (i.e. your SJCS school email address).
- Give your full name, address, phone number, and high school on each message
- Spell check your email and use proper punctuation.
- Use salutations: i.e. Dear Admissions Officer.
- Be as polite and respectful in an email as you would in a face-to-face meeting or telephone conversation.
- Check the e-mail address of the recipient before hitting the “send” button.
- Check the school’s website if you have a lot of questions before sending an e-mail. If you still have specific questions, it may be better to call the school and have a conversation.

DON’T:

- Use “IMPORTANT INFORMATION!!!” or “Please Read” as subjects for your e-mail. These are commonly used for “junk e-mail” or viruses.
- Use attachments. Schools are wary of attachments since they may carry computer viruses.

- Send anything confidential in an e-mail. E-mail is more like a postcard than like a letter in a sealed envelope.
- Send blanket e-mails to a lot of schools at once. Do some research and then ask specific questions indicating genuine interest.

Athletes: You must let your college counselor know if you are planning to participate in sports at college.

NCAA: You must receive NCAA eligibility through the NCAA Eligibility Center. To register, go to www.ncaa.org and complete the online registration form. You must then complete a Transcript Request Form (located in the College Counseling Office), sign it and give it to your college counselor so that your transcript may be sent. This should be done no later than the summer after your junior year (June). See also the Student Athlete Section.

NAIA: To play NAIA sports, every student must be registered with the NAIA Eligibility Center. Please visit www.PlayNAIA.org to learn more.

Senior Year Guide

1. Importance of your Senior Year: Your senior grades and behavior are critical. More and more colleges are rescinding acceptances based upon a decline in a student's grades or disciplinary issues. Your senior schedule is also very important to colleges as they take it into consideration when they are making their admissions decisions. If you need to make any changes to your schedule, you must first discuss this with your college counselor as well as the colleges to which you have applied or are going to apply. Again, colleges can rescind acceptances based upon changes in your schedule.
2. If you have not already created an email account that you will use for colleges, please do so as soon as possible. Please make sure that your email address is professional and appropriate; colleges will make judgments about you based upon this. You might consider using your SJCS email address. You should check your email accounts on a regular basis as many colleges will communicate with you through e-mail.
3. Be careful and mindful of what you have on your Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat and other social media sites. More and more colleges are reviewing these sites as part of the admissions process.
4. If you have not already done so, mark your calendar with application deadlines for each college, transcript request deadlines, scholarship deadlines, SJCS deadlines, schedule of visits by college representatives, fairs, interview appointments, etc.
5. It is recommended that you complete a tracking form that will list all colleges you plan to apply to, their application deadlines (note Early Decision and Early Action Deadlines), SJCS's deadlines, and the date that you submitted your Transcript Request to the College Counseling Office.
6. If you did not complete your 4 Junior Questionnaires (we started this in College Match last spring), make sure to do so (this will be used by your college counselor to write your letter of recommendation). Any explanation of a drop in grades on the transcript, disciplinary sanctions (what it was and how it impacted you), and any other issues that you wish the counselor to address may be included. Include what your hopes and dreams are, your first college choice (if you have one), special interests, and responsibilities at home or in the community. This must be turned in to the College Counseling Office electronically.

7. In Scoir, if you have not already completed your Activities List, you should do so now or at least complete a comprehensive list of your activities. Be honest and inclusive. See also the Activities List section.
8. Determine whether your colleges are test optional and if so, whether you will be submitting test scores or not. If you are unsure whether your colleges are test optional and/or if you should report your test scores, please work with your college counselor to determine the best plan for each college. If a college requires test scores, they generally require official test scores—meaning that they come directly from either College Board or ACT. Saint Joseph’s does not have the ability to send official test scores on your behalf. However, please note that *some* colleges will accept self-reported SAT or ACT scores from applicants who attend U.S. high schools. Only those applicants who are offered admission and choose to matriculate at these colleges will be required to provide official results prior to enrolling. Please make sure to check your colleges’ websites to view their policies and/or check with your college counselor so that we can assist you as this can potentially save you money.
9. Complete college applications during the summer after your junior year or early in your senior year. Find out if the college you are applying to accepts the Common Application. Remember all transcript requests must be submitted to the College Counseling Office at least one month prior to the college’s application deadline. Keep in mind Early Decision and/or Early Action deadlines.
10. Keep in mind the importance of the essay. You are presenting yourself! At a time when the selective colleges have the most competitive applicant pools in history, writing a strong essay becomes more important to set you apart from other applicants. The essay gives you an opportunity to present ideas and, most importantly, to give a sense of yourself to the admissions committee. Begin your rough drafts early and always save your essays so that you can easily make edits. You are strongly encouraged to submit your essay to your college counselor for review and feedback as well as someone who can review it for grammar. See also the Essay Writing Section and pick up an Essay Writing Packet from your college counselor. Please remember to begin working with your college counselor early so that you have plenty of time for edits before your deadline.

11. You must complete and submit the Transcript Request Form in order to have your transcripts sent to your colleges. This form must indicate if you need a letter of recommendation from your counselor and to which colleges you would like a letter/transcript sent to. Please note that no transcripts or letters will be sent by the College Counseling Office without this completed and signed form. See also the Forms Section.
12. If you have not already asked your teachers for letters of recommendation, do so as soon as possible. All Teacher Recommendations must be made directly to the teachers in person by giving them the Teacher Recommendation Form (your college counselor has your completed forms). All teachers' letters of recommendation will be turned in directly to the College Counseling Office. You must let your college counselor know which teachers you have requested letters of recommendation from. Make sure to give your teachers ample time to complete the letters—remember they are very busy. It is always considerate to send the teacher a thank you note after he or she completes the letter.
13. An application deadline usually means the application must be in the college's admissions office by that date. Remember to review your applications with your college counselor prior to submitting them and that you must submit your Transcript Request Form to the College Counseling Office no later than one month prior to this due date to ensure that all items are submitted in time.
14. Keep copies of all items that you may submit to the colleges directly. Occasionally materials are lost in the mail or misfiled by a college admissions office.
15. You must let your college counselor know if you are planning to participate in sports at college. To play in NCAA Division I or II sports, you must receive NCAA eligibility through the NCAA Eligibility Center. To learn more about this process, go to www.ncaa.org. There is also a direct link to the Eligibility Center for you to register on our website under the College Counseling page. Registration should be completed during your junior year. You must also complete a Transcript Request Form and submit it to the College Counseling Office so that your transcript may be sent. Your transcript request should be made during the summer after your junior year. To play NAIA sports every student must be registered with the NAIA Eligibility Center. Please visit www.PlayNAIA.org to learn more. See also the Student Athlete Section.
16. If a college requires a Mid-Year Report, you must let your college counselor know prior to the Christmas break!

17. Keep your college counselor up-to-date on your applications. Check the status of your application files and let your counselor know if additional documents are needed.
18. Let us know each time you receive a notification letter (accepted, denied, deferred, or wait list) and of any scholarships you may have been awarded.
19. Once you have made your decision on which college to attend, you must notify each school of your decision as well as the College Counseling Office. The Candidate's Reply Date is May 1st.
20. If you decide to take a "gap year" between high school and college to travel or pursue another interest, you can write all of the colleges to which you were accepted and ask them for a deferred acceptance until you are ready to matriculate. Many colleges will grant a one year deferment if you have a meaningful plan for that gap year. For example, to travel abroad, do volunteer work, etc. However, please note that many colleges will not grant a deferment "just because" or so that you can attend another four year institution. Please check with each school.
21. If you are wait-listed, you should immediately contact your college counselor. The Counselor will guide you through this process by providing you with SJCS's Wait List Procedures and Frequently Asked Questions Handout as well as developing a personal plan of action.

Remember: You are responsible for sending in your online application, application fees, official test scores, and FAFSA/CSS PROFILE forms (financial aid forms available October 1). The College Counseling Office will send your official transcript, school profile, senior schedule, and school/counselor/teacher recommendations (if applicable).

Please note that it is your responsibility to turn all documents in by the due date. Failure to turn in documents by the required due date, may result in unnecessary delay of your application packet being sent to your colleges.

Adherence to all items included in the College Counseling Handbook is essential in receiving the maximum benefits of the College Counseling Program.

College Admission Testing

What Is the Purpose of Standardized Tests?

High schools use a variety of grading scales and curricula, which can make comparison of students' grades difficult for college admission officers. Standardized tests provide colleges with a common measure to help them sort through credentials from thousands of high school students across the country and around the world. Additionally, standardized tests are one indicator of a student's readiness to do college-level work (others include GPA, strength in curriculum, extracurricular activities, personal essay, recommendation letters, and class rank if applicable). Admission officers can compare test scores among applicants to help in the process. Test scores may also be used as criteria for awarding merit-based financial aid.

Who Are the Testing Agencies?

The two major testing agencies are the ACT and the College Board (SAT). Both are helpful in providing materials for both students and parents. You can visit their websites (www.actstudent.org and www.collegeboard.org) to obtain information regarding test dates, registration, preparation, score reports and interpretation.

What Are the Tests?

The most commonly used tests in college preparation and admission are the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT), SAT I, and ACT. Advanced Placement (AP) is also a standardized test that some of our students take, but these tests are more commonly considered advanced coursework assessments, rather than college admission qualifying tests. However, some colleges may consider them as part of the student's overall academic profile.

Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT):

The PSAT/NMSQT is a practice test for the SAT. This test measures verbal, reading, math, and writing skills. It is also the qualifying test for the National Merit Scholarship Competition. High scorers are identified using regional score cutoffs, and invited to participate in the scholarship competition. PSAT/NMSQT scores are also used for the National Achievement and National Hispanic Recognition programs.

The PSAT is offered in the fall and is school-based. Students do not need to register to take this test; it is given to all sophomores and juniors who are at school on the scheduled test date (please see the School Calendar for this date). It is typically given on a Wednesday during mid-October. The PSAT 8/9 is given to all freshmen who are at school on the scheduled test date (please see the School Calendar for this date as it may be different from the date of the PSAT given to sophomores and juniors). The tests are

designed to be given as a preparation for the SAT test that juniors will take in the spring. Learn more about this test by visiting www.collegeboard.org.

SAT I Reasoning Test:

The following information pertains to the new redesigned SAT implemented in March 2016. Referred to as the SAT Reasoning Test, the examination was completely redesigned in March 2016 and contains sections designed to assess verbal and mathematical aptitude. The two required sections each have a maximum score of 800. The new SAT has just two (instead of the previous three) required sections (Evidence-Based Reading & Writing and Math) and the test takes three hours.

The test is usually first taken in the spring of the junior year and is repeated again at the end of the junior year and/or in the senior year. The test is usually repeated because most students tend to have higher scores the second time they take this test. Saint Joseph's school number for the SAT is 410902. The SAT I is not administered at SJCS. Test dates and registration deadlines are posted on the website and in the monthly College Counseling Newsletter. Please visit www.collegeboard.org for further details.

SAT II Subject Tests:

These tests have been discontinued.

ACT:

The American College Testing Program is a national testing service. The ACT test is a measure of academic development which relies, in part, on the student's knowledge of the subject matter fields, reasoning abilities, and the ability to use both together. ACT's website states that the test "is designed to assess high school students' general educational development and their ability to complete college level work." The ACT is a multiple-choice test containing four parts: English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science Reasoning. Four separate scores are given on a scale of 1-36 and a composite score (averaged from the sub scores) is also provided on the same scale. The ACT also has a separate optional Writing Test, which is designed to measure a student's skill in essay-writing. There are only a handful of colleges that require the optional Writing Section so students should speak with their college counselor if they are unsure whether they should take it or not. The ACT is accepted at nearly all colleges in lieu of the SAT. Some students perform better under this format, so we encourage students to try both the SAT and ACT test at least once. SaintJoseph's school number for the ACT is 410902. To learn more about the ACT go to www.act.org.

Advanced Placement (AP):

Although not specifically used for college admission, Advanced Placement (AP) is a program in which college-level courses are offered in high schools and students who score high enough on AP exams may

be able to qualify for college credit for, or exemption from, introductory college courses. AP Exams are given in May at SJCS. For more information regarding AP Exams, please visit www.collegeboard.org.

Commonly Asked Questions:

When and how do students register for the SAT/ACT tests? Students can register online through the College Board (www.collegeboard.org) or ACT (www.actstudent.org) websites. It is best to register early (at least a month in advance) because it gives you the best chance of being assigned to the test center of your choice. When students should take or possibly re-take specific tests varies, depending upon the students' goals, individual colleges' admission requirements and individuals' results. Generally speaking, it is best for students to allow enough time to retake a test if necessary, and some may even wish to do so multiple times. We recommend taking the SAT and ACT at least one time each during the spring of a student's junior year.

What if I miss the registration deadline? Both the SAT and the ACT have late registration deadlines closer to the test date, but students who register late are required to pay a late fee. If you miss the registration all together, both agencies allow students to take the test as a standby. However, there is no guarantee. Test centers accept standbys on a first-come, first serve basis, and only if they have sufficient space and testing materials on hand. There is an additional charge for this service above and beyond the charge for late registration. Please visit www.collegeboard.org for the SAT and www.act.org for the ACT to learn more about completing the standby registration accurately.

Should I take the SAT or the ACT? The vast majority of higher education institutions accept both the SAT and ACT and regard them as equally valid. A few exceptions do exist, so students are encouraged to check with individual colleges. Roughly one-third of students score higher on the SAT than on the ACT, one-third score higher on the ACT and one-third perform about the same on both. So, generally speaking, it is a good strategy to take both tests at least once.

Should I take the optional ACT Writing Sections?

College requirements will vary from school to school. It is best to know what each of your colleges require; however, since the vast majority of colleges do not require the optional Writing/Essay section, we do not recommend taking it until you know that one of your colleges requires it. Please see your college counselor for further assistance.

What about nonstandard administration? If a student has a documented learning disability or physical handicap that would affect his or her ability to complete a test under standard administration, the student should fill out an application for nonstandard administration through the College Board Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) for the SAT Test or through ACT. To qualify for nonstandard administration, a student must have a current psycho-educational test and a current written plan on file at SJCS that supports the requested accommodations.

Please be aware that testing companies, not SJCS, make the decision as to whether to permit testing accommodations. Students are encouraged to work with both the College Counseling Office and the Academic Support Program to complete this application.

Students should know that the ACT and SAT are not permitted to flag any test taken under non-standardized conditions. Even if a student has extended time on a test, this information cannot be noted on the testing results sent to colleges.

What about fee waivers? Students who can demonstrate that they have a financial need may request fee waivers for standardized tests. Students must go through their College Counselor to request fee waivers.

When should I take the SAT or ACT? We recommend that students take the SAT and the ACT at least once during the spring of their junior year.

If a student takes both the ACT and SAT and/or retakes one or both tests, how do colleges decide which scores to use? Admission practices vary significantly regarding test scores, so students should always check with the admissions office at the individual colleges/universities to find out how they handle multiple test results. Generally speaking, most colleges use the student's highest score from any and all test administrations (usually referred to as a "Superscore"). So, it is usually in the student's best interest to take both the ACT and the SAT and/or to retake a test at least once. However, some colleges average scores, while others use the highest subscores to generate a new highest composite score.

Can I decide which of my scores can be sent to the colleges? Yes and no. The ACT reports each individual test date separately. You may decide which ACT score you wish to send to colleges. Please note that some colleges will "mix and match" (superscore) your ACT scores, so it may be in your best interest to have all of your test scores sent.

In March 2009, SAT implemented their Score Choice Program. This program is a score-reporting feature that gives students the option to choose the SAT scores by test date and SAT Subject Test scores by individual test that they send to colleges, in accordance with each institution's individual score-use practice. Score Choice is optional, and if students choose not to use it, all scores will be sent automatically.

It is important to note that colleges continue to set their own score-use practices, which may vary from college to college. Different colleges use test scores in different ways and a "one size fits all" approach to college admissions does not reflect the diverse needs of colleges and universities. The College Board is enabling participating colleges to display their SAT score-use practices directly to students on

collegeboard.org. This information is presented at the time that students are asked to send scores. Students are encouraged to follow the score-reporting requirements of each college to which they apply, but their scores are not released for admission purposes without their specific consent. Colleges and universities will only receive the scores that students send them.

Do all colleges/universities require standardized tests for admission? While most colleges/universities have required either the ACT or SAT in the past, recent trends (COVID) have made it optional to submit test scores to the majority of colleges. An organization called Fair Test maintains a list of colleges that have permanently decided to be test-optional as well as colleges and universities who are temporarily test-optional due to COVID on its website (www.fairtest.org), along with information about the debate over standardized testing.

When and how should scores be reported to colleges? When you register for the SAT I or the ACT you are asked to list the colleges to which you want your scores sent. After your test has been scored, the results will be sent by the test giver to the colleges. If you did not indicate any college on the registration form or want to add any additional colleges, you may complete the online “Additional Report Request Form”. Students are responsible for sending their scores to the colleges to which they are applying. At any time during the admission process, students can contact the testing agencies to request their scores be sent to individual colleges. Many colleges are now accepting self reported scores for initial application; however, some still require that the scores be sent directly from the testing agencies and will not accept scores on school transcripts. Please review your colleges’ score reporting policies as well as speak with your college counselor regarding whether you should submit your test scores.

What about test preparation?

There are many free and fee-based test prep services available to students. We recommend first exploring all of the free resources that are available, and then pursue, if needed, any of the fee-based options.

Practicing standardized tests online affords the student the opportunity to enhance test-taking skills and take sample SAT and ACT tests. Online test prep offers a variety of options, some free or for a minimal cost. Without a doubt, students should visit the College Board (www.collegeboard.org) and ACT (www.act.org) sites for practice activities, general test information and online registration. Also, www.number2.com offers free SAT and ACT practice and vocabulary building activities.

CollegeBoard has partnered with Khan Academy for free test prep for the new SAT. For more information on this please visit <https://www.khanacademy.org/sat>.

Key Points to Remember Regarding Testing:

Be sure to spell your name the same way (should be your full, legal name) every time you register for a test or apply for admission to a college. Different spellings will create different test records and may prevent all your scores from being sent to colleges to which you apply. Using different spellings while you inquire and apply to colleges can also cause duplicate records and files and can cause your documents to be “lost” in the file room of the college to which you send them. Also remember to check your social security number before you enter it in the appropriate space on the registration forms. If you use the wrong number, it will cause your records to be misfiled.

Saint Joseph’s College Board/ACT code is 410902. Please enter this code in the appropriate space in the registration form so that SJCS will receive an official score report for our records.

Test Taking Tips:

1. Before taking the test, learn the directions for each section of the test to save time during the test. These can be found in the booklets provided for free by the SAT and ACT.
2. Read each question thoroughly and carefully so that you understand specifically what is being asked.
3. Always answer the easy questions first. Remember, they are usually at the beginning of each section and count the same as the more difficult questions. After completing them, return and work on the more difficult questions.
4. Be accurate in marking your answers; erase all unintended marks completely. If you skip a question make sure that your answer choice is for the correct question.
5. With both the SAT and the ACT there is no penalty for guessing so you should answer all questions prior to the end of the test.
6. Remember to bring the following items to the test center: Admission Ticket, Picture Identification, No. 2 Pencils with Erasers, Wristwatch, and a Calculator if allowed.
7. Get plenty of sleep the night before the test.
8. Prepare in advance; take a prep course, use a computer program, take a practice test. Remember, last minute cramming is stressful and rarely successful.
9. Know what to expect. Arrive at the test location early, become comfortable with your surroundings, know where the restrooms are located, etc...comfort helps performance.
10. Be confident! You have the ability to perform well on either the SAT or the ACT.

Keep in mind that it’s only a test. While it’s true that test scores are important, they’re not nearly as important as you may think. Different colleges use test scores differently, but no college makes admission decisions based solely on test scores.

Financial Aid

Facts about Financial Aid:

Almost all financial aid is based on need. Information about need based financial aid and scholarships awarded for merit can be found on the SJCS College Counseling Website. The College Counseling Office also has scholarship books for students/parents to review. While your College Counselor will help as much as possible, it is the responsibility of the students and parents to find scholarships suitable for the student at the individual schools and for knowing specific details about the nature of the awards, how to apply, and other steps necessary to ensure your consideration. There are too many schools and too many changes each year for the College Counseling Office to be responsible for all the details. You also bear the same responsibility for need-based financial aid. Parents must fill out the FAFSA and possibly the CSS PROFILE (College Scholarship Service) on College Board. A list of those institutions requiring the CSS PROFILE is given on their registration form. If you plan to apply for aid, go to www.collegeboard.org for the CSS PROFILE forms and to www.fafsa.gov for the FAFSA forms. Parents must complete these forms and send them to the appropriate agencies. These forms are used to help colleges and scholarship sponsors determine how much financial aid a student needs. They ask for information about your family's financial situation. Your parents need to complete only one CSS PROFILE and one FAFSA, even if you are applying for financial aid to more than one college or scholarship sponsor. Please be aware that you will only fill out the CSS PROFILE if you are applying to some private schools or a few select public institutions. There is a fee charged for processing this form. Sending both the FAFSA and the CSS PROFILE in a timely manner can make the difference in you receiving scholarships and/or financial aid. The FAFSA must be filled out for all schools, public and private, and is free of charge. Please note that many colleges/universities have deadlines for these forms in November/December while others are in the spring so it is very important to check with each college regarding their deadlines. Saint Joseph's will host a Paying for College Night in the fall to further help families understand this process.

South Carolina State Scholarships:

As information can change from year to year, information regarding the South Carolina State Scholarships will be given to you during the Senior Meeting in the fall of your senior year.

Scholarships:

The best sources of scholarship information for students and parents are the colleges to which the student is applying. Parents and students should investigate thoroughly what scholarships are available at each institution to which the student applies, follow the college's scholarship application procedures, and meet the college's scholarship deadlines.

You should be wary of any offer that guarantees or promises scholarship money. Most of these scams require you to pay an up-front fee in return for finding you scholarship money. Legitimate scholarship

search websites will never require you to pay a fee and there are no guarantees that you will win any scholarship. Legitimate scholarship search engines, like www.goingmerry.com and www.fastweb.com, may ask you to register a username and password, for general contact information or require you to look at advertisements. However, they will not ask, and you should never give, any financial information such as credit card numbers or bank account information. You should also never give your social security number to scholarship search websites.

Helpful Hints and Practical Ideas:

The process of applying for admission, scholarships, need-based aid, and loans can be complex and confusing. Take advantage of the financial aid staff at the colleges to which you are considering. Let them assist you through the web of forms, policies, and procedures. If you don't understand something, ask questions.

Don't assume that because your neighbor does not qualify for need-based aid that you won't either. And if your income is above a certain arbitrary level, don't assume you won't be eligible. Factors other than income are important in need analysis. Each family's situation is unique and must be considered individually. And remember that the information you submit is treated confidentially.

If a college subscribes to the National Candidate Reply Date of May 1st, you have until then to notify the college of your intent to accept or decline its offer of admission, scholarships, and financial aid.

Policies, deadlines, and requirements for admission, scholarships, and financial aid differ from school to school, and even within schools. Be sure to observe them.

In particular, be sure to comply with deadlines for admissions applications, financial aid applications, and scholarship applications. Schools with limited resources may not be able to meet the financial needs of students who apply late.

Carefully follow instructions for completing forms.

Use accurate information. Avoid having to submit correction documents later. It is time-consuming and can cause delays in consideration of your aid application. Your federal tax returns are your best financial references for completing need-based financial aid applications.

Keep a copy of everything you submit to any school or agency. This includes applications for admission, aid, loans, and scholarships, as well as all the letters, essays, and grade reports. Remember that financial need varies with college costs and that financial aid packages will vary from college to college as well. When you compare need-based aid packages, be sure you are considering all costs of attending a

particular institution and are comparing the types of aid offered in the aid package, not just the total amount of aid or scholarships offered.

Borrowing money, in moderation, is a viable means of financing a college education. It is economically justified to borrow for investment expenditures—a house for instance. A college education is also an investment. Its benefits are enjoyed long after the consumption of formal education ends. Just as you would spread out the costs of a house over a number of years, it is reasonable to spread out the payment of education costs over a number of years.

Examine personal resources and expenses. There may be relatively painless ways to cut expenses and free up more money for college costs.

Eligibility for need-based aid is not set in stone from year to year. If family circumstances change, as when a parent loses a job or becomes seriously ill, additional help may be available...ask!

If you receive need-based aid, you will have to reapply for assistance each year. Certain scholarships may also require you to reapply annually.

At most schools, the self-help portion of a student's need-based aid package (job and loan) will increase from one year to the next.

Saint Joseph's - College Counseling Policies

1. Students must complete and submit a Transcript Request Form for every college to which they apply and/or would like a transcript sent to on their behalf. Please note that if you would like for the College Counseling Office to complete a letter of recommendation, you must complete this section of the form. No transcripts or letters will be sent without this signed form. Please also note that SJCS will not release any unsealed letters of recommendation to students or parents. All letters will be sent directly to the college indicated on the Transcript Request Form.
2. Students must request Teacher Recommendation Letters in person using the Teacher Recommendation Form located in the College Counseling Office. Students need to let their college counselor know which teachers they have sent their requests to. SJCS will not release any unsealed letters to students or parents. All letters will be reviewed by your college counselor and sent directly to the colleges.
3. Meet with your college counselor to review your online college application prior to submitting it to the college/university; ideally at least two to four weeks prior to your submission date. The college counselor will submit your transcripts, all letters of recommendation (if applicable), and any other needed forms to your college/university. Please be aware that if you do not follow this process, you may not receive the maximum benefits of the College Counseling Program.
4. Seniors must turn in all completed transcript request forms to the College Counseling Office at least one month before they wish to have them sent, but no later than one month prior to the deadline set by the college. The College Counseling Office will submit the transcript together with the required supporting documents (recommendations, profile, senior schedule, etc.) in one complete packet. SJCS will send all application packets without charge. Please be aware that the student/family is responsible for all application fees required by the colleges.
5. It is the student's responsibility to notify the College Counseling Office if he or she needs additional information, such as new grades and/or updated transcripts, to be sent to a particular college as the year goes along.
6. Saint Joseph's is a member of the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) and supports NACAC's Statement of Principles of Good Practice. As such, students are highly encouraged to be forthcoming on their applications regarding disciplinary issues. It is important to note that colleges may disqualify or rescind an offer of acceptance to a student because of disciplinary issues and/or withholding information on the college application. Saint Joseph's will, when requested on the institution's application (counselor recommendation section), accurately report student conduct records (for ninth through twelfth grade) to colleges and notify colleges of any significant changes in the student's academic or personal status between the time of application and graduation. This includes, but is not limited to, serious disciplinary violations, honor violations, probation, suspensions, dismissal, or a significant drop in grades.

7. If the College Counseling Office receives an inquiry from a college regarding a disciplinary record of an applicant, the College Counseling Office will notify the student and recommend a course of action for the student to take. This may include writing a letter of explanation, sending additional letters of recommendation on the student's behalf, etc.
8. Saint Joseph's will provide colleges, to which a student applies, with whatever information is requested regarding that student.
9. Juniors and seniors are permitted to make college visits or attend early decision days and will be given excused absences for those days. Any college visits to be approved as excused absences must be submitted in advance to the Front Office (typically two (2) weeks prior to the visit) and documented after the visit with the College Visit Record Form. Second semester sophomores and all juniors are permitted no more than two (2) such absences and seniors are permitted no more than four (4) such absences during the academic year. Please note that Fall Break is an excellent time for making college visits. Siblings who go with the family for college visits will be required to use a family travel day.
10. Juniors and seniors are allowed to meet with college representatives as they visit our school. Sophomores are also allowed to meet with college representatives on a case by case basis (permission must be obtained from the College Counseling Office). Students are expected to monitor the College Rep Visit Lists (located in SCOIR and on the SJCS website) to see what and when college representatives are visiting SJCS. All students must register to attend a college rep session through SCOIR and obtain permission from their teachers at least one day prior to the visit. No student will be permitted to a college rep session without a signed pass from his or her teacher. Space will be limited, so students are strongly encouraged to sign up early. Students are expected to be on time for visits, sign in and go back to class immediately following the visit.

It is a privilege to attend a college rep visit, and, as such, it is up to the discretion of the administration, teachers, and/or the college counseling office to deny a student the opportunity to attend a college rep visit. Reasons for denials include, but may not be limited to the following: test or test preparation in a class during the rep visit, space limitations, behavior issues, poor academic performance, etc.

11. As a NACAC member, Saint Joseph's expects its students to honor and adhere to NACAC's Statement of Students' Rights and Responsibilities and Statement of Principles of Good Practice, especially with regard to the May 1st Candidates Reply Date and Early Decision Agreements.

Glossary of Terms

Testing:

ACT: American College Test (www.act.org). The American College Testing Program is a national testing service. The ACT contains four tests that measure abilities in the area of English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science, and yields a separate sub score in each area and one overall composite score. The score range is 1 (low) to 36 (high). The ACT test also has an optional Writing Section. Students should register for this section as most colleges require this section even if they are not using the score in the admissions process. This test is a measure of academic development which relies, in part, on the student's knowledge of the subject matter fields, reasoning abilities, and the ability to use both together. Some students perform better under this format, so we encourage students to try both the SAT and ACT test at least once. Most colleges accept ACT scores in lieu of SAT scores. Students should register online at ACT.org. Saint Joseph's school number for the ACT is 410902. Please go to www.actstudent.org for further details.

Advanced Placement (AP): Although not specifically used for college admission, Advanced Placement (AP) is a program in which college-level courses are offered in high schools and students who score high enough on AP exams may be able to qualify for college credit for, or exemption from, introductory college courses. AP Exams are administered in May at SJCS. For more information regarding AP Exams, please visit www.collegeboard.org.

College Board: Organization who administers the PSAT, SAT, and AP Tests. It also sponsors programs such as the Admissions Testing Program and the College Scholarship Service (CSS).

Fee Waiver: Exemptions for financially needy students to register for the ACT and/or SAT without the registration fee. Please note that some colleges will also offer Fee Waivers for application fees.

National Merit Scholarship Program: In the junior year, the PSAT is also used by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation to determine semifinalists for National Merit Scholarships.

National Merit Recognition Program: The College Board (who runs PSAT, SAT and AP tests) created the National Recognition Programs to recognize academic achievement among student populations that are often underrepresented at the university level. Students that are eligible for the NRP come from Hispanic, African-American and/or Indigenous backgrounds.

NMSQT: National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test Selection Score, the score used to determine those students who will be named semifinalists in the competition for National Merit Scholarships. The score will also determine those who will receive Letters of Commendation from the National Merit Scholarship

Corporation. This score is derived by the formula of Reading + Writing and Language + Math X 2 (scores from junior year PSAT) with a maximum score of 228.

PSAT: This test is given in the fall of the sophomore year and is repeated in the fall of the junior year for all students at Saint Joseph's. All Freshmen will be given the PSAT 8/9 (please see school calendar for test administration date). The test is designed to measure the student's verbal, writing, and mathematical abilities that have been developing over the years the student has been in school. The main purpose for the test is to give our students practice for the SAT and to gain familiarity with the format and types of questions asked on the SAT. It also is valuable because it gives sophomore and junior students an estimate of what they might expect to score on the SAT.

SAT I Reasoning Test: Referred to as the SAT Reasoning Test, the examination was completely redesigned in March 2016 and contains sections designed to assess verbal and mathematical aptitude. The two required sections each have a maximum score of 800. The new SAT has just two (instead of the previous three) required sections (Evidence-Based Reading & Writing and Math). The test takes three hours. The test is usually first taken in the spring of the junior year and is repeated again at the end of the junior year and/or in the senior year. The test is usually repeated because most students tend to have higher scores the second time they take this test. The two required sections have a maximum score of 800 each. Saint Joseph's school number for the SAT is 410902. Please visit www.collegeboard.org for further details.

Application:

Accept: When your request for admission has been approved. If you are accepted to more than one school, you will now have to decide where you will attend. Generally, you have until May 1 to send in a non-refundable enrollment deposit. If you are accepted under the Early Decision plan, you will need to retract all other applications at this time.

Candidate Notification Date: The date by which a college notifies a student of the admissions decision. The most common notification dates are April 1-15.

Candidate Reply Date: The date by which a student must notify the college of enrollment intentions. This date is May 1st for all colleges with the exception of Early Decision plans.

CEEB Code: College Entrance Examination Board. Saint Joseph's CEEB Code is 410902.

Common Application: The Common Application is an application form that is accepted by over 500 different colleges and universities in the United States. Some of these colleges/universities use the Common Application exclusively, while others will accept it, but also have their own application that students may use. Many of the colleges/universities that use the Common Application also require a

“supplement” which contains some institution-specific questions and which may also request an additional essay or short answer. The Common Application can only be submitted **online** to member colleges. The benefit of using the Common Application is that you only have to fill out one application form and perhaps only one essay and you can copy it and send it to a number of different colleges. It can be a tremendous time-saver. Please visit www.commonapp.org for more information and to access the application.

Deferral: Deferral is another tool that colleges may use when they are not ready to make a decision on a candidate at that time. Students are usually deferred until a later date and it gives the colleges time to review other applicants and/or gather more information on the student (new grades, tests, etc.).

Deny: When your request for admission has not been approved/accepted. This may be because your credentials do not meet the minimum requirements or (and more likely) because there were many other well-qualified candidates who applied for a few spaces. No matter the reason, you should not feel that you have failed.

Double Depositing: An unethical practice when a student sends in acceptance/enrollment deposits to more than one school that has accepted him or her. Not only does this damage SJCS’s reputation, but it hurts the future admissions chances of younger siblings. It also puts the student’s acceptance in jeopardy with both colleges. Please note that this is not the same thing as sending in a deposit to one school while staying on another school’s wait list nor does this include housing deposits.

Early Action: A plan of application used by some colleges or universities, Early Action follows basically the same calendar of application and notification as Early Decision but allows accepted candidates until May 1st to accept or decline the offer of admission. You must check with each college for their deadlines! Just as with Early Decision, under the Early Action plan, an applicant can be denied admission outright and not automatically deferred for later consideration. There is no appeal of this rejection. Please remember that each student must check with schools to see if it is possible to apply to more than one early action institution. Key advantage is that students can compare financial aid offers.

Early Decision: A plan under which a student applies to the college of his or her first choice early in the fall, usually by October 15th or November 1st. You will need to check with your individual school of choice for their deadline. A student can apply to only one school using the Early Decision plan. The student agrees by contract to enter that college if offered admission and to retract all other applications from other schools. Students are notified of decisions in December if they apply to a school that has only one Early Decision (ED) plan or one that has an ED I plan. ED II decisions are usually made in February or March. If deferred under the ED plan, a student is usually reconsidered for admission later in the year, but is released from any obligation to attend if accepted. Some colleges now include rejection letters in

their response to Early Decision applications and no reconsideration will be given. It is important to discuss this option with your College Counselor to determine which plan is more advisable to you.

GPA: Grade Point Average (formally CWA). Saint Joseph's Catholic School (SJCS) utilizes a 10-point grading scale to determine individual course grades which are reported on a 100 point scale. In recognition of the increased rigors of AP and Honors courses, an additional 7 points are averaged for each AP course and an additional 3 points are averaged for each Honors course into the cumulative weighted GPA and NOT into the final course grade for each class. These additional points are only added in the final computation in the GPA and are NOT reflected in each student's course grade.

We use the South Carolina Uniform Grading Scale (SCUGS) only for the state scholarships (Hope, Life, and Palmetto). It is important to note that many colleges will recalculate your grades into a 4.0 GPA and will only use your core academic classes (math, english, science, history/social science, and foreign language) when doing so.

Gap Year: Some students may elect to pursue a year participating in a worthwhile activity or special program between graduation from high school and the start of college. It is our recommendation that students apply to colleges and accept at one college and then request a deferral from that college. Some colleges will grant a deferral to accepted students who wish to pursue a Gap Year. Because each college is different, we recommend speaking with both the College Counselor and your college about this process.

Legacy: An applicant whose parents or grandparents are graduates of a particular college. Siblings, uncles and aunts do not usually count. Many colleges give academically qualified legacies an edge in admissions.

Liberal Arts College: Liberal Arts is a term that refers to the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. A liberal arts college is one that holds that students need to continue to learn to think and read critically, analyze problems, work toward solutions, and communicate clearly and concisely. The idea is that these skills will prepare the individual for a variety of professional fields.

NAIA Eligibility: National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics. The NAIA Eligibility Center is responsible for determining the eligibility of first-time NAIA student-athletes. Any student playing NAIA sports for the first time must be certified by the NAIA Eligibility Center, and all NAIA member schools are bound by the center's eligibility decisions. Please visit www.PlayNAIA.org to learn more.

NCAA Eligibility: National Collegiate Athletic Association. All athletes playing Division I or II sports in college must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center and fulfill certain curricular requirements. The NCAA Eligibility Center certifies a student-athlete's eligibility to play in college athletic programs. You

should do the online application (www.ncaa.org) and then let the College Counseling Office know so that your transcripts can be sent. You must also send official copies of your SAT scores to the NCAA.

Need-Blind Admissions: A policy in which the applicant's ability to pay for college does not affect the admissions decision. Fewer and fewer colleges continue to subscribe to this policy. Most have now become need-aware or need-sensitive.

Official Transcript: This is an official document from your high school that lists all of your high school level courses, your course credits, and GPA. At SJCS, transcripts are primarily generated for colleges as well as scholarship applications. The transcript must be signed, have the school seal, and be in a sealed envelope in order to be considered official. You must request your official high school transcript using the Transcript Request Form. Please note that you must have your official transcript sent to your colleges from any institutions that you took classes from during your high school years (this includes Dual Enrollment).

Rolling Admission: The student is notified of a college's action usually within four to eight weeks after all application materials are received by the Admissions Office. The student is under no obligation to attend, and has until May 1 to respond. Under a Rolling plan, the student's chances of admission are usually greater earlier in the cycle; as time goes on, the slots fill up and financial aid dollars are used up. Be sure to apply to certain select state schools and some private schools early (no later than November) so that they will have room in their accepted class.

Single-Choice Early Action/Restrictive Early Action: An admissions practice that is a variation of Early Action. This type of plan is used by certain highly selective schools and stipulates that the student may not apply under any other early program (or sometimes just Early Decision program) if applying Early Action to one of these schools.

SRAR (Self Reported Academic Record): Allows students to self-report courses and grades that have been completed or will be attempted (e.g., senior year courses in progress) for high school credit.

Supplemental Application: Additional application information a college may request that has not been included in the generic Common Application.

Wait List: Wait List is a tool that colleges use to neither deny nor accept students at that time—held without a decision until a later date. Directors of Admissions have no way of knowing how many people will take their acceptances. In order not to overshoot or undershoot their desired yield, colleges will maintain a Wait List for qualified students. A Wait List provides the college with a list of qualified students who continue to be interested.

Financial Aid:

Contributor: A Contributor is anyone who is required to provide information, consent and approval as well as sign an applicant's FAFSA Form.

CSS PROFILE: Also called Profile (or PROFILE). A financial aid form developed by the College Board and required by many colleges. Along with the FAFSA, it helps colleges determine the financial aid package for admitted students. Using this, a school calculates the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) or the amount that the family is to pay. CSS stands for College Scholarship Service.

EFC: Expected Family Contribution—previously found in the upper right hand corner of the SAR (Student Aid Report) but has been replaced with **SAI**.

FAFSA: Free Application for Federal Student Aid. This must be completed for all financial aid considerations that are need based and many that are merit based. This form should be done as soon as possible. The FAFSA is available beginning October 1 and will use Prior-Prior Year taxes. Failure to submit this form in a timely manner may result in much less financial aid that you are shown to need.

Federal Stafford Loan Program: Loans that are adjusted every year. No repayment is required while the student is in school.

Financial Aid Package: The final package of money for a student who has demonstrated need. It usually consists of loans, grants, campus jobs, etc. This package fills the gap between parent's contribution and the total cost of college.

Gapping: A practice whereby a college offers less financial aid than the student's calculated need.

Grant Money: Money that does not have to be repaid..."free money".

Loans: Money that has to be repaid.

Merit Aid: A financial grant based on academic qualifications or a special skill and talent that is unrelated to financial need. Institutional money given to help recruit a student to a college even though that student may not need financial help.

Need-Based Aid: Financial aid based on the college's assessment of the student's financial circumstances and the family's ability to pay.

Pell Grants: These federal grants are only awarded to students with high need. It is not money that needs to be repaid.

Preferential Packaging: A policy of awarding financial aid in which colleges offer the best aid to their most desired applicants.

PPY: Prior-Prior Year: PPY refers to a policy enabling students and families to file the FAFSA using tax information from two years ago. For example, a high school senior planning to enroll in college in the Fall 2025 would be able to file the FAFSA using taxes from 2023 (filed in 2024).

Profile: See CSS PROFILE.

SAI: Student Aid Index: Previously referred to as the **EFC**, the **SAI** is an eligibility index number that a college's or career school's financial aid office uses to determine how much federal student aid the student would receive if the student attended that school. This number results from the information that the student provides in their FAFSA Form.

SAR: Student Aid Report: Financial aid explanation of your potential benefits that is generally sent to you four to six weeks after you mail in your FAFSA forms or possibly sooner if you apply online.

Unsubsidized Stafford Loans: You do not need to show need for these loans. Interest on the loan must be paid while the student is in college. Repayment of the principle begins after graduation.

Work Study: These are on-campus jobs that require 15-20 hours a week. This can be part of your financial aid package. Please note that not all on-campus jobs are part of the Work Study program.

College Counseling Forms

Request for Letter of Recommendation

Name: _____

Date Submitted: _____

Classes Taught by Teacher: _____

Important Things to Remember

- Always **MAKE YOUR REQUEST IN PERSON** and remember that you are **ASKING** your teacher(s); **NOT TELLING** them.
 - Select a teacher that can write about **YOUR PERSONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS/ ACHIEVEMENTS, INTERACTIONS/PARTICIPATION and ACADEMIC MERITS in the context of their class.**
 - Please remember to write **THANK YOU NOTES** to your teachers.
1. List three words that describe you well and why. Make sure that each word is different so that you are presenting a varied and well-rounded view of yourself.
 2. What is the single most important thing that you want the colleges to know about you as a learner? Give an example of how you have shown this.
 3. Have you pursued any interests that relate to this subject outside of class? If yes, please explain (i.e. mentor, study group member, tutor, internships, clubs, projects, etc.). Have you received any Honors, Recognitions or Awards in this subject area?

4. Describe how you made a personal contribution to this class. Is there something specific to distinguish you from other students?
5. What are you most proud of from my class? Were there any papers/projects that you most enjoyed or found impactful? Explain.
6. Describe at least one obstacle you faced in this course (i.e. classroom situation, personal issues that affected your performance, etc.) and explain the actions you took to overcome the obstacle. (Did you ever come in for extra help? Did you have a tutor?). If there is more than one obstacle, please provide more than one example. Be sure to include what you have learned about yourself as a result of this challenge.
7. Please share anything else that might be helpful in preparing your recommendation. Example: Is there any additional information that you feel will help me understand your academic ability, potential, lower performance or circumstance (make sure to explain)? You may also want to include why you are asking this specific teacher to write a letter on your behalf.



Transcript Request Form

Student Name: _____ Date of Request _____ Class of: _____

| Name of College(s) Transcripts should be sent to: | College Counselor: | | Application Plan | Application Type | Test Optional |
|---|--------------------|-----------|-------------------|------------------|---------------|
| | Letter | Form | | | |
| | Yes or No | Yes or No | ED EA Reg/Rolling | CA Scoir College | Yes or No |
| | Yes or No | Yes or No | ED EA Reg/Rolling | CA Scoir College | Yes or No |
| | Yes or No | Yes or No | ED EA Reg/Rolling | CA Scoir College | Yes or No |

Additional Items:

D Letters of Recommendation from: _____

D Honors College(s): _____

D Early Decision Agreement

___ If you are including test scores with your application, it is your responsibility to know if your college(s) requires official scores (meaning sent directly from the applicable institution to the college) or if they will accept self-reported scores. You are responsible for requesting and sending all official test scores and acknowledge that SJCS is not able to send official test scores.

___ Please note that all Letters of Recommendation will be sent directly to the colleges indicated and will not be shown to the student/parent. By signing below you are acknowledging your understanding of this and agree to waive your rights to review these letters. All requests for Teacher Letters of Recommendations must be made directly to the teachers.

___ Transcript Request Forms MUST be submitted directly to the College Counseling Office via hand delivery/in-person meeting. No transcripts will be sent without this form.

___ Please allow four weeks for processing. All requests should be made at least 30 days prior to your college's deadline.

___ By signing this form I acknowledge that I have reviewed and approved my transcript. In addition I acknowledge that I am aware of Saint Joseph's policy on disclosing discipline history.

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

For College Counseling Use:

| | | | |
|------------------------|---|--|--|
| Date Request Received: | If Applicable: College not in Applying Column & Date Email Sent to Student: | Date Application Acknowledgment Completed: | Date Sent & Initials of staff member:: |
| | | | |