



Academy of the Holy Names College Guidance Handbook

GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT

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Our Purpose:

The Academy of the Holy Names Guidance Department strives to address the “whole” person—spiritually, socially and academically. The guidance program is designed to meet the needs of the students in a developmental approach over four years of high school. Through small group and individual guidance sessions, students are assisted in building a system of values and decision-making processes which provide the foundation for personal choices, career search and college selection.

The Academy of the Holy Names views higher education as further preparation for life. Though still not the “real world,” college gives students a broader arena in which to continue maturing. The search for the right college or university involves the need to look at the values, strengths and goals of each young woman.

This handbook is intended to be an informational tool for students and parents to refer to as they plan for the future.

Our Roles:

College Counselors

As a college preparatory school, the Academy of the Holy Names encourages each young woman to seek colleges and universities where she can be challenged to reach her potential and to be successful both academically and personally. While the college counselors suggest schools which are appropriate to the student’s needs and abilities, the decision to apply to and to attend a particular college rests with the student and her parents. Overall, the student is responsible for conducting her own search, completing applications and meeting deadlines. The College Counseling Department will provide the student with the necessary support and assistance to be successful throughout the college planning process.

The college counselors advise students throughout the standardized testing process including the PLAN, PSAT, SAT Reasoning Test and subject tests, ACT, and Advanced Placement Testing. They host an annual BAIS (Bay Area Association of Independent Schools) College Fair in collaboration with the other Tampa Bay private schools. They coordinate an annual Case Studies Program for juniors and their parents, in conjunction with their FCIS (Florida Counsel of Independent Schools) counterparts, which brings more than 60 heads of admission from across the U.S. to meet with our families in a mock admission program. The counselors hold annual meetings for parents of freshmen and sophomores to introduce the curriculum and the course placement and selection procedures. These meetings serve as springboards for creating an academic strategy leading up to the college admissions process. The college counselors give presentations regarding the college planning process to the juniors, seniors, and their parents. The counselors meet with students throughout their four years at the Academy.

The College Counseling Department hosts representatives from various colleges and universities in order to provide the students with the valuable opportunity to make one-on-one contact with specific colleges. The counselors monitor the college application process and submit each student’s official transcripts, letters of recommendation and any other appropriate documents to colleges and to scholarship services. The counseling department hosts an annual financial aid workshop for parents of seniors. The college counselors welcome all phone calls and they are available for individual meetings by appointment. Students are encouraged to take advantage of the college counseling department’s resources.

Guidance Counselors

The personal guidance counselors provide a program that is developmental and preventive. The program is characterized by outreach as well as availability. Students meet individually with a counselor, and when appropriate, in groups, and are provided the opportunity to receive immediate attention to their needs through an open-door policy.

The personal counselors deal with issues such as motivation, interpersonal relationship skills, self-concept and self-awareness, decision-making, academic progress, conflict resolution, and when necessary, situational and crisis adjustment. The personal counselors make themselves available for individual conferences with parents and they organize group conferences with parents and teachers when needed. Teachers have the opportunity to make referrals to the personal counselors.

The counseling program contains a career component for guiding students through the process of self-exploration in order to gain self-understanding, confidence and purpose, in order to aid the students in their career choices. Students are invited to make individual appointments for career counseling. Personal assessment testing and career testing are also available.

The counseling program is set up to provide a comprehensive guidance curriculum that supports each student's unique desires and needs, challenges her to become her best self, and prepares her for the future. All of the counselors work collaboratively to meet the needs of the students and parents.

Learning Specialist

The counseling department employs a full-time learning specialist who is responsible for providing teachers and students with learning strategies and accommodations that will best suit each student's needs.

The learning specialist creates formal learning plans for students with documented learning disabilities. The learning specialist oversees the application process for diagnosed students' requests for accommodations and extended time on standardized testing.

SELECTING A COLLEGE

There are various characteristics of colleges and universities that a student should consider in order to come up with an initial list of colleges to research further.

LOCATION: The environment where the student will be spending her college years will ultimately play a role in determining her level of satisfaction with a particular school. How far away from home is the student willing to live? Is it necessary/desirable to remain in the area? Does the student prefer an urban, suburban or rural environment? Some campuses are more isolated than others, and therefore the majority of student activities take place on the campus. This can be a positive factor because it means that there are fewer distractions. Students who attend rural colleges and universities report stronger feelings of identification with the school. Large state schools are typically located in rural settings. On the other hand, a particular student may seek out an urban location because of the multitude of options for entertainment. It is extremely important for a student to know what percentage of the student population lives on campus vs. off campus. A large commuting population usually translates to fewer social opportunities on campus. Statistics show that students who live on campus tend to do better academically and they report greater satisfaction with the institution that they attend.

SIZE: Much can be said about the advantages and disadvantages of small and large colleges. In general, more individual attention is expected at small colleges; there are more opportunities for leadership, and the faculty is more visible and accessible. Large colleges offer more majors, course offerings and diverse activities.

ENROLLMENT: The enrollment breakdown is also important to consider. Many students prefer a co-ed environment, but it is advisable to look at the percentages of men and women on campus before making a decision. Colleges that have recently become co-ed may have only a token representation of the opposite sex. As a high school for young women, the Academy stresses the value of women's colleges for those students who would benefit from continuing in this type of environment. A diverse student body offers great opportunities to learn from one's peers.

AFFILIATION: One may distinguish among colleges by determining whether they are privately or publicly controlled. Because public institutions receive funds directly from state governments, tuition for an in-state student is obviously less than tuition at a private college; however, many private colleges and universities offer scholarships that make the total cost of attendance reasonable. A student from the Academy should determine whether she wants to continue her education at a Catholic college.

MAJORS: Contrary to popular belief, it is not necessary for high school students to know precisely what careers they are interested in pursuing. College is a time for self-evaluation and discovery which will lead to a more concrete choice. The majority of students end up changing their majors during their college careers. If a student has an interest or strength in a particular subject or program, she would be wise to research which colleges offer a major in that area and which schools have a reputedly excellent program in that field.

COST: Although cost may ultimately play a part in choosing a college, consideration of cost should not play a major part in the initial search for a college. All students are encouraged to apply for financial aid and scholarships. Frequently, expenses can be considerably lessened through these channels.

LEVEL OF SELECTIVITY: It is important to choose a college or university that will be a good fit academically. A student should select a college/university where she will be intellectually challenged. Comparing the high school grade point averages and standardized test scores of the university's current students with one's own cumulative grade point average and test scores will give a student a general idea of her chances of being accepted to a particular school. Other factors that will be weighed heavily in the admission process include the student's course load and level of rigor of those courses, extra-curricular activities, demonstration of leadership, service and character, student essays, and letters of recommendation. It is important to remember that selectivity is simply the variation between the number of applications versus the number of accepted students. Higher selectivity does not necessarily mean the institution is "better."

THE COLLEGE VISIT

The campus visit is one of the most important parts of the college selection process. Students and their parents are encouraged to visit the campuses of colleges in which they are interested in order to get a first-hand impression. Favorable and unfavorable impressions gathered during the visit can help to narrow down the list of choices.

Although the summer is usually the most convenient time for families to visit colleges, campus visits during the school year are more productive. Families can see and meet the college students, visit with professors and sit in on actual classes. Some schools even provide an opportunity for the student to stay on campus overnight. If possible, visits should be scheduled for days that the Academy is not in session. Permission to miss school must be obtained from the assistant principal and from each teacher. You will find AHN's specific policy on missing school to visit colleges in the high school handbook, which is found on the AHN website:

To prepare adequately for a college visit a student should:

- read the school's catalog and know why she is interested in that particular college.
- be familiar with her academic record.
- prepare some questions for the interview and for the tour guide.

After the college visit a student should:

- wander around the campus on her own.
- make notes on her reaction to the college while her ideas are fresh in her mind.
- upon returning home, write a brief thank you note to the person who interviewed her.

THE INTERVIEW

Whether conducted on campus or in Tampa with an alumni representative, the interview is an important facet of the information-gathering process between you and the college. In the interview, you have an opportunity to present interesting personal qualities which help the college evaluate you as an applicant. Additionally, the questions you ask in the interview will help you make an informed decision about that particular college. The following are guidelines to a successful interview and questions which you should be prepared to answer during the interview.

Guidelines:

- **Be on time** for your appointment.
- **Be neat.** A dress or skirt is appropriate for your interview.
- **Be well-prepared.** Read the college catalog prior to your interview and prepare questions based on what you read. Let your interviewer know that you are applying for specific reasons. Know what the college has to offer and how you might fit in.
- **Answer questions to the best of your knowledge and ability.** Do not be afraid to admit that you do not know something.
- **Be ready to volunteer information.** Know your GPA, standardized test scores and latest grades in the courses you are currently taking.
- **Be yourself.** Do not pretend to be something or someone you are not. The interviewer is interested in finding out as much as possible about you.
- **Relax!** Interviews are meant to be informative for everyone involved.

Questions to expect:

- **What do you hope to gain from the college experience?** Have you given any thought to why you are going to college? Are there skills you hope to acquire or improve? Admitting your weaknesses can make you interesting and believable.
- **Which characteristics of this college are particularly appealing to you?** Have you researched the institution and found that it has elements of special interest to you? Have people whose opinion you respect recommended this college to you? Do your homework.
- **What do you hope to do at college outside of the classroom?** What contributions do you hope to make to student life at the college of your choice? What makes you special or unique?
- **How would your teachers describe you?** Ask a teacher or two before the interview.
- **What are your concerns about the college selection process?** Admissions officers want to help you make the best decision.

QUESTIONS TO ASK COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES

You should take advantage of any opportunities provided to ask questions about a college, whether it is during an interview, during a tour of campus or during any phone contact that you might have with a student, faculty member or admission officer.

Characteristics

- Where is the campus located?
- What is the surrounding community like? Does it support the school?
- Is the college public, private or church-affiliated?
- What is the current student enrollment?
- Does the college have a core course requirement? What is it?

Academics

- What is the average class size? Largest? Smallest?
- What is the student-to-teacher ratio?
- What percent of freshmen return for their sophomore year?
- What is the average GPA of incoming freshmen?
- How are faculty advisors assigned?
- What services are available for undeclared students?
- What percent of students graduate in four years?
- Are classes taught by professors, graduate assistants or both?
- What percent of the faculty have their doctorate degrees?
- Is there an honors program? What are the requirements?
- What is the job placement rate in a particular program?
- What types of career placement services are available?
- What internships are available?

Student Life

- Where do most of your students come from?
- Do most students live on campus or commute? Is housing guaranteed?
- What student activities are offered? Which ones are the most popular?
- Is there a Greek life on campus? What percent of the students participate?
- What division is your athletic program? What sports are offered?
- What is the male-to-female ratio?
- Are freshmen allowed to have cars? What is the parking situation like?
- What transportation is available to students who don't have cars?
- Are residence halls coed or single sex?
- What do most students do on the weekends?
- Do the students have a choice of meal plans? How is the food?

Admission

- What are the grade point average and SAT/ACT score requirements for admission?
- How important are extra-curricular activities?
- Do you require an essay?
- Do you require SAT IIs? Which ones?
- Is there an early action or early decision plan?
- What percent of applicants are accepted?
- Are personal interviews required?
- Are letters of recommendation required?
- Do certain majors have special admission requirements?
- What is the application deadline? When do decision letters go out?

Cost/Financial Aid

- How much is tuition? Room and board? Other fees?
- What percent of students receive need-based financial aid?
- What percent receive academic scholarships?
- What would a typical freshman financial aid package look like?
- Do you provide families with financial aid award estimates?
- What percent of financial aid need do you meet?
- What financial aid applications are required? What are your deadlines?
- When are award letters received?
- Is there a tuition payment plan?
- Are campus jobs available to those who do not receive work study?

TESTING

Rarely, if ever, do colleges use standardized test scores as the main basis for admission. However, the fact remains that standardized testing is a required part of the application process at most schools. The following is a brief overview of the different types of testing:

PLAN: The American College Testing (ACT) PLAN assessment exam assesses academic skills and achievement, prepares the students for post-secondary education and future careers, and prepares students for the ACT college entrance exam. It is given to AHN freshmen in October.

PSAT: The Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) is given in October to sophomores and juniors. It is used as a practice test for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). It is also used as the qualifying exam for the National Merit Scholarship Program. When the results of the PSAT arrive at school they are distributed and explained to the students. Parents and students are encouraged to review the results. The questions and answers from the test are returned with the scores, which is helpful in determining the student's strengths and weaknesses. The test scores are reported on a scale of 20 to 80 for each section. The test contains three sections: verbal, math and writing.

ACT: The American College Test (ACT) is a five-part test that estimates the student's current level of educational development in the knowledge and skills required in college course work. The five tests comprising the ACT are Writing, English usage, Mathematics usage, Social Studies Reading and Natural Science Reasoning. ACT scores are used by colleges for admission purposes. Scores on the ACT may occasionally replace SAT subject test scores. The best preparation for the ACT is conscientious attention to daily schoolwork and extensive reading. The ACT score is reported as both a standard two-digit score (ranging from 1 to 36) and as a percentile rank. Students receive separate scores for each of the five sections of the test and an overall averaged composite score. Register for the ACT at www.act.org.

SAT I: The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) measures the student's ability to learn. Its components include the Critical Reading Aptitude Test, which measures the student's mastery of vocabulary and reading comprehension skills. The Mathematics Aptitude Test measures the student's quantitative skills and logic. Finally, the Writing Aptitude Test includes both a multiple-choice section that deals with the mechanics of writing and an actual written essay. Because the SAT is an aptitude test, measuring mastery of skills rather than mastery of content, there is very little that can be done short-term to improve scores. The best preparation consists of careful attention to daily schoolwork and extensive reading. SAT scores are reported as three-digit scores on a scale of 200 to 800. The SAT is one of the tests which is required by colleges for admission purposes. It is offered six times throughout the year on the first Saturday of the month. Register for the SAT at www.collegeboard.org.

SAT Subject Tests: The SAT Subject Tests measure factual knowledge in specific subject areas. Each test is an hour long and three can be taken on one testing day. Generally, students are encouraged to take the SAT subject tests as close as possible to the end of a course covering the same subject. Some colleges require these tests for admission; others use them for placement; still others do not require them at all. It is therefore important that a student check the admission requirements of the colleges to which she is applying to see whether the SAT subject tests are necessary. Some schools will accept the Writing section of the SAT as one subject test. Like the SAT, SAT subject test scores are reported on a scale of 200 to 800. Average scores vary from test to test. When a student receives her scores, she should consult the college counselor to help her interpret their meaning.

A.P.: Approximately 15 Advanced Placement exams are offered annually each May, usually following completion of an AP course. The exams give high school students the chance to earn credit and/or college placement when they enter college by earning a qualifying score on the exam. Each exam is scored in a range of 1-5. Generally, a score of 4 or 5 earns the student college credit. Each college and university sets its own policy on the requirements to earn college credit.

Standardized Testing for Students with Disabilities: If you have a disability for which you need specific testing accommodations and/or extended time, you will be required to submit an application to the testing company to gain permission to receive accommodations. If you have not been approved by the testing company, you will not receive the accommodations or extended time on the test. The testing company makes that determination.

Test-Optional Colleges and Universities: There are now more than 800 colleges and universities in the U.S. who no longer *require* standardized testing as a part of their admissions criteria. These schools have a *test-optional* policy. A list of these schools can be found by going to <http://fairtest.org/university/optional>.

CHOOSING YOUR SCHOOLS

It is up to each student and her parents to choose the schools to which she will apply.

The college counselors are available to advise you through the process. It is our recommendation that students apply to colleges using a 3-tiered process that includes the following types of schools:

1. Reach Schools

- These schools are typically extremely selective and/or dream schools.
- What is a reach for one student might not be a reach for another.
- Extremely competitive schools are a reach for EVERYONE.
- 10% to 25% of applicants are accepted at these schools and only 5% of the over 2000 colleges and universities fit into this category.
- These are schools with the most name recognition and press coverage which creates the buzz that keeps them in the minds of students and parents everywhere.

2. Desired Schools

These are schools that match your profile, and your chances of admittance are reasonably good. These schools should be your TOP choices.

3. Likely Schools

This tier denotes colleges where you are likely to be admitted, where the odds of admission are strongly in your favor.

Students should choose colleges and universities in all 3 tiers where they could be happy and productive for 4 years.

The process of coming up with a list of schools is not a precise science. The range of actual competitiveness in the admissions process varies within each student's tier and may change notably from year to year. THERE ARE NO GUARANTEES...IT IS A SUBJECTIVE PROCESS.

That's why a student's final list of colleges should clearly reflect the fact that the student has done her research and that is another reason to have a range of schools from reach to likely.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS:

1. **Spend as much or more time and energy focusing on your desired schools and likely schools as you spend focusing on your reach schools.** Many students and parents place too much importance on admission to reach schools and they de-emphasize other options. This results in quite a bit of disappointment, anguish, humiliation and a blow to the student's self-esteem if and when the student is denied admission.

2. **The college counselors will never tell a student that she should NOT apply to a particular school.** The counselors try to paint a realistic picture of a student's options and her chances of being admitted. The only time the college counselor will intervene regarding the list of schools to which a student is applying is if the list only contains reach schools. Then the counselor will go on record to recommend that the student adds more reasonable schools to her list. The counselor cannot require this, so ultimately the student's admission outcomes are a result of her own choices.
3. **A greater chance of admission at a school does not mean that the school's programs are of a lesser quality.** The selectivity of an institution is dependent on the size of its applicant pool, which can easily be affected as much by geographic location, popularity and reputation as by academic quality.
4. **Beware of publications which attempt to rank or compare schools.** Again, these schools are dealing mostly with highly selective institutions and remember that the statistics in these publications are self-reported and then ranked/voted on by members of these same institutions.
5. **All students should make their own decisions and do their own research to find a school that meets her tastes and needs.** Because of the competition today for a place in all of our nation's colleges and universities, our girls should feel proud about their accomplishments and their ultimate success in this process.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications: Students submit their college applications electronically via the Internet. It is absolutely necessary that directions on all parts of the application are followed carefully. It is wise to make a copy of the completed application for one's own records. Students submit a transcript request form to the college counselor for each college application. The transcript request form is found in Naviance in the Document Library. The College Counseling Office submits the following application materials to each college or university: the official academic transcript and letters of recommendation.

Official Academic High School Transcript: The AHN official transcript that is sent out with every college application contains the following information: all courses taken with semester grades, a weighted cumulative grade point average and a record of absences. Please keep in mind that most colleges recalculate the cumulative grade point average to include academic subjects only.

Standardized Test Scores: It is the student's responsibility to send test scores to the college admissions offices. In order for the test score reports to be considered *official*, test scores must be sent directly from the testing service to the individual college admissions offices. It is free if students arrange to do this when registering for an individual test. However, students can also request score reports to be sent to the colleges through the testing service website or by phone. A small fee will be charged at that time. (Please refer to the list of web sites and phone numbers found in this handbook.)

Application Deadlines: All public, state of Florida university applications must be submitted by September 15. All other applications are due by December 1; however, we recommend a priority deadline of November 1. At least 10 business days must be allowed for processing and mailing. Therefore, if a student is trying to meet a specific deadline, she must submit her transcript request form and materials 10 business days prior to the actual deadline to ensure its' timely arrival. An emergency on a student's part does not constitute an emergency on the college counselor's part. All applications will be processed on a first-come, first-serve basis. NO exceptions.

Essays: The essay is the most difficult and time-consuming aspect of the application. The essay gives the student the opportunity to individualize the application by saying something about herself. Much time and preparation should be spent on the essay so that it is well-written, grammatically correct and relevant to the question asked. Rough drafts should be reviewed by the counselor, a teacher and a parent and revised if necessary. The college counseling office conducts an annual college essay writing workshop for juniors and the counselor is available for additional assistance with all college essays. Even if the essay is an optional part of the application, it is highly advisable for the student to submit it. (Please refer to the section on Writing the College Essay for more tips.)

Recommendations: The comments of a teacher who has worked closely with the student in an academic setting can supply invaluable insight for an admissions committee. Most colleges allow the student to choose any teacher; some will request recommendations from teachers in specific disciplines. In selecting teachers to write her recommendations, the student should consider those who know her well and who can attest to her strengths and her work habits. It is the student's responsibility to make sure that the letters of recommendation are completed by the time she is ready to apply; she should remind teachers at least two weeks before the recommendation is needed. The recommendations are confidential. Teachers download the letters on Naviance. A copy of the recommendation is sent with each application.

Final Selection: For many students, making the final decision as to which college to attend is the most difficult part of the process. If another visit to the campus would be helpful, the student should try to arrange it. Once a decision is made, the student should send the enrollment deposit and contact the other colleges to where she applied to let them know that she will not be attending. This is common courtesy since other students, perhaps classmates, might be on the wait list.

The following is a checklist of items that are submitted in the college application process:

- ___ Application
- ___ Application Fee
- ___ Official Transcript
- ___ Activity Resume
- ___ Essay(s)
- ___ Letters of Recommendation
- ___ List of Senior Year Courses (Included on transcript.)
- ___ AHN Profile
- ___ Postage Paid Reply Card to be returned to AHN to verify receipt of application packet.
(This is only sent with application materials that are sent via U.S. mail. Most application materials are sent electronically.)

THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

Criteria for admission used by colleges include:

High School Record: Central to the evaluation of an application is the student's high school record. Grades earned in 9th, 10th, and 11th grades and in the first semester of 12th grade will be given close scrutiny by the admissions committee. The types of courses taken throughout the four years, the level of difficulty and the number of years of study will be evaluated. The transcript is the best single predictor of success in college and the primary factor in the selection process.

Standardized Tests: The SAT, SAT Subject Tests and the ACT are used by most colleges in conjunction with the transcript. The student should know which tests are required, recommended or optional at each of the colleges she is considering and she is responsible for being aware of the deadlines for registration for these tests. This information is made known to students in the school handbook and by the college counselor. Although the standardized scores are just one factor used in evaluation, they should be considered when students are researching colleges. It is important to note the range of scores given by a college. Where the student's score falls in comparison to that range gives an indication of her potential for admission.

Class Rank: Many colleges will ask for a class rank when evaluating a student's transcript. The Academy does not rank students because the size of the classes, the type of academic program and the philosophy of the school do not lend themselves to ranking. Colleges accept a non-ranking policy for a small private school. The college counselor does enclose a grade distribution scale and a school profile with each application.

Extra-Curricular Activities: Most colleges and universities are very interested in what students can bring to the campus community—a special ability, talent or interest. Colleges want students who have balanced academic achievement with involvement in extra-curricular activities; however, quality rather than quantity is what is important. The depth of the interest, the length of time involved and leadership shown are more significant than superficial involvement in numerous activities. Admissions officers want to know how the student spends her free time, whether she has the ability to work with others, and whether or not all of this can be balanced effectively and successfully with her academics.

WRITING THE COLLEGE ESSAY

Your college essay is a crucial part of the admission process. Demographics are such that a greater number of people are applying to colleges and universities due to a population boom in the college-bound age group. Therefore, the competition to get accepted at any institution is keen.

The college essay is the only truly subjective element in your application. The remainder of the application states facts such as grade point average, test scores, activities in which you participate and leadership positions that you hold. The essay provides you with an opportunity to describe the intangibles that define you, which cannot be found in the rest of your application.

In a sense, the essay is where you plead your case. Think in terms of writing your essay as though it is the *only* thing that you are sending to the admission committee. The committee must admit or deny you based solely on your essay. In most instances, you are competing with applicants whose statistics are similar to yours. This is a compelling case for writing an excellent essay. The essay really can make or break the final outcome.

The following is a list of do's and don'ts for writing your college essay(s):

DO

- Write clearly.
- Use proper grammar.
- Check your spelling.
- Be yourself. Know yourself. Be honest. First and foremost, colleges want to know who you are to ascertain whether or not you are a good fit for their institution.
- Keep it concise. Say exactly what you mean and cut out the extraneous stuff.
- Use humor if it comes naturally to you. Try out your humorous essay on several people. What is funny to one person may not be funny to someone else.
- Read successful essays for their essence rather than their content.
- Emphasize *how* you feel as opposed to *what* you perceive.
- Avoid the obvious topics. Admissions officers will read hundreds or thousands of essays about mission trips. Unless you have a very unique experience or perspective that will make a memorable impact on the reader, steer clear of this theme. Other redundant topics include: your experience playing on your team, your favorite band or song, why you admire your mother, father, sibling, etc..., how you intend to change the world, and why you want to be a doctor.
- Allow people to *read* your essay rather than reading it aloud to them. Then, ask for their reactions and suggestions.
- Write your essay and then re-read it a day or two later for a fresh perspective.
- Know the college or university. You don't want to write an essay about how your primary goal is to win a lacrosse scholarship when the school doesn't have a lacrosse team. Or, it might be interesting to write your reaction to a particular incident that occurred at that institution to show that you've done your research and understand the spirit or character of that school.
- Keep a journal. It may come in handy for topics for your essays.
- If the essay is supposed to address WHY you are applying to a particular school, pretend college is the final phase of your life and ask yourself why that school is where you want to spend your last four years on earth. This is what the admissions committee wants to hear rather than why you want to use their school to find a job and/or to make a lot of money and contacts upon graduating.
- Pretend that you are an admissions officer. It is 1:00 a.m., you've already reviewed 15 files and *your* file is number 16. Read your essay. What do you think about it? Will you remember it? Score your essay.

DON'T

- Restate what can already be found on your transcript or activity resume.
- Use vocabulary that you wouldn't ordinarily use.
- Write about too many subjects.
- Ramble.
- Model your essay after someone else's essay.
- Refer to an incident from your past if it doesn't continue to impact who you are today.
- Start your essay with a quote unless it is extremely funny or pertinent to your essay.
- Overuse exclamation points. Your essay will come across as being trite.
- Write about potentially dangerous topics that may turn off the reader, such as extreme political or religious views.
- Use profanity or tasteless themes. The reader will question your judgment even if the essay is well-written and memorable.
- Overuse clichés or repeat certain words or phrases.

Your college essay will be evaluated subjectively by one or more readers. Acclaimed essays from AHN graduates have run the gamut from a profound critique of the Lord's Prayer to a brief, humorous description of how a robot that makes sandwiches would improve society. Despite the main topics, both of these essays successfully conveyed the writer's authentic personalities. One extremely quirky essay—that might not particularly appeal to everyone—was the deciding factor in getting one AHN student into an extremely selective institution where her classmates with higher grades and more impressive resumes were denied admission. On the other hand, brilliantly funny or unique essays have also been overlooked from time to time for less risky language and subject matter. To a degree, the essay is still a shot in the dark aiming for an unknown target.

Think of your college essay as the bonus point portion of an extremely difficult exam. It is important to use this final opportunity to tell the admissions committee exactly who you are and to convince them that you will be an asset to their student body.

WRITING YOUR ACTIVITY RESUME

Your activity resume is a concise summation of your activities, in and out of school, during your high school years. It should include athletics, clubs and organizations, employment, positions of leadership, community service, summer activities, and honors and awards. Remember, admissions committees are looking for students who have persevered in their activities and who have shown leadership in these activities.

The activity resume should model a business resume: it should be easy to skim and it should be limited to one page if possible. Two samples of a typical activity resume follow. Please note that you do not have to use one of these formats. Make this your own document that best highlights your strengths and interests.

Save your resume on your computer so that you may update it as you add to it during your senior year. Your college counselor will review your resume for you and assist you with suggestions.

ACTIVITY RESUME, SAMPLE #1

Name
Address
Phone Number
Social Security Number
Academy of the Holy Names
Class of ____

Academic Clubs and Honors

National Honor Society (11, 12)

Peer tutor (11, 12)

Treasurer (12)

Spanish Club (9, 10, 11, 12)

Tandy Scholarship - Nominee for excellence in math, science and computer science

Volunteer Service Activities

“S” Club (10) - monthly meetings combined with monthly service projects

Saint Peter Claver Gardening Project (11) - Gardening and landscaping, 2 full Saturdays

Metropolitan Ministries (12) -Sorted food and served meals, 6 hours per month

Total Number of Service Hours: 105

Athletics

Soccer (10,11) Team Co-Captain (11), All-County (11)

Softball (9)

School Organizations and Activities

Student Government - Class Representative (10, 12), Secretary (11)

Yearbook (10) - Sports Editor/Photographer

Spring Musical (10) - Chorus of “Carousel”

Out-of-School Activities

St. Mark's Episcopal Church - Youth Choir (11, 12)

Recreation Department Soccer League (summers 9, 10, 11)

Employment

Marty's Deli (summers 10, 11, 12, 29 hours per week)

ACTIVITY RESUME, SAMPLE #2

Name

Address

Social Security Number

Phone Number

High School

Academics

- National Merit Commended Scholar 2014
- Latin Honor Society 2012 to present
- Mu Alpha Theta (math honor society) 2013 to present

Honors and Awards

- National Latin Exam: 2006-Maxima Cum Laude, 2005-Magna Cum Laude
- Second Place: Daughters of the American Revolution Essay Contest 2006
- Smith College Book Award 2006

Extracurricular Activities

- Academy of the Holy Names Student Ambassador Program, 2012 to present
Represent AHN at special events, give presentations at Tampa Bay area grade schools to prospective students and parents, help plan and run annual school Open House for prospective families
- Latin Club, 2012 to present
- Bayshore Players Theatrical Group
Performed in the following productions: "Harpedes," role of Esther; "Bye Bye Birdie," chorus, and "Dorothy Parker's Laughs and Laments-A Series of One Act Plays," a variety of roles

Community Service

- Christian Life Community Service Club (CLC)
Outstanding Service Award, 2013
Group Leader 2012, 2013
- Tampa Museum of Art, docent 2013
- Adams House Nursing Home, 2011 - read to resident Clara Martin weekly
- Gasparilla Road Race Volunteer, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013

Summer Activities

- UCLA-Theater and Film School, 2005
- USF-Dramatic Arts Speaker Series, 2006
- Lifeguard at YMCA, 2004-2006
- Latin Forum, 2004, 2005, 2006

AHN GUIDANCE POLICIES

Application Deadlines

All college and scholarship applications must be submitted to the AHN College Counseling Office a minimum of **10 business days** prior to the deadline. This will allow the counselor enough time to process the paperwork and mail the packet in a timely fashion. All applications will be processed on a first-come, first-serve basis.

All state of Florida, public university applications are due to the College Counseling Office on **September 15th**.

All other college applications are due to the College Counseling Office by **December 1st**; however, we recommend that you submit the majority of your applications during the month of October.

Letters of Recommendation

Letters of recommendations are deemed confidential and must be submitted directly to the College Counseling Office by those who write your letters. Most college applications have a statement that allows you to waive your right to see the letters of recommendation under the Family Rights and Privacy Act. It is the policy of the AHN Counseling Department to support the waiver of your right to see the letters. In our experience, this action is favorable to your college application. Not signing the waiver signals a red flag to the admissions committee that you may have something to hide.

Honors Convocation Announcements

The AHN College Counseling Office announces the college acceptances and scholarship awards at the annual Honors Convocation. We must have official written documentation of college acceptances and/or scholarship awards to announce these honors. Merit-based awards are announced rather than need-based awards. Also, we do not announce awards that we deem unacceptable because of the nature of the program. For example, we do not announce “Who’s Who” because it is a for-profit business and for a fee, anyone can earn their award. We also do not announce summer programs or National Leadership Forums, because while these are wonderful programs that provide a nice opportunity for learning, only affluent families can take advantage of these programs; we announce awards not opportunities.

Discipline and College Applications

The College Counseling Department at AHN adheres to the policy of reporting to colleges any serious or repeated disciplinary action that occurs, when in the judgment of the school, it would be irresponsible or unprofessional not to do so. Such reporting will occur at the time the application is initially submitted, while the college is reviewing the application, or after the admission decision has been made, depending on when the infraction takes place.

Any significant changes in the student’s academic status or qualifications, during the senior year will be reported either by the student or the counselor to the colleges to which the student has applied or may apply. In most cases the student is encouraged to personally report the offense, with confirmation by the counselor.

Early Decision Notification

It is the responsibility of the student to abide by the conditions set forth by an early decision policy at a particular college or university. This includes abiding by the obligation to **attend that university** if accepted for admission and notifying other schools that you withdraw your application for admission. The early decision process involves a contract signed by the student and her parents agreeing to honor its stipulations. The AHN college counselors will abide by early decision policies and we will notify all institutions involved should you break an early decision agreement or should you fail to withdraw your applications from other institutions upon receiving your early acceptance.

FINANCIAL AID

Each student is encouraged to apply for financial aid in order to make the cost of attending college more reasonable. College financial aid officers are the best source of information concerning available assistance and should be contacted in writing, by phone or during a visit to the campus.

Financial aid is made up of a variety of sources: scholarships and grants, loans and work-study programs. Scholarships and grants are monies that are based on need and/or merit and they do not have to be paid back. Loans must be paid back with interest. Work-study programs are part-time work opportunities on campus. To receive financial aid, families must submit a completed financial aid form (FAFSA) between January 1 and March 1 of the student's senior year. The information you supply on the form is based on the previous year's income tax return information.

FAFSA: Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Must be filled out by any applicant seeking financial aid. There is no fee accompanying this form. The FAFSA is required in order to apply for federal aid programs. It is also used by many state agencies and colleges to award their own monies. The Florida Bright Futures Program requires that students submit the FAFSA in order to receive the scholarship. The online application can be found at www.FAFSA.ed.gov.

Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program: The state scholarship program that provides money for students who stay in state to attend either a public or private college or university. The student must meet a minimum grade point average and SAT or ACT score requirement to qualify for one of two scholarships. (Please see the section titled "Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program" in this handbook.)

FRAG: Florida Resident Access Grant. Awarded to students who are residents of Florida and who stay in state and attend a private college. The award amount varies from year to year, but it is generally worth around \$2,500 per year.

Institutional Aid: This consists of scholarships and/or grants awarded by the colleges from their own funds. The scholarships and grants are based on need and/or merit.

Pell Grant: The Pell Grant is a federal grant based on need.

Perkins Loan: This is a loan obtained through a college from money allocated by the federal government.

PLUS Loan: This is a loan to parents of dependent children. It equals up to the cost of attendance minus financial aid. Parents pay only the interest while the student is enrolled in school. Once the student graduates, they immediately begin paying back the **principal** and interest.

(CSS) Profile: This is a supplemental form provided by the College Board to collect additional financial information that the FAFSA does not request. There is a fee to process this form. Some colleges require this form as part of the financial aid application process.

SEOG: This is the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant. It is a federal grant for a student who qualifies for the Pell Grant and who has dire need.

Stafford Loans: These are federal loans borrowed from a financial institution, either subsidized by the federal government or unsubsidized depending on need.

Students will receive their financial aid packages from colleges in April, in time for comparisons and decisions to be made by the May 1 commitment deadline.

FLORIDA BRIGHT FUTURES SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Florida Department of Education offers the following two scholarships for high school graduates who will attend a public or private college or university in the state of Florida:

Florida Academic Scholars Program

Award: \$100 per credit hour

Criteria:

3.5 weighted grade point average in the following required academic units.

16 Academic Units

4 English

4 Math

3 Science (2 with labs)

3 Social Science

2 Foreign Language (same language)

1290+ SAT or **29+** ACT

100 service hours

Florida Medallion Scholars Program

Award: \$75 per credit hour

Criteria:

3.0 weighted grade point average in the **16** academic units listed above.

16 academic units listed above.

1170+ SAT or **26+** ACT

****This scholarship program is both subject to and prone to change. We will update you on any changes made to the program.*

Other scholarship information may be obtained from the following sources:

- College and/or university financial aid offices
- AHN College Counseling Office; Students receive bi-weekly memos on Mondays listing scholarship opportunities. The memo for seniors is posted weekly on the AHN web site at www.holynameta.org.
- Internet (see web site listings under “financial aid and scholarships”)
- Naviance

NCAA INITIAL ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

The AHN College Counseling Department and Athletic Department work together with each student-athlete in the pursuit of athletic scholarships and athletic opportunities at the college level. Any student-athlete wishing to participate in college athletics at the NCAA Division I or II levels must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center. The NCAA determines an athlete's eligibility status. Student-athletes should register with the NCAA at the end of their junior year in high school. There is a brief application to complete online along with an application fee. The NCAA Eligibility Application is available online at ncaaeligibilitycenter.org. PLEASE sign up for electronic transcript delivery when you register. This will enable the college counseling office to send your transcript electronically with the push of a button. If you don't include this request, your transcript will be sent via U.S. mail which slows down the entire process. You must submit a transcript request form in order for the college counseling office to forward your official transcript to the NCAA.

The core courses required by the NCAA Clearinghouse include a minimum of 4 years of English, 3 years of math, 2 years of social science, 2 years of natural science, plus 1 additional year of English, math, natural science, or social science and 4 additional courses in the above areas or foreign language, science, philosophy, or comparative religion. (All AHN graduates meet the above requirements.)

To qualify for Division II athletics, a student-athlete must have a minimum GPA of a 2.0 in 14 core courses and a minimum SAT composite of 820 or a minimum ACT composite of the sum of 68 on all 4 sections of the exam.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Naviance:

Connection.naviance.com/holynamestpa

College Search Sites:

- Cappex.com
- CollegeBoard.com
- College Navigator
- Collegenet.com
- College Prowler
- Collegeview.com
- Connection.Naviance.com/holynamestpa
- Embark.com
- Facebook
- Fairtest.org
- NSSE
- Petersons.com
- Princeton Review
- Unigo.com
- Zinch.com

Standardized Testing Sites:

- ACT.org (ACT, PLAN)
- Collegeboard.com or ETS.org (PSAT, SAT I, SAT II and A.P.)
- Fairtest.org

Test Prep Sites:

- ACT.org
- Collegeboard.com
- Domesatreview.com
- Kaplan.com
- Revolutionprep.com
- Review.com (Princeton Review)
- SatellitePrep.com
- TestU.com

Financial Aid and Scholarship Sites:

- Collegeanswer.com
- Collegeboard.org
- Connection.Naviance.com/holynamestpa
- Fafsa.ed.gov (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)
- Fastweb.com
- Finaid.org
- Firm.edu/doe/brfuture (Florida Department of Education-Bright Futures)
- Salliemae.com
- Scholarships.com
- Simpletuition.com

Other:

- Commonapp.org
- EligibilityCenter.org
- EssayEdge.com
- NACACnet.org (National Association of College Admissions Counselors)
- WowWritingWorkshop.com

ADMISSION TERMINOLOGY

Academic Grade Point Average - Your weighted grade point average in your academic subjects on a 4.0 scale. This includes English, math, science, history and foreign language. Most colleges and universities will recalculate your grade point average to the Academic GPA for use in the admission process. The Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program also uses this weighted GPA.

ACT - American College Test. A college entrance exam for juniors and seniors that consists of English, mathematics, reading and science reasoning sections. Each section is scored on a 1-36 point basis. Scores from each section are averaged to get a composite score. Students are encouraged to register for the ACT at www.act.org.

A.P. - Advanced Placement. Tests available to students in specific subject areas that are usually accompanied by a year-long placement course in that subject. College credit may be awarded by a college or university depending on your exam score.

CEEB Code - Six-digit number used to identify each high school. Used on SAT and ACT registration forms. AHN's CEEB code is 101680. *Memorize it!*

Class Rank - A measure of academic performance determined by one's grade point average in relationship to one's classmates' grade point averages. AHN does NOT rank.

COA - Cost of Attendance. Total cost for an academic year of study including direct and indirect costs including tuition, room, board, fees, books, transportation and spending money.

Common Application - (informally known as the Common App) is an undergraduate college admission online application that applicants may use to apply to any of 488 member colleges and universities. The AHN College Counseling Office strongly encourages students to use the Common App because it saves the student time and effort and it allows the counseling office to send your documents electronically which expedites the college admission process. Please note: each Common App school does typically require submission of a supplemental form that is unique to that school. For more information please go to commonapp.org or see your college counselor.

Deferral - A college may postpone its admission decision pending more information on the student.

Early Action - An admission plan whereby a student can submit an application by a particular deadline earlier than the college's regular deadline and receive a decision earlier as well. The early action student, if accepted, is NOT bound to enroll. Students accepted under early action still have until May 1 to commit to their school of choice.

Early Decision - An admission plan whereby a student can submit an application to her first-choice school by a particular deadline earlier than the college's regular deadline and receive a decision much earlier also. The early decision student agrees to enroll if accepted and withdraws any applications to other colleges upon receiving her acceptance. A student may apply to only one college as an early decision applicant.

EFC - Estimated Family Contribution. The amount of money you and your family are expected to contribute toward your college education for the next academic year. This amount is determined by completing the FAFSA.

FAFSA - Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Financial aid form, required by most colleges, to be completed by the student and her parents and sent to the federal government for processing. Form must be completed between January 1 and April 1 of the student's senior year.

Financial Aid Package - Financial aid award to a student in the form of a combination of grants, scholarships, work-study and loans.

Gap Year - A gap-year is a year taken between high school and college. During this gap-year, students engage in extra-academic and non-academic courses, language studies, volunteer work, travel, internships, sports and more, all for the purpose of improving themselves and their resumes before going to college. These academic gap-years are also called Pathways, Prep-Year and Bridge-Year. Please see Naviance and your college counselor for more information and resources on Gap Year programs.

Naviance/Family Connection - Online program which provides students and parents with access to college websites, Academy of the Holy Names' college admissions statistics, a college search resource, a calendar of colleges' visits to AHN, and comparison charts of your academic record with our graduates from the past three years in relationship to specific colleges and universities. Your counselor will provide you with a personal PIN that will allow you to access your account at www.connection.naviance.com/holynamestpa. Your own information is private and for your eyes only. Your classmates are not able to view your GPA and test scores.

PLAN - Preliminary ACT. This test is given to all freshmen at AHN. It resembles the ACT and it includes an interest inventory for career planning.

Profile - Financial aid form used by certain colleges to obtain information in addition to that which is provided by the FAFSA. A processing fee is charged.

PSAT/NMSQT - Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test designed for juniors. Preparatory exam for the SAT. AHN students take this as sophomores and juniors. Only juniors may qualify for the National Merit Scholarship Program.

Reply Date - The date by which the student must notify the college of her enrollment intentions. It is May 1st at most institutions.

Rolling Admissions - A college does not have a specified application deadline. Once the application is received, the college immediately reviews it and notifies the applicant of a decision within four to six weeks of receiving the application packet.

SAT - Scholastic Assessment Test. Standardized college entrance exam required by colleges and universities for admission purposes. Consists of a verbal and a math section. Each section is scored on a 200-800 point basis. Students are encouraged to register for the SAT at www.collegeboard.com.

Unweighted Grade Point Average - Calculated by multiplying the number grade by the amount of credit given for each class, add these together and divide the total by the total number of credits attempted. Extra points are not given for honors and/or Advanced Placement courses.

Wait List - In some cases, applicants will be offered a position on a school's wait list. Remaining on the wait list could eventually mean an acceptance. It is the student's responsibility to notify her counselor and the college/university as to whether or not she wants to remain on the wait list.

Weighted Grade Point Average - One (1) point is added to the grade point total for each Advanced Placement course and five-tenths (0.5) of a point is added to the grade point total for each honors course.

Work-Study - A federal financial aid program providing on-campus jobs for students who demonstrate financial need. The award amount depends on the family's financial need and on the amount of money the school has for the program.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR COLLEGE ADMISSION COUNSELING
STATEMENT OF STUDENTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
IN THE COLLEGE ADMISSION PROCESS

WHEN YOU APPLY TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES YOU HAVE RIGHTS.

Before you apply:

You have the right to receive factual and comprehensive information from colleges and universities about their admission, financial costs, aid opportunities, practices and housing policies.

When you are offered Admission:

You have the right to wait to respond to an offer of admission in the regular decision process and/or financial aid until May 1.

If you are placed on a wait list:

- The college should provide a history that describes the number of students on the wait list, the number offered admission and the availability of financial aid and housing.
- Colleges can not require a deposit nor a written commitment as a condition for remaining on the wait list.
- Colleges must notify you of the resolution of your wait list status by August 1 at the latest.

WHEN YOU APPLY TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES YOU HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES.

Before you apply:

You have the responsibility to research and understand the policies and procedures of each institution.

As you apply:

- You must complete the entire application in a timely fashion meeting the school's deadlines. You should be the sole author of your applications.
- You should abide by your high school's policies and deadlines for submitting your applications.

After you receive your admission decisions:

- You must notify each school which accepts you whether you are accepting or rejecting its offer, no later than May 1.
- You may confirm your intention to enroll and, if required, submit a deposit to only one school.
- If you are accepted under an early decision plan, you must promptly withdraw your applications submitted to other schools.

If you think your rights have been denied, you should contact the college or university immediately to request additional information or the extension of a reply date. In addition, you should ask your counselor to notify the National Association for College Admission Counseling. If you need further assistance send a copy of any correspondence you've had with the college and a copy of your letter of admission to: Executive Director, NACAC, 1631 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-2818.

COLLEGE COUNSELING CALENDAR

FRESHMAN YEAR

- Fall** PLAN/ACT/Interest Inventory administered
- PLAN results returned - Presentation by college counselor re: time management, GPA, importance of academics early in high school career
- Spring** Curriculum Meeting for Freshman (includes course selection for sophomore year)

SOPHOMORE YEAR

- Fall** PSAT administered
- Spring** PSAT results returned
- Curriculum Meeting with sophomores
- One-on-one meeting with college counselor to begin college planning process

JUNIOR YEAR

- September** Visits to AHN by college representatives
- Prepare for PSAT.** Read (Studies have shown that avid readers do the best on standardized tests.), do practice tests, study vocabulary, brush up on math skills. The PSAT is good practice and a good predictor for the SAT.
- October** Presentation by College Counselor on the PSAT
- PSAT administered**
- Bay Area Association of Independent Schools College Fair** - This fair is hosted by AHN and all of the other private high schools in the Tampa Bay area.
- November** **College Planning Night**-meeting for juniors and parents regarding college planning
- January - February** PSAT results returned
- College Counselor meets individually with juniors and parents** (these appointments can be scheduled through the end of April.)
- Register for SAT and ACT
- College Planning Retreat for Juniors**

March	<p>ACTIVITY RESUME DUE</p> <p>College Essay Writing Workshop</p> <p>SAT</p> <p>Register for SAT and ACT</p>
April - May	<p>FIRST COLLEGE ESSAY DUE</p> <p>Visit colleges</p> <p>Register with NCAA Eligibility Center</p> <p>Advanced Placement Exams</p> <p>2 Letters of Recommendations Due</p> <p>Take SAT, SAT subject tests, and/or ACT</p>
Summer	<p>Visit colleges</p> <p>Firm up final list colleges</p>
<u>SENIOR YEAR</u>	
August	<p>Senior College Night - Review of the college application and admission process</p> <p>College representatives visit AHN throughout the fall semester</p> <p>September 15 - application deadline for all Florida public university applications</p> <p>Register for SAT, SAT subject tests, ACT</p>
October	<p>Early Decision/Early Action applications due</p> <p>Bay Area Association of Independent Schools College Fair</p>
November	<p>Application process continues</p>
December	<p>December 1-application deadline for ALL applications</p> <p>Register for the Florida Bright Futures Program</p>
January	<p>Financial Aid Workshop for parents</p>
January - March	<p>File FAFSA and all other financial aid paper work as soon after January 1 but before March 1</p>

April

Admissions Decisions received by students

Hand in all documentation for Honors Convocation (award letters, college acceptance letters, and scholarship award letters)

May

May 1 - Commit to school of choice

Advanced Placement Exams

Honors Convocation

Graduation

Final AHN transcript sent to your college of choice

Summer

Florida Department of Education sends you notification of Florida Bright Futures Scholarship status