

# 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

## W H Y D E C E M B E R 1 1 I S S I G N I F I C A N T . . .

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

- November 13—Date by which seniors finalize their college lists with balance
- December 11—Date by which all seniors must completely finish all applications
- December 1—Priority application deadline for certain BU scholarships
- December 2—SAT and Subject Test Date
- November 20 through November 24—BUA closed for Thanksgiving Break

### 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

December 11th is the date by which all seniors are expected to complete all college applications. "Complete" means that students will have *finished* all applications, all essays, all short answers, and all materials, and have them ready to submit to colleges regardless of the outcome of any Early Action or Early Decision applications.

We have chosen December 11th as a final deadline for a few reasons:

1. It precedes BUA and BU finals. We don't want students to feel pressure to work on college applications *and* study for finals simultaneously.
2. It precedes the arrival of ED and EA news and most

Regular Decision deadlines. While we hope that all of our students are admitted to their EA or ED schools, history suggests this will not be the case for all students. We would rather students proactively complete applications now than rush to complete them after receiving not so great news.

3. It precedes our departure for winter break. In addition to our communications with colleges to advocate for our EA/ED applicants, we will be working with the sophomores and juniors after the release of PSAT scores. Then, of course, BUA closes for winter break at

3:30pm on December 21. We expect to have lots of individual meetings about essays and applications along the way, and we are less available after December 11... and just not here after December 21.

4. We want students to have a **well-deserved** and **relaxing** winter break!!!

We expect to see all essays very soon and no 'brand new' essays after December 4. The goal is for students to keep working on essay drafts and applications until they are done, taking full advantage of us as resources and advocates along the way. We are here to help, but students need to prioritize work on their applications... well before December 11!

## N E T P R I C E C A L C U L A T O R

All US colleges and universities are required by the federal government to post a 'net price calculator' on their websites. The NPC is meant to help families understand the actual cost of attendance of each college, once need-based (and merit-based, if applicable) financial aid is factored

into the cost. For many families, the published sticker price of a college is not the actual cost.

Even if you enter the same data to similarly priced colleges, you may find very different 'net prices' due to the quality/specificity of the calculator.

Information received from the calculator is only as accurate as the estimates you provide and is not an **offer** of financial aid. If aid is of importance to your family, it is critical to ensure all deadlines are met for the CSS Profile, FAFSA and any school-specific forms, as required.

## COLLEGE LISTS

Seniors are to have their 'final' college list in Naviance—in the 'active/colleges I'm applying to' section—by November 13th. We have discussed with seniors why this date is important, and what a balanced, appropriate "final" list should look like.

We feel very strongly that students must conclude their college 'search' process in order to focus on finishing college applications. Once

students know with certainty where they are applying, they can fully shift their attention to crafting compelling school-specific essays.

Students accepted via an ED (binding) decision to a college will soon be done with their application process.

And we understand if a student who is admitted to an EA school shrinks their college list; we applaud this! However, we expect that

students NOT admitted EA/ED will not add to their lists. Rather, they should think of their final lists as 'Plan B', or the places they will apply *if* they are not admitted to an ED or EA school and use their time between now and December 11th to thoughtfully complete those applications.

Be sure to talk with your child about their final college list. Please be in touch with us with any questions.

## College Board Score Reports

It generally takes 2-3 weeks from the time a student requests scores by sent from the College Board or ACT for them to arrive at the intended college. We encourage students to send scores to Regular Decision schools in mid-December and to avoid 'Rush' reporting. Plan ahead!

## College Counseling Newsletter

## "MISSING" CREDENTIALS

Students who have already submitted a college application may be receiving "Missing credentials" messages via email, US mail, or web portals. These messages are designed to prompt students to complete their applications for admission.

Ultimately, each student is responsible for completing his

or her own application, so reading and responding to these messages is critical.

If a student receives such a message, he/she should let us know as soon as possible. We may need to re-send a teacher recommendation that was lost in transit or have the student check with College Board about the status of

their scores.

If a student ignores this message, the college may discontinue their application, or reject their candidacy. Students typically get just one chance to complete an application once a college or university provides them with the information of what is needed to do so, so paying attention is imperative!

## STATUS OF COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

All seniors should be continuing to work on all college essays NOW. We should see at least a first draft of all remaining essays by no later than December 4th. We are in the home stretch of this process (and December 11 is fast approaching), so we want to make sure that your child is on track to finish applications soon.

We have been very clear with students about the deadlines and the need to balance various commitments while prioritizing college applications. While most seniors have been *remarkably* diligent, others have not been as attentive and risk finding themselves behind schedule in the next few weeks. We are simply less available

after December 11th due to programmatic responsibilities and preparing for the upcoming winter break closure.

If your senior is not currently working on college applications, please remind them of our deadlines and our process. And do feel free to check in with us about your child's progress.

## Early Action / Decision Response Time

In most cases, students who applied EA or ED will hear back from colleges by mid-December—anywhere from the week of December 8 to December 23, depending on the school. We will soon discuss with seniors how to prepare for the arrival of decisions.

## JUNIOR PARENT PROGRAMS

In the coming weeks and months, we will be laying the groundwork for our work with the Class of 2019.

Here are a few things of note on the horizon for parents:

- On Tues., Jan. 23rd, we will host an 8:00 – 9:30am Junior Parent Breakfast (Academy Room in the GSU). The program is designed to introduce you to our senior year curriculum (including the

thesis project) as well as the college counseling process. We will cover a number of topics and leave time to answer group-level questions.

- On February 6th, we will host an evening program for junior families, featuring a speaker from a Boston-area university admissions office. This seventh annual **College Colloquium** is

meant to engage junior families in conversation with an admission officer from a selective college/university about the current landscape of college admissions, as it is an ever-changing entity!

We will provide more details on these events in the coming weeks. We're excited to get to know our juniors—and you!—better as we begin working with them in earnest in January.

## PSAT RETURN

In early December, PSAT scores will arrive from the College Board.

Unlike SAT and Subject Test scores which simply post to a student's College Board account and can be checked online, PSAT scores include diagnostic feedback which helps students prepare for future SAT exams; PSAT scores are not reportable to colleges. In an upcoming Junior Meet-

ing, we will discuss the timeline for the release of scores, walk juniors through a mock score report, and advise on what each section of the report means and how to best utilize the feedback. The score reports include answer keys, a list of student responses, diagnostics for each section, a code that provides online access to student-specific practice exercises for the SAT, and, of course, scores.

The Junior Meeting will allow students to ask questions about the PSAT and find out what to expect when their score arrive. We will also remind juniors about the importance of keeping scores to themselves, and about the weight of PSAT scores in the college application process (in which they don't play a role). Be sure to check with your child about his/her scores.

## MOCK SAT / ACT & PREP CLASSES

Each year, BUA works with Revolution Prep to provide test prep opportunities for juniors.

Again this year, BUA juniors will be offered the chance to take a free mock ACT (November 16) and/or SAT (January 11). That score—plus information from the PSAT—helps inform students about which test format is right for them. The College Counseling Office is avail-

able to work with each member of the Class of 2019 to assist them in developing an individualized plan.

Revolution Prep will be offering small online prep courses for a fee. Financial aid is available for students who receive financial aid to attend BUA.

Not all students need formal test prep, especially those who

excel at time management or tend to do well on standardized tests without much prep. But some students benefit from a structured/monitored preparation environment and from reviewing problems/examples with an instructor. For more information, contact Jake Miller:

Jake.Miller@revolutionprep.com  
(617) 977-4460

## Rigor of Curriculum

Curriculum rigor is measured differently in each college admission process, but is always considered a priority (along with grades, test scores, and extra-curricular involvement). Generally, colleges evaluate how difficult a student's courses have been (with regard to what was available to them) in five academic areas: English, Math, Science, Social Science, and Foreign Language. At most high schools, that means taking AP level coursework in those five subjects. Some colleges even distinguish rigor between certain AP courses.

Students at BUA are generally granted the 'most demanding' rigor designation because of our all-Honors program and the University coursework they are balancing as high school students.

## Junior Spring Test Dates

### March 10

SAT only (no Subject Tests)  
\*\*\*Usually the first sitting for BUA juniors\*\*\*

### May 5 & June 2

SAT & Subject Tests

February 10, April 14,  
June 9 & July 14  
ACT

## SOPHOMORE PARENTS

We hope your child is taking full advantage of the myriad social opportunities available at BUA—from club involvement to sports to theater to school-wide activities like Lock-In or Fall Festival. As you are aware, we are a rigorous academic school, which makes involvement in activities outside of the classroom all the more important. Students need healthy outlets beyond academics through which they can socialize, develop leadership skills, learn how to be a good team member, and find passions and talents.

Now that your child is almost halfway through the sophomore year, we hope s/he has found a few ways to get involved, made a habit of attending school functions and found ways to get to know his/her classmates.

BUA is a really fun, inclusive place—with plenty of opportunities for student interaction beyond the classroom. We hope your child is taking advantage of this side of the Academy!

## PSAT SCORES ARRIVING IN A FEW WEEKS

PSAT scores should arrive at BUA in early December. Once they arrive, we will invite sophomores who took the test to our office for small-group meetings. At these meetings, we will review a sample score report and discuss each aspect. The reports include an answer key to the test, a list of student responses, skill-based accomplishments and deficits, and guidance on how to improve for future standardized tests. The reports are fairly complicated in their layout, and we use these small-group meetings to review the form before distributing scores individually to students. These meetings also allow us to better acquaint ourselves with the sophomores.

If your child has not shared his/her score report with you by the time BUA exams begin, please check in with him/her to discuss; they should arrive well before then.

## EFFORT AND HARD WORK

BUA is a demanding school—our faculty members expect a lot of our talented students. We tend to gather very high-achieving students from area middle schools and push them to new limits while they are on our campus. For some students, this is the hardest they have had to work so far to do well, rather than rely solely on their innate ability or knowledge base. For others, our rigorous program requires further development of good study habits adopted in earlier years, though they may now find longer homework assignments and more substantive class discussions.

Long story short, this place is not easy. BUA expects and requires a lot of effort and hard work. Students should engage with our curriculum expecting to need to do about 45 minutes of homework for

## FRESHMAN PARENTS

each class per night (while being mindful of longer assignments spread out over several nights/weeks). Our faculty members do not expect all students to be perfect from day one; rather, they expect students to immerse themselves in the work, be eager to learn new things and be willing to commit time and intellectual energy to figuring out difficult math problems, confusing physics formulas, and what an author is trying to say in an English text. Our teachers do not let students get away with being lazy or take the simple path.

But that's part of the fun of BUA. We are a school that prides itself on rigorous work, high expectations, AND students who actually meet our challenges. Our kids are not just smart; they work hard and care about what they are learning. Sure, there may be occasional assignments or disciplines they encounter that are less appealing than others, but on the whole our students find meaning

and excitement in their work. BUA appeals to students for many reasons, but among the most typically cited is that it is a school where being smart is cool.

Students who are disinterested in hard work, who don't want to put forth the effort required to do well, and/or who hope to get through four years here based on aptitude rather than elbow grease tend not to do well, and certainly tend not to enjoy themselves while here. As we often explain to college admission officers who work with our seniors, we are an unapologetically academic place whose students work very hard. Colleges admire that, and students who are able to do well here (which does not necessarily lead to transcripts with straight As!) tend to do very well in the college admission process. Hopefully your child is making the necessary adjustments to the rigor of this place and they—and you—are proud of their hard work and solid efforts thus far.