

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

EARLY APPLICATION DECISIONS ARRIVING

IMPORTANT DATES

- Mid-December—Most EA & ED notifications released
- January 1—Popular deadline for Regular Decision applications
- January 11— 3pm-7pm
Free mock SAT for interested BUA juniors
- January 23— 8am-9:30am.
Junior Parent Meeting to review senior year curriculum and college counseling process
- February 27—8am-9:30am. Sophomore Parent Meeting to anticipate the University portion of the curriculum and the start of the college process

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Each year, about 80% of our senior class applies to at least one college through an “Early” application process—either Early Action (non-binding), Early Decision (binding), or Rolling Admissions (non-binding). Many of those decisions arrive in mid-December **(though with growing applicant pools, more EA decisions are spilling into January)**, so our seniors are preparing for the flurry of decisions arriving over the new few weeks.

We have reviewed the range of possible decisions—and what each means—with the senior class, and have asked all Early applicants to consider the possibility that they might receive any of those decisions:

Admit—students are admitted to the college. If admitted

through Early Decision, the student must enroll at that institution and withdraw any other submitted applications. If admitted through Early Action or a Rolling application process, the student may still apply to other schools.

Deny—the student’s application is discontinued at that college; they cannot re-apply during the current admission cycle, and they will not be considered in the Regular round.

Defer—the student’s file will be considered again in the Regular Decision round, and students will typically receive a final decision by April 1. Mid-year grades and additional materials will be added to the file between now and March.

While many of our students

receive good news this time of year, historically, a few students have received disappointing or frustrating news.

We’ve asked the seniors to discuss with parents how they need you to respond if they are not admitted. If you demonstrate frustration at a deny or defer decision, that may cue the student to also express frustration.

In all cases, if you or your child have questions or concerns about a decision, please call or e-mail us so that we can serve as a sounding board. In some cases, we may have information from our advocacy communications to better position a deferred application, or be able to provide context for a denied application.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

College admission offices care about academic performance much more than academic potential.

That a student could have earned straight As if a particular set of stars aligned is less relevant than the set of grades a student actually earned and

that appear on their transcript. While SAT scores do play a role in the admission process, at the end of the day, more weight from an academic standpoint really is given to classroom performance and final grades in a tough curriculum. Extra-curricular and per-

sonal contributions are looked at separately.

To the most selective colleges, there *can be* a big difference between an A- and a B+, or between a B and a B-, so encourage your child to work to his or her full potential. It will be noticed by colleges!

THE "DEFER" LETTER

Of the different decisions students may receive regarding their EA/ED application, to be deferred is perhaps the most vexing. It can bring uncertainty and a lack of closure and can be difficult to interpret.

A deferral positions the student's application to be reviewed again in the spring with Regular Decision candidates; fall grades and other updates will be added to the

student's file for review.

A deferral means different things at different colleges and for different candidates. Some colleges only admit or defer early applicants; others admit a few, deny many, and defer a small handful that they are genuinely interested in reconsidering in the spring.

We remind students who have been deferred that first semester grades are TRE-

MENDOUSLY important in the process, as is a well-considered specific and engaging letter of interest to be sent in January (with our guidance). Extra recommendations might be helpful but not as much as additional academic information and an expression of interest by the student.

Please reach out to us with any questions/concerns about a deferral decision.

Submitting applications
and scores for Regular
Decision

January 1 is the most popular deadline for Regular Decision (RD) applications. Many students awaiting EA/ED decisions in December have yet not submitted RD applications. Required test scores for RD applications, however, can be submitted now via College Board/ACT, as needed.

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SECOND SEMESTER COURSEWORK

Now that college applications are completed (or are close to completion!), and BUA finals are soon underway (with BU exams to follow), students may be anticipating second semester coursework.

We've encouraged students to sign up for challenging classes that they believe will hold their interest for the duration of the semester. Every

year, we see second-semester seniors lose some steam as the weather improves, Regular Decision college news arrives, and graduation planning begins. Unfortunately, senioritis is alive and well!

In all cases, admission to college is contingent upon a student's successful completion of high school in a manner consistent with a stu-

dent's performance at the time of application. In other words, students are expected to maintain similar grades through the end of high school.

In addition, second semester is designed to give students a bit more time to work on the senior thesis project, once the college application process has been completed.

POST DECEMBER 11TH
APPLICATIONS AND ESSAYS

As you know, we anticipated guiding all seniors toward 100% application completion by December 11th. The good news is that many of our seniors will meet that goal. The bad news is that some of them still have a good deal of work to do.

We have continued to send seniors the message that

even after December 11, we strongly encourage them to work with us on drafts of essays. We are available to meet with students to discuss essays between now and December 21 (when BUA closes at 3:30pm for the winter break). Meeting individually with students now instead of working via e-mail will be more efficient.

We will not be available to review—or provide feedback on—essays during the break.

Well-written, thoughtful, and personal college essays are **essential** in a college application, and we really do want to help position students for the strongest possible review at each of the colleges to which they apply.

Winter Break

It's been a LONG semester in many ways. Your child has completed a lot of academic work AND a round of college applications. That's quite an accomplishment!

We hope that your child revels in a well-deserved winter break.

JUNIOR PARENT MEETING

Tuesday, January 23, 2018

Junior Parent Meeting

GSU—Academy lunchroom

8:00—9:30 a.m.

We invite all junior parents to a meeting at which we will discuss the college search and application process, and how we work with you and your child to navigate the process.

Soon, you will receive an email from our office with a list of

spring semester 'events' for juniors and/or parents, including a reminder about this meeting.

We will provide an overview of the college counseling timeline, including when to visit colleges, when to take certain tests, when to interview, and when to write applications.

We will also provide juniors and their parents access to

our college counseling database, *Naviance*, that is designed to be a useful tool for families researching colleges.

After our initial one-on-one meeting with juniors in January, parents are invited to set up individual meetings with us, as well. It can be a nuanced and high-anxiety process, but we are committed to keeping it sane as we help you and your child navigate it.

SAT / ACT ONLINE PREP CLASSES

BUA juniors are encouraged to take a free mock SAT on Thursday, January 11th, from 3:00-7:00 p.m. Students may also request a free ACT mock exam in the College Counseling Office if they were unable to take the practice test offered on November 16.

Small group online courses—

Revolution Prep will again offer small group online course settings for the SAT or ACT, taught by a professional instructor, in

preparation for the March SAT or April ACT. Financial aid is available for eligible students.

Not all BUA students need formal test prep... in fact, most don't. Students best served by test prep are those interested in boosting scores, who do well in a structured/monitored preparation environment, and who want to review problems/examples with an instructor. Students who excel at time management and/or who tend

to do well on standardized tests without much prep (or prep on their own) are probably not the target audience for formal prep.

Of the many reputable test prep companies out there, we continue to utilize Revolution Prep for their solid understanding of BUA and our students' needs. For more information about the online courses or to sign up for the practice SAT, contact: Jake.Miller@revolutionprep.com (617) 977-4460

PSAT Scores

Students who took the PSAT in October will be able to access scores electronically the week of December 11th. To prepare for the posting of scores, in the final Junior Meeting of the fall, we reviewed a sample PSAT score report.

Every student who took the PSAT receives a detailed report which will include scores, comparative percentiles, proficiency by skill set, an answer key to the test, and access to free online test prep through Khan Academy. Booklets used on test day have been returned to the juniors.

Students have been reminded: PSAT scores are not seen by colleges. Furthermore, they should not share their scores with each other. If you have any questions about the PSAT, please contact us.

DEVELOPING A COLLEGE LIST

In mid- to late January, we will invite juniors and parents to fill out lengthy surveys in *Naviance*, our college counseling database, designed to provide us with important and relevant information about each student. From these surveys and from individual student meetings, we will work with your child to develop a list of colleges to research. In most cases,

these lists are designed in late January/early February—in time to schedule college visits over March Break.

The lists we develop with each junior tend to include 20-25 schools at different levels of selectivity, but all of which have cultures, academic programs, geographic locations, or other attributes that match their interests.

The lists will evolve over time, ultimately landing at 15 schools or fewer by the time we return for Fall 2018, and they will be shortened further throughout the fall. On average, BUA students submit around seven applications each. We look forward to helping your child identify strong college matches.

Spring College Board Test Dates for Juniors

**SAT only (no Subject
Tests)**
March 10

SAT & Subject Tests
May 5 & June 2

ACT
Feb 10, Apr 14, June 9 &
July 14

SOPHOMORE PARENTS

It is still far too early to be visiting colleges in earnest. Your child is still working their way through our program, and probably doesn't yet have a clear sense of what s/he wants to study or what kind of college culture s/he is seeking.

Most families begin to visit colleges in the spring of junior year—usually over Spring Break—to take a tour and/or attend an Information Session. Colleges also often offer Open House events to juniors in April or May. Visits usually continue over the summer and often into the fall of senior year. Some colleges (not all) offer students a chance to interview as part of a visit, and interviews are usually reserved for late in the junior year, over the summer between junior and senior year, or in the fall of senior year. Feel free to visit one or two local schools if your family is eager to get started, but it really is best to delay expensive and time-consuming trips until your child is better able to gain valuable insights from the visits.

S O P H O M O R E P A R E N T M E E T I N G

On Tuesday, February 27th from 8:00-9:30am, in the Academy Room of the GSU, please join us and Dr. Rosemary White for a meeting to discuss the transition to the University component of our program. The registration process for Fall BU courses begins in mid-spring semester, so we want to make sure you are armed with pertinent and timely information. We will also address time-sensitive questions about the college search and application processes (when to visit campuses, interview, take tests, which tests to take, etc.).

We enjoy this meeting each year, which allows us to get to know a new group of parents, demystify the college application process a bit, and arm your family with helpful information about next steps in the process. It marks the first formal step toward thinking about how junior year will differ from sophomore year.

W I N T E R B R E A K

Finally! Winter break is almost here! It's been a long semester, especially for new students who may have spent much of the last few months acclimating to the rigorous expectations of Academy teachers.

Winter break can be a great time to take a step back from academics and school work. Students should try to keep some of their time unscheduled as this may be the first time in months that your child has actually had a chunk of free time.

Some students may spend their break catching up on personal reading, playing video games, watching episodes of a favorite show that were missed because of a need to study for one of those tough physics tests, or reconnecting with friends from middle school who now attend different high schools.

FRESHMAN PARENTS

We think it is important that your child take some time away from serious school work in order to 'be a kid,' or as they may prefer being called, 'a teenager.' As adults who see your students day in and day out at the Academy, we see how hard they work here, and understand that our program asks a lot of our bright students. Colleges will look favorably upon the rigor of our program and your child's success in that program, but it is also important that students not reach senior year feeling burned out, or that the cumulative effect of our intense workload steers students too far away from social activities or time spent with friends.

Throughout the school year, we encourage students to get involved in activities and allow for unscheduled moments with friends. But breaks are also an opportune time to make sure that students just simply get a break from work.

Winter break is also a good time for students to figure out how they want to spend their second semester with us—whether joining new activities, committing to a challenging academic class, or making a point of including other students in their friend groups. In many ways, the second semester is a fresh start, one that comes after students have a good handle on our program.

SUMMER OPPORTUNITIES

Early in the second semester is a good time to start thinking about summer opportunities for your child—including community service programs, summer courses of interest, camps, etc. We maintain a lengthy list of summer programs that we are happy to share with any family interested in exploring a range of summer opportunities. In addition, www.teenlife.com is a search tool that may be a helpful way to start a search for an activity that will interest your child. In addition, we post—on the bulletin board outside our office, as well as via BUA student email—information about programs of interest.