

# UNIONDALE HIGH SCHOOL COLLEGE INFORMATION NEWSLETTER

U U F S D

## 10 Questions to Ask Your School Counselor

Your school counselor is one of your best resources as you plan for college. Your counselor has information about admission tests, college preparation, and your education and career options.

Here are some basic questions to help get your conversation started:

*What courses do I need to take to be ready for college?*

*How should I plan my schedule so I'll complete them?*

*Which elective courses do you recommend?*

*Which AP courses should I consider taking?*

*How should I study for the SAT/ACT, and is it given at this high school or do I need to go somewhere nearby?*

*Do you have any additional college planning sessions scheduled like a Junior Conference?*

*Do you have any websites that you recommend for college/scholarship browsing?*

*What activities can I do to prepare at home and over the summer to get ready for my freshman year of college?*

*What kinds of grades do different colleges require?*

*Are there any special scholarships or awards that I should know about now, so I can work toward them?*

## A P P L Y I N G T O C O L L E G E : Y O U R C O U N S E L O R ' S R O L E

When it's time to complete college applications, your school counselor plays a central part. You are the one in charge, though — it's up to you to ask your counselor for the help you need.

### **What Your Counselor Can Help You Do**

Your counselor is the one who sends important parts of your application such as your high school transcript to colleges. And that is not the only role your counselor plays in the college application process, he or she can help you do all of the following things:

#### **\* Find Colleges**

Your counselor can help you create a list of colleges to research that is based on your interests and on the characteristics of each college. He or she can also help you narrow down that list later on.

#### **\* Understand Requirements**

Colleges have different application requirements. Most require applicants to submit an essay. Many ask applicants to send scores from an admission test,

such as the SAT or the ACT.

Your counselor can explain the requirements of each college and help you register for admission tests, if necessary.

#### **\* Send Your Transcript**

Your counselor is responsible for sending your high school transcript to the colleges you apply to. Some college applications come with transcript-request forms for you to give to your counselor, or you may simply have to ask your counselor to send your transcripts.

#### **\* Get Recommendations**

Some colleges specifically ask for a recommendation letter from a high school counselor. If the college doesn't specify, consider asking your counselor for a letter of recommendation as long as he or she knows you well enough to speak about your strengths and character. It is important to ask for a letter of recommendation from someone that knows you well.

#### **\* Make the Most of Your Time with Your Counselor**

College application season is an especially busy time for high

school counselors. You can help your counselor help you by staying on top of the application process. Here's how:

**\* Be early.** If you start doing tasks — researching colleges, collecting ideas for application essays, making requests for recommendation letters — well ahead of time, you'll make it easier for your counselor to give you timely answers when you need help. Start the process in your Junior year and summer before you become a Senior!

**\* Be organized.** Figure out a system for keeping track of application components and deadlines yourself.

**\* Be responsible.** Your counselor can help in many ways, but this is your project and your responsibility. It's up to you to ask your counselor for the help you need. Schedule appointments when you need to talk to him or her.

**\* Be prepared.** When you do meet with your counselor, have a list of questions ready and know what you want to discuss.

### Guidance Department

Alisa Becker, 560-8836  
Diana Boucher, 560-8833  
Phil Bachmann, 560-8947  
Mary Iannotti, 560-8949  
Kristine Linden, 560-8834  
Lexoune Marcellin, 560-8832  
Claudia Rivera, 560-8837  
Natasha Boyce, 560-8835  
Randolph Jean-Baptiste, 560-1007  
Stacie Reid, Guidance Director

**Method Test Prep Code—  
TKN.12970072**

**Please utilize this source to help you  
study for your SAT & ACT !!**

# HOW TO GET A GREAT LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

Colleges often ask for two or three recommendation letters from people who know you well. These letters should be written by someone who can describe your skills, accomplishments and personality.

## ***Colleges value recommendations because they:***

- Reveal things about you that grades and test scores can't
- Provide personal opinions of your character
- Show who is willing to speak on your behalf
- Letters of recommendation work for you when they present you in the best possible light, showcasing your skills and abilities.

## **When to Ask for Recommendations**

Make sure to give your references at least one month before your earliest deadline to complete and send your letters. The earlier you ask, the better. Many teachers like to write recommendations during the summer. If you apply under early decision or early action plans, you'll definitely need to ask for recommendations by the end of your junior year or before. Remember that some teachers will be writing whole stacks of letters, which takes time. Your teachers will do a better job on your letter if they don't have to rush.

## **Whom to Ask**

It's your job to find people to write letters of recommendation for you. Follow these steps to start the process:

Read each of your college applications carefully. Schools often ask for letters of recommendation from an academic teacher — sometimes in a specific subject — or a school counselor or both.

Ask a counselor, teachers and your family who they think would make

good references.

Choose one of your teachers from junior year or a current teacher who has known you for a while. Colleges want a current perspective on you, so a teacher from several years ago isn't the best choice. Consider asking a teacher who also knows you outside the classroom. For example, a teacher who directed you in a play or advised your debate club can make a great reference.

Consider other adults — such as an employer, a coach or an adviser from an activity outside of school — who have a good understanding of you and your strengths.

Perhaps most important, pick someone who will be enthusiastic about writing the letter for you. If you're unsure about asking someone in particular, politely ask if he or she feels comfortable recommending you. That's a good way to avoid weak letters.

## **How to Get the Best Recommendations**

Some teachers write many recommendation letters each year. Even if they know you well, it's a good idea to take some time to speak with them. Make it easy for them to give positive, detailed information about your achievements and your potential by refreshing their memory.

Here's how:

- Talk to them about your class participation.
- Remind them of specific work or projects you're proud of.
- Tell them what you learned in class.
- Mention any challenges you overcame.
- Give them the information they need to provide specific examples of your work.
- If you need a recommendation

letter from a counselor or other school official, follow these guidelines:

- Make an appointment ahead of time.
- Talk about your accomplishments, hobbies and plans for college and the future.
- If you need to discuss part of your transcript — low grades during your sophomore year, for example — do so. Explain why you had difficulty and discuss how you've changed and improved since then.

Whether approaching teachers, a counselor or another reference, you may want to provide them with a resume that briefly outlines your activities, both in and outside the classroom, and your goals.

## **Final Tips**

The following advice is easy to follow and can really pay off: Waive your right to view recommendation letters on your application forms. Admission officers will trust them more if you haven't seen them. Remind your teachers that they need to upload your letter to Naviance. For people outside of school, have them email your counselor the letter. This will save time and stamps. Make sure your references know the deadlines for each college. Follow up with your references a week or so before recommendations are due to make sure your letters have been sent to Naviance or your counselor. Once you've decided which college to attend, write thank-you notes. Tell your references where you're going and let them know how much you appreciate their support.