

## Freshman College Counseling at Trinity Prep

"Curiosity, self-discipline, effort, imagination, intellectual verve, sense of wonder, willingness to try new things, empathy, open-mindedness, civility, and tolerance for ambiguity are some of the qualities that define and give value to being a student."

*Source: Colleges Unranked by Lloyd Thacker*

### Studenthood and Self-Discovery

A student's freshman year at Trinity Prep lays the foundation for the exciting college application process that TPS seniors undertake each year. Freshmen academic and extracurricular activities are important building blocks in a student's ongoing self-analysis and are keys to a successful college counseling process. Studenthood refers to those qualities that equip a student to make education happen, to engage learning as a process. The Trinity Prep freshman college counseling program targets each student's maturing life skills and self-analysis through advisory activities, classroom presentations, and panel discussions that

- foster a smooth adjustment to upper school life
- the development of more sophisticated study strategies and academic goal setting for success in a challenging academic environment
- individual exploration of extracurricular and academic areas of interest

### Who am I? Get to know yourself and learn to set goals.

One of the keys to a successful college selection process in the junior and senior years begins in the freshman year as a student learns to analyze his/her strengths, weaknesses, interests, and abilities as well as values and educational/career goals.

Teachers, advisers, and the counseling staff encourage and guide students in this life strategy so that freshmen become comfortable setting personal and academic priorities. These strategies are crucial parts of a senior's confidence and success in setting priorities and evaluating colleges in the college application process.

- Spend focused time completing the fall and spring college counseling activities such as academic goal setting and personal goal setting.
- Start thinking about what you like to do and what you do well. Complete online surveys to gather information on your interests, your personality, and on what kind of college major and/or career could be a fit for you as well as one that lets you use your skills and interests.

**Refine your study strategies.**

High schoolers in all four grades are urged to take the toughest courses appropriate to their skill levels. Trinity Prep freshmen are encouraged to make the most of their academic opportunities, and in the spring they are guided through academic goal setting as it is linked to planning for future classes and to current admissions' statistics from colleges.

- Schedule the most challenging curriculum appropriate to your skill level, especially in the “big five” subjects -- English, science, math, social science, and world language -- on which colleges put the most weight. Don't forget your fine arts curriculum requirement, another way to expand your mind.
- Assess your study strategies and make use of Study Period sessions, peer tutors, study groups, and early preparation for semester exams. Students who are willing to refine their study strategies and to try new ways of committing information to long-term memory enjoy more academic success in the freshman year. The refinement of these strategies and habits will pay dividends in high school and beyond.
- Discuss your high school plans -- including your four-year academic plan -- as well as possible college plans with your parents. As freshmen complete sophomore class registration each spring, they are encouraged to plan ahead and to seriously consider their junior and senior classes. Students can research class prerequisites on the Trinity Prep website and consult teachers as they navigate this process.
- READ as much as possible.
- Begin keeping a journal, an activity that will improve your writing as well as provide a record of impressions and experiences that you can use in composing college admissions essays. Remember, standardized tests may include a writing component, a student-written essay and multiple-choice questions on grammar, usage, word choice, and idiom. Your best preparation is to WRITE, WRITE, WRITE.
- Get involved in problem-solving activities in math and science classes.

**Explore your interests through extracurricular activities.**

Get involved! Getting ready for college isn't all work; enjoy your first year in high school by taking part in school activities and outside activities. Don't be lulled into thinking that you have plenty of time -- waiting until junior or senior year -- to see what clubs, sports, or activities interest you. College admission officers view extracurricular activities as a reflection of a student's interests, an indication of a student's active engagement in the

learning process, and a predictor of whether a student will be able to juggle academics with outside activities on a college campus.

- Show quality - commitment and leadership - not quantity in activities within and outside school. Over and over admissions reps explain that schools are looking for students who follow their "passion."
- Look for leadership opportunities - whether serving on a club committee, volunteering for additional responsibilities, or running for an elected office - and try your hand at new activities.
- Keep a list of activities, or a résumé, beginning with freshman year. Update at least twice a year. Juniors and seniors use their résumés on college visits and in admissions interviews so that colleges know that they are serious applicants with solid qualifications. Keep track of your service hours and complete the Trinity Prep community service forms. Your service may earn you school awards and even qualify you for college scholarships.
- Consider taking advantage of summer opportunities that will allow you to explore your interests, try out something new, volunteer, or even get a job. We encourage students to be engaged in various activities during the summer as well as to try things that they may not have time for during the school year.

### **Explore colleges and take your first steps in the college research process.**

While much of the Trinity Prep college counseling focus during freshman year is on helping a student answer the "Who am I?" question, freshmen can also benefit from getting the feel of college campuses and from researching general entrance requirements and a few of the "nuts and bolts" of the process.

Getting college facts helps freshmen in their academic planning as well as in the first steps of analyzing potential "matches" in the college process.

- Listen and ask questions during the annual senior panel as seniors talk about their college choices/opportunities and advise freshman on life at Trinity Prep. During the spring panel for the freshman class, seniors talk candidly about the Trinity Prep experience and share their thoughts on what went right and what they wished they had done differently.
- Visit college campuses near your home. Walk around to get the feel of the place or attend events that are open to the public. Reflect on your campus experiences. Begin to consider what kind of campus is a fit for you.
- Become familiar with basic college entrance requirements and set academic goals related to the requirements of schools that interest you. Classroom presentations

by the freshman counselor focus on these requirements. Freshmen can also gather information by accessing a school's homepage (university name.edu) and by using the print resources in local libraries and bookstores.

- Become familiar with standardized test formats and ways to perform your best. Visit the College Board website ([www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)) and test yourself on sample questions. Learn more about the ACT (<http://www.actstudent.org/>). The PSAT (mini-SAT) you take in October of your sophomore year will provide you with a baseline of your performance.
- Begin thinking about how you will finance college. Do some basic financial aid research ([www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) or <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college>) so you are familiar with resources and can access information.

## Contacts

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