

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

Jill Atkinson, Director of College Counseling
617.353.9031 jillatk@bu.edu

Ellen Evans, Assistant Director of College Counseling
617.358.2595 erevans@bu.edu

A new College Counseling
Newsletter will be posted
every two weeks

P A R E N T S D A Y – O C T O B E R 2 5

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

- November 1—The most common EA/ED application deadline
- November 4—SAT and Subject Test Date (only date when Language with Listening Subject Tests offered)
- November 15—Another common EA/ED application deadline
- November 13—Seniors finalize college lists with 10 or fewer colleges
- December 2—SAT and Subject Test Date

I N S I D E T H I S I S S U E :

Senior Parent Section
Page 2

Junior Parent Section
Page 3

Sophomore/Freshman Parent Section
Page 4

Wednesday, October 25th is Parents Day at BUA! In the morning, parents of underclass students will have the opportunity to sit in on shortened Academy classes to get a feel for the classroom experience of their students. Because seniors take most/all of their classes at the University, parents may not be able to attend all of their senior students' classes.

Parents are also able to join their child and the student's advisor for a group lunch—an opportunity for informal dialogue and conversation.

You are also invited to meet with your student's BUA advisor for a one-on-one conversation about your child. You will need to schedule that appointment beforehand; be on the

lookout for an email soon with access to a Google schedule that will allow you to sign-up for an appointments with your child's advisor. That email will also include a schedule of the day's activities.

You are welcome to use the advisor meetings as a chance to ask questions about the BUA program/curriculum/culture, or offer any information about your child that you think maybe useful for the advisor to know. You will not be meeting with each of your child's teachers individually.

On Friday, October 20th at Noon, mid-term grades for BUA courses will be made available in PORTA, along with teacher comments. Please review these ahead of Parents Day as your conversation with your

child's advisor may center around those grade reports. Most classes at BUA are year-long courses, and the only grades that post to a student's transcript (and then sent to colleges) for these courses are the final end-of-year grades. Consider mid-term grades to be a "check-in" that leaves no permanent mark on college applications. Semester grades will be made available in early January, following final exams in December.

Our advisory and class meeting structure means that your child has several chances each week to connect with adults in the BUA community above and beyond their classroom teachers, so these are good opportunities to seek help, as needed.

R E G I S T R A T I O N F O R S P R I N G 2 0 1 8

Last week, we met with students to discuss course options for Spring 2018! Students received the course request forms and pertinent information via email.

Juniors may have more flexibility in second semester than first; many will continue in

their language and Biology sequence, while others may expand their coursework into new areas. We will advise based on student interest, and with some contextual information for how colleges will review course selection.

Seniors will pick four new

courses, one of which must satisfy their English requirement. The others (except senior thesis, and Calculus, if needed) are of the student's choosing. We want students to conclude their time with us in classes that will excite them, and keep their interest, even as spring weather beckons!

S U P P L E M E N T A L E S S A Y S

In addition to non-Common Application applications, seniors should be working on “supplemental” essays for colleges. These are additional, school-specific essays and short answers that many colleges require, above and beyond the main college essay. We have instructed seniors how to approach these essays: making a list of all the supplemental essays

they may have to write, and writing engaging, descriptive college-specific replies to the prompts.

Most of our students submit an application on/before November 1; to that end, students must be writing **now**, submitting work to us for review, and quickly making revisions and edits, as needed. Students who wait until late October to share

essays with us will find our response time slowed and run the risk of submitting a weaker application than if they had planned well and allowed appropriate time!

These essays are incredibly important; admission officers see them as more raw and personal than the main essay and hope to see interesting, well-written responses, especially from BUA students.

Fall Test Dates for Seniors

November 4

SAT
SAT Subject Tests
(only month Languages w/Listening offered)

December 2

SAT, SAT Subject Tests offered

December 9

ACT

College Counseling Newsletter

E A R L Y A C T I O N & E A R L Y D E C I S I O N

Most BUA students apply somewhere Early Action. Many of our students considering UMass-Amherst, Northeastern, MIT, the University of Chicago, Boston College or Case Western Reserve University should apply via this non-binding process. Rarely do we suggest that a student wait until Regular Decision at these particular colleges,

unless they are waiting on improved scores/grades from the fall, or if they are applying to one of the rare colleges through an Early Action program that prohibits other Early applications (for example: Yale, Princeton, Harvard, Stanford, Notre Dame). Confused? Contact us and we can talk you through this particular quirk in the process.

Early Decision is much less common for BUA students, but tends to be pursued by 25% or less of our senior class each year. In most cases, students can apply ED to one school, and EA to other schools. If your child is unsure about how to approach EA or ED options, please encourage them to speak with us soon. We are here to help!

F I N A N C I A L A I D & E A R L Y A P P L I C A T I O N S

There are two forms colleges use to determine need-based financial aid: the FAFSA and the CSS/Profile.

We have instructed seniors that they must determine which forms each college needs, and submit them by all stated deadlines. (This information is easily found on the college's admission and/

or financial aid webpage.)

To receive full consideration for financial aid for which a student is eligible, it is critical that students NOT miss a financial aid deadline. With the FAFSA now factoring in the last two complete years of tax information, an official offer of financial aid (rather than an estimate) should

arrive with a student's letter of acceptance (or shortly thereafter).

Though submission of the FAFSA is free, submitting the CSS/Profile costs \$25 for the first college, and \$16 for each additional college. Fee waivers are available to those who qualify.

College Rep visits to BUA

Be sure to visit Naviance (<http://connection.naviance.com/buacademy>) to see the college representatives who are visiting BUA this fall.

College rep visits will conclude by early to mid-November.

UNIVERSITY FEEDBACK

Each semester, Ellen Evans (as University Liaison) reaches out regularly to the BU faculty members who teach our students. She requests information about how our students are doing in their courses—attendance records, performance on tests and quizzes, and engagement with the class. Historically, about 80% of BU professors respond to her requests, and we have a particularly close working rela-

tionship with the Biology instructors. We generally hear very good news from professors. Occasionally, we hear high praise from professors who were not aware they had a high school student in their classroom!

On the occasion that we receive worrisome news, the student's BUA advisor reaches out the student (and, if necessary, the parent) to ask

for clarification. In all cases, it is the student's responsibility to keep his or her BUA advisor apprised of poor performances on test/quizzes, missed homework, and absences.

The transition to University courses comes with new responsibilities and expectations. If we all work together to support our students, they are more likely to find success in BU courses.

PSAT

All BUA juniors were strongly encouraged to sit for the PSAT on Saturday, October 14.

The PSAT is a practice version of the SAT. It is not a mirror image, however. The biggest difference is that the SAT has a written essay section, while the PSAT "Writing" section is multiple choice.

The PSAT will run from 8am until about 11:30am in BU's Morse Auditorium (602 Com-

monwealth Avenue) for those registered to take it at BUA.

Juniors who take the PSAT are typically eligible for consideration in the National Merit Scholarship Competition. Semi-finalists are announced in September 2018.

Otherwise, the PSAT has no bearing on a student's college process. They are not seen or requested by colleges. Practice booklets were distributed

to those students who are registered to take the test.

The PSAT is modestly predictive of SAT scores, but we have seen some students perform exceptionally well on the PSAT, and less well on the SAT, and vice versa.

Mostly, the PSAT is a chance for students to engage with SAT-style standardized testing, and boost their test-taking confidence and acumen.

LEADERSHIP

There is often a lot of buzz in the junior class about the role that "leadership" plays in the college application process. True, colleges are looking at leadership and extra-curricular involvement. But not all students can or should seek leadership positions, especially in the traditional sense.

Leadership is a multi-dimensional term. It can refer

to serving as the president of a club, as much as it can refer to facilitating a class discussion on a certain text, or modeling for underclassmen what it means to be a happy and confident student. It can be serving as captain of a sports team as much as tutoring a classmate in math or baby-sitting a younger sibling.

Colleges are generous with

how they define leadership, and we hope your child is as well. Colleges do also look for "members" - students who will be involved in the clubs that others are leading. If everyone is a leader—there may only be a bunch of one-person clubs!

Encourage your child to talk with us about how this might play out for him or her.

SAT: March 10, 2018

Most every BUA student takes the SAT for the first time in March of the junior year, though students going to Japan on the BUA Spring Break trip should speak with us about alternate testing plans. For those who cannot take the March test, May or June may be the next best options, leaving the other for Subject Tests, if needed. Many students who have taken the test before March have typically underperformed.

College admission officers become concerned if students take the SAT more than 3 times during high school. To limit that, we expect students to take the test in March, and if needed, one more time in late spring, or in the fall of senior year.

Most BUA students take the SAT no more than two times.

Spring 2018 Test Dates for Juniors

SAT ONLY (No Subject Tests)
March 10*

SAT and Subject Tests
May 5 & June 2

ACT
February 10, April 14 &
June 9

***We strongly recommend that BUA juniors take the SAT for the first time in March**

SOPHOMORE PARENTS

Standardized Testing is an important part of the college application process. At BUA, we advise students to sit for at least two Subject Tests by the end of junior year (most will have taken 2-4 by that point, rarely more). In addition, we advise all BUA students to sit for the SAT for the first time in March of their junior year or perhaps the ACT in April. The PSAT in sophomore year (when it's optional) and junior year (when all students should take it) is meant to be preparation for the SAT—a score that will never be seen by colleges and is therefore “safe.” Once a student sits for an **official** College Board test—an SAT or Subject Test they register for through College Board—it is eligible to be seen by colleges. We actively discourage students from taking lots of standardized tests, as repeated test sessions can seem worrisome to colleges and cause the student distress. Please be in touch with us with any questions about how colleges look at standardized testing.

P S A T

Many sophomores will sit for tomorrow's PSAT (Saturday, October 14). The test materials are returned to the College Board for scoring immediately following the test. In December/January, scores will be available for each student who sat for the test. At that point, we will invite students in to the College Counseling Office to meet with us in small groups to spend a few minutes, at group-level, discussing how to decipher the score report. We will help each student access their scores, and we will be available to answer any specific questions a student has. The score report includes question-by-question answer keys and guidance—and study tips for the SAT designed specifically for each test-taker. It is worth a reminder: colleges do not see PSAT results, therefore the score reports should be treated as a learning tool for future standardized testing opportunities.

INVOLVEMENT OUTSIDE OF CLASS

We encourage you to talk with your child about getting involved in activities outside of class. Now that we are halfway through the fall semester, we hope first-year students have a better sense of how to manage our rigorous academic expectations, have built some strong friendships, and are feeling more confident in their ability to handle high school responsibilities.

With these important foundations in place, it's time for students to get involved—if they haven't already! BUA is a really safe space in which to try out different activities, and develop new interests. Students who may know nothing of Model United Nations or Robotics can get involved, and try their hand at building a robot, or figuring out how the French government would think about an important political issue. Perhaps your child is intrigued by theater, or wants

FRESHMAN PARENTS

to join the Performing Arts Outing Club for a trip to a play or musical in the Boston area, or wants to contribute to the Yearbook or submit a short story or poem to the Lit Mag—these are all wonderful things to sample while at the Academy.

We do ask students to 'commit' to activities, in that we want students to understand that others may be relying on their consistent investment in an activity for the duration of a season, semester or school year. That said, a one-season commitment doesn't bind a student to an activity for all four years.

Our experience has been that as students add a reasonable number of activities to their plate, they learn strong time management skills, develop passions and new friendships, and enjoy their time at BUA a bit more. Most of our students are involved in 2-5 activities outside of class over the course of the year—anything from sports to performing arts to

creative writing to science-related activities, etc.

When it is time to apply to college, students will be asked to identify the activities they have participated in between 9th and 12th grades, the number of hours per week and weeks per year they were involved, any leadership roles they held or honors they received as a result of their participation, and an expression of interest in whether they might want to continue that activity in college.

Colleges use this information to determine what kind of citizen the student has been in their high school community, and what kind of contributor he or she may be in college. This is especially important at residential colleges which rely on student involvement in order to maintain a robust student life experience.

So encourage your child to explore the many activities available at BUA, and to try out a few activities this year.