

# 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

## P A R E N T A L R O L E S I N T H E C O L L E G E P R O C E S S

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

- February 6th — 6-8pm:  
**College Colloquium** @  
Room 206, BU Photonics  
Center (8 St. Mary's  
Street). **Juniors and their  
families** are invited to  
attend a presentation by a  
representative from the  
Tufts University Admission  
Office regarding highly  
selective admissions
- February 9th — Deadline  
for Juniors to register for  
March 10 SAT
- February 27th —  
8:00-9:30am @ GSU  
Academy lunchroom.  
Sophomore Parent Meet-  
ing to review junior year  
curriculum and college  
counseling program.

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

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As students begin to think about college, their egos, identities, hopes, accomplishments, and insecurities are brought to the surface. The process of identifying colleges that are a good match for them may seem daunting, and the notion of being “judged” by admission officers (and potentially rejected by a dream college) may weigh on them.

To that end, we want you to understand how you can support your child, allow them room to grow and evolve in the process, and how we can help.

It is critically important that you listen to your child—ask questions (but not all the time, or every day) and *listen* to their responses. Understand that your child may have different goals for themselves than you

might. Work toward compromise. Practice repeating what they say back to them, so they understand that you are hearing their point of view.

When you do start visiting college campuses, separate from your child for a bit. Allow them space to “explore” campus on their own, away from you, where they may get a different sense of the community and place and can interact with others and make their own observations. Also, be aware of how you interact with admission officers who are trained to notice “over-functioning” parents and often take note of overly boastful parents, which does not serve an applicant well.

Be open to your child’s changing feelings about certain col-

leges or majors. As 16-17 year olds, they don’t have it all figured out and that’s fine! The idea is to encourage them to be thoughtful about the process and ideally provide them with options that will encourage them to explore.

And talk to us. If your child is not taking your advice or the “college conversation” at home is getting uncomfortable for all involved, call us. Your child might “hear” things differently from us (if only because we aren’t Mom or Dad). And use **us**—rather than your child—as a sounding board. In our roles as college counselors and college admission officers, we can certainly offer some perspective from our experiences of working with students and families.

## C O L L E G E A D M I S S I O N V I S I T O R S

Each year, BUA hosts admission representatives from colleges and universities (and some summer and/or gap year programs, as well as special interest programs) across the globe. During the fall, seniors who attend these informational meetings find out more about a college as well as

demonstrate interest, often with an individual who quite possibly may read their application, should they apply. For juniors, spring meetings are a great way to meet actual admission representatives and put a human face to a process that can feel uncertain. It’s also a terrific way for them to

begin to differentiate the vast number of options available to them. Though students are not allowed to miss BUA or BU classes to attend, they will be able to contact the reps via email with questions. We post scheduled visits on our door, and an up-to-date list can be found in Naviance.

## MID-YEAR REPORTS

We are currently sending out mid-year reports to the colleges to which our seniors have applied. Mid-year reports include an updated transcript listing fall semester grades, spring semester courses, and individual student comments/updates. These grades are the last official set colleges will see as they make decisions on students in the Regular Decision or EDII applicant pool(s).

The reports are sent electronically in most instances, and they should be added to the student's application soon.

Mid-year reports are used by colleges as a final check-in about how the student is doing in their senior year. We write a short report about each student to explain weaker grades, excitedly point to high grades in particularly rigorous courses, and make the admission reader

aware of any recent achievements or updates.

In addition, we make personal contact with colleges in mid-February/early March to advocate one last time for each student. The best source of advocacy is your child's continued solid work in each of their classes; the better a student does this year, the stronger case they are making for themselves in the admission process.

## Senior Thesis

The senior class is under a bit of extra pressure this month as they work toward completion of the first draft of their senior thesis. For some seniors, that means composing 1,000 words each week!

Please check in with your child about his/her progress.

## College Counseling Newsletter

## FINANCIAL AID DEADLINES

Colleges have firm application deadlines for financial aid in order for a student to receive full consideration. If your family is applying for aid, please check with each college to which you child is applying to make sure you are meeting each deadline. In most instances, colleges have financial aid deadlines in late January/early February.

All US colleges will request that you submit the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid, for which you must apply for a PIN number in advance of filing); many private colleges will also ask for the CSS/Profile (a College Board financial aid form). Both forms can typically be found on the financial aid page of a college's website.

Late financial aid applications can lead to less or no financial aid (as money is often doled out on a first-come, first-served basis).

Do not hesitate to communicate directly with the financial aid office at each college with questions about how to fill out forms and how a school may treat your particular financial circumstances.

## DEFERRAL LETTERS

If your child's Early Decision or Early Action application was "deferred" into the regular decision pool, we have encouraged them to write a letter to that college. That letter should provide a general update, outline any recent achievements, provide a compelling argument for why the college should now offer them a space in their fresh-

man class, and reiterate the student's strong interest in the school. Such letters can be important to admission officers looking for a reason to admit a student in the spring. In our years in admission, we read many such letters, and a few made an impact on whether a student was ultimately admitted. Of course, the largest determi-

nant in whether a deferred applicant is ultimately admitted centers around Fall Semester performance and the size (and quality) of the applicant pool this year. If a student is "in the running" though, this type of letter can help seal the deal. We are here to help students prepare these letters before submission by mid-February.

## College Interviews

Many seniors may be embarking on several college interviews in the next few weeks. With advance notice, we are happy to do mock interviews or prep work with your child to help them prepare for these conversations

## COLLEGE COLLOQUIUM

Tuesday, February 6

6:00-8:00pm

BU Photonics Center, Rm 206

8 St. Mary's Street

BUA is hosting its fifth annual **College Colloquium**—a chance for a conversation with an expert in the field of college admissions.

This year, the presenter will be an admission officer from Tufts University Undergraduate Ad-

missions who will discuss how highly selective colleges embark on their review process, what factors influence their choices, and how they 'craft' a class.

We expect you will learn a lot about how applications are read and how each component of an application figures into the overall process.

The evening promises to be an informative conversation

about the process of applying to college. You will have a chance to ask group-level questions at the end of the presentation.

Due to space constraints, **only BUA juniors and their families** are invited to attend. (No RSVP necessary.) All junior students are strongly encouraged to attend.

Note: This is not a Tufts information session.

### This Week in Junior Meeting

We briefly discussed the difference between need-based financial aid and merit scholarships.

We also examined the different "cultures" of college campuses, encouraging students to make thoughtful decisions about the types of students they want to surround themselves with during college.

### Next Week in Junior Meeting

We will talk with juniors about the various standardized tests they may embark on through this process: SAT, ACT, Subject Tests, AP exams, etc. We will also discuss how students should approach their own testing plan to accentuate their academic strengths.

## PARENT SURVEY IN NAVIANCE

All junior parents/legal guardians are allowed access to Naviance. If you are interested in creating an account but have not received your logon information—or if you are having difficulties using Naviance—let us know!

Once you are logged on, you will find a Class of 2019 Parent Survey, a fairly in-depth survey that asks you to share with us some of your thoughts

about your child and the college process. Your survey responses are seen only by Ms. Atkinson and Ms. Evans—NOT by your child or by colleges. Your input—along with our conversations with your child—help us assist them in the development of their college lists and inform us in our work with them throughout the process.

Your child may not remember some salient moments in his

or her academic career or may minimize an achievement you might call our attention to in the survey.

The survey may time out, even as you are typing into them! Please save your work every ten or fifteen minutes. And be in touch with one of us if you have any questions about the survey. We are looking forward to reading your thoughts and working with your child.

## COLLEGE LIST DEVELOPMENT

All juniors are completing a lengthy survey in Naviance. We are now in the process of meeting with each junior individually to review/discuss the survey and to help them develop a working college list.

We do not arbitrarily assign students to specific colleges, rather, we work with students and parents to develop a preliminary college list of about 25-35 colleges by mid/late Febru-

ary. The list is meant to be a starting point: a well-balanced group of schools in terms of selectivity that also vary in size, location, campus feel, etc. Student and parent survey results inform us of each student's specific academic, social and demographic needs and interests.

Students should thoroughly research colleges (online, through guidebooks, campus

visits, conversations with us, etc.). In June, once we have final junior grades and SAT or ACT scores, we can provide a clearer sense of each student's chance of admission at the schools on their list.

We expect each student's list to evolve over the next few months. Ultimately, most BUA students apply to somewhere between 6 and 8 colleges in their senior fall.

### Spring College Board Test Dates for Juniors

**March 10**  
SAT

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

**April 14, June 9  
& July 14**  
ACT

## SOPHOMORE PARENTS

Toward the end of the year, we work with juniors to help them identify two Academy teachers to write letters of recommendation for college applications. As most BUA students only have three Academy classes in their junior year, many of our students turn to at least one teacher from sophomore year for a recommendation. Academy teachers are free to decline a recommendation request (either because a student asked them late and that teacher has a hefty writing load already, or because the student is not someone for whom that teacher feels s/he can strongly advocate). To that end, we encourage all sophomore students to be aware of how they interact with their Academy teachers. Students should show up to class on time, be engaged, contribute to discussion, seek help when needed, and consistently put their best foot forward in class. The impression a student makes on their teachers now could contribute to the strength of a student's college applications later.

## SOPHOMORE PARENT MEETING

On Tuesday, February 27th, all sophomore parents are invited to an 8am meeting in the GSU Academy lunchroom with Jill, Ellen, and Rose White to discuss some timely aspects of the BUA experience. Specifically, we will talk about the transition to BU coursework in the fall, Biology at BU, foreign language options at BU, standardized testing, and the timeline for the college search process (which doesn't really begin in earnest until mid-Junior year). The meeting is meant to be a group-level conversation about each of these topics; we will not be able to address individual student situations at this meeting. We do encourage all sophomore parents/guardians to attend so that you have a better sense of who we are, and so that we can get to know you and make sure we are all on the same page. Coffee, tea, and light refreshments will be served. The meeting should conclude by 9:30am.

## COLLEGE ADMISSION TESTS

It can be difficult to keep track of all of the tests related to college admissions! Here is a quick guide, when each is offered, and the role they play:

*\*\*\*We recommend that all BUA students have either an SAT or ACT score about which they feel confident.*

**SAT exam**—a 3 hour, 50 minute in length (not including the optional essay). Students should first sit for it in March of junior year. Two main sections (Evidence-based Reading/Writing and Math = each scored out of 800 points, for a possible total of 1600) and an optional essay (which students should take) scored for Reading, Analysis and Writing.

**ACT exam**—an alternative to the SAT also widely accepted by US colleges. Scored out of 36 points, also with an essay option (maximum—12 points). Unlike the SAT, the

## FRESHMAN PARENTS

ACT includes a science section.

*\*\*\*By the end of junior year, each student should have taken at least 2 Subject Tests.*

**SAT Subject Tests**—Hour-long subject-specific tests offered 6 times throughout the year. Subject-specific, so students should consider a test at the end of the year in which they took the corresponding class. Many colleges require two Subject Test scores in the admission process. Which tests a student takes depends on academic strengths and what colleges and majors they are considering. Each test is scored out of 800 points. These matter a bit less than the SAT, but can play a big role in admissions at certain colleges.

**PSAT exam**—A practice version of the SAT exam, minus the written essay. Offered at BUA in October each year. Optional for BUA sophomores but is expected of all BUA juniors. Meant to help prepare students for the

SAT exam in March of junior year, with similar test-day conditions and the types of questions as the SAT. Also enters juniors into consideration for National Merit Scholarship recognition. Colleges do not see PSAT scores.

**Advanced Placement (AP) exams**—Subject-specific tests offered only on specific dates in early May. Students are tested on a specific range of topics covered in AP courses (which are not offered at BUA). U.S. colleges generally do not require these tests in the admission process, and very few of our students sit for them. That being said, students who are interested in going to college overseas—or have done considerable work in a subject beyond what is taught at BUA—may consider sitting for one or more AP exams. They are **not** required by—or expected of—BUA students planning to apply to U.S. colleges.

As each test becomes relevant for your child, we will work with him/her on the details of the test.