

Santa Susana High School Counseling: **Preparing for a Brighter Future:** ***College Handbook***

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Putting the College Process into Perspective

The primary focus of your early high school years should be building a solid academic foundation while exploring new options outside of the classroom and continuing to enjoy those pursuits you have long held. Challenge yourself academically, do your best work. Make friends. Go after that personal goal you set for yourself on the field. Believe it or not, this is exactly what you should be doing as far as the college process goes, too. Colleges will assess your preparedness and achievements in academic and personal areas as they consider your application. The foundation that you build as a freshman or sophomore is critical to your future success at Santa Susana, in college, and beyond.

Why go to college?

College presents students the opportunity to continue to learn. You will learn from professors who are expert in their fields, you will conduct research, and test new theories; you will explore new topics and revisit ideas with which you are already familiar. Just as importantly, you will learn from your classmates, whose backgrounds differ from your own. In the classrooms and dormitories, on the fields, and over meals, you will gain valuable insights from your peers. You will learn how to live more independently and take on more responsibility and decision-making.

During your time at college, you will specialize in one or more areas (typically called majors) and be able to explore a wide variety of other subjects through a core curriculum, distribution requirements, or minor program. You might also prepare for further degrees in medicine (MD), law (JD), business (MBA) or other academic areas (MA or MS, PhD.) Data from the US Census Bureau show that people who attend college earn significantly more over a lifetime than high school graduates do on average. In the job market of today and tomorrow, a bachelor's degree is essential.

Why should I start thinking about it now?

Our goal at Santa Susana High School and in conjunction with the College Career Center is to make students and parents feel knowledgeable, confident and calm as they move through the process. We'd like you to make informed choices during freshman through senior years. We hope you will view college as an exciting opportunity for academic and personal growth and enjoy exploring all the possibilities out there.

WHERE DO I START?

The College Career Center (CCC)

The College Career Center is a resource that is available to students and parents throughout their time at Santa Susana. The center has handbooks, SAT prep books, College/University, Junior College, and Vocational study information. As well as self-assessment tests that may help students find an interest of study before going off to college. Parents are always welcome to call or email the office with questions or thoughts, and encouraged to schedule appointments when they are on campus.

Whether they have questions about specific colleges, majors, standardized tests, or summer plans, students should feel free to stop by or make an appointment to meet with one of the college or academic counselors.

Academic Planning and Performance

During Spring Semester student will start their registration for the next Fall Semester. They will receive assistance from their TAP advisor, and the Counseling Staff. Before choosing classes for the following year, check in with the College Career Center: find out what it would mean if you switched foreign languages or stopped studying one altogether; learn more about what colleges would expect to see from a prospective engineering or studio art major.

Of course, colleges are primarily concerned with your academic preparation and achievements when they review applications, so it goes without saying that your grades are important. When your transcript is sent out with your college applications, your year-end grades for year-long classes will appear, along with semester grades. So, if things don't go so well fall semester in your pre-calculus class, don't despair. Work hard to make improvements during spring semester, and your year-end grade will likely reflect your efforts. An upward trend in your grades over time – between freshman and sophomore year for example – speaks positively to your commitment and growth.

Particularly as you enter your junior and senior years, ask yourself the following questions: *Am I doing the bare minimum to meet graduation requirements, or am I taking the most demanding classes available and challenging myself as a student? Do my grades reflect my abilities?* These are questions admission officers can ask about you as well.

When reviewing your application, the transcript is the single most important credential admission officers will consider. Your transcript is an official account of all of the courses you took and grades you have received while at Santa Susana. Colleges are very interested in what grades you earn in what kinds of classes. It is up to you, in conjunction with the academic office, to choose the classes in which you enroll. The College Counseling office can give you a sense of what coursework different colleges might be expecting to see in a competitive candidate's curriculum, and we are happy to offer guidance when it is time to choose classes. The grades, of course, are up to you. Strive to work your hardest and earn the best grades you are capable of earning. When asked, many seniors reflect that they regret not working as hard as they could have in classes. Try to avoid feeling this way when you are a senior by always doing your best.

One of the greatest benefits of attending Santa Susana is the opportunity students have to work with the faculty. As a student seeking to grow both academically and personally, you have a tremendous resource in the Santa Susana because of our small size classes – take advantage of it! If you are struggling in a course, don't wait to ask for help, or to take advantage of the supports available. Before you turn in a paper, submit a rough draft and ask for some guidance and early feedback. When a paper is returned, follow up with

the teacher and learn ways to improve for the next time. You will see positive results in your grades and gain insight into ways you can improve your future work. Ask questions of your instructors, advisors, and teachers. Get to know them and let them get to know you. Remember, some of these people will be writing letters of recommendation for you, and it is great if they can speak to the growth they have witnessed over the past few years and write a very thorough letter on your behalf.

Courses to take in High School- A-G Requirements

So what should you take? When you look at a college website, you will usually be able to find their specific requirements. So if you have some colleges in mind, or at least some that would represent your type of college, it pays to do research up front.

SSHS Graduation Requirements VS. College “A-G” Requirements

SUBJECT	SSHS DIPLOMA*	“A-G” REQUIRMENTS**	(A-G)
English	40	40	B
Mathematics	30 <i>Must include: Algebra I</i>	30 <i>Must include all: Algebra I Geometry Algebra II</i>	C
Physical Education	20		
Fine Arts or Foreign Language	10	20 Foreign Language & 10 Visual/Performing Art	E F
Social Science	30	20	A
Physical Science	10	20	D
Biological Science	10	(College Prep Biological Lab Science	
Science Elective	10	& College Prep Physical Lab Science)	
Practical Art	5		
Health	5		
Computer Education	5		
Electives	55	10 (must be college prep class)	G
TOTAL	230		

* Students must also pass the CAHSEE

** Students must also receive a **C or Better** to earn credit for A-G requirements

A student heading for an Ivy League or top tier college would likely have taken a language (other than English) and first year Algebra class in 8th grade, then would have taken 4 more years of Math, Language and Lab Sciences. In addition, many of those would be honors or AP classes. Highly selective colleges will see applicants with an average of 18-20 honors/AP semesters and well more than the minimum number of core academic classes shown above.

Beyond the Classroom

In an increasingly competitive college market, colleges want to know what kind of citizen you will be on campus, what kind of roommate you will make, will you contribute to student life, the arts, athletics? Colleges hope you will get involved in meaningful ways outside of the classroom. More importantly, you yourself should want to get involved, try new things, and challenge yourself. Santa Susana has so much to offer outside of the classroom – the opportunity to act in a play, join clubs, play club sports, be a leader in on campus - and these are things you should feel free to try for the first time or continue to pursue. Do what you love – write poetry, dance ballet, run, volunteer your time, create art, sing, act, take up juggling.

The trick is to find balance between your co-curricular pursuits and your school work. If you are so involved that you have no time for your classes, this is a problem. *Grades are always the central factor in an admission decision*, and a laundry list of activities will not compensate for a poor performance in the classroom. Don't join every group on campus just to have things to list on your college application. College admission officers are pretty good at spotting "resume-builders".

What do you do with your time outside of classes and homework? Colleges will ask this question, and it is a good idea to consider this very topic throughout your high school career. Remember, we stress the importance of this not only in the context of the college application process, but rather in terms of your own growth as a person. Now is the time to explore and try as many new things as you want. There won't be many times in your later life when you are easily able to host your own radio show, have access to a darkroom and photography instruction, try welding, or devote so much time to volunteering for a particular cause.

Do what you are passionate about, and your enthusiasm and sincerity will shine through. Try not to give up outside interests community and volunteering, studying karate, private music lessons. These things might "look good" on a college application, but most importantly, they make you happy, and are enriching and rewarding. Life goes on after college applications are filed, and it would be a shame to devote time to pursuits solely to make yourself more attractive to colleges if it means you give up on a hobby you will enjoy your whole life.

Transcript:
Grade Point Average:
Scholarship
Junior College
Vocational Schools

General Classes Vs College Prep Courses

Calendar:

September

- ☐ **Welcome to Santa Susana High School!**
- ☐ Get to know your teachers.
- ☐ Try something new.
- ☐ Enjoy getting to know your classmates. Try to get to know people whose backgrounds are very different from your own.

October

- ☐ Check in with your teachers to see how things are going in each class. Ask about ways in which you could improve.
- ☐ Prepare conscientiously for your fall mid-terms.

November

- ☐ Pay attention to feedback from teachers and act on suggestions.
- ☐ Communicate regularly and openly with your advisor about how things are going both academically and socially.

December

- ☐ Prepare for exams. Put in your best effort – winter break is just around the corner!

January

- ☐ Reflect on how the fall term went for you. What could you do differently this term?

February

- ☐ Make summer plans to study, get a job, do community service.
- ☐ Check in with your teachers on your performance in each class.

March

- ☐ Discuss taking the SAT Subject Tests/ACT with your teachers and college counselor. If these tests are appropriate for you.

April

- ___ Stop by the College Counseling office just to say hello! If you haven't made summer plans, **Mrs. DeMartino** has lots of ideas.

May/June

- ___ Do your best work on final exams. Be sure that you have a clear sense from each teacher about the structure of the exam and what will be covered. Attend tutoring if needed.
- ___ Make a list of the activities in which you were involved and any special achievements or recognition.
- ___ Keep a portfolio of outstanding work from the school year to reference when looking for teacher recommendations.