

## March/April Calendar

- March 19– SF National College Fair at Concourse Exhibition Center 1:30-4:30 pm
- April 8– last day to sign up for May SAT tests
- April 9– ACT



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## SAT Joins Reality Television

Little did one third of high school students in the nation who entered a classroom to take the SAT this past Saturday morning realize that watching reality television shows would give them an advantage on the SAT. This week the internet is abuzz with the controversial essay prompt posed on the SAT: **“Do we benefit from forms of entertainment that show so-called 'reality,' or are such shows harmful?”**

There has been an outcry regarding the fairness of the question. What about the students who do not have televisions, or whose television watching is limited, or do not care or have time to watch television, or do not watch television for religious or cultural reasons? What were students who learned in their SAT preparation to use literary and historical examples in the answer to the SAT essay question to do? On the other hand, is there some legitimacy to such a question

as we evaluate such role models as Kim Kardashian and Snooki, and their place in society? But what if you are like me and do not even know who Snooki is? What do you think?



## UC Will Use Wait Lists Again

For the second year in a row, all UC campuses except UCLA and Merced will use waitlists for some applicants. A student could receive waitlist offers from more than one UC and can accept an offer from more than one UC. If a student does accept a waitlist offer from any college, he should not delay

enrolling at a college that has accepted him. The last day to submit an intent to enroll at any college is May 1, 2011. Freshman students will be notified of their status by June 1, 2011. If a student is later offered a position off the waitlist, he will lose his deposit at the first

UC if he selected a UC. Last year, some UC campuses did not take anyone off the waitlist and thousands of students were waitlisted. Thus, students should not be too hopeful about being offered a spot off a waitlist, which is good advice at almost every college.

# Arizona's SALT Program

Recently, I had the pleasure of sitting down with the admission coordinator for the University of Arizona SALT program. SALT stands for Strategic Alternative Learning Techniques. SALT is unique because it is one, if not the only, structured program at a large university for students who have learning difficulties. Since I often work with students who have learning challenges who want the opportunity to attend a larger university, this was an opportune time to be updated on the SALT program.

One thing that is very important to understand about SALT, and other such programs, is that the programs are not built to be enablers. SALT is looking for evidence that the student can live independently. When I work with students, I want to make sure that they understand the particulars of their learning challenges and have or are adopting strategies to cope with those challenges so that they can be successful in their education.

If students think they are in need of the services of SALT, they should apply to the university simultane-

ously when they apply for SALT. The SALT application has several essays. These are not the typical college essays. SALT is looking for information to determine whether SALT is the right fit for a student. Students must first be admitted to the University before SALT reviews the application. SALT has about 225 spaces, and receives about 500 applications per year. SALT can usually accommodate most eligible students. However, it is important that a student apply early.

Once a student is admitted into SALT, the student will attend an orientation in the summer before the regular university orientation. SALT is a fee based program in addition to the university tuition, and the student must stay in the program for at least one year. Most students stay for two years, and there are scholarships available. Each student will be assigned a learning specialist and have a short weekly appointment. There are many resources available such as Inspiration, a great software program for students with reading comprehension issues, and Kurzweil, a program that reads to the students. It is up to the students to decide how much and how often they use the resources available.

About 50% of the students are diagnosed ADD or ADHD and the other 50% have been diagnosed with a learning disability such as dyslexia. There are no special programs within SALT to address students who have been diagnosed with autism or Asperger's. However, I was pleased to learn of a fairly new living environment on campus for these students called Chapel Haven West. The students at Chapel Haven can also use SALT.

Finally, it is important to understand that SALT does not provide the students with accommodations. Thus, if students need accommodations, such as extra time for tests, these services are handled through the university's department of disability resources. Thus, many students avail themselves of the services of both centers.

## *Summer Activities*

As summer approaches, students should begin considering how they will spend the summer. While I do not want to see stressed out kids, summer is a great time to pursue passions that a student cannot undertake during the school year. It is also a time for students to make a little money while gaining some job experience. I encourage students to really think about how they want to plan their summers. The activities need not be expensive. For instance, I encourage students to read as much as they can when they can read the books and materials they want to read. Reading improves vocabulary and comprehension skills. For those interested in a summer program, applications should be submitted early as some of these programs sell out. Away programs are great for experiencing a college campus, immersing oneself in a foreign country, pursuing an existing or developing a new passion, contributing to the community, improving academics, or learning independence.



# When Colleges Say No

As one college counselor put it this month, “The real March Madness begins this month”, as colleges roll out their admission decisions. While many students will be elated by their fat envelopes, others will feel rejected upon receiving thin envelopes. Oftentimes, this may be the first time in their lives where they face rejection. These students must remember that an admission denial at a college is NOT a reflection of their personal worth or accomplishments. Rather, they should consider the following.

- Many colleges are reporting a huge increase in applications. Thus, pure numbers are driving many denials.
- Some public colleges are heavily recruiting out of state and international students because of budget cuts.
- Hundreds of valedictorians were rejected at one of the most highly selective colleges last year, and they thought they did everything right.
- Colleges are looking to diversify their classes—talents, geography, gender, economic. Thus, you may not be the violinist that a college seeks.

This is the teachable moment. This is where personal growth enters as they deal with adversity. And did they really get nothing out of all the time and effort they expended in high school? What about the intellectual strength they gained which will help them at the college they will attend and in life, in general? How about



the difference they made in their schools and in their communities? What about the relationships they have fostered? As they realize these things rather than the momentary disappointment, you will probably see them proudly wearing their new college sweatshirts, looking forward to new intellectual pursuits, adventures, and relationships.

## SAT vs. ACT

At this time of year, I receive many inquiries about standardized testing. When should I take the SAT? How many times should I take the test? Should I take the SAT or the ACT? Does test preparation help?

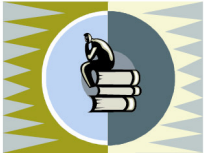
There are different philosophies concerning testing. I will present mine. I encourage students to take the SAT and the ACT because they are very different tests. Colleges will take the best scores, no matter which test is presented. The core difference between the tests is that the SAT is reasoning and logic based and the ACT is curriculum based.

Anecdotally, about 1/3 of students do better on the SAT and 1/3 do better on the ACT. For the rest, it is a wash. Thus, it is to a student's advantage to take both tests to determine if one test is better than the other for that student.

In most cases, I discourage students from taking the SAT or ACT before Spring of Junior year. If they wish to improve their scores, they can study over the summer and retake the test in the Fall of Senior year. I am loathe to recommend taking either test more than twice, and I do recommend some type of test preparation, particularly for

the SAT. Test preparation does not need to be expensive. There are many free and inexpensive resources, but a student must be motivated to realize positive results.





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## *College Planning Workshop*

On March 31, 2011, in collaboration with Sylvan Learning Center in Burlingame, I will conduct a college planning workshop. This will be different than the joint seminars that I have done in the past with Sylvan.

The workshop is appropriate for 8th graders who will be entering high school as well as students currently in the 9th through 11th grades in high school and their parents. It will be more hands on as the students will be given calendars to plan a timeline through the remainder of their high school career. The context of the planning will be

what colleges are really looking for when they evaluate applicants. Since each student has different interests, passions and goals, we hope to help them individualize their plans to meet their goals and pursue their passions.

The workshop will be held on Thursday evening, March 31, 2011 from 6:30-8:30 p.m., at Sylvan Learning Center, 1200 Howard Avenue, Suite 104 (entrance on Lorton Avenue), Burlingame, CA.

Please reserve a seat by calling College Focus at (650) 343-3940 or email Maureen

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