

DE COLLEGIO

Volume 12, Issue 1

June 2019

LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

You've made it through your junior year at Solebury. You've already had several opportunities to begin your college search: self-reflection through your student questionnaire, colleges visiting our school in the fall, college fairs, financial aid programs, my introductory courses to the search process, etc. Now that summer is here and you don't have classes for a couple of months, it might be a good time to visit colleges.

Based on what information I have provided you, you should have a general list of schools that you are considering. Use this as a springboard to your college visits. Prepare some questions in advance, check out the school's web site, show them that you are interested in them. Often the interest that you show in a school is reciprocated when it comes time to make a decision.

Chances are, many of the schools that you might visit over the summer will want to visit us in the fall. Ask them. If they do not have such plans, and you are seriously interested in them, let me know. I may be able to request a visit from them if they are in the area. Meeting with college representatives on our campus is another way for you to show them how interested you are. And since you are part of *one of the largest applicant pools in U.S. History*, this

interest can go a long way in helping you in the admissions process.

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRES

Back in December, I distributed to the juniors their own copy of the student questionnaire. This form was due at the end of the winter trimester, along with a practice college essay. Many thanks to those of you who returned this form to me. I have been diligently looking through them in an effort to get to know you better and provide better guidance. *However, we still have not received these forms from some of you.* **It is important throughout the college search process that you get things done in a timely manner, as I plan to do for you.** The first rule of college applications is to meet the deadlines; colleges can afford to deny you admission for not submitting the application on time. If you have not yet handed it in, please get it to me immediately. If you need a new form, it is available on the college counseling page of Solebury's web site.

INTERVIEWS

In December, in my introductory letter, and throughout our college guidance courses, I told you about the mandatory interview with me. It took some poking

and prodding, but I have met with all returning seniors. If you wish to meet with me again, feel free to set up an appointment by contacting me at the e-mail address or phone number below. I will be around for most of the summer writing recommendations and presenting Solebury to various colleges and would welcome an ongoing dialogue with you.

I look forward to meeting with you again in the fall for a short, *mandatory* follow-up meeting to see how your summer went and your college list is shaping up, talk about how senior classes are going, to walk you through the details of the college application process and to become an even better advocate for you to the colleges.

STANDARDIZED TESTING

One of the many factors that colleges consider in their decision-making is standardized test results, either the SAT or ACT. The SAT is more widely known on the coasts, while the ACT is more prevalent in the Midwest. Both feature optional essays, but some colleges will require the essay so I recommend taking either test at least once with the essay.

Both the SAT and ACT will be offered again in the fall. The next test date for the ACT is July 13 (*we are currently in the late registration window*) SAT is August 24 (*Register by July 26*). Please note that these are before dorms open at Solebury so we will not be able to provide transportation for boarders. Don't forget that you will need to upload a photo for both exams.

Some of you may have been disappointed with your first SAT/ACT results. I have a couple of key points to keep in mind. First, test scores should not be used as a measure of your worth. They are merely one of many factors that go into the admissions process. Most colleges tend to downplay standardized test scores in favor of rigor/breadth of curriculum, GPA and activities (in that order). In fact, more and more colleges are going "test optional," so that you do not need to submit test scores (see www.fairtest.org for a complete list). However, you should still always strive to do your best on the exams as well as in class and in the community.

Second, it is not uncommon for students to raise their test average from their junior to their senior year, sometimes substantially. Some of it comes with being fresher coming off of summer break, some from being more used to the test, some from having a better understanding of the subject matter. There may be other factors as well, such as taking test prep courses. If you wish to take advantage of the summer and take test prep course, several are available in the area and, for boarders, most likely there are programs near you.

Solebury again plans to offer an SAT Prep course this summer and fall. This will be taught on campus with Solebury's own faculty. Look for more information on our web site in the coming weeks.

SUMMER DAYS

While summer is a great time to relax and recharge your brain, you shouldn't

spend the whole time doing nothing. Colleges like to see that you do something over the summer: volunteering, employment, travel, etc.

It may not even be too late to enroll in a summer course. Keep in mind, though, that most colleges have told me that taking a summer course at their school does not necessarily help in the admissions process. In fact, according to representatives from Harvard and Gettysburg whom I spoke to recently, the best thing you can do over the summer is get a job!

ESSAYS

As part of your college application, you will likely be expected to write an essay. The summer is a good time to work on your essays and get them polished. From the student questionnaire, you should have already written an essay based on the Common Application (www.commonapp.org), which is accepted by over 700 colleges. You will find that these general themes will recur among college applications. I have reviewed most essays that have been submitted and have tried to return them with my feedback when we met. The essay topics will be the same as your questionnaire essay topics, so if you can do that questionnaire essay, then you can do your college essay!

Over the summer, get a hold of different college applications and start working on them and their essays. That way, you can spend more time in the fall focusing on being a senior instead of a college applicant. If you want me to look at any applications and/or essays either for

specific schools or the Common Application, let me know. I have read and reviewed approximately 4700 college essays in my career and look forward to reading some more and giving you feedback!

A NEW COALITION

Four years ago, some colleges decided they wanted to create an alternative to the Common Application, in the hopes that it would encourage students to be more engaged in the college preparation and application process. As a result, the Coalition for Access, Affordability and Success was born.

The Coalition allows students to save materials in their "locker," has different essay prompts and a collaboration platform where you can chat with college counseling professionals.

CLEAR!

I have spoken to some of you who have expressed an interest in trying to pursue college athletics. In order to be considered for Division I or Division II athletics, you must register with the NCAA Initial Eligibility Center. You can do so at www.eligibilitycenter.org; I would recommend doing so in the upcoming weeks. You must also arrange to send your SAT/ACT scores to the NCAA (their code is 9999), but that does not have to happen immediately.

I will need to know if you plan to register with the NCAA, so that I can send a transcript there this summer. Note that

the NCAA Initial Eligibility Center does not apply to Division III athletics.

RESOURCES

The college guidance office also has guidebooks and other resources to help you in your college search. Please see me to sign any of this material out.

Our web site also will be frequently updated with information about upcoming events, summer study opportunities, scholarships and more. Please visit it often!

THE "FACE" OF ADMISSIONS

Many of you have profiles on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other web sites for social reasons. You may spend hours each day updating your profile, messaging your friends and clicking through photo albums. It's harmless fun, right?

Be aware, though, that what you and/or your friends post may have implications in college: How would you feel if a college admission officer saw your site? Most colleges are not surfing the Web for your profile – only about 10% according to a recent survey by the National Association for College Admission Counseling. However the same survey reported that 38% percent of these schools saw something that had affected the students negatively. The following article from the New York Times reflects this:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/10/business/they-loved-your-gpa-then-they->

[saw-your-tweets.html?pagewanted=all&r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/10/business/they-loved-your-gpa-then-they-saw-your-tweets.html?pagewanted=all&r=0)

Some examples I've seen:

- Last summer, Harvard denied 10 previously accepted high school seniors because of offensive material that they posted: <http://www.philly.com/philly/education/Harvard-withdraws-10-acceptances-for-offensive-memes-in-private-group-chat.html>, and they did so again at least once this summer.
- One admission dean reported that he denied at least one college applicant in part because of a blog he posted. The dean said the student's blog included seemingly hostile comments about certain college officials.
- Swimmers at Louisiana State criticized coaches on Facebook and were kicked off the team.
- Police busted an underage drinking party at George Washington University after they found invitations online.
- Two student workers were fired: one because she posted that her job was boring; another for complaining about a small tip that a customer left.
- Finally, a senior in high school who was on probation for underage drinking, was sentenced to 90 days in jail because a photo that she posted violated her probation.

In general, I would encourage you to be cognizant of the fact that anyone can see your pages – not just your posts but your friends' posts as well. If there's a picture of you that isn't flattering, or your posts (or even a friend's posts on your account) aren't flattering, take them down!

These sites are constantly changing their privacy settings, so it would be wise to make sure that the content on your page does not do you a disservice. Especially if you are part of the growing trend to "friend" people in admissions!

THE LAST WORD

Choosing a college is not easy. You have plenty of people to support you every step of the way. Let us help you, and I'm sure that you will find the college that's the right match for you. I will be around most of the summer to offer assistance. Please stop on by!

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www.solebury.org/academics/college-counseling/index.aspx

CEEB Code: 392955