

Madison Academy

Senior Packet



College and Career Counselor: Mr. John Bryson
email: jwbryson@macademy.org

***Pages 17-20 should be completed and returned
to Mr. Bryson ASAP**

LET ME HELP!

Preparing for college and life after high school is an exciting process. Included in this packet are answers and guidelines to frequently asked questions. I hope you will use this as a tool to guide you through the college and scholarship application process. Familiarize yourself with the websites of the schools you are considering so you know where to find the answers to your questions. College recruiters, admissions offices, and financial aid offices are pleased to answer any specific questions you may have. Always avoid waiting until the last minute to apply for admission or scholarships. And finally, keep in mind that YOU, the student, must take charge of this process; your parents will be there to help guide you in your college search, but ultimately this is YOUR responsibility!

TAKING THE ACT and SAT

The ACT and SAT tests are college entrance exams that are an integral part of the admissions process. Your score on these tests will help determine the colleges and scholarships for which you will qualify. Some important things to remember:

- It is recommended that students take the ACT and/or SAT two to three times, beginning as early as the end of sophomore year
- The SAT includes a writing component. The ACT has an optional writing section. Many schools (including The University of Alabama and Auburn) require that students submit at least one ACT score that includes the writing portion.
- Colleges must receive test scores directly from ACT or College Board (SAT). When registering for the test, the cost for sending

scores to four schools is included in the test fee. If you need to send the score to additional schools or if you decide to send the scores later, there is a fee. Details about this service are available online.

- Colleges and scholarship programs will give a student the benefit of his/her highest test score. Therefore, you may send multiple scores to the college.
- If you would like to see how your ACT score compares to your SAT score, check out www.convertyourscore.org.
- ACT Prep courses are offered at MA and study materials are available online at the respective websites. There are also several “brick and mortar” programs available in the area.
- Register for the ACT at www.actstudent.org. Tests are offered in February, April, June, September, October, and December of each year.
- Register for the SAT at www.collegeboard.com. Tests are offered in January, March, May, June, September, October, November, and December of each year.
- Many colleges have a priority deadline of December 1 to be considered for scholarships. So, plan to take the test two to three times prior to December 1 of the senior year.
- If you think you might qualify for test accommodations, see Shelley Knox, Director of BRIDGE.

WHEN SHOULD I APPLY TO COLLEGES?

We hope that you have already made some college visits and are choosing the colleges to which you will apply. Be sure to call or email at least a week in advance to schedule appointments for college tours

and information sessions. Many colleges will also schedule an appointment for you and your family with an admissions counselor.

Most colleges make applications available in late summer/early fall.

You can continue to take the ACT/SAT after you submit your college application. Updated scores will be added to your admissions file as soon as they are electronically transmitted to the college.

- Applications – Applying online is preferred by most colleges and required by many. Some schools may offer the option of downloading the application as a PDF file to print and submit by mail. If you need assistance with your application, see Mr Bryson.
- Fees – A few colleges process admissions applications for free. However, for most colleges, an application fee of \$25 - \$75 will be required at the time of application. The amount of the fee depends on the school.

Remember: You must have your official transcript submitted to the college from Madison Academy. And, most colleges require you to have your ACT or SAT scores sent directly from the testing service. We recommend you check with the Admissions Offices of the colleges to which you are applying to verify that they have received ALL of the documentation required for your admission packet to be considered.

HOW DO I SEND AN OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT?

1. Log in to Parchment at www.parchment.com. Instructions are on the website
2. Click “Transcript Request” and follow the instructions.
3. For a HARD COPY, email Mr. Bryson at jwbryson@macademy.org or Mrs. Parrish @ dparrish@macademy.org
4. Allow at least three business days for Mr. Bryson or Mrs. Parrish to send your transcript.

* Please note: Most transcripts are sent electronically to colleges. Printed copies are available for sending with scholarship applications, etc.

HOW DO I REQUEST A TEACHER/COUNSELOR RECOMMENDATION?

Give your teachers at least two weeks notice when you ask them to complete an admissions recommendation form or to write a scholarship recommendation letter. Give the teacher your request in writing and give the specifics on the purpose of the recommendation. This includes your name, what the recommendation is for, and the deadline. Be sure to provide the teacher with a copy of your resume (see the resume information on page 15 and 16) so that the recommendation will emphasize your specific qualities and activities. Provide the teacher with a properly addressed envelope, including the correct postage if it must be mailed. You should request a letter of recommendation in person so that necessary details can be discussed (such as address, format of the letter, scholarship requirements, etc).

Madison Academy

Teachers and counselors will write recommendations in the order they are received. ALLOW A MINIMUM OF TWO WEEKS – 10 Business Days – when you request a recommendation from a counselor or teacher. Always be mindful of deadlines!

PROVIDE ACCURATE INFORMATION!

Some applications require you to provide school details, contact information, counselor or teacher recommender information, etc. Some information you may need is included below.

Name of High School: Madison Academy
 325 Slaughter Road
 Madison, Alabama 35758

Phone: 256-469-6400

FAX: 256-469-6408

College Counselor: Mr. John Bryson
 jwbryson@macademy.org

ACT/College Board/CEEB CODE: 011468

HOW DO I FIND MY GPA AND CLASS RANK?

Your GPA and class rank are available from your counselor or registrar. Some college and scholarship applications require you to report these numbers. Rank and GPA are officially updated in January and again at the end of both junior and senior years.

WRITING ESSAYS

Applications for scholarships and selective colleges often require the student to submit an essay. As you are writing the essay, remember that those who will be reading the essay will likely be reading essays from hundreds of other applicants. Pay careful attention to answer the prompt clearly and concisely. Include personal information that will make your writing memorable and will make your application “stand out” from others. After you have completed the first draft of your essay, you may want to make an appointment with an English teacher or the Guidance Counselor to read it and make suggestions for improvements. Again, watch your deadlines, allowing them a proper amount of time to review your material.

Tips and Thoughts For Writing Your Essay

Never underestimate the importance of your essay. The essay is your opportunity to shine and the only part of the application over which you have total control. Following are some suggestions from a Yale admissions counselor:

1. Sit around and THINK for awhile. What is the question asking? Make sure your essay answers the question thoroughly, but tell your own story. If the question gives you some latitude, mull over various ideas until you hit upon one that “feels right,” or one about which you’re more excited than the others.
2. When you can, write about something that is interesting to YOU. It will be easier to write and your essay will have a more natural voice.
3. Be personal. It’s your application, your experiences, your thoughts, interests and personality. The selection committee is trying to get to

know you through your own words. Even if a topic is an intellectual one, the school is looking for a personal response.

4. Be reflective. Look for ways to express not only the WHAT, WHEN and WHERE, but the WHY (why you made a choice, for example) and HOW (how the experience changed you)

5. Write in some depth. Use some detail and specific language, not just general, superficial statements. It is much better to give one specific example that is written in narrative form and rich in detail than to give numerous examples that are vague and flat.

COLLEGE VISIT DAYS

Per Madison Academy policy, “College visits—juniors and seniors are allowed three (3) days per year to visit various colleges and universities—must be submitted to the administrator no less than one week before the scheduled visit. Teachers have the prerogative to require that makeup work be completed in advance of the absence(s).”

*Detailed forms for this purpose are available in the Counselor Office.

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR COLLEGE VISIT

The spring/summer of the junior year is an excellent time to make college visits. You may choose to combine campus visits with a summer family vacation. If so, plan to revisit any college you are seriously considering when it is in “full swing” for a full experience. You may also plan your visit for one of the visitation or preview days many colleges offer in the fall and spring.

Remember seniors are allowed THREE excused college days during the school year with appropriate documentation.

- Familiarize yourself with the institution’s website so that you are not wasting time asking questions for which you can easily find answers. Usually there is a “prospective students” or “future students” section of the college’s main website that answers many common questions.
- Focus on the broad picture, including such factors as - location, size, admissions selectivity, cost, majors available, and campus life. Contact the admissions office to schedule a tour for yourself and your family. At many colleges, you will also be offered the opportunity to meet with an admissions counselor. When you interview, be prepared to ask questions. The following page includes sample questions that may help guide you.
- Your parents may or may not be invited to sit in an interview with you. If they are present, understand that YOU, not your parents, will be asked the questions and should be the “take charge person.” Your parents will sit quietly in the background. At the end of the meeting, they may want to ask questions about areas not covered between you and the admissions officer.
- Be sure to remember the following:
 - It will be helpful to take a copy of your transcript with you.
 - Take a one-page resume with you listing your activities and accomplishments.
 - When you return home, be sure to write a thank you note to the admissions counselor who met with you.
 - Always be confident, polite and cooperative.

Madison Academy

- While you are on campus, try to do the following:
 - Talk to students.
 - Eat in the cafeteria.
 - Visit a dorm (usually this is included in the tour).
 - Talk to someone in the department you are considering as a major.
 - Pick up a copy of the school newspaper.
 - Ask if you may attend a class.
 - Visit the bookstore and read bulletin boards.
 - Many schools will offer to arrange for you to spend a night in a dorm with a student host

SAMPLE COLLEGE VISIT QUESTIONS

- Admissions:
 1. What are the specific admission requirements - ACT/SAT scores, GPA, etc.? (Plan to take a copy of your transcript with you to the meeting.)
 2. When is the application deadline?
 3. What forms are necessary to complete the application process?
 4. What fees are associated with the application? What fees are required after I am accepted (housing deposit, tuition deposit, etc.)?
 5. When can I expect a response as to whether I have been accepted?
- Scholarships:
 1. What academic scholarships are available? What ACT/SAT score and/or GPA is required to qualify?

2. How do I apply for these scholarships – is there specific paperwork that must be filed, or will I be automatically considered once I have been accepted for admission?
 3. What other specific scholarships are available – within my major, foundation scholarships, leadership, Madison County resident, etc?
 4. What are the specifics of any scholarships that have been offered? (Example: If full tuition is offered, how many class hours are covered? Is the scholarship renewable? Is there a certain GPA that must be maintained in order to renew the scholarship in future years?)
- Housing:
 1. When do I need to apply for student housing?
 2. What is the amount of the housing deposit? What amount is refundable if I choose to attend a different college or choose a different type of housing (apartment, etc.)?
 3. Is space limited?
 4. What is the cost per year for housing? Does the charge differ from dorm to dorm?
 5. Is there a requirement for students to live on campus/in dorms? If so, until which year?
 6. What is the probability that I will be placed in the specific housing for which I have applied?
 7. What meal plans are available or required? What are the costs of the meal plans?

- Credit for courses taken in high school:
 1. Are there placement tests to determine which math/science/English course level I will enter? When are these tests administered?
 2. What AP credits are accepted?
 3. How many credits are accepted and for which courses?
 4. What score must be earned on the AP test in order to earn college credit?
- Curriculum questions:
 1. What accredited degrees does your college offer in the area of _____?
 2. May I have a list of specific coursework required to earn a degree in _____?
 3. Is a catalogue available in print form or are the course offerings posted online?
 4. How long does it normally take a student to complete this degree?
 5. Are any required courses offered on the web or are they all taught in a classroom setting?
 6. What is the average class size for the courses I will be taking?
 7. What is the percentage of classes taught by Graduate Assistants vs. full Professors?
 8. What is the job outlook for this major?
 9. Are there opportunities for internships, co-op, etc, in this academic program?
 10. How do you assist students in finding employment after college?
 11. Can I set up a time to visit a class-in-session?

• Miscellaneous:

1. What is the parking situation? Is there a map showing available parking?
2. Are freshmen allowed to have cars on campus?
3. Do buses/transit systems run from different parts of the city through campus? If so, what is the cost? Is there a map of the bus route and hours?
4. What type of student support services are available? Tutoring, Counseling, Career Advising, etc? Free or cost involved?
5. What is the retention rate of students from freshman to sophomore years?
6. What is the campus policy related to school wide emergency situations?
7. What security measures are taken within the dorms, classrooms, etc?

THE PURPOSE OF THE SENIOR RECOMMENDATION PACKET

During the senior year, many students need counselor recommendation letters for scholarships and/or school report forms required by private colleges and highly competitive universities. If an application requires a School Report or Counselor Recommendation, the College and Career Counselor is available to write recommendation letters and complete required forms. In order to give colleges and scholarship committees a complete, well balanced picture of you, you should complete the forms included in this packet. You are responsible for returning them to Mr. Bryson. **Letters of**

recommendation will only be written when a complete packet is on file. Mr. Bryson will accept the information at any time prior to writing a recommendation letter; however, it is recommended that the forms in this packet be returned to Mr. Bryson by September 1.

I. RESUME - Please include a resume listing activities in which you have been involved during high school. There is no particular format required. Include information related to school clubs and activities, volunteer work, paid employment, etc. A sample resume is found on page 16.

II. PERSONAL PROFILE – We appreciate personal examples which support your statements about your strengths, goals, values and meaningful experiences. (Form attached.)

III. PARENT INSIGHT – Your parents often tell us things we do not know about your personal interests, special family situations, and character. They can return the Parent Insight page directly to Mr. Bryson or you can deliver them yourself. (Form attached.)

IV. PEER COMMENTS – Choose a friend who knows you well and can also be objective about your strengths and weaknesses. The friend should give the Peer Comment form directly to Mr. Bryson. (Form attached.)

V. TWO TEACHER COMMENT PAGES – Ask two teachers who know you well to complete these comment forms and return them to Mrs. Bryson. This sheet is in an informal style designed to provide a picture of your academic strengths and work ethic. DO NOT confuse this form with a college admissions teacher recommendation form or a scholarship recommendation letter. (Form attached.)

CREATING A RESUME

Whether you are looking for a summer job, asking a teacher for a college recommendation, or applying for a scholarship, you will need a resume of your high school activities and achievements. There are many formats and styles of resumes and no particular format is better than another. However, if you have not already prepared a resume, you may consider the outline below to organize your information. Choose a format that best highlights your activities. For example, if you are very athletic you may have a section for athletic participation and another for athletic honors and awards. If you have held numerous leadership positions, you could list them together. In each section of your resume, you should always begin with your most recent activity, and you should not go back before 9th grade. Remember to keep your resume professional – no flowery paper or unusual fonts.

Note: What does your email address say about you? If you send your resume to colleges or potential employers, think about the impression you are making with your email address. Make it “professional” by using your initials/name and a series of numbers or something similar (jasmith1234@gmail.com). Cute descriptors or nicknames (coolchick@gmail.com or footballhero@hotmail.com) are fine for friends but don’t always make the best first impression!

Student Name

Street Address

City, State, Zip

T 256-000-0000

C 256-000-0000

email address

EDUCATION

Madison Academy, Class of 2017, Madison, AL

May include GPA, class rank (if high), and/or special courses

AWARDS

Honors and recognition; include year received and a description

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

May include GPA, class rank (if high), and/or special courses

Note offices held

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Volunteer work, church groups, scouts

Include leadership roles and time involved in each activity (i.e. two hours per week or two weeks in summer)

WORK EXPERIENCE

Paid work; include job description and responsibilities, employer, dates of employment

PROFICIENCIES

Technology proficiencies such as KeyNote, Excel, Microsoft Word, MAC, etc.

Skills that you have learned that may be pertinent to the college experience such as public speaking, team building, etc. (Your school activities, community activities, and work experience should show where and when you learned or honed these skills. This is more of a list of attributes you possess)

PERSONAL (OPTIONAL)

Special experiences, hobbies, accomplishments, talents, travel

NOTE: RESUME SHOULD NOT BE LONGER THAN ONE PAGE

PERSONAL PROFILE

DUE: Upon Completion or by August 31

Student Name _____

Student Email: _____

These questions will help your counselor write personal recommendations for you. PLEASE TYPE YOUR ANSWERS AND RETURN TO MR. BRYSON.

1. Describe your educational/career plans. Include the names of three colleges in which you are presently interested as well as what subject you are considering for a college major/career.
2. List two values that are most important to you, and explain why.
3. Describe a way in which you have grown personally and/or academically since your freshman year.
4. Describe your proudest accomplishment – academic/and or personal.
5. Describe the experience that has been the most meaningful to you and explain why.
6. If there are any circumstances that have had a negative impact on your academic performance or participation in activities, please explain the circumstances and their impact on the back of this paper or attach an additional sheet.

PARENT COMMENTS

DUE: Upon Completion or by August 31

Student Name _____

Parent Name _____

We would appreciate you providing us with observations about your child's experiences outside of the school environment. Parent comments often reveal a side of the student that we do not know.

PLEASE TYPE YOUR ANSWERS AND RETURN TO MR. BRYSON

1. List three adjectives that best describe your child and briefly explain why.
2. Describe a specific incident from your child's high school years that has made you very proud of him or her.
3. Please discuss any special circumstances that you feel may present a difficulty for your child in the admissions process. Also, we would like to know about any special experiences which would make your child especially interesting to an admissions committee – living in a foreign country, participating in an unusual activity, etc.

PEER COMMENTS

DUE: Upon Completion or by August 31

*Ask a close friend to complete this evaluation for you

Student Name _____

Peer Evaluator Name _____

Your comments will provide the counselors with a fresh perspective and will be used for insights in preparing your friend's recommendations for college admission or scholarship consideration.

PLEASE TYPE YOUR ANSWERS AND RETURN TO MR. BRYSON.

1. List three adjectives that best describe your friend.
2. What is your friend's greatest strength? Give a specific example.
3. Describe one quality that makes this friend unique.
4. What is one challenge or area in which your friend could improve?
5. Give feedback on your friend in the following areas by indicating if he/she is "Excellent" "Good" "Average" or "Needs Improvement"
 - Energy and initiative
 - Independence
 - Self-confidence
 - Warmth of personality
 - Reaction to setbacks
 - Respect from peers
 - Respect from faculty

TEACHER COMMENTS

Student Name _____

Teacher Name _____

Input from teachers is very important! Please answer the following questions, keeping in mind that your statements may be quoted or paraphrased in a counselor recommendation. Thank you for making time in your busy schedule to complete this. PLEASE TYPE ANSWERS AND RETURN TO MR. BRYSON

1. How long have you known this student and in what context?
2. What are three adjectives that describe this student and why?
3. Describe a specific incident that reveals the student's character or academic potential.
4. How would you rate this student in Leadership Poor Dependability
5. Give feedback on the student in the following areas by indicating if he/she is "Excellent" "Good" "Average" "Needs Improvement" or "Not Observed":
 - Leadership
 - Dependability
 - Reaction to constructive criticism
 - Respect accorded by peers
 - Works well with others
 - Independence
 - Initiative
 - Creative
6. Provide any additional comments that will help the counselor write an informed, personal recommendation letter for this student.