



MOUNT
DE SALES
ACADEMY
FOR GIRLS

GUIDE TO COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

MOUNT DE SALES ACADEMY FOR GIRLS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1: BEGINNING THE PROCESS: GETTING STARTED, RESEARCHING COLLEGES, AND MAKING A COLLEGE LIST 2

- How to Start Thinking About the Process 3-4
- Beginning Your Research & Different Ways to Research Colleges 5-8
- Questions to Ask on A College Tour 9
- Developing a College List 10-11

SECTION 2: AN OVERVIEW OF THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS FILE & FACTORS CONSIDERED BY COLLEGES 12

- Factors Considered by Colleges When Reading Your Application 13-14
- Materials Sent By MDSA To Colleges 15
- General Application Tips 16

SECTION 3: THE COLLEGE ESSAY 17

- Overview of The College Essay & How to start Brainstorming 18
- College Essay Writing Tips 19

SECTION 4: TESTING 20

- Standardized Testing: When, Where, How 21-22

SECTION 5: SPECIAL TALENTS 23

- Prospective Student Athletes 24-25
- The Arts 26-27

SECTION 6: FINANCIAL AID 28

- Financial Aid Overview 29
- Financial Aid Forms 30

SECTION 7: TIMELINE OF THE COLLEGE PROCESS BY GRADE 31

- Freshman 32
- Sophomores 33
- Juniors 34-35
- Seniors 36-37
- College Counseling Yearly Calendar 38

SECTION 8: ADMISSIONS TERMS GLOSSARY 39-43



SECTION 1

BEGINNING THE PROCESS: GETTING STARTED, RESEARCHING COLLEGES, AND MAKING A COLLEGE LIST

The college process can certainly seem daunting at first and you may be wondering where to start. This section will provide suggestions on how to get the process started and tips on developing a

HOW TO START THINKING ABOUT THE PROCESS

It is likely that you have heard something about the college process. The process of applying to colleges has changed dramatically. With heightened media attention on increasing competition at selective schools and rising tuition costs, it is difficult to know where to begin. It is not unusual to feel overwhelmed or confused at the beginning of this journey.

WHY COLLEGE?

The first step in this process is assessing why you want to go to college. In essence, you are assessing your goals and what you want out of the college experience. A couple of questions to consider when doing this are: Why do you want to go to College? What do you hope to attain through your years of undergraduate education? What are your career goals? In your best estimation, is graduate school in your future?

Many students go to college because they have an idea of what they want to do with their lives, such as attending medical school or pursuing a law degree. However, many students go to college because it is the next step in their life, and they want to broaden their education. By assessing your goals, you want to evaluate the situation and make sure you are going to college for the right reasons. Be sure you are doing it for the betterment of yourself.

You are in the driver's seat. Although you will get input from parents, friends, relatives, counselors, admissions officers and likely every person you will meet, remember that YOU are the one going to college. Stay focused on your interests, goals and needs.

Keep an open mind and be an informed customer. Do not jump to conclusions based on any single source of information. Try not to be tempted by a person who loves or hates a school or by the number of stars next to a college in a guidebook. This is an individualized process-what may be appropriate for your friends may not be appropriate for you. Stay focused on yourself and keep a sense of what this process is about: finding the right match for you!

HOW TO START THINKING ABOUT THE PROCESS CONTINUED

BEGINNING THE COLLEGE PROCESS

The college process begins with self-evaluation. Until you've carefully considered your needs (academic, social, personal), you are not ready to decide whether a school is the right match for you. To choose a college wisely you need to pull together some information about yourself. In your first meeting with your counselor many of these questions will be discussed. Your thoughts beforehand will also help you prepare.

ACTIVITIES & INTERESTS

- What activities do you enjoy most? Why?
- How would you describe your role in school, your home, and your community?
- What do you do for fun? Relaxation?

THE COMMUNITY AROUND YOU

- How do you describe Mount de Sales Academy, your family, and your hometown?
- How has your environment influenced your way of thinking?
- What distresses you most about the world around you? What will you do about it?
- How are you influenced by others? Do you ever feel pressure to conform?
- How do you think others would describe you? What would others say are your strengths? Your weaknesses?
- What do others expect of you?
- How do you react when your beliefs are challenged?
- How do you make decisions?

GOALS & VALUES

- What values are important to you? Why?
- What relationships are important to you?
- How do you define success? What do you expect of yourself?
- What kind of person do you hope to become?
- How has your background helped to shape who you are today?
- How would you like a college to challenge you?
- What do you expect from your college experience academically? Socially?

SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT

- Have you met your potential in high school?
- How rigorous are your courses?
- Are you interested in a wide range of courses or a narrow group? Why?

An honest and thoughtful self-evaluation can reveal the qualities you should look for in colleges. It will also prepare you for questions you will be asked in essays and interviews during the admissions process. If you are willing to look seriously at yourself, you can find the colleges that are right for you and present yourself effectively to them. Naviance has many tools for career and interest self-exploration.

BEGINNING YOUR RESEARCH: INVESTIGATING YOUR OPTIONS FOR AFTER MDSA

Choosing where to apply begins with asking one basic question: What are the characteristics of my ideal college?

Once you have identified some of the factors and criteria that are important to you, develop a preliminary list of colleges to investigate. At the end of your junior year, you may have a list of as many as 30 colleges. That's OK. At this early stage of the process, it is good to cast your net as wide as possible and keep options open. Using the information, you have collected, draw up a list of specifications about the colleges that match your characteristics and interests. Then contact these colleges and get on their mailing lists. Follow up with some investigative legwork, including looking at websites and college brochures with a critical eye, visiting campuses (in real life or via virtual tour at a college's website), watching videos, and talking to current students and alumnae.

As you research colleges, you will find that there are many colleges and universities that are good matches for you. You should apply to a range of schools that best match your own needs, interests, and abilities, and those that present you with appropriate challenges.

INTERNET RESOURCES & SEARCHES

Mount de Sales Academy is pleased to be able to offer **Naviance Family Connection** as an online tool to help you establish preferences, research colleges and build college lists. The Counseling Office will provide all students and their parents with passwords to register for Family Connection. Students will use Naviance as their main college search tool.

Today, students have limitless online resources at their disposal to assist in the college selection process. Most colleges and universities maintain websites complete with school photographs, maps, video clips, and even virtual campus tours. They also provide up-to-date information about programs, faculty, and facilities. In addition, students can use online tools to identify colleges and universities that fit their criteria and locate scholarship and financial aid opportunities.

COLLEGE REVIEWS, GUIDEBOOKS, AND RATINGS

If you decide to use college review sources, remember to view that source as you would for a research paper.

1. What institutions are included or excluded from the publication?
2. What is the primary focus, point of view, or objective of the comparison or rating?
3. What special expertise qualifies the author or publisher for the guide?
4. When was the guide published? Is the information still relevant?
5. Does the publication use the same standards to measure all institutions, or do some institutions receive special treatment?
6. Is the publication a serious attempt to inform and help in the college admission process – or was it written primarily to entertain or present offbeat or humorous aspects of the various institutions?

DIFFERENT WAYS TO RESEARCH COLLEGES

COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE VISITS TO MDSA

Representatives from a wide variety of colleges will visit Mount de Sales Academy during the school year. A representative is usually a member of the admissions staff or a graduate of the college or university – often they are the first reader of your application. Meeting with a representative here on our campus is a priceless opportunity to gain more information about the colleges that interest you or learn about new ones. Even if you have seen a school and have had an interview there, it is wise to come just to let the representative be aware of your continued interest. Some colleges provide application fee-waivers if you attend a visit or college fair.

MOUNT DE SALES ACADEMY COLLEGE ADMISSIONS VISIT PROTOCOL: HOW & WHEN TO SIGN-UP

- The schedule of college visits can be found on Naviance in the colleges tab and is updated often during the summer and fall**
- Students will be notified via email & Naviance when a college on their “Colleges I am thinking about list” is scheduled to visit**
- Students are required to sign-up for college visits via Naviance by 2PM the day before the college visit is scheduled**
- Once signed-up, students will receive a pass in their mailbox the morning of the college visit**
- Students must notify their teachers that they are attending a college visit and check in with them before attending**

COLLEGE FAIRS

College Fairs are large events in which a large variety of colleges are represented. College representatives and college alumni set up tables/booths where students can meet with them, ask questions about their school, pick up informative brochures and booklets, as well as sign-up for college mailing lists. Attending a college fair can be extremely helpful for students who are not quite sure where to start in the college research process.

Information about college fairs, including National College Fairs, Portfolio days for artists, and the MSJ & MDSA Annual college fair will be posted in the College Counseling Office

MSJ & MDSA ANNUAL COLLEGE FAIR

Mount de Sales & Mount Saint Joseph hold an annual college fair each October for all interested students and families.

Our College Fair Website is updated each year with fair details and a list of schools attending!

<https://msjmdscollegefair.com>

DIFFERENT WAYS TO RESEARCH COLLEGES

CAMPUS VISITS

There are lots of ways to learn about a college, from brochures to websites, but **there is no substitute for seeing a college in person!** Visiting when school is in session is particularly useful since it gives you the experience of the collegiate atmosphere with its variety of people and activities. We highly recommend that you visit a college while it is in session, before you commit to enroll there. Note: Campus life rarely comes alive before noon on Saturdays and Sundays. Therefore, do not plan an early morning visit on weekends if you want to see students.

MOUNT DE SALES ACADEMY JUNIOR COLLEGE VISIT DAY

Mount de Sales Academy holds an annual Junior College Visit Day in November in which Junior students are required to attend a college campus visit. Students do not attend school at Mount de Sales on this day.

Students will be required to complete a reflection on the campus visit to turn into the College Counseling office along with a signature from someone at the college that was visited.

The date of Junior College Visit day is stated on the school calendar, on the school website, and in the student handbook

The College Counselor will provide a list of local colleges in advanced of the day

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A SUCCESSFUL CAMPUS VISIT

- Appointments for information sessions, tours, interviews, and overnight stays can fill up quickly so call the admissions office or sign-up on the college website as far in advance as possible. Be prepared to tell them the date and time of day you would like to visit. If you want to stay overnight in a residence hall, ask if arrangements can be made.
- Visit the college website prior to your visit. Write down any specific questions you may have.
- Check with the College Counseling Office to see if any MDSA graduates are attending the college. You may know one of these students and want to talk with her while on the campus. Alumnae are always eager to host visitors to their colleges!
- As a family, set the ground rules for college visits. Parents and students will not necessarily have the same thoughts, feelings, and impressions of the college. Open communication will help reduce tension while visiting campuses.
- Review your high school record so that you can answer specific questions about your course of study, test scores, and activities if asked. In this case, talk with your college counselor about a mock interview.
- Try to avoid visiting more than two schools in a given day. Though blistering schedules may sound time efficient, it is usually very difficult to get a sense of a campus in such a short amount of time. Your frustration with the schedule may negatively impact your assessment of the colleges.
- As you are planning your college visits, try to include a college located in the area that is not on your list. Students and parents are often pleasantly surprised by what they find.
- Check the Mount de Sales Academy Handbook for College Visit procedures.
- Inquire about the opportunity to meet with a member of the faculty in your desired area of study, if so desired. If you meet with a member of the faculty, make sure you are well prepared with questions to ask about their program and what it can offer you as a prospective student.

DIFFERENT WAYS TO RESEARCH COLLEGES

CAMPUS VISITS CONTINUED

- If you are an athlete, you may want to inquire about meeting with the coach of your chosen sport. Make sure you are well prepared with questions to ask about their program and what it can offer you as a prospective student/athlete
- Make sure you have adequate directions and arrive in plenty of time to find the admissions office. You should inquire about parking before arriving.
- Dress appropriately & comfortably. If you have questions about what is appropriate, please see your college counselor

DURING THE CAMPUS VISIT

When visiting a college campus, try to imagine living, learning, and making friends there. Families should take a student-conducted tour and ask questions that will give them a sense of campus life.

- Be a keen observer of all aspects of campus life. Visit the school dining hall, the college student center, specific departments' student and faculty offices, the bookstore, the campus library, student housing, and as many other "gathering places" for students and faculty as possible. Also, see the buildings, theaters or labs that are associated with your special interests as well as the town or city where the school is located. Pick up a school newspaper and read the events that are going on campus at any kiosks you may pass. This will give you a good idea as to the hot topics on campus.
- Visit classes. Obtain permission from the Admissions Office.
- Talk to as many students as you can.
- When you take the tour, stay near the front of the tour group. If you are far away from the guide the tour will seem less personal and you will miss the opportunity to hear from a current undergraduate.
- While visiting, it is important to keep in mind that you are interviewing the school as much as it is interviewing you. Make sure you ask questions, but remember that the questions you ask describe you and your interests as well. Be thoughtful and articulate.
- Take good notes and pictures. Schools can seem similar after the first few visits so it is important that you remember your impressions of each.
- Make an allowance for free time to talk to students, eat at a dining hall on campus, or see a dorm if your tour did not allow you a chance to see one.
- Take note of if you can see yourself there. How comfortable are you?

AFTER THE VISIT

- Send a thank-you note to the people who assisted you. The school may add the note to your file.
- Whether you visit colleges alone, with your family, or with friends, you should not try to evaluate everything about a college "right on the spot." Once you are home, compare notes and photos and have a good family discussion.
- Update your "Colleges I am interested in" tab on Naviance after college visits and indicate your current interest level in the school. There is also a notes section on Naviance in which students can add electronic notes about college visits.
- Update your College Counselor on how your visit went

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ASKING YOUR COLLEGE TOUR GUIDE

- 1) How large are your classes? What has been the size of your largest class? Smallest class?
- 2) What is the percentage of professors teaching your undergraduate courses? (as compared to teaching assistants or graduate students) Have you had any teaching assistants as teachers? If so, how often?
- 3) How adequate is the library?
- 4) How adequate are the computer facilities?
- 5) When do you have to declare a major?
- 6) Is each student assigned an advisor to help lead them through the process of scheduling and eventually choosing a major?
- 7) How are the dorm rooms? Are the dorm rooms wired? How many students live off campus?
- 8) How competitive are the classes? Are students competing with one another?
- 9) How available are your professors?
- 10) What are some of the hot issues on campus right now?
- 11) How politically active is the student body?
- 12) What kind of faith community exists here for Catholic students? Is there a convenient church where I can attend mass?
- 13) How popular is studying abroad? What kinds of programs are available for students?
- 14) Are there fraternities and sororities? If so, how large of a role do they play on campus?
- 15) Describe a typical weekend? Are there alternatives to the typical party scene? Do most people stay on campus or go home on weekends?
- 16) How active is the student government? Does the administration listen to student input?
- 17) What are other popular activities to become involved in?
- 18) What do you hear students complaining about?
- 19) If you could change something about the school, what would it be and why?
- 20) How are the performing fine arts? May I audition for something even though I may not be majoring in theatre or art?
- 21) What have you enjoyed most about your experience so far?
- 22) How diverse is the community?
- 23) If you had it to do over again, would you do it the same way? If not, where do you think you would have gone?

DEVELOPING A LIST OF COLLEGES: RESEARCH, REVIEW & REFINE

In choosing where to apply, you must eventually face the toughest question of all: will the college choose you? Assessing your record, your strengths, your weaknesses, and examining the college's reputation and statistics will give you some idea about your chance of acceptance. Knowing who a college has admitted or denied from Mount de Sales Academy in the past is also good information to consider, but it's dangerous to generalize too much from past decisions. Admissions can change dramatically from one year to the next. The student who is admitted with grades lower than yours may have had unusually strong recommendations or special talents, or she may have been a child of an alumna/us.

Once you begin to define the characteristics you are seeking in a college and have researched a variety of institutions, you and your counselor will begin to divide the schools into three categories:

REACHES

comprise your first group. They will be the "most competitive" schools and should be chosen carefully.

50/50's

represents schools at which you have a 50% chance of being admitted

LIKELIES

are schools where you have a solid chance of being admitted. These schools should be researched as thoughtfully as your "realistic challenge" colleges. Also, consider adding schools to this category that are financially safe options.

Do not apply to any college or university that you do not want to attend.

An application to a "likely" college is meaningless if you do not intend to go there under any circumstances. You may find yourself admitted only to these colleges. Therefore, you want to be certain that they meet criteria like those in categories one and two. Keep in mind that an institution's reputation is important, but not as important as the educational, geographical, and social criteria you have established for yourself.

Developing a college list can initially feel overwhelming as there are so many different colleges out there to choose from. Some things to consider when developing your list: location, distance from home, quality of academic or extracurricular programs, etc. Throughout the process, your list will be updated frequently and the college counselor is here to help you talk through any adjustments that may be made to your list of colleges.

It is important to remember that there are over 4,000 schools in the country and there are multiple schools in which you could be happy attending. We do not recommend that you put all your hopes for college on acceptance to only one school. We want you to come up with a list of five to seven schools at which you could go and enjoy your four, or more, years.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN MAKING A COLLEGE LIST

This is a valuable tool for discussion during the initial phase of developing your list of colleges. Check those factors that will be important to you when deciding on schools.

Campus Atmosphere

Distance from Home

Cost (Financial Aid, Merit Scholarships)

Size (small = less than 2,000; medium = 2,000-10,000; large = more than 10,000)

Location (urban, suburban, rural)

Region (Northeast, Southeast, West, Midwest)

Social Life (fraternities & sororities, outdoor activities, off-campus life, weekend activities)

Housing (dormitories, off-campus housing, suites, on-campus apartments)

Academics

Academic Reputation

Liberal arts college or university

Flexibility of curriculum (core, no requirements, etc.)

Specific programs (engineering, architecture, business, Nursing etc.)

Strength in specific academic areas (science, performing arts, math, English, etc.)

Class size

Availability of Professors

Activities

Athletics (club, varsity, intramural)

Community service

Performing Arts (music, dance, theatre)

Visual or Graphic Art

Speech/Debate

Religious Groups

Career Services

Disability Services

Alumni Network

Study Abroad Options

Internship or Co-Op Opportunities

Profile of An Accepted Student



SECTION 2

AN OVERVIEW OF THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS FILE & FACTORS CONSIDERED BY COLLEGES

This section will break down factors that colleges consider in applications, what information is sent by MDSA to colleges, and general application tips

AN OVERVIEW OF THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS FILE: FACTORS CONSIDERED WHEN READING YOUR APPLICATION

Even though there are differences among colleges, the same general criteria are used by all schools to create a well-rounded class.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

STUDENT EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES & RESUME

- Level of community involvement & service (school, neighborhood, place of worship)
- Summer activities
- Employment
- Participation and leadership in student organizations and extracurricular activities

ESSAY

ACADEMIC RECORD

- Quality and range of courses (AP/ Honors, electives that are important to you)
- Consistency of performance
- Improvement of performance
- Student performance and classroom participation
- Student's positive impact on the school

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers (MDSA students request two teacher letters on Naviance during spring of Junior Year)
- Counselor
- Employer
- Other recommendations include: Coaches, Scout leaders, and Youth Ministers

TESTING PROFILE

- SAT Reasoning Test
- SAT Subject Tests
- ACT

Some colleges are choosing to become "test optional" in which a student can choose to not submit standardized testing. Please see individual test optional policy of each college in how it affects scholarship consideration and application requirements. www.fairtest.org contains a list of test optional colleges.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS FILE: FACTORS CONSIDERED WHEN READING YOUR APPLICATION CONTINUED

OTHER

- Demonstrated academic talent or scholarly achievement
- Member of an under-represented racial, ethnic, religious, or socioeconomic group
- Daughter of alumnus or/alumna
- Musician, performer, artist, athlete
- Outstanding social contribution
- Unusual background
- Leadership experience

Schools may differ in how they weigh the various aspects of an application. However, most colleges consider the following, in order of importance:

1. Academic record
2. Personal qualities and co-curricular record as revealed in your application and essay
3. SAT Reasoning test scores, SAT Subject test scores, and/or ACT scores
4. Required recommendations
5. Interview
6. Extra letters of recommendation

Schools are looking for more than just qualified candidates. At the most selective schools, many well-qualified applicants are not admitted. Factors beyond the control of the individual applicant come into play in an institution's final admission decision. Always keep in mind that 70% of all colleges and universities in the United States admit most of the students who apply.

Other things to consider

- Over-enrollment in the previous class may cause a school to accept a smaller class for the upcoming year.
- A dramatic increase in the number of applications may cause a school to become even more selective.
- Each institution has enrollment goals or institutional priorities that it hopes to meet. A school may be in search of a replacement for the horn section of the orchestra, a goalie for the soccer team, or a female scientist for its chemistry program. The school may also be trying to achieve a racially, socio-economically, religiously, and geographically diverse community.
- The Early Action/Early Decision policy varies from one institution to the next. At some schools, the admission rate of early applicants is indeed higher than the overall admission rate. At some, the opposite is true – the EA and/or ED pools are more competitive. In general, a candidate who would not otherwise be admitted through the regular process will not be admitted simply because she has applied Early Decision.

WHAT IS SENT FROM MOUNT DE SALES TO COLLEGES

THE HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPT

Your high-school transcript is an integral part of the college application. The transcript details academic performance as well as academic and school honors and awards.

The Counseling Office sends student transcripts from Naviance to colleges at three different times: when you first apply to a college, immediately after the first semester of the senior year, and after graduation. Mount de Sales Academy does not send quarter grades to colleges unless specifically requested in Early Decision applications.

The following items are included on the transcript:

- Semester grades, cumulative GPA
- Honors and AP-level course designations
- Mount de Sales Grading Scale

You and your parents also have access to the transcript at any time. Should you need to view, request, or send your transcript, please let the counseling office know.

Each transcript is also sent along with the Mount de Sales Academy School Profile, which provides the colleges with a snapshot of our school, course offerings, grading scale, scheduling policies, and college admissions statistics.

LETTERS OF REFERENCE

Recommendations from teachers, the school, volunteer directors, and employers are a vital part of applying to college. Colleges require references from teachers and the school. Other references are optional. Each kind of reference is explained below.

Teacher Reference:

Colleges ask teachers to comment on your classroom performance in a subject or discipline. You should choose the teachers who know you the best as a student, will address your strengths as a student and your academic accomplishments, and can give specific examples of your abilities in class. You should request two references during the spring of your junior year (in-person and on Naviance). The Counseling Office will be glad to answer any questions families or students have about teacher references.

School/Counselor Reference:

Mount de Sales Academy is proud of each student and her individual accomplishments. The counselor recommendation includes information on your academic and extracurricular activities, your responsibilities and commitments outside of school, and any personal circumstances that may need clarification. Faculty and family input is solicited to build a full and complete picture of your academic, social, and personal progress. The recommendation is kept confidential. Students will be asked to complete a resume on Naviance to create a place where students can communicate information about themselves to their counselor.

Other References:

There are often questions regarding additional references from alumni of the college, employers, volunteer directors, and the like. These are not required references. In fact, these letters should be added only if the recommender knows you well and can provide information not already detailed elsewhere in the application. The difficulty is that too much additional information can cause an admissions officer to skim the documents. Any positive impact of the additional letter is therefore reduced. You should consult your counselor if you have any questions.

SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT

The secondary school report is a supporting document that is filled out by the college counselor that is sent along with the transcript and school profile. Rigor of the student academic schedule is indicated along with any additional comments from the college counselor.

GENERAL APPLICATION TIPS

Admission to private colleges, particularly the more selective ones, is a complex, subjective, and unpredictable process. Decisions are generally based upon a committee's evaluation and discussion of a candidate's file. When a student applies to college, the admissions office collects several pieces of information as it makes a decision about an applicant. The application that you fill out is one way your character and personality can emerge to the reader, and it is the one part of the application over which you exercise full control. A careful, thoughtful job on your application can make a difference. College admissions officers often comment on how a poor application has hurt someone's chances and how a thoughtful well-presented application has pushed a borderline candidate into the admitted group.

- Consider your audience. Does the admissions office really want to wade through a dozen extra sheets detailing your every activity or honor since seventh grade? Consider the time constraints of your audience.
- Do not overdo it. It is tempting to tell the Admissions Office everything you have ever done or have been interested in doing. The assumption is that more is better. Try to resist this temptation to pad the application with trivial activities or long-neglected interests. Concentrate on a few quality pursuits and avoid manufacturing quantity.
- Answer the questions they ask. In your eagerness to write about what you want to write about, do not ignore the question.
- Be yourself. This is easier said than done. You will drive yourself crazy trying to figure out what you think a college wants to read. There is seldom a right or wrong answer to a question on an application. The committee wants a clear, honest, and reflective answer that will tell them something about you as a person.
- Give yourself plenty of time. Try to manage this process as you would any in-depth school project. Be sure to do the following: have primary materials and research completed early; leave sufficient time to do a rough draft; fill out all forms completely, accurately; and according to the specific guidelines provided by the college, and submit everything on time. Last minute jobs usually read like last minute jobs.
- Do not be too humble. Submit evidence of your scholarly and creative endeavors if you feel such supplemental information will aid the college admissions offices in gaining a more vivid picture of you and your potential.
- Make a copy. After you have completed your application be sure to print a copy of it before your hit the send button.
- Don't hurry – be careful and precise. Proof read, proof read, proof read before hitting send. Be on the lookout for confirmation of receipt. Print it out once you have received it and save for your files. If you have not heard from the college within 3 weeks, call to confirm that they received your application

INFORMATION YOU WILL NEED WHEN COMPLETING APPLICATIONS:

Mailing Address of MDSA: 700 Academy Road Catonsville, MD 21228

School Code: 210335



SECTION 3

THE COLLEGE ESSAY

The college essay provides colleges an opportunity to learn about the student and to learn something that is not already outlined anywhere else in the application. This section will provide tips on college essay writing.

THE COLLEGE ESSAY

Your essay is a significant part of your college application folder. It provides you with an opportunity to individualize your application and to reveal yourself in your own voice – more than grades, test scores, and even the most considered recommendations can do. Choosing an essay topic is not easy. Both English teachers and Counselors are happy to read and react to essays and provide assistance.

- Limit your essays in most cases to one page single-spaced. (Some schools require shorter or longer essays. You should not exceed the specified length.) They are read quickly by individuals more interested in quality and depth than in length.
- Answer the essay question that is asked. It is fine to try to use an essay for multiple colleges, if the essay provides the information asked.
- Optional Essay? Do it – this is your chance to stand up and be counted.
- Keep the following advice in mind: it is appropriate to ask a teacher or counselor or parent to react to an essay. However, Fred Hargadon, a former Dean of Admission at Princeton states, “I can’t emphasize enough that the style, flavor, and substance of your essay needs to be your own and to look your own and to sound like you. In a word, your essay (in fact, your entire application) should smell authentic.”
- Choose a topic that highlights you and is not covered in any other part of the application
- The Common Application usually releases essay topics in the spring before your senior year. This will give you a head start with your essay. It is suggested that you start thinking about your essay during the summer.
- Include specific details, examples, and reasons to develop your ideas rather than simply state facts to get ideas across.
- Some colleges have a page on their website where they share successful college application essays along with commentary from admissions officers- do look at these
- Do not turn your essay in without proofreading it and do not rely on your computer’s spell check to catch mistakes
- Avoid filling your essay with gimmicks and jokes. What is most important is that the admissions counselors are learning something new about you!

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN BRAINSTORMING A COLLEGE ESSAY TOPIC

- Major Accomplishments: These don’t have to be accomplishments that were formally recognized
- Hobbies, qualities, or skills that distinguish you from others: How did you develop these?
- Favorite books, movies, and works of art-how do they influence you?
- Difficult times in your life that changed your life perspective
- Strong personality traits
- Community activities
- Role Models
- Dreams for the future
- How you pass your time. If you could be doing anything right now, what would you be doing?

TIPS FOR WRITING COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ESSAYS

The number one suggestion from college admissions office about writing an essay is “BE YOURSELF”

Check out these other tips before you begin.

Choose a Topic That Will Highlight You

Don't focus on the great aspects of a particular college, the amount of dedication it takes to be a doctor or the number of extracurricular activities you took part in during high school.

Do share your personal story and thoughts, take a creative approach and highlight areas that aren't covered in other parts of the application, like your high school records.

Keep Your Focus Narrow and Personal

Don't try to cover too many topics. This will make the essay sound like a résumé that doesn't provide any details about you.

Do focus on one aspect of yourself so the readers can learn more about who you are. Remember that the readers must be able to find your main idea and follow it from beginning to end. Ask a parent or teacher to read just your introduction and tell you what he or she thinks your essay is about.

Show, Don't Tell

Don't simply state a fact to get an idea across, such as “I like to surround myself with people with a variety of backgrounds and interests.”

Do include specific details, examples, reasons and so on to develop your ideas. For the example above, describe a situation when you were surrounded by various types of people. What were you doing? Whom did you talk with? What did you take away from the experience?

Use Your Own Voice

Don't rely on phrases or ideas that people have used many times before. These could include statements like, “There is so much suffering in the world that I feel I have to help people.” Avoid overly formal or business-like language, and don't use unnecessary words.

Do write in your own voice. For the above example, you could write about a real experience that you had and how it made you feel you had to take action. And note that admission officers will be able to tell if your essay was edited by an adult.

Ask Someone to Proofread

Don't turn your essay in without proofreading it, and don't rely only on your computer's spell check to catch mistakes.

Do ask a teacher, parent, or college counselor to proofread your essay to catch mistakes. You should also ask the person who proofreads your essay if the writing sounds like you.

Adapted from The College Application Essay by Sarah Myers McGinty.



SECTION 4

TESTING

This section will outline the difference between the two main college admissions tests, and provide suggestions on how to choose which test to take, when to take the tests, and how to prepare.

STANDARDIZED TESTING: WHEN, WHERE, HOW

Standardized testing is an important factor in the college admission process. We want our students to understand the importance of standardized testing, but more importantly we want all students to keep testing in perspective. Students' academic achievements in the classroom (grades and curriculum) are the most important part of a student's complete academic record. Disclaimer: Extracurricular activities are extremely important; however, they WILL NEVER supersede your performance in the classroom and on standardized tests. We have found that students who enroll in the most challenging curriculum appropriate for their abilities, and those who plan and carefully familiarize themselves with the test format using practice materials, are able to attain scores which accurately reflect their school performance.

TESTING OVERVIEW:

All Mount de Sales Academy students should have at least one test score (ACT or SAT) on record before senior year! We advise our students to begin taking the exams after Christmas of their junior year in hopes that they will have a score they are happy with by the end of that year. Many students will take either or both tests again in the fall of their senior year, which is recommended. The number of times a student takes these tests will vary depending upon the student's level of satisfaction with their scores. Statistics show that the most improvement takes place between the 1st and 2nd testing and between the 2nd and 3rd testing. Students should rest assured that most, if not all, admission offices will focus on the student's top score, whether that be on the ACT or SAT. You will be able to, in most cases, 'super score' your SAT or ACT score so that the colleges are taking the highest score in each category into account for their decision.

SAT vs. ACT

We advise students to attempt a timed practice test of each test at least one time and then concentrate on the test in which a higher score was received. The differences between the two tests are as follows:

- 1) The SAT is scored out of 1600 points while the ACT has a composite score out of 36
- 2) The SAT has 5 Reading passages and the ACT has 4
- 3) The ACT has a Science Section that tests critical thinking
- 4) You get to use a calculator on all ACT Math questions and only some questions on the SAT

The two tests are similar in that they both have an optional essay question, do not penalize for guessing, and that ALL colleges accept them. They both also test the same math concepts.

Mount de Sales Academy's school code (210335) must be included on the test registration form. This will ensure that we will receive your test score. We keep each test score on file. **Mount de Sales Academy will not be able to transmit test scores. It is every senior's responsibility to have their test scores sent directly from the testing agency (ACT or SAT) to the college where she is applying. This will be necessary for the application to be complete. This can be done by logging onto your accounts and sending through www.act.org for the ACT or www.collegeboard.com for the SAT.**

STANDARDIZED TESTING: WHEN, WHERE, HOW

SAT II (Subject Tests)

The SAT II Subject Tests are tests in specific subject areas. Not all colleges require SAT Subject Tests. Typically, only selective schools require these tests. When registering for a subject test, if it is required by a school to which you have applied to, be positive which tests are required or recommended. When choosing which SAT Subject tests to take, look no further than the curriculum in which you have immersed yourself throughout high school. Only take tests in which you know you have a solid grasp of the subject.

SAT SUBJECT TEST DETAILS

- There are 20 SAT Subject Tests in five general subject areas: English, history, languages, mathematics and science.
- Each Subject Test is an hour long. They are all multiple-choice and scored on a 200–800 scale.
- SAT Subject Tests are generally given six times in any given school year, on the same days and in the same test centers as the SAT — but not all 20 tests are offered on every SAT date.
- The Language with Listening tests are only offered in November.
- You can take one, two, or three Subject Tests on any test date.
- You can't take the SAT and an SAT Subject Test on the same day.

Testing Accommodations

Testing accommodations are helpful to those who have a diagnosed and properly documented disability. The ACT and College Board (SAT) offer testing accommodations for those who qualify. If you believe you will qualify or would like to discuss your testing options, you **MUST** meet with the Director of Academic Services for specific information about registration and testing plans.

Test Preparation

This is very important because just like practicing shooting a free throw can increase your shooting percentage; practice for standardized testing can improve your score. Getting started is easy. As freshman, sophomores and juniors, all students take the PSAT. These tests are helpful in multiple ways. First, they help students learn the format of the tests and how they will be administered. Second, they can be good indicators of how the students will perform when they take the official ACT and SAT. Students will also receive a detailed score report with the correct answers to all test questions. Students may also order study guides, and practice tests online on the testing websites.

A free and useful test prep option is Khan Academy which has partnered up with CollegeBoard where students can link their PSAT and SAT score to their website which will provide individualized practice tests and study calendars. <https://www.khanacademy.org/sat>

If students would like additional help or information on prep courses offered, they should reach out to the college counselor.

Fee Waivers:

Fee waivers are possible for the ACT & SAT for students who are receiving financial aid and meet certain financial requirements. If you have questions about this, please contact the college counselor.



SECTION 5

SPECIAL TALENTS

Athletes, artists, actresses, and musicians must go through different application processes than other students. This section will outline the different processes and requirements for these students.



Considering playing a sport in college?

- 1) Self-Assessment:** Take the time to be honest with yourself about your abilities and potential. If you have never been a starter at Mount de Sales Academy in your sport, can you really play on the college level? How good is the program at the schools at which you are looking? Do they welcome all to the program, with potential for development, or only those they recruit?
- 2) Talk with others:** Talk to your coach at Mount de Sales Academy, your counselors, or former Mount de Sales Academy students who were similar to you in ability. Ask for their help in your self-assessment.
- 3) It is important to consider more than just attending a college to be a part of their athletic team.** Evaluate academic & social fit before committing to a team. You are not only choosing a team, but a college that will be your home for four or more years and get you started on your career path.
- 4) Consider the time commitment as a student athlete and do your research on how that will affect your ability to participate in other activities or programs offered by the college**

After you have completed these steps and you are ready to move forward in the process...

- 1) Check on the NCAA Eligibility Center website to see their prospective student-athlete timeline.**
- 2) Talk to your coach at Mount de Sales Academy about the kinds of schools you are considering.** Discuss other programs that might be of interest to you. Ask if he or she will contact these schools on your behalf. If you are in a sport where college coaches request videos or film of your play, start to discuss what you might send and how to produce it.
- 3) When communicating with the admission offices at these colleges, be sure to inform them that you are a varsity athlete, of the sport(s) you play, and that you are planning to play at the collegiate level.** They will often pass this information on to the respective coach(es).
- 4) Contact the college coaches directly.** Let them know of your interest in applying to their school and in your intention to participate in their program. You should send an athletic resume and set up a visit to meet with the coach.
- 5) Please see the NCAA academic standards for each athletic division and be sure you are academically staying on track with these standards**
- 6) Remember that your interests and a coach's interests don't always overlap to your advantage.** A coach's goal is to build the best team possible. Typically, a coach can present to the admissions committee a list of his or her most desired candidates from among the applicant pool. There is no guarantee that the admissions committee will admit all candidates on a coach's list nor follow his order of preference. Academic and personal factors must be taken into consideration. For this reason, coaches often create their lists by striking a balance between an applicant's athletic ability and academic credentials, while factoring in a student's enthusiasm (or lack of interest) in attending that college.

PROSPECTIVE STUDENT ATHLETES CONTINUED

A coach's promises should almost always be taken with a heavy dose of skepticism and always have a backup plan. Coaches who guarantee you admission are probably overstepping their bounds. The Admissions Committee makes admissions decisions, not the coaches. A coach may lead you to believe that you will make his or her list, but there are never any guarantees. You could be bumped from a list at the last minute if the coach finds a better athlete, an equivalent, or even a somewhat less talented athlete with stronger academic credentials who is more likely to make it through the admissions process. We have seen cases where promises have been made by a coach only to see the promises broken during the process.

If coaches start asking you to commit, it is of critical importance that you discuss this with your college counselor, the athletic director at Mount de Sales Academy, your coach at Mount de Sales Academy, and your parents before responding. It is of utmost importance that you keep the lines of communication open between yourself, your coach(es), and your college counselor throughout the entire process. This will help ensure that all parties are on the same page.

NCAA and NAIA ELIGIBILITY CENTER:

The NCAA has established an Eligibility Center online (eligibilitycenter.org) for both recruiting and eligibility purposes for student-athletes in Division I and II. All students with an interest in Division I or II programs must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center.

- 1. Certification Account:** "You need to be certified by the NCAA Eligibility Center to compete at an NCAA Division I or II school. You also need to be registered with a Certification Account before you can make official visits or sign a National Letter of Intent in Division I or II" (ncaa.org)
- 2. Profile Page:** If you plan to compete at a Division III school or are currently unsure in which division you want to compete, create a Profile Page. If at any time you wish to pursue a Division I or II path, you will be able to transition to a Certification Account" (ncaa.org).

NAIA schools may also require you register with their eligibility center at www.playnaia.org

Your college counselor has access to upload your transcript to the eligibility centers

THEATRE/DRAMA



For students interested in pursuing a major in theatre, please pay close attention to the following points. If you have any questions, make sure to see the chair of the Mount de Sales Academy Theatre Department.

1. Each college/university has different requirements. Start checking college websites during your junior year so that you do not miss any requirements (i.e. audition dates and audition requirements).
2. It is best to make a list of the schools you are interested in, what each school requires, and then pay attention to any crossover material.
3. When going to an audition, prepare more material than is required.
4. When creating a resume, be careful not to embellish your credentials as many auditioners may ask you to perform something from a past performance.
5. Be prepared! Be over-prepared!
6. Students interested in Technical Theatre: Keep a good visual (photos) record of all the work that you do

MUSIC



Students planning on majoring in music should focus on certain classes depending on the specific emphasis the student desires.

Instrumental Music: Instrumental music majors should take band for four years. They should take private lessons for four years on their applied instrument. Band reinforces the fundamental aspects of instrumental music necessary and required by state and private universities, and liberal arts colleges.

Music Performance: Music performance majors should take and participate in everything the instrumental major does as well as take up all opportunities to perform within the community

Vocal Performance: Vocal performance majors should take chorus for at least three years. They should take private voice lessons for four years as well. They should also consider other opportunities to get further training and experience by participating in recitals as well as in events such as the Christmas and Spring concerts.

THE ARTS: CONTINUED

VISUAL ARTS



The following suggestions are intended for any students who are highly considering majoring in the visual arts in college. If you have done a significant amount of visual art work during your career at Mount de Sales Academy, it is highly recommended that you create a portfolio of your best work as part of your college application, regardless of whether you intend to pursue your art work in college. If you are considering pursuing the visual arts, you **MUST** participate in a Portfolio Day at a college. Please see the Art Department chair for more information about this process.

- Colleges may differ, but most will be looking for digital copies documenting your work. Usually no more than twenty samples of work are submitted.
- You should also include a brief artist's statement which describes your interests and investment in the visual arts.
- Other formats are possible, and may in some cases be advisable, depending on the scope and type of your work and the college you are considering. Consult your Counselor, your art teacher, and the admissions offices of your target colleges.

PROCEDURE

- Start off on the right path. As a freshman consider enrolling in Line and Color.
- Sophomore year enroll in another art course.
 - Assuming you have been successful in those two courses, use advice from your art instructors as to which class to enroll in next. Of course, you will want to mix in a few of the other art electives (see course handbook for descriptions).
- Collect all your work from these courses including sketchbooks, finished pieces, and things you may have done outside of your coursework at Mount de Sales Academy.
- Before creating your portfolio, review your collected works with an art faculty member. The goal of this is to identify the most important and most representative works you have created. You should select about twice the number of pieces that you may finally include in your portfolio.
- Be sure to know the preferred format in which your chosen colleges want you to submit your portfolio.



SECTION 6

FINANCIAL AID

This section will define the major financial aid documents that are important in receiving financial aid as well as provide tips on how to navigate the college financial aid process

FINANCIAL AID

The best advice that can be given regarding financial aid is **PLAN AHEAD!** Finances will obviously come into play at some point during your college application/admission/selection process. Make sure you have requested and read all financial aid information from colleges you are considering.

Financial Aid Questions to ask when visiting a college:

1) Is the school 'need-blind' in its admissions policy? A college that is 'need-blind' makes admission decisions without regard to the student's ability to pay. What this means is that admissions decisions are made by the committee prior to viewing the student's financial circumstances.

2) Do you meet 100% of demonstrated need? To be eligible for financial aid a student (parent) completes several forms (discussed below) and a determination is made regarding a family's economic need. Some schools meet 100% of your demonstrated need with an aid package that includes grants (scholarships), student loans, and work-study.

3) What is your 'packaging policy'? Most schools give an aid package that includes grant money (scholarships), loans, and/or work study. Ask the following questions: **A)** What percentage of your aid packages are grant vs. self-help (loans/work study)? **B)** How does an aid package change over four years? Some colleges entice freshmen with large grants for the first year and then switch to a much heavier self-help burden (loans/work study) in subsequent years. An increase in loans is normal, however you want to avoid a complete 'bait and switch' situation. **C)** Do you have a 'preferential packaging' policy? i.e. If two students have equal demonstrated financial need, do they give more grant aid (or better overall aid packaging) to the student who has a stronger academic profile? Are students entering certain fields given better aid packages? Are students who apply under early deadlines as compared to regular deadlines given any special consideration?

4) What is your policy regarding outside scholarships? Some schools deduct money earned in outside scholarships from your financial aid package. Some schools reduce your loan burden, but other schools reduce your grant money.

5) How much debt can you expect after four years?

6) Are there any tuition payment plans that will allow you and your parents to spread out your payments over a period of months?

Things to think about:

1) Your list of schools should include at least one economically safe school - that means a school that meets your academic needs and is affordable.

2) Watch out for scams! Be aware of services that charge you to do scholarship searches for you. Check with your college counselors before you pay for any such service. Watch out for websites that may try to trick you. For example, www.fafsa.gov is the correct website for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, whereas, www.fafsa.com is a website that will try to get your information and then sell it.

3) Be aware if your colleges have separate scholarship applications than your admissions application

4) You may wish to schedule an appointment with a financial aid officer at one or two schools so that he or she can advise you on special programs, tuition plans, loan or payment programs that might be beneficial to you. Make sure you have prepared your questions ahead of time.

FINANCIAL AID FORMS

Parents: It will be imperative that you are familiar with the Financial Aid forms and which forms are required by the schools to which your daughters have applied. Please pay attention to filing deadlines!

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): All colleges require this form for a student to be eligible for financial aid. The FAFSA's purpose is to determine your eligibility for all forms of federal aid. The college counselor will send out information about Financial Aid Workshops where you will learn about the FAFSA from a financial aid officer from one of our wonderful local universities.

You can file a FAFSA online at www.fafsa.gov. First you and your student must obtain a PIN number which may be done through the FAFSA website. The FAFSA can be filed starting on OCTOBER 1ST and should be filled out and submitted as close to this date as possible. It will use prior-prior year's tax information

CSS/Financial Aid Profile: Many private colleges (along with some private scholarship programs and public colleges) require this form. Most of your questions about the PROFILE can be answered at www.collegeboard.com. You can file the PROFILE at www.collegeboard.com as well.

Additional Information:

If your family has a special financial need or financial circumstances that are not covered on any of the forms above, write a letter or email describing your situation and send it to the Financial Aid offices of the colleges to which you are applying. DO NOT attach letters or tax forms, etc. to the CSS PROFILE or FAFSA.

KEEP A COPY OF ALL FORMS FOR YOUR RECORDS

If you have any questions about your financial aid award or the package that is sent to you in the spring, call the college and ask to speak with a financial aid administrator. Financial aid officers are usually very helpful. Review any special circumstances you feel may have been overlooked. It is possible that the financial aid officer can adjust your award based on new information. Be prepared to offer concrete information that will allow financial aid officers to review your award. Most colleges do not negotiate or match offers from other schools. Each institution has different priorities and policies that govern how its financial aid is distributed.

If a school is your first choice but has not offered you enough money for you to attend, it is ok to call the financial aid office and tell your counselor this information. In some cases, they may be able to find some more money for you. However, sometimes they have exhausted their entire pool of money for the year and will not be able to give you anything further. At that point, you will need to get creative or reevaluate your options.

SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH ENGINES & COMMON WAYS TO FIND SCHOLARSHIPS

CollegeBoard Big Future Scholarship Search	local parishes
Federal Student Aid Website https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/	Employers
Fastweb.org Scholarship Search	State & Local Government
Cappex	QuestBridge (for eligible students)
MDSA web page	



SECTION 7

THE COLLEGE PROCESS: STUDENT TIMELINES BY GRADE

This section will provide students and parents with an idea of how the college process should progress throughout each year at Mount de Sales. Use these guidelines to stay on track.

TIMETABLE FOR STUDENTS

WHAT'S IMPORTANT FOR FRESHMEN

Get off to a good start with your high school academic record. To maximize your college options as a graduating senior, you will need a strong four-year academic record. Course selection and grades are the primary criteria used by colleges in making admission decisions.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF:

- Build strong academic, language, mathematics, and critical thinking skills by taking challenging courses.
- Study hard and work toward the best grades you can earn.
- Become involved and begin building your portfolio of activities, service, awards, and accomplishments. Do not limit yourself by first impression likes and dislikes. Stretch yourself, apply yourself, surprise yourself!
- Take the PSAT in mid-October for practice. The PSAT for freshmen, sophomores and juniors is administered on the same day. It is imperative that you take this test seriously as it is great preparation for future standardized tests.
- Start a folder in which you can place an inventory report of your activities, accomplishments, strengths, and positive qualities. This information will be useful in completing college applications, preparing for campus visits and college interviews, and providing background material for those who write your letters of recommendation.
- Strengthen your vocabulary by increasing your reading. An easy way to do this is by reading the front section of the newspaper (online is fine) or reading one non-assigned book a month.
- Research the academic requirements for admission at colleges at which you may be interested in attending. Make sure you are selecting your high school courses wisely based upon this information. Do keep in mind that it is also important to have a balanced schedule.
- If you are an athlete, learn about the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) www.eligibilitycenter.org or the NAIA requirements for eligibility www.naia.org . Please see the section for prospective athletes in this handbook for more specific information about the college process for athletes

IF YOU ARE THINKING ABOUT A SELECTIVE COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY:

- Talk with your parents about it.
- Share your ideas with the Mount de Sales Academy College Counselor.
- Talk with your counselor and develop a master course schedule that will enable you to achieve this goal.

TIMETABLE FOR STUDENTS

WHAT'S IMPORTANT FOR SOPHOMORES

Maintain the strongest possible academic record by enrolling in the most challenging courses appropriate for you. Work hard on your academics. Make good grades.

FALL SEMESTER:

- Continue getting involved and building your portfolio of activities, service, awards, and accomplishments. Keep STRETCHING and PUSHING yourselves.
- Add to your folder in which you are placing a record of your activities, service, accomplishments, strengths, and positive qualities. This information will be useful in completing college applications, preparing for campus visits and college interviews, and providing background material for those who write your letters of recommendation.
- Attend the Mount de Sales Academy & Mount Saint Joseph High School College Fair in October
- Take the PSAT in mid-October for practice. The PSAT for freshmen, sophomores and juniors is administered on the same day. It is imperative that you take this test seriously as it is great preparation for future standardized tests.
- Make sure you are 'on top' of your academic work. If needed, meet with your teachers and counselor for additional help.
- Begin to research colleges: Naviance is a great place to start!
- In December, you will receive your PSAT scores. You will receive both the score report and the actual test that you completed so that you may see where you excelled and where you need improvement.

WINTER/SPRING SEMESTER:

- Keep Studying!
- Look for volunteer and school activities to develop your interests.
- Select courses for your junior year that will meet your academic needs and the requirements for college admission.
- Explore summer enrichment opportunities.

SUMMER BEFORE JUNIOR YEAR

- Start to get serious about researching colleges. Utilize your college tab to explore college search tools on Naviance and do a college search Big Future College Search by CollegeBoard.
- Start to add colleges on your "Colleges I am interested in" list of Naviance to organize schools that you would like to research. This also allows your college counselor a chance to see what you may be interested in.
- Participate in summer enrichment opportunities

TIMETABLE FOR STUDENTS

WHAT'S IMPORTANT FOR JUNIORS

Realize that this will most likely be your toughest year academically. Commit to excellence in the classroom. Maintain the strongest possible academic record by enrolling in the most challenging courses appropriate for you. Work hard on your academics and make good grades.

FALL SEMESTER:

- Attend college visits by admissions representatives held at Mount de Sales. All Junior students are welcome to sign up for visits at our school through Naviance. Once signed up, your college counselor will put a pass in your mailbox the morning of the visit. Check Naviance often for new visits that have been added throughout the fall
- Attend the Mount de Sales Academy & Mount Saint Joseph High School College Fair in October. There are also national college fairs that come to Baltimore City and Washington D.C.
- Participate in Junior College Visit Day in November. All students are required to visit a college this day.
- Add to your folder in which you are placing a record of your activities, service, accomplishments, strengths, and positive qualities. This information will be useful in completing college applications, preparing for campus visits and college interviews, and providing background material for those who write your letters of recommendation.
- Take the PSAT/NMSQT in October. (This is an important test and it is IMPORTANT that you put this date on your calendar and come to school prepared to take this test.) Prepare by spending time reviewing the PSAT Student Bulletin and taking the sample test. This is the qualifying test for the National Merit Scholarship Program.
- Meet the Mount de Sales College Counselor for assistance in starting your college search. Your College Counselor is here to help you throughout this process. Request a meeting with them in the guidance office.
- Become proactive with your college search. Request information from colleges that have caught your initial interest and plan visits to college campuses.
- Make a habit of checking your school email address as your College Counselor will be reaching out to you starting Junior year with important college information, scholarship opportunities, and events.
- Become familiar with Naviance and begin to update your Naviance account.

WINTER/SPRING SEMESTER

- In December, you will receive your PSAT scores. You will receive both the score report and the actual test that you completed so that you may see where you excelled and where you need improvement.
- Take the SAT or ACT. Remember registration dates are typically about 4 weeks before the testing date. You must register on your own on-line at www.collegeboard.com for the SAT or www.act.org for the ACT. Test scores are important factors in helping your College Counselor assist you in identifying appropriate college choices for you.

*Mount de Sales Academy suggest that all rising seniors to have at least one test score, either ACT or SAT, before returning for senior year.

TIMETABLE FOR STUDENTS

WHAT'S IMPORTANT FOR JUNIORS CONTINUED

- Schedule classes your senior year that will meet your academic needs and the requirements for admission to the schools where you are planning on applying.
- Parents should schedule meetings with College Counselor as needed
- All Juniors will have a scheduled individual meeting with the College Counselor and are required to attend.

WINTER/SPRING SEMESTER: CONTINUED

- Continue developing portfolios, audition tapes, writing samples, or other evidence of talents required for college admission and/or scholarships.
- Take AP exams in May for all Advanced Placement classes in which you are enrolled.
- Take SAT Subject Tests if they are required by schools to which you are applying.
- Visit colleges of interest during breaks and utilize your college visit days. Many colleges host spring open houses for juniors.
- Don't be afraid to reach out to college admissions representatives assigned to our school if you have any questions. Introduce yourself so that admissions reps can place a name with a face when reading applications. Admissions representatives love when students themselves call or email with questions.
- **REQUIRED:** Request two teacher letters of recommendation on Naviance. First, please ask teachers in person if they are willing to write a letter
- **REQUIRED:** Please complete your resume on Naviance by the last day of junior year as it will be an important source of information when writing counselor and teacher letters of recommendation

SUMMER BEFORE SENIOR YEAR

- Visit as many colleges from your initial list as possible and keep a record of your impressions.
- Get a head start on your college essays: Brainstorm essay topics, write drafts, bounce ideas off others, and set a goal for yourself to have your essays done!
- Student/Athletes planning on playing an NCAA Division I or II sport or playing a sport at an NAIA college must register with the NCAA Clearinghouse at www.eligibilitycenter.org no later than October 1st of their senior year or at www.naia.org for NAIA schools. Please let the College Counselor know that you will be needing transcripts uploaded
- Plan to attend optional application days held by your College Counselor to help you organize college application requirements and get some tips on writing college essays
- Start to finalize your "Colleges I am Applying to List", being sure you have a mix of safety, reach, and 50/50 schools

TIMETABLE FOR STUDENTS

WHAT'S IMPORTANT FOR SENIORS

Your senior year record is the MOST important. RESIST the temptation to alter your senior schedule in any way that will reduce its rigor or reduce the number of core courses (English, Foreign language, Science, math, history/social science, religion). Strength of curriculum and performance in it is the most important factor in college admission decisions.

FALL:

- Make accounts for the applications and the proper forms for admission, scholarships, and financial aid from the colleges to which you plan to apply. Most schools accept applications (and prefer them be sent) on the web. If you apply online, be sure to download forms that must be completed by your Counselors or Teachers and submit these when you request to have your transcript sent.
- Take time to visit with College Admission representatives who visit Mount de Sales Academy. Remember that these representatives are often the ones who will be presenting your application to an admissions committee. Even if you have visited a college campus and had an interview, stop by to say “hello” to these representatives.
- Make your own chart/calendar with all deadlines for your applications for admission, scholarships, and financial aid. Be sure that you meet these deadlines.
- Student/Athletes planning on playing an NCAA Division I or II sport play a sport at an NAIA college must register with the NCAA Clearinghouse at www.eligibilitycenter.org no later than October 1st of their senior year or at www.naia.org for NAIA schools.
- Register for the SAT, ACT, and SAT Subject Tests (if necessary) for early fall. Remember registration dates are typically about 4 weeks before the testing date. You must register on your own on-line at www.collegeboard.com for the SAT or www.act.org for the ACT.
- Finalize the list of schools to which you will apply and update on your “Colleges I am applying to List”. Please properly identify your manner of applying (Common App, Coalition, or college’s own application) and your deadlines (Early Decision, Early Action, Rolling, Restricted Early Action, or Regular Decision).
- Visit college campuses if possible. (Review the College Visitation Policy in the Mount de Sales Academy Handbook.)
- Check Naviance & emails often for reminders from your College Counselor
- Write, proofread, and revise your application essays; get feedback from others.
- We suggest you have all of your applications completed and ready to go before you go trick-or-treating. This means every piece of your application should be submitted by November 1st. Keep in mind that the earliest deadline colleges are allowed to set is October 15
- Be aware of separate college deadlines for scholarships (from colleges or outside scholarships) for which you are applying.
- Be sure that your parents attend the financial aid workshop in the fall. FAFSA forms should be submitted as soon after October 1st as possible
- Reach out to admissions counselors for any questions or to introduce yourself

TIMETABLE FOR STUDENTS

WHAT'S IMPORTANT FOR SENIORS CONTINUED

WINTER

- Keep your College Counselor advised of both the admission decisions and scholarship offers regardless of your desire to accept these offers. **Please turn in copies of all scholarship and acceptance letters to your College Counselor.**
- Complete any applications still pending. Be aware of any independent scholarship deadlines for which you are applying.
- Visit schools to which you have applied and been admitted so that you may see them from a new perspective.
- Start to make pro/con lists of schools that you have been accepted to
- Update your colleges of any new grades, test scores, or awards that may have a positive effect on your application or financial aid status

Once your semester exams are scored and fall grades are computed, Mount de Sales Academy will send an updated transcript with your seventh semester grades included to every school that has already received an official transcript from the Guidance Office. This includes all schools that have already accepted you. Every school that has received your application will receive an update. It is in your best interest to maintain the quality of your academic work through your senior year. "TAKING IT EASY" is something best saved for the summer months. Remember that all offers of admission are contingent upon the successful completion of your high school career. Final transcripts will be sent in June.

SPRING

- Consider all colleges that you have been accepted to and weigh your options. Be especially mindful of that final dollar amount you are expected to pay in tuition, room, & board after all financial aid and awards have been applied.
- Attend accepted student days at the colleges you are most interested in
- Send an acceptance to your first-choice school. Notify all other schools to which you have been admitted that you will not be attending.
- Respond to financial aid and scholarship offers.
- Notify all colleges that accepted you of your final decision NO LATER than MAY 1st, which is the Universal Decision Date. Make your final decision before this date and send a deposit to the school you wish to attend.
- Provide your college counselor with information regarding the scholarships you have received and the amounts of these scholarships.
- Let your College Counselor know where you want your final transcript sent. This must be updated on Naviance.
- Write Thank You notes to all those teachers and admission people that assisted you during this process.
- Sign up for orientation & housing at the school to which you are attending.

COLLEGE COUNSELING YEARLY CALENDAR

FALL

- Senior students will have Senior Orientation before school starts which will include time for the college counselor to provide important information and necessities regarding the college application process in the fall
- Senior Parent Coffee will be held on same day as senior orientation which will include time for the college counselor to address senior parents about the college application process in the fall
- Financial Aid Night will be held before the October 1st opening of the FAFSA. This Night will consist of a presentation by a financial aid director at a local college
- Senior students will have individual meetings scheduled with the college counselor to organize college applications and check college lists
- Junior and Senior Students are eligible to attend college admissions visits to MDSA by signing up for the visits via Naviance
- Senior Students will receive lesson on college interviews
- College Counselor will begin sending application materials to colleges
- The Mount de Sales & Mount Saint Joseph College Fair is held in the beginning of October. It is open to all students and their families
- A Junior Parent Coffee will be held in October to kick off the college process
- College Counselor will begin sending application materials to
- Junior College Visit Day is held in November

WINTER

- College Counselor will continue to meet with students on an as needed basis.
- Students will make schedule for next year and should consider college requirements when doing so
- College Counselor will send mid-year materials to colleges and any updates
- Senior Students will start to receive college decisions

SPRING

- Junior Students will be met with individually and in groups by the College Counselor to start on college lists
- A Junior Parent Coffee will be held to talk about college topics
- Senior Students can make appointments with college counselor to go over admissions decisions, final college decisions, and financial aid.
- Freshman and Sophomore students will receive Naviance accounts and will have lessons on career and interest profiles (a great start to college process)
- Sophomore students will be addressed in Spring about starting college research

SUMMER

- College Counselor will hold application days during summer where rising seniors can brainstorm college essays and organize application materials
- College Counselor will be available various times during summer to meet with students as needed



SECTION 8

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

This section will provide definitions to common terms seen in the college admissions & financial aid process.

Common College Vocabulary That is Important to Know

Academic Solid/Major courses: Usually refers to a traditional discipline of English, mathematics, foreign language, science or social science

ACT (American College Test): This is an achievement test for college bound students. It consists of math, science reasoning, reading, English, and an optional writing section. Scores in each section are out of a possible 36. Your composite score is the average of your scores in math, science reasoning, reading and English. The ACT website is www.act.org.

AP (Advanced Placement): Administered nationally in May, AP tests measure a student's mastery of advanced placement material. Scores range from 1-5. A student receiving a 3, 4, or 5 may receive college credit for their work depending on the specific credit requirements of the college where she matriculates.

Bachelor's Degree: The degree earned after the successful completion of required undergraduate courses at a university or college.

CEEB Code: Mount de Sales Academy's code number is 210335. This code will be used on the SAT test, the ACT test, and applications for admission and financial aid.

Class rank: Where you fit in numerically based solely on your GPA with your class. **It is the policy of the Mount de Sales Academy Guidance office to NOT rank our students.** We do not complete this information on forms nor will we give it to individuals.

Coalition Application for Access and Affordability: A new application hosted by 116 different colleges that aims to streamline the college admissions process. Some schools, like University of Maryland College Park will only accept applications in this manner. Recommendations and Transcripts will still be sent via Naviance for students choosing to use this application method.

College: An individual institution that offers undergraduate education, or an educational division of a larger university, such as the College of Arts and Sciences.

College Board: Membership organization consisting of representatives from college admissions and financial aid offices and secondary school guidance personnel which contracts with the ETS to create and administer its programs (i.e.: SAT, PSAT and AP)

CSS/Financial Aid Profile (College Scholarship Service): Provided through the College Scholarship Service and the College Board. Some colleges and scholarship programs require the CSS PROFILE to help them award nonfederal student aid funds. The CSS PROFILE may be submitted through the Internet (recommended), at www.collegeboard.com/profile

Common Application: An application used by as many as 700 colleges and universities across the country. The student completes one common application online and can send through the common application website to whichever colleges he or she chooses from the list of participating schools. Supplements are often required by each school, so make sure to check the website: www.commonapp.org. Not all colleges take the common application, so be sure to look at individual college application methods.

Defer: This is a decision that a college may make if they want more information on a student before they either admit, deny, or waitlist him or her. Keep in mind that typically all the school wants is the student's latest grades or new test scores.

Deferred Admission: Many colleges will allow students to postpone enrollment (defer admission) for one year after acceptance.

Early Action (EA): Under an Early Action deadline, a student will receive an admission decision from an institution sometime before January 31st, but will not have to inform the college of his/her own decision until May 1st.

Early Decision (ED): Early Decision offers the students the opportunity to apply to their first-choice institution with the understanding that, if they are admitted, they will attend. A student should not enter into Early Decision lightly; it represents a moral commitment to a college.

Educational Testing Service (ETS): This organization is responsible for producing and administering a variety of standardized tests, among them are the SAT Reasoning Test and SAT Subject Tests.

EFC (Expected Family Contribution): The EFC is the amount that FAFSA or CSS Profile ultimately determine that a family can pay after assessing the family's financial need.

Enrollment Deposit OR Matriculation Fee: deposit required of accepted students at many colleges and universities to reserve a space in the incoming class.

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid): One of the two forms used by colleges to determine a student's financial need. It may not be submitted until after October 1st. The FAFSA may also be filed on the internet at www.fafsa.gov. Filing online is the suggested method.

Financial Aid Package: This term refers to the amount of aid that the student receives from a college. The Financial Aid Package may contain federal and nonfederal aid, such as loans, grants, work study, or any combination to meet the student's need.

Grant: Refers to the part of the student's financial aid package that does not need to be repaid.

Legacy: an applicant who is the child of an alumnus/a

Mid-Year Report Form: Many colleges ask that a mid-year report form be sent for every student with an active file after completion of the first semester of their senior year.

National Merit Scholarship: scholarships given based on students' junior PSAT/NMSQT scores and other criteria.

NCAA Eligibility Center: The NCAA Eligibility Center processes academic qualifications for all prospective NCAA Division I and Division II student/athletes and determines whether they are eligible to compete.

PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test): Administered in October to freshman, sophomores, and juniors, the PSAT is a practice test to better prepare you for the SAT Reasoning Test. Your scores from your junior year are used to determine eligibility for the National Merit Scholarship competition. Although teachers may use this as a diagnostic tool to determine a student's strengths and weaknesses, your scores will not be used in the college admission process.

Pell Grant: This is a need-based federal grant which students apply for when completing the FAFSA. Even if a student does not qualify for the grant, the Student Aid Index Number which every applicant receives can open other financial aid possibilities.

Perkins Loan: A federal loan program based on need. Loan applications are made through the college financial aid offices.

PLUS Loans: These are not need-based loans. They are low interest loans, made to help the parents. The college financial aid office or the state guarantee agency can help you find a lender.

Profile: description of the characteristics of a college's enrolling class; description of the secondary school that accompanies each senior's transcript when it is sent to a college.

Rolling Admission: Many colleges, mainly state schools and many non-selective schools, will process and evaluate a student's application as soon as all the required credentials have been received and will then notify the student of the decision without delay. Colleges following this practice may make and announce their admission decisions continuously over several months as opposed to colleges with fixed deadlines and reply dates. You will typically hear a decision from the school within four to six weeks.

SAT Reasoning Test: This is an aptitude standardized test for college-bound students. The test consists of sections in Evidence Based Reading & Writing, formerly known as the verbal section and Math. There is an optional essay section. Scores in each section are out of a possible 800.

SAT Subject Tests: These tests are one-hour tests in specific subject areas, such as languages, math, sciences, and history. Students may choose which tests they would like to take. NOT ALL COLLEGES REQUIRE SAT II's, so be sure to check with the schools to which you are applying for their standardized testing requirements.

Secondary School Report Form (may also be called Counselor Report Form): Many colleges have a form such as this. This is the part of the application that the College Counseling office will fill out.

Selectivity: the ration of admitted students to total applicants at a given institution.

Stafford Loans: Low interest loans made by a bank, credit union, or similar institution. The college financial aid office or the state guarantee agency can help you find a lender.

SAR (Student Aid Report): A student will receive the SAR from the processing center roughly 3-5 weeks after submitting the FAFSA. The SAR will be received sooner if it is completed online. The SAR contains all the information the student provides on the FAFSA. The SAR gives the student an opportunity to correct any information, to present any special or extenuating circumstances, or to have the information sent to up to six additional colleges.

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language): This test is recommended for students for whom English is not a first language. Some colleges may require it of all international students from non-English speaking countries.

Transcript: This is an official document that contains all of the student's classes and grades starting from their freshman year and ending with their senior year

Waiting List: A state of limbo between admission to a school and rejection for highly qualified students who rank slightly lower than those accepted. The number of students taken off the waitlist varies widely from year to year; predictions are hard to make. Some students on the waiting list may not know their fate until July.

Work Study: A part-time job funded by the government and administered by the college. Jobs are awarded based on need and are factored into the aid package.

Yield: percentage of students admitted to a college who ultimately attend that school.

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