

## University preparation at Wheaton Academy

Before getting into what a student should be doing in order to be competitive for selective university admission, he/she must know how a university evaluates a competitive applicant.

There are five basic areas where a student will be evaluated. The first two criteria are a student's grades and then standardized test scores (ACT, SAT, TOEFL, SAT Subject exams). Third, a selective university will look for a strong resume' with involvement in clubs, sports, internships, volunteering, and special talent/awards. Fourth, a student must write well on his/her university essays. Last, is the ability for the student to show genuine interest in the university. Is he/she a good fit?

Even during the summer before attending 9<sup>th</sup> grade, a student can begin to develop a resume' by finding a camp or class on a university campus for enrichment. Some camps are science-oriented such as PAVE at Vanderbilt University <https://pave.vanderbilt.edu/ayindex.php>

Students should also consider volunteering and/or working a job during the summer months to gain experience and show a good use of his/her time. Reading 3-4 hours per day is essential for a student to improve his/her English reading comprehension skills and to perform well on the TOEFL. Following the sophomore year, many international students will spend a portion of their summer doing ACT/SAT preparation as well. Wheaton Academy provides a practice ACT each September for all 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students.

We encourage all of our students to find his/her pace and to find his/her place. The "pace" refers to a student finding the right level of rigor or challenge in his/her coursework. Most students may not be ready for all advanced classes, but will want to take some advanced classes. Finding a "place" at Wheaton Academy refers to the importance for a student to get involved right away in a club, volunteering, or even participating in a sport. Selective universities will want to see this involvement right away and will look for a student to find a passion in one or two areas. For example, a student may get involved in theater at Wheaton Academy and join the Musical Theater Performance class. He/she may try out for and make the school musical in the spring. Over the course of his/her high school career, this student may earn bigger parts in the play and show universities a commitment/passion for theater.

Junior year, most students will take an ACT/SAT prep course and begin testing during spring semester. Each student will be given a Naviance Family Connection account, which is a vital resource for researching universities. The university counselor will meet with all juniors to help them complete some documents, which will help the university counselor guide the student to research the best-fit universities suited for each student. In May, the university counselor and student will have a phone meeting with the family in the home country to discuss the university search process and answer any questions the parents may have. During the summer before senior year, students/parents need to decide on 6-10 universities to apply to in the fall.

In September of the senior year, each student will meet with the university counselor to review his/her list, decide on which deadlines to apply, select teachers for letters of recommendation, and work with each student to revise his/her essays. Many students will retake the ACT/SAT as needed. All seniors will know where they have been admitted, denied or waitlisted by the end of March of their senior year. Each must decide where they will attend on May 1<sup>st</sup>.