

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**

IMPORTANT DATES

- March 10—SAT (with essay) test date for BUA juniors
- March 13—3pm Senior Parent Coffee to discuss regular decision news, wait-lists, and college visits
- March 20—Deadline for students to register for AP exams through BUA
- April 1—Date by which seniors will receive most/all of their college decisions
- April 6—Registration deadline for May Subject Tests

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COLLEGE CAMPUS VISITS

Many junior families are planning to visit a few college campuses over break. Here are a few reminders:

1. Students (not parents!) should visit college websites to figure out when tours and information sessions are offered. Students should RSVP as needed. Some colleges may not offer tours during Spring Break.
2. Interviews are not usually offered/recommended during Spring Break.
3. It is usually not possible/recommended to visit more than 2 campuses in one day.
4. Students should take notes after each visit—writing down the names

of anyone they met, their impressions (good and bad), something distinctive about the school or culture, and noteworthy aspects of the academic program. Especially if a student applies to the school later, these notes can help compose a more compelling school-specific essay, if required.

5. Plan on visiting a range of colleges, not just the most selective. Investing in only the super selective (with admit rates of 25% or less) is a surefire way to end the process in disappointment. Students should plan visits to a few “likely” and “possible” range schools, even early in the process.

6. Parents should give their child space on campus visits, to sit for 20 minutes or so in the student union, or on a bench somewhere on campus. This freedom will help them start to get a feel for the independence they will experience once they are enrolled in college.
7. When it makes sense, students should try to set up meetings with varsity coaches, professors, or department heads. This is only for students who have a defined and strong interest in a specific program or activity.

Visiting college campuses should be fun—and hopefully these tips will help you make the most of each visit.

UNABLE TO GET TO CAMPUS?

Visiting college campuses in New England is a priority, as these colleges generally expect that Boston independent school students get to campus (finances allowing) in person. That can factor into an admis-

sion decision as “demonstrated interest.”

If your child can’t make it to a campus, s/he should review college guidebooks, scour the college website, talk with one of us about the college, talk

with BUA graduates who attend the institution, e-mail admission officers or faculty members, meet with college reps who visit BUA in the fall of senior year, and attend area receptions in the fall.

Colleges want students to get to know them as part of the college search process, and these are all meaningful ways to learn more about schools that your child may not be able to visit in person.

FINANCIAL AID

If a student applied for financial aid from colleges, please scrutinize all financial aid offers carefully. It is important to pay attention to the balance due at each college rather than the total amount of scholarships.

A financial aid package typically includes some sort of grant (money that does not have to be repaid), a loan (with a limit of about \$6000 per year), and a work-study

expectation (usually \$2500 per year). Some colleges are in a financial position where they can replace loan expectations with additional grant money.

Be sure to look at the full cost of attendance for each school (tuition, room & board, health plan, books, orientation fees, technology costs, etc.) and subtract the aid award from that total. What at first might look like a

generous aid package may ultimately not be as competitive based on the total cost of attendance (especially when you factor it over four years).

Compare the balance due for each college. Feel free to contact financial aid offices to inquire about additional funding or to offer insight into how one of their peer schools is offering more funding. Work with us on strategies for these phone calls.

College Decision News

Regular Decision college notifications are starting to trickle in. Most will arrive in mid/late March, and some schools may be as late as April 1 or 2. Remember to talk with your child about who opens the mail when it arrives!

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SENIOR MEETING

On March 1st, Ms. Atkinson met with the senior class to discuss a few time-sensitive pieces of the senior year experience and the college process.

Grades are still very important. Strong grades can help students on waiting lists and eventually help students earn transfer credit.

A first draft of the senior the-

sis is due this week! A final version due on April 18; failure to meet important deadlines can delay the receipt of a student's diploma.

College decisions arrive in mid/late March. Seniors should be supportive of each other, read letters carefully, understand deadlines, and carefully review financial aid package awards.

Wait-lists should be entered into with much thought and close work with Jill and Ellen.

Most seniors will want to head to college campuses in April to visit (or re-visit) schools where they were admitted. Students must ask permission of BU instructors, and parents must let Mrs. Barr know if they are missing class/school, too.

SENIOR CLASS SUPPORT

The last few weeks of March are always an exhilarating time for the senior class at BUA. Most of the seniors are still awaiting word from colleges, the thesis is (hopefully!) nearing completion, and nostalgia is starting to settle in.

To that end, we are encouraging each member of the

class to be supportive of each other, especially around the very sensitive news of college decisions.

Our seniors are an ambitious group, sending out applications to the most competitive colleges in the nation. Historically, our students do well in these processes, but it is rare that a student is admitted to

every school to which s/he has sent an application.

We hope that each member of the class is able to offer constructive support to classmates and respect each other's privacy. Our office is always open to students who need a space to express frustration or disappointment (or to celebrate!).

Senior Parent Coffee

Tuesday, March 13th
3pm-4:30pm
College Office @ BUA

We are inviting senior parents to come to a meeting with us at which we will discuss: receiving college decisions, April campus visits, financial aid, and supporting your child during this exciting time.

MARCH SAT FOR JUNIORS

Most Academy juniors (who are not travelling to Japan on the Spring Break trip!) are likely registered to sit for the SAT on Saturday, March 10.

Though the essay is optional, BUA students should opt for it; some colleges will require it.

Students should get a good night's sleep, eat a healthy breakfast, and arrive at the testing location with ample time to get settled.

Students should also visit the College Board website to confirm what materials they should bring (<http://sat.collegeboard.com/register/sat-test-day-checklist>).

Students can do some final preparation for the test next week: review sample questions, math formulas and concepts, the particulars of the written essay, etc. Time

permitting, students can take a practice exam on the College Board website. HOWEVER, students should also get some REST over Spring Break! Remember: students will have more opportunities to sit for this test and others. High scores replace low scores, so this should not be a high-stress test. That being said, students should take it seriously, do their best, and share their results with the College Office.

COLLEGE ESSAY TOPICS

In an upcoming junior meeting, Jill and Ellen will discuss with the juniors the role of the college essay in the evaluation of a college application. They'll discuss the various Common Application essay prompts and emphasize that students can work with the questions to find a topic that works best for them. Some of the prompts are more difficult to write than others, but "topic of your choice" has been revived after

an absence of several years!

We have assembled collections of sample essays which we encourage juniors to stop by and review. In general, a strong college essay conveys a story, is written in an engaging fashion, and allows the reader to learn something about the student. We advise students to "show," not "tell," and to use anecdotes, examples, and stories to convey meaning.

When admission officers review essays, they are looking at writing ability and want to be engaged; they also hope to see a student's authentic self coming through (not a polished version of themselves that a parent might prefer they showcase!).

Later this semester, all juniors must submit three potential essay ideas for discussion with Jill and Ellen.

Upcoming Junior Meetings

We will be discussing the Personal Statement (college essay) and reviewing the Common Application prompts. Example essay packets are viewable in the College Counseling Office. By Monday, April 2, juniors should submit (via Naviance journal entry) three short paragraphs outlining three potential topics for their college essay.

Recent Junior Meetings

We discussed course registration for the Fall semester. All seniors take 5 courses, one of which is thesis-oriented, and one of which counts toward an English requirement for graduation. Rising seniors have more choice than ever before for course selection. We will help them make sense of their options. Students must submit course registration forms by April 2; forms were sent to the Class of 2019 via email.

FALL 2018 COURSE REGISTRATION

Recently, we talked with the juniors about course registration for the Fall 2018 semester and the senior thesis. Registration info and forms have been sent via email to the Class of 2019. Forms with required signatures are due by April 2, 2018 at Noon.

All seniors must take an English course each semester and will be assigned to a thesis

block each semester. In addition, all students must complete Honors Calculus before graduating. Beyond that, students may select from a wide range of University courses.

Juniors should make a point of coming to see one of us to discuss their course selection. We can be particularly helpful in providing insight into what previous students have taken,

providing past course evaluations, and sharing info about what specific colleges may want to see students take senior year, whether or not they have a clear intended major.

There are plenty of classes to choose from, and our goal is to make sure students are signed up for classes that interest them and position them well for the future.

Spring College Board Test Dates for Juniors

SAT only, with essay
March 10 (no Subj. Tests)

ACT
April 14, June 9, July 14

SAT* or Subject Tests
May 5 & June 2
(*students should opt for the essay)

SOPHOMORE PARENTS

Spring Break is here! BUA classes will be suspended for two weeks so that students can take a breath, recharge, and do something other than schoolwork between the hours of 8:00am and 3:00pm schoolwork. (NOTE: BU is only on break for 1 week, so students taking BU courses return on March 12).

We hope your child has a chance to do something of interest over the break, whether it be reading a book for pleasure (not because it's assigned by a teacher!), making music, travelling, participating in sports, hanging out with friends, or anything else that is hard to do during the hustle and bustle of the school week.

This is the last long break before the summer, so we hope that students come back to school on March 19th ready to re-immersede themselves in academics and extra-curricular activities.

COURSE REGISTRATION FOR 9TH AND 10TH GRADERS

Freshmen and Sophomores must submit their course registration forms to Dr. White by Noon on Monday, April 2nd.

*Juniors take English and History at BUA, and most will take Math at BUA through the MA 90/95 sequence. We generally recommend that students take the BU Biology 107 course in the fall, and that their fifth class be a language course (modern or classical). We are happy to work with students individually about whether the Bio 107 course is appropriate for them and which language or other elective to choose.

*The Sophomore curriculum is more standard: English, history, chemistry and math (unless past the 90/95 sequence) at BUA, plus language. It is the latter which presents some choice for 10th graders, who may opt to continue with Greek or Latin or to give the Modern Language Pilot program a try. Students are encouraged to seek out their advisor, teachers and the college counselors with any questions they might have.

TAKING RISKS

As the school year marches on, we encourage first-year students to take the occasional risk in their out-of-class involvements. Trying out a new activity or attending an event put on by a club or student group could be an exciting way to develop new interests. A student who never considered themselves an athlete might try out for Ultimate Frisbee, or a student who has always been curious about Model UN might decide to attend one of the club's meetings. How about chess? Our club regularly places high in the state competition and is on the lookout for new talent—both experienced players and those interested in learning!

For first-year students, this kind of extra-curricular risk-taking can open paths to new student friendships, help students discover hidden talents, and perhaps even

FRESHMAN PARENTS

help them learn better time management as additional activities force students to better budget their time.

While we would not want students to get involved in activities solely for the sake of college applications, we do see a few juniors every year who suddenly scramble to join clubs because they realize the "Extra-Curricular Activities" section of their college applications looks fairly slim. College admission officers are trained to understand when a student's involvement in activities is long-standing and genuine, and when it is designed to bolster a resume. When students fill out college applications, they are asked to list several of their most meaningful activities, years and weekly hours of involvement, titles and positions held, and the ones they are likely to continue in college.

Admission officers look for consistency over time, not sudden involvement in clubs in jun-

ior and senior year (though, of course, students sometimes do genuinely develop new interests and involvement in activities in junior or senior year).

If, in a college application, a student is able to point to a few activities that they have been committed to since freshman year, it helps build a picture of a student who consistently pursues an interest and can place a student in a position to possibly gain a leadership position in that activity by senior year.

One of the Academy's strengths is the ease of access to a multitude of activities; there are generally not competitive processes to join clubs here. Students with an interest (and the time!) can try out new activities handily.

Encourage your child to pursue new activities and clubs, develop their passions and interests, and make meaningful out-of-class contributions to the Academy.