



CANTWELL-SACRED HEART OF MARY H.S. MEMORANDUM

TO: ALL SENIORS AND SENIOR PARENTS
FROM: MS. CHAN, *COLLEGE COUNSELOR*
SUBJECT: PREPARATION FOR COLLEGE ADMISSION
DATE: 8/21/2008

You are about to embark on a journey full of exploration, evaluation, decision-making, deadlines and applications. It can either be an adventure or a huge ordeal. It all depends on how you approach the process. The key is being open-minded, honest with yourself and starting at the beginning. This preliminary memo should help guide you.

There are a variety of attributes that you need to consider when evaluating colleges and universities. Big or small? Public or private? East or west? Warm or cold climate? Consider as many characteristics as you can think of and decide which factors are important to you. Beware of letting only one or two factors govern your choices. If you choose a college solely on the basis of one academic program and then you want to change your major after taking an incredibly interesting geology class, then what? You should be especially careful about letting any one individual, whether it's a friend, a teacher, an admissions officer, or even a parent, influence your choice. Liking someone who went to a college or who works there does not guarantee that you will like it.

Of course you are not the only decision maker in the college admission process. Colleges ultimately select their classes from the options they have in their applicant pool. In order to approach the process realistically you must assess your strengths and weaknesses as well as the college's reputation and statistics. Then ask yourself the ultimate question: Will the college choose me? Having a sense of the type of student a college has admitted or denied in the past can give you a clue, but it's dangerous to generalize too much about past decisions. The student who got in with a lower GPA than yours may have had unusually strong recommendations or a more rigorous course load.

One of my primary duties as College Counselor is to help you evaluate your chance of admission. I would also highly encourage you to apply to a range of colleges that will ultimately result in a variety of choices by April. It is important for everyone to include at least one college that you will "likely" be admitted to on your final list of colleges. Do not apply to any colleges that you would not realistically attend. It requires too much time, energy and money and a "safety" school is meaningless if you don't intend to go. The real key here is to cover your options. You should be able to do this with five to eight applications; fewer than five applications and you may not have enough options, more than eight is an indication that you probably haven't done enough research.

Be Organized

It won't take long before you find out how time consuming the college admission process truly is. The best thing you can do is *get organized* from the very beginning. This memo is designed to be a source for answers to your questions and a tool to help you get and stay organized. In addition, *get a calendar!* You will need to keep track of application due dates, interview appointments, deadlines for financial aid and scholarships, test dates etc. Keep a record of:

- Applications requested and received, along with deadlines
- Which teachers you've asked to write recommendations
- Secondary School Reports you have turned in to the counseling office
- Photocopies of all applications and essays you've submitted to colleges.
This will save you hours of work if your application is lost in the mail or misplaced among thousands of other applications in an admission office. It happens often.

No memo can begin to answer all the questions you will have through this process but if you follow the recommended procedures, you'll waste less time on the details and have more energy for the larger questions facing you in this process. You will experience joys and frustrations over the course of the next few months, but you do have some control over whether this process rules you or you control it. I'm here to support you through it!

General Information

Most colleges have their applications available by late August. **You may download applications or apply online. Most colleges now prefer that you apply online. California State University requires that you apply online.** To request information by mail, simply mail a plain postcard (you can get a supply at the Post Office) to the admission office stating:

*Please send me an application and view book. I will graduate from
Cantwell-Sacred Heart of Mary High School in June 2009.
Thank You.*

Sign the postcard with your name and address. Make it legible!!!

You can find addresses online.

UC applications are available online in October.

Private college application forms include several parts:

- The student's self-presentation
General information and one to three essays.
- School recommendation (which needs to be turned in to the college counseling office after you have filled in the top portion)
- Teacher recommendation
- Mid-year reports

Testing

CSHM'S College Board code is 052020. Memorize this number. You will need it time and time again especially when taking the SAT I, SAT II and ACT exams as well as for completing college applications.

It is your responsibility to know which colleges require which tests and to request that they be sent from the Educational Testing Service to the colleges. **You can do this when you register for the test**, when you take the test, or when you receive your scores. The best time to order your test results sent to colleges is at the time you register for the test. To save money, wait until you submit your very last test registration form to send scores to all your colleges. They will automatically receive your entire history of SAT I & SAT II tests.

Almost all colleges require the SAT I (or ACT) and most private colleges also require SAT II subject tests. The University of California system requires both . Carefully note any specific requirements of the colleges to which you are applying.

You may register for the SAT by going to www.collegeboard.com. They also have a toll-free Customer Service number: 866 756-7346.

You may register for the ACT by going to www.actstudent.org.

The ACT

The ACT is a curriculum-based test and is considered at most colleges to be a respectable alternative to the SAT I. The ACT is designed and administered by a company other than the ETS. Therefore, the test dates and locations are different. Registration packets are available in the College Counseling Office.

The ACT tests your academic skills in the following areas: English, Math, Reading and Science Reasoning. As you can see, the emphasis is on verbal skills and your ability to draw conclusions, see implications, and apply facts. Students who are strong verbally and find they have difficulty with the math portion of standardized tests should consider the ACT.

This memo should help with any preliminary questions. If you have any questions, drop into the college counseling office before school, at lunch, or after school. Parents are free to call the College Counseling office (Ext: 24) at any time if they any question regarding college for their son or daughter.