



Jesuit High School Counseling Newsletter – November 2018

Greetings,

We can hardly believe the fall semester is more than halfway done. Each grade level counselor has held multiple counseling classes thus far this semester, and the first few milestones of the college application process have also come and gone. By this point in the semester, we have met with most students one-on-one at least once—if this is not the case, and your son has not yet had a meeting, please reach out to your son’s counselor and we will schedule one.

We have an exciting batch of new scholarships to share with you all in this month’s newsletter, several of which have deadlines within the next month or so. For this edition we also share some in-house articles regarding the college process. The first two are a pair of articles related to college and the Thanksgiving holiday, and though the articles are geared toward parents of seniors, the ideas we share within the articles are relevant to families of all grade levels.

The third article discusses how to approach a college campus visit, which we feel strongly is a crucial aspect of the college discernment process. Even if families cannot feasibly visit out-of-state schools, there are an array of diverse options within a couple hours’ drive of Tampa that will allow students and families to explore large state schools, small private schools, small tech schools, small religious schools, and mid-size private schools. Nearby schools, of course, include not only University of Tampa and USF, but also Eckerd College in St. Pete, USF St. Pete, Saint Leo University, Florida Polytechnic University and Florida Southern College (both Lakeland), Ave Maria University and Florida Gulf Coast University (both near Naples/Ft. Myers), Stetson University in Deland, and Rollins College and University of Central Florida in the Orlando area. This group of schools offers a nice variety in terms of student population, campus culture, selectivity, and geographic setting, and will hopefully allow your son to calibrate his sense of what each *type* of school looks and seems like in person. This understanding can then be applied to his perception of other schools of the same type, regardless of geographic proximity or your family’s ability to visit.

We feel it is extremely helpful when students have stepped foot on a college campus by the fall of their senior year, as it helps students calibrate what they like and don’t like. Plus, the college process tends to become more real for them once they’ve visited even one campus. Wherever your family’s college visits take you, we hope the guide is useful.

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As always, please let us know how we can better serve you and your sons as this academic year continues.

Warm regards,

Jesuit Counseling Department

Upcoming Events

The University of Alabama Reception for Tampa Area Prospective Students and Parents

Tuesday, November 13, 2018 at 7 PM

Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay

2900 Bayport Drive, Tampa, FL, 33607

Please contact Mrs. Benet Bondi using [this link](#) to RSVP for the reception.

Scholarship Opportunities

The scholarships listed below do not encompass all available scholarships —they are merely a comprehensive list of every scholarship of which we have been made aware.

Please note: for any scholarship where counselors need to complete a recommendation form or letter, we require at least three weeks' notification to allow us ample time to complete your recommendation.

Students can find additional scholarship opportunities on the websites listed at the end of this section.

Please let us know with any questions.

Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Scholarship

Student must have a cumulative unweighted GPA of 3.5 or higher, and have a minimum of a 1200 SAT or 26 ACT.

Student's family must also demonstrate unmet financial need (family income cannot exceed \$95,000). Last year's

scholarship recipients had a median family income of approximately \$26,000. Students can apply for this award through the Common App by adding the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation as one of their schools. More information is available at

<https://www.jkcf.org/our-scholarships/college-scholarship-program/how-to-apply/>. **Deadline is November 20, 2018.**

National Honor Society Scholarship

This year, 600 of the most outstanding NHS seniors will be selected to receive scholarship awards, with one national winner receiving a \$25,000 scholarship. 24 national finalists will receive a scholarship worth \$5,625, and 575 national semifinalists will receive a scholarship worth \$3,200. More information is available at www.nhs.us/scholarship.

Deadline is **December 7, 2018**.

Burger King Scholarship Program

High school seniors, Burger King employees and their dependent children, spouses, or domestic partners are eligible to apply to receive up to \$50,000 in scholarship awards for the 2019-2020 school year. High school seniors must have a cumulative GPA of 2.5 to be eligible and must be active in their community through volunteering, sports, clubs, and/or religious organizations. More information is available at www.burgerkingscholars.com. Deadline is **December 15, 2018**.

GE-Reagan Foundation 2019 Scholarship

Students can win up to \$10,000 per year in renewable scholarships, up to \$40,000 total per recipient. Must be U.S. citizen and high school senior with cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher. More information available at [this link](#).

Deadline is **January 4, 2019**.

Spectrum Bay News 9 Project Weather Scholarship

Students must have a minimum GPA of 3.5 on a 4-point scale. Scholarship is a one-time award given to one student attending high school in each of a number of Florida counties (awarded to one student from Hillsborough County).

Award is \$1,000, and the check will be presented by a Spectrum Bay News 9 meteorologist at the Spectrum Bay News 9 studios. Application form is online, plus a written essay of 500 words or less explaining why you believe you should receive the prize, a letter of recommendation from one of your high school teachers, and a copy of your transcript. Send

applications to: Project Weather Scholarship Contest, c/o Spectrum Bay News 9, 700 Carillon Parkway, Ste. 9, St. Petersburg, FL, 33716. Winners are selected based upon academic, science, and community accomplishments. More information available at <http://www.baynews9.com>. All entries must be postmarked by **January 7, 2019**.

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library Foundation 2019 Profile in Courage Essay Contest

Students must write an essay of 700-1,000 words describing and analyzing an act of political courage by a U.S. official who served during or after 1917, the year of JFK's birth. Students can win up to \$10,000 in scholarship funds. First-place winner receives an all-expense-paid trip to Boston to receive the award. The top 25 essays will be recognized with scholarship awards. More information available at www.jfklibrary.org/essaycontest. Deadline is **January 18, 2019**.

James (Coach) Day Scholarship

Available to any active member of a high school track and field team that is participating in the Bob Hayes Invitational Track and Field Meet. Scholarship is worth \$1,000. Guidelines and scholarship information can be found at www.bhitm.org. Scholarship applications and all information must be postmarked and/or received by **February 1, 2019**.

Bill of Rights Institute 2018-2019 We the Students Essay Contest

Students must write an essay responding to the prompt: "What are essential qualities of a citizen in your community in 21st Century America?" Student must be a U.S. citizen but can be in any grade of high school. More information available at [this link](#). Deadline is **February 14, 2019**.

Right Fit Foundation Scholarship

Each year the Right Fit Foundation provides local scholarships to college-bound students in the Tampa Bay area. Student must be a U.S. citizen and a resident of Hillsborough, Pasco, or Pinellas counties. Scholarships are worth up to \$5,000. More information is available at www.RightFitFoundation.org. Deadline is **April 30, 2019**.

SunTrust Off to College Scholarship Sweepstakes

Throughout the year, once every two weeks, two \$500 scholarship winners will be chosen at random. Students can enter online once during EACH entry period—not just once! Open to ALL seniors—no minimum GPA and no requirements to demonstrate family's financial need.

Enter **now and throughout the year** at www.suntrust.com/offtocollege. Two winners will be randomly chosen once every two weeks beginning at the end of October 2018, until May 2019.

Raise.me Micro-Scholarships

Varied amounts for students grades 9-12. This is a way to discover colleges and earn scholarships for your academic and extracurricular achievements throughout high school. Even freshmen can start.

Deadline is **ongoing**. <https://www.raise.me/>

Scholarship Websites – recommended sites to search for scholarships.

- Fastweb.com
- CollegeXpress.com
- Collegedata.com
- Bigfuture.collegeboard.org
- AIE.org
- Chegg.com/scholarships
- Myscholly.com
- Cappex.com/scholarships

Standardized Test Registration Info

Please note that tests offered at Jesuit High School are marked with three asterisks (***)

SAT DATES AND DEADLINES

Students may register online at www.collegeboard.org.

| <u>Test Date</u> | <u>Registration Deadline</u> | <u>Late Deadline (with late fee)</u> |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| December 1, 2018 | (November 1, 2018) | November 19, 2018 |
| March 9, 2019*** | February 8, 2019 | February 26, 2019 |
| May 4, 2019 | April 4, 2019 | April 22, 2019 |
| June 1, 2019 | May 1, 2019 | May 19, 2019 |

ACT DATES AND DEADLINES

Students may register online at www.actstudent.org.

| <u>Test Date</u> | <u>Registration Deadline</u> | <u>Late Deadline (with late fee)</u> |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| December 8, 2018 | November 2, 2018 | November 16, 2018 |
| February 9, 2019*** | January 11, 2019 | January 18, 2019 |
| April 13, 2019*** | March 8, 2019 | March 23, 2019 |
| June 8, 2019 | May 3, 2019 | May 17, 2019 |
| July 13, 2019 | June 14, 2019 | June 21, 2019 |

Standardized Test Preparation Services

Although we as a counseling department have no specific partnership with any one individual or organization, over time we have received names of both individual tutors and independent test preparation companies who have worked previously with Jesuit students.

No one test prep service will be the perfect solution for all of our students—just as each student is unique, so is each student’s best approach to test preparation. Given this diversity of learning styles, we share here a list of some of the names and companies we have heard from Jesuit students and parents. Again, please note—these are not recommendations, but simply names we have heard associated with positive results.

Individual Tutors:

José Noboa
(813) 326-3084

Sandy Christopher
(813) 766-3563

Dan Roeder – Select Choice
(727) 230-9031
Office@SelectC.com

Kingsley Reeves
Cell: (813) 943-3146

reeves@usf.edu

Mary Wharton Schroeder
(813) 253-3186
www.tampasatprep.com

Evan Jones
(ACT Math & Science, SAT Math)
(813) 785-3390
Evanjones1@gmail.com

Jan Gentry
(ACT English, SAT English)
(727) 510-5646

Test Preparation Centers:

Myers
1534 W Village Dr, Tampa
(813) 966-9377

Disciplined Minds
715 W Platt St., Tampa
(813) 254-5437
disciplinedminds@gmail.com

Knowledge Points
Riverview · (813) 671-1919

Valrico · (813) 689-7212
Land O Lakes · (813) 909-0781

Advanced Learning Centers
1911 Tyrone Blvd N, St.
Petersburg, FL 33710 · (727) 381-9722

Huntington Learning Centers
(813) 908-1000

Online/Skype Services:

ACT Academy- Free

Drew Valins
[Satellite Test Prep](#)

[Khan Academy](#)—free!

Magoosh—(relatively) cheap!
[Magoosh SAT prep](#)

[Magoosh ACT prep](#)

Revolution Prep
(813) 417-6560 or (813) 280-0447

[Kaplan Test Prep](#)

Compass Education Group (one-on-one remote tutoring)
<https://www.compassprep.com/>

Articles of Interest

Article 1: Talking to a high school senior at Thanksgiving

Imagine this scenario, parents and guardians: you are in the cereal aisle at Publix after work, and you run into your neighbor who is also restocking their supply of Honey Nut Cheerios. You both say hello, and you ask them how things are going. They say things are going great, and then they ask you how your job is.

This seems a little personal, but you can tell they're simply expressing interest in you, so you decide this is a fine topic to glaze over briefly. So, you tell them your job is going great, thanks very much for asking.

Then, immediately after you respond, they look at you and ask you with genuine interest: no really, how are things going at your job? How did your last performance review go? How's your salary? Benefits? Are you lined up for a promotion? Making any career moves soon? Where do you want to end up, ultimately?

Of course, this conversation would never happen. We would never ask these things in a casual social setting—they're much too personal, and it would feel abrupt for them to be brought up. These are also hard questions to answer at all in the first place, let alone answer in the cereal aisle when you're thinking of other things.

For high school seniors, the college search process—and the frequent instances of having “the college conversation” with genuinely caring adults in their lives—can feel very similarly overwhelming to the fictitious line of questioning above. Without anything other than positive intent on the part of the adult, when students are asked, “So, where are you applying for next year?”, they are reminded of the bigger, potentially more daunting questions facing them at this moment: have they done as much as they could with the gifts they have? How do they stack up against their peers? Are they going to make people (most importantly you, their parents) proud with their college acceptances? Will they be successful? Did they miss anything in the application process? Are they good enough? What do they want to be when they grow up?

The reason we as adults ask this question of high school seniors—“the college question”—makes total sense. We genuinely care—and so do your cousins, your son's grandparents, his aunts and uncles, your aunts and uncles, and family friends who stop by for coffee on Sundays. It's wonderful to be loved—and your son should be aware of this—at the same time, though, we have a small suggestion.

Maybe don't talk about college at Thanksgiving.

In the same way that celebrities receive frequent requests for selfies “just this one time” when they're out in public, seniors frequently find themselves the center of attention, facing interested and caring adults in their lives who each ask them variations on the same question, with the same big-picture implications mentioned above. This paparazzi-like pressure is nice, of course, but over time it can take its toll, leaving a student feeling that their public image, at least with family and family friends, is reduced to how well and impressively they answer “the college question”.

Conversations with caring adults should be a welcome chance to genuinely reflect and connect with others—they should not feel like a storm to be weathered. This is partially the responsibility of the students to control their mindset, too—students need to learn that sometimes, stress comes in the form of unwanted conversations, and that these conversations can help to push them outside their comfort zones in a healthy way that leads to personal growth. It should be among the least of their worries that people care about their lives.

At the same time, though, the pressure not to fail, and the pressure not to let people (you, their parents) down is real. For students, it can often feel like colleges expect them to be more adult than they actually are during the application process. They are expected to close out their senior fall with a clear and certain career path all planned out, a resume that prepares them for it, and the polished maturity of a college graduate, all while they're still seventeen or eighteen years old. Two years ago in the Washington Post, a [high school senior wrote](#) about “the haunting sense that every other applicant had done something amazing.” This sentiment is far from uncommon.

What can we do about this pressure? It's pretty clear that no one wants to have a student mentally reaching to hit the 'play' button on a pre-recorded “where I'm applying to college” spiel when adults express a genuine interest in their future path. It may be helpful to take a step back for a moment and consider the big picture.

In both his [TEDx talk](#) and his new book on the pressures of high school, Dr. David Gleason, a clinical psychologist from Massachusetts, asks: is it worth it for us to expect adolescents to think and act like adults before they have actually developed those capacities? Dr. Gleason also prompts us to ask ourselves: to what degree do we create the culture of pressure that our students feel? What can we do to limit this pressure?

In an [op-ed in the Detroit Free Press](#) last year, Patrick O'Connor, Associate Dean of College Counseling at the Cranbrook Schools in Michigan, discusses the state of college admissions, and the shift that has taken place.

“Where applying to college used to be an exciting opportunity to find the schools that will best help a student learn more about themselves and their relationship to the world, choosing a college is now more about affirmation of who the student already is, not who the college can help them become.”

None of this happened when parents, aunts, and uncles applied to college, but these enlarged, unrealistic expectations are often resting on the shoulders of the high school senior seated across the Thanksgiving table.”

Your senior is in the midst of a period of time where, despite our best advice and reassurances, they feel as though their future relies on a committee's judgment of how good they are as a person. Their sense of self-worth, in their eyes, is partially (and temporarily) at the mercy of several small groups of people in faraway offices, behind closed doors. Students are concerned, at some level, that *who they are*—not simply what they've done—will not be enough.

In order to clarify things on both sides, we need to clear the mud out of the channel and find common ground.

To clarify the adult perspective here, what are adults seeking when we ask our favorite high school senior about their college plans? Adults who care want to **express an interest in the student as a person**, and to **know them well**. Relatives over holiday breaks especially hope **to spend quality time with them**. They want to **show them that they are loved** and confirm that they do, indeed, have a strong network of support. Adults also **want to continue to establish a solid bond with their student** and create lasting memories before they and their world change upon graduation from high school.

This is possible without asking “the college question”. More on that in a moment.

If we think about the students' goals and expectations for the holiday weekend (and for all family interaction, in that case), we find them to be very similar. Students want to **feel interesting as people**—and to **know that they have a strong, loving network of support where they belong**. They want **lots of quality time with their family like when they were younger and no one asked them about their future**. Students also want to **live in the moment**, which is especially potent right now, as normal traditions can often morph into the “last time they'll do _____ before everything changes”. This can be daunting, but it's reassuring that both adults and students share such similar goals.

With these commonalities in mind, there seem to be several clear solutions to protect the holidays as sacred, quality time with family and loved ones—ideas that serve the shared interests of both adults and students listed above.

Listen to your senior

Ask your senior directly—is college a topic you feel okay talking about with family over break? You could even mention this article, and ask if any of these thoughts resonates with them.

Expect that they will respond by asking NOT to discuss it. Many seniors we polled said explicitly that they wished that their relatives would leave the topic of college completely off the table, citing the fact that they needed time away from thinking about college, because they were hoping to relax and enjoy the holiday. One senior simply stated, “I’d politely tell them, please don’t talk to me about college. It’s my break and I’d like to forget about college apps for a week.”

If your senior doesn’t want to talk college, you may suggest to your relatives that they voluntarily tell your senior outright that they won’t be bringing it up. This names the elephant in the room, but does not pressure the senior to produce a response. They could try saying something like, “I’m sure a ton of people are asking you about college, and I want you to know I’m not going to ask you about it this break. I just want to know about you and how your life is going—I don’t care where you go to school as long as you’re happy.” Then, they can actually follow through on this promise.

Plan out how you will approach “the college topic” with relatives

If your senior doesn’t want to share his plans with relatives himself, one solution is to ask if he would be alright with you sharing them on his behalf, so that relatives are still up to speed on his life. If you go this route, encourage your relatives NOT to be that person who quietly says on the side, “I know you don’t want to talk about it, but can you just tell me?”

If your family is particularly inquisitive (or if the first idea feels too much like kid gloves), consider planning a time to break radio silence when your senior shares his plans with everyone at one time, in one place, and leaves some time for questions afterward. This way, your family members won’t feel cheated out of getting to hear about important developments, and your senior won’t be on edge in each conversation, wondering when the topic will arise. Students can then rest easy knowing that they’re not being evaluated, and won’t feel pressure to share an exhaustive update on their college process over and over with each family member.

Finally, if your senior requests not to discuss college, ask your relatives to respect where he’s coming from, however silly the request may seem. He will still be able to handle life’s eventual adversity even if you indulge his request not to talk about college for a few days.

Focus on pure quality time by doing things together

Once you’re clear of the college conversation, a whole lot of room is made for everything else. Memories are made by living in the moment, and that’s what you and your senior both want. Play flag football outside. Go fishing. Play catch. Cook together, so that they actually know how to cook when they’re on their own. Do a jigsaw puzzle. Drive to the beach. Watch a movie. Go for a hike in the woods.

Seniors are looking at this break as a time to recalibrate; to “catch their breath” as O’Connor mentions in his op-ed piece mentioned above. They are looking forward to spending time with family, with friends who are home from college, and to rest and catch up on sleep. Let it be just that.

Finally, remove phones from the equation as much as possible. Phones are great ways to connect, but just as often they remove us from the moment. This includes parents as well as children—your seniors know if you are distracted by your phone during quality time, even if you “just check it for a moment”, and they are paying attention.

Allow room for silence, and trust that your senior will share in his own time

Too often, quality time can be seen as limited during a holiday break, and opportunities to connect with graduating seniors can therefore also seem scarce. This can lead families to try to maximize every moment, thinking that each quiet minute is an opportunity lost.

Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg, author of "[Raising Kids to Thrive](#)" and co-director of the Center for Parent and Teen Communication in Philadelphia, is quoted extensively in an [article](#) written by Phyllis Fagell, school counselor at the Sheridan School in Bethesda, Maryland. The article focuses on ways parents can stay connected with teen sons, and we've shared it in previous newsletters with positive response from parents.

In the article, Ms. Fagell quotes Dr. Ginsburg:

"The themes of adolescence include: are my parents proud of me, do I fit in with my peers, am I capable at school, do I have any idea what I can do with my life...and, most basically, am I good enough?... 'If you put all of those together, you can begin to see why it matters so much that a parent loves a child for who they are.'"

The article continues,

"Parents also need to be willing to be patient. 'When you feel like you have to dive in too deeply at every single moment, you might actually push your son away,' Ginsburg says. 'You might go for a walk or go fishing or just be present, and after 30 minutes or three hours of silence, the nuggets will start coming out.' Parents need to be willing to tolerate the quiet while their son reflects, and trust that communication will happen at the right moment."

According to Ginsburg, "If you stay present, really believe in the kid, treat him like the expert in his life and talk at the pace he's able to listen, then the details will work themselves out," he says.

Low-pressure conversation starters

You probably don't need these, but here are some non-college-related questions that still leave room for open-ended conversation and follow-up discussion. If your relatives don't know what to ask your student about, here are some ideas.

What has been your favorite / least favorite part of senior year so far?

How are your friends?

What's new with you?

What do you want to make sure you do before you graduate from Jesuit?

What do you want to make sure you do before you go to college?

What do you wish you knew how to do but don't right now?

What pressures do you feel right now?

How do you feel like you're different now compared with freshman year?

Is there anything you actually like learning about in any of your classes?

How are your teachers this year?

What's the hardest part of senior year been so far?

What has surprised you most about senior year so far?

What plans with your friends are you most excited about for the spring?

What do you want to do together this weekend? (then plan a day and time to do it, and follow through)

What have you been up to in your free time? [with follow-up questions that demonstrate genuine interest]

What's something you've changed your mind about in the past year?

Your senior has spent much of his fall reducing himself to a few numbers and words crammed into a series of boxes on college apps. We like the idea of using holiday break to let them focus on the rest of who they are, and encouraging extended family to do the same.

Article 2: "What about after Thanksgiving, when he actually does need to get more college stuff done?"

For families whose seniors are not yet done with the college application process (this is most of you! Do not despair), it may feel as though the above advice is impossible to implement. *If I don't bring it up and continually hound him about it, nothing will ever get done and he won't even go to college!*

We have some ideas.

Schedule a weekly college conference with your son, and leave other time sacred

In a newsletter earlier this year, we shared an article from Rick Clark, the Director of Undergraduate Admission at Georgia Tech. He suggested (and we suggest!) setting aside one or two hours per week where parents and their sons meet to discuss college applications. A few Jesuit families have shared that they have tried this and loved it.

Just as with the Thanksgiving holiday, when the topic of college applications hangs over everyone's head as a perpetual threat, tension can arise unintentionally. Many students feel that quality time is compromised when the topic of college enters the picture (hence the above advice), but if the topic of college is restricted to once per week, with the rest of the week as a college-free zone, then that may leave every other parent-child interaction free from potential college stress.

When you DO discuss college, focus on your senior's inherent value, and NOT the school's evaluation

Patrick O'Connor from the Cranbrook Schools suggests that families focus on the "role college will play in what's next for their lives". This is great advice—since students risk losing a sense of personal value with each college rejection (again, despite our advice to the contrary), it is a good idea to focus conversations on the utility of each school for the student's development. What does your student think are skills he wants to develop? How well does he think each school serves those needs? How will this school help form him into the person he wants to become?

Along the way, affirm how well your son is doing every chance you get. While he awaits a decision that he feels is very personal, it can be helpful to receive confirmation that his value is independent of that school's admissions decision.

In your conversations about college, **ensure that you are consistently vocal about evaluating whether or not a school is good enough for your son**—never vice versa. You're entrusting the school with your son—these schools had better prove their worth to you and your son. It only seems like it's the other way around in the college app process.

Colleges are tools for personal development, not trophies or affirmations of achievement.

Be cautious about offering help

We strive for connection—but be thoughtful before suggesting help. If you are an alum of a school, or know somebody WELL who is an alum, feel free to offer them as a resource. If your neighbor's son who you knew when he was six but not really anymore now goes to Boston College, there are probably other resources who will be able to help your senior more effectively.

If your senior is behind on work, it can be tempting to jump in and complete some work for him. This is kind and considerate, but ultimately, he will reach this point of overload again, where he has too much to complete and not enough time, and he will not always have his parents to hop in and save the day.

Help train him now by allowing him the freedom to fail at accomplishing everything he has put onto his plate—this way he will have the skills to pre-emptively evaluate his choices and commitments before they end up being too much to do the night before the deadline. Learning to fail with grace and a steady hand will allow them to recover quickly when you're not there to catch them.

There are some decisions that nonetheless require family discussion and the help of someone who knows the applicant well. A few current seniors responded to our poll by suggesting that family members help brainstorm essay topics if requested, and help by discussing a student's academic interests in an open-ended manner. The experience a parent brings from knowing a student long-term brings insights, of course, that cannot be found anywhere else.

Reinforce the unimportance of name brands

Admission at top schools, says a recent Jesuit graduate who attends a highly selective school, is "highly random". "Realistically," he said, "it matters more what you do in college than just where you get in."

There are lists such as [this one](#) of successful people who attended schools without Ivy League prestige, but equally significant for your senior will be *your personal anecdotes* of people you admire who are successful and who also *didn't attend a highly prestigious school*. Students are nervous that the name on their diploma will determine their future, and they need every reassurance possible that their future success depends on them and all of their gifts, rather than on an admissions decision that is out of their control.

Again—your seniors want to make you proud. Show them that they already have.

Reach out to your son's college counselor

If you are concerned that something may be amiss, and you have checked with your son in a family college conference, we remain open resources for you all throughout the year. Please email us with any questions.

Keep in mind that there is a time to *know*, and a time to *not know*—now is the time for *not knowing*.

From now until your senior puts down his enrollment deposit at his school of choice, he will most likely not know where he will be headed next year. This can be disconcerting, but it is also freeing.

Once their applications are submitted (along with all required documents), your senior is free to live their life and focus on being a senior in high school. Encourage this, and encourage them to become comfortable with the uncertainty of not knowing for a few months yet. This will be a useful skill as they await other important decisions down the road.

As the year goes on, your senior's peers will hear back from schools here and there. This is energizing for that student and his family, but can be very demoralizing for students who have yet to hear back from anywhere.

Several students we surveyed shared that, above all else, they wished their families had been more “ok with not having everything figured out”. As they told us, “we're uncertain about where we're going to end up, if we're going to be with our friends, if we're going to like the place we end up, etc...the process is not over, so we still have no idea.” Help them have courage in the face of this uncertainty by being okay with it yourself.

If your senior shares that they have been accepted somewhere, celebrate the heck out of it—they now know that, no matter what happens, the college future they have been working for will be a reality. Agree with them that it's a long road ahead and that there are sure to be more acceptances coming their way, and after celebrating and posting the acceptance letter in your home for everyone to see daily, focus the conversation again on your senior as a person, and not as a list of achievements.

Article 3: College Visit Guide

In a piece written for *Forbes* magazine, Willard Dix, who writes on college admissions for students and families, discusses an article from the New York Times entitled “Skipping the College Tour” by Erica Reischer.

We do NOT—we repeat, do NOT—suggest that college tours are a waste of time. Quite the contrary, in fact—college visits are very much worth the time, if done right.

They do both bring up good points, though, and we want to summarize them below for your consideration, in addition to offering our own words of advice as you and your families head out to visit schools.

Part A: The campus visit is a crucial marketing tool

We took a poll of the senior class of 2017 here at Jesuit, and asked them about the factors they considered in deciding where to go to school in the fall. We asked them to rate the importance of each factor on a scale of 1 (not important at all) to 10 (very important).

Of the 136 respondents, 102 seniors, or three-quarters of the respondents, listed “their visit to the school's campus” as a 7, 8, 9, or 10 in terms of importance. A full forty students listed “their visit to the school's campus” as a 10—the very highest rating for any college decision factor.

Given that the campus visit holds such gravity—which Admissions offices are aware of—it's important to keep in mind that college visit programs that are put together by admissions offices are well-intentioned, but nonetheless are a rather idealistic advertisement of sorts. They want to 'yield' you—to ensure you enroll—which means that they need to present the best possible picture of their school during your entire time on campus.

Part B: How to repurpose a marketing tool as a discernment tool

Yes, the Prospective Student Tour and Admitted Student Day are both extended, immersive advertisements. This is not a bad thing. A school is excited to welcome you (either to get you to apply, or to 'yield' you). It's a great feeling to be recruited.

With that said, it's important to supplement organized Admissions events with a make-your-own campus visit, of sorts. In today's consumer culture, assessing quality is as much about new user reviews and online word-of-mouth as it is about a long-standing brand name's reputation through the generations.

In the spirit of being a 'discerning consumer', then, Dix and Reischer highlight in their respective articles that we should focus on other 'users', or "experience surrogates", who have already been through the process and can provide feedback. These current 'users' (current college students) can be students you know from your hometown, or can be random people you pass on the sidewalk.

The important part is to speak with several current college students about their experience, and in so doing, gather as much data as possible, with which you can make an informed decision.

The brochures and social media will not be enough.

Part C: How to get the most out of your college visit

Bring your backpack

We suggest this for a few reasons.

First, on a college tour, prospective students are likely to receive brochures and free merchandise from the Admissions office. Admissions giveaways (tote bags, brochures, Frisbees) can seem to prospective students like billboards proclaiming your outsider status to current students you pass on the quad, so you may feel more comfortable stuffing handouts in your own well-used backpack.

Second, a backpack may help a prospective student feel like he can blend in. The truth is that current college students are in their own world—they don't care if you're a visitor or not; they are more interested in planning their weekend, meeting their friends for lunch, or stressing about midterms. Nonetheless, if you are concerned about blending in (or simply not sticking out too much), a backpack can help camouflage you a bit.

Third, simply put, in new and potentially unfamiliar situations, it helps to have something to do with your hands. High school students are well-accustomed to carrying their backpacks, and to carrying on conversations while hooking their thumbs on backpack straps. Bringing your own backpack on a campus tour can be a subconscious, but effective, tool for helping you feel comfortable while talking to new people in a potentially intimidating environment.

Fourth, a backpack can also be a useful subconscious hint for students to continue to immerse themselves in the mindset of a college student. What will it be like when I'm coming back from class here? Well, I'll probably be wearing a backpack, for starters. What will the workload be like? Where and when will I study all of the books contained in this backpack I'm wearing? These questions may be easier to ponder with the reminder of a backpack on your shoulders.

Finally, if anyone asks you why you brought your backpack to a campus visit, you can always simply tell them that you wanted a place to keep your water bottle, jacket, snacks, etc. while you're walking around.

Go on a student-led campus tour, if it's possible—and it almost always is

Even if a tour guide is a paid employee (read: walking advertisement) of the college or university you're visiting, it's still helpful to hear a polished, well-rehearsed perspective from a tour guide who is a current student.

If you stand near the front of a tour group (or if you're lucky enough to have a private tour), you can learn a lot about that student's world on their particular campus. You probably will not get a complete picture of every possible student experience—and that's normal—but if you are able to select a tour guide with similar interests (or even a similar way of speaking), they can be your first window into what your life could be like if you were to enroll at that school.

Keep in mind, students—this student tour guide is not you, and nor are they every student at that school. Ask any graduate of any school, and they will remember fellow students with whom they didn't share interests (or get along).

You're not going to be friends with everybody at the school where you end up. Sorry.

If your tour guide says something you think sounds terrible, there could very easily be a number of other students at that school who would vehemently disagree, and/or be embarrassed that the tour guide has characterized something so inaccurately. Take everything your tour guide says with several grains of salt, and confirm or disprove what they say by talking to other students later.

At the end of the tour, ask for the tour guide's email address or other contact information, and take a photo of their business card (or make a note in your phone). If you guys got along great, then it will feel very natural to continue the conversation at a later date. They will be happy to hear from you, and you will perhaps hear an even more unfiltered perspective than you heard on the official tour.

Even if you didn't like what they had to say, the tour guide may be a helpful point of contact to connect you with other students who do share your interests, or who are more similar to you in personality.

Stop random students on campus and ask questions

This can seem excruciating and uncomfortable, but hear me out.

After you go on the Admissions tour led by (probably) a student tour guide, it can be helpful to talk to people who aren't employed by the Admissions office—even if the tour guide position is unpaid and they don't have financial incentive to keep everything rosy.

By only speaking with your tour guide and no one else, you're not getting the whole picture.

Although each campus has its own unique culture, college students are, on the whole, relatively open to meeting new people, and are often very engaged in their school community. It's just how college works, most of the time. Plus, using the mindset of 'user reviews' mentioned above, there are few people better poised to offer you a sense of *what it's actually like there as a student* than people who are actually there as students right now.

As you walk away from the admissions tour, look around for students who aren't in a hurry, and perhaps a group of friends walking together who look like they might be open to being stopped by random strangers. Hint: this is actually a large portion of college students.

Actually ask questions, perhaps inspired by the questions below

Rule #1: you must only ask questions whose answers you actually care about. Current students may not know the student-faculty ratio, but they can probably talk for several minutes if you pose an open-ended question that asks them to evaluate and analyze their experience at that school thus far.

Of course, students, you should word these questions however you would actually say them as a real human being to another real human being. If you sound or feel robotic, you will not get an answer that is helpful for you.

Ditch the questions you think you should be asking, but that you don't care about, and ask about things that you feel matter *to you*.

We suggest having these general questions in mind, and asking questions using your own normal and natural wording that try to get at the same ideas.

- **What are your favorite things about being a student here?**
 - This is a pretty basic question, but is helpful in getting the conversation going. Every student can probably think of at least one thing.
- **Why did you choose to come here over the other places you applied?**
 - They made a choice themselves that you will soon be making—ask them how they did it. Listen for their decision-making process! Is it similar to yours, or do they prioritize different things? This will help you know how much to follow their advice.
- **What surprised you once you got here?**
 - Otherwise known as, what do you wish someone had told you? What don't the brochures tell you? And/or, what's something that the college or university hasn't yet realized people care about?
- **What didn't you expect about life here at _____? What did no one tell you about before you got here?**
 - This is different wording that tries to encourage the same reflection as the previous question.
- **What kinds of pressures are there, if any, as a student here?**
 - The "if any" is only to be polite—every school has pressures, a lot of which are worth avoiding if you end up there. What pressures are you not willing to put up with at all, ever? Again, remember that one student's sense of "how everyone feels here" is probably more accurately stated as "how everyone in my extended social circle feels". Grains of salt!
- **What don't you like about going here?**
 - There's always something—listen to what they say, and figure out if it's a big enough deal for you that you might not want to go there.
- **Do you think there are any stereotypes, or common personality traits, of students here?**
 - Some stereotypes exist for reasons, and many don't—but every school has its archetypes, and it's helpful to know what students say they are at each school.
- **Do you think there's any pressure for students to conform to being a certain way here?**
 - This is subtly different than the question above. Listen carefully to their answer to this one. You get to decide if the pressures they mention are good, bad, or neutral.
- **How do the locals in [insert nearest town or city here] view students here?**
 - This may not matter to you now, but if students are generally viewed with disdain in town (or are beloved), local residents' attitude toward college students will have an effect on your experience in at least a minor way at some point.
- **If you had to describe students here using 3-5 adjectives, what would you say?**
 - This might be a more straightforward way to learn about campus culture than the previous questions, if you don't feel like going out on a limb.
- **What do you and your friends do on a weekday night? On a weekend?**

- This will help you assess if you and the student are similar—in other words, if you should listen to their review of the school or not. Talking to one student about their weekend plans will only help assess if their friend group is right for you...more so than if a particular school is right for you. Remember, most schools have thousands of people, so there are also thousands of weekend itineraries for you to choose from. Make sure you place value on the agendas that help you become the person you want to be.
- **What kinds of topics do you and your friends talk about at lunch?**
 - Whether it's "whatever", "sports", "politics", "music", "philosophy", "our schedules", or a little bit of everything, there's often a general trend, especially at smaller schools with more distinctive cultures.
- **Is there a common way people normally respond to the question "how are you"?**
 - They may not have an answer for you—maybe give them some examples like "jeez, I'm so tired", "man, I'm busy", "gosh, I'm pumped for the weekend", "I was up until 4 AM last night", etc. At some schools, the basic response may be something simple like "great" or "fine". The point is to see if there's any standard expectation of how students should be, and how they present themselves to each other.

Remember, the point of all of these questions is to get *past* the surface-level perspectives people will share, and get current students to really reflect and open up so that you know what you're getting into. Ask questions you care about.

Part D: A few final thoughts

Students: you should be the ones driving each conversation

Parents and guardians are a crucial component in this process, of course, and as we find ourselves saying often, this is a *team process*.

With that in mind, we often see that students could stand to take more initiative themselves in taking ownership of the college research and discovery process. This is part of our college counseling philosophy, and extends to college visits.

Students—if you profess to 'hate it' when your parents 'ask a bunch of questions that you don't care about', do a bunch of question-asking yourself and see where that gets you.

Quite simply, when asked a question, current college students will be most likely to respond to the person who asks the question. Not only will they make eye contact more often with the person who asks the question, but they will tailor their answer to what they think the question-asker is looking to learn.

If a parent asks a question about workload, or social life, or study abroad, the college student will respond with the student in mind, but they will ultimately still most likely be speaking directly to the parent when choosing how to answer, and choosing which anecdotes to mention, and which level of detail is appropriate.

If a high school student asks the question, the opposite can happen—the college student will likely look at, and therefore tailor their response to, the high school student. When high school students drive the conversation, college students open up more, and you as a prospective student may get a more authentic picture of their college experience, since they may feel that they are opening up to a peer.

Reflect on what the current students told you, and figure out what matters to you

Questions to ask yourself after conversations with current college students:

Did the students you spoke with like the school? Great! What were their reasons? Do you care about those things?

Did they mention something they see as 'good' that you might actually view as a potential drawback?

Contrastingly, did they dislike certain aspects of the school? Do those things matter to you, or can you deal with them?

What did they say they are studying? What do they do in their free time? Remind yourself to check and make sure that their perspective is one that you feel is worth even considering in the first place.

Acknowledge that no school is perfect

Just as no restaurant is perfect every time, no school will be without flaws. For each student at any given college or university, there will likely be several things that they don't really like (or that they "aren't the biggest fans of", etc.). If a student really likes a school, though, the multitude of that school's positive attributes will outshine the few drawbacks, at least in their eyes.

Even when you find yourself at your dream school, you will inevitably run into things you don't like. There will be people you don't think are very nice or interesting (or both), there will be buildings you don't like for one reason or another, and things about the school will frustrate you that you had never considered previously. Figure out which of these matters to you (and ask students as mentioned above), so that you can weed out the schools where the drawbacks turn into deal breakers for you.

Acknowledge that you are different now than you will be in the future

One of Reischer's most important points is the idea of "present self" vs. "future self". Students, you are different now than you were when you began at Jesuit as a freshman, and you will be different when you step foot on your college campus as a freshman. When you make a guess about what you will like in the future, you are relying on, psychologists say, a rather faulty predictive measure. It's hard, in essence, to figure out what you'll like in the future when you are not, in fact, that future self.

As Reischer writes, "We seduce ourselves into being at a blissful haven based on a small slice of time and well-rehearsed words. When students return from a college campus and talk mostly about the beautiful weather or the cute tour guide, they've imagined themselves in an ideal, not a real, place."

We aim, as much as possible, to remind you that you are a real person picking a real place to spend four years. The point is this—by speaking with current students, and by digging beyond the surface experience of a college visit, your choice of where to apply, and where to spend every day for four academic years, will be more well-informed. Have fun!