

Class of 2020

College Focused Bulletin

Summer 2019

It is hard to believe that Senior Year is right around the corner! Hopefully, this summer will be spent with friends and family; but most importantly preparing for this ever so important year. The goal of this bulletin is to be used as a quick reference and also to provide you with some important updates concerning the college application process. For a more detailed resource, access the College Planning Guide, which can be found on the Counseling Website or in the Document Library in Naviance Student (formerly known as Family Connection).

Please direct any questions during the summer to Mrs. Lusk or Mrs. Steffen as the counseling office will be opened on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, from 8:00 am – 1:00 pm. Classroom presentations to review the "College Focused Bulletin" information will begin in September.

Things to Do This Summer:

- Format and finalize your resume. Naviance Student has a resume builder! The resume builder is under the About Me tab.
- Identify characteristics or "preferences" you want in a college and update the College's I'm Thinking About section of Naviance Student
 - Make an honest assessment of your academic and personal profile
 - Select a reasonable range of realistic and appropriate colleges to research based on academic requirements, majors offered, geographic location, size, financial considerations, etc.
 - Visit colleges when possible and schedule an interview
- Create a "college application only" email address
- Begin to narrow down your list of schools to the final number of schools to apply. Transfer these schools to the "College's I'm Applying To" section of Naviance Student. Schools must be moved here for us to send application materials. It is important to accurately identify how you plan to apply (EA, ED, RA, etc.). This is how counselors know when application materials are due. We also must have a transcript release on file.

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Fall SAT Dates:	Fall ACT Dates
August 24	September 14 @PTHS
October 5	October 26
November 2 @PTHS	December 14

College Visits @ PTHS

A number of admissions counselors will be Visiting PTHS. This is a great time to ask specific questions about majors, the college itself, or the application. Check Naviance Student for a complete list and to sign up.

Are you a potential Division I or II athlete??

You must register through the NCAA Eligibility Center!!!
<https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/ /NCAA.jsp>

Save the Date

*South Hills College Fair
 Location: TBA
 October 8th 6:00-9:00 pm
 *FAFSA Completion Night @
 PTHS Library: October 3rd
 4:30, 5:30, or 6:30 – one
 hour time slots available

Requesting Transcripts Electronically Using Naviance Student

1. One Transcript Release form must be signed by a parent or student if 18. This form is available in the document library in Naviance Student or in the Counseling Office. We cannot send your transcript without this signed document.
2. In Naviance Student, students must indicate their college(s) where transcripts need to be sent. From the Colleges tab: Choose the "Colleges I'm Applying To" section. Please also indicate your intended application deadline, specifically Early Decision or Early Action, and if you also submitted your application. Standardized test scores (ACT/SAT/SAT II) must be sent to the college directly from the testing agency.
3. Beside each college you will see one of the icons below:



Common Application Schools: Use the Common Application to complete your application. Some schools may give you the choice to use their own specific application or the Common Application. Some schools are Common Application exclusive. **Students will have to link their Naviance Student account after signing the FERPA waiver.**



A Common Application School: The student is NOT using the Common Application AND the School cannot receive electronic documents through Naviance Student. Paper documents must be mailed to the school.



Electronic Application Schools: Use the school's own specific application to apply. We are able to send transcripts electronically once they have been requested. Coalition Application schools also show this icon.



Paper Application Schools: When the stamp icon is displayed next to the college name, we can only mail a paper copy, along with any supplemental materials. You must provide a 9x12 addressed stamped envelope.

Requesting Letters of Recommendation-Electronic Submission

1. Ask in person first!
2. You **MUST use Naviance Student** to request letters of recommendation. Teachers will be able to send documents electronically as indicated by the icons. If you are using the **Common Application DO NOT INVITE the recommender via the Common Application website.**
3. Click on the College's Tab in Naviance Student-"Colleges I'm Applying To"-Click Letters of Recommendation
4. Click Add Request.
5. Choose the teacher from the drop down menu.
6. You can choose a specific colleges or all current and future colleges in the "Colleges I'm Applying To" section.
7. In the Personal Note box: a letter of reminder and thanks to the recommender.
8. Click Submit Request to send the request.

Requesting Letters of Recommendation-Paper Submission/Stamp Schools

1. Complete Steps 1-8 above.
2. Provide your teacher with a letter addressed to the college with four (4) stamps for the schools that are paper submission only.

Admission Vocabulary

Rolling Admission-Applications are reviewed according to the date by which completed materials are received. Early submission is advisable.

Regular Admission-Application with a set deadline and timeframe for review.

Early Decision (ED)-A deadline as early as Nov. 1st, which will generally provide a **binding** response from the college. A contract is signed by student, parent/guardian, and counselor. Typically, students can apply to only one school ED and must withdraw other applications if accepted.

Early Action (EA)-A deadline as early as Nov. 1st, which will generate a **non-biding** response from the college. Students may apply to multiple schools via the EA option.

Single Choice Early Action-A non-biding application option, but students cannot apply to an early program at any other private college or university.

Wait-List-A delay in an admission decision.

Deferred-An EA or ED application has been moved to the regular decision date.

Common Application-2019-2020

www.commonapp.org

The Common Application is a comprehensive tool allowing students to apply to nearly 700 colleges using one application. Some schools exclusively use the CA, while others give students the choice to use the CA or their own specific application.

2019-2020 Common Application Essay Prompts

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

The Coalition for Access, Affordability and Success

The Coalition Application: <http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org/>

The Coalition represents more than 90 higher education colleges and universities. The online platform provides tools to assist students in applying to college.

The Coalition essay prompts for the 2019-2020 application years are:

1. Tell a story from your life, describing an experience that either demonstrates your character or helped shaped it.
2. Describe a time when you made a meaningful contribution to others in which the greater good was your focus. Discuss the challenges and rewards of making your contribution.
3. Has there been a time when you've had a long-cherished or accepted belief challenged? How did you respond? How did the challenge affect your beliefs?
4. What is the hardest part of being a teenager now? What's the best part? What advice would you give a younger sibling or friend (assuming they would listen to you)?
5. Submit an essay on a topic of your choice.

FAFSA: Free Application for Federal Student Aid

What is the FAFSA and Why Complete one?

The FAFSA is the free application that students must complete to apply for federal student aid, which includes Pell Grants, federal student loans, and work-study opportunities for their post-secondary education. In addition to determining eligibility for federal student aid, FAFSA information is used by many states, colleges, career schools, and private organizations to determine eligibility for nonfederal student aid. In PA, the FAFSA is used to determine State Grant eligibility. Schools also use the FAFSA data to award their own financial aid. A new FAFSA must be completed each year.

Where to apply online?

www.fafsa.gov

It is FREE. Be mindful of other organizations or websites that charge a fee.

www.financialaidtoolkit.gov

Resources and helpful information.

Earlier Submission

Students are able to submit a FAFSA for the 2020-2021 school year as early as October 1, 2018.

Earlier Income Tax Information

Students will utilize the income information from one tax year earlier—"the prior-prior" tax year when completing the 2019-2020 FAFSA.

Students will be able to complete the FAFSA using information imported directly from the IRS, using Data Retrieval Tool.

Benefits of an earlier FAFSA

Alignment-The financial aid application process will be more aligned with the college application process.

Certainty-Students (and their parents, if applicable) will not need to estimate income information.

Less pressure-There will be more time for students to explore and understand financial aid options and apply for aid before state and school deadlines.

Important Dates

If you plan to attend college during

- July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021

You can submit a FAFSA beginning

- Oct. 1, 2019-May 1, 2020

Income information based from

- 2018 Tax year.

FAFSA Completion Night: October 3, 2019

College Essay Advice

The PTHS counselors have spent quality time participating in WOW Writing Workshop seminars, attending selective college meetings, attending the PA School Counselor Association Conference, and working with guest speakers from the College Night in April, in an effort to better understand what selective college admission counselors are looking for while reading the thousands of college essays they receive each year. The college essay writing process can be summarized into three essential points.

1. It really comes down to the one word that we all dread at one time or another...REFLECTION. By definition, reflection is the process of thinking and learning from your experiences. It is another way to describe an event through exploration. Asking yourself the questions of what went right? How do I feel about it? Often when you are able to process your experiences through conversation or writing your strengths and weakness are revealed. It is powerful way to evaluate yourself and expose who you really are to your reader. *AHA!* The college admissions counselors want to get to know who you are beyond your GPA and test scores. The college admissions counselors realize that as a 17 or 18 year old, your life experiences may be limited to trite and worn out stories of band camp or whatever else. It is how you tell your story and what details you chose to explore and learn from that may be the connective link to one reader that may crack a smile or shed a tear in your favor.
2. Before you start writing your college essay, common application essay or any personal statement, ask yourselves this question:

“What do I want colleges to know about me that is not apparent from the rest of my application package?”

If you are stuck in finding an answer, have a conversation with your parent or family member that really knows you. It may be an attribute such being honest or an experience you had as a captain/leader of a team. Together, you may recall a story or an event that demonstrated that characteristic. Now you have a theme. Develop the theme with reflection in mind. Consider these three questions to organize the event or experience into paragraphs for a formal structure of writing:

What? Brief Description of event and details. Remember this is not an explanation but an evaluation.

So What? Your feelings and understanding of the scenario. How did you react? Anything that you feel is significant or important to you and why you felt/thought the way you did.

What Next? Share what you learned from the experience. How will this experience affect your future experiences or decisions?

When you are writing a reflective essay, you can use the first person “I” and “we” to describe your feelings and thoughts. The tone of your essay should be calm and thoughtful...reflecting back with a positive attitude rather than describing or re-living the event.

3. The last piece of advice is to find a good editor/proofreader. Again, It is helpful to work with someone who really knows you and can help you develop your theme. The grammar and spell check tends to fix itself by the final edit. Don’t be afraid to put yourself out there or to be creative, your essay may be your chance to claim a spot in the freshman class of your “Dream” school.

Five Common Interview Questions (and How to Answer Them) Via Fastweb.com

The college admissions interview doesn't have to be a nerve-racking experience. You'll make the best impression if you're relaxed. Get comfortable with some typical interview questions before you sit down for a face-to-face with the admissions interviewer and ease your anxiety. Practice what to say to these common interview questions.

Why Do You Want to Attend this School?

Colleges look for students who will be a good match for their school. Your interviewer wants to see a genuine interest in the college. "There's always going to be a question 'Why do you want to come to our school?' so you really have to know the school," says Bev Taylor, an independent college counselor and director of the Ivy Coach. Spend time before the interview thinking about why that college would be a good match for you. "It's important to talk about yourself. Students need to do their homework before an interview. Find out what it is about themselves that can make them happy at that college," Taylor says.

What book have you read in the last year that has special meaning to you and why?

This interview question frequently comes up and is an easy one to prepare an answer to. Try not to pick a book that you were assigned to read for class, but if you do, try not to mention that it was an assignment. "Know about a book and don't just stop at the name of the book and the author. Know something about the book and something that you enjoyed about that book ... You have to know the answer to this one," Taylor says. Use this opportunity to share something about yourself. Talk about why the book had special meaning for you and try to reveal your interests and personality in the process.

How will you contribute to this campus?

This question comes in different forms including, "In what ways have you contributed to your high school?," "How will you be a valuable addition to the college?" Before the interview, pick a few positive adjectives that describe you and explain why. Then turn that into the answer to any of these questions. For example, "I'm very self-motivated. If I see that something needs to get done, I take it upon myself to do it. In my high school glee club, for instance ..." An answer like this will work for more than one type of question. "Don't just give the three adjectives though. Pretend you were thrown a ball and now you have to run with the ball. Relax and answer the question, but give more than just the answers," Taylor says.

What are your academic interests?

You don't have to know what you'll major in, but be able to explain your academic interests, why they interest you, and how you can pursue those interests at their college. Colleges are looking for students who are excited about learning, not students who feel they need to get a college degree but aren't sure why.

Do you have any questions?

"That's going to come up at the end, guaranteed. Too often students will say, 'I think you've answered them all. That's probably the worst answer you can give. You need to have some questions,'" Taylor says. Asking your interviewer questions shows them that you've spent time thinking about their school. It's okay to bring a list of questions you wrote beforehand.

Ask the right sorts of questions. Don't ask something that can easily be found on the school's Web site. Show you've done some research. Ask questions that relate to your interests, not just general questions. You also don't want to ask a question that will put their school in a negative light. Instead of asking a yes or no question like, "Are research opportunities available to freshmen?" ask a more open-ended question like, "How can a freshman get involved in research?"

No matter what questions you're asked in your interview, think of the interview as a conversation. Relax and act like yourself. It's important to anticipate what questions you'll be asked and prepare answers. Don't just recite the answers you prepare, but take time to think them over and sound natural.

Things to Know About How Colleges Use Admission Test

Via The College Board

College admission tests, like the SAT, are standardized tests typically taken in your junior or senior year. Colleges use scores from these tests to help them make admission decisions. Each college has its own admission processes and policies, and they use scores differently. Here are the facts you need to know.

1. Most Four-Year Colleges Use Test Scores in Their Admission Decisions

SAT scores help colleges compare students from different high schools. Your scores show your strengths and readiness for college work. But remember, scores are just one part of your college application, along with grades, course rigor and recommendations.

2. Test Scores Are Not the Most Important Factor

When they use scores in admission decisions, different colleges weight the scores differently. But no matter which college you're applying to, test scores are not the most important factor. Colleges give the most weight to your grades and the rigor of your classes.

3. Most Colleges Publish Student Test-Score Information

Some colleges publish the average scores of their students, and others show ranges. If you're interested in a particular college, you can see how your scores compare. But keep in mind that most colleges admit students with a wide range of scores; there are always some students who score above and some below the published scores. Think of these scores as a guide, not a cutoff.

4. Admission Tests Let Colleges Find You

When you sign up for the SAT, you get the chance to hear from colleges that have an interest in you based on a combination of your test scores, grades, academic interests, and other characteristics. The PSAT/NMSQT, SAT, SAT Subject Tests, and PSAT 10 offer opportunities for you to indicate your desire to have your name shared with interested colleges.

5. Colleges May Use Scores to Award Scholarships

Most scholarship money — money you do not have to pay back — comes from colleges. Some colleges use your test scores, alone or in combination with other characteristics and achievements, to award their funds. Some colleges may even automatically award you a scholarship if you earn a certain score. Other organizations and private companies that award scholarships may also require your test scores as part of their scholarship applications.

6. Scores May Determine Placement in College Classes

Admission tests like the SAT evaluate the reading, writing and math skills you'll need in college. So some colleges use scores to place students in classes that are at the right level for them. Scores can also be used to identify students who may benefit from specific advisors or academic support in college.

7. Most Four-Year Colleges Require Scores, and Some Two-Year Colleges Recommend Them

Nearly all four-year colleges require you to submit admission test scores — you can't apply without them. The SAT is accepted by almost all U.S. colleges. Some four-year colleges and open-admission colleges, including community colleges, don't require scores but may use them for placement or scholarships.

8. Colleges Consider Multiple Scores in Different Ways

You decide who sees your scores, because you're in charge of sending them. If you take the SAT more than once, you can often choose to send only your best scores. But each college sets its own policy for how it uses multiple scores:

- Some colleges require all your scores.
- Some colleges look at your highest combined scores from one test date.
- Some colleges accept your highest section scores from any day you tested.

