



Ask Molly

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

By Students and Parents

SPX's Testing Program: Details and Additional Information

Each year, St. Pius has an all-school testing day, usually the 3rd Wednesday in October. ALL STUDENTS take a practice ACT that we administer in October with the assistance of the Cambridge Company. Results are available to and shared with students within 7 days.. PSAT testing is optional, done in October, and is open to sophomores and juniors. Most SPX students take the ACT or SAT at least once before the end of their junior year; it is recommended that a student consider taking it once for real before the end of sophomore year, and definitely once before the end of one's junior year. ACT prep classes are offered on a continuing, and as needed basis by the counseling department. There are multiple free online resources available as well. Look at the "ACT Information Page" submenu

ACT and SAT Testing

How and where do I register for the ACT test or SAT test?

You may register online. [ACT Website](#) There is an [ACT Info Page](#) on Molly Callahan's web page. For the SAT, website is www.collegeboard.org There is a fee which must be by credit card. If you miss the registration deadline, you can pay a late fee and still register (for up to two weeks after the initial deadline).

What is the "School Code" that the ACT and SAT tests ask for?

The school code is **261-697**. It is also called the CEEB code. It should be used on all testing registration as an identification instrument.

On my application, should I name schools that

should receive my ACT or SAT scores?

"Molly" says YES. The fee pays for this service anyway, up to 4 schools. A student will not jeopardize admission with a faulty or lower score on the first test administration, or any one score, for that matter. It is part of the application process.

ACT's and SAT's have a writing subtest. Should I take it?

Not all schools require the writing subtest; it is a good instrument to assess college readiness in writing. There is a trend emerging that may require these as part of the admission process in the near future. "Molly" suggests a student take the writing subtest to find out if writing skills are appropriate for college entrance level work. In this area, only William Jewell College and St. Louis University "recommend"

the writing subtest as part of the admissions process. Truman State has it as an option.

What is the highest score you can earn? For ACT, the score is 36. For the SAT, it is 1600.

What is a good ACT score or good SAT score?

“Good” is an arbitrary descriptor. The national ACT average for 2019 was 20.7; the SAT average was 1059 (out of 1600). A key element in understanding a test score is its percentile (not its percentage). The percentile reflects how a student scored in relation to the norm group – the other students who took the test. Average ACT score in Missouri was 20.8 in 2019

Can I get a detailed printout of my ACT test questions and answers?

Yes, you may, but only on certain testing dates during the school year. It must be ordered and a fee paid for this option.

Check this website for further clarification:

<http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act.html>

How often or how many times should I take the ACT or SAT tests?

There are a number of opinions “out there” about this question. “Molly” suggests that students take it at least twice unless one achieves an appropriate score in the first test sitting. There is a set number of times – 12 -- a student can take a test administration. Statistically speaking, a student will score + or – 2 of the ACT score earned the first time OR + or – 40 of the SAT score earned the first time. A student should have a realistic goal for the score. One way to prepare is to take a prep course, purchase a prep book / CD, and / or take a full practice test. There are a number of free resources on the Internet, including these sites:

www.actstudent.org (look for “Test Prep” link, then scroll to the very bottom of the page),
<https://spxkc.org/documents/2021/6/2021%20Additional%20ACT%20and%20SAT%20Resources%20off%20the%20Internet.pdf>

Should I take only the ACT, or only the SAT, or should I try both?

All colleges accept both exams. The ACT, traditionally more popular in the South and Midwest, is more curriculum-based (knowledge-based). The SAT — still predominant on the East and West Coasts — focuses more on basic math, verbal and writing skills (reasoning skills). Both tests have had some revision in recent years; ACT research has done some research, and in releasing its results, the ACT reiterated its long-standing case for more rigor in high school coursework. The organization encourages students to take a minimum of four years of English, and three each of math, social studies and science. Students who had taken those core courses or more averaged 21.9 on the exam; students who had not taken enough core courses averaged 18.7

Some colleges and universities have gone ACT test optional for 2020-2021, and some 2021-2022 (actual announcement determined by the particular school.)

ACT has also released its research-based “benchmarks” for college readiness: English 18, Math 22, Reading 22, Science 23 [ACT Benchmarks](#)

I am taking AP courses. How do I know if I can earn college credit?

The AP college credit website may answer these questions. A student must score a “3”, “4” or “5” to possibly earn credit. Credit varies by institution. See this link:

<https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/creditandplacement/search-credit-policies>

I am taking ACCP courses at Pius. How do I know if I can earn college credit?

Most colleges accept ACCP courses for credit; however, the student should check with the respective institution for clarification prior to taking the class at Pius and paying for it. There is **never a guarantee** about this; it is up to the college or university. Students and families should check about this ahead of time before paying for it.

I heard that there is a college credit program other than AP and ACCP. What is it?

The program to which you refer is called the CLEP (college level examination program). Students can earn credit by taking examinations for material already mastered. Tests only cost about \$85 plus admin fees for 2021; study guides are available for them as well. If a student has taken a solid high

school curriculum, CLEP testing is a viable alternative and may save a family money in the long run. Each college handles CLEP testing a little differently. This website will answer most questions:

<https://clep.collegeboard.org/exam>

Planning for Post-High School Education

When is a good time for a student to start planning for life after high school?

One can never start too soon, but one can start the process too late. Obviously, doing well in school from day one freshman year is important. But junior year, semester 1, is a good starting point; sophomore year, semester 2, is even better. Visiting college fairs, whether in the fall or spring, is wise. These are posted on the “Planning for College” submenu on Molly Callahan’s website.

A student can look at career assessment instruments, “Molly” would suggest looking at the ACADEMICS tab on the main Pius page, go to the “Counseling” section and navigate to “Career Information” submenu.

What are some other good online resources for this process?

[Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) is an excellent resource for job descriptions and appropriate training needed. It is the penultimate resource, according to “Molly.”

[Peterson's](#) is a good source for college choices and “customizing” them.

[CollegeView](#) is a more detailed search for areas of study and for schools that offer degrees in one’s area of study.

What should I do prior to senior year?

“Molly” suggests you look at the “Planning for College” submenu AND to check out the “College Planning Manual: Parents and Students” document.

Suppose I really have no idea what I want to study or major in. What should I do?

There are several ways to go about answering this question. First, there are online career assessment instruments. Secondly, the local community colleges can administer a battery of tests for a nominal fee and discuss the results with you. A third option is talking with one’s parents and one’s school counselor about general interests. What a student wants to focus on, among other things, would be reflecting on the personal qualities you possess that you believe are strong and viable and then considering how those qualities could best be put to use in the work world. A fourth consideration is to opt for attending a local community college the first year; it is relatively inexpensive, and you can complete general education requirements for most college majors in the first year or year and a half.

I am not a typical traditional student who aspires to a 4-year college. What should I be thinking about?

College is not for everyone, but further education of some kind should be a serious option. Community colleges (Maple Woods, Penn Valley, Longview, Blue River, Johnson County) offer associate degrees. Schools like DeVry Institute, ITT, and St. Luke’s College of Health Sciences at Rockhurst University, and cosmetology schools (all in the Kansas City area) offer specialized training that culminates in 1-2 years. Graduates from these schools find very good entry level jobs, often with the assistance of the respective school. In addition, one could pursue training in areas like EMT, real estate, and the Fire Academy.

Applications, Transcripts, College Visits & Recruiters

What should I know about college applications?

Applications usually involve simple information about yourself – name, address, work history, school activities, intended major, self-reported high school courses taken and grades, etc. Sometimes an essay is involved; if this is true, it is wise for the student to spend a significant amount of time on this since often it is an initial screening device for admission. “Molly” recommends that the student send a résumé with applications. Some elite schools will require letters of recommendation from the student’s teachers (usually teachers of English, social studies, math, science and foreign language [CORE COURSES] should be the writers of these letters) All application materials should be sent together in one mailing or emailing. Applications can be completed online. There is usually a fee involved; recently, however, a few schools do not have them (Metropolitan Community Colleges, Rockhurst University, Avila University. Most schools have online applications only.

Suppose I need a transcript for an application or scholarship. What is my next step?

All transcript requests should go through the counseling department. These requests are then given to the school registrar who mails them in a sealed envelope, signed, dated and embossed with the school’s seal. Most of the time, a college or university wants an “official transcript” that must come from St. Pius X with the school seal. Schools prefer transcripts sent this way or sent electronically from SPX’s Counseling Department. If a student or family needs to hand-deliver the transcript, it must be delivered in a sealed envelope, embossed with the school’s seal, and stamped with a message that reads, “Unofficial If Opened.” Emailed transcripts are never official in any sense of the word.

- If students apply online, then an email should be sent to the counselor or a note given to request an official transcript be sent. Students should NOT verbally request passing the counselor in the hall or

running by him on the way to class.

- In either instance, **students must be current with tuition payments and with service hours toward graduation for transcripts to be sent.** For seniors, “current service hours” would be 45 if semester 1; for semester 2, it would be 52½.

How do I arrange college visits? What is the school’s procedure for excusing these visits?

St. Pius is **very clear** about this policy. Families arrange the visits, at least a week ahead of time. The student brings a written parental permission note to the counselor who gives the student an **orange** college visit slip that all teachers need to approve and sign. Both are turned into the main office by the day **BEFORE** the scheduled visit (not the day of). Last minute scurrying by trying to get phone permission or email permission, then turning in **orange** notes that are incomplete will seldom result in the visit not being excused. College visits are not excused after April 30th for seniors; juniors have until May 5th for their one college visit.

If proper procedure has been followed, students may practice or attend the respective extracurricular activity.

What about college recruiters? How do I see them?

A good many college recruiters come to Pius in the Fall semester. Pius tries to have these people come during the seminar period. An interested student needs to see the counselor and obtain an **orange** “recruiter” slip for the time scheduled. Recruiting visits are announced over the P.A. at school and are on the calendar of Molly Callahan’s “Planning for College” submenu .

[Planning for College](#) (click on “Calendar” at the top)– well in advance. Visits are normally restricted to 30 minutes, especially if class time is missed.

Scholarships

I understand that students can automatically qualify for some scholarships. What does this mean?

“Automatic” scholarships are awarded to students who have certain predetermined ACT or SAT scores, and a certain GPA. These are awarded whether a student has a financial need or not. Most likely in 2021-2022, the criteria for these scholarships will be revised, given that COVID-19 influenced criteria this past year.

I see in the SPX newsletter a reference regularly to local scholarships. What does this term mean and how does it apply to me?

Local scholarships are ones sponsored and underwritten by local community groups or organizations. They vary from year to year. These are some examples:

- Greater Kansas City Community Foundation (under the “Resources” tab)
- Gladstone Chamber of Commerce
- KCI Rotary Club Educational Foundation
- Elk’s Club Scholarship
- Clay County Bar Association
- St. Luke’s Hospital North Healthcare Scholarship
- Alumni Scholarships from respective colleges and universities
- Elizabeth Spelman Health Care Foundation Scholarship
- Kansas City Chiefs Scholarship

The sponsoring organization has a coordinating representative who most often sends a paper application to the school or provides an online link for the application. The counselor will reproduce paper applications and announce via the P.A. or “X” Factor or his website of their availability. It is the student’s responsibility to secure these applications. They are then returned to the counselor and mailed to the representative. If applications can be accessed online, then the student should complete it and send it. If a transcript is required, it is the student’s responsibility to ask the counselor for that. These

local scholarships often will be need-based and will require an essay.

Tell me about “Bright Flight” Scholarships and “Missouri Access Grants.”

Students who earn a qualifying score on the ACT or SAT (top 3% overall) earn the “Bright Flight” scholarship if they attend a school in Missouri. For 2019-2020, this was a 31 ACT and 1450 for SAT, it is to be determined. This \$3,000 scholarship may vary in amount from year to year, depending on funding, and is renewable with a 2.50 GPA. Starting back in 2010-2011, ACT and SAT scores in the top 4% – 5% of Missouri scores may be awarded up to \$1,000 if they choose a Missouri school and the funds are available.

Missouri Access Grants are available to families who qualify financially; each family must complete the FAFSA. The award range is from \$300 to \$2,850.

I understand there are huge scholarship databases on the Internet. Please clarify.

Fastweb is an Internet resource that puts the student in touch with thousands of private-funded scholarships. The student must complete a profile online that sets up a “mailbox.” Any time a scholarship in the Fastweb database recognizes a student’s profile that is similar to its criteria, an email is sent to the student. The student then looks up the scholarship and sees if (s)he qualifies. If so, the student may apply online or download a paper application and send it in. A student can create a Fastweb profile anytime after enrolling in high school (it is not just for seniors). There are many other private scholarship databases available on the “Scholarship Station” submenu; they will require setting up an account.

How do I earn recognition of my scholarship offers for the graduation program?

The school counselors ask that any awards for students be validated with a parent email or letter (copy). These are then added to the counselor’s records of scholarships, which are then acknowledged in the graduation program.

NAIA and NCAA ClearingHouse: Sports Eligibility

- Student athletes desiring to play sports in college must register with the NAIA or NCAA
- Clearinghouse to determine eligibility. The NCAA website is:
<https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/>
- There is a registration fee of \$90 that accompanies this. Academic requirements, namely, the core course requirements, are also present there, too.

In addition, a high school transcript is required. That must be requested through the school counselor or school registrar; it must be official and have the school seal, or submitted through a secure website to which the counselor has access. .

Finally, the prospective athlete must contact ACT or

SAT (The College Board) directly and ask that an “official” ACT or SAT score be sent directly to the Clearinghouse. For ACT scores, go to www.actstudent.org and click on “The Test”, then “send your scores” on the left hand side of the page. Designate the testing date; you will want to send a regular report. There is a \$13 fee for this service. . The NCAA code is 9999.

The NAIA Clearinghouse website is <http://www.playnaia.org>. They have a \$70 fee as well. Their eligibility code for ACT and SAT scores is 9876.

For SAT scores, use this link:

<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat?excmid=VT-00051> and look for the “sending your scores” link.

The Many Responsibilities of a School Counselor: 2021

A day in the life of school counselors is seldom, if ever, predictable.
Responsibilities include, but not limited to:

- ❖ Conferencing with each student at least twice a year; more, by request by student or parent
- ❖ Assisting freshmen with transition to high school
- ❖ Assisting sophomores with transitioning to sophomore year's more difficult academics
- ❖ Encouraging juniors to focus on their future studies and schools of choice
 - Assisting seniors with college applications, choices, FAFSA completion and Scholarships
 - Helping students with a four year plan of academics
 - Fielding parental concerns by phone or email
 - Discussing student concerns with teachers as needed
 - Providing multiple resources for students to help them with planning for senior year (folder)
- ❖ Proactively managing student crises as needed or requested
- ❖ Discussing and requesting schedule changes for students as needed throughout the year
- ❖ Coordinating Catholic College Day in September

- ❖ Coordinating all-school testing day in October
- ❖ Interpreting all-school testing ACT results for students and parents; sharing these with administration and faculty
- ❖ Setting up college recruiting visits to SPX, including those from the Armed Services
- ❖ Arranging for college visits to be excused (parent note, "visit slip", return to office
- ❖ Organizing scholarships for seniors: <https://spxkc.org/scholarship-station-1>
- ❖ Setting up and organizing college information files
- ❖ Setting up and organizing career information files
- ❖ Organizing ACT and SAT files, maintaining current scores for both, and downloading and printing scores for the students' test cards
- ❖ Organizing SPX "Career Day"
- ❖ Arranging for and organizing "Senior Financial Night" and "Junior College Information Night" in February
- ❖ Providing news for the parent newsletter
- ❖ Coordinating summer leadership and enrichment activities sponsored by local organizations or colleges and publicizing them in the weekly newsletter
- ❖ Writing letters of recommendation for college applications, scholarships, applications for college Honors Programs, etc.
- ❖ Transcript preparation and submission during the school year as well as FINAL TRANSCRIPTS in June.
 - ☐ transfer students
 - ☐ withdrawal students -- records and grades
 - ☐ Transcripts for insurance, job applications, etc.
 - ☐ Preparing a master list of transcripts sent for seniors, graduates / former students, and in house students that include scholarships, admission into Honors' Colleges, intended post high school plan(s), and option of choice
- ❖ Entering transfer students' grades into PowerSchool
- ❖ Enrolling students as needed for credit recovery in Acellus and entering the final grades and credits into PowerSchool
- ❖ Monitoring the A+ program
- ❖ SEC Coordinator for the Diocesan "Circle of Grace" program.
- ❖ Professional reading
- ❖ Updating the web pages for the college calendar, <https://spxkc.org/counseling>
<https://spxkc.org/counseling> and <https://spxkc.org/my-spx>