

# The Miami Valley School



## College Counseling

## Freshmen Handbook

# Freshmen College Counseling Handbook

For all Freshmen Students and their Families

**Purpose:** To acquaint all students and parents with information that will lead to laying the foundation for a successful college search/selection/application process.

WELCOME MVS FRESHMEN and FAMILIES!

The mission of The Miami Valley School is to challenge young people of promise to become self-sustaining learners and compassionate global citizens.

Five core values are integral to our success in achieving this mission:

- **Excellence:** MVS summons all students to their full potential of mind, body, and spirit, by inviting and encouraging them to seek distinction in their endeavors.
- **Caring Community:** MVS values a nurturing environment where each student is known and loved, and finds joy in belonging.
- **Experiential Learning:** MVS believes that students thrive from opportunities to experience life and to learn while broadening their knowledge of self and kindling intellectual passion and curiosity.
- **Celebration of Individual Gifts:** MVS believes that fostering appreciation for unique talents, capabilities, and differences nourishes individual growth and enriches the community.
- **Character:** MVS insists upon and fosters integrity, respect, personal responsibility, teamwork, and empathy for others – qualities of character that are inherent in leadership development.

The MVS College Counseling Team encourages our students to use these core values to lay the foundation for strong academics, to follow passions outside the classroom, and to develop good citizenship. A strong background in these areas will undoubtedly lead to, not only a growing experience at MVS, but a successful college selection process. Throughout your student's journey at MVS, please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concern regarding how a class or activity may relate to your student's college process. The door to the College Loft is always open.

Most Sincerely,

Colin Dunnigan  
Director of College Counseling

## FRESHMEN YEAR

### *AT THE BEGINNING:*

Get off to a good start with your high school academic record. (WE CANNOT STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS ENOUGH – THIS IS THE YEAR EVERYTHING STARTS TO COUNT!) To maximize your college options as a graduating senior, you will need a strong four-year academic record. Course selection and grades are the primary criteria used by colleges in making admissions decisions. Make sure to READ – READ – READ!

### *CHALLENGE YOURSELF:*

- Build a strong academic (English, mathematics, language, social science, natural science) foundation and critical thinking skills by taking challenging courses.
- Study hard and work towards the best grades possible.  
**If you get in trouble or fall behind with your studies, it is IMPERATIVE that you seek out assistance from your instructors, your Academic Advisor, or your College Counselor. That last thing you want to do is dig a deeper hole by not seeking help.**
- Make use of the time that your teachers offer to provide any extra help.
- Become involved and begin building your resume of activities, awards, and accomplishments. Do not limit yourself by first impression likes and dislikes. STRETCH YOURSELF! SURPRISE YOURSELF!
- Start a folder (on the computer) in which you list your activities, accomplishments, strengths, positive qualities, and qualities that may need strengthening. This information will be useful in completing college applications, preparing for campus visits and college interviews, and providing background material for those who write your letters of recommendation. It will also assist you in creating your Activities Resume which you will be required to do at the beginning of your senior year. (Please see the last page in this document as a guide to how you should properly format your Activities Resume.)
- Strengthen your vocabulary by increasing your reading.
- If you are an athlete, know the OHSAA (Ohio High School Athletic Association) requirements for high school eligibility (see athletic director) & and the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) requirements for college eligibility (<http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net>).
- In the spring, select appropriate courses for 10<sup>th</sup> grade with the help of your family and Academic Advisor.

### ***IF A SELECTIVE COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY IS A POSSIBILITY:***

*(A 'Selective' college/university can be defined as any institution admitting less than 60% of their applicant pool.)*

- Talk with your parents about it.
- Share your ideas with your Academic Advisor and your College Counselor.
- Work with your Academic Advisor to develop a master course schedule that will enable you to achieve this goal.

## **WHERE YOU SEE YOURSELF & HOW TO GET THERE FROM HERE**

### **High School Transcript:**

This document is the key to your success in college admissions. Your transcript contains all the grades that you will have earned beginning at the start of your freshmen year and ending with your senior year grades. Please keep in mind that you will be applying to college during the fall of your senior year, so the last grades that most admissions offices will see before rendering a decision will be the grades at the end of your junior year. It is **IMPERATIVE** that you start off strong! If you do not start off strong, then you must make sure that your grades demonstrate an 'upward trend'. Remember, if you have a slow start it is much harder to raise a GPA than maintain it. **START and FINISH STRONG!**

### **What Colleges are LOOKING FOR:**

- Overall Performance
- Rigor of Curriculum (college prep, Honors, Advanced Placement)
- Grade Trends
  - Each Year Counts
  - Grades within a specific discipline
  - Course Difficulty
- Depth & Breadth (Academic Interests)

### **College Search Timeline:**

Your college search will not fully begin until the middle of your junior year. However, that does not mean that you can wait to begin thinking about college. MVS is a college prep school and the expectation is that you will be attending a four-year college/university upon graduation. Of course we are most willing to hear about any other options you may want to pursue after your graduation from MVS. As a freshman, it is most important to concentrate on your curriculum and your performance in that curriculum. Start listening to the upperclassmen as they proceed through their college process. Take note of important things they say such as, "I wish I would have started the process and visiting colleges earlier." It is always good to start thinking about things like this earlier rather than later.

You will have a one group meeting each year, until your junior year. In January of your junior year, we will have one group 'Kickoff to the College Process' meeting, and subsequent individual meetings. This is when the process really gets underway and becomes very personal. Please do not feel that if you are younger than a junior that you are not allowed to use the resources in the College Loft. You are welcome and encouraged to come up to the College Loft to use the resources and speak with the College Counselor.

### **Academic Preparation:**

College admissions professionals all say that the curriculum in which you enroll (regular, honors, Advanced Placement level courses), and the performance in that curriculum is the #1 criterion they consider when looking at a student's application. Therefore, it is imperative that you challenge yourself appropriately (if you have a question what 'challenge appropriately' may mean for you, please ask your college counselor.)

A good model to follow is:

- 4 credits – English
- 4 credits – Mathematics
- 3 credits – Lab Science (minimum)
- 3 credits – Social Science (minimum)
- 2 credits – Foreign language (minimum) (3 credits are **highly** encouraged)
- 1 credit – Fine Art
- 1 credit – Physical Education

This model is a good one to have in mind as you move forward in planning your four-year schedule.

### **Standardized Testing:**

The Miami Valley School does not do any standardized testing until the sophomore year. During the sophomore year each student will take the PLAN (a precursor to the ACT) and the PSAT (a precursor to the SAT). Although these tests DO NOT impact your college admissions decisions, they are both good indicators of future success on similar tests and in related course work at MVS. We try to de-emphasize these tests as it is much more important for our students to concentrate on their current class work. For further information on standardized testing and a more thorough schedule of testing, please visit the College Counseling Website at: [http://college.mvschool.com/college\\_standardized\\_tests.htm](http://college.mvschool.com/college_standardized_tests.htm)

### **Careers/Possible Majors:**

It is extremely important to MVS students that as freshmen they keep an open-mind about all subject areas. As any upperclassmen will tell you, it is not imperative that you know what you want to do with your life at age 17/18, much less when you are 14/15. Students are encouraged to enroll in and experience a wide variety of classes and educational experiences. This will allow them to have a better feel for what is available to them in the future.

### **Involvement:**

This is a VERY important aspect to the students' experience at The Miami Valley School. The College Counseling office encourages students to follow their passions. Your involvement is an important aspect of college applications. However, colleges do not want to see a 'grocery list' of activities. Just remember, Quality before Quantity. *Colleges would much rather see a student become heavily involved in fewer activities, than only partially involved in many activities.*

Reasons to become INVOLVED:

- Current Enjoyment
- Balance (Time Management)
- Ability to Commit & Follow Through
- Creates an Active Campus Community

What Stands Out:

- Length of Involvement
- Depth of Involvement
- Awards and Distinctions

Ways to Become Involved:

- School Activities (clubs, athletics, etc.)
- Church
- Community
- Employment

**WHAT COLLEGES WANT IN AN APPLICANT:**

- STRONG ACADEMIC PREPARATION  
(See the above recommended Academic Preparation list)
- INVOLVEMENT OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM  
*REMEMBER: QUALITY not QUANTITY*
  - Good Examples of Involvement are:
    - After-school/weekend job
    - Clubs and Activities at MVS (taking on leadership roles)
    - Playing multiple sports (taking a leadership role is important)
    - Acting/Dancing/Drawing (concentrating and developing in any area of Fine Arts)
    - Tutoring here at MVS or in other local schools
    - Community Service
    - Volunteering
    - Church Activities
- GOOD STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES  
The best preparation for standardized testing is challenging yourself in the classroom. Also, you want to make sure you are reading, not only for school but for pleasure as well. This will help with vocabulary development.
- STRONG PERSONAL QUALITIES  
Colleges are looking for students who have learned and displayed qualities such as:
  - Character
  - Integrity
  - Determination
  - Leadership ability
  - Honesty
  - Adaptability
  - Friendly/One who can interact and get along well with othersThese qualities can be developed through interaction and involvement on all levels. Make sure you are picking good role models to learn from and doing your best to always 'do-the-right-thing'.

**If you have any questions about this information, please see the Director of College Counseling. The door to the College Loft is ALWAYS open!**