

Saint Saviour High School: a guide to the college application process for the Class of 2012

Getting Started!

Here we are! It's the beginning of your final year of high school - a year that could be the most interesting, exciting and productive of your school career. Regents exams are behind you and you must look upon the year ahead as one in which you lay the ground work for your first year in college. Your immediate task is to put together a list, long or short, of colleges. In planning this be practical: choose one or two "reach" schools (ones that may be just beyond your grasp); one or two for which your GPA and SATs are comfortably in range; one or two safety schools—i.e. colleges that are financially and academically well within range.

Does Senior Year Matter?

Yes, very much so. Although colleges make their *initial* assessment of your application on the basis of your 9th, 10th and 11th grade GPA, senior year is academically critical in two ways:

- 1.) It allows colleges to see the demanding nature of your coursework. This is why we've pushed you into hard classes, required you to take math yet again and insisted that you take six major subjects.
- 2.) ***Your senior grades are critical in determining your eligibility for college acceptance.*** Most colleges require that we send your first semester grades early in February - before they make a decision on your application. Some, like U.Delaware, inform students that if their first and second semester senior year grades are significantly lower than their junior grades their admission may be revoked. Senior year is not more difficult than junior year and there is no reason why you should not be able to maintain or improve upon your current grades.

Some Do's and Don'ts:

Do have that "financial" talk with your parents that we recommended in June. It's really important for you to understand how much money is available for college. If your parents attended the college info night at SSHS last November, they have a copy of Affording College, a booklet that allows them to calculate how much financial aid you are likely to receive in college and, most importantly, what portion of that will be offered in the form of loans that must be repaid. However, you can also access that information at www.collegeboard.com by clicking on their financial estimator.

Don't have just one "dream" school; have five or six. Remember, you may not get into the college that you've been dreaming of for the past three years. Or, you may get in, but not be able to afford to attend. There are many schools at which you can receive a wonderful education and be extremely happy.

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Do ask friends or family who have had experience with college for information but **don't** be overly influenced by their views - particularly if it has been several years since their contact with a particular university. You must form good judgments based on sound information and a good knowledge and understanding of your own needs and preferences.

If you haven't done so already, register online (it's free) with *fastweb.com* or one or more of the scholarship websites that I gave you last year – also listed on P.10 below.

Apply for scholarships and, very important, find out if your parents belong to a union, professional association or ethnic organization that offers college funding.

Don't dismiss good or useful possibilities because of prejudice. Look at women's colleges—they get great reviews from their students, because they offer lots of support, build confidence, present leadership and other opportunities, and - it's a myth that you don't meet men if you attend one! Similarly, students are often unwilling to apply to two-year colleges even when it makes perfect sense to do so. We have some interesting articles in the Guidance office on this subject.

Do get as much information as possible about the programs of study at each college that you research.

--Visit the college (use that list of questions that I gave you in June to form as full a picture as possible of campus life).

--Use the internet

--Check out the college catalogs on the guidance bookshelf. These books contain full and detailed information on all courses of study, majors and minors offered by the college.

--College guides, available in bookstores, are useful. Some are highly subjective and opinionated. Just because a particular reviewer likes/dislikes a college doesn't mean that you will feel the same way. Nevertheless, some, like *US News and World Report*, offer useful statistics on costs, graduation rates, ethnic diversity, average SAT requirements, etc. Others, *The Princeton Review Guide to Colleges*, *Fiske Guide to Colleges*, (particularly good) and others, aim to give you a flavor of student life at each college. (Please refer to the list of useful publications on p.10 of this booklet).

SAT II Subject Tests:

Do find out if your college requires SAT II subject tests **and**, very important, if you have to arrange for your SAT I scores to be sent directly from the College Board to the college. Most institutions accept the SAT scores as they are reported on the transcript; some, however, insist on direct reporting and that is *your responsibility*.

Help! How Will I Know What to Do?

Don't worry! We will move through the steps in a systematic way and if you complete each one at the proper time, everything will fall easily into place. The following specific tools are designed to move you smoothly through the college application process:

- Your counselor (Mrs. Montes or Mrs. D'Emic) will meet with each of you during the month of September. We will follow up on our spring discussions, review your junior year grades and SAT scores, narrow down the list of colleges that you've been considering and draw up a final plan of action.

Our guidance classes during **the fall** will focus on the admissions process and cover the following topics:

- ✓ How to choose a college.
 - ✓ Sizing yourself up—deciding what you want.
 - ✓ Writing the college essay: we will devote class time to this subject during which you will receive some very helpful materials. Ms. Caughey has generously offered to make herself available during the fall, to any student who needs help with her essay. Remember girls, you must write the essay yourselves. College admissions offices know immediately if well-meaning parents or another adult have done it for you—definitely a bad idea and highly unethical!
 - ✓ Putting the application together: how to “package” yourself well.
 - ✓ Looking at Financial Aid—how does the process work? A to Z explanation. *See Financial Aid note below (p.7)
 - ✓ Different types of colleges: Public vs. Private; women's colleges, two-year colleges; specialized colleges.
 - ✓ Looking at career tracks: how might that influence your choice of college?
- During the **spring semester**, our guidance classes will focus on preparing for college and will specifically cover the following topics:
 - ✓ Time management
 - ✓ Study skills for college: note-taking, getting organized, etc.
 - ✓ Living away from home/ living at home: what adjustments need to be made in freshman year?
 - ✓ Papers; examinations in college; the syllabus; advisors; the core curriculum.
 - ✓ Social life in college.

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YOUR COLLEGE APPLICATION

Applications fall into 4 broad categories and you may be submitting one or all of the following:

1. **Private Colleges:** (e.g. NYU, Brown, Manhattan College, St. John's U. Fordham, St. Francis College..... and so on)
All of these offer the possibility of submitting the application on-line or on paper. Sometimes the application fee is waived if submitted on line so be sure to check the college website for this. The application fee (if there is one) is then paid by credit card – or you may be allowed to send a separate check.
2. **SUNY – the State University of New York** (Binghamton, Stony Brook, Oneonta, New Paltz, F.I.T. and many others – all described in the SUNY view book of which you will receive a copy)

SUNY applications usually involve 2 steps:

- a) the completion of a simple application form on line, along with the application fee – payable by credit card. If you don't wish to use a credit card you can obtain a paper app. form in Guidance.
 - b) in most cases, the additional submission of a supplemental application form, with essay, resume and letter of recommendation to each individual SUNY campus to which you have applied.
3. **CUNY – the City University of New York** (Hunter, Brooklyn, Baruch, CCNY, CSI, Kingsborough....and others – all described in the CUNY books available in Guidance)
The regular admissions application may be completed on-line only at www.cuny.edu/apply. The application is simple and straightforward and DOES NOT require essays, resumes or recommendations. The flat fee of \$65 allows you to apply to up to 6 colleges in the CUNY system. You should list them in order of preference.

The MACAULEY HONORS COLLEGE application is also accessed on this website but are more complicated than the regular admissions application. Please speak to your counselor if you are interested in this.

4. **State Colleges outside of New York** (Rutgers, U.Conn., U. Delaware, Montclair State....and many others)

In filing these please follow the directions from the individual websites. Some require essays, resumes and recommendations; others do not.

Filing the Application:

EVERY APPLICATION MUST BE PROCESSED THROUGH THE GUIDANCE OFFICE.

There are 2 critical steps to be followed by you for each and every application that you plan to submit:

1. You must complete the application CAREFULLY, paying special attention to your spelling, grammar and punctuation. Proof-read, proof-read, proof-read – a bad impression created on the application can hurt your chances of acceptance. Get someone else to help you read it over but make sure that whoever you ask is competent to pick up your errors!

The essay may be submitted on-line but sometimes you are given the option of mailing it. Again, have someone read it before you submit – your English teacher or guidance counselor will be happy to help.

You will always need the following information:

School Code/CEEB Code: 330865

**Guidance Counselor: Mrs. M. D’Emic
or
Mrs. Y. Montes**

**School Address: 588 6th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215
Tel: (718) 768-4980
Fax: (718) 369-2688**

Usually optional: your social security #

You are often asked to list the subjects that you are taking in senior year (“Courses in Progress”) and to indicate whether they are one or two semester courses.

Very Important: as soon as you submit each on-line application you must give your guidance counselor the following:

- a large (9x12 or 10x13) envelope addressed to the college with 4 stamps.
- a copy of your extra-curricular activity sheet (resume)

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- any counselor recommendation forms (also called the Secondary School Report) that are attached to the application.
- your essay, if you are submitting it by mail.
- a \$2.00 transcript fee (check or cash) payable to SSHS to cover the administrative costs – photocopying, telephone calls etc. – associated with application processing.

Receipt of the items above is an indication to us in the guidance office that you have applied to the college and **we** then mail the supporting documents to complete your application. These include your transcript, the school profile, your SAT/ACT scores, your recommendations and any other required documentation.

Recommendation Forms:

More and more colleges now request that teachers and guidance counselors complete recommendation forms, in addition to the actual letters that they have already written on your behalf.

When you see teacher/counselor forms with the on-line application, **print them out.** Complete the upper portion with your name, address etc. and then give it to the teacher who wrote your letter of recommendation – with the request that she/he complete it and give it directly to the your guidance counselor.

Copies of the School Report, Mid-Year Grade Report and Final Report must be given to Guidance.

A Word on SAT's and the ACT:

Most colleges require students to submit scores from either the SAT I or the ACT. In many cases these colleges will accept the score report that is sent along with your high school transcript. However, a number of institutions particularly the highly selective colleges and universities, request that the scores be reported directly to them from the testing agency itself. **It is your responsibility** to find out your college's policy in this regard and to make arrangements accordingly; in short, to see whether or not you must have the scores reported directly.

Colleges will almost always accept **either** the SAT I or the ACT. The tests differ in their scope and focus. While the SAT I is a measure of reasoning ability in the areas of Critical Reading and Math, with an additional Writing

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Skills component, the ACT focuses on the content of what you have learned in English, Math, and Science with an additional (optional) essay section. (Some institutions require you to submit scores from the essay section also, so check your college's policy on this.) Students who find the SAT I particularly difficult and who find that their scores on the test fail, significantly, to reflect their abilities may discover that they perform better on the ACT. We have a conversion chart in the guidance office that will help you in comparing SAT I and ACT scores.

SAT II Subject Tests are required by some of the most selective colleges. Once again, it is your responsibility to find out if your college requires them. Please speak to one of us in the Guidance Office for advice on scheduling the tests, and on which ones to take.

Although all juniors and seniors will sit for the SAT I (and some for the ACT) *not all colleges require you to submit test scores*. This knowledge may be particularly consoling to those of you who “hate the test” – and the scores! You may find a list of those colleges at www.fairtest.org. Remember, however, that when SAT scores are out of the reckoning, other components of your application become even more important.

Fee Waivers are available for the SAT tests and all students from low-income families should check their eligibility to receive them. The guidelines are available in the Guidance Office, or at www.collegeboard.com. Since eligible students also receive 4 fee waivers for private college applications this is a very valuable package and no student should ignore the opportunity. Because we, as guidance counselors, must sign a document verifying eligibility, we have to request **written proof** of the fact that the family income falls within the guidelines laid down by the College Board. Please contact the Guidance Office for more information.

A Brief Note on Financial Aid Forms:

The most important Financial Aid worksheet (the FAFSA) will be distributed to every student in December. You *cannot* file this form until **after January 1, 2012** at which time you should submit the form on-line Even if you believe that you are not eligible for aid you should file this form because many colleges require it on file before they award merit scholarships.

The CSS Profile: *Some* colleges require this form (available online or in guidance). You file it **only** if your college requires it because there is a submission fee to be paid for each college to which you are sending it. The CSS form should be filed during the fall and definitely not later than Jan. 15. *If you fail to submit this form to a college that uses it you will receive less financial aid than you should.*

A word of warning: Colleges do run out of money for financial aid and therefore you and your parents MUST APPLY ON THE FAFSA AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE IN JANUARY 2012. **Don't wait for your W-2. Estimate your 2010 income—you can make corrections later.**

Date to Remember: Monday, December 5 at 6:30 p.m.—a financial aid meeting for senior parents that covers all forms of aid for college along with directions for completion of the applications for financial aid.

The Common Application

There has been an increasing trend in recent years among colleges to allow students to complete a single application - termed the **Common Application**. You may submit photocopies of this application to participating colleges. The process is straightforward, but the following information may be helpful:

- 1) You can download the application (you will need Adobe) on the Common Application website.
- 2) You can find out whether or not your college accepts the form by checking out the college website or the common application website.
- 3) **Deal with the forms on the common application as follows:**
Your application: Complete it *once* – then submit to as many colleges as you wish or, if mailing, print as many copies as necessary.
Teacher Recommendation: give one copy to the teacher(s) who wrote your recommendation. He/she will complete it and give it to your counselor; we will then copy it and include it with each of your common applications
The Secondary School Report and the Mid-Year Grade Report: Give them to guidance. **One copy only is required.**

Of course, you must treat the common application just the same as any other—give your guidance counselor a stamped addressed envelope with the essay, activity sheet, and transcript fee.

Deadlines:

All applications for CUNY and SUNY schools must be submitted to the Guidance office by **Monday, November 7, 2011**. These applications are easy to complete and meeting this deadline should pose no problem for any student.

All other applications submitted to the Guidance office by **Thursday, December 1, 2011** will be processed and mailed out before January 1. Applications received by the guidance counselors after December 1 will be processed and mailed when we return to school in January.

These deadlines are strictly adhered to each year. Please do not ask us to make exceptions. Regardless of the deadlines outlined above, you must submit any application to the guidance office at least **two weeks** before it is due in the college admissions office.

Colleges operate in a variety of ways when it comes to accepting applications from students and you should be familiar with the following terms:

- **Rolling Admissions:** Colleges that operate a rolling admissions system accept applications all year round and do not have a specific deadline. They process your application as soon as they receive it and give you a decision within weeks. *For colleges with rolling admissions you must apply early in senior year because places may get filled up quickly.*
- **Early Action:** Early Action is an admissions policy under which you apply during the fall, usually by a date in November, and receive a decision by the college sometime in December. If accepted, you have until May 1 to make up your mind—and you may continue with applications to other colleges or universities in the meantime.
- **Early Decision:** This process works in much the same way as early action as far as application and acceptance dates are concerned. However, the similarity ends there. Under early decision, you must decide in December whether or not to accept the offer of a place. Once you have accepted, that decision is **binding**; you must withdraw all other applications **at once**. You are committed to attending the college even if you don't know what kind of financial aid, if any, you will receive.
For a number of reasons *early decision is risky* and is **not recommended** for most students. Simply put, you must know, without doubt, that you **want** and **can afford** to attend your chosen college.
- *A note on Early Action and Early Decision:* You should consider the option only if your application is as good as it's going to get by the initial application date. For example, if the application deadline is November 1, SAT scores received after that date **will not be considered**. If your application is denied,

in most cases it will be reconsidered at a later date under the regular admissions process—at which time new information (SAT scores, senior year grades, etc. will be reviewed).

A Note to Student Athletes:

If you want to play in college you must register with the N.C.A.A. Clearinghouse. College coaches cannot consider you unless you have registered. Please see Mr. Atanasio for registration information – you can complete the forms on-line. You should also speak to your coach who can be helpful in making contacts among the colleges.

A final word:

In the course of the year, in addition to the guidance office resources, you will receive from us many useful, free publications on preparing for college, and on the application process itself. Read them! Students who take responsibility for getting themselves in gear for going to university are far more likely to succeed than those who simply “muddle through”. Good information is the key to good decision-making. ***Above all*** – stay calm! This process will play out in a smooth and successful way as the year goes on. If you begin to work on your applications early you will avoid stress for you and your parents and you’ll definitely feel happier and more confident about the whole experience.

Useful Websites:

Exploring College Options: www.collegeboard.com
www.catholiccollegesonline.com (Catholic Colleges Association)
www.collegeview.com College View – Virtual tours, electronic applications,
 scholarships, financial aid info – and more
www.review.com (The Princeton review)
www.kaplan.com (Kaplan)

Financial Aid/Scholarships/Miscellaneous

www.finaid.org www.fastweb.com
www.ncaa.org www.freschinfo.com