

Riley Baker Educational Consulting

www.rileybaker.com

16 Green Bay Road

Winnetka, IL 60093

847.441.8687

rileybaker@rileybaker.com

March 2020

14th – SAT and SAT plus Writing

(register by 2/14—late
registration until 3/3)

9th, 10th and 11th grade
students - Make plans for a
productive summer. Investi-
gate summer programs, jobs,
internships

11th grade students – Create
an initial list of colleges

Prepare for spring SAT/ACT
exams

April 2020

4th - ACT and ACT plus Writing

(register by 2/28 - late regis-
tration 3/13)

Seniors should have their final
letters of acceptance by the
beginning of April

Juniors—Visit colleges

Prepare for AP Exams

Seniors—Compare offers of
admission; revisit top choices

Evaluate financial aid packag-
es and consider college
funding options

Spring Admissions

Over the past few years, many colleges and universities have received huge increases in their volume of first-time, first-year applications. There has also been a sharp rise in the number of students choosing to apply early. As a result of these patterns, admit rates have dropped, some classes have increased in size, and residence halls are groaning under the weight of so many students! From the norm of singles and doubles has arisen the norm of triples, and even quads – challenging for young people who have grown up with their own room. Some universities are even having to convert lounges into bedrooms.

These and other space constraints have prompted more colleges to offer a select number of students the option of spring admission. Some colleges may even offer students the option of spring entry on their application, a practice long in use by Purdue University. These spring seats open up after December graduates have left and study abroad students are no longer on campus. Colleges will typically offer this opportunity to high-achieving students who exhibit evidence of independence, leadership and flexibility. Students who are offered January enrollment must first pay their enrollment fees to secure their spot. Colleges will want to chat with them about plans under consideration for their fall semester and will likely encourage classes, travel, community service or employment. During the fall, these students will be contacted for housing and meal plan options and will attend a first-year orientation before arriving on campus in January. Note

that students who accept the offer of spring admission cannot enroll elsewhere and cannot defer their enrollment until the following fall semester. If spring admission is not an option, the student will have to reapply for the following fall semester.

One of the main concerns that first-year students have about entering college in the spring is graduation – can they still graduate on-time with their peers? The answer is almost always YES, you can. The way to ensure this is to work closely with an academic advisor in order to gain their assistance in selecting the right coursework to stay on track. Many students may choose to complete coursework at a local community college during the summer or over winter break – again, talk to your advisor first because it is imperative to select transferable courses. Spring admits may also want to study abroad and this again is easily manageable. This is the perfect time to remind students that there are many ways of entering college with a full semester of academic credits already under their belts through CLEP tests, AP exams, and community college classes. Find out ahead of time what your colleges' spring admission policies are and plan accordingly.

Some spring admits may worry about coursework within their major that is offered in strict sequence. Examples of this may be in the fields of mathematics and science. For example, Calculus 1 may only be available in the fall and required of an engineering major before entering a specific Physics class in the spring. Pre-health students wishing to complete Organic Chemistry may find that Chemistry 2 is a prerequisite, but if Chemistry 1 is offered (continued on p. 3)

Career Paths for Genetics Majors

Genetics majors can find jobs in a wide variety of fields. These include:

- Agriculture & plant sciences
- Animal sciences
- Environmental conservation
- Forensics
- Human genetics
- Veterinary medicine
- Wildlife biology

Common career paths include:

- Genetic counselor
- Medical scientist
- Forensic technician
- Researcher
- Physician
- Agriculture or food scientist
- Veterinarian
- Biologist
- Clinical scientist
- Geneticist
- Biomedical engineer



Focus on Majors: Genetics

Fascinated by heredity? A major in genetics might be the right choice for you. Genetics is the study of inheritance and variation in all living organisms and viruses. A genetics major provides the knowledge base necessary for many specializations in biology.

The major begins with establishing a strong foundation in math and the sciences. Chemistry, biochemistry, and biology as well as courses in calculus and statistics are generally required. For this reason, it can be helpful for students interested in this major to take four years of math and science, particularly biology, chemistry, physics, calculus, and any computer science classes offered, while still in high school.

A genetics program is typically taught in a combination of research, lecture, and lab work. In comparison to other major programs, genetics is very research-oriented, so if you do not enjoy research, this is likely the wrong major.

More specialized courses in the major may include cytology (the study of the structure and function of plant and animal cells), microbial genetics, human genetics, genetic data analysis, and behavioral genetics. Regardless of the specific courses, students will leave the major with a strong understanding of genetics and many critical skills.

Because the program emphasizes research, students will become comfortable with designing and conducting experiments, analyzing data, and coming to conclusions. They will gain problem solving skills and effective communication skills, achieve proficiency in math, and gain a deep understanding of the sciences, not just conceptually but practically.

The major is a good starting point for students heading to medical or veterinary school, and it provides a strong foundation for those who wish to pursue a graduate degree in biology.

While there are many jobs that require further study, there are also a wide variety of job opportunities that do not require graduate school or medical school. For example, for those who are interested in writing, students can become science writers. Science writers write and edit science related news for journals or for professional, trade, or business publications.

Students who loved their time in the lab could become a lab bench scientist or a lab manager. Bench scientists conduct experiments to contribute to research and development. Lab managers establish standards for proper medical laboratory equipment. They also oversee staff, operations, and equipment, ensuring that everything is held to a degree of order. A managing job would be appropriate for students with strong communication skills who are adept leaders.

Students who are interested in sales may find jobs as representative for a biotechnological company. Overall, the biotech industry is growing, and multiple types of biology-related jobs will be found there. All companies selling products need sales representatives, and it is particularly important for biotech companies to have sales representatives who understand not just the product but the field surrounding it. Since a major in genetics is a foundation for most biological sciences, genetics majors can easily go into this role.

Of course, there are other jobs in the biotechnological industry, such as managers and executives, which do not require a graduate degree. There are also specialized research roles in that industry that do require graduate degrees.

If a student wishes to become a genetic researcher, physician, or a veterinarian, they will need further study. For researchers, a PhD is the typical requirement, while physicians and veterinarians would need a medical background.

Financial Matters: Appealing Your Financial Aid Award



If your first choice college offers everything you want but the price tag is making you cringe, don't give up hope; consider appealing your financial aid award. While colleges and universities won't encourage such an appeal, the financial aid officers are empowered to make adjustments, if deemed warranted.

To appeal, do the following:

Do not deposit until you've settled the financial aid discussion. Once they have your money, colleges will be less motivated to offer a better deal.

Be realistic. Show the college that this is a partnership that you want to be part of, but need just a bit more assistance. Know exactly what you CAN afford. If your Expected Family Contri-

bution (EFC) is more than the cost of tuition, then make sure that your request makes sense. Do your homework and negotiate in good faith.

Be informed. Make sure you have researched the specific financial aid policies at each college before entering into a conversation with them. Don't contact a college, touting fabulous grades and awesome SAT scores, only to find out that the school offers only need-based financial aid but gives no merit aid awards.

See if the college offers "preferential packaging" – a practice in which they will meet a larger share of financial need based on the academic stats of the student, i.e., stronger grades and test scores will receive more money. Take a look to see if your test scores are in the "middle 50" or in the "top 25." There will be more money at schools where the student's scores raise the school's profile.

Be prepared. Colleges will generally reconsider awards for just two reasons: 1) the EFC from the FAFSA (Free

Application for Federal Student Aid) was incorrect due to a change in the family's financial situation because of an illness or unemployment, or 2) there is a competing offer from another college. If you plan to mention the competing offer, be prepared to fax a copy of the award letter to the financial aid office.

Ask about "second chance" or conditional aid. See if the college is willing to add any additional aid if you complete senior year with straight A's.

Send a letter. Put all of your reasons down in writing and ask for a follow-up meeting, in person if possible or by phone.

Stay cordial and don't become desperate or melodramatic. Any college that accepted you will now want to do what it can to help you enroll. Respectfully assure the financial aid officer that this is your first choice for college and ask if they can help you to make this a viable option for your family. It never hurts to ask!

Spring Admissions (continued from p. 1)

only in the fall, they may have to wait to start the sequence. Again, as soon as you are clear on accepting spring admission, look into course sequences and prerequisites, and talk to your academic advisor.

Some spring admits do report a few transition challenges: fall first-years may have already built friendship bonds, spring orientation rarely has the fanfare of the big fall orientation programs, and it may be harder to learn about clubs and organizations. But look on the bright side – the smaller

size of spring orientation will mean a more relaxed atmosphere and more one-on-one conversations with students and faculty are possible. Residence hall advisors create programming to ensure that the newbies are quickly connected to other students. Make sure you also learn about any financial aid implications to spring entry. Some colleges also require that students live on-campus for a semester before being able to join a sorority or fraternity.

For many students, being a spring first-

year is a wonderful opportunity. Treat the fall semester 'off' like a mini-gap year and explore your many options. Consider an internship and start building your resume; take classes to accelerate your major completion; or just get a job and save money. College is what you make it and knowing that entry in the spring will have no bearing on your ability to graduate on time, and be successful and fulfilled, makes it a great life experience that should be carefully and thoughtfully considered.

Riley Baker
Educational Consulting

16 Green Bay Road
Winnetka, IL 60093

Phone:

847.441.8687

E-mail:

rileybaker@rileybaker.com

Website:

www.rileybaker.com

Selecting High School Classes

Students often struggle when making decisions about which classes to take during their all-important four years of high school. How do you choose?

College admission officers review five parts of an application: standardized test scores, if required; college essays; recommendations; listing of academic honors and extracurricular activities; the high school transcript, covering grades 9-11. *Without question, the most important part of that review is the students' complete academic transcript.* When analyzing the document, the reader may have to first determine that a student has met that college's minimum course requirements - typically 3 years of Math, 4 years of English, 2-3 years of Social Sciences, 2-3 years of Sciences and 2-3 years of a foreign language/ASL. Assuming that the applicant has completed those, the primary focus will be on the strength of the coursework selected. Admission decisions rarely hinge on just one aspect of an application, such as test scores, but the overall trends in performance, challenges of coursework, and grade trajectories are all-important.

When a high school sends an applicant's transcript to a college, it is usually accompanied by the School Report. This document provides the college with detailed information about the applicant's placement within their overall class and the choices of coursework the applicant had available each year. Universities want to see that students have chosen to really engage in their high school ex-

perience, push themselves to take on increasingly rigorous coursework and have been successful in their endeavors. Why? Because that is exactly the type of student who will also excel on a university campus!

The School Report shows whether or not you had the option of taking an AP course or a College Prep course, as opposed to a regular course in any given subject. Admission officers want you to take full advantage of courses that are available to you. But remember, they will never expect to see a class on your transcript that your school does not offer or require - just try very hard to shine within the range of opportunities available.

Make sure your transcript reveals your passions and interests. If you are applying as a foreign language major, have you taken the most advanced options available? If you are applying as a STEM candidate, have you taken the highest level of the Math and Science courses open to you?

Remember that your high school years are your way of preparing yourself for the increased challenge of a college classroom. Take classes that give you a solid foundation so you can be ready for college-level math, writing, and science classes. As you take on those tough classes, are you also engaging in activities? Think about showing consistency in extracurricular choices too. This is the balance that colleges love to see - consistency, rigor, determination, dedication and resilience.