

...We're On Our Way!

Congratulations! You have earned the distinction of being a senior at Holy Spirit High School. This will be a very exciting year as you plan for and begin a new chapter in your life. We are here to help you with this process. Remember that you are making decisions based on your interests, talents and achievements. You are an individual. Your college search, applications and eventually the college of your choice must be a good fit for you. Your counselor is trained to assist you with the decisions and dilemmas that are part of this important crossroad in your life.

Your counselor will be meeting with you throughout the year for college planning sessions which will keep you on track for timelines and deadlines related to college admissions and submissions of applications. Topics covered in these meetings will include:

- SAT/ACT Planning
- College Application Process and Procedures
- Essay Planning
- Interviewing Skills
- Refining your College List
- Open Houses, College Visits, HSHS College Visit Calendar
- Financial Aid (HSHS Financial Aid Night)

Here is some useful information for you as you fill out your college applications:

Full Name of School: Holy Spirit High School
Address of School: 500 S. New Road
Absecon, NJ 08201
School Telephone Number: 609-646-3000
Guidance Fax Number: 609-646-2561
Principal: Ms. Susan Dennen
Guidance Counselor: Mr. Robert Walkotten
CEEB code number: 310025
Graduation date for Class of 2010: May 26, 2010

Please leave blank any questions about size of senior class and rank, your counselor will fill this in. If your application has other questions about which you aren't sure, please see your counselor.

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THE COLLEGE APPLICATION: TIMELINES AND DEADLINES

Most college applications are filed during the fall of senior year (*by Thanksgiving dinner!!!*). An increasing number of schools have made their applications available during the summer between Junior and Senior year. Application fees run from zero to one hundred dollars with the majority of schools within the \$25 - \$50 range.

If after researching colleges and universities carefully a student emerges with a strong attraction to one specific school, they may want to consider **Early Decision** (binding) or **Early Action** (non-binding) applications. The deadline for ED or EA plans typically runs between November 1 and December 1, thus compelling students to be timely and efficient in their application process. Be certain that you discuss this option carefully with your parents and your counselor, especially if you are considering an ED plan. The majority of **Regular Decision** application plans post deadlines from January 1 to February 15. There are **Rolling Admissions** plans at many schools as well. Rolling admissions deadlines vary widely but at each school, *timely submission* of an application produces a greater chance of being admitted.

DEADLINES: THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GUIDANCE OFFICE AND INDIVIDUAL STUDENT

The following policies and procedures have been formulated regarding the submission of college applications to the Guidance Office:

An individual student transcript contains a record of the courses taken and the semester and final grades for these courses. The transcript also includes the number of credits received for each course. An official transcript will be mailed along with each individual application sent. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCE WILL AN OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT BE PROVIDED TO A STUDENT OR A PARENT.** For the protection of individuals and the school itself, official transcripts will be conveyed directly from institution (Holy Spirit) to institution (college or university to which the student applies). Students or parents may certainly request unofficial transcript copies from the Guidance office - these will be so designated by a stamp.

As one might imagine, the volume of applications processed by the Guidance Office is substantial and the investment of time and energy in each is considerable. Consequently, a policy has been set by the Guidance Office regarding timely submission of applications:

Every transcript request must be submitted at least ten (10) working school days before it is due. Putting together college applications is a time-consuming process and it is necessary to allow a significant time span to assure that it is done thoroughly and professionally. It is possible that an application will leave Guidance in less than ten

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working days; however, this policy must be respected to assure that no applications miss their intended deadlines.

It gets even more challenging for the January 1st and 15th application deadlines. Since many colleges use the New Year's date as their deadlines, Guidance will require an even longer period of "prep time" to assure timely and professional completion of applications. School will close for Christmas break and Guidance will not reopen until early January. As a result, **TRANSCRIPT REQUESTS AND APPLICATIONS WHICH YOU DESIRE TO HAVE MAILED BEFORE CHRISTMAS BREAK (i.e., for the January 1st or 15th deadline) MUST BE SUBMITTED BEFORE THE CLOSE OF SCHOOL ON MONDAY DECEMBER 7th.**

Certainly, the earlier an application transcript request is submitted, the quicker it will "get into the system." **Guidance will not alter the queue for requests submitted late** - each individual request will be processed **in the order it is received**. Once a request has been completed in Guidance and mailed out, the office will note the mailed date on Naviance. You can log on at any time to note the status of your request. If you have a concern about your application(s) please see your counselor or the office secretary.

A NOTE TO SENIORS

As we all know the college application process is an anxious time for all involved. Parents, students and the counselors may each be occupied with their own frustrations as applications are completed and dispatched. As we all want to do our best for the good of the students we ask you to note the following:

As the volume of applications mailed out from the Guidance Office increases, so too do numbers of forms mailed from high school counseling offices around the world. It is likely that some of you are receiving mailings from diverse colleges and universities regarding the status of your applications. Predictably, some of these indicate that part or all of your application is "incomplete" or "missing." When you receive such notices, **DO NOT PANIC**. Simply bring in to Guidance a copy of the notice you received and we will follow up. In virtually all cases, these situations are resolved with a well placed phone call. The key to handling these disruptions is to remain calm. Do not recriminate, either to the college or to the Guidance office, and do not assume the forms were not sent. The sheer volume of material received by the colleges, coupled with the number of people handling each sheet of paper, make it likely that misfiling will occur and information will be misplaced. We can always send out a second copy of transcript and/or recommendation to be on the safe side. It is also important for you to understand that **THIS WILL HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO EFFECT ON YOUR STATUS AT THAT COLLEGE**

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OR UNIVERSITY. Such aberrations do, however, underscore the need to be vigilant about making copies of your applications.

The best approach to this daunting process is to work together with us and we will put forth our best effort in every single application we complete. Together, we will manage! **As soon as you have a response from each college admissions office, whether it be ACCEPTED, DENIED or WAIT-LISTED, bring the letter to the Guidance Office to be photocopied for your file. We will return your original letter to you immediately. This information is very important for our records.**

PROCESSING COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

As our society becomes more technological, the college admissions process changes. Many colleges offer opportunities for students to apply online. The Guidance Office encourages students to apply to their colleges electronically. We recognize that all colleges may not use an online system and therefore we will still accept paper applications from students when necessary. When a senior completes his/her paper applications to college, Guidance requires that the application be handed into the student's counselor. This permits the student's counselor the opportunity to go over the application. This leads to a single packaging of the application, the official transcript and the literature (including a profile) which describes Holy Spirit High School. As requests are submitted, they are processed in the order received. To be fair, one student's applications cannot be placed ahead of another student's application.

Transcript requests may be submitted one at a time, there is no need to submit them all at once. Students should not hold their applications while waiting for 12th grade SAT scores. While the senior year SAT's may influence the total application package for some students, it is not necessary or advisable for most students to wait that long. By using the college code numbers at the time of applying to take the SAT, the scores will be sent by the testing company directly to the colleges (some colleges require this) and the colleges will await the results before making their decisions.

Once in awhile a college will notify a student that something is missing from the application packet. If the student receives one of these cards, DON'T PANIC. Just bring the card to the Guidance Office. We will forward the missing information, if it is from the school's part of the package that same day. In other cases, where there is a question, we will call the college to determine the nature of the problem. This type of situation will not affect the admission decision.

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WRITING YOUR COLLEGE ESSAY

Introduction

If you are like most students, you see the college essay as another hurdle that you must jump over on the way to being accepted at the college of your choice. In fact, the essay is not a hurdle but *a rare opportunity*; it is a chance for you to “talk” directly to the college’s admissions committee and to help them “see” you as a thinking and feeling person, rather than simply a set of impersonal statistics. Except for your interview, it is your only chance to share your thoughts, insights, and opinions; to highlight your accomplishments; and to convey your maturity and outlook on life. If you see the college essay in this way - as an opportunity - then it is clearly worth the effort to put some extra time, thought, and energy into writing it.

Purpose of the Essay

The college essay is extremely important for two major reasons:

1. it enables the college admissions office to evaluate your communication skills. Through your essay they can assess the clarity of your thinking and your ability to convey your thoughts in written form.
2. It enables the admissions office to learn more about you as a person, beyond what grades and SAT scores convey. A well-written essay can speak worlds about your attitudes, feelings, personal qualities, imagination, and creativity. For the admissions staff, it adds another important piece to the puzzle because it distinguishes you as an individual, apart from any other student who is applying.

Choosing a Topic

The choice of a topic is frequently not an issue, because many colleges and universities will either give you a topic to write about or present several rather specific topics from which you must choose. Other colleges may simply “suggest” broad general topics or give you total freedom to write about something that interests or concerns you. Regardless of whether you

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must respond to prescribed topic or come up with one of your own, here are a few general hints about the most effective way to approach your topic:

- * Narrow your topic and try to be as specific and illustrative as possible
- * Relatedly, the easiest topic to write about is yourself. no one knows more about you than you. Since one important purpose of the essay is self-revelation, it is no place to be shy or modest, although you should not exaggerate. if you choose to write about yourself, remember that little incidents and facts are often the most revealing of character and outlook.
- * Do not be afraid to write about something you think is a little different. A unique topic or approach is often refreshing to a college admissions officer who has been reading applications all day. Further, an unusual or offbeat essay is an excellent way to show your creativity

Preparing to Write

Before actually sitting down to write a first draft of your essay; spend some time organizing your thoughts. Develop a framework for your essay so it will have a smooth and logical progression from one idea or incident to the next. Consider your purpose in writing, what you want to convey, and the tone that you think is most appropriate for the topic. Decide on a style that is comfortable for you, not one that you think the college admissions committee prefers. Finally, remember that organizing your thoughts and deciding on a framework does not mean you must be overly rigid at the start; leave room for flexibility and creativity as you actually begin writing.

Writing the Essay

You do not have to get it right the first time! Instead, write the first draft of your essay with the main focus on content - communicating your thoughts. Then set it aside for a day or two, reread it with a fresh perspective, and make any necessary changes. This is also the point at which you should consider matters of organization, style, grammar, spelling, and tone. Once you have rewritten your first draft, you may wish to try it out on your family, friends, English teacher, or guidance counselor. While the final product and final "voice" should be yours, they may be able to offer helpful suggestions for technical or other improvements.

Within this general outline for actually writing the essay, there are some "do's" and "dont's" which should be highlighted:

Do's

- * Do think "small" and write about something that you know
- * Do reveal yourself in your writing

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- * Do show rather than tell. By giving examples and illustrating your topic, you help bring it to life
- * Do write in your own "voice" and style

Don't

- * Don't write what you think others want to read
- * Don't exaggerate or write to impress
- * Don't use a flowery, inflated, or pretentious style
- * Don't neglect the technical part of your essay (grammar, spelling, and sentence structure)
- * Don't ramble - say what you have to say and conclude

THE PERSONAL INTERVIEW

Personal interviews may not be required, however, whenever possible it is a good idea for you to sit for an interview. The application and even an interview are really limited grounds on which to make admissions decisions, yet the admissions officer rarely has any other opportunity to see you at work. Here are a few helpful hints to consider:

1. The interview may begin in the secretary's office. Be prepared to make a good impression on everyone.
2. Plan your interview and campus visit when classes and college activities are in progress.
3. Write or telephone for an appointment. Get the location on campus of the interview and ask about parking.
4. If you are visiting several colleges in the same geographical location, you might want to schedule several interviews for the same trip. Allow at least two hours for each interview and campus tour.
5. Be on time.
6. If your parents accompany you, they should remain outside of the room. Bring no friends!
7. Be friendly. Sincerity, preparation, forthrightness and confidence in your own ability will help make a successful interview.
8. Prepare for the interview by reading the catalog and other available literature about the institution in advance of your visit. Show you have done some thinking about the courses you need, and such matters as extracurricular activities.
9. Know in advance the questions you are going to ask. Do not waste the interviewer's time by asking for information easily obtained in literature about the college. Candidates who ask

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good questions stand out in the minds of the admissions officers who, after all, see hundreds of students year-in, year-out.

10. Listen to the interviewer carefully. Answer the question without rambling generalizations. Take notes if you desire.
11. Remember that the interviewer is trying to make a match between you and the college in the interest of both.
12. Be prepared to explain in some detail, the specific experiences you have had both inside and outside of school which make you an interesting applicant. Be honest and original in your statements. Be frank and say, "I do not know" if you cannot answer a question.
13. In discussing your past school experiences, stress both your academics and the non-academic positive aspects.
14. Recognize that the interviewer has a schedule to keep, especially at certain times of the year. Sense when the interview should be terminated.
15. Thank the interviewer for spending time with you, answering your questions, and giving you consideration.
16. As soon as possible after the interview, write the official a note telling him or her that you were grateful for the time given you and for answering your questions. If you think of something, write about it. You should send a letter of thanks even if you have decided not to apply to that college.

CAMPUS QUESTIONS TO ASK ADMISSIONS OFFICERS, STUDENTS & PROFESSORS

CAMPUS CULTURE/SOCIAL:

- * Why do students select this college?
- * What do students on campus rave about?
- * What do students complain about most?
- * How active is the social life?
- * What type of student seems happiest?
- * What are the most popular extracurricular activities?
- * What are the student traditions?
- * What happens around here on the weekends?
- * What kind of campus wide social events do you have?
- * Do you have to belong to a fraternity or sorority to feel part of the social life?
- * From what parts of the country do you get the majority of your students?
- * What type of housing do you have for freshmen? Is housing guaranteed? All four years?
- * What type of meal plan do you offer?
- * Are all residence halls wired for Internet and cable?
- * What did you and your friends do for fun last weekend?
- * What is one thing you do not like about your campus?

ACADEMIC:

- * What are the most popular majors?

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- * How active is the college in helping students with career planning?
- * Who teaches introductory courses - professors or graduate students?
- * What arrangements are made for advising and tutorial help?
- * What opportunities exist for independent studies and study abroad?
- * What constitutes a typical freshman year program?
- * Why is this a good college for me to study my selected major?
- * If I am unsure about my major, is this a good place to explore my options?
- * What percentage of your students graduate in four years?
- * Is the overall college atmosphere very competitive?
- * How much interaction do you have with your professors?

SAFETY:

- * How comfortable will I feel walking through your campus alone at night?
- * What types of crimes occur on campus?
- * Do you and your friends feel safe here?
- * How do you get around campus?

ADMISSIONS:

- * What is the profile of the typical student admitted here?
- * How much weight is given to standardized testing?
- * What is your early admission program and what percentage of the class is accepted through this program?

FINANCIAL AID:

- * Do you participate in all of the federal and state financial aid programs?
- * What forms do you require in addition to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid? (FAFSA)
- * What is the criterion for merit scholarship consideration?
- * What percentage of a student's financial need is met?
- * How are private scholarships handled?
- * What is the institutions practice regarding financial aid renewal? Will grants be continued? Will additional financial aid be available if tuition and costs increase?
- * What is the deadline to apply for financial aid?
- * Can I appeal my financial aid package?
- * What types of payment plans do you offer?
- * What alternate loan solutions do you offer for families?

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RECRUITMENT OF ATHLETES AND THE NCAA

In response to concerns over competitiveness levels and growth in athletic participation among college students, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) established the three-tiered system of classifying college sports by divisions. This process was completed in the 1970's, allowing colleges and universities to specify level of competition they sought and consequently determining the number of scholarships and grants which each institutions could award. The provisions for the differential regulations also had the effect of permitting an outside governing body (the NCAA) to monitor college athletics for potential abuses.

Division I schools are those who chose to compete at the most challenging levels. Although the colleges and universities within Division I tier are typically large and comprehensive, size is not a determining criterion for inclusion in this subsection. Smaller schools can in fact select to compete at a more intense level -- which helps to explain why institutions such as St. Joseph's (undergraduate population 3700) are in the same bracket with the University of Michigan (23,000 students). In additions, smaller schools may designate individual sports for Division I competition while preserving a more amateur status for others.

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Within the Division I bracket are subdivisions for men's football which recognize differential levels of competitiveness. Division 1-A teams are those which go all out for national championships and typically recruit football players nationwide -- Notre Dame, Penn State and Florida are some schools in this subgrouping. Division 1-AA teams are somewhat less competitive though typically stocked with some excellent athletes drawn from just as wide a pool as those in Division 1-A. Schools such as Villanova and Delaware are in Division 1-AA as are institutions in the Ivy League and the Patriot League. These two conferences have chosen by agreement among members schools not to award scholarships for athletic participation in any sports and they are the exceptions among Division 1 colleges and universities.

Division II schools engage in competitive sports but not with the intensity as those in Division I. While institutions in this bracket are usually smaller than those in Division I, size again is not a determining factor for inclusion. Division II schools may recruit athletes for scholarships and grant aid for participating in sports but they are limited in funding and in numbers than their Division I counterparts.

Division III schools compete at varied levels of intensity. Some institutions (such as The College of New Jersey) enjoy nationally prominent teams which could probably challenge many Division I sites. By contrast, some colleges choose to place less emphasis on intensity and more value on participation. Division III schools come in all shapes and sizes; their common denominator is that of not providing scholarships for participation in athletics.

In order to assure that athletes being recruited in Division I and II colleges/universities meet criteria for high school academic rigor and progress toward graduation, the NCAA has established a review process for eligibility. Any student who **anticipates** playing at a Division I or II level -- or who is being actively recruited by schools in these tiers-- must submit a form to the NCAA for review. The agency, which performs this service, is called the NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse, a body that assures that academic standards are met in high school through "core" courses in the "traditional" scholastic subjects. **All students who wish to participate at Division I or II levels in college MUST submit her/his credentials to the Clearinghouse!**

The process of applying for initial eligibility certification is actually quite simple. A form (available at www.eligibilitycenter.org) is completed providing identifying information such as name, address and school along with authorization for the submission of a transcript to selected colleges and universities. There is an option which allows the Clearinghouse to release your eligibility to any Division I or II school that requests it. The Student Release Form is three pages; the first copy is sent so NCAA with payment of a fee for this service. The remaining two copies are brought to the Guidance secretary. One copy will be sent to the Clearinghouse along with your completed Junior transcript. The second copy will be retained and sent along with a final transcript for proof of graduation. **Students must register for the NCAA Clearinghouse online at the following web address www.eligibilitycenter.org**

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Under NCAA rules, coaches from Division I and II schools may not have direct contact with athletes until July 1 following Junior year. Questions about the Clearinghouse as well as on any aspect of athletic recruitment may be directed to the Guidance Office or to the Athletic Director.