



Holy Family High School

College Counselor

December 2011

by Mr. William P. Wilson

Volume XII Issue 5

Financial Aid Seminar for Senior Parents

Wednesday, December 14, 2011 at 6:00p.m. in the Library

College Planning Seminar for Students and Parents

Wednesday, January 11, 2012 at 6:00p.m. in the Theater

PSAT and PLAN results will be returned.

All juniors, sophomores, freshmen, and parents are strongly encouraged to attend.

Is Your Senior Behind?

Recently, several parents have asked if their senior is behind in the college application process. Unfortunately, the answer for some is **YES**. If you are asking this question, consider these issues: Has your senior sorted through all of the college information received and decided where he/she will apply? Have you taken your senior to tour college campuses and meet with admission counselors? Has your senior met with me this fall to discuss college plans? Has he/she asked anyone to review application essays? Has your senior completed an HF Transcript Request Form in the Counseling Center? If the answer to any of these questions is **NO**, then your senior is behind.

Finishing admission applications before December 1st was the goal throughout this process. The vast majority of the seniors did this. In fact, many students have already heard from colleges about their admission, while others are anxiously waiting. Either way, the major paperwork is behind them, and they can now concentrate on their school work and other activities. If a college requests additional information such as mid-year grades or a deposit, there will be plenty of time to take care of it.

On the other hand, there are seniors who have let themselves get behind and

are now scrambling to get things done. Some colleges have deadlines for applications which are rapidly approaching, and those that operate on rolling admission will get *more selective* as their freshman class gets closer to being filled. Still others have limited residence hall space, and the better rooms will be taken. The bottom line is: **get it done**.

Colleges that operate on rolling admission often get more selective as time passes.

As you might expect, this is a busy time of year in our office. Seniors need to realize that they must give us ample time to process their records. Applications are normally completed in the order in which they are submitted. Right now, getting an application sent out, including writing a counselor recommendation, can take two or more weeks. Therefore, we have told the seniors that if they want an application sent out before Christmas, they must have the completed application, or at least the secondary school report section, to us by Thursday, December 1st. We will not guarantee that applications turned in after that date will be processed in December. Likewise, requests for teacher recommendations must be made well ahead of any due date.

Apps to be mailed before Christmas should have been turned in by December 1st

FAFSA and Profile

We now have copies of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) worksheet in our office. You are required to submit this form in order to qualify for need-based financial aid at any college or university. Considering the high cost of attending college, everyone is encouraged to take the time to complete the FAFSA. To this end, **a financial aid presentation on completing the form and to answer related questions will be held on December 11th**. The FAFSA is **free**.

Submitting the FAFSA online will speed its processing by several weeks. **Apply for your PIN today and your FAFSA will be processed much quicker.** www.pin.ed.gov

As I have noted in previous issues, some colleges, typically private schools, will ask that you submit the *Profile* in addition to the FAFSA. Check the information which you have about each college to which your senior is applying. If the *Profile* is required, you can register at <http://profileonline.collegeboard.com/index.jsp>. The *Profile* requires a fee.

The FAFSA cannot be sent in before January 1st. On the other hand, the *Profile* can and should be done now. Both forms should be submitted by February 15th. Since the figures used to complete the FAFSA and the *Profile* are those from your 2011 tax forms, this can create a problem for some families. Try now to line up the income and asset figures which are requested on these forms. Even though you may not file your taxes until later, it simplifies the process if you have accurate figures when you complete the forms.

Some colleges also include a separate financial aid application as part of the admission application. Be certain to fill this out as well. Fortunately, most colleges are committed to being need-blind in admission and also meeting the demonstrated need of the family.

Feel free to call me if you have any questions about financial aid.

Juniors

For juniors, the college search process begins in earnest with the start of the new year. As seniors will attest, the most difficult part of the college application process is deciding where to apply. The task of making appropriate choices from among over 3200 colleges may seem somewhat overwhelming. To keep the search manageable, it is important to be organized. As college counselor, I will help you understand what to do and when. It is essential that the students are actively involved in the research and decision making. No one can do this for them.

Consider these activities in the coming months:

In the College Counseling Center we have several worthwhile books with valuable information about college decision making, finding the right match, the application process, testing, and finding scholarships. We also have a collection of college guidebooks and catalogs. Students are welcome to borrow these materials overnight.

Just about everything you could possibly want to know about college selection is also available on the Internet. Your family's computer is a direct con-

nection to a wealth of information about college. I have compiled a list of valuable Websites for college information. Check the HF website or College Planning Handbook for this list and other valuable information.

On January 11th, I will hold a special evening program for all students and their parents. I will be presenting issues about college selection, admission, SAT & ACT testing, and financial aid. I will also return and review the PSAT and PLAN results. The program will be at 6:00p.m. in the theater.

Beginning in January, I will meet individually with juniors and their parents. In these meetings, I will examine the academic record and aspirations of the students and families and work with them to develop a college plan.

All juniors should take both the SAT and ACT at least once before summer. Registration should be completed online.

Throughout the months ahead, juniors will receive a barrage of information about colleges. They should make the most of the information they receive and consider some preliminary decisions about level of selectivity, size, location, setting, possible major, facilities, activities, cost, etc.

The spring is an excellent time to tour college campuses. A great deal can be learned by making a two hour visit to a college. Spring break is a great time to visit because most colleges are still in session. Try to include college visits in family travel plans.

Juniors and parents should also plan to attend the Catholic high school college fair held this spring. This can be a great opportunity to gather information and ask specific questions. This will occur on Monday, April 23rd at Regis Jesuit HS. The Denver Spring College Fair will be held on Sunday, April 22nd at the University of Denver.

All juniors should take the SAT & ACT before summer.

Underclassmen

I am often asked by parents of freshmen and sophomores, "What should we be doing about college?" Although it is certainly never too early to begin reading about and visiting colleges to learn about the possibilities, when it comes to college planning the most important thing that your student can do is get good grades and get involved.

Colleges unanimously indicate that the most important factor which governs an admission decision is the high school transcript: curriculum and grades. Colleges want to know where the student went to school, how did the student challenge him/herself within the available curriculum, how well did he/she meet those challenges. To a lesser extent, SAT and ACT scores, involvement in extracurricular activities, personal essays, and recommendations are considered. The academic record is always **number one**.

Net Price Calculator

All colleges should have a Net Price Calculator on their website. The calculator will allow you to enter your grades and test scores then will provide an estimate of merit-based scholarships you might receive. And, it will allow you to enter income and family information then provide you with an estimate of need-based financial aid.

Test Dates		
<u>SAT</u>		
Test Date	Registration Deadline	Late Deadline
Jan. 28	Dec. 30	Jan. 13
Mar. 10	Feb. 10	Feb. 24
May 5	Apr. 6	Apr. 20
June 2	May 8	May 22
<u>ACT</u>		
Test Date	Registration Deadline	Late Deadline
Feb. 11	Jan. 13	Jan. 20
Apr. 14	Mar. 9	Mar. 23
June 9	May 4	May 18

Students should register on-line at collegeboard.org and actstudent.org.