Junior Parent College Information Night



Who Am I?

- 6 years working in college housing
- 9 years working in college admissions
- 6th year as College Counselor at St. Joe's

- Campuses I've worked at:
  - University of Central Florida
  - University of North Florida
  - University at Buffalo
  - Buffalo State University

Junior Year Timeline

- October & November
  - PSAT was taken October 16 (scores should be released in November)
  - Scores will be reviewed with students in November in Religion classes
  - College search & application process will be reviewed at this time
  - Individual meeting with school counselor for preliminary college discussions ongoing
- December – April
  - Individual college meetings with each student
- February & Easter breaks, Summer
  - Take your son(s) to visit colleges
- May & June
  - Start college essay in English class
  - Start asking teachers & counselor for letters of recommendation
  - Create and begin Common Application

Find the right fit

- Academic
- Financial
- Physical
- Social

What to look for in a college

- Location
- Location setting
- Size
- Academic programs
- Cost
- Athletics
- Student life
- Campus Safety
- Student demographics
- Admissions requirements

Schools to consider

- Reach school
- Target school
- Likely school
- Local school
  - Should be a target or likely school

College Research Resources



- SCOIR
- College Navigator
- College Board
  - Big Future
- SUNY
- Cappex/Niche/Chegg*

SCOIR

- Research colleges & careers
- Manage college lists
- Register for college visits at SJCI
- We are assigning them the PrinciplesYou Assessment in Scoir
  - In-depth career assessment that can only be taken once and it takes about 30 minutes to complete
    - We are asking the students to have it completed by the end of first semester
- Request letters of recommendation (end of Junior year)

Visit!

- If your son is unsure, start local
  - Large suburban (UB), small urban (Canisius, D'Youville), medium-sized urban (Buff State), small-medium sized rural (Fredonia, St. Bonaventure), small suburban (Daemen), college town (Geneseo, Brockport)
- Take a campus tour, attend open house, attend virtual presentations
- St. Joe's will organize tours this spring and summer for students
- Colleges will be visiting St. Joe's this fall & spring (for students only)
- Buffalo National College Fair – March 17 - 18, 2027

Questions to ask

- Academic support, counseling, safety, housing, social opportunities, class size, who teaches the classes, student demographics, application details and timelines, etc.
- Find out what is important to you and your son and ask at every visit so you can compare schools
- Questions for admissions staff vs. student tour guides
  - Professionals – questions that involve facts or data
  - Student tour guides – opinions and experiences
- Read the student newspaper!

What is included in the application

- Application – demographic information, activities
- Transcript or self-reported grades
- SAT/ACT scores*
- Personal Essay
- Letter(s) of recommendation
- Supplemental Information (depends on college and/or major)
  - Supplemental essays
  - Resume
  - Portfolio/Audition

What are colleges looking at?

- GPA
- Academic rigor
  - Including senior year!
  - Specific curriculum for certain majors
- Test scores (maybe)
- Extracurricular activities
- Letters of recommendation
- Personal essay
- Supplemental essays
- Demonstrated interest

GPA & Test Scores

- Colleges report a range of scores known as “middle 50%”
  - 25% of accepted students have higher than the range, and 25% have lower than the range
- For test optional schools – if a student is at the lower 25th or higher, we recommend submitting scores

SAT/ACT exams

- SAT vs. ACT
- Students are encouraged to take an SAT or ACT exam spring of junior year
- Most colleges superscore tests, so submit all scores
- Prep course information can be found on the SJCI Counseling website soon!
  - Test Preps Buffalo offers classes at SJCI
  - Courses will be offered for the March & May SAT

Test-Optional/Test-Blind

- Many schools are test-optional or test blind, but not all
  - MIT, Purdue, Ohio State, all Florida public colleges, UT Knoxville, UGA, Auburn, Georgetown, University of Miami, Notre Dame, Alabama, LSU, all Ivys, will require test scores next year
  - This is not a full list – just many of the popular schools for St. Joe's students
- Many schools still have not decided for next year
- If a school says they are test optional, they mean it
  - If they don't, they'll usually say they are "test preferred"
  - You can also ask what percentage of their accepted students submitted a test score
- www.fairtest.org has the most up to date listing
- Other terms you may see
  - Test Blind
  - Test Flexible
  - Do no harm

Programs to apply into

- Honors
  - Benefits include priority course registration, smaller classes, access to faculty & research, scholarhips
  - Acceptance varies by school – some have separate applications, some are invite only
- EOP/HEOP
  - For students who may be slightly below the academic requirements for traditional admissions, but also show a strong financial need
  - NYS colleges only
  - EOP – SUNY
  - HEOP – Private colleges

Choosing a major

- Students don’t HAVE to choose a major right now
  - 80% of college students change their major at least once
  - The most common major for college freshmen is “Undeclared”
- Career assessments are available in SCOIR
- Special majors/individualized studies/create your own
- All colleges have a Career Services office to help with choosing or changing a major

Paying for College

- Net Price Calculator
- Scholarship information will be provided during Senior year
- Financial Aid night next September
- Colleges/federal government will use your 2026 taxes for financial aid purposes

College Rankings

- Don’t put too much weight into the rankings!
- Just because a school is “ranked” high does not mean it is the right fit for your son
- Rankings are arbitrary and easily manipulated
- Read the fine print

Using a Private College Counselor

- This is NOT something we recommend
- They don’t know our school, don’t have relationships with colleges, and often give inaccurate advice
- Our English teachers help significantly with college essays
- This includes “financial aid counselors” & NCSA

Athletics

- NCAA
  - Division I, II, III all have different recruitment processes
- Club
- NCAA Night – February 24, 2027
  - More information coming this winter
- NCAA Eligibility Center
  - Portal through NCAA for students interested in Division I or II
  - www.eligibilitycenter.org
  - $120 registration fee

Senior year timeline

- August 1 – Applications open
- September
  - Transcript review
  - Presentations to seniors, parent presentation
- September – November
  - Individual college meetings with each senior
  - College visits to St. Joe's
  - Work on and complete applications
- October 1 – FAFSA available
  - FREE Application for Federal Student Aid
- May 1st – National Decision Deadline
  - Students must commit to one school by May 1st

Alternatives to College

- Military
  - Contact the local recruiter for the branch he is interested in
  - Check out the physical and health requirements
  - Application process for the Academies starts much earlier and is much more involved than traditional college applications
- Trade School
  - Erie 1 BOCES
  - Apprenticeship Programs
  - Local colleges like Alfred State or SUNY Erie offer programs

Advice from Admissions Professionals

- Let the student take the lead on this process
  - Don’t pretend to be the student, either!
- Essays should be genuine
- Many schools track demonstrated interest – visits, phone calls, webinars, emails, etc., and may be used in the admissions process
- Students need to be careful on their social media
  - Scholarships and acceptances have been rescinded based on social media posts


Questions?