



JUNIOR HANDBOOK

AND COLLEGE PLANNING

Class of 2023

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Welcome!

To the Class of 2023,

Your junior year will be filled with great opportunities and challenging academic classes. We hope the next months are exciting, fun and fulfilling! Please keep the following in mind:

- Stay focused on academics. We know you are busy with extracurricular activities and outside jobs, but you must keep your schoolwork your priority! Your GPA counts!
- If you are not already, get used to keeping an accurate calendar or planner. You will need to keep track of many things, such as testing dates (PSAT, ASVAB, ACT, etc.).
- You should narrow down some ideas regarding what you are going to do after you graduate and explore those choices. Remember you can explore a university, community college, apprenticeship, or the military.
- Talk to relatives, job shadow someone in a position you have an interest in, research careers on the internet and ask Mrs. Camp for assistance.
- Continue to develop your hobbies and interests.

This packet is intended to help guide you and your family through some important aspects of your junior year. Please read through the entire packet. There is a lot of important information included, but try not to get overwhelmed. We are here to help you with any questions you may have or any additional information you may need.

Your high school career is half-way complete, but we cannot overemphasize the importance of your continued success and achievements during this year! Let's work together to make your junior year a successful one! We are excited about the Class of 2021, and we look forward to working with you this year!

Mrs. Taggart
Principal

Mrs. Camp
Counselor

Mrs. Howard
College Counselor

Class sponsors
Junior Class Sponsors



Calendar of Events

Mark your calendars for these important upcoming events for Seniors and Parents:

| | | | |
|------------|--|------------|-----------------------------------|
| Sept. 8-10 | ACT Prep on Campus | | |
| Sept. 11 | National ACT Date | Jan. TBD | LifeSouth Blood Drive |
| Sept. 13 | Junior League College & Career Night | | |
| Sept. 16 | Deliver Junior Class Rings | Feb. 9-11 | ACT Prep on Campus |
| Sept. 22 | LifeSouth Blood Drive | Feb. 12 | National ACT Date |
| | | Feb. 23 | National Honor Society Inductions |
| Oct. 2 | National SAT Date | Feb. TBD | Montala Pageant |
| Oct. 4 | College (& Career) Fair at ACA | | |
| Oct. 5 | Fall School Day ACT | March 8 | School Day ACT @ ACA |
| Oct. 18-22 | Homecoming Week | March 12 | National SAT Date |
| Oct. 20-22 | ACT Prep on Campus | March 30-1 | ACT Prep on Campus |
| Oct. 22 | Homecoming Football Game | | |
| Oct. 23 | National ACT Date | April 2 | National ACT Date |
| Oct. 26 | School Day PSAT | April 13 | School Day SAT @ ACA |
| | | April TBD | Junior/Senior Banquet |
| Nov. 6 | National SAT Date | | |
| Nov. TBD | Junior Serve Day | May 2-9 | AP Exams |
| | | May 7 | National SAT Date |
| Dec. 4 | National SAT Date | May 12 | High School Awards Day |
| Dec. 8-10 | ACT Prep on Campus | May 16-19 | Exams |
| Dec. 11 | National ACT Date | | |
| Dec. 14-17 | Exams | | |

Junior Year Events

Junior Serve Day

This year, Junior Serve Day is set for October. Juniors will be off-campus with their Homeroom teacher serving in our community. More information will be sent closer to the date. Parents will be asked to complete a Google form before their child can leave campus to give permission for travel and activities off-campus. Without permission, students will not be allowed to go.

Junior/Senior Banquet

The date for this year's Junior/Senior Banquet will be April. Every year, the junior class hosts a formal dinner for the senior class. The cost for all Juniors will range between \$25-\$35 (depending on the amount of money



raised by the class). A date can be from another class or school, however, the ACA junior will be responsible for paying a fee for their date as well. Students are expected to wear formal attire (suit/tux for young men and formal dresses for young ladies). Dresses should be modest. Dresses should not be shorter than two inches above the knee (including slits). Tops should not be too low cut and any two-piece dresses should not be too revealing (two inches or less). As per the student handbook: 1) If a student is thought to be dressed inappropriately at a school event, any employee may call it to the attention of an administrator. The administrator will go talk to the student. 2) The student will be asked to leave if the administrator determines the dress is inappropriate. The administrator will meet with the student and parent the next available school day to determine if further action is needed.

High School Awards Day

HS Awards Day is on Thursday, May 12th. Academic awards will be presented at this time. Students receiving awards are asked to dress in church appropriate clothing (following ACA's dress code). Emails will be sent the week prior to awards day to let you know if your child will receive an award.

Long White Dresses (for Girls)

Senior girls will need to have a long white dress for various events throughout the **senior** year. Each girl should wear a *pure white dress* (not cream-colored, eggshell, off-white, etc, but can have lace in cream-colored, eggshell, or off-white). The dress must be floor length. (Girls whose dresses are too short or too tight risk not being allowed on the field trip and not being included in the picture. If you are in doubt, please email Mrs. Taggart pictures of yourself from the front and back angles wearing the dress.) The dress may not be strapless, but may have straps no less than two-three inches in width. Your shoes will be removed for the pictures, but you must wear shoes to school and on the trip. Jewelry may be worn, but should be low-key and dainty (nothing chunky and large). Some girls will use heirloom dresses. These typically take 1-2 years to complete, so if this is something you'd like to do, reach out to someone to make it for you. I would recommend Heirlooms by Tracie. Her contact info is (334) 300-4002, or by finding her work on Facebook on her page "Heirlooms by Tracie. Mrs. Howard has several other recommendations if she is booked.



Junior Year School Information

Appointment Procedures

Mrs. Camp reviews each Senior transcript to ensure they are on track to graduate. Mrs. Camp is happy to discuss academic or social concerns at any time. If you need an appointment to see Mrs. Camp, please send her an email and she will get with you as quickly as possible.

Grade Point Average

When filling out college applications, one of the first questions you will need to answer is your Grade Point Average (GPA). Many colleges and scholarship programs prefer to look at unweighted grade point averages. We can provide you with both your unweighted and weighted GPA. Rarely, some applications may ask for your class rank. Please note that ACA does not give out class rank because this can fluctuate during the school year. We will let you know if you are in the top 5%, 10%, etc.

| Course Grade | A | B | C | D | F |
|------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|
| Regular Course | 4.0 | 3.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 0 |
| Honors Course | 4.5 | 3.5 | 2.5 | 1.5 | |
| Dual Enrollment Course | 5.0 | 4.0 | 3.0 | 2.0 | |
| AP Course | 6.0 | 4.5 | 3.0 | 2.0 | |

Graduation Requirements

Students attending ACA from grade 9 through 12 must earn 27 units of credit to graduate and receive a Standard or Advanced Diploma. ONLY units of credit earned in grades 9 – 12 apply toward graduation requirements. When counting units of credit for graduation, each semester of work passed will be counted as $\frac{1}{2}$ unit. For example, if students pass first semester Spanish, but never pass second semester Spanish, they earn $\frac{1}{2}$ unit of credit in Spanish toward graduation. Whether receiving a Standard or Advanced Diploma, all seniors MUST have taken the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the ACT twice (or once each) and have had their scores reported directly to ACA in order to graduate. Finally, it should be noted that all accounts MUST be cleared and paid in full before seniors will be permitted to participate in graduation exercises and have their diplomas mailed.



Requirements for a Standard Diploma

4 units Bible – one for each year enrolled at ACA (includes Bible/Chorus and dual enrollment course)

4 units English

1 unit 9th Grade English or Honors English

1 unit 10th Grade English or Honors English

1 unit 11th Grade English or Dual Enrollment Composition I & II

1 unit 12th Grade English or Dual Enrollment Literature I & II

4 units Mathematics – one math course must be successfully completed each year enrolled at ACA

1 unit Algebra I–

Algebra I taken in the 8th grade earns one unit of credit which is included in the high school GPA and satisfies the Algebra I requirement. Students taking Algebra 1 in the 8th grade must still successfully complete a math course each year enrolled at ACA in grades 9 – 12. The Algebra IA and Algebra IB combination completed in the 9th and 10th grades will satisfy the Algebra I requirement and will count as 2 of the 4 required math units.

1 unit Geometry

1 unit Algebra II

1 additional unit – For students who do not complete the Algebra IA and Algebra IB combination, the additional required unit MUST be selected from Finite Math, Precalculus with Trigonometry, Calculus, Advanced Placement Calculus, and Dual Enrollment Finite Math.

4 units Science:

1 unit Biology or Honors Biology

1 unit Chemistry or Honors Chemistry

2 additional units must be selected from Physical Science (limited to those who took the course in 9th grade), Anatomy & Physiology, Biomedical Science, Advanced Placement Biology, Environmental Science and Physics.

4 units Social Studies:

1 unit World History or AP World History – 9th grade

1 unit U.S. History & Geography OR AP European History – 10th grade

1 unit U.S. History & Geography OR AP U.S. History – 11th grade

½ unit American Government OR AP American Government – 12th grade

½ unit Economics or Honors Economics – 12th grade

1 unit Physical Education – Beginning with the 2014-15 school year, participation in fall marching band for two semesters may be substituted for Physical Education. Students must participate in marching band for two fall semesters to earn the full unit of Physical Education. Spring semesters of concert band do not count toward this requirement.



½ unit Health

½ unit Intermediate Technology or Communications

4 units Electives – A list of electives is available through the guidance office. (Additional core courses may be taken as electives.)

Requirements for an Advanced Diploma

4 units Bible – one for each year enrolled at ACA (includes Bible/Chorus and dual enrollment course choices)

4 units English

1 unit 9th Grade English or Honors English

1 unit 10th Grade English or Honors English

1 unit 11th Grade English or Dual Enrollment Composition I & II

1 unit 12th Grade English or Dual Enrollment Literature I & II

4 units Mathematics – one math course must be successfully completed each year enrolled at ACA

1 unit Algebra I – Algebra I taken in the 8th grade earns one unit of credit,

which is included in the high school GPA and satisfies the Algebra I

requirement. Students taking Algebra I in the 8th grade must still

successfully complete a math course each year enrolled at ACA.

1 unit Geometry

1 unit of Algebra II

1 unit of Precalculus with Trigonometry

NOTE: The Algebra IA and Algebra IB combination do NOT count toward an Advanced Diploma.

4 units Science:

1 unit Biology

1 unit Chemistry

2 additional units must be selected from Physical Science (limited to those who took the course in 9th grade), Anatomy & Physiology, Biomedical Science, Advanced Placement Biology, Environmental Science and Physics. (**This only applies to the 2019 Senior Class since Medical Anatomy is no longer an option.)

4 units of Social Studies:

1 unit World History or AP World History – 9th grade

1 unit U.S. History & Geography OR AP European History – 10th grade

1 unit U.S. History & Geography OR AP U.S. History – 11th grade

½ unit American Government OR AP American Government – 12th grade

½ unit Economics or Honors Economics – 12th grade

1 unit Physical Education (see Standard Diploma Requirements)



½ unit Health

½ unit Intermediate Technology or Communications

2 units Foreign Language (must be the same language)

2 units Electives – A list of electives is available through the guidance office. (Additional core courses may be taken as electives.)

Advanced diplomas are awarded to students completing required work AND maintaining a 3.00 academic GPA. If students have more AP/Dual Enrollment classes, they can count as an honors credit. However, honors credits cannot count as one of the AP/Dual Enrollment class credits. Graduating seniors receiving advanced diplomas are awarded white honor cords.

Valedictorian and Salutatorian

For the purpose of calculating GPA for Valedictorian and Salutatorian the core GPA will be used. Core GPA is calculated by using grades from the five core classes – Bible, English, Math, Science and Social Studies – from 9th – 12th grades only for a total of 20 credits. AP, Dual Enrollment and Honors classes are weighted in this calculation. In case of a tie, high school credits earned in the 8th grade will be used to break the tie. If a tie still exists, the students will be co-valedictorians or co-salutatorians.

A transfer student's total number of quality points cannot exceed the total number of quality points possible for ACA students.

The Valedictorian and Salutatorian give an address at the Commencement Exercises. All speeches are subject to administrative approval



Career & College Counseling Center

Students are encouraged to meet with Mrs. Howard before or after school or by requesting an appointment on her website or by email. She is on campus Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Services available through the counseling center with Mrs. Howard:

Assessments to identify interests, abilities, and career values (ASVAB)

Career and College Information

Opportunities for part-time employment, full-time employment, and volunteer opportunities

Assistance in finding college/university or other educational programs

Scholarship assistance

Sending transcripts to colleges and universities

TRANSCRIPTS

Transcripts may be requested by submitting the Google Form “Transcript Request.” This request form is on the counseling website and will be emailed to your child at the beginning of the year. Transcript requests will only be honored if they are submitted through this form. ACA will provide **three** FREE transcripts. After three have been submitted, a fee of \$5 per transcript will be assessed. Please make sure you have sent in your application to a college **before** you request the transcript. If a college receives a transcript and it has no application to match it with, they often just throw them away. If a transcript is sent prior to an application being submitted, and another transcript must be sent, a fee may be assessed.

At Senior Exit Interviews, the final transcript request form will be completed. Final high school transcripts are not available until after you have completed high school. These will be finalized after graduation. Once transcripts are available, Mrs. Howard will mail the final transcript to the school indicated on the request form **if** the student indicates they have already applied and been accepted to the college. Transcripts are typically ready and mailed by the second week of June.



Post-Secondary Options

Post-secondary is any education option after high school. Options may include: two-year college, four-year college or university, independent private schools, the military, apprenticeships, or beginning the work force.

Four-Year College

Four-year universities generally have certain academic requirements for entry. These universities are typically larger in size with a higher teacher-to-student ratio. At four year colleges, you can obtain a bachelor's, master's, specialists, or doctoral degree.

Two-Year College

Community and Junior Colleges offer two-year associate degrees. They are usually easier to get into than most colleges and universities and are generally less expensive. Most students will receive an associates degree upon graduation at a community college.

Private Colleges

Community and Junior Colleges offer two-year associate degrees. They are usually easier to get into than most colleges and universities and are generally less expensive.

Technical/Trade Institutions

A trade school (also known as a technical school) is a postsecondary educational institution designed to train students for a specific job in a skilled trade career. Most importantly, a trade school offers hands-on training to prepare students for actual work in their chosen field. Trade school programs are entirely concentrated on relevant job training. Although each program is unique, most programs take anywhere from a few months to a year. Some more specialized types of training programs can last anywhere from one to two years. The length of schooling to gain entry-level technical skills is usually under one year.

Military Service

There are six military service branches, each with their own active-duty and part-time components. According to todaysmilitary.com, "Each varies in service commitment, location, and how its members contribute to the overall mission of protecting our country, though all components are on the same rank-based pay scale." The branches of service are: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, and the Coast Guard.

Apprenticeship

Paid on the job training. Apprenticeships bridge the gap between school and the world of work. An apprenticeship is a way to learn a skilled trade through structured on-the-job training, and get paid while you do so.

The Work Force

Joining the workforce is generally a phrase used to describe someone who chooses to begin employment in some capacity, instead of going to college or joining the military. Students may choose to do this temporarily or long term. Those who choose to take a year off after high school may hear the term "gap year," meaning the student is taking a break from school to work, do some form of ministry, just figure out what they want to do, etc.



Naviance and Common App

CEEB Code: 011869

(Students will be asked to supply this code throughout the college search and application process.)

Students should apply online to college institutions. Students should request to have the transcript sent electronically by the following steps:

1. Go to your Naviance account at www.connect.naviance.com/alabamaca
2. Click on the “colleges tab”
3. Go to “colleges I’m applying to”

Complete the Important Privacy Notice for Common Application: (check: yes, I do waive my right to access and check by completing this form, I authorize all schools, etc.) This sets you up with a common application username and password. The Common Application is available online at www.commonapp.org, which allows students to apply to hundreds of different college institutions with ONE application process. The participating colleges and universities are listed online.

Click on +add colleges to this list. Enter the college you are applying to and request that a transcript be sent electronically. This is the ONLY way a transcript request can be made. Please do not request a transcript until you have completed and submitted the application for admission.



Choosing a College

Choosing a college requires that you know yourself. Ask yourself the following questions and perhaps the best college fit for you is one that will match your responses to these questions:

1. What are your academic interests?
2. How would you describe your learning style? Do you like small or large classes; seminars or lectures; internships?
3. Did you take advanced placement classes at ACA and do you want to continue to be challenged in a rigorous academic environment or do you want a less pressured academic environment?
4. How would you weigh the importance of social opportunities versus a focus on academics? Are you an adventurer or risk taker who enjoys a lot of change or do you prefer a stable, predictable environment?
5. Do you want to spend the next four years with people like you or do you want to meet people from different cultures and backgrounds very different from your own?
6. What do you do well or care deeply about? What interests, talents, or skills do you want to pursue while you are in college?

The “best college” and the “best fit” is the college that is right for you. It is not necessarily your parent’s college or the one your friends will attend. It is the college that will best meet your needs! Make it a priority to try to find a college that matches your academic, spiritual, and personal interests. A good college fit is one that will:

1. Offer a program of study to match your interests and needs.
2. Provide a style of instruction that is well suited to the way you learn best.
3. Provide a level of academic rigor to match your ability.
4. Offer a community that feels like home to you.
5. Value you for what you do well.
6. Meets your spiritual needs.



Criteria for Admission

Every college institution establishes their own criteria for admission. The most general criteria for admission are:

- 1) GPA (grade point average)
- 2) ACT/SAT Scores

Some colleges institutions break down their criteria for admission into several criteria including:

- 1) The rigor of the high school curriculum. (Did you challenge yourself by taking advantage of Advanced Placement (AP) and honors courses? Tougher classes will not only look better on a college application, they will better prepare you for college.
- 2) Some colleges will look solely at the students CORE GPA (meaning only English, History, Science, Math, and foreign language – in some cases). It is important to maintain good academic grades in ALL courses and not only rely on your electives to boost your GPA!!
- 3) Colleges may use your highest ACT/SAT scores called superscoring. This does not happen everywhere, however, some colleges will take the highest subject grade from multiple testing attempts to give you a “new” composite score.
- 4) Many colleges want to look at your resume. They want to see if you were able to balance extracurricular activities, leadership skills, and community service.
- 5) It is important to have out-of-school experiences, including summer activities, work, and hobbies that reflect responsibility, and dedication. Meaningful use of your free time is essential. Students should include these commitments in their resumes.
- 6) Students who go the extra mile to develop a special talent in sports, research, writing, the arts, or anything else will gain an edge. Students should consider sending a college evidence of anything that makes them stand out such as a portfolio of their creative writing, or sending a link to a demonstration of their talent.
- 7) Some colleges require letters of recommendation from the college counselor and several academic teachers. These letters help the college admission counselors gain further insight into the impact a student has had both inside and outside the classroom.
- 8) Essays are required by some college institutions. They are the highest ranked non-academic feature of an application and the only part of the college application over which the student has absolute control. The essay should reflect the student’s personality and tell something about the student that is not on the application. A student’s essay should show their ability to use language correctly and



appropriately. It is imperative that the essay be proofed for errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. A good essay is not good because of the topic but because of the voice.

- 9) It is important that the students have demonstrated enthusiasm for attending a university, as evidenced by campus visits, an interview, and ongoing contact with the admissions office. Early in the college-planning process, students should schedule campus visits, including an information session, tour, and interview if available. They should stay in touch with admission representatives and attend local presentations.

Below is the full set of essay prompts for 2021-2022.

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.



About the College Admission Process - Top 10 Facts

1 You have the right to request information from colleges and universities without feeling pressure tactics to persuade you to apply or enroll.

2 You have the right to accurate information about each institution's academic programs, facilities, and faculty, along with each institution's retention and graduation statistics.

3 You have the right to the names of all accrediting, certifying, or licensing organizations for each institution.

4 You have the right to complete information about all direct and miscellaneous expenses, the types of non need-based and need-based financial assistance provided, and the methods by which eligibility is determined.

5 You have the right to accurate information about all aspects of campus safety, including institutional crime statistics.

6 You have the responsibility to assure that all required items necessary for the completion of your application are received by each institution within the required timeframe.

7 Once admitted to a college or university, you have the right to wait until May 1 to respond to an offer of admission and financial aid (unless you have been admitted under a binding Early Decision program).

8 You have the right to request in writing an extension to May 1 without penalty if an institution requires an earlier commitment (unless you have been admitted under a binding Early Decision program). A sample request is on page 23.

9 You have the right to historical information about prior waiting list activity including the number wait-listed, the number ultimately admitted and the availability of housing and financial aid. Colleges and universities cannot require a deposit from you to maintain your place on a waiting list.

10 You have the responsibility to submit a deposit to only one institution—and upon submitting that deposit to withdraw from all other institutions to which you have been admitted.

- Taken from the New England Association for College Admission Counseling, www.neacac.org -



Types of Admission

1. **Regular Decision** is the application process in which a student submits an application to an institution by a specified date and receives a decision within a reasonable and clearly stated period of time. A student may apply to other institutions without restriction.

2. **Rolling Admission** is the application process in which an institution reviews applications as they are completed and renders admission decisions to students throughout the admission cycle. A student may apply to other institutions without restriction.

3. **Early Action (EA)** is the application process in which students apply to an institution of preference and receive a decision well in advance of the institution's regular response date. Students who are admitted under Early Action are not obligated to accept the institution's offer of admission or to submit a deposit prior to May 1. Under non-restrictive Early Action, a student may apply to other colleges.

4. **Restrictive Early Action (REA)** is the application process in which students make an application to an institution of preference and receive a decision well in advance of the institution's regular response date. Institutions with Restrictive Early Action plans place restrictions on student applications to other early plans. Institutions will clearly articulate these restrictions in their Early Action policies and agreements with students. Students who are admitted under Restrictive Early Action are not obligated to accept the institution's offer of admission or to submit a deposit prior to May 1.

5. **Early Decision (ED)** is the application process in which students make a commitment to a firstchoice institution where, if admitted, they definitely will enroll. While pursuing admission under an Early Decision plan, students may apply to other institutions, but may have only one Early Decision application pending at any time. Should a student who applied for financial aid not be offered an award that makes attendance possible, the student may decline the offer of admission and be released from the Early Decision commitment. The institution must notify the applicant of the decision within a reasonable and clearly stated period of time after the Early Decision deadline. Usually, a nonrefundable deposit must be made well in advance of May 1. The institution will respond to an application for financial aid at or near the time of an offer of admission. Institutions with Early Decision plans may restrict students from applying to other early plans. Institutions will clearly articulate their specific policies in their Early Decision agreement.

- *Taken from the National Association for College Admission Counseling's Statement of Principles of Good Practice Interpretations of Mandatory Practices -*



Corresponding with Colleges via Email

Using proper email etiquette is important, especially with the admissions office. They are trying to see if you are a good candidate for their college or university so it is vital that you take some thought into every initial email and response. (These tips will also help you when you are communicating with your college professors and future employers. Begin implementing these tips when emailing back and forth with your teachers at ACA!)

DO: Remember that your email messages may be added to your admissions file.

DO: Choose an appropriate email address. You may want to rethink addresses like partygirl@hotmail.com or hatetostudy@yahoo.com

DO: Give your full name, address, phone number, and high school on each message.

DO: Spell check your email and use proper punctuation.

DO: Use salutations, example: Dear Admissions Officer.

DO: Be as polite and respectful in an email as you would in a face-to-face meeting or telephone conversation.

DO: Check the email address of the recipient before hitting the “send” button.

DO: Check the school’s website if you have several questions before sending an email. If you still have specific questions, it is better to call the school and have a conversation.

DON’T: Use all lowercase letters or uppercase letters; all lower-case letters are difficult to read and all uppercase feels are if you are SHOUTING.

DON’T: Use “IMPORTANT INFORMATION!!!” or “Please read” as resubjects for your email. These are commonly used for “junk email” or viruses.

DON’T: Send anything confidential in an email. Email is more like a postcard than like a letter in a sealed envelope.

DON’T: Send blanket emails to several schools at once. Do some research and then ask specific questions indicating genuine interest.

(This advice originally appeared in a Washington University newsletter for counselors.)



College Admission & Military Entrance Testing

Below is a recommended College and Career Testing Timeline:

Sophomore Year: Fall - PSAT (used to determine National Merit Winners); Spring: ACT/SAT, and ASVAB

Junior Year: Fall - PSAT, ACT/SAT; Spring: ACT/SAT and ASVAB (if not taken sophomore year)

Senior Year: Fall - ACT/SAT

Alabama Christian Academy requests that students apply to at least THREE colleges they are interested in during their senior year. This will allow for students to compare universities in regards to cost, location, campus involvement, etc. It is highly recommended that one of those schools be a “safety” school. A safety school is one in which your academic credentials exceed those of the average accepted student. Meaning, there is a high probability that you will be admitted (though it’s important to recognize that nothing is certain).

ACT

The ACT is a standardized test used for college admissions in the United States. There is a writing portion for the ACT. It is an essay that measures writing skills taught in high school English classes and entry level college composition courses. The writing portion is **optional** at most colleges. Please check to see what your desired college has for requirements. The ACT consists of four sections of multiple choice questions in the following subject areas: English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science. The ACT scale goes up to a 36, being a perfect score. The test without the essay is 3 hours and 30 minutes (with breaks), with the essay is just over 4 hours with breaks.

All students are required to take the ACT test **two times** before graduating from Alabama Christian Academy. Students may take it as often as they want to but at least twice. There will be two ACTs offered on campus at ACA each school year, once in the fall and another in the spring. These tests are approximately \$55 and will be charged to the student’s account if they choose to sign up. The spots will be first-come first-serve started with the seniors and working down to the sophomores. We recommend students complete geometry before taking the ACT so they will be familiar with the questions for math on the test.

In addition to the two school day ACT tests that will be held on campus, there are National tests scheduled almost every month. Those test dates are posted on the calendar in the front of this packet and also posted on their website: <https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration.html>. If you or your child need assistance with registration for a National test, please contact Mrs. Howard and she will be happy to help! Registration takes about 30 minutes. (Students will just need to get your debit card



information, if they don't have their own, to pay for the test). ACT Prep textbooks are also available at registration and cost around \$35 (it is also available on Amazon).

ACT Prep courses will be offered on campus at ACA for FREE ONLY for those signed up to take the upcoming National ACT. All National tests are offered on Saturdays and our ACT Prep course will take place the Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday leading up to the Saturday test date. If you would like your child to complete the ACT Prep course, ACA needs a copy of the testing registration to confirm their "ticket" for Prep. This course will be first-come first-serve as we only have a certain number of spots available, so the sooner you register, the better chance you'll get into the prep course. The Official ACT Prep Guide book is required for the prep course at ACA (at the expense of the student).

SAT

ACA offers the SAT test on campus once each year, typically in October. The SAT is a multiple choice test created and administered by the College Board. The purpose of the SAT is to measure a high school student's readiness for college, and provide colleges with one common data point that can be used to compare all applicants. There are two sections of the SAT - Math and Evidence-Based Reading and Writing. Some students perform better on the SAT over the ACT (or the opposite) so testing both can be extremely beneficial. Overall, the higher you score on the SAT and/or ACT, the more options for attending and paying for college will be available to you. The SAT is scored on a 200 to 800 point scale. Your total SAT score is the sum of the two section scores. The highest possible SAT score is 1600. If you choose to take the **optional** essay, you will receive a separate score. The test without the essay is 3 hours, with the essay is 3 hours and 50 minutes.

Most colleges will accept scores from both the ACT and the SAT. There is not necessarily a better test over the other, but it would be helpful to take both just to see if you score higher on one over the other. In addition to the one school day SAT we will host at ACA, there are National SAT dates almost monthly. If you or your child would like help registering for the SAT, please contact Mrs. Howard.

PSAT

The PSAT is another form of assessment used for students to be considered for a National Merit Scholarship. You must also satisfy high academic standards and other requirements, but if you earn a qualifying score to enter the National Merit Scholarship Program, you could compete for national recognition and college scholarships. This test is taken by students in the 11th grade. If students choose to take the PSAT their sophomore year, it is strictly a practice test. The scores will NOT count towards Merit scholarships. If your scores are high enough your junior year, you can qualify for a National Merit commendation and/or



scholarship. The score range for the PSAT is anywhere from 320-1600. PSAT scores between 950 and 1060 are above the national average and that will put you in the top 50% of test takers.

ASVAB

The ASVAB test is a timed, multi-aptitude test, which is given at more than 14,000 scrolls and Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS) nationwide. The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery is your ticket to a great United States military career. This test is developed and maintained by the Department of Defense. This assessment helps to determine which branch every individual would be best for and even what military jobs you can hold after you finish basic training or boot camp. The better your ASVAB score, the broader your options. We will host an ASVAB on campus for those interested once a year. If your child is interested in taking the ASVAB an additional time, please contact Mrs. Howard and she will get a recruiter to come to campus and give your child another test. (This may happen at a military career center if they cannot come to our campus, but Mrs. Howard can help get this set up). This test can be used as an entrance exam for all branches of the military: Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, National Guard, and Coast Guard. This test will be given to the sophomore class every spring.



Tips for Completing Your College Application

You may see some terms while filling out applications and scholarships that you do not understand. Below are a few with a description of each. If you have any additional questions about specific terms on your applications or scholarships, please feel free to reach out to Mrs. Howard.

CEEB or College Board Code

The College Board assigns a code to every high school in the nation to identify schools. The CEEB for Alabama Christian Academy is **011869**. This will be asked on applications and testing registration sites ALL the time! Try to remember it :)

Degrees/Certifications

Certification - earned after completing a short series of courses for a particular skill competency.

Associate's Degree - earned after what is usually two years at a community or junior college.

Bachelor's Degree - earned after what is usually four years at a university or four years at a college.

Master's Degree - earned after what is usually two years of post-bachelor's degree study.

Doctorate Degree - earned after what is usually 2-4 years of post-master's degree study.

GPA or Grade Point Average (can be weighted or unweighted)

This is the cumulative average of ALL of a student's grades (translated into points on a 4.0 scale) earned from the freshman year forward. The unweighted average uses unweighted grade points, where the weighted average uses weighted grade points. Colleges usually look at weighted averages and ACT/SAT scores.

GPA - Unweighted

This refers to a grade point average that assigns 4.0 quality points to an "A", 3.0 to a "B", 2.0 to a "C", and 1.0 to a "D", regardless of whether the courses are standard, honors, or AP level.

GPA - Weighted (Also known as Quality Point Average)

This refers to a grade point average that uses the above noted scale but assigns 0.5 extra quality points for Honors classes, 1 extra quality point for Dual Enrollment classes and a scale for AP classes.

Match School

One in which your transcript mirrors that of the average freshman. Therefore, your GPA, SAT?ACT scores and coursework (college prep, honors, etc.) are all on par with those undergrads typically admitted. While



this will not guarantee an acceptance (especially considering that extracurricular activities, essays, etc. come into play), you can apply with confidence and the understanding that you have a great shot!

Reach School

Colleges where your academic qualifications are below the average accepted student. For example, it is unlikely you would gain entry to an Ivy League university with a 1.5 GPA. However, even if your SATs might be 100 points lower than average or you have a 3.4 GPA instead of a 3.8, if you really like the school, throw your hat into the ring. It could be a long shot, but an admissions officer might just see your potential!

Safety School

A safety school is one in which your academic credentials exceed those of the average accepted student. Meaning, there is a high probability that you will be admitted (though it's important to recognize that nothing is certain).

Letters of Recommendation

Many colleges and scholarships require letters of recommendation from your counselor, principal, or teacher. Some schools have a specific form for them to complete, while others just require a letter. Please be sure to give the person filling out the form a minimum of **TWO WEEKS** to complete the recommendation letter. Chances are, they have more than one letter to complete. To receive a good, thorough recommendation letter, it is helpful to provide your counselor, teacher, or principal with a list of your accomplishments – both in school and out of school. Please give them a copy of your resume when asking them to complete your recommendation. It would also be nice to write an email or a letter thanking them for writing your letter.



College Visits

The summer is a great time to get started visiting colleges. It is very important to visit colleges you are interested in attending. It is not recommended to make up your mind to attend a college based solely on the website or what your friends think about the college or university. You will be living at the college you choose to attend for quite a while, so you should be sure you are comfortable with the campus and the town where the school is located.

Each student at Alabama Christian Academy receives 10 days to which they can be absent. **Juniors will receive ONE additional absence to visit a college during the school year with documentation from the admissions office that you attended campus. Seniors will receive TWO additional absences to visit colleges during the school year with documentation from the admissions office that you attended campus.** If the students go over the allotted absences and do not use them for college visits only, the student will be responsible for attending and paying for Saturday School at ACA. These absences are ONLY available as college days and MUST be pre-approved by Mrs. Howard or Mrs. Taggart **ONE WEEK IN ADVANCE.**



Financial Aid & Scholarship Information

The biggest portion of scholarship money will come from the college you attend. You must be accepted to a college before you can begin to ask that college/university for scholarships. Most have an acceptance deadline of December 1st in order to receive scholarships, but some may have an even earlier deadline. Make yourself aware of the scholarship deadlines for the school(s) of your choice.

Finding and applying for other scholarships takes a great deal of time and effort. Research and completing paperwork for these scholarships is not easy so the sooner you get started, the less overwhelming it will feel. Mrs. Howard can help by providing and navigating the resources available for scholarships, but she cannot give individuals a list of scholarships tailored to their specific needs and talents. She will update the counseling website and send emails about various scholarship opportunities as she receives them. There are thousands of scholarships out there. Use other resources and search for scholarships online! Do your research! Two great websites are fastweb.com and wiredscholar.com. There are several other websites to find scholarships available on the counseling website.

Scholarships are only one type of financial aid, and there generally separate applications for each scholarship. Most other forms of aid (grants, loans) require that students fill out a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA is a federal form which cannot be filled out until October 1st, when the previous year's tax information is available. The form can be filled out on-line at www.fafsa.ed.gov. It MUST be completed for students to be eligible for State and Federal aid. This type of aid usually depends upon families' financial needs. It is a great idea to fill this out whether you think you would qualify for it or not - there is SOME money for which you may be eligible automatically, without any financial need. The application takes about 60 minutes to complete and you will need the previous year's tax information available to you to complete the application.

Students and parents should be aware that every college handles scholarships differently. Some college applications for admission automatically qualify you to be considered for a scholarship, while other colleges have a separate scholarship application process. The scholarship/admission office of each college is the best source of information concerning the scholarships available at that institution. The ACA College Counseling Office receives only a limited number of scholarship notices from the colleges, which will be passed along to students. Students should check the scholarship list in their Naviance account for updated scholarship information.



Merit scholarship types vary. Some of them are:

1. Academic
2. Leadership
3. Departmental
4. Talent
5. Athletic
6. External (includes any type of scholarship) -- Many organizations offer scholarships including state and local governments, businesses, employers, clubs, civic groups, church and religious organizations, military associations, private foundations, and charities.

Helpful guidelines to make your scholarship search successful:

- Strictly observe deadlines and strive to submit applications early
- Be honest about grades, experiences, memberships, qualifications, family finances, and other information
- Only apply if you meet the scholarship's minimum requirements
- Carefully follow instructions
- When submitting the application, only include items requested
- Proofread your application carefully
- Keep copies of EVERYTHING you send in case your application gets misplaced. (Save them in a specific folder labeled for the college on your drive so you can easily find them from anywhere!)

Students should bring a copy of all scholarship awards and acceptance letters to Mrs. Howard.



Student Athletes (NAIA & NCAA Clearinghouse Information)

Students interested in playing NAIA or Division I or II varsity sports are required to complete the NAIA and/or NCAA Clearinghouse application. This must be completed online. Request transcripts to be submitted electronically to NCAA from Mrs. Howard. Be sure to request to have final transcripts sent upon graduation. You do not need to complete an application to be talked to by college coaches, but you will not be eligible for play until this is completed. The recruiter you are working with for each university should give you a timeline as to when this process will take place. If this does get completed early before you are recruited, you will be ahead of schedule! The sooner, the better!

We plan to have someone from both the NAIA and NCAA on campus for our parents and students to get a better understanding of the eligibility requirements. We will send updated information as we schedule these events.

NAIA Eligibility Clearinghouse

www.play.mynaia.org

NCAA Eligibility Clearinghouse

<https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/>



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