

Saint Saviour High School: a guide to the college application process for the Class of 2017

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.

HEOP: Parents and students please read this now – HEOP (Higher Education Opportunity Program) is a NYS college admissions program for students from low income families. Please check the guidelines: www.heop.org ; click on Guideline and Requirement and scroll down to see the income guidelines. If you are eligible, this can make a huge difference to the cost of a college education – so please contact the guidance office and speak to us.

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 information on how to calculate the amount of financial aid you are likely to receive in college and, most importantly, what portion of that will be offered in loans that will

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have to be repaid. However, you can also access that information at www.collegeboard.org 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.

Do use **Naviance** as your research tool for colleges and scholarships. For additional information ask friends or family who have had experience with various colleges 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*. **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 academic and financial 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 (we have a list of questions available in the guidance office that will help you to come away from a visit with the information you need).

--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. (Word of warning: **avoid getting "hung up" on rankings – they often mean very little**). Others, *The Princeton Review Guide to Colleges*, *Fiske Guide to Colleges*, (particularly good), *The Insider's Guide to the Colleges* 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.

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SAT's and the ACT:

Most colleges require students to submit scores from either the ACT or the SAT. It is not necessary to take both.

The tests differ in their scope and focus. While the SAT is a measure of reasoning ability in the areas of Critical Reading, Writing, and Math, with an additional (optional) essay, the ACT focuses on the content of what you have learned in English, Math, and Science with an additional (optional) essay section. (Only some institutions require you to submit scores from the essay section also, so check your college's policy on this on their website). We have a conversion chart in the guidance office that will help you in comparing SAT and ACT scores.

SAT Subject Tests are required by **some** of the most selective colleges. 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 which ones to take.

Although all juniors and seniors will sit for the ACT (and some for the SAT) ***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 ACT or SAT scores are out of the reckoning, other components of your application become even more important.

Fee Waivers are available for the ACT and 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 college 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.

4.

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 these colleges allow you to submit your application on-line, the majority through the Common Application (see below). This is by far the most effective way of applying. 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. You should complete these on-line. Most, but not all, SUNY schools use the Common Application.
3. **CUNY – the City University of New York as well as the Macaulay Honors College of CUNY** (Hunter, Brooklyn, Baruch, CCNY, CSI, Kingsborough....and others – all described in the CUNY books available in Guidance). Must be done on-line but NOT by Common Application. **IF YOU ARE APPLYING ONLY TO CUNY SKIP NOW TO PAGE 6, BELOW.**
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. Some use the Common App; others, like Penn State, do not.

Information for your Application:

You will always need the following information:

School Code/CEEB Code: 330865
Guidance Counselor/Advisor: Mrs. M. D'Emic
School Address: 588 6th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215
Tel: (718) 768-4980 Fax: (718) 369-2688

Usually optional: your social security #.

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HOW TO COMPLETE AN APPLICATION

Applying to a private college: The Common Application

Hundreds of private colleges, as well as many state colleges across the US now use the Common Application (www.commonapp.org). To set up a Common Application account, log onto Naviance, click onto Colleges I'm Applying To, and follow the directions there.

You will complete all parts of the Common Application ONCE, listing the colleges to which you intend to submit the application. Remember, you may only send this application to colleges that participate in the Common Application. When you've completed the form, save it and you may submit to each college separately when you are ready.

During the month of September we will go through the steps together in our one-on-one guidance sessions. Everything will become clear then!

Paying the application fee: each college requires a separate application fee (some are free, especially if you are applying on-line). You are requested to pay the fee at time of submission. You may pay by credit card or by check or, if you had a **fee waiver** for the SAT in the spring or fall, you will use one of the 4 college application fee waivers that you receive from the College Board.

The Essay: As you complete the application you will upload your essay (the same one goes to each college on the Common App), which you will have saved already in your own documents. Since the Common App now places a strict limit on the length of the essay, you will pay particular attention to that at the time of writing.

Extra-Curricular Activities: Use the resume you created in the spring for completion of this section.

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. Your teachers will submit their recommendations for you on-line, through Naviance.

However, it is your responsibility to ask your teacher for that recommendation, to invite that teacher on Naviance, and to ensure that she/he knows that the recommendation has been REQUESTED by you. Your counselor will be happy to help you complete these steps; it's easier than it sounds!

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What Next?

So, you've completed the Common Application; you've written and uploaded the essay; you've paid the application fee and submitted the form to one or more colleges.

Are you done? **NO!** Every application must be finally processed through the guidance office so there are **TWO** further steps:

1. - the **Supplement to the Common Application**: because each college receives precisely the same application from you, each one now asks you to complete a short supplementary form on which you may be asked to say why you've chosen to apply specifically to that college. Take the supplementary form seriously because the college will use it to determine how well you've thought out your reasons for applying there, and how good a **"fit"** you think it is for you. Just as you don't want to be thought of as "just a number", no college wants to be considered "just number 4" on your list of common applications.

2. – **if** you are submitting the Common App and because all your recommenders are submitting their forms and letters on-line through Naviance, the remainder of the application will be submitted electronically and you don't need to take further action.

However, in keeping with your responsibility to ensure that everything has been completed properly, you should follow up with your counselor and recommender(s) to make sure that we have actually received the on-line requests to submit materials on your behalf.

HAVING ALL YOUR COLLEGES LISTED ON YOUR NAVIANCE ACCOUNT IS THE SUREST GUARANTEE THAT YOUR COUNSELOR KNOWS WHERE YOU'RE APPLYING AND WHERE TO SEND YOUR DOCUMENTS.

How to Apply to CUNY [Macaulay applicants please consult Mrs. D'Emic separately]

Submitting an application to CUNY is simple and straightforward. No resume is required and you should follow these steps:

Access the form at www.cuny.edu/apply.

Create an account (user id + password)

Click on General Freshman Admissions

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Complete the form which allows you to list up to 6 colleges/majors in order of your preference – all for one fee of \$65.00.

Submit!

Immediately upon submission you will be invited to print out a copy of the completed form (which you'll keep for your records) along with the following

- (a) the Document Return receipt
- (b) the Transcript Request Form
- and, if you haven't paid on-line, (c) the Payment Return Receipt.

Address and stamp (3 stamps for a CUNY application) a large envelope (9x12) to the address you are given on the form. Place forms (a), (b), and (c) in the envelope and give it to your guidance counselor.

The entire process takes less than 40 minutes. Simple!

A few CUNY colleges allow you, if you wish, to submit an essay LATER in the application process.

How to Apply to SUNY

There are two ways of applying to SUNY

Using the Common Application – following all directions above, listing individual SUNY schools – e.g. Binghamton U., Stony Brook etc. as recipients. Do not, however, use the Common App for FIT.

OR

Using the SUNY app: www.suny.edu/student. This is quite a simple and short procedure – much shorter than the Common App so, unless you're using the CA anyway for other non-SUNY colleges, use this form, which involves 2 steps:

1. The completion of an application form on-line, along with the application fee – payable by credit card. Students from low income families are eligible to apply for fee waivers. Please refer to the SUNY guidebook for further details.
2. In most cases you must also submit a supplemental application form, with an essay, resume, and letter of recommendation to each individual SUNY campus to which you have applied. Each college posts this form on its website.

Be aware of the fact that SUNY charges an application fee of \$50.00 PER COLLEGE so choose carefully. Research programs and entry requirements before you begin.

Deadlines:

All applications for CUNY must be submitted to the Guidance office by **Thursday, November 10th**. These applications are easy to complete and meeting this deadline should pose no problem for any student.

All other applications should be completed by **December 1st at the latest**. Many colleges will fill places as they receive applications so it's completely in your interest to move smartly with this process.

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, your 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, ACT or 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 (ACT/SAT scores, senior year grades, etc. will be reviewed).

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PLEASE TELL US **TWO WEEKS** AHEAD OF TIME, IF YOU PLAN TO APPLY EARLY ACTION OR EARLY DECISION; WE NEED TIME ALSO TO PREPARE YOUR APPLICATION MATERIALS.

A Brief Note on Financial Aid Forms:

The most important Financial Aid worksheet (the FAFSA) will be distributed to every student in September. You may file this form anytime **after October 1st**. Even if you believe that you are not eligible for aid you should submit the application because many colleges require it on file before they award merit scholarships.

The CSS Profile: *Some* colleges require this form (available online only).

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.* The easiest way to access this form is to google “CSS Profile” and connect to the first link that comes up.

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. They should use the tax information they filed last April in completing the form.**

Date to Remember: *Wednesday, September 28th 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.*

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 Ms. Comerford 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.

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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.org

www.fairtest.org provides a full list of all colleges that **do not** require SAT or ACT scores.

www.catholiccollegesonline.com (Catholic Colleges Association)

www.review.com (The Princeton review)

www.kaplan.com (Kaplan)

Financial Aid/Scholarships/Miscellaneous

www.finaid.org (the best information resource on financial aid)

www.ncaa.org

www.fastweb.com (the largest database of scholarships)

www.finaid.org/scholarships/unusual.phtml

Scholarship Publications:

Tanabe, Gen. *The Ultimate Scholarship Book*

Kaplan Scholarships

Copies of both these books may be found in the school library.