

NOTES FOR PRESENTERS

OF

THE COLLEGE AWARENESS

PROGRAM

Notes for “Standardized tests”

Standardized Testing: required by the majority of colleges and universities in the United States. The reason is that the school transcript reflects the student’s ranking only in relation to the other students at his or her high school. Some states, including New York, have examinations which rank students in relation to other students in their state. The PSAT, SAT I, SAT II and ACT reflects the student’s ranking in relation to all other college-bound students in the United States. You should emphasize the need for all students to take preparatory courses in how to succeed in these tests. Such courses should be available at the schools and are commercially available.

If students do not take the standardized tests, they eliminate many options for college.

1. PSAT – Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test

- Generally, this test is taken in October of the junior year in high school. The results are sent only to the high school and to the student. The results are scores between 20-80 in both verbal and mathematical areas. This is a predictive test which presumably projects a student’s performance at the college level.

2. SAT I – Scholastic Aptitude Test I

- Also a predictive test presumably projecting how a student will perform in verbal and mathematical areas at the college level. SAT I may be taken as follows:

Junior Year: January, March, April, May and June

Senior Year: October, November, December and January

- Generally, SAT I is first taken in May of Junior Year so that the student will have the results before entering senior year. SAT I may be taken as many times as a student wishes during the senior year with the aim of improving his or her score. Generally, scores do not improve unless tests are taken at least two months apart. Students wishing to apply for early admission will have to take the SAT I prior to the beginning of their Senior Year.
- The SAT I results are scores between 200-800 in both the Verbal and in the Mathematical areas (between 400-1600 cumulative). These scores must be reported to the colleges to which the student applies. Reporting can be done online through the Educational Testing Service. The colleges, in evaluating a student for admission, use the highest score in each area no matter how many times the student has taken the SAT I.

3. SAT II – Scholastic Aptitude Test II

- A test given to evaluate a student’s knowledge in specific areas such as English, history, foreign languages, mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, etc. There is no limit on the number of SAT II tests a student can take. Many colleges and universities require three tests for entrance, one of which must be English. The student may choose the other two.
- We recommend that a student take SAT IIs at the completion of specific subjects such as American history, chemistry and physics and for foreign languages, the last time a student will be studying that language in high school. In subjects such as English and Mathematics, we recommend that a student take the SAT II in English in May of Junior

Year and in Mathematics when the student has completed Algebra II/Trigonometry, Precalculus (Math I) or Calculus (Math II). SAT II examinations may be repeated as desired, e.g., English in May of Junior Year and October or November of Senior Year.

- SAT II examinations are offered as follows (only 3 SAT IIs may be taken at the same sitting):

Junior Year: January, March, April, May and June

Senior Year: October, November, December and January

- Most students take the SAT II in June of Junior Year and also in November or December of Senior Year. The results must be sent to the colleges to which the student applies, online, if desired, through the Educational Testing Service. The student should have English and two other SAT II examination results by the end of Junior Year so that he or she will have enough test results to apply for early admission.

4. ACT – American College Testing Program – Offered 6 times each academic year
September, October, December, February, April, June

- A curriculum-based test that measures academic achievement, with four sections of assessment: English, mathematics, reading, science
- A student may take the ACT exam as many times as he or she wishes. The exam may be taken as early as the winter or spring of Sophomore Year. This is usually done for practice – to get familiar with the test. In Junior Year the ACT is taken in the fall, winter or spring (usually only two times at the most). In Senior Year the ACT may be taken in the fall and winter.
- The results are a Composite Score. The score results must be reported to the colleges to which a student applies.
- We recommend that a student take the ACTs at least once before the end of the Junior Year so that the results will be available in case the student wants to apply to college under an early admission plan.
- ACT may be used for admissions purposes in lieu of the SAT I or SAT II or both at some but not all colleges.

Notes for “What college admissions offices look for”

In general, you can go over the College Admissions Handbook and elaborate on the sections and areas which apply to this. (The students will have been given the Handbook, but may not have studied it.)

Listed below are the areas which probably need elaboration:

Introduction: Section on “What’s Important to the Colleges?” p. 2

1. Testing: The College Advisor will have gone over “Standardized Testing” prior to your session. The Advisor presentation will cover what the test is and when the student should take the test. You should emphasize that in this highly competitive environment, the results of grades, state exams and the standardized testing are all of significance and importance, and the students should do their best to obtain instruction on how to succeed on the standardized testing.

The significant items to be covered:

- Grades –the comparative ranking of each student with other students at his or her high school; reference the Transcript
 - Other State Examinations – the comparative ranking of a student with other students in his/her state.
 - SAT I and SAT II or ACT – the comparative ranking with all American and international students.
2. High School teachers evaluations: It is important to point out the difference between a recommendation (should be a favorable report on the student) and an evaluation (telling the good, but also the weaknesses). This may effectively be put in the form of a question you ask the students.

College Admissions usually request two views:

- Secondary School Report – (in the Handbook) – A letter written in support of the student by the Guidance Department. This is an overall picture of the applicant as a student and as a member of the School community during his/her time at the school.
 - Two Teacher Recommendations – These should be in academic subjects (in the Handbook) – You should give examples of “academic” teachers versus other teachers (coaches, club advisors, etc.)
3. Extra-curricular activities. You should emphasize the importance of these activities:
 - On the application there is a chart on which the student can list clubs and activities, and teams in order of preference and the time devoted to the activity.
 - There also is space in which the student can list activities, jobs, and interest outside of school (e.g., church work, jobs, community service, favorite books).

- Another section on the application is about summer activity. The student should highlight the value of significant experience.

4. Family Background

- This will include factual information (the student's name, address, etc.) and the parents' name, address, where the parents live, and the student's living arrangements (with both, mother/father, etc.), and the family's educational background.
- You should emphasize that colleges want everyone possible to obtain education. That a student would be the first in his or her family to attend college would likely be regarded favorably by Admissions Committees.

5. What has the applicant has to say about him/herself – “Who you are”

- This is the only opportunity the applicant has to talk about him or herself.
- This is the applicant's opportunity to demonstrate what is special about him or her which would make attendance at the college something interesting or special in some fashion.
- You at this point should explain about the essay writing workshops as part of scheduled English classes in spring to help writing this kind of essay.

Notes for “How to develop a list of colleges and how to apply”.

There are many resources available to find out about colleges so that a student can determine whether he or she wants to go to college and what could be the right college.

Some guidelines for college research:

1. Information from friends and family. Students should ask their friends and family about their experiences, likes and dislikes, the value of the preparation they received, how they adjusted socially, what the college experience was like, etc.
2. At a student’s High School
 - The College Guidance Office – There are “Guides to the Colleges”: usually categorized by four and two year colleges (a Bachelor’s degree or an Associate degree), and within these categories, arranged alphabetically by state.
 - The School or Public Library – there is usually an entire section devoted to colleges. They usually have both general guides (The College Handbook, Stanley Kaplan’s Guide) and catalogues and brochures from individual colleges as well as videos/dvds which the colleges have supplied. These are valuable resources. Another important reference in the C.E.E.B.’s Index to Majors – in this students can look up by the subjects they may want to study; The Index lists every college in the country, by state, that offers particular majors.
 - Graduates of the student’s High School who currently are in college. Graduates return on vacation to visit and students can arrange to talk with them; students should ask the Principal, Guidance Counselors or other teachers for the names of some recent graduates who are attending a college in which they are interested.
3. Explore the Internet
 - Web sites are available for general research on colleges.
 - Individual colleges have virtual tours and you can send for brochures and Information via the Internet.
4. What to read about in the catalogues and brochures:
 - The subjects offered for study
 - The extra curricular activities available (e.g., teams, clubs, band, newspapers, singing groups, social organizations, etc.)
 - Is Study Abroad (1 term/1 year) available at a college:
 - Size of the college (small 500-5,000; medium 5,000-10,000; large 10,000-30,000)
 - Location of the college (city, rural, suburban)
 - Living situation (residence halls, etc.)
 - Financial Aid (what % of the student body on financial aid?) This tells you to some extent how much is available and how diverse the student body is.

Notes for “The Application Folder, letters of recommendation”

For RO56 Representative

THIS COULD MAKE THE ENTIRE DIFFERENCE IN COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE!

Beyond the requirements of the college for entrance (application Parts I and II, Secondary School Report, Teacher Recommendations, Standardized Test Results and Transcript) there are other items which can be included and sent to the college which will add to its understanding of the applicant. This information can be vital in determining the decision of the College Admissions Committee.

1. Additional support letters. There is an expression that the College Admissions Officers use for too many support letters: “The thicker the folder, the thicker the applicant!” This means that every additional support letter should represent a different aspect of the student. Any letter that repeats should not be included.
 - From coaches, club and activity advisors. Helpful in giving an additional dimension to the student and as a member of the school community. The student must ask the person involved, give them a stamped, addressed envelope for each college, the deadline (when it is due); they will send it.
 - From activities outside of school (church work, community service, part-time jobs, baby sitting, summer internships or jobs, etc.) Helpful in understanding another aspect of the student. The request should be made well in advance (and preferably, if a job, at the end of the job or internship) The request will be made for 5-10 copies of the recommendation in sealed envelopes which the student can address and mail to the colleges.
 - Letters from someone who is attending or has attended a college to which application is being made. Helpful in that the writer knows the student and the college and say he or she thinks it would be a good “match”. The person must be approached well in advance. The student should furnish a list of extracurricular activities and interests as well as the course of study. The student shall provide a stamped, addressed envelope to send the letter.
2. Extra-curricular information which will add to the Admissions Committee’s understanding of the student
 - Athletics – If the student is a member of a school team or plays with an outside team, get as much information about the team’s or his or her record. This information should accompany the application.
 - The Arts – If the student has been in music, dance or drama performances, send a videotape with the application. If there is no videotape, a written “resume” of the performances with the date and the content of the program should be sent. If the student is an artist, he or she shall list some of the exhibits where the art or photography has been shown, and send colored slides of the work.
 - Clubs and other activities – Clippings from the school newspaper or church bulletins that illustrate the student’s participation can be added to the college application.
 - Visiting the College or having interviews with graduates – The student should visit the college if at all possible. The student should request an appointment for a tour and a group

session or a meeting with an individual member of the Admissions Office. A visit is important because the college will know that the applicant has shown a real interest and made an effort to understand the college and because the applicant will understand better whether the college he or she visits is a place he or she wants to spend four years.

- If a visit is not possible, the applicant should contact the Admissions Office and request a meeting with a graduate (alumnus/alumna) in his or her area. This also would be an important demonstration of the applicant's interest and a learning experience for the applicant.

Notes for “Financial Aid”

For RO56 Representative

The basic information and financial aid availability should be covered in the Junior year and in the fall of the Senior year. Show part of the video on financial aid at the beginning of the fall session.

1. Purpose of Financial Aid: The colleges want to make it possible for all students who wish a college education and who are eligible to attend college. Approximately 70% of students attending college today receive some kind of financial aid.
2. How Financial Aid Works – All colleges require financial aid forms. Some required only one form FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and others also require the CSS – FAF (College Scholarship Service Financial Aid Profile). In addition, each college has its own financial aid form which is sent directly to the college Financial Aid Office.
3. Other Necessary Material – In addition to the financial aid form itself, the student is required to submit the family 1040 Federal Income Tax Form as well as listing other assets he/she may have.
4. General Timetable and Guidelines for Obtaining Financial Aid:
 - Apply Early in the fall of the Senior year. There are specific deadlines to meet for each of the various forms: FAFSA (get from College Guidance office; it comes in around October. This cannot be submitted until after January 1 of the Senior year; CSS Profile (get from College Guidance Office or on-line) submit this as early as October to get the results. College Financial Aid Form This should be submitted with the student’s application.
 - Student financial aid package will be offered when the student is accepted at a college. Usually there is a deadline by which the student has to let the college know whether he/she is accepting the package.
 - Amount of financial aid package – If there is a problem with the amount of financial aid offered, the student should be in communication with the college financial aid office to discuss it. It is up to the student or his or her parents to take the initiative, and they should not be shy about asking for more help if the package offered is inadequate. Acceptance of a student means the college really wants the student, and generally the colleges work hard to make sure those they accept can come.
5. Research web sites on Financial Aid Sources – Refer to the College Admissions Handbook to find out about web sites.

Notes for “The essay”

For: The English Department for its use in their planning the Writing Workshop on College Essay

1. This is the only opportunity in the entire college admissions process that the student has an opportunity to speak for himself or herself. (All other information which goes into the application is someone else’s evaluation of student (i.e., test, grades, recommendations, standardized testing, etc.)
2. It is important to remember that the reader has only a short time to read the essay. (Generally, the reading load of the admissions’ readers is 3,000—3,500 folders in about six weeks)
 - a. The length is important. If the directions say one page or 500 words, then the admissions committee means it.
 - b. There is a fine line between having the reader immediately involved through a catching first sentence and not thinking the essay is “weird”.
3. The essay is the only means to distinguish the student as an individual from other applicants with similar grades, record, scores from a similar kind of school.
4. The Admissions Committee should feel that it knows the applicant as a person as a result of reading the essay.
5. Topics for the essays vary and some ask for just a personal statement, but even with these there should be a thesis for the essay which tells about the student.
6. The essay should not be a personal catharsis. Avoid the three Ds; death, divorce and disaster as topics – these catch the writer up in the subject matter and do not leave an opportunity to let the admissions committee learn about the writer.
7. A helpful approach is to go over the essay and ask “So what?” about every sentence. This will help the student tighten up the essay and make every phrase count.
8. A good way to avoid being generic is to individualize through the use of specific illustration and detail.
9. The Admissions Office makes an admissions profile for each student indicating their grade point average, a summary of their extracurricular activities and any academic Honors they have attained. This is the only information the entire committee sees before they all vote. The admissions person presenting the applicant to the committee is the only person who presumably reads the entire folder, including the essay. This is why the essay is so important, to create an understanding of the individual.