

# 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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Check out BUA's comprehensive [College Admission Guidebook!](#)

## F I N A N C I A L A I D F O R C O L L E G E

### IMPORTANT DATES

- January 22 – 8:00-9:30am, GSU Academy lunchroom. Junior Parent Meeting to review senior year curriculum and college counseling program
- February 5 – 6:00-8:00pm College Colloquium, Room 206, BU Photonics Center (8 St. Mary's Street). A presentation for BUA juniors/families about highly selective college admissions by an admission officer from Tufts University
- February 8 – Deadline for juniors to register for March 9 SAT
- February 26 – 8:00-9:30am, GSU Academy lunchroom. Sophomore Parent Meeting to review junior year curriculum and college counseling program

Financial aid for college comes in many forms. The common types of financial aid are need-based financial aid and merit scholarships.

**Need-based financial aid** is aid based on a family's ability to pay for college. The cost of attendance at a private university can be \$70,000 or more, and oftentimes, over half of the student population at these schools is receiving some sort of need-based financial assistance. A need-based financial aid package usually includes some sort of grant (money that does not need to be re-paid), a student loan (money that does need to be repaid), and work study earnings (up to \$2000 per year). At many selective colleges, this is the only type of

financial aid that is offered. Families must complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) in order to determine eligibility for financial aid, and some schools will also ask for the College Scholarship Service (CSS) PROFILE. Students will often be asked to re-apply each year for need-based financial aid, as the amount of demonstrated 'need' each year may vary as tuition increases, and/or family financial circumstances change. In addition, families may find it necessary to secure additional loans to pay for the cost of college.

**"Merit" scholarships** are financial awards given to students for academic, athletic, musical, or other types of 'talent.' Many colleges offer these

types of financial incentives to students to entice them to enroll. Certain scholarships can be tied to participation on an athletic team, maintenance of a certain GPA, involvement in a musical ensemble, etc. Students may also receive merit scholarships directly from a college, or from an outside agency.

We encourage all families who are seeking any type of financial assistance to make note of application deadlines, and fill out all paperwork ahead of time. In addition, if you are seeking need-based financial aid, please do not hesitate to speak with the financial aid office at a college if questions arise. They are there to help you understand that college's financial aid policy.

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## C O L L E G E A D M I S S I O N G U I D E B O O K

The College Admission Guidebook (available on the BUA website, under "Academics", and "College Counseling", click on "Current Families") is meant to complement the range of individual counseling resources offered at BUA. Though lengthy, it details aspects of the college applica-

tion and search process, including: admissions jargon, information about the Common Application, a sample BUA transcript, timelines for juniors and seniors, lists of college visit clusters within geographic regions, and information about financial aid and scholarships.

Though we generally begin meeting formally with families in the second semester of junior year, the Guidebook is available online to all BUA students and families as a resource to help frame family discussions about this process. Questions about the content? Let us know!

## COMPLETING COLLEGE APPS

Seniors are responsible for ensuring each college application is complete. Colleges communicate with applicants via mail, e-mail, or an online web portal about missing credentials. Students should act to ensure any missing credentials are accounted for as quickly as possible.

We send BUA transcripts, school profiles, and recommendation letters for all students. Students must send

official test scores (from their College Board or ACT account), if required. If required, they must also send a BU transcript directly from BU's Registrar's Office.

College admission offices are usually overwhelmed with credentials in the two to three weeks after a stated application deadline; confirmation of an application due January 1st, for example, or of missing credentials, may

take until mid/late January. If, in late January, your child has not yet received a confirmation their application was received—and is complete—the student (not the parent) should let us know and/or contact that admission office. Missing credentials typically don't jeopardize an applicant, though if not completed by late February, that may mean a file is not properly/fully read or deemed incomplete.

### Financial Aid Forms

If your family is applying for need-based financial aid from colleges, be sure to submit the FAFSA (and, if required, the CSS/Profile) ahead of any deadlines (usually late January through mid-February).

### College Counseling Newsletter

## MID-YEAR REPORTS

In late January, we send a "Mid-Year Report" to the colleges at which our students have active applications or have been accepted. Colleges weigh these reports in their evaluation of a Regular Decision applicant's candidacy. Students admitted through an EA or ED program are expected to earn grades consistent with their usual perfor-

mance (as we reminded students throughout the fall).

Mid-Year Reports include a full BUA transcript (with final Fall 2018 grades) as well as a listing of Spring 2019 courses. In addition, we send a cover page with additional comments updating the colleges on recent accolades/achievements of each stu-

dent. We use this as an opportunity to put first semester grades in context and to continue our advocacy for BUA students at each college to which they have applied.

In general, colleges may wait to review a candidate's application for admission until the Mid-Year Report has arrived to complete the application.

## SECOND SEMESTER

It's officially second semester of senior year! BU courses begin on January 22nd, senior seminars re-start that same week at the Academy, and seniors must once again attend ASM each week.

Second semester of senior year feels quite different than first; the stress of completing college applications is over,

the outline and structure of the senior thesis has been established, and the weather eventually thaws. In mid/late March, colleges will announce decisions, thesis deadlines become even more pressing, and high school nostalgia starts to set in.

Please be mindful of your child's completion of their

time with us throughout each of these moments. Some seniors may feel burned out, distracted by the nice weather, or develop a case of senioritis. We want to make sure everyone successfully wraps up their BUA career, graduates, and is able to happily move on to their next educational community.

### College Interviews

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

# JUNIOR PARENTS

## JUNIOR PARENT MEETING

Tuesday, January 22

8:00am–9:30am

Academy lunchroom in GSU

Along with Dr. Rose White, we will host a discussion with junior parents about the college search and application process, standardized testing protocol, the Naviance college counseling database, the transition to the senior year at BUA, and registration for BU courses.

Each winter, we host this meeting as a way of introducing ourselves, sharing information, and answering group-level questions about next steps in the BUA - and college search - experience.

As a group, we will talk about ways to support students through the transition to senior year and to navigate the college search process. We can also set up individual family meetings in the coming

weeks to discuss your child’s process specifically. These meetings are especially helpful after we’ve had our first one-on-one meeting with your student. We hope all junior parents/guardians will be able to attend the meeting on 1/22 (we’ll send notes afterward, if not!), and we look forward to working with you over the next year and a half.

Coffee, tea and light refreshments will be served.

## COLLEGE COLLOQUIUM

Tuesday, February 5

6:00pm–8:00pm

BU Photonics Center, Rm. 206

BUA is hosting its seventh annual College Colloquium—a chance for juniors and their families to hear from an expert in the field of selective college admissions.

An admission officer from the Tufts University Undergraduate Admission Office will provide a

glimpse into the world of highly selective college admissions. We expect that you will learn a great deal about how applications are reviewed by admission officers, how each component of an application figures into the overall process, and how difficult a task admission officers face.

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.

(Please note that this is not a Tufts University information session.)

This annual event is scheduled to coincide with the ‘official’ start of the college search and application process by our juniors, therefore only **junior families** are invited to attend.

## NAVIANCE

We use a web-based program - Naviance - to support college counseling at BUA. Naviance is accessible from any computer, and allows us to help students manage their college application process.

Each BUA junior/senior has an account in Naviance where preliminary, working and final college lists reside at times during the process. Naviance

also provides links to websites and resources about the college process, search tools for colleges, historical data about BUA admission to various colleges and universities, and resume tools.

In junior meeting, and throughout the senior year, we will work with students via Naviance to help them craft resumes, build college lists, sub-

mit credentials to colleges, and keep records of their college visits.

Junior/senior parents will have access to their child’s Naviance record, and parents are asked to complete a lengthy initial survey and be aware of their child’s developing college list. We will discuss Naviance further during the Junior Parent Meeting on January 22.

**This Week: Naviance training**

On Thursday (1/10), Ms. Atkinson did a quick review of the features of Naviance students will frequently use. (Juniors were provided with logon information to Naviance in the fall.) Students viewed the site and received an overview of different college and scholarship search engines as well as historical data on BUA applicants to colleges. Juniors will complete a lengthy survey, due by January 11th. Each student is expected to schedule a one-on-one meeting with us after completion of their survey.

**Up Next: In Weekly Junior Meetings**

On Thursday (1/24), we will show juniors a copy of their transcripts (the form that grades take when they are sent to colleges) and the BUA school profile.

In addition, we will discuss the process of touring college campuses in preparation for any spring break campus visits.

**Spring College Board Test Dates for Juniors**

**March 9**  
SAT only  
(No Subject Tests)

**April 13, June 8, July 13**  
ACT

**May 4 & June 1**  
SAT or  
SAT Subject Tests

## SOPHOMORE PARENTS

BU Academy places a high premium on the academic experience. We want students to actively embrace intellectualism, ideas, and scholarly engagement. When it comes time to submit college applications, this type of “life of the mind” culture becomes a distinguishing factor for our students in the admission process. College admission officers enjoy the fact that our students are not just taking classes for the sake of taking classes; our students, more than most, tend to embrace the pursuit of knowledge. This plays out through the senior thesis experience, classroom discussions, and University course enrollment. Time and again, college admission officers tell us how clearly a student’s “love of learning” comes across in their college essays, interviews, and recommendation letters. To that end, encourage your child to embrace the academic culture and identity of this place, contribute to class discussions, and engage scholarly ideas during their time at BUA.

## SOPHOMORE PARENT MEETING

On Tuesday, February 26th, all sophomore parents are invited to an 8am meeting in the GSU Academy lunchroom with Jill, Ellen, and Rose to discuss some timely aspects of the BUA experience. Specifically, we will talk about the transition to University coursework next 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.

## EXTRA-CURRICULAR INVOLVEMENT

BUA is committed to seeing students involved in a wide variety of extra-curricular pursuits starting in the freshman year. It’s pretty easy to get involved at BUA, whether your interests lie in theater, sports, journalism, creative writing, robotics, science, studio art, music, community service, etc.

All of these involvements will add up to an important component of college applications. College applications ask students to list each of their extra-curricular activities, the years of involvement, average weekly hours of involvement, as well as any leadership roles or notable achievements. At the nation’s most selective colleges and universities, very strong students are often denied admission if they do not have a robust or meaningful extra-curricular profile (in favor of strong students WITH compelling involvement in activities).

## FRESHMAN PARENTS

Colleges are not just looking for the number of clubs in which a student is involved; rather, most colleges would prefer to see a select few manageable commitments to which a student is dedicated and in which they find personal meaning. A student may love theater, so he or she does a few plays/musicals at BUA, some community theater, and ultimately write a senior thesis that is theater-related. Or a talented athlete may play on a BUA team, a club team, and a summer rec league in a single sport. Or a student may love a certain language, so he or she takes University classes in the language, does a homestay overseas in an immersion program, and volunteers at a cultural center in Boston that involves regular use of the language. These kinds of extra-curricular involvements help convey to an admission committee that a student genuinely loves a particular pursuit.

Similarly, a student may not yet know what

their particular interest or strength is, so he/she might play a sport one season, perform in the play the next, write for the literary magazine, and perform plenty of community service. All of that is great and can be important, too.

Don’t underestimate the power of employment, either! Admission officers know that a student who holds a regular job shows responsibility, work ethic, timeliness and other critical skills.

Colleges will generally expect increased extra-curricular involvement and leadership over time. There isn’t one special club or activity which gets more notice by colleges, but rather the culmination of all involvements a student pursues outside of the classroom will help round out an admission file. Colleges want to get a sense of what is important to students outside of the classroom and how those interests may translate into contributions to their own campus community. And extra-curricular activities are a great way to meet new friends!