**GEMS AMERICAN ACADEMY COLLEGE HANDBOOK**

**Junior Meeting Check List**

* Review Transcript
* IB Predict Grades
* Questions about classes for next year
* Review Calendar
* Counselor, Student and Parent Roles in the College Process
* Understanding of Ten College/University Application Cap
	+ *Ideal range is 6-8 colleges, with an even selection in the following categories: Safe/Likely, Comfort, and Reach.*
* Naviance
* Where do you want to study \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* What do you want to study \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Testing Plan
* Conversation about Finances with Parents

***University Username and Passwords***

**GAA GMail**

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**College BoardSAT**

**1/SAT 2 Exams**

*www.Collegeboard.org*

Username: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Password: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**ACT Exams**

*www.ACT.org*

Username: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**TOEFL**

*www.ets.org/toefl*

Username: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Password: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**International English Language Testing System (IELTS)**

http://www.ielts.org

Username: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Password: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Naviance**

https://succeed.naviance.com/auth/signin

Username: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Common Application**

*www.commonapp.org*

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**UCAS**

*www.ucas.com*

Username: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**FAFSA**

*www.fafsa.ed.gov*

Username: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Password: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Other Website:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**TIMELINE FOR COLLEGE PLANNING**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **June** | * Start thinking about which teachers you would like to ask to write your letter of recommendations. Fill out the LOR form that was given to you during your junior meeting.
* Add colleges to the “colleges I’m thinking about tab” in Naviance
* Prepare for upcoming standardized tests
* Continue researching colleges
* Visit Colleges
* Work on writing the college essay
 |
| **July** | * Continue researching colleges
* Visit colleges
* Prepare for upcoming standardized tests
* Work on writing your college essay
* **Clean up all questionable blogs, YouTube, Facebook, etc. entries. Anything you reveal about yourself on the web is potentially available for colleges to see.**
* If you are applying to an art, architecture, theatre or music program, prepare your portfolio.
* **GET ORGANIZED**; find a way to track all the necessary information that you need to apply for all colleges/universities (Tip: Use an excel spreadsheet to track SAT scores, SAT requirements, application dates, interview dates, etc.)
 |
| **TIP** | If you are applying to the US, create an account for the common application online. The 2016-2017 version will be posted on August 1st. **Save your common application username and password, and take a look at the application supplements for each college to which you are applying.**  |
| **August** | * Sign up for your senior meeting with Ms. Leishear or Mr. Abraham
* Finalize your application checklist (make sure you understand all requirements for admission, make sure you have the proper account/method of applying to each institution, continue working on essays/personal statements)
* Narrow your list to 3 reach schools, 3 comfort schools, and 3 safety schools
* Review your current courses and your transcript to ensure that you have met or will meet all graduation requirements
 |
| **September** | * Have your list of schools finalized.
* Meet with your designated counselor (Abraham: First names A – La, Leishear: First names Le -Z)
* If you are applying to UK systems, California schools or Early Decision, make sure your teachers are working on your letter of recommendation and are uploading it into Naviance ASAP
* Begin to complete college applications – first deadlines come first.
* Consult with your counselor regarding your personal essay progress
* Focus on your academic work, time management and study skills
* Attend Senior/Parent College Night
* Request your SAT and/or ACT score report to be sent to each college or if you are retaking the tests, add the colleges to our test registration.
* **OXBRIDGE: Oxford and Cambridge applications for overseas interviews are due mid-September**
 |
| **October** | * **-UK: Oxford, Cambridge, Medicine, Vet and Dentistry applications are due mid-October**
* **UC and CSU: Applications open October 1st, but you cannot submit until between Nov. 1st and Nov. 30th. You can complete your application during this time and write the required essays.**
* Follow up with all teachers who you asked to write you a letter of recommendation
* Check application deadlines, especially if you are applying early to anywhere.
* Continue to complete applications in order of application deadline
* Continue to consult with your counselor about your essay and anything else needed in the application process
* Prepare for any upcoming standardized tests
* Register for November SAT or SAT subject tests as needed
* Check if you need to submit TOEFL scores with any of your applications. If so, request them to be sent from your testing agency
* Complete and submit all applications before the Nov. 1st deadline
* Register or request interviews for the colleges that offer or require an interview
* Receive IB predicted scores
* If applicable, register for the CSS profile on [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) (this is a financial aid document that is required by some colleges in the US)
* Write thank you notes to those teachers who write you a LOR
 |
| **REMINDER** | **Always double check your application before submitting.****Always have at least one other person read your essays before you add them to the application**  |
| **November** | * Nov. 1: Deadline for many early decision and action applications
* Many public universities have priority filing deadlines around this time.
* Make sure your LORs have been uploaded in Naviance by your teachers
* Continue to consult with counselor about the essay and application process
* Focus on academic work, time management and study skills
* Prepare for any upcoming standardized tests
 |
| **REMINDER** |  **University of California and Cal State Applications open the month of November for submission only.**  |
| **December** | * Prepare for any upcoming standardized tests
* Finish college applications and essays
* Submit finalized college applications
* Thank you letters for those who wrote you a LOR
* Study for final exams
 |
| **January**  | * Submit FASFA form if you are applying for financial aid in the U.S.
* Prepare for upcoming standardized tests
* Finish and submit college application and essays
* If you are in IB, make sure you are working on IAs, extended essays and CAS reflections
 |
| **February** | * Keep up the pace with school work
* If you are in IB, make sure you are working on IAs, extended essays and CAS reflections
 |
| **March** | * Notify your counselor ASAP when you receive admission decisions
* If you are in IB, make sure you are working on IAs, extended essays and CAS reflections
 |
| **April**  | * Notify your counselor ASAP when you receive admission decisions, **most colleges will inform students by April 1st.**
* Decision making time!
* If you are in IB, make sure you are working on IAs, extended essays and CAS reflections
 |
| **May** | * Reply to all U.S colleges by May 1st about your choice.
* Inform all other colleges that you will attend another institution, and tell your counselor of your final choice.
* IB exams
 |
| **June** | * Begin the via process if necessary
* Final transcript to be sent to the college or university to which you are committed to attending.
 |

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILTIES**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **School/Counselor**  | **Student** | **Parent** |
| * Maintain accurate transcripts
* Send all school documentation to colleges and universities: transcripts, profile, school reports, and letter of recommendation
* Assist student on requesting college information
* Monitor overall process and help students compile all the pieces of the application
* Remind students of upcoming deadlines
* Provide information about college and university reps visiting our school
* Update and publish school profile annually

 * Write reports of

recommendations when requested by the student or college  | * Research colleges and universities
* Check email daily
* Ask teachers for letters of recommendation
* Sign up for all appropriate testing (SAT, SATII, ACT, TOEFL)
* Talk with university reps at our school
* Fill out applications
* **WATCH DEADLINES**
* Give appropriate forms to your counselor, especially any mid-year reports
* Keep copies of all forms and applications
* Inform your counselors of all admissions decisions ASAP
* Update your Naviance account as needed
 | * Discuss openly financial restrictions and funding for colleges
* Prepare financial forms as required
* Provide application fees as needed
* Assist students in management of deadlines
* Proof read essays and applications
* Assist in gathering basic college information
* Visit colleges
* Balance the pressure you put on your teen – they need some push, but this is also their responsibility
* Keep your own expectations in check
 |

**FINDING THE BEST FIT**

It’s not uncommon for high school students to utter the sentence “I want to get into a really good college, like Harvard or Yale, or any of the Ivys.” While Harvard, Yale and the rest of the Ivy League schools are excellent institutions, they also may be a terrible fit for your student. The most important part of the college search is finding the best fit for each student. While one college might be an excellent match for one student, it may not be the best match for another. It’s important for students to take the college search seriously and keep an open mind. In order to find the best fit, a student needs to focus on various aspects of colleges and universities and not just one standalone factor like a ridiculously competitive acceptance rate or the fact that the university has an amazing Greek life. While this information seems obvious to adults, it’s not always that apparent to high school students. What a student truly needs to consider are the following:

1. **Will the college/university bring out the best in you?**
	1. When are you the happiest?
	2. What brings out the best in you? Challenge? Material that comes naturally?
2. **Will I be able to learn about my favorite subject area in a way that best suits my needs?**
	1. What will be your concentration?
	2. Do you enjoy classes because of the material or because you’re learning from an instructor?
	3. Do you like working in groups or independently? Could you learn in a class of hundreds?
	4. Do you want research opportunities?
	5. Do you want a chance to study around the world?
3. **Does this school offer me a chance to get involved in act ivies that are important to me?**
	1. Do you play a sport? If so, does the college offer this sport, and at what level do they offer it?
	2. Would you want to write for a student publication?
	3. Are you into performing arts? Design?
	4. Do you want to surround yourself with people just like you or with people that are different from you? Do you want to meet only people from just your year?
	5. Do you want a variety of opportunities to contribute towards the school? Be a mentor? Serve on the student government? Play in a band?

**Students can start their college search by using the acronym “MATCH” to get them started***.*

**M** – Major (make sure the college has the major in which you are interested)

**A** – Activities (Do they have the sport you play? Theatre? Band?)

**T** – Territory (Where do you want to go? US? UK? Canda? City? Town?)

**C** – Cost (Can you afford this institution? Do they offer scholarships? Financial Aid?)

**H** - Help (Does this college/university offer support for academics? Mental health? Career?)

M … Major

**What to Study?**

**Agriculture**

**Architecture**

**Area, Ethnic, Cultural & Gender Studies**

**Arts**

**Biological & Biomedical Sciences**

**Business, Management & Marketing**

**Communications & Journalism**

**Communications Technologies**

**Computer & Information Sciences**

**Construction Trades**

**Education**

**Engineering**

**Engineering Technologies**

**English Language & Literature**

**Family & Consumer Sciences**

**Foreign Language & Literature**

**Health Professions & Clinical Sciences**

**History**

**Law & Legal Studies**

**Liberal Arts & Sciences**

**Library Science**

**Mathematics**

**Mechanic & Repair Technologies**

**Military Technologies**

**Multi-Interdisciplinary Studies**

**Natural Resources & Conservation**

**Parks, Recreation & Fitness**

**Personal & Culinary Services**

**Philosophy & Religion**

**Physical Sciences**

**Precision Production Trades**

**Psychology**

**Public Administration & Services**

**Science Technologies**

**Security & Protective Services**

**Social Sciences**

**Theological Studies & Religious Vocations**

**Transportation & Materials Moving**

A ... Activities

**What to Do?**

**Continue a Sport - \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Start a new one - \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Watch?**

**Participate?**

**Varsity (DI,DII,DIII)?**

**Club?**

**Intramural?**

**Choral Groups**

**Dance**

**Film**

**Journalism**

**Music ensembles**

**Opera**

**Concert Band**

**Drama**

**Jazz Band**

**Marching Band**

**Musical Theater**

**Radio**

**TV Station**

**Student Government**

**Symphony Orchestra**

**Service/Volunteer**

T ... Territory

**Where to live?**

**US UK Canada Europe Australia Middle East**

**Public Private**

**4-Year 2-Year Other**

**Small < 2,000 Medium 2,000-15,000 Large > 15,000**

**Urban? Suburban? Rural?**

**WEST:** Alaska Arizona California Colorado Hawaii Idaho Montana Nevada Oregon Utah Washington Wyoming

**SOUTHWEST:** Arkansas New Mexico Oklahoma Texas

**MIDWEST :** IllinoisIndianaIowaKansasMichiganMinnesotaMissouriNebraskaNorth DakotaOhioSouth DakotaWest VirginiaWisconsin

**SOUTH:** Alabama Florida Georgia Kentucky Louisiana Mississippi North Carolina South Carolina Tennessee Virginia

**NEW ENGLAND:** Connecticut Maine Massachusetts New Hampshire Rhode Island Vermont

**MID-ATLANTIC:** Delaware District of Columbia Maryland New Jersey New York Pennsylvania

C ... Cost

 **FAFSA PROFILE Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ NPC**

**Scholarships or Grants**

H ... Help

**Accelerated study**

**Certifications**

**Double major**

**English as a 2nd Language**

**English/Math Support**

**Honors programs**

**Housing Options**

**Internships**

**Learning Disabilities**

**ROTC**

**Student Employment Services**

**Study Abroad**

**Tutoring**

**Work-Study programs**

**INVESTIGATING COLLEGES**

Once you’ve identified colleges that you are interested in, students need to make sure to do their complete research on each university in order to determine best fit. This requires digging a little deeper into college researching, and examining more finite aspects. Below are some questions that students may find helpful in examining the many facets of universities.

**Basic Facts:**

1. What is the college’s selectivity and what do they require for admission?
2. Where is the college? How far away is it? Too far? Or too close?
3. Does the college have a religious affiliation? Does that matter to you?
4. How many of the students graduate in 4 years? 5 years? 6 years?
5. How many freshman return as sophomores? This is sometimes listed as “retention rate”.

**Where do you fit on the college campus:**

1. What is the middle 50% of test scores for both verbal and math? Where does that place you?
2. What is the average grade point average for applying freshman? Where do you place?
3. Are their special requirements for certain programs? (Look at engineers and science majors)
4. Are freshman guaranteed housing?
5. What’s the percentage of international students? Where are they housed? Is there an orientation program/support services for these students?
6. What is the school’s social life like?

**University specifics:**

1. What courses are required to graduate?
2. Does the college have academic programs that interest you? (study abroad programs, internships, research opportunities, interdisciplinary majors)
3. What do students have to say about the college? Do you know anyone there?
4. What is your general impression of the college?
5. What are the college’s strongest academic programs?

**Admission Process:**

1. When are applications due?
2. What does the application contain? Is an essay required?
3. Is an interview suggested or required?
4. Is it possible to take a tour of the college?

**Choosing a major:**

Do you really know what you want to study? It’s perfectly ok to not know what you want to study, but just be honest and open about it. Don’t pick a major just because someone says you should be interested in it or good at it. More importantly, keep the fact that you’re undecided about what you want to study as an important detail when applying to schools. Those students that are undecided and want some flexibility should consider liberal arts colleges/universities in the United States.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | USA | UK |
| Length of Time | Bachelor’s Degree: 4 yearsAssociates: 2 years | BA: 3 years (Foundational year can be skipped **if enrolled in full IB and student receives passing marks)** |
| Academic Term | Two semester system, some use a trimester or quarter system. Most schools start in mid to late August and end in May. | Most also use a semester system, but some use trimester or quarter systems. The start and end of an academic year varies by university. |
| University Organization | Universities are often divided into schools by subject, but these schools do not typically have a lot of autonomy from the university. | University acts an umbrella organization for the different colleges. Colleges are fairly independent of one another. |
| Application system | Individual college/university apps, the Common App, and state specific online apps (ex: California) | UCAS, unless you are applying for a foundation year, then apply directly to the school |
| Cost | High | Moderate |
| Financial Aid | FASFA, merit based scholarships, athletic based scholarships | Merit based scholarships  |
| Athletics | Important social activity; athletic scholarships available. Levels: D1 - III | Intramural sports; generally no athletic scholarships available. |
| Living Situation | Dormitories with roommate. Off-campus housing occasionally available. | Dormitories without roommate generally. Off-campus housing generally available. |
| Types of Degrees | Associates, Bachelors, Masters, PhD, variety of vocational and professional degrees. | Higher National Diploma, Certificate of Higher Education, Diploma of Higher Education, Foundation Degree, Bachelors, Masters, PhD, variety of professional and vocational degrees. Postgraduate degrees divided into taught and research degrees. |
| Transfering | Much easier in the states,Possible to switch majors | Can be difficult. Not able to change majors.  |

**Canadian Universities:**  Please keep in mind the following information: Terminology (Colleges are vocational or technical training institutions, universities grant bachelors and advanced degrees. Typical length of time is 4 years, and provide flexibility in transferring school and majors. Applications are submitted to the individual universities via their online site. Ontario does offer a centralized application center (OUAC). Canadian entry requirements vary greatly with some institutions asking for SAT scores, IB predictions scores, and transcripts with varying levels of attainment.

**European Universities:** Applications to Europe vary a great deal, depending on the country to which students are applying and their career goal. Generally, the IB program is required at competitive European universities. There are many growing programs in Europe that are offering programs in English with an American style curriculum. The American College Overseas website ([www.aco.eu.com](http://www.aco.eu.com)) is an excellent resource to identify these schools.

**WHAT DOES A COLLEGE APPLICATION CONTAIN?**

**The Transcript**

Your transcript shows what courses you have taken and what grades you received at the end of each course.

It is the single most important piece of information the college admission officer has and tends to correlate

most strongly with college performance. It is sent directly from the Counseling Office. When college admissions officers look at a transcript, they look for "transcript quality." There are three parts to transcript quality: breadth, depth, and performance.

*Breadth*: This is shown through a combination of continued study in the basic areas of English, history,

mathematics, science, and foreign language. Students handicap themselves by focusing only on minimum graduation requirements - competitive colleges are interested in students who maximize their academic studies.

*Depth*: This refers to students taking electives in courses that focus on their interests, whether in math, science, the arts, or computer science. Colleges expect electives to demonstrate a student's interest in a subject area and not just meet graduation requirements.

*Performance*: Colleges want to see that students have challenged themselves in some area(s) and have taken advantage of opportunities to take demanding courses. In all cases, better grades are preferable to lower grades, however, it is important to realize that a lower grade does not necessarily keep a student out of a college. If a student's grades are average compared to his or her peers within the school, or if there is a downward trend that cannot be adequately explained, then that will be taken seriously by colleges. Conversely, upward trends and challenging courses are noted, and often slow starts can be overcome by later improvement.

Midyear Transcripts are sent to colleges at the conclusion of the first semester of the senior year and Final

Transcripts are sent to universities at the conclusion of your senior year by the GAA counseling office. All final transcripts are mailed in June to the college where you plan to enroll. It is your responsibility to notify your college counselor as soon as you send in your enrollment deposit. Admission deans review all final transcripts of incoming students to make sure that students have maintained the same academic level on which they were offered admission. **Do not jeopardize your** **admission by presenting declining grades in the last semester of your senior year.** The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma is highly regarded by many universities around the world. It is particularly important if you wish to attend university in Europe. Some universities request or require that we submit your IB predicted grades with your transcript.

**School Profile and Secondary School Report**

Whenever a transcript is released, a copy of the GEMS American Academy Profile goes with it so the recipient

knows how to interpret the information on the transcript. The school profile is a key document that tells the

admissions officer what courses are available, how the school grades, the proportion of students who attend

college, where GEMS American Academy's students have been admitted and where they enrolled, standardized

test information, and information about IB courses and exams. Admissions officers use this information to

compare your transcript against what is in effect the school's transcript.

**Standardized Test Scores**

Like it or not, most colleges and universities still require test scores. They are useful because they do provide a

standardized common denominator to help admissions officers measure you against all the other applicants. Some colleges, like larger universities, place a heavier emphasis on standardized scores, while other smaller colleges and universities do not. Please check the standardized test requirements for all colleges/universities to which you are applying. **Finally, please remember that** **in all cases, you are responsible for sending "official" test scores to the colleges to which you are applying.**

**The SAT**

The SAT is offered at various testing centers around Abu Dhabi. It looks not only at verbal, mathematics and reasoning skills but also writing ability. Recently, the format of the SAT has shifted back to its original version that tests students on critical reading and mathematics. The range of scores for both sections range from 200-800.

**Critical Reading:** Short reading and long reading passages.

**Mathematics:** Content through Algebra II

GAA students may take the SAT at several locations in Abu Dhabi. **GAA is not a testing site for the SAT, so please make sure that you make arrangements with a testing center.**  Information about the test and testing centers in our area can be found on [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com). Additionally, GAA students to use this website to register for the SAT before the deadlines

.

**Should a student take the SAT?** It is recommended that all GAA students consider taking the SAT. Although

the test is generally required by U.S. universities, it is recognized worldwide and admissions officers in many

countries welcome SAT test information. In addition, standardized test scores are often required when students

apply to special programs even after they graduate from high school, so doing well on a SAT can have a

number of benefits both in the college application process and beyond.

**How many times should a student take the SAT?** Most students take the SAT in May and/or June of the

junior year and again in October and/or November of the senior year. For example, GAA students might

want to take the SAT I (Reasoning Test) in May, the SAT II (Subject Tests) in June, and retake the SAT I

or II in October. Educational Testing Service and College Board studies indicate that three or more test scores tend to fall in a very predictable range and that there is usually no advantage to keep taking the test beyond that number. On the other hand, scores of students sometimes go up significantly when the test is taken more than once, and this may be related to students becoming less anxious as they become more familiar with the nature of the test.

**SAT II: Subject Tests**

The SAT II Subject Tests are one-hour exams that measure knowledge and skill in particular subject areas.

Students may take up to three tests on the same test date but may not take the SAT I and SAT II on the same

date. There are 22 SAT II exams offered five times a year. The foreign language listening exam which

requires preapproval is not offered at all testing times. Many colleges require one to three SAT II exams. Because there is so much variation regarding what exams different colleges require, it is very difficult to give general advice as to which exams should be taken. **It is the** **student's responsibility to check the requirements of each college.** Students who have questions about which tests to take may speak with the GAA counselor.

**American College Test (ACT)**

The American College Test (ACT) is an alternative to the SAT test. It is a four-part test of English, mathematics, reading proficiency, and science reasoning with scores ranging from 1-36. Unlike the SAT I, the

ACT is more like a subject test. Students who perform at a high level in the classroom but whose SAT scores

are low may find that their scores improve by comparison when they take the ACT. It is sometimes

recommended that students take both the SAT I and the ACT in order to see how they score and determine

which one they are more comfortable with, and then take that test again. In the U.S., most universities accept

either the SAT I or the ACT. Additionally, some U.S. colleges accept the ACT in lieu of SAT II tests. The ACT

may be required by some universities outside of the U.S. if students do not have an IB Diploma.

**English Proficiency (TOEFL or IELTS)**

Designed for international students whose first language is not English in order to help colleges assess a

student’s English ability. Offered in Abu Dhabi many times during the year – don’t wait until a university asks for you to take it as your application will be considered incomplete until proficiency is shown.

Register online: www.toefl.org and www.ielts.org

Take the TOEFL or IELTS if:

You are applying to the US, Canada, UK, Australia, or New Zealand

The UK will only accept IELTS

English is not your best, first, or passport language

Your SAT Critical Reading score is below 500

Your university lists proof of English proficiency as a requirement

**Sending Test Scores to Colleges**

It is the student's responsibility to send official test scores to colleges. Gems American Academy cannot do that

for you. This can be done at the time you register for a test, or online at www.collegeboard.com (SAT I, SAT

II), www.act.org (ACT), www.toefl.org (TOEFL) or [www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org).

**Tests and Early Action/Early Decision Applications**

If you think you might be a candidate for an Early Decision or Early Action application (an application which is

sent to a college by a specified deadline, usually by November 1), you will want to plan your program of testing

to allow for that change in the normal calendar of events - in other words, you may need to take the SAT I and

SAT II sooner than usual. Taking any exam in November may easily result in the score reaching the college too

late to be taken into consideration for Early Decision or Early Action.

**The Application**

Most universities now have online applications that can be completed and submitted via the Internet. Students applying to the U.S. should become familiar with the Common Application and with Naviance/Family Connection. Other universities offer applications that can be downloaded and printed, and then mailed.

**The Common Application, UCAS, and Canadian Application Clearinghouses**

Nearly 400 U.S. colleges and universities are members of The Common Application group. The Common

Application is a single application accepted by all of the members who agree to treat the Common Application

as their own in the admissions process. Some colleges require an application supplement along with the

Common Application; you must check the college's application information as forgetting to do the supplement

will jeopardize your application. The Common Application is a great time-saver as you complete it once online

and it is accessed by the U.S. colleges that are part of the Common Application system. It is important to note,

however, that students who apply Early (Early Decision, Early Action, etc.) and use the Common Application

will not be able to go back and edit essays once they have been submitted to a university. Information about

using the Common Application is available at the Common Application web site, www.commonapp.org.

In the United Kingdom many schools use the UCAS system (www.ucas.ac.uk) for college applications. The

system is relatively simple, requiring only basic information, one personal statement and one letter of reference.

Again, some universities will require additional information and essays, and some require that the student come

for an interview. A few selective UK universities and programs have an earlier application deadline of October

15. Be sure to check the university website and meet all of the application requirements. In Canada, a similar

website to the Common Application is www.ouac.on.ca for applications to universities in Ontario.

**Essays and Personal Statements**

Many colleges request essays; many do not. Some ask for two essays and some even ask two or three short

answer questions in addition to essays. In the United States they are called essays, in the UK they are called

personal statements. Regardless of the name, the essay is your opportunity to let the admissions staff get to know you, to give or amplify information requested in other parts of the application, to give some insight into

the depth and complexity of your thinking and to demonstrate your writing style. Your essays represent you and

they should represent your very best work. Some colleges may ask to see a graded piece of academic work - usually a history or English essay with your teacher's comments and the grade on it. A photocopy may be acceptable, but not if it looks as if you tried to change or correct something on it.

**Counselor's Recommendation**

Many colleges ask for a school recommendation; this is written by your college counselor in the form of a

letter. It is important that the school counselor is able to talk knowledgeably about you. It’s important that you take the college activities seriously in advisory and fill out the forms given to you with complete diligence as the counselors will use those forms as a piece in guiding their recommendations.

**Teacher Recommendations**

Some colleges ask for teacher recommendations; some do not. Some ask for one recommendation, some ask for

two recommendations. Some ask for recommendations from a particular teacher (English and math are the most

common), and some let you choose. Universities are interested in finding out what you are like in classes and in

school. You should start thinking about what teachers you would like to ask to write your recommendations.

Counselors will work with students to help determine which teachers to ask. We will also go over the process

and give you additional documents. Included in this packet is a form for you is the exact form we will be using for you to fill out and hand in to your teachers.

**Extra Recommendation Letters**

Extra recommendations may be useful if there is someone in the community who knows you very well, such as

an employer, coach, tutor, or minister. Such acquaintances can provide information that is not available in

another part of your application. Recommendations should talk about you as a person, so letters from a

politically important person or an important alumnus of the school are only useful if they refer to your

individual traits and strengths. These extra letters should only be used sparingly. Colleges ask for two teacher

recommendations and that’s really all they have time to read.

**Resume**

Many universities request a resume from applying students, and even if it is not requested students are

encouraged to include a resume with the application materials. If you have not already done so, you should

start a list of activities you have participated in since the beginning of high school. You should include school,

extracurricular, community, summer activities. Be sure to note leadership roles or activities that might set you

apart from other students. As Juniors and Seniors it is important for students to continue activities out of class, whether that involves sports, music, theater, community service, or any other activity you enjoy. Remember, an in-depth focus on a limited number of things is better than a scatter-shot attempt to participate in everything. Colleges want to see what interests you have and how deep that interest goes, so sticking with something is important, as is taking on leadership roles. Consider some kind of summer experience, perhaps something different from the regular holiday of previous summers. An internship, an extended community service project, a summer program, or something that shows initiative on your part is an indication to a college that you are a person with interests and the initiative to pursue them.

**Other Materials Included in the Application**

If you are an accomplished musician, artist, writer, etc. you might want to send samples (a cd or slides for art

portfolios), but remember that you will not get these materials back. Only do this if you have reached a point in

your level of accomplishment that you are truly outstanding. If you have taken part in a summer activity or

taken a course, consider including a transcript or recommendation if that is appropriate. Always check with your counselor before including any extra materials.

Teacher Letter of Recommendation Data Sheet

**Student Name:**

**Teacher’s Name:**

**Counselor: Leishear**

*Teacher: Thank you for agreeing to write this letter of recommendation. If you have any questions in regard to this letter, please see one of the counselors. Once you are finished, please make sure it is on updated school letterhead and then upload it in Naviance.*

*Student: The information on this form only relates to your performance in this teacher’s class. Answer all questions completely by giving your specific evidence and avoid repeating yourself. The more fully you answer the questions, the more thoughtful and effective your letter of recommendation will most likely be.*

I will be applying to (circle): USA        Canada        UK        Other:

Previous courses taken in this subject and grades earned:

Why have you asked this teacher to write a LOR? What do you hope this letter will show about you that your GPA/grade doesn’t?

Describe your performance and contribution to this teacher’s class. What examples do you have?

Describe how either the class or this teacher has influenced you.

List 2 positive adjectives that this teacher might use to describe you. Give examples of each.

Identify your significant CAS or service hours:

Is there anything else you can share that might help this teacher write an effective LOR for you?

**WEB RESOURCES FOR THE COLLEGE BOUND**

The resources listed here should not be perceived as an endorsement of the particular website, products, or

Services described.

**GENERAL COLLEGE SEARCH WEBSITES**

**United States**

http://connection.naviance.com/GAA

www.commonapp.org

www.collegeboard.com

www.petersons.com

www.princetonreview.com

www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/college/corank.html

http://www.campustours.com/

www.studyusa.com

www.yahoo.com/Education/Higher\_Education/Colleges\_and\_Universities

www.clas.ufl.edu/CLAS/american-universities.html

www.globalcomputing.com/universy.html

www.utexas.edu/world/univ/state

http://www.nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/

www.fihe.org

[www.naicu.edu](http://www.naicu.edu)

**Canada**

www.aucc.ca

www.ouac.on.ca

http://www.electronicinfo.ca/en/degree.php

www.studyincanada.com

www.uwaterloo.ca/canu/index.html

www.international.ednet.ns.ca

[www.accc.ca](http://www.accc.ca)

**UK**

www.ucas.ac.uk

http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/universityguide

http://www.prepareforsuccess.org.uk/

http://www.unistats.com/

http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/

**Australia**

www.thegoodguides.com.au

<http://www.idp.com/>

**International**

www.braintrack.com

www.i-studentadvisor.com

www.ecis.org

www.ies-ed.com

**COLLEGE ADMISSION TESTING RESOURCES**

www.collegeboard.com

www.act.org

www.toefl.org

www.ets.org

www.kaplan.com

<http://www.fairtest.org>

**FINANCIAL AID RESOURCES**

http://studentaid.ed.gov

www.fafsa.ed.gov

www.finaid.org

www.fastweb.com

www.scholarships.com

[www.studentloanfunding.com](http://www.studentloanfunding.com)

**COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

www.utexas.edu/world/comcol/alpha/

cset.sp.utoledo.edu/twoyrcol.html

http://home.cccapply.org/