

# St. Thomas More School

## College Counseling Handbook



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Oakdale, Connecticut  
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# Saint Thomas More School

## PROFILE

### Saint Thomas More School

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Phone: (860) 859-1900  
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### Headmaster: James F. Hanrahan, Jr.

Academic Dean: Steven Davis  
College Placement Counselors:  
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### The School:

St. Thomas More School was founded in 1962 by James F. Hanrahan, Sr., to assist the underachiever- the boy who has the ability to achieve, but who has not yet shown their potential through academic achievement. The intellectual, moral, physical, and social development of each student is the focus of the school's educational design. The goal of St. Thomas More School is to prepare young men for college. The school believes that with proper supervision, encouragement and guidance from a dedicated faculty, the students will develop the skills that are essential to a successful college career and a fulfilled life. St. Thomas More School is accredited by *the New England Association of Schools and Colleges* and is a member of the *Connecticut Association of Independent Schools*, the *National Association of Independent Schools*, the *National Catholic Educational Association*, and the *NAFSA Association of International Educators*.

### The Mission Statement:

“Saint Thomas More School is an accredited college preparatory boarding school in the Catholic tradition for young men who have demonstrated intellectual ability yet have not realized their potential. Within a structured environment, we strive to motivate, nurture, and strengthen the intellectual, moral, physical and social development of every student.”

### The Academic Program:

The academic requirements and curriculum have been designed to provide preparation for entrance into any U.S. college or university. All courses offered are academic in nature and each student is required to take at least six courses. A total of 16 academic credits are required for graduation, but students generally finish with many more. The school year is divided into the traditional four marking periods, and students are expected to complete midterm and final examinations at the conclusion of each of the two marking periods. The school utilizes the block schedule format, which was instituted in 1996. Classes run for forty-five minutes, unless on their block schedule day. Postgraduate students daily take a double period of math and English, along with two electives.

### Graduation Requirements

**Math:** 3 years  
**English:** 4 years  
**Lab Science:** 1 year  
**U.S. History:** 1 year

**Theology:** 1 year  
**Art:** 1 year  
**Electives:** 3 years

### Total: 16 academic credits

Foreign Language: 2 years [International students exempt]

### Grading System:

St. Thomas More uses a traditional numeric system:  
A (100-90), B (89-80), C (79-70), D (69-60).  
We do not rank our students.

### Average SAT Scores:

Math: 550      Verbal: 510

~

**School Code:** 070112

### College Placement:

One hundred percent of St. Thomas More students intend to enroll in college, approximately 95% actually do. The college counselors stress a strong fit when discussing the placement of each student. All seniors and Post-Grads take the SAT's twice in the fall. All international students take the SAT's and the TOEFL twice in the fall. A partial listing of various schools where students are or have been enrolled at are: Boston College, Boston University, Brown, Bucknell, Bryant College, Case Western Reserve, Clark, Assumption, UCONN, Penn. State, Notre Dame, Holy Cross, Cornell, Providence College, Harvard, Northeastern, Villanova, Pitt, UMBC, Merrimack, and Catholic.

# Glossary of College Admissions Terms and Processes

## **PSAT/NMSQT**

The Preliminary Scholastic Assessment

Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test is offered in October each year and provides juniors (and also sophomores) an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the procedures, the types of questions and the scope of the SAT I as well as the SAT II: Writing Test. Detailed results are reported in a way that helps you see your strengths and weaknesses. Approximately 15,000 of the 1.2 million students who take the PSAT/NMSQT will be designated National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists.

## **SAT I: Reasoning Test**

The SAT I is a 3 hour and 45 minute test (60 minutes for writing, 70 minutes for critical reading and math, and 25 minute for a variable section) designed to measure reasoning and critical thinking skills in both quantitative and verbal areas. The SAT includes a student-written essay and multiple choice writing section. The SAT I, administered by the College Board, is used by most colleges as part of the admissions process, sometimes in combination with one or more SAT II: Subject Tests.

## **SAT II: Subject Tests**

The SAT II: Subject Tests are one-hour tests that measure a student's mastery of specific subject areas. Scores are used primarily for placement purposes and sometimes allow a student to bypass an introductory course. Approximately 100 schools nationally require or strongly recommend Subject Tests.

## **American College Testing (ACT)**

The ACT is comprised of four 35–50 minute tests in academic areas of English usage, mathematics usage, social science readings, and natural science readings. Four separate scores, plus a composite score averaging the tests, are reported. Many students in the South and West take these instead of the SAT's. There are relatively few test centers in the Northeast. See the College Counselor for a registration form.

## **Advanced Placement Test (College Board)**

Sixty percent of U.S. high schools currently participate in the AP Program, and most colleges and universities in the United States and Canada have an AP policy granting incoming students credit, placement, or both for qualifying AP Exam grades. They are used for college credit and placement.

## **Common Application**

A general application that is accepted by a large group of colleges and universities. The student completes one common application and then mails copies (or submits it electronically) to whichever colleges he or she chooses from the list of participating schools. This application can be downloaded or submitted online from the Internet at [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org). Please Note: Some colleges ask for extra information on a "Supplemental Form"; be sure to check with each college to see if this extra form is required.

## **Early Action**

A program which allows a student to submit an application at an early date (usually Nov. 1 or 15) and be notified of an admissions decision in December rather than in April. This is not a binding agreement; students are required to notify the college by May 1 of their intention to matriculate.

## **Early Admission**

Allows students to enter undergraduate programs after completing three years of secondary school. Early entrance is most often supported in cases where the secondary school is not equipped to provide a challenging academic program for a particularly well-qualified student or when a student has exhausted the opportunities in his/her school.

## **Early Decision**

A program which allows students to apply early to college (November) and be notified of an admissions decision in December rather than in April. This is a binding agreement. The student is expected to apply to only one college, his/her first choice, and agree that if admitted, s/he will withdraw any other pending applications and agree to attend the ED school.

## **Deferred Admission**

Many schools will offer this option to its newly admitted students. The student may defer his admission to college for one semester or one year for personal reasons (travel, work, internship, personal hardship, etc.). Two stipulations usually apply: that the student not enroll in a degree program at another institution during that year, and that the student must pay his commitment deposit before the deferral will be granted for the following year. The student does not have to re-apply for admission.

**Rolling Admission**

According to this plan used by many institutions across the nation, a student may apply at any time up to a designated "closing" date. Four to six weeks from the time the file is complete, the student will be notified of his/her decision. The candidate reply date is May 1.

**Wait List**

A "list" of applicants who, though qualified for admission at a particular school, are not quite as compelling (in one way or another) as those who are initially offered admission. Wait List candidates are usually given the opportunity to decide whether or not they wish to wait for a final decision. Those who elect to stay on the "Wait List" are still encouraged to accept another school's offer of admission, since there is no guarantee of being moved from the Wait List. If the student is eventually moved from the Wait List to the "Admit" list, s/he has another opportunity to decide which college to attend.

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# I. Introduction

## College Counseling Philosophy

The College Counseling program at St. Thomas More School is a student-centered program that educates students beginning in the eighth grade in the practice of making well-informed choices and decisions that enable students to “seek challenge, make a difference, and live an extraordinary life.” Through building relationships with students and their parents over the course of five years, we work closely with students to help shape a fruitful experience and strong profile that strategically positions each student to gain admission to institutions of higher learning that are commensurate with individual interests and abilities.

While we encourage students to take control of the college admission process—as to do otherwise would be a disservice and impede the growth and developmental process that is at the core of the college application process—the college counselor holds a high level of responsibility in advocating for his students, communicating frequently and effectively with parents, maintaining long-lasting connections and communications with a diverse group of institutions of higher learning, and providing education on the changing patterns and trends in college admission. In sum, we provide high quality college guidance and counseling services to our students, actively probing and prodding to learn what is unique about our students and offering suggestions and recommendations based on numerous years of experience in this field. We encourage parents and students to each play a distinct role in the college admission process:

**From the parents** – You are a vital player in the college process. To best play your part we ask that you focus on the educational side of the process and less on the results side, remaining mindful that the primary goal is placing your son or daughter in an appropriate institution at which he or she will thrive and from which he will ultimately graduate. Be involved and supportive; be the voice of reason and reality; encourage positive work attitudes; recognize doing one’s best as success; above all, provide an environment that allows your child the right to be heard throughout this process. The best way to help stay engaged in the process is to visit your son’s Family Connection Naviance college placement website. This will help you see what is happening in the college application process as we all go through the important steps together. Specific instructions will be e-mailed to parents.

**From the students** – We ask for a willingness to work hard, stay organized, and, above all, maintain a sense of humor. Additionally, we ask that students maintain a positive attitude and keep things in perspective. Students must avoid falling into the trap of either believing they will be admitted nowhere or believing they have the necessary credentials to be admitted anywhere, as neither is true. In the end, students who openly embrace the college admission process and experience fulfillment in the process are the students who have a good understanding of their particular talents, abilities and interests and who are able to identify schools that are appropriate matches.

## II. The Five-Year College Counseling Program

### **Program Overview**

St. Thomas More School college counseling program begins in the eighth grade and overall consists of a series of activities and meetings geared toward preparing students to make informed choices throughout the college selection and application process, including choices regarding goals and the objectives and strategies that will be employed to attain those goals. 8<sup>th</sup> grade -10<sup>th</sup> grade college counseling is primarily conducted in the advisory program and the 11<sup>th</sup> grade -PG program expands the process through the college placement office.

Making well informed decisions is a developmental process; participation in St. Thomas More's college counseling program will provide students with grade appropriate activities that will lead students through this process. Starting in the eighth grade students will establish a plan for their Upper School career. During the ninth grade students will continue to learn about ways that their transcript, co-curricular activities and summer endeavors paint a picture of them as they will be viewed by colleges. During the tenth grade students delve further into standardized testing as they learn to interpret scores and develop strategies to attain desired results. The eleventh grade presents the opportunity to reflect on successes and interests and identify a more concrete direction for their college search. It all comes to fruition in the twelfth grade as students finalize their college lists, apply, await decisions and ultimately make a choice.

### **Eighth Grade College Counseling Program**

**Goal:** The eighth grade program focuses on assisting students with the development of a sketch of desired accomplishments and achievements throughout his St. Thomas More years.

#### **Overview of Activities**

► Provide suggestions and guidance to eighth graders and parents as they begin planning for that which they intend to accomplish academically and personally during their St. Thomas More tenure, including, but not limited to, course selection and co-curricular activities.

### **Ninth Grade College Counseling Program**

**Goal:** The ninth grade program assists students with the transition to the St. Thomas More community and its unique culture. This transition provides students with yet another opportunity to hone their decision-making skills. By the end of the ninth grade students will have refined or established their initial plan for their St. Thomas More tenure, understanding that goals are fluid and may change as priorities and interests change.

#### **Overview of Activities**

► Discussion concerning the secondary school transcript, course selection, standardized testing, and Naviance, a helpful web-based college planning system. Students learn what information colleges see and how it may be interpreted.

► Discuss co-curricular activities and summer opportunities. An important part of overall student development occurs outside of the classroom, and as such students should plan their extra-curricular and summer activities as they have planned their courses. Students are encouraged to pursue their interests as well as explore new ones; to show commitment to that which they are passionate about; and to excel in their interest(s) (whether in writing, athletics or the performing arts) to the best of their ability. Summer opportunities come in all forms and can have long-lasting impact on a student's future. Summer activities may include volunteer work, attending a

sports camp, participating in a research program, working at a camp, or a combination of several things.

► Discuss and explain the importance of resume building and portfolios. Reviewing resumes encourages students to assess how well they are allocating their time and energy. Learning how and why to build on the resume with a portfolio encourages students to present a richer picture of their secondary school career through the collection of particularly meaningful work and accomplishments (e.g. essays and research papers, articles written, projects, awards, art, internships/jobs, special skills, letters of recommendation, resume, etc.). Whether or not the decision is made to ultimately submit a portfolio as part of a college application, students have a document providing a holistic picture of their high school career to refer to in preparing applications and in some cases using elements as part of their application.

### **Tenth Grade College Counseling Program**

**Goal:** The goal of the tenth grade program is to acclimate students to standardized testing and to examine quantifiable elements of their profile.

► Continue discussion with students concerning refinement of goals and objectives as part of future plans. Further discussion regarding resumes, portfolios, and college planning through use of Naviance.

### **Eleventh Grade College Counseling Program**

**Goal:** The eleventh grade program focuses on the examination of self (i.e. quantitative and qualitative) and direction for the college search process.

### **Overview of Activities (Junior Year Timeline)**

#### **Fall**

- Take PSAT/NMSQT at St. Thomas More School (October).
- Register for the SAT and SAT Subject Tests for May.
- Talk with your parents about college. Discuss how your college education will be financed, the range of schools you are considering, and your academic and career interests.

#### **Winter**

- Register for national testing (SAT, SAT Subject Tests, ACT).
- Use Naviance, internet, guidebooks and college search engines to begin formulating a “balanced” list of appropriate colleges.

#### **Spring**

- Take the SAT and SAT Subject Tests (offered in May at STM).
- International students- Register and take the TOEFL Exam in the spring.
- Make plans to visit colleges of interest; call ahead for campus information session and tour schedules.
- Begin individual appointments with college counselor.
- Begin refining your college list. Use Naviance, guidebooks, the Web, and family and friends for continued research.
- Identify teachers from whom you want college recommendations.

#### **Summer**

- Continue visiting colleges; schedule interviews.
- Begin drafts of college essays.
- Continue refining your college list. Use Naviance, guidebooks, the Web, and family and friends for continued research.

## **Twelfth Grade College Counseling Program**

**Goal:** The twelfth grade program helps students refine their list of colleges, complete the application process and ultimately choose the appropriate school at which to matriculate.

### **Overview of Activities (Senior Year Timeline)**

#### **September**

- ▶ Schedule individual appointments with your college counselor.
- ▶ Register for national testing (SAT, SAT Subject Tests, ACT).
- ▶ Meet with college representatives visiting St. Thomas More School.
- ▶ Visit any colleges which you did not see over the summer, obtain any applications not yet received, and finalize list of colleges.
- ▶ Begin to make plans for Early Decision or Early Action applications, if applicable. Most ED deadlines will fall on November 1 or November 15. To meet these deadlines, the whole process must be started in early September.
- ▶ Know the process for submitting applications (refer to “**Filing the College Application**” section in this Handbook).
- ▶ Ask teachers for letters of recommendation.
  - At least a math and English teacher. The more the better. Ask your advisor and an administrator.
  - Remind them to post the letters of recommendation to NAVIANCE.
  - Inform your college counselor who you asked for a recommendation letter.
- ▶ Complete drafts of college application essays.
- ▶ International students must get 15 copies of their parents bank statements as soon as possible. This is used by colleges to verify international students ability to pay the tuition.

#### **October**

- ▶ Register for national testing (SAT, SAT Subject Tests, ACT).
- ▶ International students- Most college applications should be done by Thanksgiving or upon returning.
- ▶ Create final application list and submit to your college counselor.
- ▶ Take SAT or SAT Subject Tests, if applying to a college under an Early Decision or Early Action plan. Make sure score reports are sent directly to your colleges.
- ▶ Make sure to give teachers your recommendation forms well in advance of deadlines.
- ▶ Submit Early Decision/Early Action application, if applicable. Early Decision/Early Action deadlines— November 1/November 15. Make copies for your records.
- ▶ If applicable, submit Financial Aid Profile to the College Scholarship Service.

#### **November**

- ▶ SAT and SAT Subject Test exams at S.T.M.
- ▶ Submit Early Decision/Early Action application, if applicable. Make copies for your records.
- ▶ Follow up with people from whom you have a recommendation.
- ▶ Use Thanksgiving break to work on applications.
- ▶ Certain California colleges...

#### **December**

- ▶ SAT and SAT Subject Test exams at S.T.M..
- ▶ Finish all remaining applications by December 15th. Make copies of applications for your records.
- ▶ ED/EA decisions will arrive this month.

**January**

- ▶ Parents- Submit FAFSA to U. S. Government after January 1.
- ▶ January 15–February 15: many applications due.
- ▶ Watch for missing credential letters from the colleges to which you have applied and send or request necessary information..
- ▶ ED/EA decisions will continue to arrive this month.

**February**

- ▶ Contact your colleges to make sure that all your application materials have been received.
- ▶ Write to first choice institution, if possible.

**April**

- ▶ Many decisions received in March; all decisions received by April 15.
- ▶ Inform college counselor of decisions from colleges- admit, deny, waitlist.
- ▶ Have you been placed on a wait list? See college counselor about waitlist procedures and strategies.

**May**

- ▶ Candidate Reply Date—May 1.
- ▶ Take AP Exams (if applicable) and send scores to your colleges.  
[See the Academic Dean to register for AP Exams.]
- ▶ Write letters/send emails to all schools to which you were accepted but will not attend, letting them know your final decision.
- ▶ See Mr. Quinn if you have any questions about the NCAA Clearinghouse.

**June**

- ▶ Send final transcript to NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse (if applicable).
- ▶ Make sure to register for first-year orientation and finalize your housing arrangements.

### III. Choosing a College

#### NAVIANCE

This Internet-based resource is St. Thomas More School's primary platform for the college placement process. [ See Appendix I for log in process.]

#### ► Responsibilities and Expectations

##### **STUDENTS:**

- Update and organize your own college application process website on a regular basis with your counselor.
- Check and respond to all e-mails, notices, and memos as soon as possible.

##### **COUNSELOR:**

- Help organize and update the website with counsel, communication, and consideration of student and parent input.

##### **PARENTS/GUARDIANS**

- Help organize and update the student's website through communication with counselor and student.

#### Developing a College List

During the individual meetings in the spring of your junior year, we will consider a tentative list of colleges. This list will reflect both your own and your family's preferences and my suggestions based on your interests and your personal, academic, and extracurricular record. We will not develop a final list at this time. Over the following six to eight months, we will revise choices to reflect changes in your record and feelings about colleges based on your research and visits. Once we have developed an initial list, you should contact each school requesting a brochure, an application and any additional information you may need.

Remember, even if you have superb qualifications, you will not necessarily be offered admission by all the colleges to which you apply. Highly selective colleges of necessity deny many more qualified candidates than they accept. Some schools accept less than 11% of their applicants. Most students will apply to between six and eight (8-12) colleges, depending on the circumstances. The final list of colleges to which you will apply will likely include schools from across the continuum and fall into these three categories:

**Reach:** One or two of your schools may fall in this category. These are schools where chances of admission are less likely, but where there is some chance of admission. There is a difference between a reach school and one where there is little chance of gaining admission.

**50:50/Possible:** You will need two or three schools where you are a truly qualified candidate, with roughly 50–50 chances of admission, in order to maximize your options at the end of the process.

**Reasonable/Likely:** You must have at least two schools where your credentials are very impressive and where you feel you can be happy and productive. It is usually easier for students to think of colleges in the reach category, but it is the other two categories where the most thoughtful and major effort needs to be applied if the application process is to work best. If you are involved, informed, and realistic, you will have little difficulty developing a well-balanced and focused list of colleges.

## **Points of Comparison:** *what to consider when comparing colleges*

Below are some characteristics of schools and the variables by which to compare those characteristics.

### **College Type & Philosophy**

**Type:** Church/state/private control. College/university.

**Curriculum:** Liberal Arts, pre-professional for business, visual & performing arts, etc.

**Philosophy:** Traditional/progressive. Career-oriented/comprehensive.

**Academic Calendar:** Semester/trimester/quarter. Block system/January term.

### **Enrollment and Location**

**Size:** Number of undergraduate students. Small (250-2,500) vs. medium university (2,500 – 6,000) vs. large (7,000 and up).

**Geographic Location:** Rural vs. urban vs. suburban. Distance from home. Near water or mountains.

**Retention:** % of freshmen who ultimately graduate. % of freshmen who continue to sophomore year.

**Make-up of Student Body:** Male/female ratio. % commuter/resident. Diversity.

### **Academic Environment**

**Academic Offerings:** Majors offered in areas of interest. Interdisciplinary/design your own major. Honors program.

**Academic Atmosphere/Culture:** Competitive or collegial. Workload. Course expectations.

**Academic Requirements:** Core curriculum, thesis, comprehensive exam.

**Special Programs:** Internships, junior year abroad, 3+2 option (typically engineering), 4+1 option that leads to a master's degree.

### **Financial Considerations**

**Net Costs:** Affordability. Compare net costs (financial aid awards/scholarships) rather than total costs.

### **Campus Culture/Student Life**

**Social Atmosphere/Type of Students:** Politically active student body vs. academically-minded vs. socially-minded.

**Housing:** Coed vs. single-sex, special interest living (e.g., chem.-free, foreign language, environmental, etc.) shared bathrooms, on-campus and off-campus requirements, fraternities and sororities.

**Campus Activities:** Athletic competition, focus on the arts, school spirit, Greek life. Presence of religious, ethnic and cultural groups.

## **Thinking About a College Major**

While some high school students have an idea of what they would like to major in during college, many do not. This is quite O.K.! Most colleges (especially liberal arts colleges) require you to take “distribution requirements” or “core courses” during the first two years, allowing you to explore different academic areas. For example, as a junior or senior in high school, you may have an interest in accounting, medicine, or anthropology. As a first year student in college, you may be exposed to law and decide that criminal justice is your primary goal, yet by your senior year you may have abandoned all dreams of law and you may have fulfilled a major in environmental studies. Changes like these are quite common and acceptable.

## **College Search Resources**

### **World Wide Web**

The internet is an invaluable resource to use in researching colleges, learning more about financial aid and scholarship programs, and requesting information from colleges. (See lists of

helpful Web addresses in the Appendix.) Your college placement counselor will provide college catalogs, viewbooks as well as resource and scholarship guides. All St. Thomas More students and parents also have access to Naviance, an internet-based college advising and planning tool.

### **Suggested Guide Books and Other Resources**

The College Board, *The College Handbook*

The College Board, *Book of Majors*

The College Board, *The College Cost and Financial Aid Handbook*

The College Board, *The Scholarship Handbook*

Barron's Guide, *Profiles of American Colleges*

Peterson's Guide, *Summer Opportunities for Kids and Teenagers*

U.S. Dept. of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*

The Princeton Review, *The Best Colleges*

### **Selected Publications**

Edward B. Fiske, *The Fiske Guide to Colleges*

Loren Pope, *Looking Beyond the Ivy League*

Loren Pope, *Colleges that Change Lives*

Bill Mayher, *The College Admissions Mystique*

Richard Montauk and Krista Klein, *How to Get Into the Top Colleges*

### **The Campus Visit**

A good way of evaluating a prospective college is through a campus visit. In most cases college visits are not required for admission. However, there are countless sad stories of students attending colleges that they never visited or never visited thoroughly and who end up having to transfer. This section will include suggestions on how to most profitably visit a college.

First of all, plan your visit carefully. Call or write in advance to make arrangements.

If an interview is required or if you would like one with an admissions counselor, make arrangements for this at the same time. DO NOT just "drop in" because you happen to be in the area! There may be no one to help you. Spring of your junior year or the summer following are probably the best times for a visit. If you know someone attending the school you wish to visit maybe you can arrange to stay overnight. Some campuses will also arrange this for you. These are helpful ways to get to know a school in addition to the usual guided tours. It is a good idea to visit with (or write to) a faculty member in a subject area of interest to you. This will help you evaluate the curricular offerings from a knowledgeable source.

\*Please note that college visits are not considered "excused" absences. College visits should be planned over school vacations, long weekends and the summer of the junior year.

Most colleges will provide guided tours to show you the sights and to answer general questions. Information sessions (usually conducted by admissions professionals) are also common and they allow you to ask the more in depth questions that the student tour guide may not be able to answer. Be prepared with your questions. Everyone has his or her own interests and ideas about colleges, so there are probably as many different questions as people. Think about your questions and concerns before you visit. Many other questions will probably come to you during the visit, but it helps to think ahead. Some questions will fall under the following general headings:

1. Size, location and surroundings
2. Academic and cultural environment
3. Student life and student body
4. Athletics and extracurricular activities
5. Student services
6. Religious environment
7. Special issues—resources for women, students of color, foreign students, students with physical disabilities or learning differences, etc.
8. Weekend activities and campus life outside of the classroom
9. Your personal concerns

### **College Representative Conferences at S.T.M.**

Many college representatives visit us here at our school in order to speak directly to our seniors about the benefits and opportunities of their particular college or university as well as their own experiences within that campus community.

### **The Interview**

An interview is another useful opportunity for you to learn more about a school, as well as a chance for you to tell the admission counselor a little about yourself that may not be “on the record.” Some colleges (especially small or more selective ones) require interviews; some do not. Check the catalogs of those colleges in which you are interested to be certain. In many cases interviews are non-evaluative. They are a means of sharing information and clarifying admission requirements. Some colleges do use the interview as an evaluative tool. Check with an admission counselor to find out how large a role the interview plays in admission decisions.

Call the admission office directly to arrange a specific time for an appointment. Be prompt, be neat, be prepared and most of all, be yourself. Appointments for interviews are available during the spring of your junior year, in the summer following, and in the early fall of your senior year. Interview appointments may be more difficult to get in the fall because most admissions staff people are visiting high schools so call well in advance if you plan to interview in the fall. In some cases you may be interviewed by an alumnus of the college to which you have applied. Don't be surprised if you feel more than a little nervous. College admission people expect this and are trained to help you become more at ease, but remember it is important that the college be able to sell itself to you, too.

You can help yourself by being prepared. Know your scholastic standing and College Board (SAT) scores. Think about the subjects you are taking. Why did you take them? What materials have you covered? How are you doing in those courses? What have you gotten out of them? What books have you read recently? Also, think about your extracurricular activities. Are you in any clubs? Do you play any sports? Did you work during your summer vacation? You can also prepare by thinking about the personal you. Be frank with yourself about your weak as well as your strong points. Don't be afraid to share your plans and goals. Considering these areas in advance will help you be ready for a variety of questions.

Also remember that much of this will be “give and take,” with an opportunity to ask questions, as well as to give answers. Again, be prepared! Study the catalog or visit the college's website and ask intelligent questions.

### **Some questions you may want to ask are:**

1. How accessible are the professors?
2. What is unique about the college?
3. What are the classes like (lectures, discussion; large, small)?

4. Who does the teaching (professors or teaching assistants)?
5. Give me an example of what some of your recent grads are doing.
6. Have there been any major changes on campus in recent years?
7. What on-campus activities are available?
8. Do most students stay on campus during the weekends?
9. Are students guaranteed on-campus housing all four years?
10. Are first year students required to live on campus?

**Some questions you may be asked in an interview are:**

1. Why are you interested in this college?
2. What are your academic and career goals or professional plans and what factors went into that decision?
3. Do you have a tentative major in mind and why are you choosing that field?
4. What is the most important aspect of college life for you?
5. What are your greatest academic strengths you want the college to know about?
6. Do you perceive yourself as having any academic weaknesses that you would like to talk about?
7. Apart from academics, what are some of the things you do outside of school?
8. What would you like to know about this college and what are your priorities in choosing a college?
9. If you had the opportunity to go through high school again, what would you choose to do differently?
10. What do you feel you have to offer this college?

\*\*Following your interview remember to ask the interviewer for his or her business card or contact information. Write a “thank you” letter to your interviewer within five days after your interview.

## IV. Applying to College

### Components of the Application

The college application provides a profile of the student that includes objective and subjective criteria. As applications submitted to colleges reflect these elements students should present themselves openly and thoroughly. Each aspect of the application is important and therefore no one part should be taken lightly. Attention to detail and adherence to a timeline of tasks will ensure that applications are completed properly and in a timely fashion.

#### **Objective Criteria:**

**The Transcript** is the most important part of a student's profile, as it provides a picture of one's course selection, strength of program, and grades earned. In evaluating a student's four-year academic program colleges will make comparisons against other students in the applicant pool. A student's particular academic program will reflect his/her abilities, talents, interests, and initiative.

**National Standardized Testing** is another defining component of the application. While testing remains an important part of the evaluation process, it, as noted above, should be kept in perspective. On the whole, the more selective the college, the more important these tests are in the selection process. Some colleges have done away with these tests, such as Bates, Bowdoin, and Mount Holyoke, who place greater emphasis on the other elements of the application in rendering decisions.

**Co-Curricular Activities** show another dimension of the student. Colleges are looking for students who will actively contribute outside of the classroom and add to the school's community. Students can get involved in an array of activities in a variety of different ways. Students, however, should pursue activities in which they not only objectively show interests and achievements, but to which they make a meaningful contribution.

#### **International Students:**

- 20 Official Copies of your parents' bank statements
- Statement of Financial Standing
- Copies of I-20's, passports, visas
- TOEFL Scores
- SAT Subject Tests: These are important as a way for international students to distinguish themselves from their competition.
- Official transcripts from previous schools

#### **Subjective Criteria:**

**Essays** afford the applicant the opportunity to tell his/her story. Colleges will look to the essay as a way to assess and evaluate an applicant's personality, analytical and critical thinking skills, and communication skills. Essay questions come in a variety of forms and require thoughtful and insightful response. Essays should be typed answering the question asked of you in a proper and concise manner.

**The Resume** is a document based on objective information which should be clear, concise, attractive and personalized; it should show your Upper School activities and achievements as well as particular skills, abilities and interest.

**The Interview** is being required less and less by colleges and universities. However, if an interview is required or strongly encouraged this is a great way to distinguish yourself as an applicant. (see “The Interview” in “Choosing a College”)

**Teacher Recommendations** allow the college to learn about the applicant from his teachers—work habits, performance, successes, challenges, demeanor, etc. It is most common to have two academic teachers, representing different disciplines, write for the applicant. The College Counseling Office strongly suggests, however, that one recommendation come from English teacher from either the junior or senior year. All recommendations remain confidential to ensure integrity. We strongly recommend two recommendations (one math and one English). It is also recommended to ask a school administrator and / or someone else at the school who can attest to the character of the student, outside the classroom. The more, the better!

**College Counselor Recommendation** is written by your counselor and gives an overview of the student emphasizing the positive with supportive data. This comprehensive letter includes elaboration about academics; discussion of co-curricular activities; and a sense of the character and values of the applicant. All recommendations remain confidential to ensure integrity.

### **Supplementary Criteria:**

**The School Profile** provides basic background information about St. Thomas More School and gives colleges a clear picture of the environment, including such things as school history, statistics, academic requirements, grade explanations, and college matriculations.

**The Secondary School Report (SSR)** provides colleges with additional information. Some of this information is institutional and some is specific to the student. Questions specific to the student include making comparisons to classmates as well as students from past classes. These comparisons are an extremely important supplement to a student’s application, and teacher evaluations and comments will therefore also be taken into account when make such assessments.

**Special Talents and Abilities** may be represented in various forms—portfolio, video, CD, cassettes, etc. While some colleges may encourage, and specific programs may require, the submission of visual and aural aids (e.g., a student applying to an architecture program will mostly be required to submit a portfolio of art work; a musician may be asked to provide a recording of a recital), some are impartial, and some discourage it. If uncertain discuss this with your counselor along with talking with the admission people at the school(s) to which you wish to send additional materials.

**Wildcard:** Most colleges seek balance within their student populations (i.e., they seek a diverse group of students). Most colleges are competing for historically underrepresented minority groups. Other “wildcard” factors are socio-economic background, religion, and legacy. The deeper the legacy, the more it may affect the admission decision.

# Writing the College Essay

## Essay's Importance for Colleges

- To judge depth of students' understanding of intellectual or social issues and quality and freshness of mind, "lighting up" issues referred to skeletally elsewhere in application.
- To show writing style, technical correctness, and fluency (sentence subordination, paragraph construction/unity, vocabulary, metaphorical versus concrete language, etc.).

## Subject

- Anything of real interest to the student. It should light up another part of the application.
- **Autobiographical:** Be careful of the obvious "How my trip to France taught me independence." But if reflective (travel, significant personal struggle, or family experience) can be a very impressive subject.
- **Social/Political:** Ought to be tied to previous student interests. An essay on devotion to environmentalism as an abstract idea carries little weight.
- **Intellectual interests:** Response to works of a particular author, research in certain areas, places where the student has outgrown and reached beyond his/her school's curriculum.

## Length

More than two-thirds of a page, and usually less than four pages to ensure being read carefully.

## Format

- Neat, readable and typed.
- Physically prepared by student him/herself (not dad's/mom's secretary, even as typed—it raises doubts about editorial overlays).

## For weak writers/poor scorers

- Take real care; start early (summer is a great time to begin drafts of essays); rewrite frequently.
- Send one to three extra writing samples: in- and out-of-class work, with teachers' comments.

## How weighted by college

Often as a confirmation of decision if other credentials are clear. The essay can be a powerful "tipper" in close cases, especially with very strong or very poor essays. Warning: faculty admissions readers pay careful attention to essays. As the eventual consumers, they are vociferous complainers about admitting students with dull or error-riddled essays.

## Testing for College Admissions

Standardized tests are only one of the many factors which colleges use in making decisions. Such testing provides a reasonably accurate comparison of student performance on a nationwide basis. Therefore, it is important to understand the testing requirements but, just as importantly, to keep testing in perspective. Academic achievements and extracurricular activities are more important than test scores, both in terms of obtaining a top-notch education and in terms of enhancing chances for admission to selective institutions.

## Students Diagnosed with a Learning Disability

Non-standardized testing is helpful to those who have a diagnosed and properly documented learning disability or physical handicap. The College Board offers extended time for those who qualify. Students who believe they qualify for such testing should meet with Mr. Quinn to obtain specific information about registration and testing plans.

## **General Recommendations**

**SAT Reasoning Test:** Students should take the SAT (see definition in Glossary) either once or twice in the spring of their junior year. Most students will repeat the SAT once during the fall of the senior year. The total number of times a student takes the test will depend on his/her level of satisfaction with the scores. Regardless of how many times a student takes the SAT, the colleges will receive all of the scores: the student will not be allowed to choose which scores to send. Most colleges, however, will focus on a student's best verbal score, best math score and best writing score, even if they are achieved on different testing days.

**SAT Subject Tests:** In addition to the SAT, some students will need two SAT Subject Tests (see definition in glossary) by the time they apply to college. Your decision whether or not to take Subject Tests depends upon the colleges to which you are applying, as they are required or recommended by only a select number of institutions (see "Colleges that Recommend or Require SAT Subject Tests," in the Appendices). For schools that require the SAT Subject Tests the most commonly chosen tests are Math (level I or II), foreign language and a science (Biology, chemistry, or physics). It is wise to check the requirements of schools of interest in the junior year to ensure that the required tests are taken.

## **Preparing for the SAT and SAT Subject Tests**

### **Ways to prepare for the SAT Reasoning Test**

- Be conscientious in your English and math courses, especially on vocabulary assignments; look up words you don't know in reading assignments. Try to use the words to help retain their meaning.
- Take PSAT's.
- Use your PSAT Report of Student Answers to identify your strengths and weaknesses.
- Writing—Take all English essays seriously and analyze your teachers' corrections and comments.
- Read the SAT Preparation booklet which you can get from the College Counseling Office; the booklet also contains a full practice test and answer key.
- Participate in a Kaplan program.

### **Ways to Prepare for the SAT Subject Tests**

- Take AP/Honors level courses, if possible.
- Study the SAT Subject Tests Preparation booklet which you can get from the College Counseling Office.

## **PSAT/NMSQT St. Test Dates**

**Wednesday, October 13**

**Saturday, October 16**

## **SAT Test Dates & Registration Deadlines 2010-2011**

To register go to [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) (you will need a credit card)

<b>2010-2011 SAT Test Dates</b>	<b>Test</b>	<b>Registration Deadline</b>	<b>Late Registration Deadline (Late Fee Required)</b>
<b>October 9, 2010</b>	SAT & Subject Tests	September 10, 2010	September 24, 2010
<b>November 6, 2010</b>	SAT & Subject Tests*	October 8, 2010	October 22, 2010
<b>December 4, 2010</b>	SAT & Subject Tests	November 5, 2010	November 19, 2010
<b>January 22, 2011</b>	SAT & Subject Tests	December 23, 2010	January 7, 2011
<b>March 12, 2011</b>	SAT only	February 11, 2011	February 25, 2011
<b>May 7, 2011</b>	SAT & Subject Tests	April 8, 2011	April 22, 2011
<b>June 4, 2011</b>	SAT & Subject Tests	May 6, 2011	May 20, 2011

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## **TOEFL Test Dates & Registration Deadlines 2010-2011**

To register go to [www.ets.org/toefl](http://www.ets.org/toefl) (you will need a credit card)

		\$170 Sat., Sep 11, 2010
Danielson	Internet-based Test	\$170 Sat., Sep 25, 2010
		\$170 Sat., Oct 09, 2010
		\$170 Fri., Sep 10, 2010
		\$170 Sat., Sep 11, 2010
		\$170 Fri., Sep 24, 2010
Glastonbury	Internet-based Test	\$170 Sat., Sep 25, 2010
		\$170 Sat., Oct 09, 2010
		\$170 Fri., Oct 22, 2010
		\$170 Fri., Oct 29, 2010
		\$170 Sat., Oct 30, 2010

## **AP Course and Exam Information at CollegeBoard.com**

### **AP Macroeconomics**

[http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/sub\\_maceco.html?macro](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/sub_maceco.html?macro)

THE EXAM

[http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/economics\\_macro/exam.html?macro](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/economics_macro/exam.html?macro)

### **AP Microeconomics**

[http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/sub\\_miceco.html?micro](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/sub_miceco.html?micro)

THE EXAM

[http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/economics\\_micro/exam.html?micro](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/economics_micro/exam.html?micro)

## Appendix I

### NAVIANCE COLLEGE PLACEMENT WEBSITE

FIRST TIME REGISTERING:

**GO TO:**

<https://connection.naviance.com/stms>

Click: [i need to register >](#)

Enter *registration code*: \_\_\_\_\_  
[Your counselor will provide this to you.]

Click: **Register**

**Reset Password**

[Give your new password to your counselor for safe keeping.]

**Welcome to Family Connection**

TO BEGIN:

Click: **colleges** tab

Under: **college research**

Click: > **college search**

### Appendix III

## STUDENT RESUME FOR COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

Many college applications ask for information regarding out-of-school activities, awards, work and volunteer experience, and other “special” experiences you may have had. Rarely does the college application provide enough space to adequately (or neatly) respond to this category data. A short resume’ is a good way of addressing this issue while giving a college application an air of maturity and polish. Here are some suggestions you may consider. Title your resume’ - activity summary so that admissions officers know what they are looking at. Some examples are: Resume’, Activities Resume’, Student Summary, and Background Highlights. Place this title at the top of the page. Always include your name, address, phone number.

Choose a format that you like best. In all cases, try very hard to keep the document to one page. Highlight awards and leadership activities. Do not list personal recognition programs such as “Who’s Who.” Be honest and don’t try to “pad” your resume. Fill in your most important activities if they ask for your activities on their form, and then write “see attached” and include your resume. Do not leave it blank. As with anything you place in the college application, make sure it is neat, well-organized, spelled correctly and properly labeled.

*Sample resume below:*



## **Robert Jones**

6 Pine Street, Arlington, VA 12333

home: 555.555.5555

cell: 566.486.2222

email: [rdjones@gmail.com](mailto:rdjones@gmail.com)

### **EDUCATION**

#### **St. Thomas More School**

Oakdale, CT

2008-2011

### **INTERESTS ~ ACTIVITIES ~ EXPERIENCE**

#### **Academic Achievement:**

- Media Student of the Year 2008
- Science Olympiad 2008
- Outstanding Achievement: Geometry
- Academic Honor Roll: 2009 - 2010

#### **Extracurricular:**

- 2006 Representative to New Jersey Boys State - 11th
- National Honor Society -11th, 12th Tutor
- Political Science Club – 11th, 12th
- St. Andrew's Youth Group – 9th, 10th, 11<sup>th</sup>
- Piano- 4 years

#### **Volunteer:**

- Big Brother Program
- Dooley House – aided in demolition of abandon housing to re-build for needy -12th
- South Jersey Food Pantry – packed food for distribution – 10th, 11th, 12th
- St. Andrew's CCD Program – teacher's assistant – 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

#### **Athletics:**

- Football – 10th, 11th 12<sup>th</sup>
- Sophomore Year – Junior Varsity Soccer,
- Junior Year – Varsity Soccer, Olympic Conference Champions
- Senior Year – Olympic Conference Sportsmanship Award
- Baseball – 9th (Team Captain), 10th, 12th
- Judo – 9<sup>th</sup>

### **EMPLOYMENT**

- Cashier for Genuardi's Family Markets – January 2007 – present

<b>HELPFUL INTERNET WEBSITES</b>
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COLLEGE SEARCH AND INFORMATION:

<http://www.collegeboard.com>

<http://www.princetonreview.com/colleges-majors.aspx>

<http://www.petersons.com/college-search.aspx>

<http://www.mycollegeoptions.org/>

<http://www.schoolguides.com/Default.asp>

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

<http://www.getintocollege.com/app/content/families/resources/>

APPLICATION:

<https://www.commonapp.org/CommonApp/Default.aspx>

TOEFL INFORMATION:

<http://www.ets.org/toefl>

FINANCIAL AID:

<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>

<http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/index.jsp>

<http://www.finaid.org/calculators/ibr.phtml>

## **Recent S.T.M. College Placement Acceptances Matriculation Lists**

Albright College	Eastern Connecticut State U.	Merrimack College
Alfred University	Eckerd College	Miami University
American Intl. College	Elmira College	Middletown
American University	Elon University	Michigan State University
Andrews University	Emerson College	Missouri State University
Anna Maria College	Emory U. at Oxford	Mitchell College
Arizona State University	Emory University	Mount Ida College
Assumption College	Fairfield University	Mount St. Mary's
Atlantic Union College	Five Towns College	Mount Union,
Babson College	Fordham University	New England College
Barry University	Franklin Pierce College	New Mexico State U.
Baylor University	Freemont Tech (CA)	N.Y. Inst. of Technology
Becker College	George Mason University	New York University
Bellarmino University	George Washington U.	Nichols College
Bentley College	Hancock College (JUCCO)	Norfolk State
Boston College	Hartwick College	Northeastern University
Boston University	Hofstra University	Ohio Northern University
Brandeis University	Husson College	Ohio State University
Bryant University	Indiana University	Ohio University
Buffalo State U.	Indiana U. of Pennsylvania	Oklahoma State University
Butler Community College	Iona College	Old Miss
Butler University	Iowa State University	Oregon State
Canisius College.	James Madison University	Pace University
Castleton State University	Johnson and Wales U.	Penn State: Erie Campus
Catholic University	Kansas University	Penn State University
Central Connecticut State U.	Kent State University	Philadelphia University
Centre College	Kenyon College	Plymouth State College
Champlain College	Kutztown University	Portland State University
Christian Brothers Univ.	Lasalle College	Post University
Clark University	Lehigh University	Post-graduate program:
Coastal Carolina University	Leslie College	[MCI or Bridgton Academy]
College of Charleston	Lewis and Clark College	Providence College
College of New Jersey	Liberty College	Purdue University
College of St. Rose	Lincoln Memorial	Purdue University
Colorado State University	University	Quinnipiac College
Coppin State University	Lincoln University	Richard Stockton U.
CUNY Queens, Hunter	Long Beach State U.	Robert Morris College
Barauch	Long Island University	Rochester Inst. of Tech.
Curry College	Loyola Univ. of Chicago	Roger Williams University
Daemen College	Lynn University	Rowan College
Dominican College (CA)	Manhattanville College	Rutgers University
Dominican College (NY)	Marion Court College	Ryder University
Drexel University	Mass. Maritime Academy	Sacred Heart University
Duquesne University	Memphis University	Saint Anselm College

Salem State College  
Salve Regina University  
Savannah Col. of Art & Design  
Southern Connecticut State U.  
Seton Hall University  
Southern New Hampshire U.  
Southern Vermont Univ.  
St. Francis College  
St. John's University  
St. Josephs-Maine  
St. Leo's University  
St. Louis University  
St. Peter's College  
St. Thomas Aquinas  
Stetson University  
Stonehill College  
Suffolk University  
SUNY Binghamton  
SUNY Buffalo and Albany  
SUNY Oneonta  
SUNY Farmingdale  
SUNY Plattsburgh  
SUNY Stonybrook  
Syracuse University  
Temple University  
Towson State University  
UCONN Avery Point  
UMASS Dartmouth  
UMD College Park

UNC at Pembroke  
U. of Minnesota Twin Cities  
Univ. Washington Seattle  
University of Arizona  
University of Arkansas  
University of Bridgeport  
University of Colorado  
University of Connecticut  
University of Delaware  
U. of District of Columbia  
U. of Glion in Switzerland  
University of Hartford  
Univ. of Illinois: Chicago  
U. of Illinois:  
Urbana Champagne  
University of Indiana  
University of Louisville  
University of Maine  
Univ. of Maine: Orono  
Univ. of Maine: Farmingdale  
University of Maryland,  
U. of Maryland: Baltimore  
University of Mass Amherst  
University of Mass Boston  
University of New England  
Univ. of New Hampshire  
University of New Haven  
University of Oregon  
University of Pittsburgh

University of Portland  
University of Puerto Rico  
University of Rhode Island  
University of San Francisco  
University of Scranton  
University of Tampa  
University of Texas  
University of Texas Austin  
University of the Pacific  
University of Utah  
Univ. of Virginia: Wise  
University of Washington  
University of Wisconsin  
U. of Wisconsin: Madison  
University Nevada: LV  
Villa Maria College  
Villanova  
Wagner College  
Washington State University  
Washington University  
Wentworth Inst. of Tech.  
West Virginia University  
Western New England Col.  
Westfield State  
Wheelock College  
Worcester Polytechnic Inst.  
Wright State U.