October 2025 Newsletter
collegeapp101.com

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The PSAT and Selective College Admissions

Over the years, College App 101 has published a great deal about the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) in newsletter and podcast format. Now fully digital, the PSAT/NMSQT occurs throughout October. Parents and students should consult their high school's office of academic guidance or principal for information such as testing date, testing location, testing grades, and so forth.

While all high school grades (except seniors) may take the PSAT/NMSQT, the National Merit Scholarship competition occurs only among junior class testers. More than a million juniors compete every October for a National Merit Scholarship. The top 50,000 scorers become, in some way, a National Merit Scholar, most achieving Commended status. Of those 50,000 students, the top 16,000 scorers become National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists. Eventually, about 1,000 Semifinalists are eliminated and there are 15,000 Finalists.

What is the relevance of the PSAT/NMSQT to selective college admissions? National Merit Scholars, even Commended status students, are more likely to win admission to a selective college, because National Merit Scholar status is the most elite high school academic recognition. Many such students enroll in colleges on the more selective end of the spectrum.

Parents, who are preparing their student to win admission to a selective college, would do well to ensure their student's high school has a track record of graduating National Merit Scholars.

Career Planning Session

College App 101 is excited to announce a new career aptitude service: Career Planning Session. This service is for students, who do not know what college major to declare or career path to pursue. The Career Planning Session is a meeting to discuss a high school student's prospective career choices and the education that such career prospects require. A pre-meeting assessment is required. Connect with Dr. Riley at collegeapp101.com and request more information today.

College App 101 Podcasts

Designed for college bound high school students and their parents, these podcasts are brief, informational, and entertaining. They are available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and collegeapp101.com/podcasts/. Recent episodes:

- Fall 2025 Financial Tips: FAFSA, Generosity, and More
- Admissions Advice from a College Student
- When to Prepare for Highly Selective Admissions
- The Role of Parents in College Admissions

Dates to Remember

- Oct 4: SAT test day
- Oct 18: ACT test day
- Oct 24: regular registration deadline for the Nov 8 SAT
- Oct 28: late registration deadline for the Nov 8 SAT (fee increase)
- Nov 7: regular registration deadline for the Dec 13 ACT
- Nov 8: SAT test day
- Nov 21: regular registration deadline for the Dec 6 SAT
- Nov 24: late registration deadline for the Dec 13 ACT (fee increase)
- Nov 25: late registration deadline for the Dec 6 SAT (fee increase)

Click here for SAT registration and here for ACT registration

Past College App 101 Newsletters

Past editions of the College App 101 Newsletter can be found here.