

HOW COLLEGES CHOOSE CANDIDATES

Have you ever wondered how colleges and universities decide which candidates they will accept? When a college receives your application, an admissions committee will assess all your qualifications and determine if you would be a good fit for their school. It's a complicated process and there are a lot of factors that come into play.

Scholastic Record/Transcript:

The quality of work you have done in high school is the single **MOST IMPORTANT** factor in the admissions process. It is imperative that admissions people see an academic program that incorporates both challenging courses and good grades.

Maybe your junior and senior year grades are stronger than they were freshman and sophomore year. Perhaps you have gone up a level in some courses. This shows that you are growing as an individual, taking your academics seriously, and challenging yourself!

Standardized Tests Scores:

How much emphasis is placed on standardized test results depends on each college's policy. It is important to remember that test scores are a part of the total applicant profile. Your scores compare you to other students in your age group nationwide.

Extracurricular Activities:

Colleges are not necessarily looking for a long list of activities. They tend to prefer in-depth participation and leadership in a few areas of interest. They want to know that you have initiative, curiosity, and motivation beyond your studies. They are hoping to find people who will come to their school and be involved in their community.

Community Service:

Colleges like to see that you are committed to the world around you. Thoughtful commitment to a cause or social issue shows depth and integrity.

The Essay:

Most colleges require applicants to write an essay. Students are often able to write one essay that is applicable to more than one school. Remember to be creative!

Recommendations: Most colleges require a letter of recommendation by your guidance counselor. In addition, colleges will also request one or more individual teacher evaluations.

The Interview:

Some colleges require interviews. If so, the interviewer's report will be considered with your application.

Portfolio/Audition:

Art-based and performance-based majors may require submission of a portfolio and/or audition. This information can be found on a college's website.

The Focus of Sophomore Year

The decisions and choices you make now can have a major impact on whether or not a college will choose to admit you in the future. Sophomores should focus on the following issues to increase their chances of gaining acceptance to the college of his/her choice.

1. **Classes and Grades.** The selection of classes – and the grades you receive in them – is very important. Although colleges hone in on junior year because it is the last full year of grades they will see before making an admissions decision, every year counts. You will want to stick to a tough regime of college prep classes, which are relative to the type of student you are. Strong students should enroll in honors and AP courses if they are eligible. However, make sure your course load is balanced so you are still achieving solid grades.

Some of the teachers you have for classes in your junior year may also play an important role for you in your senior year; junior year teachers typically write letters of recommendations for students. So plan on spending some of the time in your junior year getting to know at least a few of your favorite teachers on a more personal level.

2. **Extracurricular Activities:** Sophomore year is a great time to build your resume. Either continue in the activities in which you are already involved or begin something new you are genuinely interested in. Remember, it is quality and not quantity that matters. Also, both in school and out of school activities count.
3. **Resume/Portfolio:** It is never too soon to begin documenting your education, experiences and accomplishments. Start by listing all your high school accomplishments, including your course work, academic or athletic accomplishments, awards and honors and any other achievements. Next, review any and all of your work experiences, including part time jobs and volunteering or community service, and describe those experiences using action verbs. Showcase any leadership positions you have held. If you have room, include hobbies and interests.

Some art-related programs require a portfolio, which is a collection of your art work.

4. **Standardized Tests.** The vast majority of the standardized testing will be scheduled in the junior year. All students will take the PSAT/NMSQT and SAT and/or ACT. International students will also be required to take the TOEFL. Students who are looking at some of the more competitive colleges may also need to take the SAT Subject Tests.

SAT Subject Tests: These are hour long exams that ask students to demonstrate a deeper, more detailed knowledge of a specific subject. Students are allowed to take up to 3 exams in one given day. Students can register online at www.collegeboard.org. The Guidance Department recommends that students take the SAT Subject Tests as they are prepared for them in May or June. Below is the list of sophomore year courses and which SAT Subject Tests they prepare you for:

AC Course	SAT Subject Test
Advanced Geometry/Algebra 2	Math Level I
AP World History	World History
Honors Latin 2	Latin
Advanced Pre-Calculus	Math Level II

5. **Career Research.** Your career choice(s) may have a big impact on the list of potential colleges you consider, so it is important to at least try narrowing down career possibilities. How do you discover possible paths? Conduct research, take some college assessment tests, talk with your family and other adult family friends, meet with your teachers and guidance counselor and evaluate your likes and dislikes.

NAVIANCE: Family Connection

Arlington Catholic High School uses Naviance: Family Connection, which is a college and career readiness web-based program. Students are not only able to explore careers that match their strengths, but also are able to access a wide range of college admissions information. Additionally, Naviance keeps track of recent ACHS college applications, student statistics and admissions decisions.

Here are some of the features of Naviance:

“Careers” Tab:

Career Interest Profiler: The Career Interest Profiler is a tool that can help you discover the types of work activities and careers that match your interests. The interest profiler has 180 questions about work activities that people do at their jobs.

Cluster Finder: The Cluster finder will help you learn what career clusters may be a good match for you based on activities that interest you, personal qualities that you have and subjects that you enjoy studying in school.

RoadTrip Nation: RoadTrip Nation sends young people on road trips to interview leaders that build their lives around their interests. You can watch short interviews with people whose interests are similar to your own and learn about the path they took to become successful.

“Colleges” Tab:

College Search: students and families can search for colleges based on numerous qualifications like location, size of student body, majors offered, cost, etc. Naviance includes over 6000 colleges from all over the world in its database – counselors have found this search engine to be easy to use and to yield quality results.

College Lookup: With Naviance, it is easy to look up information on any college of interest to you. Students can learn about specific admissions requirements, majors and activities offered, and statistics about the student body at the click of a button. It is easy to research colleges as contact information is readily available, including a direct link to the college’s homepage.

Scattergrams/Application History: Because we use Naviance to keep track of our applications and admissions decisions, students and families can access our statistics and graphs that represent ACHS applicants to specific schools. These graphs show the SAT scores and GPAs of applicants (without names) and indicate whether the student was admitted, waitlisted, or denied. This data allows students to have an understanding of how their statistics match up to previous applicants. It is strongly encouraged that students and parents use this feature in conjunction with consultation from counselors to create a well-balanced college list.

Colleges I Am Thinking About: This feature allows students to keep track of the colleges they are considering. You can save the colleges that are most appealing to you here.

“About Me” Tab:

Resume: This feature allows students to enter a variety of activities and then Naviance imports the information into a resume template.

There are numerous other options in Naviance that you will discover as you more fully explore the site. To access Naviance/Family Connection go to <http://connection.naviance.com/arlingtonchs>. All students have a username and password, which parents should use as well.

Comparing the SAT to the ACT

	Redesigned SAT (Spring 2016)	ACT
Format & Length	5 long sections (comprising 3 “tests” and an optional essay): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing & Language; Reading; 2 Math; Essay • Questions have 4 answer choices • Total testing time: 3 hours (without optional essay) • 3 hours (without optional essay) 	5 long sections (comprising 4 “tests” and an optional essay): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English; Mathematics; Reading; Science; Writing (optional essay) • Most questions have 4 answer choices (Math has 5) • Total testing time: 2 hours, 55 minutes (without optional essay)
Scoring	Combined score: 400-1600 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence-based Reading & Writing: 200-800; Math: 200-800 • Essay score reported separately • “Cross-Test Scores” report performance on Science & History/Social Studies across entire test • No deduction for incorrect answers 	Combined score: 1-36 (average of 4 tests) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English: 1-36; Math: 1-36; Reading: 1-36; Science: 1-36 • Writing score not factored into Composite score • Combined English/Writing score provided separately: 1-36 • No deduction for incorrect answers
Writing/English	Revise and edit a piece of writing for logical structure and effective rhetoric <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard English grammar and usage • Punctuation • Logical structure • Effective rhetoric • Includes informational graphics 	Revise and edit a piece of writing for logical structure and effective rhetoric <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard English grammar and usage • Punctuation • Logical structure • Effective rhetoric • Commonly confused words
Math	Pre-Algebra through basic Trigonometry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong emphasis on Algebra • Stronger emphasis on real-world scenarios which will require students to apply mathematical logic to situations in the sciences and social sciences Calculator prohibited on one section 13 Grid-In questions (no answer choices)	Pre-Algebra through basic Trigonometry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Math tested in straightforward manner • Extensive range of concepts tested • Emphasis on word problems • Formulas not provided
Reading	Vocabulary de-emphasized 4 long passages and 1 paired passage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 passages include diagrams/charts • 1 passage from “Great Global Conversation” 	Four long passages 4 long passages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very little emphasis on vocabulary • Straightforward questions that require close reading of passage • Order of questions is random • Less time per question
Science	The new SAT does not have stand-alone Science section, but Science questions will be included throughout the Math, Reading, and Writing & Language tests.	40 Questions distributed over 7 passages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on charts, diagrams, etc. • Science is a reasoning test – rarely requires prior science knowledge
Essay	50 minutes, optional, always last section <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze a passage and evaluate author’s reasoning and rhetoric • Students’ opinions discouraged • Essay is scored on 2-8 scale on three traits (Reading, Analysis and Writing) 	40 minutes, optional always the last test <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze multiple view points on a contemporary issue • Demands a more structured response • Optional, but required by most schools

MINIMUM ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS FOR MASSACHUSETTS STATE UNIVERSITIES AND UNDERGRADUATE UMASS CAMPUSES

The minimum admissions standards for the state universities and undergraduate UMass campuses were established for several primary reasons: first, to emphasize the importance of successfully completing a rigorous academic course of study in high school (such as MassCore, a recommended program of studies that includes specific numbers and types of courses across academic subjects); second, to ensure that students are well prepared to complete college courses and their degrees; and third, to increase consistency across the state universities and undergraduate UMass campuses.

Again, these standards are minimum requirements. Eligibility for admission is not an entitlement of admission for any applicant; as such, meeting the minimum standards does not guarantee admission, since admissions officers consider a wide range of factors when reviewing students' applications, and the state universities and UMass campuses can establish additional requirements. For information about any additional requirements, please contact the admissions office at the institution(s) to which the student is interested in applying.

Note: These standards do not apply to the community colleges, which implement open admissions and enrollment policies. For additional information about admissions policies at the community colleges, please contact the admissions office at the institution(s) to which you are interested in applying.

FRESHMAN APPLICANTS

The admissions standards for freshman applicants at Massachusetts public four year institutions have three primary components:

1. Successful completion of required academic courses in specific subjects; and
2. A minimum average and weighted grade point average (GPA) earned in high school level academic courses; and
3. The submission of SAT or ACT scores.

ACADEMIC COURSE REQUIREMENT

All freshman applicants are required to successfully complete the following courses in each academic subject. Currently, these applicants are required to have completed 16 courses; starting with students who are enrolling during the fall of 2016, the number of required course will increase to 17 given the required completion of four mathematics courses in high school.

**Academic Course Requirements for Entering College Freshmen
for Massachusetts State Universities and UMass Campuses**

Subject	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017 and beyond
English	4 Courses					
Mathematics	3 courses (Algebra I and II and Geometry or Trigonometry or comparable coursework)				4 courses (Algebra I and II and Geometry or Trigonometry or comparable coursework) including mathematics during the final year of high school	
Science	3 courses (from Natural Science and/or Physical Science and/or Technology/Engineering, including 2 courses with laboratory work).					3 courses (from Natural Science and/or Physical Science and/or Technology/Engineering), including 3 courses with laboratory work.
Social Sciences	2 courses (including 1 course in U.S. History)					
Foreign Languages	2 courses (in a single language)					
Electives	2 courses (from the above subjects or from the Arts & Humanities or Computer Science)					

MINIMUM GPA REQUIREMENT

The minimum average GPA for freshman applicants, weighted for accelerated (Honors and Advanced Placement) courses is 3.0 for both the state universities and the UMass undergraduate campuses.

The GPA is based on all courses completed and grades received for courses in which the student is currently enrolled (for example, mathematics course in which the student is enrolled during the senior year of high school).

SAT/ACT SCORE REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLICANTS WHO DO NOT MEET THE GPA REQUIREMENT

All freshman applicants who meet the minimum average GPA requirement of 3.0 and are within three years of their high school graduation must submit their SAT scores (for Critical Reading and Mathematics) or ACT scores.

For freshman applicants who do not meet the minimum GPA requirement, they must earn the following SAT or ACT scores in order to be eligible for admission.

NOTE: NO APPLICANT WITH A HIGH SCHOOL GPA BELOW 2.0 MAY BE ADMITTED TO A STATE UNIVERSITY OR UMASS UNDERGRADUATE CAMPUS.

Required SAT or ACT Scores for Freshman Applicants to UMass Campuses

Weighted Average GPA	Combined SAT Score (Critical Reading and Mathematics)	ACT Score
2.51 – 2.99	950	20
2.41 – 2.50	990	21
2.31 – 2.40	1030	22
2.21 – 2.30	1070	23
2.11 – 2.20	1110	24
2.00 – 2.10	1150	25

Required SAT or ACT Scores for Freshman Applicants to State Universities

Weighted Average GPA	Combined SAT Score (Critical Reading and Mathematics)	ACT Score
2.51 – 2.99	920	19
2.41 – 2.50	960	20
2.31 – 2.40	1000	21
2.21 – 2.30	1040	22
2.11 – 2.20	1080	23
2.00 – 2.10	1120	24

NCAA Eligibility Information

The NCAA has established a central Clearinghouse to certify athletes for eligibility in Divisions I and II. Here are the answers to questions that frequently are asked by students about what they need to do to participate in college sports under this new process.

- **Why do I need to register and be certified?** If you intend to participate in athletics at a Division I or II school as a freshman, you must be registered with and be certified as eligible by the NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse. **Please note that initial eligibility certification pertains only to whether you meet the NCAA requirements for participation in Division I or II athletics and has no bearing on your admission to a particular Division I or II institution.**
- **When should I register?** Students should register with the Clearinghouse after the completion of their junior year of high school. At this time, a transcript, which includes six semesters of grades, should be sent to the Clearinghouse from the high school. Students must submit a signed transcript release form (available on the Clearinghouse website or you can pick one up in the Guidance Office) to the Guidance Office for this purpose. Additionally, students should have their SAT or ACT test scores forwarded directly to the Clearinghouse whenever they take the exam.
- **How do register?** You may complete the registration process on line at www.eligibilitycenter.org.
- **Are standardized test scores required?** Qualifying test scores are required for participation at both Division I and II institutions. You may report your scores directly from the College Board or ACT using code **9999**; or if your high school reports test scores on the official high school transcript, those scores may be used for eligibility purposes.
- **What if I have attended more than one school?** If you have attended multiple high schools since 9th grade, the Clearinghouse must receive an official transcript for each school. Transcripts can come directly from each school or from the high school from which you are graduating. Check with your high school counselor.
- **What will the Clearinghouse provide to those institutions that are recruiting me?** The Clearinghouse will send your eligibility status to any Division I or II institution that requests it, provided you have given your permission on your student-release form for the institution to receive that information. Please note that the Clearinghouse will not send your eligibility information at your request; rather, the institution must make the request for that information. Additionally, if no member institution requests your eligibility status, a final certification decision may not be processed.
- **Transcript Release Form. You must submit your Transcript Release Form to Mrs. Lally in the Guidance Office so that your transcript may be sent to the NCAA.** This form can be used to send an official transcript through Grade 11 and/or the final transcript after graduation from high school. This form gives Arlington Catholic permission to send your transcript to the NCAA Clearinghouse. You may print this form online or pick up one in the Guidance Office.

Action Plan: Your Junior Year

Junior Year is a whirlwind of activity, from studying for SAT tests and AP exams to considering colleges to apply to and visiting campuses. On top of all that, it is important that your child keeps up good grades and continues to participate in extracurricular activities. To keep on track, follow the action items listed for each month below.

September

This year the PSAT/NMSQT counts. Taking it can qualify your child to receive a National Merit Scholarship. Your child is signed up to take the PSAT/NMSQT this October. Your child will receive a copy of the PSAT/NMSQT Student Bulletin and take the enclosed practice test. For further practice, your child should use the online PSAT/NMSQT Preparation Center.

October

Your child takes the PSAT/NMSQT. Be sure he/she checks “yes” for Student Search Service to hear from colleges and scholarships.

November

This is a good time to evaluate a student’s performance in the first quarter and get re-energized for the second quarter.

As you approach the second half of junior year, you should begin to look at preparing for the college search process.

December

Help your child register online for the SAT/ACT and SAT Subject Tests, which are offered several times during the year. Some colleges require or recommend 2-3 Subject Tests for admission or placement.

Encourage your child to find out about college firsthand from friends who are home from college for the holidays.

Begin to think about and prepare for mid-year exams in January.

January

Help your child organize a file for college brochures and information. Before you know it, they will start pouring in.

Use Naviance for your College Search to find schools that might match your child’s skills and interests. Have your child meet with his/her school counselor to begin to develop a college list.

February

Plan to visit college campuses with your child this spring while classes are in session.

March/April

Most students take the SAT/ACT in spring of junior year and fall of senior year.

Your child should meet with his/her counselor to discuss courses to take senior year.

Now is a great time for your child to start looking for a summer job, internship or volunteer opportunities. Real world experience can give your child a preview of careers in which he/she is interested. This may help him/her focus his/her studies in college and when he/she is selecting a major.

May/June

AP Exams are in May.

Attend local college fairs with your child. Visit colleges during vacation.

Your child can take SAT Subject Tests when he/she has successfully completed the corresponding high school course.

If applicable, your child should prepare writing samples, portfolios, audition media, and other material for the fall application season.

Help your child make a resume of his/her accomplishments, activities, and work experience. You can use the “Resume Builder” tool in Naviance.

If your child plans on competing in Division I or Division II college sports and wants to be eligible to be recruited by colleges, he/she must register with the NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse (www.eligibilitycenter.org).

Summer

Visit college campuses. Call ahead for tour and open house schedules.

If your child is planning to take the SAT/ACT in the fall, he/she should register online in August or September (check deadline schedule).

Discuss different college majors with your child that relate to his/her interests and career goals.

By the end of the summer your child should narrow his/her college list. The list should include “safe” schools as well as “reach” and “realistic” schools.

Help your child prepare drafts of application essays for his/her target schools. Complete as much of the Common Application (www.commonapp.org) as soon as possible.

USEFUL WEBSITES

NAVIANCE

connection.naviance.com/arlingtonchs Naviance is a college and career readiness platform that helps connect academic achievement to post-secondary goals.

College Search

www.collegeboard.org search for colleges and careers

www.petersons.com explore colleges

www.collegenet.com search for colleges

according to geographical areas

www.collegeexpress.com search for private colleges

www.princetonreview.com explore colleges

www.gocollege.com college search

College Fairs

www.collegeweeklive.com interactive, free online tool that allows students to chat live with colleges/universities via the Internet.

Career Information

www.bls.gov/oco The US Department of Labor's Occupational Outlook Handbook

www.masscis.intocareers.com Career information, searches and interest inventories

Students Interested in the Arts

www.portfolioday.net applying to a visual arts program.

<http://nasad.arts-accredit.org> applying to a visual arts program

<http://nast.arts-accredit.org> applying to a theater arts program

<http://nasd.arts-accredit.org> applying to a dance program

<http://nasm.arts-accredit.org> applying to a music program

www.awpwriter.org Useful for students interested in applying to writing program

Electronic Applications

www.commonapp.org Common Application

Free Online Admissions Essay Writing Course

www.essayedge.com tackle the question; select an essay topic; structure and outline; style; introductions and conclusions; editing and revising

Standardized Testing and Test Preparation

www.revolutionprep.com SAT test prep

www.collegeboard.org dates for SAT, register for SAT

www.actstudent.org dates for ACT, register for ACT

www.princetonreview.com Test prep

www.ets.org Educational Testing Service – helpful tools for the test-taker, practice questions

www.kaplan.com KAPLAN SAT test prep

www.khanacademy.org/test-prep SAT Test prep

SAT/ACT Optional College List

www.fairtest.org

MASSColleges

www.masscolleges.org provides information about admissions and financial aid; admission requirements and deadlines; research and data about college

Financial Aid

www.fafsa.gov FAFSA financial aid form

www.profileonline.collegeboard.org PROFILE form

www.salliemae.org Financial Aid 101,

Estimated Family Contribution

Calculations, scholarship search

www.fastweb.com financial aid search

www.mefa.org

www.finaid.org

National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

www.nasfaa.org This site provides the best links to sources of information about financial aid on the Internet.

Financial Aid Resources for Students with Disabilities

www.finaid.org/otheraid/disabled.phtml information about scholarships and fellowships for students with physical and/or learning disabilities

Scholarships

www.collegeanswer.com

www.fastweb.com

www.tuitionfundingsources.com

www.collegenet.com

www.scholarships.com

www.studentscholarships.org

www.scholarshipamerica.org

Athletics

www.ncaa.org eligibility requirements for athletes

www.naia.org National Association for intercollegiate Athletics

www.eligibilitycenter.org NCAA Clearinghouse

Armenian Student Association of America

www.asainc.org a non profit organization, provides scholarships to students.

The United Negro College Fund

www.uncf.org nation's largest, oldest, most successful and comprehensive minority higher education assistance organization.

