



**ALABAMA
SCHOOL OF
FINE ARTS**

THE NEXT STEP

Planning for Life After ASFA



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This comprehensive handbook is meant to serve as a guide to you throughout your planning process for your next steps after the Alabama School of Fine Arts. We hope you will find it a useful at-home reference to supplement the individualized support provided by your Specialty faculty and college & career counselor.

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Section I: Introduction

ASFA College & Career Advising works with the Specialty faculty to help students identify positive and realistic career options and discover the best fit for college placement or other post ASFA training. We look forward to partnering with you to help ASFA students discover more about themselves and work towards achieving their goals.

Note: Our college advising program intentionally focuses primarily on 11th and 12th graders because they are better equipped to take part in the self-reflection and research that goes into the college search. Because 9th and 10th graders should be busy establishing a solid academic foundation and developing as human beings, the college advising process for them is broad and consists of information offered periodically through our advisory program:

- Encouraging 9th graders to establish a strong foundation in their academic and Specialty courses since 9th grade is the first year that grades count for college admissions.
- Having 10th graders complete a career assessment and reflect on their results, reinforce messages about good academic habits, and offer an overview and answer questions about the college search.
- When requested, meetings or phone calls with 9th or 10th graders or their parents (as time allows) to answer preliminary questions related to college.

Expectations & Ethics

The Role of the College & Career Counselor

What the college & career counselor will do:

- Assist with the details of applying to college and decision making
- Provide resources to help with college and career planning
- Give clear and timely communication
- Be a positive advocate for students to college admissions officers; appropriate interventions
- Give direct and honest responses to questions
- Respect students and parents. Each student has their own path in life, and we respect their journey. Each student is as important and valuable as the next.
- Follow the National Association for College Admission Counseling's [Guide to Ethical Practice in College Admission](#).
- Serve as a resource for college and career related topics.

What the college & career counselor will NOT do:

- Predict if a student will or will not get in to a particular school. No crystal ball.
- Drop everything in order to accommodate lack of planning on the student's part. There are nearly 70 students in the class, and each one gets equal consideration. No one student is more important.
- Find you money for college.

The Role of Students in the College Process:

- Take charge of your future; don't expect others to do the work for you.
- Do not submit false, plagiarized, or fraudulent statements on applications or other documents.
- Show respect to counselors, teachers, and staff.
- Honor all deadlines. Allow plenty of time to complete applications. Submit requests to Ms. Rutsky and teachers at least 3 weeks in advance of the deadline.
- Be honest and realistic. Be open to suggestions about your list of schools.

- Don't ask us to do something immediately; understand that you are one of nearly 70 seniors.
- Keep your college list on Scoir up to date.
- Maintain only one active enrollment deposit or the equivalent at one college.
- Notify colleges where you have decided to decline their offers of admission.
- Report college admission results and scholarship offers to Student Support Services by May of senior year. This information is used to help future ASFA students predict admissions chances and by ASFA for public relations purposes.

The Role of Parents in the College Process:

- Know and convey that the goal is for the student to find a post-ASFA option that is the best fit for the student, regardless of how selective or prestigious.
- Remember and remind students that students' value as individuals, their intelligence, and their ability to succeed are determined by themselves, not by the outcome of college applications.
- Be appropriately involved and interested in the college admissions process, but don't overdo it. You are not the one going to college. Don't pressure your child into a particular field of study, or a particular college. College admissions is about finding a good fit – a match to be made, not a prize to be won.
- Help with organization, time management and planning. For example, sit next to your students as they create an account for the SAT, ACT or transcripts. Help them to save their usernames and passwords. Don't do this for them. Sit with them as a guide.
- Be honest with your student about what you can contribute towards college costs.
- Be positive about your child's dreams. Listen and let them talk through their dreams, even if they don't sound practical. Don't be afraid of ideas, even if they sound farfetched. Life will help shape what really happens. Remember that the world needs inspired and enthusiastic artists, teachers, musicians, accountants, mathematicians and historians just as much as it needs lawyers, doctors and business professionals. The goal is for students to find what makes them happy and fulfilled in life.
- Be careful whose word you take as true. There are many people who consider themselves experts in college admissions, but may have their own agendas. You can be certain to get professional and unbiased information from your ASFA counselors and Specialty faculty.
- Be respectful and patient with us counselors as we work with each of the many students in our case load. Before contacting us with questions, please check this handbook, the College & Career Counseling section on the ASFA website, and the college's website.
- Respect boundaries. Remember that your student is in the driver's seat. NEVER, under any circumstances, complete your student's college applications, write their essays, or submit anything on their behalf. Other than for financial information, do not call a college on your student's behalf; help them to make that call themselves. (Rehearse with them ahead of time.) Do not communicate with anyone posing as your student.
- Use your phone and email contacts wisely. Don't contact your colleges of interest on a daily basis. Before you pick up the phone to call, please check the college's website.
- Establish a weekly or bi-weekly college meeting as a family. Discuss what's happening, how you can help your student, share information you have learned. And then, stop talking about college and just go back to enjoying time as a family. Constant talk about the college process creates enormous stress on teens and doesn't accomplish anything. If you nag your student, he/she will close down and stop sharing with you.
- Tell us what information or help you need. There are no silly questions. We want to especially invite questions and contact from parents who did not attend college themselves, or families in which this is your oldest child going to college. We are here to help everyone regardless of how much you do or don't know about college. We are happy to talk with you!

About Us

Serving as ASFA's college and career advisor since 2006, Rebecca (Becki) Rutsky has been named one of the "Counselors That Change Lives." Her higher education experience includes the University of California at Los Angeles Extension, Hoover City Schools, University of Alabama School of Medicine, University of Virginia, and Kenyon Young Writers Workshop.

Becki edited *Fundamentals of College Admission Counseling (1st edition)*, which earned her the Addis Service Award from the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC). She has served in leadership roles for NACAC and Southern Association for College Admission Counseling. She has earned fellowships and grants from Andrew Mellon Foundation, Jacob K. Javits Fellowship Program, National Merit Scholarship Corporation, and National Endowment for the Humanities.

Scoir

ASFA uses Scoir as a college database and search engine, as well as to organize college admission document requests. 10th grade students receive a registration number and account during their sophomore year as well as their parents. We highly recommend you use this program in your college search.

To access Scoir, go to <https://app.scoir.com/signin>.

- Enter the registration number in the email sent from Scoir.
- Choose your password.
- After this first registration, the login will be your email and the password they selected.
- If you forget your password, there is a link to reset it on the login page.

Scoir includes a career program called YouScience, and during 12th grade, students use Scoir to request transcripts and organize their college admission process.

Section II: Timelines and Course Information

When should I begin planning for college?

While there is no set date when college planning and preparation must begin, earlier is generally better. Colleges base their decisions on a student's coursework, grades, and extracurricular activities during high school, so that's where the main emphasis in preparing for college should occur.

However, the courses students take in middle school often determine what they take in high school, so starting the planning earlier can be helpful. (Check out the Middle School section of Knowhow2go.org/ for tips.) *College is Yours* by Patrick O'Connor is a great guidebook to begin or glean some wisdom during the process.

With the rising costs of college, getting a jump on financial planning is a good idea. We recommend FinAid.org and Road2College.com.

Following are some checklists to help you know what you should be doing for college preparation year by year:

9th & 10th Grade College Planning Timeline

Grades 9 and 10 are focused on establishing a strong foundation in high school, creating college awareness, and emphasizing the importance of taking ownership of one's learning in the early years of high school. The work that students do in these grades will be part of the record that colleges will see and base their decisions upon. In addition, younger high school students need to get involved in activities and explore their interests both inside and outside of school.

9th Grade

- **Do well in your classes and plan a challenging program of classes to take.**
 - The courses you take in high school show colleges what kind of goals you set for yourself. Are you putting your all into Specialty? Are you signing up for advanced classes in areas where you excel? Are you choosing electives that really stretch your mind and help you develop new abilities? Or are you doing just enough to get by? Colleges will be more impressed by respectable grades in challenging courses than by outstanding grades in easy ones.
 - Remember not to overload yourself. Work with your teachers and counselors to choose appropriate courses for your personal strengths in which you can succeed AND feel challenged.
 - Most academic colleges base admission decisions on grades from high school, so 9th grade is often when your academic record for college really begins to count. (For students who took Algebra I or foreign language in 8th grade, these courses will go on your transcript for college, too.)
 - For conservatories and arts schools, talent is the primary or sole factor for admissions more than academics or test scores, so if that's your goal, do what your Specialty faculty tell you, and practice, practice, practice.
- **Create an email address to use for college applications.**
 - You will be so inundated by college emails that many students find creating a separate email account is helpful. It is also helpful to allow both the student and parents access. Be sure to check it occasionally.
- **Create a file of important documents and notes.**
 - Include copies of report cards, lists of awards and honors, and lists of school and community activities in which you are involved (including both paid and volunteer work), and descriptions of what you do.
- **Get involved with academic enrichment programs, summer workshops, and camps related to your Specialty or future goals.** Learning happens outside of the classroom, too.
 - Stay active in your Specialty and outside activities that you enjoy.
 - Colleges look at more than just your academic record for admission. It's important that you demonstrate your abilities outside of the classroom, too.
 - **Quality** is more important than quantity. It's not as important that you spend a certain number of hours involved, but rather that you develop and demonstrate passion and initiative.
 - Explore Summer and Other Enrichment Programs Section of this handbook, but understand that formal programs are definitely *not* the only or necessarily the best way to spend your summer. Be curious and creative, explore your community and other options, look for ways to learn, explore your passions, and contribute to your community and beyond.

- **Consider registering with the website [Raise.me](#)**, which allows students to begin earning micro scholarships from colleges and can be a good motivational tool.
- Possibly attend college information programs that ASFA sponsors or shares.
- **Complete Net Price Calculators** on a variety of college websites to estimate what different colleges may cost your family. Use tools such as <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/paying-your-share/expected-family-contribution-calculator> and <https://fafsa.ed.gov/spa/fafsa4c/> to estimate what college may cost your family.

10th Grade

Fall

- **Attend college visits** at your high school and info sessions sponsored by colleges. Find out which ones are visiting [here](#).
- **Attend a college fair**, such as www.nacacfairs.org. Arts students, consider attending a National Fine & Performing Arts College Fair.
- **Take the PSAT**, a practice for the SAT test in October. Consider doing some test prep. [Test Prep Resources](#)
- **Stay on track with your courses.** Work with your teacher and counselor to make sure you're enrolled in the courses you need to prepare you for college or a career.
- **Begin learning about the college admissions process.** Get familiar with general [college entrance requirements](#). Individual college admission web sites and the library are good sources of information.

Winter: Read, Write, and Explore

- **Take on new roles.** Stay involved with your school and activities and work toward leadership positions in those that you like best. Become involved in community service and other volunteer activities.
- **Read, read, read.** Developing your reading skills will help prepare you for tests and make you a well-rounded individual. Read as many books as you can and read the newspaper to learn about current affairs.
- **Practice your writing.** You'll need good writing skills no matter what path you pursue, so work on those skills now to get prepared. Find a teacher or another adult who can advise and encourage you to write well.
- **Get to know Ms. Rutsky, your college and career counselor.** Make an appointment to introduce yourself, ask some questions.

Spring/Summer: Keep your grades up and reach out to colleges.

- **Contact colleges that interest you.** Contact schools and ask for more information about their academic requirements and any programs or activities that you're interested in. It's especially important to start this process now if you think you want to attend a military academy.
- **Visit college campuses** just to begin to get a feel for what you do and do not want.
 - Starting with nearby colleges (even if you really, really want to go out of state) often makes sense because they can serve as "dry runs" to practice visiting, talking to admissions staffers, and begin to get a sense of what you might like in a college campus, i.e. size, urban/suburban/rural, etc.
 - 10th graders often have more flexibility than older students to take time off from school so this can be a good time to visit farther-away schools

- Most colleges offer virtual tours.
- **Plan Next Year's Course Schedule.** Before you submit your course selections at your school, meet with Ms. Rutsky to review your proposed schedule for junior year.
- **Keep your grades up.** There's probably a lot competing for your attention, but it's important to remain focused on doing well in your classes. Remember that your grades affect your GPA and are one of the most important factors that most colleges consider in the admissions process.
- **Start your college search.** Use college search tools such as [Scoir](#), [BigFuture.org](#), and others to decide what factors are important to you and see a list of colleges that match your criteria. Attend college fairs and read the material you get from all types of schools—you may see something you like.

Summer

- **Make the break a productive one.** Colleges are interested in how you spend your free time. Summer study, jobs, and volunteer work are some good options. Identify some careers that interest you, and see if you can arrange a day to "shadow" someone who works in that field.
- Explore the Summer and Other Enrichment Programs section of this handbook, but understand that formal programs are definitely NOT the only or necessarily the best way to spend your summer. Be curious and creative, explore your community and other options, look for ways to learn, explore your passions, and contribute to your community and beyond.
- **Do some early research.** The web provides good college entrance information, as well as online applications to many institutions. Summer is a great time to check out some of the sites and bookmark your favorites.
- **Visit college campuses.** It's better to visit campuses when classes are in session, but sometimes summer allows you to see places that are harder to visit during the busy school year. If you are going on vacation, add in a college visit at the same time.

Any Time

- **Complete Net Price Calculators** on a variety of college websites to estimate what different colleges may cost your family. Use tools such as <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/paying-your-share/expected-family-contribution-calculator> and <https://fafsa.ed.gov/spa/fafsa4c/> to estimate what college may cost your family.
- Consider doing some test prep. [Test Prep Resources](#)

11th Grade College Planning Class of 2025



Note: You should be talking with your parents/guardians throughout this entire process.

Fall Semester

- Attend ASFA's college admission programs with your parents/guardians.
- Attend college visits at your high school and info sessions sponsored by colleges. This is your year to research colleges. Next fall is too late! Find out which ones are visiting in Scoir and [here](#).
- Attend a National College Fair and/or Performing & Visual Arts Fair: <https://www.nacacfairs.org/>
- Prepare to take the [PSAT](#) (also the qualifying exam for the [National Merit Scholarship](#) program), scheduled in October. Consider doing some test prep. [Test Prep Resources](#)
- Plan to take the [ACT](#) and/or the [SAT](#) this year. All 11th graders will take the ACT at ASFA in the spring, but colleges take your highest score on either test. Consider taking it on a national test date, too. Know that many colleges are test optional. In this handbook, see Section IV: ACT and SAT Tests.
 - Consider doing some test prep. [Test Prep Resources](#)
 - When registering, consider sending your score to up to 4 colleges to avoid sending fees after you take the test. However, you may wish to see your scores before you send to colleges.
- Check your email and Scoir www.scoir.com regularly as these are the official means through which ASFA communicates college-related information to students.
- Involve yourself in school or extracurricular activities, emphasizing quality, depth of commitment, and initiative in activities that are important to you.
- Study hard! Colleges tend to emphasize junior year grades.
- Complete Net Price Calculators on a variety of college websites to estimate what different colleges may cost your family. Use tools such as <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/paying-your-share/expected-family-contribution-calculator> and <https://fafsa.ed.gov/spa/fafsa4c/> to estimate what college may cost your family.

January-March

- Read all college and financial aid information and complete required college admission paperwork, which Ms. Rutsky will discuss with your class in January. Share and discuss with your parents/guardians.
- **REQUIRED FOR ALL JUNIORS: DUE MARCH 8th:**
 - Meet with Mrs. Rutsky. Don't delay.
 - Create a resume. You can find more information in the Resume section of this handbook and sample resumes that Ms. Rutsky will share with you.
 - Complete Brag Sheet on Scoir under Surveys.
 - Ask a teacher to complete a Teacher Insight Form for you.
- Continue researching colleges to find ones that would be good matches for you.
- Spring Break and other vacation days are good times to visit college campuses. Schedule ahead through admissions. Virtual visits are also a good option.
- Register for challenging senior year classes in which you feel you can succeed. Strength of curriculum is one of the top 3 most important factors in academic college admission decisions.
- Plan now for [summer](#) employment or other activities to explore interests, pursue challenges, and find ways to expand your horizons. Pre-college summer programs, travel, jobs, and [volunteering](#) can help you learn more about yourself and the kinds of college communities and programs of study that you

enjoy. A good place to start is the Summer & Enrichment Programs section of this handbook and colleges that interest you.

April-May

- Optional: You may want to take the [SAT](#) and/or retake the [ACT](#) since all colleges that consider test scores for admission will take your highest score on either test. [Test Prep Resources](#)
- Update your resume with any new activities, honors, or other achievements. Please post a new copy in Google Classroom any time you update it.
- Study hard & end your year in as strong a position as possible. Colleges tend to emphasize junior year grades.

Summer

- Get a head start on admission essays and read the Procedures for Applying to College section of this handbook carefully.
 - Gather ideas for your college essays by keeping a journal about significant books, issues, experiences, and thoughts. See the Common Application (www.commonapp.org) and individual college websites to preview application essay questions.
- Use your summer to expand your horizons and gain experience. How you use vacations can reveal your priorities & resourcefulness; what you do shows people what you value. Internships, jobs, volunteering, and pre-college summer programs can help you learn more about yourself and the kinds of college communities and majors that might suit you. A good place to start is the Summer & Enrichment Programs section of this handbook and colleges that interest you.
- Continue researching college options. You should have a well-considered list of colleges where you plan to apply by the first day of senior year.
- Visit college campuses. If you go, always call ahead to schedule through the Admission Office to make your visit official because showing interest in a school can be a tip factor in admission decisions.
 - Some colleges offer free/discounted programs to visit campus, but many have spring or early fall deadlines, so start applying now. <https://www.cappex.com/greenlight/articles/fly-in-and-diversity-programs>
 - If you can't visit, try online tours available on most college websites.
- Read the Paying for College and Scholarships sections of this handbook for directions on how to conduct your own individualized scholarship search.
- You can register now for summer/fall ACT and SAT dates to increase chances of getting your first choice testing location.
- Create an organization system & calendar for college admission.
 - If you are considering applying Early Decision/Early Action programs, be very aware of deadlines and your responsibilities because these come up quickly in the fall.
- If you are planning to apply as a fine/performing arts major, find out when audition/portfolio/scholarship dates are scheduled at your prospective schools. Some of these can be quite early in the fall, so plan now in order not to miss any opportunities.



12th Grade College Planning Calendar Class of 2024

Dates Subject to Change

August/September

- Read the Procedures for Applying to College section of [this handbook](#) carefully.
- Write college admission essays and/or artist statements. Ms. Evans & Ms. Rutsky will discuss these in Senior English.
- Check Scoir www.scoir.com and your ASFA email regularly as these are the official means through which we communicate college-related information to students.
- Finalize list of colleges to which you plan to apply. Consider using the Common Application (www.commonapp.org) if two or more if your colleges accept it.
- Arts students: Research audition deadlines now & put them on your calendar. Earlier is generally better if you feel you can prepare sufficiently.
- If you wish, register to take/retake the ACT or SAT if needed and consider doing some test prep. [Test Prep Resources](#)
- If you are considering applying Early Decision/Early Action, be very aware of deadlines and your responsibilities. Many are as early as October.
- Update your résumé from 11th grade and Please post a new copy in Google Classroom any time you update it.
- Write your admission and/or scholarship application essays. Don't procrastinate.
- Plan & schedule college visits & interviews well in advance.
- Meet with college reps who visit ASFA (listed on Scoir and [here](#)).
- Politely ask teachers for recommendations *in person* at least 2-3 weeks before deadlines. Use [this form](#) to make it easier for them to write you a great letter.
- (Re)take SAT or ACT if needed.

October

- Some Early Decision/Early Action deadlines may be as early as October. **Allow at least 3 weeks for all transcript and recommendation requests unless otherwise specified.**
- 2-3 weeks after parts of your application have been submitted, check with colleges to be sure they have received all required application materials and have your highest test score on file.
 - Do NOT panic if something is missing. It happens all the time. Usually the document is stuck on a server or waiting to be processed. First, contact the admission office to double check whether or not it is actually missing. Then, contact College Counseling if a transcript needs to be re-sent, whoever wrote your recommendation letter(s), or ACT or College Board if your scores need to be re-sent. Note: Colleges are strict about deadlines for student documents, but they are usually more lenient about items coming from schools or teachers.
- Proofread & finish application essay(s).
- Plan & make college visits & interviews. (Follow up with thank you notes.)
- Research and apply for scholarships throughout the year. See the Scholarships section of this handbook for tips on searching for scholarships on your own.
- (Re)take SAT or ACT if needed.
- Goal: Finish applying to colleges by **Halloween** so that you don't miss any deadlines.

November

- Many Early Decision/Early Action deadlines are in early or mid-November.
- Early Decision/Early Action candidates should file the [CSS PROFILE](#) if required (used mostly by some private out-of-state colleges) and/or other financial aid forms required by your prospective colleges.
- Take SAT if needed.
- Research and apply for scholarships throughout the year. See the Scholarships section of this handbook for tips on searching for scholarships on your own.
- Check to see if any of your colleges require the [CSS Profile](#) for financial aid.

December

- Auburn Scholarships: Apply by December 1 to be eligible for merit scholarship consideration
- U of Alabama Competitive Scholarship Deadline: Must be admitted by January 15th, so we recommend applying no later than December 1.
- FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) at www.fafsa.ed.gov is scheduled to open this month. **This is now a State of Alabama graduation requirement. ** Do NOT use any service charging a fee. The FAFSA is ALWAYS FREE!**
- (Re)take SAT or ACT if needed.
- Double check all application deadlines to be sure you haven't missed anything. Talk with ASFA graduates who are home for the holidays.

January

- Let College & Career Counseling know if any of your colleges require Mid-Year Report forms.
- Complete [FAFSA](#) (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and/or [CSS PROFILE](#), if you haven't yet. Research and apply for scholarships. Keep & send copies of **all** college admission and scholarship offers (even the ones you do not plan to accept) to Student Support Services.
- Submit any additional information to colleges (new scores, grades, honors, etc.) which may help your admission and/or scholarship process.

February

- February 1: University of Montevallo Priority Scholarship Deadline
- Research/apply for scholarships. Keep & send copies of **all** college admission and scholarship offers (even the ones you do not plan to accept) to Student Support Services.
- Complete [FAFSA](#) (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and/or [CSS PROFILE](#), if you haven't yet.

March

- March 1: UAB Scholarship Priority Deadline
- Continue to research/apply for scholarships. Keep & send copies of **all** college admission and scholarship offers (even the ones you do not plan to accept) to Student Support Services. Be patient as some colleges may not send decisions until the end of this month.

April

- Review college responses and compare financial aid offers www.nasfaa.org/award_notification_comparison_worksheet
- Continue to research/apply for scholarships.
- Complete the Senior Survey and send copies of **all** college admission and scholarship offers (even the ones you do not plan to accept) to Student Support Services by May 1st. (Earlier is better).

May

- May 1: Let colleges know your decision by this date. Confirm housing plans and submit deposits.
 - Remember that you may place a deposit at **only one college**. Double depositing to more than one college may result in admission offers being rescinded.
 - Let any colleges that you do not plan to attend know that you're not coming so that they can offer your place to another student.
- Your final transcript will be sent in mid-June to the college that you indicate in your Senior Survey.
- Take [AP Exams if needed for credit or course placement](#) at your prospective college, if applicable.
- Send thank you notes to organizations that offered you scholarships, teachers who wrote recommendation letters, and anyone else who helped you in the admission process. [How to thank teachers for letters](#).

June: Final transcripts will be sent in mid to late June to the college That you mark as Enrolling in Scoir.

Staying Up to Date with the Latest Information from ASFA College & Career Counseling

College Advising Website and College & Career Newsletter

Please take some time to explore the [ASFA College Advising website](http://www.asfa.k12.al.us/college) at www.asfa.k12.al.us/college. If there is a topic that you would like to see covered, please let us know.

Periodically we email out ASFA College & Career Newsletters with timely information. The 12th grade edition is especially detailed. They're also posted to the [ASFA College Advising Resources & Presentations web page](#) for easy reference.

Facebook College Advising Group

You may wish to join the [ASFA College Advising Facebook Group](#), where Ms. Rutsky regularly posts articles, tips, and events related to college admissions, paying for college, and career information.

Section III: Investigating College Options

College Conversation Starter

What are your priorities in selecting a college?

This exercise is designed to start the conversation between students and parents when it comes to selecting colleges to investigate.

On the following pages are common items or reasons why students select particular colleges. In order to understand the student and parent priorities in the college search, we encourage you to:

- Print out the following 2 pages.
- Cut along the lines in order to have fourteen sections for the student and an identical fourteen sections for a parent.
- The student and parent separately put the items in order of importance, with the top card having the most importance all the way down to the fourteenth card which is of the least importance.
- Students and parents take turns discussing why they selected the first most important consideration down to the last to understand the other's perspective.

This might help each party better understand one another and help students understand what, if any, parameters the parent needs to place on the college search before everyone is too deeply invested to change their ideas.

Note: ASFA also offers Corsava, an electronic card sorting system to help identify college priorities.

Academic or Arts Programs/Majors	Size of College
Surrounding Community	Prestige
Cost	Student Body
Geography	Religious Orientation
Academic Atmosphere	Extracurricular Opportunities Internships, study broad, clubs, Greek life etc.
Social Atmosphere	Sports/School Spirit
Diversity/Inclusion	Support Services (academic, medical, mental health, etc.)

Academic or Arts Programs/Majors	Size of College
Surrounding Community	Prestige
Cost	Student Body
Geography	Religious Orientation
Academic Atmosphere	Extracurricular Opportunities Internships, study broad, clubs, Greek life etc.
Social Atmosphere	Sports/School Spirit
Diversity/Inclusion	Support Services (academic, medical, mental health, etc.)

Researching Colleges

Most of your preliminary investigation will be done independently. Resources such as the Internet, college guidebooks and automatic mailings from the colleges will be valuable to you as you begin your search.

College search engines are probably the most popular search tool. Some of these include:

- [SCOIR](#)
- [CollegeExpress.com](#) – many useful lists of colleges
- [College Navigator](#) – search for colleges that offer certain majors
- [Big Future](#)
- [Cappex](#) – excellent info about merit aid
- [FinAid](#): Assistance on navigating through the financial aid process.
- Much more <http://schoolbuff.com/resources.asp>
- This link takes you to a large collection of college search sites:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ERVyKJw1gBKbitqYJuumxCvNAAHVUf1KHSyhF8F_zEc/edit#gid=677372349
- For specific questions (i.e. "Where can I find a list of animation programs?"), Ms. Rutsky may be able to help.

Next, review recommended sources like the *Fiske Guide to Colleges* and Unigo.com. Although not all colleges are included, for those that are, these resources provide an “objectively-subjective” view of campus life.

We know that all college websites tend to blend together, so use the websites for objective information, such as college majors, programs, course catalog, club information, etc.

By completing the PSAT, you will receive unsolicited college information. Admission personnel purchase names of prospective students based on performance on the PSAT. You may receive mail, email, texts, or phone calls in the spring of your junior year. These solicitations are designed to entice you to apply for admission whether or not you are admissible.

Receiving information from highly selective schools in no way implies that the college wants you or guarantees you admission. Sadly, in many cases, the colleges are simply trying to drum up a huge number of applications so they can deny more students and appear more selective. Also, the number of students denied translates into a higher ranking in college ranking polls. So, be a smart consumer and don't become a statistic.

Finally, consider the validity of word-of-mouth conversations. There are always individuals who try to judge our choices. Maintain your integrity and graciousness. Be happy for your friends and their choices. Make a choice that suits you and all the many reasons that college is the best one for you. Worry less about impressing others and more about your own happiness.

However much you would like it, there is no formula you can follow to find the perfect college for you. It's one of those life decisions that have many acceptable options and no one correct answer. You will find a college that fits your needs and desires. This is a choice with many possible options, but it is up to you to determine which is the best one for you.

College Visits

Visits at ASFA: Purpose

Visits with college representatives are a great way for students to ask questions and to establish relationships with admissions officers who are often responsible for reading/advocating for our students' applications. Some colleges track students "demonstrated interest" as part of their admissions decisions, so attending a visit with a college representative could be beneficial. Attending college visits or information programs is one way to demonstrate your interest, but savvy students should read and [apply these suggestions](#), too.

Of course, it's not always feasible for students to miss class to meet with college representatives. If students can't meet with the reps from colleges in which they are especially interested, they are encouraged to participate in virtual information sessions sponsored by the college.

Procedure

You can view list of scheduled college visits at [Calendar of Upcoming College Visits to ASFA](#). If students who have Scoir accounts log in to Scoir and add colleges to their My Colleges list, then Scoir will send reminders if any of the colleges on your list schedule a visit.

During COVID Restrictions:

Due to COVID-19, all ASFA-sponsored college visits are currently being held virtually.

When ASFA is in Session in Person

Most in-person college visits are scheduled during Homeroom A or Lunch B and virtual visits are after school so that juniors and seniors may attend without missing class; however, depending on the college representatives' schedules, sometimes visits must be scheduled at others times. You must have your teacher's permission in advance if you are missing class time to attend a college visit (including Homeroom.)

Parents are welcome to attend college visits as well. For in-person visits, please try to arrive a few minutes in advance of visits and sign in at the main registration desk as a visitor. Please be aware that college representatives are generally visiting multiple schools and may be on a tight schedule, so be respectful of their time when asking questions afterward.

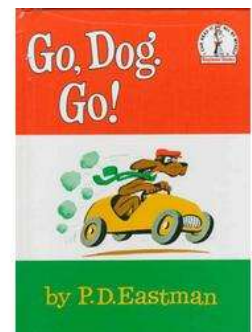
ASFA Students Visiting College Campuses

While COVID-19 may be causing some colleges to cancel in-person tours, here is a link to many [virtual college tours](#).

Always schedule your visit in advance through the admission office. Some colleges track students' demonstrated interest, so you want "credit" if you do visit.

When planning visits, consider seeing schools of different sizes and styles to help your student get a feel for these different environments (liberal arts colleges, mid-sized research universities, large public universities, etc.)

We advise students to spend a few minutes after the visit making notes about what they noticed about the school and what they liked. (See the Campus Visit Worksheet at the end of this handbook.) These notes can serve as a valuable reference later on when the student is building or narrowing down the college list, or when they are writing an application essay about a particular school.



College visits that involve an absence from school may be excused only with pre-approval from the student's Specialty Chair and a note from the parent. See the Student Handbook for details about excused absences.

In addition to official tour and information sessions, you can also:

- Ask to speak to faculty or advisor in area(s) of interest
- Interview
- Sit in on a class, tour studio/laboratory space
 - (Arts students: private lesson, portfolio review, etc.)
- Eat in cafeteria
- Talk to random people to get the unofficial man on the street view
 - Ask what they like/dislike most
- Stay overnight in dorm with a student host

Some colleges offer fly-in programs, travel scholarships, or other special visit events for recruited students, so ask if you fit into that category.

Use local colleges to practice. Even if you decide not to go there, you'll get an idea of what to look for, and you may discover something wonderful.

Ask Better Questions to Learn More:

- Instead of "Is your English Department good?" try "Can you give me some examples of recent graduates who are working in publishing?" or "Where are some of your English students doing internships?"
- Instead of "Is your college diverse?" try "Tell me about cultural activities and groups open to Asian students."
- Instead of "Do you have study abroad?" ask "Can I use my scholarships from your colleges to go on any study abroad program or only certain ones that your college sponsors?"
- The National Society for Student Engagement makes a great Pocket Guide to Choosing a College: Questions to Ask on Your College Visits and Frequently Asked Questions for Parents & Students Exploring Colleges.
- "5 Helpful Questions to Ask on an Art School Tour." offers some specific suggestions for arts students.

But I Want to Go to a "Good" College

Rankings

When students say this, Ms. Rutsky's first question back to them is, "What do you mean by a 'good' college?"

If high ranking is the answer, keep in mind that college rankings are often manipulated. There have been multiple instances of colleges using fraudulent data to raise their ranking in U.S. News and World Report, one of the most popular rankings. Also, there are so many different rankings out there that they have become almost meaningless.

The better approach is to create your own ranking system and find colleges that fit the criteria that are most important to YOU.

Prestige

Multiple research studies have shown that selectivity of college has no or minimal effect on most graduates' success or happiness. Some have shown that selectivity may offer some help to minorities, low income, and first-generation college students.

A stronger predictor of income is the caliber of the schools where students apply. Students who applied to several elite schools *but didn't attend them* were more likely to earn high incomes later than students who actually attended elite schools. Students' motivation and ambition have a much stronger effect on their subsequent success than average academic ability of their classmates.

What This Means for Your College Research

- What you DO at college matters more than the college you attend.
- One college is not right for everyone.
- There are probably several colleges where you would be equally happy and successful.
- Keep an open mind.

If you are interested in the research on this subject, see:

- [What Is an Elite College Really Worth?](#) *The Atlantic*, 2017
- [College prestige affects salaries very little in STEM fields, but more for others](#) *Wall Street Journal*, 2016
- [Does Going to a Selective College Matter?](#) *The Atlantic*, 2015
- [Why College Rankings Are a Joke](#) *New York Times*, 2016
- [Where You Go is Not Who You'll Be](#) by Frank Bruni.

Is It Impossible to Get into a “Good” College Anymore?

- There are many, many excellent colleges and universities. Students can get a good education at virtually any college because what matters most is not where they go, but what they do there.
- 70% is the average rate of acceptance among all colleges.
- The frenzy really revolves around just a few dozen colleges that are highly selective.
- The vast majority of students end up loving their college even though it may not have been their first choice during their search.

Criteria that Colleges & Universities Use to Make Decisions

Academic “Regular” Colleges

Comprehensive academic universities and colleges (which we'll refer to as “regular” colleges, like UAB, Birmingham-Southern, Vanderbilt, etc.) emphasize very different things when making their admission decisions than do conservatories and art schools. See the chart below for the factors that “regular” colleges consider when making admission decisions in order of importance.

Note that ASFA, like most specialty schools, does not rank, so the “Class Rank” category does not apply. (Colleges do not consider it since we don’t provide it.)

Academic Core Courses: It can sometimes surprise ASFA arts students that “regular” colleges focus most on Core classes, since that’s the opposite of what we do at ASFA, where Specialty is emphasized. Be aware that some colleges do not consider arts classes when they evaluate transcripts and recalculate GPAs. Ask the admission office at your prospective colleges how they recalculate GPAs because it varies widely.

TABLE 7. PERCENTAGE OF COLLEGES ATTRIBUTING DIFFERENT LEVELS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACTORS IN ADMISSION DECISIONS: FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN, FALL 2017

Factor	N	Considerable Importance	Moderate Importance	Limited Importance	No Importance
Grades in All Courses	220	74.5	15.0	5.5	5.0
Grades in College Prep Courses	220	73.2	16.8	5.9	4.1
Strength of Curriculum	219	62.1	21.9	8.7	7.3
Admission Test Scores (SAT, ACT)	221	45.7	37.1	12.2	5.0
Essay or Writing Sample	220	23.2	33.2	24.1	19.5
Student’s Demonstrated Interest	218	16.1	23.9	28.0	32.1
Counselor Recommendation	218	15.1	40.4	26.6	17.9
Teacher Recommendation	219	14.2	40.2	26.5	19.2
Class Rank	220	9.1	29.1	34.1	27.7
Extracurricular Activities	219	6.4	42.9	32.0	18.7
Portfolio	219	6.4	11.9	26.9	54.8
Subject Test Scores (AP, IB)	219	5.5	18.3	35.2	41.1
Interview	219	5.5	16.4	28.3	49.8
Work	217	4.1	28.6	36.9	30.4
State Graduation Exam Scores	218	2.3	8.7	18.8	70.2
SAT II Scores	216	1.9	5.6	14.8	77.8

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2018–19.

Conservatories and Art Schools

Conservatories and art schools evaluate candidates focusing on criteria in almost the opposite order as “regular” colleges:

1. Artistic talent – audition or portfolio
2. Artistic achievements – performances, awards, etc.
3. Recommendations from Specialty teachers
4. Other: Extracurricular, geography, gender, race, first-generation, legacy, etc. *may* play a role
5. Academics, testing, and counselor recommendation may sometimes be considered, but play a smaller role. However, these tend to be especially important at conservatories located within “regular” universities.

What Classes Should I Take to Go to _____ College?

Most colleges have course requirements, but certain highly selective colleges and universities really emphasize what courses you take. This is just a guideline. *Always check with your prospective colleges to see what their specific requirements are.*

Course Guidelines by Type of College/University

Academic Areas	ASFA Graduation Requirements ¹	Public or Private, Four-Year Universities Recommend or Require	Highly Selective Colleges and Universities Recommend ²	Conservatories & Art Schools
English	4 years	4 years	4 years	Varies
Mathematics	4 years	3 to 4 years, including junior high courses not on transcript	Enrollment through senior year	Varies
Science	4 years	3 to 4 years	4 years	Varies
Social Studies	4 years	3 to 4 years	3 to 4 years	Varies
Foreign Language	2 years	2 years of the same language	3 to 4 years	Rare
Electives ³	1.5 credits Fine Arts for Math/Science students	If required, 1 year of the same arts course	1 to 2 years	Often the Most Important Factor Along with Audition or Portfolio
Other Requirements	Driver's Ed., Health/Wellness Computer Applications			

¹ Additional ASFA requirements are listed in the [Curriculum Catalog](#).

² A highly selective college or university, as defined specifically for the purposes of this publication, would be any public or private institution that is generally admitting under 15-20% of applicants from their respective applicant pools. These colleges expect students to take the highest level courses offered by their high schools in many, though not all, subjects.

³ Some colleges and universities have specific visual or performing arts requirements.

Demonstrated Interest

Demonstrated interest is something that some colleges and universities use to track a) how much a prospective student likes their school and, more importantly b) how likely they are to enroll if the school admits them. Some, but not all, colleges track whether students show interest in them and consider this as a factor in making admission decisions. This blog post shares a list of potential action items that may increase students' chances of standing out to admissions advisors involve (among other things) attending college fairs, speaking with admission reps, and maybe even opening a few of those emails that colleges send: <https://www.collegeessayguy.com/blog/how-to-demonstrate-interest-in-a-college-a-brief-and-practical-guide>

Section IV: ACT and SAT Tests

College admission testing requirements vary from college to college. It is important that you research the testing requirements for all the schools on your list of prospective colleges.

Due to COVID-19, many colleges have adopted test optional or test blind policies. Check [FairTest.org](https://www.fairtest.org) and with your prospective colleges to learn more.

Which Test(s) Should I Take?

- All colleges in the U.S. that use test scores will accept either the [ACT](#) or [SAT](#).
- Most will use your highest Composite Score on either test.
- [Some colleges superscore](#), which means they will take a student's highest sub-scores from multiple test dates and create a new, often higher composite score.
- You can [compare your ACT and SAT scores here](#).
- [Many colleges are test optional](#), meaning they do not require standardized test scores for admissions. They may require additional information, such as a graded essay or interview. However, many colleges do use test scores for merit scholarship awards, so double check this with individual schools.
- There are also [test blind colleges](#) that will not consider any scores at all.

Testing requirements vary widely, so be sure to check with individual college admission offices for details on what they look for in their successful candidates.

What are the Tests and Their Differences?

The following descriptions were taken directly from [The College Board](#) and [ACT](#) web sites:

ACT Assessment

The [ACT](#) Assessment is a national college admission examination that consists of tests in: English, Mathematics, Reading, Science Reasoning. The ACT Assessment tests are curriculum based. The ACT Assessment is not an aptitude or an IQ test. Instead, the questions on the ACT are directly related to what you have learned in your high school courses in English, mathematics, and science. Because the ACT tests

are based on what is taught in the high school curriculum, students are generally more comfortable with the ACT than they are with the traditional aptitude tests or tests with narrower content.

SAT

The [SAT](#) measures verbal and mathematical reasoning abilities that students develop over time, both in and out of school, which are related to successful performance in college.

PSAT/NMSQT

Juniors take the [PSAT/NMSQT](#) (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) in October. It's a standardized test that provides practice for the SAT. It is also the qualifying exam for the [National Merit Scholarship Corporation](#) (NMSC) scholarship programs.

Differences Between the ACT and SAT

	ACT	SAT
Science	Includes a science section which asks students to interpret tables and charts and read (not necessarily about science content knowledge).	No science section.
Math	Allows use of a calculator throughout, and tests Trig functions and Geometry in further depth than the SAT.	Includes one section without a calculator and one section with a calculator. SAT math includes almost no Trigonometry, but tests Algebra in further depth than the ACT.
Reading	The ACT reading asks for the same amount of reading in less time than the SAT.	The SAT reading section lasts longer, testing endurance and focus
English	No significant difference.	No significant difference.
Writing	Optional. The ACT Writing section offers a short paragraph of background information on a social issue and asks students to consider three offered perspectives in light of their own views. The Writing score is not factored into your Composite Score.	The SAT no longer offers a writing section.
Timing	The ACT allows fewer seconds per question than the SAT.	Often students report feeling less rushed on the SAT, though some sections are longer

When Should I Take the ACT and/or SAT?

All ASFA 11th graders will take the ACT through school. You will receive more information during the school year. Students may also wish to take the ACT and/or the SAT on other dates, called national test dates, which you can find on websites maintained by [ACT](#) and [College Board \(SAT\)](#).

When to begin taking the tests is an individual decision; what is right for one student may not be for another. Most students don't make their highest scores until they have completed some or all of their 11th grade coursework, although some students feel more comfortable beginning earlier.

You can retake the tests as well, later in the summer before or fall of your senior year. As you plan for test dates, take into account factors such as rehearsals, performances, family travel, and any other obligations you might have.

Registering for the ACT & SAT Tests

Students register on their own to take or retake the tests on a national test date at either:

ACT – www.actstudent.org/regist/

SAT - <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register>

ACT and SAT National Testing Dates and Fee Information: www.compassprep.com/act-and-sat-testing-dates/

Get ahead of the curve by deciding on your test dates in advance. Make sure you register **on time to avoid hefty late fees.**

Each site will ask you to create an account the first time you click “register for a test.” After that, log in to your same account.

Enter all required information, but feel free to skip the student questionnaire portions that ask about the classes you've taken and your future plans. You can also edit this information later. This optional information helps colleges market to students with relevant interests, grades, and test scores. If that is important to you, go ahead and fill out this portion, but you do not have to.

Decide whether you're going to take the optional ACT writing test. (The SAT no longer offers a writing portion.) [Fewer and fewer colleges are requiring or recommending this essay](#), but one of the schools on your list may, so double-check before deciding to opt-out. There is an additional fee for the essay. Follow the instructions on the test company sites to upload a photo, pay fees, and print your admission ticket. You can also wait to log on and print the week of the test, but make sure not to lose your password. You won't be able to take your test without your admission ticket.

Fee Waivers

If you qualify for the Federal Free or Reduced Lunch Program, you automatically qualify for ACT and/or SAT fee waivers. Families must apply through the [Child Nutrition Program Manager in the cafeteria](#). Students who qualify for free or reduced lunch may contact us to request fee waivers.

Students who receive fee waivers from College Board can sign up for two SAT tests with or without essay for free. They can also send those scores to an unlimited number of schools. Students who receive fee waivers from ACT can also take two exams and send scores to up to 4 schools as part of registration and to as many as 20 additional schools later. Fee waivers cover basic registration costs and include the writing test, but they do not cover late or change fees.

More information on [SAT fee waivers](#) and [ACT fee waivers](#).

More Information

The [Compass Guide to College Admission Testing](#) is a very detailed resource that you may wish to consult.

Test Preparation

Whether you prefer to work on your own, in a structured classroom setting, or with an individual tutor, there are plenty of options available, no matter what your budget. There are plenty of free or low-cost options to practice, such as the PSAT test that 11th graders at ASFA all take, free full-length sample ACT tests available in the 3rd Floor Student Center, free practice tests, test prep guidebooks in the library, and several free online test prep sites. For more resources, see [ACT & SAT Test Prep Resources](#).

Section V: Preparing College Applications

Admission Decision Plans

Colleges determine the conditions under which you may apply, so not all colleges offer all of the following options.

Rolling Admission

Schools like Alabama and UAB operate on a rolling admission basis; they review completed applications and respond in forty-eight hours to twelve weeks with a decision. Students are admitted based on set criteria and applicants are not compared to one another for available spaces.

Once admitted, students may wish to return housing applications (check to make sure any deposit is refundable), but should not submit an enrollment deposit until the final decision to enroll has been made for one school only.

All admitted students remain admitted until May first, which is a postmark or submission date when one enrollment deposit should be sent to the school where the student will enroll; if the deposit is not received by the deadline, admission will be cancelled and typically cannot be reinstated. The only exception is for students admitted under a binding Early Decision program who are required to deposit earlier.

Early Decision

Early Decision describes the application process which commits admitted students to enrolling. Students typically apply by November first to fifteenth of their senior year and are notified in mid-December. Admitted students must enroll; deferred students are released from the commitment and will have their credentials reviewed again with the regular decision candidates. Students who select an ED option may only apply ED to one school, but may, and should, still send applications under early action and/or rolling admission plans. If admitted to the ED school, students must immediately withdraw their applications from other schools whether or not they have received a decision from those schools.

ED I is as previously described; ED II is offered with late December to early January deadlines to accommodate students who either did not have enough information to make a decision to commit ED by November or were deferred or denied as ED I candidates at other institutions. Candidates denied ED I may not reapply to the same institution ED II.

Students who seek financial aid for college should have their parents first complete the Net Price

Calculator on the prospective college website to determine how financially feasible it is to attend, and if cost is an issue, parents may contact the financial aid office to determine if and under what conditions the student might be released from the binding commitment. Colleges may say no, that only students whose families are prepared to pay full costs should apply ED.

Early Action

Candidates who apply under an early action plan are applying earlier than most candidates, but if admitted, are not required to attend. Regular EA plans provide these applicants with decisions in mid-December or in January, depending upon the timeline set by the particular school. Students who apply under the regular early action plan may apply to as many early action or rolling admission schools as they wish.

Restrictive Early Action

Restrictive or Single-Choice Early Action is a plan implemented by schools such as Princeton, Stanford, and Yale, whereby candidates only may apply to their one early action school, but may still apply to schools that offer rolling admission. Candidates may not apply ED anywhere. Hybrid programs exist for some colleges, and we all need to check college websites yearly for changes in the rules.

Regular decision programs

Regular decision application deadlines are usually in January or February. Students receive an admission decision in March or April and have until the May 1 common reply date to notify the school of their attendance via the enrollment deposit.

Deferral decisions

Students who are deferred are neither admitted nor denied, but their applications are rolled into the regular decision pile for consideration in the general pool. Colleges typically will request mid-year grades.

Waitlist

Waiting lists are designed for colleges to hedge their bets; students are left hanging while the college waits to learn how many students send in enrollment deposits. If fewer students deposit than anticipated, colleges go to their waiting lists and select candidates to fill the available spaces. Students who are waitlisted might wish to forward additional information to strengthen their case for admission, but only as designated appropriate by each college. This includes third quarter progress reports; new honors, awards or accomplishments; and notification from the waitlisted student that he or she will enroll if selected off the list. Waitlisted students still should deposit by May first to one of the colleges or universities where they were admitted to have a college to attend. Colleges should notify waitlisted candidates by August first of their final status; not hearing from the college by August first turns your waitlisted status into a denial. If, however, you are taken off the waiting list and accept that spot, you should then notify the school where you deposited (your backup school) that you will not be enrolling, but attending the place that took you off the wait list.

Student responsibilities in the application process include knowing and respecting the rules of ethical conduct. These are listed on page six of Section I of this handbook. College counselors serve as liaisons to make sure both colleges and students adhere to these admission guidelines as sanctioned by the National Association for College Admission Counseling. Sanctions will be levied against high schools where students violate these regulations. Please apply responsibly and deposit only to one college or university. If you have any questions or believe your rights have been

violated, contact your college & career counselor for assistance.

The Common Application

The Common Application www.commonapp.org helps seniors apply to multiple colleges using the same application instead of completing many individual college application forms. College admission officers agreed on a common set of questions central to each of their applications. Over 800 colleges and universities accept the Common Application and each sign an agreement annually to pledge full and equal consideration of the Common Application as their own application, so there is no advantage to completing the college's own application over the Common App.

Many colleges do not even have another version of an application; they are exclusively Common Application schools. Please consider:

- You can register yourself at any time and complete the information under the “Common Application” tab; it will be saved.
- The sections that are college-specific, which include the teacher recommendation section, will be wiped out for revision each year and should thus not be completed until, at the earliest, August of the senior year.
- You fill out one version of the Common App that is submitted to each of your Common App schools.
- Colleges personalize the Common App by requiring supplements, which may or may not include another essay. These are listed under the “My Colleges” tab.

Step-by-Step Instructions

- In mid-August, the Common App website will have a chart listing:
 - which colleges use the common application,
 - what their respective deadlines and application fees are,
 - what their testing requirements are, and
 - how many teacher recommendations, if any, are required.
- Register yourself by creating your user name and password and complete the application. You do not have to complete it at one sitting. Save page-by-page and return later.
- Navigate the Common Application by using the tabs marked Dashboard, My Colleges, Common Application and Search for Colleges.
 - Add colleges under the “College Search” tab.
- Complete the sections under the Common App tab when you are ready.
- Once you complete the Common App items, you will still have to complete college-specific information under the “My Colleges” tab.
- Please waive your rights under “Recommenders and FERPA.” Under “Invite recommenders,” invite your teacher recommender and your ASFA college counselor. Ms. Rutsky will not write a school recommendation letter for any student who does not waive their FERPA rights, and individual teachers may do the same. We will, however, still send transcripts, the Common App School Report, and other documents.
- Do NOT invite your college counselor to review your CA; this is for students who don't have school counselors and who are working with foundations.
- Print preview the entire application BEFORE submitting.

- Transmit your application and appropriate supplements *after* you have thoroughly reviewed them.
- You submit the application one by one to your colleges, and if you wish, you can make changes to your application from one college to the next.
- Failing to click the “submit” button is a common mistake. Look for the green checkmark on your dashboard next to the college name to ensure you have successfully submitted the application.
- Your application can be submitted without regard to whether or not your teacher recommendations have been uploaded or your transcript has been sent.
- Request transcripts for every college to which you will apply by adding the colleges to your Applying or Applied list on Scoir. We will not send transcripts unless you complete this step.

Information you need for the “Education” and “Academics” sections

Alabama School of Fine Arts
Address: 1800 Rev. Abraham Woods Jr. Blvd.,
Birmingham, AL 35203

CEEB code 010-326

Your college counselor’s name, phone number, and email:

Rebecca Rutsky (205) 252-9241 rrutsky@asfa.k12.al.us

Under “Title” or “Position” please list “College & Career Counselor.”

Our grading scale is a weighted, 4.0 scale even if your GPA is over a 4.0. Typically, we recommend you use your weighted grade point average, always available to view on your Scoir account or on your transcript available in iNow.

Please type in your course titles as listed on your transcript. For course level designations, all core are “College Preparatory,” Specialty courses are “Honors,” or “High Honors,” AP classes are AP, and electives can be designated as “Regular/Standard” or “N/A.”

The number of students in your class varies, and will be set after school starts next fall. It will be posted on the ASFA College & Career Counseling website.

Applying to College

There are four main parts of a typical application:

1. The online application
2. A transcript of ASFA courses and grades earned
3. Standardized test scores: ACT, SAT
4. A teacher recommendation. Fewer than 70 colleges require two recommendation letters

It does not matter what order these items are sent or uploaded to an admission office.

Students complete applications online. They can bring their logins to meetings with the college counselor to go over applications before submitting them.

Test scores are not included on the ASFA transcript. AP scores are only sent to the one school where the student will enroll AFTER the student has been admitted and has made up his or her mind.

Many colleges, but not all, allow for test-optional admissions or allow self-reported scores. Please consult the lists posted in the Test Information section. If you need to submit official test scores, go to either www.actstudent.org or www.collegeboard.org to log in and pay to send scores. Students who qualify for the free/reduced lunch programs may request fee waivers from Student Support Services.

If a teacher recommendation is needed, see the procedure outlined later in this section.

Arts students may have earlier deadlines for auditions for performing arts programs. Portfolios and audition tapes are typically sent to colleges through slideroom.com. There is a fee for this.

After you apply

- Allow 2-4 weeks for colleges to match all the parts of your application and note on your account what is missing.
- Check your email. Many colleges correspond with you over email.
- If admitted ED, you should immediately email all other colleges to withdraw any submitted applications.
- EA, Single Choice EA, Restrictive EA, deferred ED or rolling admission candidates have until MAY 1 to deposit at ONE college or university.
- If you are waitlisted at your top choice, you still must deposit somewhere by May 1 and then you can see if or how you move on the waiting list.

Essays

Colleges and universities that require writing samples will request an essay. Some may also ask for a copy of a graded writing sample completed as a high school assignment. Your college counselor is available to review your writing with you.

More detailed information about writing the essay will be sent out to rising seniors, but following are some general suggestions.

There is a section in the Common Application called Additional Information. Students who will be presenting an academic record which may need explanation or students who wish to disclose a learning disability should consider composing a letter of self-advocacy or self-disclosure. Even colleges that do not require writing will appreciate the additional information students present in this format. We recommend that students whose records are not accurate portrayals of their abilities write an explanation so that the college admission officers may evaluate the students' records appropriately and fairly.

There is a Covid section, too. Use this only if you need to explain how Covid *significantly* affected your academic record. One example would be a student who had to care for younger siblings and was unable to focus on their own schoolwork.

Steps in Creating the Essay: Assessing the Task

- Using your short list of schools, or places where you know you will apply, check online applications to determine what type(s) and how many writing samples you need. Look for similarities between questions to minimize your work.
- Start early, well ahead of any deadlines. Give yourself time to develop, hone, and edit a polished essay.

Beginning to Write

- If background reading or research is necessary, begin today. Keep notes as you deliberate your responses and thoughts to particular ideas or passages. Write down pertinent page numbers.
- If the topic is too broad, (“Tell us about yourself”), narrow it by reviewing a diary or journal. Ask friends how they would answer the questions on your behalf. Take notes and ask questions about their suggestions or responses.
- Think about what you want colleges to know about you.
- Make a list of whatever is appropriate in response to the question. Be serious, be silly; just begin to organize your thoughts and options. Collect the data you will need: log significant events, accomplishments, hopes and dreams. List any quotes or sayings that have particular meaning for you.
- Forget modesty and humility. Express aspects of your life about which you are proud. Your readers don’t know anything about you except what you convey.
- Write until all of your ideas are covered. You can condense later.
- Allow time to think and review. Jot down ideas before you write.
- If you tend to be organized, develop an outline from the lists you have compiled. If not, try a freeform outline or initial writing sample as a first draft.

Sharpening your focus

- Once the first draft is completed, read it and ask yourself what main ideas you are trying to express. As yourself how you illustrate those ideas.
- Does the writing ramble? Are the points pertinent to your main focus? Do you appropriately answer the question asked?
- Put your first draft away at least overnight. Evaluate it with some distance.
- Look for coherence and connections. Reread it as if it is someone else’s story.
- Incorporate humor appropriately. Review your draft for genuine communication.
- If you are bored or confused, your reader will be, too. Trust your feelings. If you can’t find meaning in your own story, will your reader?

Polishing the drafts

- Your college counselor, trusted English or Creative Writing teachers, and other good writers may be helpful reviewers or proofreaders. Sit with them to discuss your essay.
- Consider these ways of evaluating your work:
 - Would more detail be helpful?
 - Are there repetitive phrases you can delete?
 - Can you combine sentences for a smoother flow of ideas?
 - How can this idea be best expressed?

- Are you comfortable with these words?
- Does the writing sound genuine and believable?
- Check for grammatical and typographical errors.

Following the instructions – the formula

- College admission counselors read hundreds of essays each year. Try to avoid common themes and over-used generalizations. Insert your personality in your work.
- Brevity is appreciated. Keep your essay within the word limit. Do a print preview to make sure everything you wrote will be viewable.
- Application readers are more interested in your interpretation of the event than in the event itself; this allows them to learn more about you. The story itself should take up no more than a quarter-page of a 600-word essay.
- Finally, your reader understands you are nervous. Try to relax and offer your best efforts.

Recommendation Letters

Not all colleges require letters of recommendation. If you need letters, please follow these instructions for teachers.

Whom/How to Ask

- First, gather your applications to determine if, how many, and what kind of recommendations are needed.
- **If there is no mention of a teacher or any letter of recommendation, do not send one. If the college asks for one teacher recommendation, ask only *one* teacher. More is NOT better.**
- Consider whom to ask:
 - Teachers from your 11th or 10th grade year are typically best.
 - Colleges want as recent an assessment of your academic talents as possible.
- What teacher can best represent you as a student? Who can discuss your learning behaviors, struggles and successes, communication skills, critical thinking, classroom contributions?
- You are not required to use an English teacher, but for academic colleges (as opposed to conservatories/art schools) you should use teachers from academic subjects. Colleges want to know about you as a learner.
- Special exceptions exist for individuals who apply as fine arts majors. For example, if you are a music major, include a recommendation from a music instructor.
- **THREE WEEKS** before the actual deadline to allow teachers ample time to compose your letter of recommendation:
 - Meet face-to-face with the teacher(s) whom you intend to ask and say, “Would you be comfortable supporting my applications for college this year by writing me a letter of recommendation?”
 - Ask if they would like any additional information from you, such as the ASFA form included in this section or if they have their own requirements.

Organize the work for your recommender(s):

Complete the form marked “ASFA Teacher Recommendation Form” so your teacher knows when your recommendations are due.

Teachers only need to know when your FIRST Common Application is due; you decide which colleges get to view the letter. Teachers cannot upload their letters to the Common App until you invite and assign their teacher letter to at least one school. You have to complete most of the "Education" section, then to invite each teacher, go to "My Colleges" and click on "Recommendations and FERPA." Then scroll down and click on "Invite teacher," add the teacher name, department and email address. Close out the recommendation box and click on "Assign." Now your teachers can upload their letters for you.

For non-Common App schools, you will either need to write in a link to an electronic recommendation form, send an electronic invitation through the application system, or provide envelopes for a paper letter to go to your schools.

The majority of schools have an electronic system, so you have to put the correct teacher and counselor emails in your application. Very few schools want a letter in paper.

Further into senior year, write a brief thank-you note to your teacher. Remember, teachers complete this task on their own time and with no clerical support. The easier you make it for them, the more appreciative they will be. Be grateful that they are willing to support you with your college admission and keep them updated on your admission decisions. Keep your supporters informed of your application progress, such as where you are admitted and where you eventually attend.

Very few colleges require more than one teacher recommendation. See next page.

For more information, refer to this helpful article: [How to Ask for a Recommendation](#).

Colleges Requiring Two Teacher Letters of Recommendation

American U. in Bulgaria	Duke	Reed
Amherst College	Duke Kunshan	Rice
Bard (& Simon's Rock)	Durham U. (UK)	Sarah Lawrence
Barnard	Emory	Scripps
Bates	Franklin Olin Sch. of Engr.	Skidmore
Bennington	Goddard	Smith
Boston College	Grinnell	Spelman College
Bowdoin	Harvard	St. Lawrence
Brown	Harvey Mudd	St. Louis Col of Pharmacy
Bryn Mawr	Haverford	Stanford Stockton U.
Cal Tech	Hillsdale College	Swarthmore
Capitol Tech. U.	Hofstra	Syracuse
Carleton	Johns Hopkins List College –JTS	Trinity College (CT)
Case Western Reserve	Macalester	Underwood Int'l College
Claremont McKenna	Middlebury	U. Chicago
Colby College	MIT	U. Dubuque
Colgate	Mt. Holyoke	U. Penn Vanderbilt
College of Saint Elizabeth	Northwestern U.- Qatar campus only	Wagner College
College of the Atlantic	Notre Dame (MD)	Washington and Lee
Colorado College	Oberlin	Webb Institute
Columbia College Hollywood	Occidental	Wellesley
Columbia University	PA Academy of the Fine Arts	Wesleyan
Connecticut College	Pitzer	Williams
Cornell University Dartmouth	Pomona	Yale
Davidson	Princeton	Yale-NUS College
Doshisha U.		Zaytuna College

ASFA Teacher Recommendation Form

Complete and give to your teacher(s) whom you are asking to write you a recommendation.

Student name: _____ Date: _____

Student email
address: _____

Student Responsibilities:

- Refer to the The Next Step: Planning for Life After ASFA under Recommendation Letters for detailed instructions.
- Please include a thank-you note with this form; teachers donate their personal time to write and upload or send your letters of recommendation.

Common Application

- Confirm your recommender's email address BEFORE inviting him or her to the Common Application
- List your Common App school with the EARLIEST deadline:

Common App College/University Full Name College Application Deadline

Non Common Applications

List colleges and universities in order of application deadline

College/University Full Name	College Application Deadline	For recs that will be uploaded to online forms, write "Electronic Invitation" here
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____

ASFA Teacher Recommendation Form

- Complete this form with the same thought and care that your teacher will exercise in writing your recommendation.
- Check with your specific recommender(s) to determine if he or she has a different form for you to complete.
- Type the following responses on a separate piece of paper for readability.

CLASS TITLE: _____ PERIOD: _____

If your application materials will be filed under your formal name, please write your formal name here: _____

1. How did this class help you grow as a learner? How will this prepare you for the future?
2. What do you see as your greatest achievement in this class?
3. What ideas, understanding, and knowledge did you take away from this class?
4. How did you prioritize the demands of this class with your Specialty or extracurricular activities?
5. One of my strengths in this class was my _____ as exemplified when I _____
6. How did you contribute to the classroom experience throughout the year? What was your most significant contribution?
7. If there is any additional information that will help your teacher write a better letter for you, include it here.

Section VI: Paying for College

Paying for college can certainly be a major concern for families. Understanding the forms of aid available can help.

There are two primary forms of aid available to help families pay for college:

1. Need-based aid, which is based on a family's income and assets;
2. Merit scholarships, which are generally based on the student's achievements. Merit scholarships can be offered by the college or by outside organizations.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. When should we plan to pay for college?

A. College is expensive. Plan early. We recommend [Paying for College in Four Steps](#) and [FinAid.org](#).

Q. How can we find out how much various colleges cost?

A. [Scoir](#) lists the average cost for virtually all colleges. Big Future's [College Planning Tools & Calculators](#), especially the Net Price Calculator, and EFC Calculator are good places to begin.

[FAFSA 4Caster](#) Using last year's tax form, you can use this tool to estimate what colleges and the federal government will declare your "Estimated Family Contribution" (EFC) to be. Colleges will subtract this number from the total Cost of Attendance to determine how much aid you need.

Note that due to financial aid, many families may pay less than the whole "sticker price" of a college. Look on individual college websites for a "Net Price Calculator" to determine if your family qualifies for need-based aid. If you have trouble locating it, ask the college's financial aid website or google "net price calculator" and the name of the college.

Q. Should I apply only to colleges that I know I can afford?

A. *Do not be misled by the "sticker price" of college!* Sometimes the most expensive colleges are able to provide the most financial aid! The best way to find out how much a certain college will cost is to use the Net Price Calculator on each college's website to help estimate your costs and the amount of aid for which your family may be eligible and/or contact that school's financial aid office and request help.

However, you should have at least one "financial foundation college," where the student knows s/he can get admitted and the family knows they can afford. This guarantees that student has at least one solid back up.

Q. When do we fill out the financial aid forms?

A. Usually between October 1st-March 1st of the 12th grade year, but varies by college. The **FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)** opens October 1st each year. Check with all of your prospective colleges on when their deadlines are to have the FAFSA completed.

Q. Can you tell me how to get scholarships?

A. Although ASFA students have an incredible history of winning scholarships well above the national average, there is no magic formula. Although Ms. Rutsky wishes that she had a hotline to the financial aid offices at colleges that she could ring up to get all ASFA students scholarships, no such thing exists. Each student and family has to do the research and paperwork themselves. However, the following advice will help guide your process:

1. Follow Colleges' Financial Aid Instructions. The most important things to do are: find out from your prospective colleges how to apply for scholarships, follow their instructions completely, and *meet all deadlines*. For most students, the majority of financial aid comes from the college that they attend. Research this on the college website, but be sure to also talk with an admission and/or financial aid officer to be sure you understand the process at their school because application processes vary from college to college. One place to start is the financial aid/scholarships section on the website of individual colleges that interest you.

2. Need-Based Aid: Check the Financial Aid page of the colleges to which your child is applying to see what is required.

Most colleges require the **FAFSA (Free Application for Student Aid www.fafsa.gov)**. Some colleges also require the **CSS Profile (<https://profileonline.collegeboard.com>)** or their own forms.

Need-based aid applications are usually done between October 1-February or March of the student's senior year for regular decision, but be sure to check to see what your individual college's specific deadlines are. If you apply Early Decision or Early Action, the deadline will likely be in the fall near the application deadline. (*Be sure to ask* your colleges when their financial aid deadlines are for the decision plan under which you are applying.) Students must reapply for need-based aid every year in order to qualify for aid the following school year.

3. Searching for Merit Scholarships: *Students and families must do their own research to find scholarship opportunities that are relevant to them.* The Scholarship section of this handbook offers a list of merit scholarship search resources, plus step-by-step instructions on locating individualized scholarship opportunities.

Q. What if we were offered financial aid, but it's not enough?

If your financial aid offers still aren't what you need, you can request a Professional Judgment Review from the college financial aid office. This is commonly known as an appeal.

Here are tips for requesting a professional review of your aid offer. First, do not call asking for more aid "negotiating" to avoid offending colleges. Second, SwiftStudent formswift.com/swift-student offers free tools to help you write your appeal.

"How to Negotiate a Better Financial Aid Package" is a good place to begin, and "9 Mistakes that Will Ruin Your Chances for Financial Aid" tell you what *not* to do. For more detail, read the following:

- [Tips for Requesting a Professional Judgment Review of Your Financial Aid Offer](#)
- [How to Request Professional Judgment Review](#)
- [Financial Aid Review Request Samples](#)
- Another [Sample Financial Aid Review Request Letter](#).

Q. What if we don't think we'll qualify for aid?

Even if you think it's unlikely or don't know if your family will qualify for aid, there are many good reasons to apply anyway. Read [The Wall Street Journal's article "Why Wealthy Families Should Apply for College Financial Aid."](#)

Q. Should we pay for a service that offers to fill out financial aid forms or that guarantees financial aid?

A. The main thing to know is that the federal government provides the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and as its name suggests, it is FREE!! You should never, ever pay anyone to fill out financial aid forms for you. If you need assistance, the FAFSA offers toll-free customer service by phone, and any college financial aid office can assist you. **AVOID the website fasfa.com**, which looks just like the real FAFSA, but charges a hefty fee; it is a scam!

As when completing your taxes, families can choose to [pay a preparer](#) to complete the FAFSA. In the past, some companies took advantage of students charging them to complete a form that they were unaware that they could complete for free. So there is a great deal of emphasis on not having to pay to file the FAFSA and available resources to help with completing the form.

However, given that [financial aid expert Mark Kantrowitz stated in the New York Times](#) that "Even a certified public accountant or certified financial planner may not have in-depth knowledge of the intricacies of federal student aid laws and regulations" you would think hiring an actual expert would be a good thing. If you decide you would rather spend money than time in completing the FAFSA, practice due diligence in selecting a provider.

Q. Where can we get free help with the FAFSA and financial aid questions? What if we have more questions?

A. Start with the people who are responsible for the FAFSA: Federal Student Aid Center.

The FAFSA website has several resources that can help you with the FAFSA. You can find tips to get organized before starting to fill out the FAFSA at <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa/filling-out>. Frequently Asked Questions can be found here: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa/filling-out/help>.

The Federal Student Aid Center is EASY to reach!

Phone: 1-800-4FED-AID (1-800-433-3243)

Chat and email links are on <https://studentaid.gov/help-center/contact>.

Free publications and videos: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/resources>.

Other Free FAFSA Resources

College Financial Aid Offices

Colleges have financial aid offices that you may contact regarding the FAFSA, other documents that your prospective colleges may require for financial aid consideration, and other questions.

[Nerdwallet](#)

FAFSA tutorial along with guides for various family situations.

[Khan Academy](#)

The Paying for College section includes a video walkthrough of the FAFSA & CSS PROFILE, another financial aid application that some colleges require in addition to the FAFSA.

[Edvisors](#)

The FAFSA Help Guide takes you through filling out the FAFSA by showing each screen of the online application.

[National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators FAFSA Tips and Common Mistakes to Avoid.](#)

[FAFSA The How-To Guide for High School Students](#)

Not a step-by-step guide, but does answer some of the most commonly asked questions students and families might have. Translated into 9 different languages.

Q. Is _____ a scam?

A. Read about [financial aid and scholarship scams](#). Ms. Rutsky is also available to help you evaluate whether a resource is legitimate or not.

Scholarships

Congratulations for taking the initiative to look for scholarships. The truth is that very few organizations send scholarship opportunity notifications directly to us at ASFA. So instead here are suggestions for how to find scholarships on your own:

Q. Where can I find scholarships?

A. In most cases, the majority of scholarship and other financial aid comes from the college or school that the student attends. So the number one most important thing is for you to research and carefully follow the financial aid/scholarship application process at ALL of the colleges or schools to which you are applying. Keep in mind that these processes have some similarities, but can vary greatly from place to place, so do your research at each one and use whatever organizational system works best for you to make sure you stay on top of the deadlines and requirements. Note that some *colleges may have different deadlines to be considered for merit aid than their admission deadlines*, and these are often earlier than their admission deadlines.

National Scholarship Search Sites

- [Going Merry](#) – scholarship search www.goingmerry.com
- [Scholarships and Contests](#) - Find scholarships offered monthly, or sorted by major or age/grade. <https://jlvcollegecounseling.com/scholarships/>
- [Google Scholarships & Travel Grants](#) - <https://buildyourfuture.withgoogle.com/scholarships>
- [Scholarships.com](#) - scholarship search
- [Guaranteed Scholarships Based on GPA & ACT/SAT Test Scores](#)
<https://blog.prepscholar.com/guaranteed-scholarships-based-on-sat-act-scores>
- [Raise.Me](#) allows students to earn micro-scholarships as early as 9th grade
- [FastWeb.com](#).

Other places to look for scholarships include:

- Employers (of parents, guardians, and students)
- Church, temple, or mosque to which you belong
- Civic clubs such as Kiwanis, Lions, etc.
- Unions, credit unions, professional organizations, and other groups to which you or family members belong
- Your hometown - Check the website or contact the Guidance or Counseling Office of the high school where you are zoned to attend if you were not at ASFA to search for scholarships for students in your local community and which are not normally sent to ASFA.
- Search Google or your preferred web search for keywords such as “scholarship” and whatever is important to you, i.e. writing, music, math, women in engineering, etc.

Q. How can I receive scholarships?

A. Although ASFA students have a strong history of winning scholarships well above the national average, there is no magic formula. Although we wish that we had a hotline to the financial aid offices at colleges that we could ring up to simply get all of our students scholarships, we don't. Each student and family has to do the research and paperwork yourselves. However, here's some advice to help guide your search:

- The most important thing to do is to find out from the colleges where you are applying how to apply for scholarships and be sure to follow their instructions completely and not miss any deadlines. For most students, the majority of financial aid comes from the college that they attend. Research this on the college website, but be sure to also talk with an admission and/or financial aid officer to be sure you understand the process at their school because application processes vary from college to college. The place to start is the Financial Aid or Scholarships section of the website of individual colleges that interest you.
- For need-based aid, you will need to complete either the FAFSA (Free Application for Student Aid www.fafsa.gov) and at some colleges the CSS Profile (<https://profileonline.collegeboard.com>) and/or other forms that the college may require. The FAFSA opens each year on October 1. College deadlines for completing financial aid applications vary, so research or ask your colleges when their deadline is for the decision plan under which you are applying. Remember that the FAFSA is **FREE**. If you find yourself on a website that charges a fee to complete the FAFSA, do **NOT** use it.
- To search for other merit scholarships, try the websites listed in the previous page, which will send you scholarships that match the criteria that you enter in your profile.
- ASFA shares financial aid workshop information. Stay tuned to Homeroom Announcements, College & Career Counseling Google Classroom, and the ASFA College & Career Facebook group to find out when these will take place.
- [Scholarship Search Secrets](#) is dated, but still offers good suggestions for seeking out and winning aid for college.
- The website FinAid.org is also highly recommended for any type of financial aid questions.

Q. Should we pay for a prediction service to learn for certain whether or not my child will be admitted to a certain college?

A. NO! Because the nature of selective college admissions is subjective, it is impossible to predict with certainty the outcome of your application at any college. Most college admissions professionals consider prediction services to be one of the many scams that students and families should avoid. In addition, ASFA

provides all students access to Scoir which has data to help predict your chances of admission as well as or better than any outside service.

Section VI: Special interest information

Career Exploration and Assessments

Career Assessments

Many people find that career assessments can be helpful. It takes some of the pressure off to have data to help people make big decisions, such as what to study in college or what career to pursue. After you take an assessment, students and/or families are welcome to meet to discuss their results with Ms. Rutsky to help interpret the results and explore possibilities that they suggest.

YouScience: ASFA students in grades 10-12 can access YouScience, an online career assessment, by logging into their [Scoir](#) college & career program accounts and clicking "Career." Younger students who don't have Scoir accounts may contact Ms. Rutsky for access.

More Career Resources

What Can I Do with This Major?

Learn about typical career areas and types of employers that hire people with various college majors, and find strategies to make you a more marketable candidate. These sites help answer questions such as "I really love art history (or sociology, music, psychology, etc.) but what kind of job can I possibly find with that major?"

Bureau of Labor Statistics Career Planning for High Schoolers

The [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) provides detailed descriptions of hundreds of occupations, salary projects, and growth outlook. This is an excellent resource, with lots of information and web links.

[Career One Stop](#) - Includes links to career assessments, employment trends, resume and interview advice, and more, notably [Career Resources by State](#).

Resumes and Interviews

Resume Templates

Make your resume visually appealing! Free resume templates are available on Google Docs, Microsoft Word, and other applications. Be careful if you use Canva templates because they often do not print correctly in black & white.

Resume Content

Resumes, cover letters/emails, networking emails, references, portfolios, etc. will likely form your first impression for many jobs, scholarship opportunities, and other educational/job opportunities.

The purpose of the resume is to be a clear and concise summary of qualifications that pertain to the position or opportunity that you are seeking, and should be limited to 1-2 pages. (The more concise, the better.) The goal is to attract sufficient attention to create an interview opportunity.

Before you send your resume to a potential employer or other opportunity, take time to review and proofread it. It should be error-free and consistent in format, punctuation, and verb tense.

**** Do NOT include a list of classes that you are currently taking or have taken at ASFA on your resume! Your school transcript includes a list of all of your high school courses and grades. ****

Ms. Rutsky will share specialty-specific resume templates with juniors or by request.

Also check out [How to Write a College Resume](#).

College Interviews

See [Ultimate Guide to Interviews](#).

Interview formats vary. Some may be conducted by an admission counselor, while others may be with alumni (graduates) of the college who live in your area.

Miscellaneous Preparation:

Before the day of the interview, look up the interview location and, if you are not 100% sure where it is, use a maps app. Leave at least ½ hour extra in case you run into any issues finding it or parking. If you arrive early, you may either sit in your car and relax or go in to wait inside, depending on what makes you more comfortable.

Take a clean, crisp copy of your resume to hand to the interviewer. Even if they already have a copy, this is a way of directing the conversation to your strengths that you have already listed on your resume.

Read over this sheet and the articles that I've linked. Practice your answers to some questions. Don't try to memorize anything, but just think through what you might say and practice speaking your answers aloud. You may find it helpful to practice with another person.

Dress

Unless otherwise instructed, guys should wear a collared shirt, dress pants, and dark closed-toed shoes. No sandals. Girls should wear nice blouse, slacks or skirt (make sure it stays below mid-thigh even when you sit down), or a dress, and dressy shoes. No shorts, t-shirts, or tank tops. It may be wise to cover up visible tattoos and remove potentially distracting jewelry (e.g. nose piercings), if you have any of these.

Questions

Some may be formal in which the interviewer asks you standardized questions, while others may be more freeform conversations.

- There are always some questions that are standard (e.g., Do you have any questions for us? What are you planning to study? etc.).
- Other questions are based on the student's application. Sometimes it's something that piqued the interviewer's curiosity in your essays.

- Other times it was a particular activity that you may mention.
- And still other questions are completely random (e.g., "If you could have dinner with anyone in history, who would it be and why?" "Are leaders born or are they made?", "If you could make one change in your school system, what would it be?" etc.).

In the case of alumni interviewers, they likely have NOT received your essays or any part of application, so they won't know much if anything about you.

In most cases, the interviewer is looking for how well students can process and then express themselves. **The answers themselves are not as important as the support that the students give the answers.**

If you don't know an answer, it is all right to say so, or to ask for clarification.

Here are some links to lists of typical college interview questions and tips for interviewing:

- www.khanacademy.org/college-admissions/applying-to-college#admissions-interviews
- <https://www.fastweb.com/college-search/articles/practice-college-interview-questions>
- www.princetonreview.com/college-interview.aspx
- <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/interviews/college-interviews-practice-questions-and-strategies>.

Where Else Are You Applying?

Colleges are no longer supposed to ask students this, but you may have an interviewer who does not realize. I'd suggest a general answer. For example, if you are interviewing with a representative from a small liberal arts college, say "This college and other small liberal arts colleges like it." Or "This college and <insert the name of a popular state university that many students in your area apply to>." You can always turn the question around, such as, "I'm still working on my college list. Do you have any more suggestions?"

Questions that You Ask the Interviewer

Go into the interview with at least one specific question (preferably more) about the college or university that the interviewer is representing. Not necessarily about your intended major because your interviewer may not have studied what you plan to major in, so it's better to keep questions more about the university in general.

- For example, if I am admitted to an equally strong university, what does College X offer that might make my education or me as a person/leader stronger?
- Or, how do you think College X changes or challenges its students in a way that other universities like it may not?
- It is 100% fine to ask the interviewers questions based on what they talk with you about! Feel free to ask for clarification if you don't understand something they say, or to follow up on something that comes up during your interview. Interviews that flow like conversations are often the best.

Afterward

It's a good idea to send a thank you note to your interviewer. If possible, include a reference to something that was discussed in the interview. (Alumni interviewers do this work as volunteers, so thank them for their time.) You never know whom you might encounter in the future, and being considerate is always a plus. Handwritten notes are best, but email is increasingly acceptable and may be preferable in time-sensitive situations.

Summer Programs, Enrichment Opportunities, and “Honors”

Summer and Other Enrichment Programs

Here are some places to search for summer enrichment programs:

- [Excellent Collection of Summer Enrichment Programs](#) from around the country
- [ArtsBridge Summer Programs](#) - including dance, music, theater, and visual arts programs.
- [Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth Academic Opportunities](#)
- [TeenLife's Summer Programs, Gap Year, Community Service and More](#)
- Contact universities/colleges in which you are interested that may sponsor programs for high school students. Ask whether these offer any advantage in admissions to that college if that is your goal because many do not, and the faculty teaching may or may not be from the host college.
- For Specialty-related program recommendations, talk with your Specialty faculty.

ASFA may offer grants to help students attend summer programs related to their Specialty. Talk with your Specialty chair to learn more.

Warning about Programs that Present Themselves as “Honors” But Really Aren’t

It’s important for families not to waste their money on “honors” that won’t do them any good, but how can you tell the difference?

A good rule of thumb is: ***If the organization charges a fee, it is NOT an honor.***

Some organizations, such as NHSS (National Society of High School Scholars), National Honor Roll, and Who’s Who Among American High School Students, may appear to be honorary societies or dangle “scholarship opportunities,” but are, in fact, vanity presses that persuade families into buying books, bumper stickers, and other paraphenelia, or to gather data for marketers. ERCA (Education Research Company of America) is another group that does nothing but collect marketing data, despite promises of college guidance and scholarships.

The consensus among college counseling professionals is that while the National Youth Leadership Forums on Medicine, Law, and National Security, etc. are well organized and offer good quality, positive experiences, there is NO honor in being nominated/invited/accepted. The NYL Forums are not selective (except perhaps economically, given how expensive they are). Are they worth the money? Is going to London worth the money? Buying a Rolex? A Mercedes? Who says? How do they know? It depends on what you like to do with your money and how much you have. Do you have to do something like this to get into college or medical school later on? Of course not! They are just one out of many possibilities (and not an even vaguely impressive one, for students/families who are concerned about that sort of thing).

We advise students to consider the NYL Forums only if they have a genuine interest in the topic, can pay without straining their family budgets, and are not expecting it to impress colleges because it doesn’t. Colleges know that many, many students are invited, but few can afford to go. More substantial (therefore impressive) alternatives would be volunteering in local nonprofit organizations, conducting research, doing an internship, or otherwise showing initiative.

This is unfortunately not an exhaustive list as new groups pop up each year or change their names to stay ahead of lawsuits. If you’re unsure about the legitimacy of a mailing, Ms. Rutsky will be glad to research it. The rule of thumb to keep in mind is: If the organization charges a fee, it is NOT an honor. (None of these should be confused with Mu Alpha Theta, which IS legitimate with wonderful faculty sponsorship.)

More substantial (therefore impressive) alternatives may be volunteering in local nonprofit organizations, conducting research, doing an internship, or otherwise showing initiative.

Gap Years and Options Other Than College

What if you're not sure college is right for you at all? College isn't for everyone. Look, ASFA isn't a cookie cutter school, and you wouldn't be here if you were like everyone else. There are many different forms of postsecondary education and other nontraditional paths that people take. Ms. Rutsky and her husband have six degrees between them both, but write checks to plumbers, electricians, contractors, and mechanics that clearly show that these skilled tradespeople make more per hour than even a fabulous college counselor. 😊

A good place to start is a book called *The UnCollege Alternative: Your Guide to Incredible Careers and Amazing Adventures Outside College* by Danielle Wood. (Student Services has a copy that may be checked out.) Also, you might try *But What If I Don't Want to Go to College?: A Guide to Success Through Alternative Education* by Harlow G. Unger. Moreover, some people enter certain arts careers, such as dance, through professional companies.

Now, that said, we can cite all sorts of studies that indicate that, in general, people with Bachelor's degrees or higher earn more and have a lower incidence of unemployment than those who don't. Plus, there are all sorts of news stories that tell us that America has a shortage of skilled, well-educated workers. So, there are many compelling reasons why earning a college degree makes sense. The bottom line: this isn't a "one size fits all" situation, so you need to think about what's right for you beyond ASFA.

Gap Year

What if you're not ready to go to college right away? For students who do plan to go to college, but just not right away, a gap year may be an option. While the time period may vary from a few months to a few years, "gap year" is the term applied to a period of transition between high school and higher education. Although a common practice in Europe and Australia, gap years are still beginning to gain popularity in the U.S. If this seems like an interesting option for you, check out these resources:

- [Making the Most of a Gap Year](#)
- [Overview of Gap Years](#) (Start at either 1:25 or around 6:00 to avoid introductions.)
- [Gap Year Association](#) and [its videos](#)
- [Taking a Gap Year](#)
- [The Gap Year is Not Just for Rich Kids](#)
- [First-Year Abroad & Gap Year Programs through Colleges & Universities](#)
- [Americorps](#) and [video](#).

Keep in mind that it's easier to handle all of the college admission paperwork during the senior year while the student is still enrolled at ASFA, so we recommend applying to college during senior year, then requesting a deferral of a semester or year from the college of your choice. This is not required, though.

For Parents: Issues to Discuss Before You Send Your Student to College

Residence Hall Living

Discuss the kind of living environment in which your child is comfortable:

- Is your student a night owl or morning person?

- Does your student study with noise in the background or not?
- Is your student chronically neat or messy, shy or social?
- Request a freshman roommate on all housing applications.
- Feel free to look for substance-free living options as well; all colleges offer this.

Begin to Consider Your Student's Communication Habits

Work on opening the channels of communication so that your student will be able easily to discuss their needs with a roommate, for instance. Discuss the conditions under which your student needs to live to be a successful and happy student. Help practice the tactics of conflict resolution – use family examples this year to promote the process.

Talk about Money

Talk about how and how much money your student will have for personal expenses. Decide where you will keep the primary bank account and how, when and if family money will be allocated to the student. Talk about security issues related to money as well.

Self Advocacy Skills

Encourage your student to make the most of the educational experiences college allows. For specific hints, check out *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds* by Richard Light. Meeting with professors and advisors, asking questions and attempting enrichment opportunities are just some of the ways our students distinguish themselves in college settings.

Try not to text or call your student every day. Once a week is fine, but this is the first significant step your student is making to individuate, or to become independent.

Time Management

Granted, most ASFA students are better at time management than CEOs of major corporations. However, the less structured environment of college offers the opportunity for many problems. Encourage students to make good use (i.e., studying) of the “dead time” between classes and to find a routine and stick with it for success.

Studies have consistently shown no significant difference in grades between students who work and those who do not work while in college, and in some cases, students who work perform better. Work-study jobs typically take 12-20 hours each week and hours run around the student schedule.

Decision Making Skills

Talk about absolutely everything. Discuss the implications of security if taking medication to college. Talk about GHB, the date-rape drug. Consider a self-defense course for all students before they go off to college.

Security Issues

Discuss with campus personnel and with your student campus safety measures. No campus, small or large, is immune from outsiders. Discuss safety measures for personal safety and for property safety – walking at night, jogging with headphones, how much money and identification to carry, securing possessions in the library and in the residence hall room.

When your student accepts a ride home with someone you don't know, be sure to coach your student into leaving a calendar of departure and arrival times with you and the roommate as well as the name, address and phone of the student providing the ride. Car models and license plate numbers are good to have, too.

Tips for First-Time Parents of College Students

Many college and universities report grades and send bills directly to the student, not the parent. Be sure to discuss with your student the process by which you will be kept informed of your student's academic progress. This line of communication will be between the student and parent, not the parent and the university. Some universities even interpret the FERPA (Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act) to determine that faculty in Offices for Special Needs, for example, will not disclose to parents whether or not the student is receiving services for a disability.

Obtain a copy of your student's schedule so that in case of emergency you will quickly be able to tell campus officials or a roommate where your student is.

Be sure to have handy the name and telephone number of your student's residence hall advisor – again, in case of emergency or if your student's phone is busy for an extended period and you need to be in touch.

Obtain the name, phone number and address of your student's roommate's parents.

Secure a list of hotels and restaurants in the area for parents' weekends and general visits.

After your student decides where he or she will enroll, make your visit plans early—even a year in advance—in order to secure hotel reservations on crowded parent weekends, homecomings, and so on.

Appendix 1: For 11th Graders - School Recommendation Letter Checklist

Completing the 4 required tasks by the deadline allows the college counselor to write a [strong, detailed recommendation letter](#) for college and scholarship applications. Failure to meet the deadline may result in a [basic, weaker recommendation letter](#).

REQUIRED & DUE by FRIDAY, MARCH 19TH (Sooner is Recommended.)

1. Complete Brag Sheet for College Recommendation survey on Scoir. Log into student Scoir account at <https://app.scoir.com/signin>. Click the three horizontal lines in the upper right corner of Scoir, then choose Surveys.
2. Meet with Mrs. Rutsky: Schedule at <https://calendly.com/rutskyasfa>.
3. Resumé – Compose a carefully edited resumé. Save as a PDF or .doc. *Do NOT share as a Google Doc*. Upload to the Class of 2022 Google Classroom.
4. Teacher Insights Form – First, politely and in person ask a teacher of your choice, then follow up with an email request. The link to the form is only available to teachers, not students.

Note this is **not** the same as the teacher recommendation that some college applications require in the fall as part of their applications. This Teacher Insights Form is for internal ASFA use only and will not be sent to colleges.

Optional, But Recommended

- Parents and guardians, and student meet with Mrs. Rutsky.
- Parent Brag Form in Scoir. Log into your parent Scoir account at www.scoir.com, click the three horizontal lines in the upper right corner of Scoir, then choose Surveys.
- Career Assessment: Complete the career assessment in Scoir under My Profile then click Career Profile.

Appendix 2: For 12th Graders - College Applications Instructions

Dear Class of 2024 and Parents/Guardians:

Here is information meant to make the college admission process more efficient and less stressful. ASFA graduates who have been through this process before emphasize the importance of starting the college application process early and staying organized. Our office is here to assist you and your student through this exciting time.

SCOIR

- Along with all the information available through the ASFA College Advising website at www.asfa.k12.al.us/college, we use <http://www.scoir.com> to help seniors organize their college applications and request transcripts and recommendations, and we use it to send out messages regarding opportunities and deadlines throughout the year. We sent registration codes to all ASFA parent/guardian emails previously.
 - If you have misplaced your password, there is a “Forgot your Password” on the Scoir login page.

STANDARDIZED TESTS

- Be sure to check with ALL of your prospective colleges regarding their testing requirements; many are test optional, but testing policies vary college by college.
- All juniors took the ACT with writing earlier this spring. Students may register to retake the ACT and/or the SAT on any national testing date. For ACT and SAT testing dates and deadlines, please visit ACT: www.actstudent.org and SAT www.sat.org.
- If you register to take the ACT or SAT on national test administration dates, please request that your test scores be sent to ASFA by using our school code (CEEB code), which is **010-326**.
- Students who qualify for free or reduced lunch are automatically eligible to take the ACT and SAT at no cost. To apply for free/reduced lunch, contact Ms. Arnisha Jordan in the Cafeteria at ajordan@asfa.k12.al.us. If you already qualify for free/reduced lunch, contact Mrs. Norman for fee waivers at rhnorman@asfa.k12.al.us.
- **ACT and SAT scores are not included on your ASFA transcript**, so you must send them directly to colleges and universities via www.act.org or www.collegeboard.com. This is because most colleges require official test scores sent directly from the testing companies and allow students to choose which scores to send. Score reports can be requested when registering for a test date or after the test has been taken for an additional fee. Allow four to six weeks for colleges to receive score reports.

Some colleges accept self-reported test scores, so check with your prospective colleges' admission offices to ask if they do. This saves you the fee for sending official scores.

For those rare colleges that will accept test scores sent from the high school, we are happy to send them. **Requests must be in writing and specify precisely *which tests and test***

administration date(s) that you wish to be included for each transcript request.

APPLYING TO COLLEGE

- Commonly requested information on applications:
 - Your graduation date will be May 17, 2024.
 - There are 61 seniors in your class.
 - ASFA does not rank.
 - Our grade point scale is 4.0.
 - When applications ask for your counselor, please use Ms. Rebecca Rutsky's contact information: rrutsky@asfaschool.org and (205) 458-7252.

- Students themselves must write their own essays and submit their own requests for transcripts, recommendations, etc.; parents or guardians may not do this, nor may paperwork or requests be turned in to any other ASFA faculty or staff member. Allowing young adults to practice independence and responsibility throughout the coming year is good preparation for life as a college student. Ms. Rutsky is available to help with reviewing and providing feedback on essays and other parts of applications.

- Read and follow [How to Apply to College](#), step-by-step instructions.

- During the summer, finalize the list of colleges, conservatories, and companies where you plan to apply. Students should look at applications early to know what will be expected of them. Most applications are available online by early August, and many in-state public universities open theirs earlier.

- Common Application: If two or more of your prospective colleges accept the [Common Application](#), we strongly recommend that you use it. Create your account at <https://apply.commonapp.org/createaccount> and begin exploring, entering information, and making notes of any information that you need to track down to complete it. Note: ASFA's school code is **010-326**.

- FERPA Privacy Waiver: Students are asked whether they want to waive their rights to see their recommendation letters when they complete the Common Application. The Common Application and ASFA strongly recommend that students DO WAIVE their rights. Waiving your right lets colleges know that you do not intend to read your recommendations, which helps reassure colleges that the letters are candid and truthful. Ms. Rutsky will not write a school recommendation letter for any student who does not waive their FERPA rights, and individual teachers may do the same. We will, however, still send transcripts, the Common App School Report, and other documents.

- Summer is a good time to begin your application essay. Look on the Common Application or individual college applications to see what the essay topics are. ASFA will share college admission essay writing information, and traditionally the 12th grade English teacher has seniors work on essays and resumes. Additionally, you can find helpful information & tutorials about how to write college essays on the College & Career Counseling Google Classroom. Ms. Rutsky is happy to review your essays.

- If a college requires letters of recommendation from teachers, students are responsible for contacting teachers to request them. See the section on Teacher Recommendations in [The](#)

[Next Step: Planning for Life After ASFA](#). We recommend that students approach teachers **in person** first, then follow up with an email or other message. Please allow **at least three weeks before the college/scholarship deadline** for teachers to write recommendations.

The same teacher recommendation letter can and should be used for multiple colleges and scholarship applications. Do **not** ask multiple teachers to write for multiple colleges. In most cases, if you need more than one teacher recommendation, it should be one teacher from math or science classes, and one teacher from humanities, social sciences, or arts classes. Feel free to talk with Ms. Rutsky about which mix of teachers would be best in your situation.

Please do **not** ask more teachers to write recommendations than the number required by your colleges. Teachers write recommendations as a favor to students, and it is a time- and labor-intensive process; they are **not** required to do so, so please be respectful of their time, do not create busy work for them, and remember to say thank you. Refer to this helpful article: [How to Ask for a Recommendation](#) and read Section V under Recommendations in [The Next Step: Planning for Life After ASFA](#).

- *After* you apply to a college and after school begins in August, you **must add the college to your Applied list in Scoir** in order for us to send a transcript, recommendations, and any other supporting materials. To do so, log into your Scoir account and:
 - Click into Colleges.
 - If the college is already on your Following list, pull it over into the Applying or Applied column. If the college is not yet on your Scoir account, use the +Add college link to add it to Applied columns.
 - Select the **correct** admission plan under which you are applying (i.e. regular decision, Early Action, etc.) or else we will not know your deadline. If you are unsure, contact the college admission office. If you aren't sure or the deadline in Scoir appears incorrect, contact Ms. Rutsky A.S.A.P.
 - Indicate which application you are using to apply to that college.

If you are applying to any special program that requires an additional application separate from the admissions application, i.e. honors college, optional scholarship, competitive program/department, let us know if they require any additional materials and provide the clear instructions to upload or mail them.

- Requests for any transcripts, recommendations, or other supporting materials are due in our office at least **three (3) weeks before the college/scholarship deadline**. If you wait until the last minute to turn in an application, you are creating a situation that puts your application at a disadvantage.

Not allowing the 3-week notice means the counselor does not have adequate time to prepare a polished package, the college will be receiving your application along with mountains sent by other procrastinators, and this creates undue stress on the student. Applying well ahead of deadlines helps prevent mishaps and sends a more positive message. **This applies to both in-state and out-of-state colleges**. However please note that ASFA College Counseling processes hundreds of college applications, and teachers write dozens of recommendations each year, so you must be patient if we need time or work near to deadlines. One polite reminder about an upcoming deadline is sufficient; be respectful of adults' time and professionalism. Also, while colleges are very strict about students meeting their deadlines, they are generally more lenient with counselors and teachers.

- Should any questions or problems arise, please let us know A.S.A.P. We can take steps to try to help resolve the issue, including contacting admissions offices for assistance, if needed.

AFTER YOU APPLY

- Missing Documents: **DO NOT PANIC** if a college informs you that some part of your application is missing. It happens all the time. Usually, the document has not yet been processed by the college. First, check your admission portal or call the admission office to double check whether or not it is actually missing; there can be 3 week lags between when colleges receive documents and update their admission portals. If it truly is missing, contact us if a transcript needs to be re-sent, whoever wrote your recommendation letter if one of them went astray, or ACT or College Board if your scores need to be re-sent. (If you already paid for your test scores to be sent, the test companies will re-send them for free and you should not pay rush fees.) Note: Colleges are strict about deadlines for documents submitted by students, but they are much more lenient about items coming from schools or teachers and will **NOT** hold items sent late from the counselors or teachers against a student. Contact the admission office if in doubt.
- **Keep all copies of college acceptances and scholarship offers and send copies to our office as soon as you receive them.** Updating your college decision results in Scoir and completing the ASFA Senior Survey, which requests your admission and scholarship offers in April, is **required** for participation in Commencement, having your final transcript sent to your chosen college, and is necessary for ASFA's records and reports used to apply for grants and promote the school. Also, we enjoy sharing your excitement!
- College admission officers stress to students that they not let up during senior year (including second semester) in course selection or grades. Some students who have relaxed too much during their senior year and let grades drop risk having their admission and/or scholarship offers rescinded.

MANAGING STRESS

- Most students and families find some aspects of the college admission process stressful. You are not alone. It will be okay. Breathe. Repeat as necessary.
- One of the best techniques to reduce stress is to create a calendar that can be shared among all involved family members with all of your student's application deadlines as well as any special programs or scholarship programs to which they may be applying. Arts students, remember to include your audition or portfolio dates.
- Discuss financial issues/limits/goals up front and be as transparent as possible. We recommend setting an annual or total limit that your family can afford to contribute towards college costs so that students and parents both are on the same page. It is better to be clear and honest up front than to be disappointed later.
- Designate a weekly meeting to touch base about college admission topics. Do your best to limit conversations to this designated time in order not to become overly focused on this

topic. Agree that if any family member does not wish to discuss college admissions at this time, they may request the conversation be tabled until another designated time.

- Schedule in activities and conversations that are NOT related to college on a regular basis. What else do you and your family enjoy? Mindfully carve out ways to enjoy your time together during this last year of high school.
- Your grade-level counselor offers another source of personal/social support for seniors and families. We are also glad to share other resources should the need arise.

IF YOU NEED ASSISTANCE

- Please contact us with any questions.
- The Student Support Services Assistant, Mrs. Rhea Norman, will be very helpful to you during this time. She processes ALL transcript requests and many application forms, so please direct all transcript and other document requests to her at rhnorman@asfa.k12.al.us or (205) 459-7255.
- If your transcript is incomplete or incorrect, only ASFA's registrar, can correct it, so please contact him or her.

Please be patient during crunch time (October-December) as we must ensure all of the information on documents is complete and correct before submitting to colleges. Understand that delays with transcripts are often beyond our control.

- **Reaching the College Advisor:** Fall semester is hectic for all of us. Even though we do not require meetings with seniors, you are always **strongly encouraged** to see Ms. Rutsky or Mrs. Norman with any questions or concerns that you may have. The same goes for parents/guardians, too.

The best way is to schedule a meeting at <https://calendly.com/rutskyasfa>. Of course, when we are back in person, you may drop in during the day. If there is already someone else in Ms. Rutsky's office, you may wait a few minutes until they finish or leave a note on her memo board, and she'll get back with you as soon as possible.

- Because Ms. Rutsky and Mrs. Norman may be away from their desks assisting with college visits or other tasks, email is generally the most reliable way to reach us. We do our best to respond to email messages within 24 hours. If for some reason we don't get back to you within 24 hours, please try re-sending or call Ms. Rutsky's direct line at (205) 458-7252. Occasionally email messages go into the spam filter, which we check regularly, but some still evaporate into the ether. And then, sometimes, we just make mistakes. We can only help if you tell us that you have a problem or question. **Let's all please assume positive intent and remember that we're all working together for every ASFA student's success.**

We hope that you will take advantage of the many resources available and the college application process will be a positive experience. Good luck and please let us know if we can help. Thank you!

College Visit Summary Sheet

Before visiting a college be sure to review carefully the information in the school brochure or web site. Upon completion of your visit, write your responses to the following issues. Do this for each college visited and then compare your summaries for each.

College or University: _____ **Location:** _____

Date of Visit: _____ **Interviewer:** _____

Student Body

(Impression of student body in terms of appearance, style, friendliness, degree of interest and enthusiasm, diversity of social, religious, and ethnic background.)

Academic/Specialty Factors

(How serious about academics is the college and its students; how good are the facilities for academic and/or artistic pursuits; how varied is the curriculum; how strict or flexible are the requirements; how appropriate is the college for your interests?)

Campus Facilities and Social Life

(How complete and modern are the facilities, such as dorms, library, Internet system, student center, athletic complex; how active is the social life; how diverse is it; is it a suitcase or commuter campus?)

Overall Impressions

(What did you like least and most; what seemed different or special. What type of student do you feel would be happiest there? Are you the type?)

Rating:

 1

 2

 3

 4

 5

 6

(On a scale of 1 to 55, with 1 being the top grade, rate the college on the basis of your interest in it.)

Other Notes: _____
