

College Counseling Newsletter

B O S T O N U N I V E R S I T Y A C A D E M Y

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A new College Counseling
Newsletter will be posted
every two weeks

T H E P S A T

I M P O R T A N T D A T E S

- Sept. 8 — Deadline to register for Oct. 7 College Board tests
- September 9—ACT
- Week of Sept. 11 — College Representatives begin to visit BUA to meet with interested seniors
- Sept. 11 — Senior Kick-Off/Back-to-School Night
- September 22 — Deadline for seniors to submit final version of college essay
- October 4 — Deadline for seniors to submit a **draft** of Common Application + one set of Member School questions

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The Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) will be offered the morning of Sat., Oct. 14 at BUA. *All juniors are expected to take the test*; it is optional for sophomores.

The PSAT is a “practice” version of the SAT. Unlike the SAT (which is often submitted as part of the college application process), the PSAT scores are not seen by colleges, so the test allows students to become familiar with the format without any lasting impact on their college applications.

The PSAT is not a mirror of the SAT, though the content and questions are similar. Perhaps the single biggest difference between the two is that the PSAT does not include a handwritten essay. The two sec-

tions of the test include “Evidence-Based Reading and Writing” and “Math”. Each section is scored out of 760 possible points.

The PSAT is aligned with the ‘re-designed SAT that first premiered in March 2016. For more information on the PSAT, visit [the College Board web-site](#). The PSAT takes approximately 3 hours and 45 minutes.

Test prep is generally discouraged for the PSAT, but practice booklets are provided to students who interested in developing a sense of the types of questions that may be asked.

A letter detailing the registration process for the PSAT (which happens through BUA), what materials to bring to the

test, and what to expect on test day will soon be sent to the parents of all BUA sophomores and juniors. Students will need to register for the PSAT by **Monday, September 20**. The cost is \$20; checks should be made out to [Boston University Academy](#).

Students who live a long distance from the Academy may be able to sit for the PSAT at a testing site closer to home. Details are included in the aforementioned letter.

PSAT scores usually arrive in early December. We will meet with each student to review the scores. Students will also receive guidance about test preparation/planning in advance of the March SAT (usually taken in Junior year).

T I M E L I N E S A N D D E A D L I N E S

The College Counseling Office observes a timeline (including deadlines) through which most/all Academy students will engage with the college search and application processes. In general, students will sit for the PSAT and/or Subject Tests as appropriate. Ninth, tenth and eleventh

graders may choose to sit for Subject Tests in May or June. All students should take the PSAT in October of their junior year and may opt to take it in their 10th grade year, as well. Students typically take the SAT in the spring of Junior year for the first time, and some may opt for the ACT. Beginning in

January of junior year, we will work with the class as a whole (and students/families individually) to navigate each student’s college search and application process. Along the way, please do connect with us with any questions. We want to make the process as informed and sane as we can.

COLLEGE ESSAYS

All seniors were asked to submit at least a solid draft of their college essay to the College Counseling Office by the morning of September 5.

The final version of the essay (i.e. the version that is ready to submit to colleges) is due to us by September 22. For most students, that means they will submit 4-8 drafts of their essays to us for review between now and then.

While the occasional student may finish up the essay in 2 or 3 drafts, most will need to volley their essays back and forth with us for our feedback and guidance.

Between Jill and Ellen, tens of thousands of college essays have been read in the context of making admission decisions; we have a clear sense of what works well and what does not!

We also encourage students to stop in and talk with us about their college essays over the next few weeks.

In about two weeks, we will review with seniors how to approach writing short-answer and supplemental college essay questions that may be required, but we want them all to wrap up work on their main essays before switching gears.

College Rep visits
to BUA

Seniors and their parents can log on to Naviance to see the most up-to-date list of college representatives that are visiting BUA this fall. This list will likely be evolving well into early November.

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COLLEGE INTERVIEWS

We have shared this many times, but it bears repeating—college interviews can be an important piece of the admission process. Some colleges ask students to interview BEFORE November of the senior year. Others do not offer interviews until AFTER a student has applied in November or January. Some colleges do not offer inter-

views at all. Seniors are expected to know which colleges on their list fall into which of these categories and to make their requests accordingly. Sometimes, students are able to meet with an alumni interviewer in the Boston area, but if the college is located within a few hours drive of Boston, students are generally expected to inter-

view on the college's campus. Some schools interpret a lack of an interview, even if it is "optional," as a lack of interest in their college. Seniors are encouraged to have a "mock interview" with one of us soon if they want to practice interviewing skills ahead of time if they haven't yet done so.

COLLEGE REP VISITS

Each fall, we host 65 to 80 college admission officers from a wide array of colleges and universities. Often these visitors serve as the application reader for our students.

Visits are open to BUA juniors and seniors. **Students may only attend if they do not have an academic commitment.** We encourage seniors

to notify us if they have a class conflict that prevents them from attending a session of interest; we may advise that s/he write an email to the representative, or write a note to be delivered by us, or to return to our office immediately after class to meet with the representative briefly, if possible.

Seniors can access the visit

schedule in Naviance. Signs will be posted outside of the College Counseling Office each Friday with the schedule for the following week.

Why participate? These visits are a great way to find out more about a college AS WELL AS to demonstrate interest in the college or university!

Filling out
college applications

We will help students complete their college applications this fall to ensure that their activities, backgrounds, and essays are all as robust and accurate as they can be. This process will begin in September and conclude in time for any early application deadlines.

JUNIOR MEETING

Each fall, the Academy holds regular "Junior Meetings".

All juniors are expected to attend these mandatory, informative meetings to collectively talk about timely components of the junior year experience. This fall, these Junior Meetings will typically meet during the 'Class Meeting' block on Tuesdays at 9am. Topics will include: University transitions, making use of Uni-

versity resources, preparing for the PSAT test day, effectively working with their new advisors, registering for Spring courses, how best to manage their hybrid University/Academy schedule, etc.

Ms. Evans will lead the meetings, and relevant "guest speakers" will be brought in to meet with the group. This is part of the Academy's ongoing efforts to ensure a

seamless transition to the University and to support each student in their academic and social experience here.

In the second semester, Ms. Atkinson joins Ms. Evans in leading the Junior meetings. In the second half of the year, the focus will be on relevant and timely pieces of the college search and application process, as well as preparation for the senior year.

"Free" Time

One of the biggest differences between sophomore and junior years at the Academy is the emergence of more "free" time in a student's schedule. Depending on individual schedules, 'in-class' time for juniors (with more homework!) is often less than that of sophomores, and this usually equates to more unstructured time.

We will work with juniors to help them develop strong time management skills. This proves to be a good training ground for University study when students might only have 12-15 hours of scheduled class time each week. As high school students, though, BUAsers are still learning how to most productively use out-of-class time.

Be sure to talk to your child about how he/she uses unstructured time.

THE COLLEGE SEARCH PROCESS

The college search and application process begins formally in January of the junior year. At that point, we will begin weekly college-based meetings, give students access to a computer program called Naviance which assists in their college search process, and begin family meetings.

Juniors should sit for the PSAT on Saturday, Oct 14 and for the SAT in March. No student

should take the SAT before March of junior year, except in rare situations; we are happy to speak with students/families with questions about standardized test planning.

We will continue to post the College Admissions Guidebook on the BUA website and meet with current junior parents in January/February.

Many families begin visiting a few college campuses during

spring break of junior year, though next summer is perhaps the most common time to visit college campuses; trust us, there is plenty of time.

Your child's interests, talents, and personality will continue to grow over the next few months, and finding appropriate college matches is usually a more fruitful process later this year than it would be this fall. And we're excited to help you navigate the process.

NEW ADVISORS

The Academy's advising program pairs students with one advisor for grades 9 & 10 and with a new advisor in grades 11 & 12. This follows the role that the academic experience takes at BUA where students transition into University coursework in the junior year.

Juniors are encouraged to get to know their new advisors, seek them out throughout the

year as an adult support, and keep them apprised of academic and extra-curricular involvement.

Last year, we made some key changes to the Advising Program. More frequent advising meetings are required in grades 9 and 10, and juniors and seniors will meet with their advisor at least once per week. Advisors are a source of sup-

port and information, and students should use them accordingly!

While year-long junior meetings ensure that all students will have regular support, individual advising meetings are useful check-ins between advisor and advisee as well as an important part of finding success at the Academy.

PSAT Registration

Junior and Sophomore parents:

Please refer to the recently sent email/letter which contains important information about registering your child for the October 14 PSAT. Registration costs \$20 and must be submitted by September 18.

The test will take place in BU's Morse Auditorium (602 Commonwealth Avenue).

SOPHOMORE PARENTS

Sophomore year can be a lot of fun! Returning students have usually found their groove, have a sense of what to expect on a daily basis, and have made important connections with their classmates and our faculty. Each year, we typically have new sophomores join the class, so the year brings with it some new energy, new personalities, and new experiences.

Sophomore year also entails a lot of work. Students are expected to build upon the good study habits they developed last year, continue making use of Academic block to work with teachers on difficult classroom topics, seek out their advisors for guidance, and stay invested in their work. At the same time, it's a fine year to continue club involvement, or involve oneself in new activities and clubs—things that may have seemed a little overwhelming or scary to join freshman year.

We hope this is a great year for your child!

T H E P S A T

Sophomores have the opportunity to take the PSAT on Saturday, October 14. While all juniors are expected to sit for the test, it is optional for sophomores. Each year, about half of the sophomore class opts to take the test. PSAT scores are never seen by colleges, and sophomores are not eligible for the National Merit competition, so taking the test is “low-risk” because there are no lasting consequences. Sophomores generally find that taking the PSAT helps them develop a better sense of the type of college admissions testing they will encounter as they begin to think about the SAT and/or the ACT.

Scores will be available through the College Office in early December, and at that time, we will meet with every sophomore who took the test to discuss their scores and how to approach the junior year PSAT. Details about PSAT registration will be sent to parents of all sophomores.

W E L C O M E T O B O S T O N U N I V E R S I T Y A C A D E M Y

If you're the parent of a new student, welcome! College is a long way off for your child, but we want to make sure you are informed and familiar with aspects of the college search and application process and able to see how the process unfolds for BUA students. As such, we publish 14 issues of the *The College Counseling Newsletter* during the academic year.

You'll see that only a small section of the newsletter is dedicated to freshman parents. We begin formally working with students on the college search process midway through junior year. But there will be a few timely considerations for freshman and sophomore parents as the year unfolds such as (College Board) Subject Tests, the PSAT, course selection (when appropriate), and the importance of grades/achievement and extra-curricular activities. These are all

FRESHMAN PARENTS

topics that play into the college search/application process, and all Academy families should at least have these things in the back of their minds this year. But the nitty gritty of the college search (i.e. identifying specific colleges/programs) comes much later.

This newsletter will be updated every two to three weeks, and you are welcome to read any section if you want a heads up about what to expect in the future.

BUA has two full-time college counselors, which means a generous amount of individual attention can be given to each student. Both counselors have spent many years in college admissions and college counseling and are equipped to help you and your child navigate the college admissions process.

Jill is a graduate of the University of Georgia. She has worked in BU's Enrollment/Student Affairs Division, in the Kenyon College Office of Admissions, and as a college counselor at

Choate Rosemary Hall in Connecticut.

Ellen is an alum of Bates College and spent many years in the Boston University admission office before joining the Academy in 2001. She also serves as Liaison to the University.

We know what highly selective colleges and universities are looking for from applicants and how to help BU Academy students find their voice in this process.

We also help students identify University courses of interest and support them through several pieces of the transition process from the Academy to the University. As such, we will begin working with students about non-college matters late in the sophomore year. We have an “open office”, so we welcome you to call, email or schedule an appointment with one of us at any time over the next few years.

We're glad that your child will be at BUA this year, and are excited to get to know all the new families!