

# 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

## DECEMBER SCHEDULE

### IMPORTANT DATES

- December 11—Date by which seniors should completely finish (but not necessarily submit) all college applications
- December 2—SAT and Subject Test Date
- December 9—ACT exam
- Mid-December—Most Early Action and Early Decision notifications released
- Jan 1—Popular Regular Decision and Early Decision (Round 2) application deadline

December is almost here! It is a very busy and fast-moving month. A few academic/college counseling moments that might be worth your attention:

\*We hope that PSAT scores will arrive in the next few weeks for BUA juniors and sophomores who sat for the October test. Instructions will be provided by the College Counseling Office to these students about how to receive scores. By mid-December, all sophomores and juniors should have received their score reports, if the scores are

made available by the College Board as expected.

\*BUA final exams begin on Thursday, December 13th (a little over three weeks from now!), and BU final exams begin on Saturday, December 16th. Students have just a few short weeks of classes remaining before exams.

\*The Academy closes at 3:30pm on Thursday, December 21st, and winter vacation begins! Students have a few weeks off from Academy classes (even longer for BU commitments) to relax, unwind and pursue individual interests

before returning in 2018.

\*In addition, many of our seniors submitted early applications to colleges that come along with early notifications—in most cases, those notifications occur in mid-December.

Be sure to keep an eye on your child in the next few weeks as the quick pace of the month and the many academic and personal commitments can be a challenge for students to juggle. We want all of our students to end the semester on a positive note, feeling good about their performance in and out of the classroom.

## DECEMBER 11 DEADLINE

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This newsletter is being published on November 21st, a little under three weeks before seniors are expected to complete all college applications. As has been made clear to the class throughout the fall, December 11 is a crucial date, one that allows Ms. Atkinson and Ms. Evans time to review applications and essays before submission to colleges (many of which have January 1 deadlines) and before the BUA closure for winter break. Meeting with sophomores and juniors

to review PSAT results, conducting advocacy phone calls with college admission officers for seniors with EA/ED applications, final exams and regular end-of-semester responsibilities make application review after December 11th a very challenging task.

We hope your child will soon wrap up his or her applications in a timely and thoughtful manner, and that s/he feels good about the effort that went into each essay. We are not *unavailable* to work with

students in the month of December—in fact, we strongly encourage it from those who haven't finished applications yet—but our availability becomes more limited after December 11th and our turnaround time will be much slower. After Dec 21st, when BUA closes for the winter break, we will have extremely limited availability for essay review. We will, of course, continue to submit school materials for any student submitting an application during the break.

## FINANCIAL AID REMINDERS

Last fall, the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) became available earlier, meaning both forms typically required of students applying for financial aid at schools within the U.S. are now 'live': 1) The FAFSA is required by virtually every college/university in the US from applicants seeking federal financial aid, and 2) The CSS Profile (a form available through the College Board

website) is often required by private institutions.

Students should check each college's website for their specific requirements and deadlines. With regard to financial aid (both need-based and merit-based), meeting published deadlines is crucial in order for a student to receive full consideration for funding for which they are eligible.

In addition to checking each

college's website for information about merit scholarship availability and requirements, there are some websites that provide information about scholarships outside of those awarded by colleges. Some particularly good ones are:

- [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)
- [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)
- [www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov)

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We have enjoyed working with the Class of 2018 through this process. Each senior class has its own personality and collection of individual temperaments, and it really has been a treat getting to know your kids. What a great bunch!

HOW TO HANDLE  
COLLEGE DECISIONS

Early Decision and Early Action notifications will, in all likelihood, arrive between Dec. 7th and Dec. 23rd. If your child has applied EA or ED to any colleges, please have a conversation with him or her about how to handle arriving decisions. For better or worse, decisions tend to land in the midst of final exams, so having a strategy for receiving decisions during an already busy time of year is prudent.

Many colleges post decisions online, often announcing - via email or online - the date and/or time decisions will be announced. Also, they will often include information regarding creating an account on their online portal to access the decision. Generally, decisions posted online are posted late in the afternoon or early evening—so as not to impact the school day.

Other colleges will mail decisions through the postal service. If that is the case, **be sure to talk to your child about who opens the mail**, whether a parent or a sibling can notify the applicant if a piece of mail has (or hasn't) arrived, etc. Your child might be okay with you opening the mail, or he or she may want to find out the decision themselves, in private.

Generally, there are three decisions students will receive:

\*Admit (if admitted through Early Decision, the student is expected to enroll),

\*Deny (student is denied admission, and will not be considered in the regular decision pool), or

\*Defer (student's application will be reconsidered in March with Regular Decision applicants at which point new information such as first semes-

ter grades, additional recommendation letters, or new testing will be considered. (NOTE: If a student is deferred from an Early Decision pool to Regular Decision, it is no longer BINDING.)

We encourage all students to hope for the best, but the reality is that it is not likely that all students will be admitted to their EA or ED schools. That can be a difficult piece of news to receive in the midst of finals. Please DO NOT contact a college to discuss a deferral or a deny decision. Rather, reach out to one of us as we may be able to provide some context (we speak to admission officers to advocate for BUA applicants) and help steer your child in the right direction.

This is a big step in your child's senior year, and we are here to help all parties navigate it.

# JUNIOR PARENTS

## SAT (OR ACT) PREPARATION

Each year, BUA offers juniors an opportunity to prepare for the SAT and ACT. We strongly recommend that BUA juniors take the SAT for the first time in March; if a student prefers the ACT, the February or April test is strongly advised for a first sitting.

We are again working with Revolution Prep to offer test prep options. This year, Revolution Prep is offering BUA juniors free practice opportuni-

ties for the SAT and ACT, the results of which may help students decide on WHICH test to focus as well as if formal prep is necessary.

Optional, fee-based, small online prep sessions, led by an instructor, will be offered for both the ACT and SAT. Financial aid is available for students who receive aid to attend BUA.

Not all students need formal

test prep; many BUAs do *not*. Generally, students best served by test prep are those who: are interested in boosting scores, do well in a structured prep environment, and want to be able to review problems/ examples with an instructor. Students who excel at time management or tend to do well on standardized tests without any (or much) preparation are probably not candidates for formal prep.

## Spring Junior Meetings

In addition to one-on-one meetings with each junior, beginning in early January, we will host weekly Junior Meetings (location TBA). Attendance at the meetings are mandatory.

At these meetings, we will talk with juniors about many different aspects of the college search and application process: how applications are reviewed, how to make the most of a campus visit, how to prepare for interviews, how to identify and ask teachers for recommendation letters, how to approach college essays, how to build a resume or list of extra-curricular involvements, how to interview, etc.

We use the meetings as a chance to get to know the juniors as a group, and to educate them on preparing strong college applications.

## PSAT RETURN

In the next few weeks, we expect that PSAT scores will be posted by the College Board.

Students receive their score through their College Board account. The College Counseling Office also receives a paper report of each student's score for their file.

Ms. Evans will discuss the PSAT in a Junior Meeting, walk students through a mock score report, and advise on what each section of the report

means. The score reports include an answer key, 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, individual student scores.

Our aim is to encourage an environment where students access and receive their scores privately. We will discuss with the juniors the importance of keeping scores to

themselves and the weight of PSAT scores in the whole college application process. (PSAT scores don't, in fact, factor in to application review at all).

Be sure to check with your child about his/her scores. We are, of course, available should students have questions or need help creating their College Board account or accessing scores.

## SPRING TIMELINE

On Tuesday, January 23 from 8:00-9:30 a.m., we will host (along with Rose White) a Junior Parent Breakfast, highlighting University course selection for senior year and the college search and application processes. Save the date!

At that meeting, we will provide each parent with their own access code to create a Naviance account (the college data-

base we use). From your account, we will ask you to complete a survey for us. From those surveys and initial meetings with your student, we will work together to create an initial list of colleges (at various levels of selectivity) that your child should research.

By April, we will have helped your child identify several potential college essay ideas, as

well as two Academy teachers to write letters of recommendation on their behalf. We will also help students prepare for college interviews (that often begin in the summer).

Our process is designed to introduce students to the process in the junior spring, and then focus on application completion during the senior fall.

## Spring College Board Test Dates for Juniors

**SAT only (no Subject Tests; strongly recommended as first sitting for juniors)**  
March 10

**SAT and Subject Tests**  
May 5, June 2

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

## SOPHOMORE PARENTS

PSAT score reports are expected to arrive in early December for those 10th graders who participated. Sophomores will be made aware of score availability, and we will walk them through the layout of the score report in small groups. We ask that students not discuss scores with each other; they are meant to be private and as a preparatory tool, not as bragging rights or to make others feel badly about their performance.

PSAT score reports include a bevy of information about how to analyze the scores—from an answer key to the test, to skill-specific feedback, to an online portal with study skills designed for each individual test-taker.

PSAT scores are not part of the college admission process; they are designed to help students better assess how they might fare on standardized testing.

Students will receive their scores via their College Board account. We will be available to assist students who may encounter difficulties.

## SOPHOMORE PARENT MEETING

On the morning of Tuesday, February 27th, from 8:00-9:30 a.m., we—along with Rose White—will host a Sophomore Parent Breakfast to talk about the transition to the University component of our program. The registration process for Fall 2018 BU courses begins in March, so we need to have conversations about BU course offerings before then. We will also be on hand to address time-sensitive questions about the college search and application processes (developing a college list, visiting campuses, standardized testing plans, writing essays, etc.).

Each year, this is a fun meeting for us as we get to know more parents, demystify the college application process, and help to arm you with information to help your child make thoughtful decisions about next steps in the process. It marks the first formal step toward thinking about how junior year will differ from sophomore year. Save the date!

## INVOLVEMENT OUTSIDE OF CLASS

We encourage you to talk with your child about getting involved in activities outside of class. Now that we are nearing the end of first semester, we hope that 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.

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 what France would think about an important political issue. Perhaps your child is intrigued by theater, or wants to join the

## FRESHMAN PARENTS

Performing Arts Outing Club for a trip to a show, or wants to submit a piece to the BUA literary magazine—*The Muse*—for consideration. These are all wonderful things to sample while at the Academy.

We do ask students to 'commit' to activities; it is important that students understand that others may be relying on their consistent investment in an activity for the duration of a season. However, a one-season or one-year commitment doesn't bind a student to an activity for their entire BUA career.

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 3-6 activities outside of class over the course of the year—anything from sports to performing arts to creative writing to science-related activities to

church youth groups to community service, etc.

When it is time to apply to college, students will be asked to identify the activities in which they have participated during their high school years, the number of hours per week (and weeks per year) they were involved, any leadership roles they held or honors they received, 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 high school and what kind of contributor he or she may be in their collegiate community. This is especially important at residential colleges which rely on student engagement to define and strengthen their environment.

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