



# American Hebrew Academy College Counseling Newsletter

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## A Recap of Fall College Counseling Activities

### Visits:

During the summer, Dr. Tarbox visited colleges in the Connecticut/Rhode Island area including Brown University, University of Connecticut, University of Hartford, Connecticut College, Quinnipiac University and Yale. In the fall, we hosted visits from:

- Elon
- Johns Hopkins
- Brandeis
- University of Maryland
- Mount Holyoke College
- Franklin and Marshall
- University of Georgia
- Washington and Lee
- Washington University in St. Louis
- Goucher
- University of South Carolina
- Northwestern
- Haverford

### September:

Seniors began intensive one-on-one meetings with Dr. Tarbox in preparation for the college application “season.” Keeping in constant communication is the best way to ensure things go smoothly during this very busy time.

September is the time when “College Counselor” letters are written for each student. These letters are sent to each college to which the students have applied.

A number of seniors took the ACT exam in late September. This exam is an alternative to the SAT exam. For a good description of the two exams, and information on which exam may be best for a particular student, please see the Winter 2010

newsletter available on the College Counseling web site : <http://www.americanhebrewacademy.org/academics/collegenewsletters.asp>

Students new to the Academy enroll in our “Success 101” class and they had three class sessions with Dr. Tarbox. In the first meeting in September, students were given an introduction to “College Admissions.” Students in the class learned about the main criteria colleges look for when reviewing an application, (grades, rigor of curriculum, test scores, extra-curricular activities) and did a college admissions exercise that involved reviewing three mock college applications, and deciding, as a group, which of the three would be ( Continued on Page 4)

Pictured at Right: Tempel Green on the campus of **Connecticut College**, facing the Thames River and Long Island Sound.

Percent of Students Accepted: 37%

Middle 50% SAT Scores for Accepted Students (Although Connecticut College is SAT Optional)

Critical Reading: 610-700

Math: 610-690

Writing: 620-710

AHA alumna Anya Romanet (Class of 2006) attended Connecticut College in New London, Connecticut



## From “The Thinking Student’s Guide to College” by Andrew Roberts. 2010

### Tip #2: The Key Distinction is Between Small Colleges and Large Universities

For seniors considering their offers from colleges and universities, and for juniors beginning to put together their “college list” this spring, this article provides great information on one of the KEY factors students should be considering—whether to go to a large university or a small college.

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From the point of view of teaching, the key difference between colleges is whether they are large research-oriented universities or small teaching-oriented colleges. At both types you can get a great education. However, the accessibility and style of this education differ. Whether you choose one or the other depends on the type of person you are. Some types will thrive at large research universities; others will do better at small colleges. Let me explain.

Large research universities do three things, only one of which is educating undergraduates. The other two are producing research and training graduate students. In some ways these activities are complementary: professors who are at the cutting edge of research know their fields very well (in addition to being very smart) and so can teach undergraduates the most up-to-date knowledge and provide the best answers to their questions. But there are also trade-offs: because professors are hired for their research productivity and expected to continually produce original research, they may not be great teachers and have much less incentive to devote extra time to their teaching. Some of them view teaching undergraduates as a distraction from their “real” work.

The mission of these universities to train future professors probably falls more on the trade-off side. A good proportion of your interaction with instructors at these schools will be with graduate students who grade most papers and exams, lead discussion sections, and sometimes teach their own courses. This does not necessarily have to detract from your education. Graduate students are young, hardworking, and more accessible than full-time faculty. (And without them there would be no professors in the future, much less new knowledge.) But they know their fields less well, are less experienced teachers than professors, and have their own research to worry about—their main task is writing a doctoral dissertation.

I do not intend this as a negative judgment of research universities. If you are sufficiently proactive and ambitious, you will find in them the best possible education the world has to offer. As the Harvard economist Greg Mankiw puts it, “For someone who wants to consider a research career, being at a top research school conveys significant benefits: You get to know more active researchers early on, and you can attend a large array of research seminars. But those opportunities are not relevant for 90 percent of students at these schools, who will not go on to become PhD economists but will instead become doctors, lawyers, corporate executives, and so on.”

To get the best education at such a university, you have to be a go-getter. You have to make yourself known to the full time faculty. You have to show them that you are worth taking seriously, that you care about their field and have numerous talents. If you can do this, professors will take you under their wing, show you how their field works at the highest level, and perhaps even help you produce your own original work.

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Pictured at Right: The Van Wickle Gate at [Brown University](#)  
Percent of Applicants Accepted: 11%

Middle 50% SAT Scores for Accepted Students:  
Critical Reading: 650-760  
Math: 670-780  
Writing : 660-770

ACT Composite: 28-33



The middle gates of the Van Wickle Gates are the ceremonial entrance to Brown University and are opened only twice a year. The gates are opened and swing inward at Convocation when new freshmen enter at the beginning of the year. The central gate remains shut until the end of the year when they are opened at commencement to allow graduating seniors to leave Brown.



Pictured at Left:

The Alumni Center at the [University of Connecticut](#) in Storrs

Percent of Applicants Accepted: 50%

Middle 50% SAT Scores for Accepted Students:

Critical Reading: 550-640

Math: 570-670

Writing: 550-650

ACT Composite Score: 24-29

## For Juniors : Thoughts on Preparation for the SAT

As many of you are considering the various options for preparing for your SAT exams, I wanted to share some thoughts on preparing for the SAT.

Any type of SAT preparation (“SAT Prep”) works best to the extent that the student is willing to put in the time and effort. Some students like more structure and guidance. Some are better with more flexible SAT preparation. But for any student, the benefit will be equal to the amount of commitment the student has to doing it.

Simply enrolling in a class, or even signing up to work with a tutor, will only work well IF the homework and practice assignments are taken seriously. Some students take a formal class like the Princeton Review or a Kaplan class more seriously because their parents have invested a sizeable amount of money into it. That depends on how cognizant the student is of the fact that his or her parents have invested this money, and how much they don’t want to waste that investment.

For ANY student, and ANY kind of SAT prep, familiarity with the exam – how

long it takes, in what order the sections unfold, and how each section works is beneficial. It is my belief that students tend to do better the second time they have taken it, because of the familiarity aspect. They KNOW what to expect, and how it will work. Knowing whether to bring a sweatshirt because it’s cold in the building, or dress cooler because it’s hot in the building is important. They know that eating a good breakfast is necessary, and that the proctor of the exam will tell them repeatedly they CANNOT TALK once they are on their way to the exam room on test morning. Once the students’ comfort level is higher with the exam, they can settle down and focus on the content. Taking a full length practice exam is helpful. Students can do this on their own, but they have to be pretty self-directed to do so.

I always recommend a student take the exam twice. Chances are they will do better on at least one or more sections the second time around, and most colleges will take the “best of” the SAT scores.

I usually like to see students take the exam at least once in the spring, and once in the fall. This gives students time to decide if they want to do any additional SAT prep over the summer.

Sometimes students are more focused on college in the fall. In the spring, it still seems “a long way off” and they are also getting ready for final exams, and may be just a little tired by the end of the academic year. In the fall they are fresh, and they and their classmates are actively working on college applications. So unless the student has outstanding scores from a spring test, and are happy with those given the colleges they are considering, taking it again in October of their senior year is probably a good idea.

I hope this helps in your decision making process. Below I have provided a number of SAT Prep options that you might want to consider.

### SAT PREP OPTIONS

#### Check Out:

- 1) “The College Board’s Official SAT Study Guide” (Practice Tests) – Study on your own is often very effective! **Available on Amazon - Cost – Around \$14**
- 2) A rather fun book to read, written by college students who aced the SAT is called “**Up Your Score**” Available on Amazon, new and used – **Cost \$10-\$15**

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### Recap of Fall

(Continued from Page 1)

admitted to college. The exercise resulted in lively debate about the various pros and cons of each applicant. Students were encouraged to think about how they would want *their* application to look when they begin applying to colleges in two or three years.

### October:

Dr. Tarbox again met with the Success 101 students early in the month, to go over the PSAT examination which all freshmen and sophomores took on October 13th. The results of the PSAT examination will be received in December, and distributed to students to bring home with them at the December break.

October 15th was an early application deadline for a few colleges, and applications were readied for this date. This year, the College Counseling Office has “gone electronic” (and green!) by getting a new system up and running that allows the College Counseling office to submit transcripts and letters of recommendation electronically to colleges. (There are still a few colleges that only accept paper applications, but the majority now accept

electronic documents). A great benefit of the new system is that it allows the College Counseling Office to confirm that documents have not only been sent, but have been received and downloaded by the college, thus eliminating the concern about “missing documents.”

A final Success 101 class met and all students were given their “Naviance” accounts. Naviance is the college search and application web-based software that is used by the Academy. Students were instructed on how to use Naviance to look up colleges, and to use the “Resume” function. By keeping their resumes current, students can begin building their “portfolio” of activities, awards, community service, and summer plans that will be useful when they are applying to colleges. Parents—please encourage your student to keep their “portfolio” current. It should be updated every term as new information becomes available.

Seniors took the October SAT at Grimsley High School on October 10th. The October test is the last SAT exam before the November 1st Early Action deadlines that many colleges have. A group of students also took an ACT exam at the month.

### November:

November 1st is an important Early Action/Early Decision college deadline. This year, we had over 90 applications by 28 members of the senior class go out under Early Action or Early Decision deadlines.

A group of seniors took SATs (or SAT subject tests called SAT IIs) on November 7th. Fortunately, this Sunday fell on the day after the clocks changed back to Standard Time, and they all got an extra hour of sleep before the exam!

Dr. Tarbox attended a “Financial Aid 101” session at Davidson College on November 16th to keep abreast of current changes in federal aid policy and processing.

### November-December

As college applications become complete, the focus will turn to financial aid processing for students who are applying for aid. Dr. Tarbox’s “Step by Step Guide to Financial Aid” was emailed to all parents, and students received a Financial Aid Application Worksheet to track forms and deadlines for each of their colleges.

Pictured at Right: A view of Sleeping Giant Mountain from the hilltop dorms of [Quinnipiac University](#) in Hamden, Connecticut

Percent of Applicants Accepted: 69%

Middle 50% SAT Scores for Accepted Students:

Critical Reading: 540—610

Math: 560—630

A nice mid-sized university (5,900 undergraduates; 1,800 graduates), the campus sits adjacent to Sleeping Giant Mountain State Park. The most popular majors are Physical Therapy, Communications, Management, Psychology and Nursing. This university has become more competitive and recent upgrades in both programs and facilities have made it an increasingly popular choice.



## Distinction Between Small Colleges and Large Universities (Continued from Page 2)

If you are shy and lack self-confidence, however, you may lose some of the benefits such universities offer. Indeed, most students at these schools do not get involved in the research atmosphere, much less form bonds with professors. Instead they end up taking mostly large lecture courses and interacting primarily with graduate students. While some of these classes will be life-changing experiences, few instructors will take you seriously as an individual. Most students at these universities become a face in the crowd, particularly in the larger and more popular majors. If you do not seek out your professors, they usually will not seek you out.

What does a small teaching-oriented college offer? In many ways it is the opposite of the research university. There are no graduate students. Almost all of the classes are taught by professors. Many more, probably most, of them will be small seminars. You will likely get to know many of your professors personally or at least have the opportunity to do so. You will probably meet them walking around campus since these schools are often in small towns. And your professors will return the favor. They will learn your name and something about you. They are not required to do as much research and are encouraged to be good teachers. In fact, many of them end up at such schools precisely because they enjoy teaching and are good at it.

One of the surveys of college graduates that I referred to earlier confirms this impression. The survey asked students whether during their undergraduate studies anyone other than fellow students took “a special interest” in their work, whether there “was someone you could turn to for advice or for general support or encourage-

ment.” At small liberal arts colleges, 62 percent of students answered that a faculty member took an interest in them versus 36 percent for public research universities and 41 percent for private research universities. Incidentally, Ivy League schools came in near the bottom with 37 percent.

A small college is perfect for you if you are less confident in your abilities and lack the moxie to draw attention to yourself. This is not to say that you are less talented. Only that you would thrive more in an environment where you are a big fish in a small pond. Indeed, there is a less competitive atmosphere at such schools. You are less likely to have to compete with the superstars who have been trained since the age of two to attend Harvard and who draw all of the professors’ attention to themselves.

What could be wrong with such a picture? The main thing that is missing is contact with the cutting edge of research. Fewer professors at small colleges are doing major work in the field; there are fewer geniuses around. And the university as a whole is less geared to research—that means fewer public lectures and conferences, less money to build labs or travel to foreign countries. This may not be noticeable for most undergraduates, but for the very top students to whom this book is addressed, there are fewer opportunities at such schools. A final black mark against these schools is that they are almost all private and hence expensive, though most do offer significant financial aid.

I would add, however, that these small teaching-oriented colleges produce more future professors—a higher percentage of their students go on to get PhDs. The reason I think is that students at these schools tend to identify with their professors much more and can see themselves following in their footsteps. For most students at research-oriented universities, the professoriate is a distant and mysterious

group.

Note that what I have set out here is a contrast of ideal types—the difference between the prototypical large research-oriented university and the prototypical small teaching-oriented college. In fact, over the past twenty or so years these distinctions have been breaking down. Large universities have started to offer more college-type experiences with smaller seminars and greater contact with faculty (though they have not forsaken research or graduate students). Some offer special honors programs or liberal arts colleges embedded within the university. Conversely, small colleges have begun to require a much greater research commitment from faculty. Differences between the two types may thus be on the decline, but they still exist.

The takeaway point for you is to determine whether you have the self-confidence and talent to take advantage of the resources of a large research university or whether you need personal attention to be more accessible and competition less cutthroat. To put it more bluntly than I should, do you want the floor of the New York Stock Exchange where fortunes are made by those with the talent to succeed or a greenhouse where gardeners tend to all of their plants?

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Hillel at the University of Chicago

### SAT Prep (Continued From Page 3)

3) One of the best websites I have found for straight-forward tips and advice about the SAT is **SPARKNOTES** – simple, clear strategies for each section of the SAT, and advice on many of the SAT II exams as well. CHECK THIS OUT – It’s FREE <http://www.sparknotes.com/testprep/>

4) [www.eprep.com](http://www.eprep.com)

5) <http://www.number2.com/>  
Free! On Line SAT Prep

#### COURSES AND TUTORS:

##### 6) AHA SAT Elective Class – Winter Term

Will meet on Sunday afternoons from 1 to 3.

##### 7) PRINCETON REVIEW SAT PREP CLASS (for Juniors) AND PRIVATE TUTORS

AHA Princeton Review Class – Winter Term – Sunday Afternoons – Cost \$475. Class meets 8 times for three hours each time on Sunday afternoons (1 to 4), plus students take 3 full length practice exams (exam days meet from 1 to 5).

Information on regular Princeton Review classes and tutors in this area (Greensboro/Winston-Salem) can be found at:

<http://testprep.princetonreview.com/CourseSearch/Search.aspx?productType=C&itemCode=23&Zip=27410&rid=1&image>

##### 8) GUILFORD COLLEGE SAT PREP CLASS

[www.guilford.edu/satprep](http://www.guilford.edu/satprep)

##### 9) KAPLAN SAT PREP CLASSES AND PRIVATE TUTORS

<http://www.kaptest.com/College/>

[SAT/Kaplan-Programs/CO\\_sat\\_overview.html?cid=103399](http://SAT/Kaplan-Programs/CO_sat_overview.html?cid=103399)

Kaplan also has an On Line Course

##### 10) LOCAL SAT TUTORS IN GREENSBORO:

Mary Nance  
Academic Development Services  
2311 W. Cone Blvd. Suite 223  
Greensboro, NC 27408  
336-288-3098

Angie Kratzer (Critical Reading Only)  
[angiekratzer@hotmail.com](mailto:angiekratzer@hotmail.com)  
336-540-9675  
336-337-1181 (Cell)

Sabrina Hinson (Critical Reading Only)  
336-508-9920  
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336-202-0563

Sam Whicker (Math)  
336-323-6930

### PARENTS—YOUR HELP NEEDED IN KEEPING STUDENTS’ RESUME/ PORTFOLIO UPDATED

In the Fall Recap article, I mentioned students using Naviance to keep an updated Portfolio/Resume. It has been my experience that students sometimes have difficulty remembering many of their activities, awards, honors, and community service projects by the time they are seniors. Your students should be

encouraged to use Naviance to update their resume/portfolio at the end of every term. To do this, your student can log into his or her Naviance account by going to:

<http://connection.naviance.com/americanhebrew>.

They will use their Academy email and the password they created to log in to their Naviance account. If they forgot their password, they can have a new temporary one sent to them to log in, then create a new one. Once in their Naviance Account, the student should navigate to the ABOUT ME tab, then click on RESUME. Under “Add a New Entry” they can choose the category of the activity, etc., they want to add. They can give a name to the entry, relevant dates or grades, and a description. Details are important. If a student simply puts “Mitzvah Day” and doesn’t describe his or her involvement, the name of the agency where the work was done, who coordinated the activity, etc., the activity will lose its relevance in their resume—it won’t appear as important. The more detail and color given to an entry, the better it will be. Students should keep track of all activities, end of term or end of year awards, summer work, etc. When it comes time to do a final resume for college, the student can pick and choose which items to include or exclude. The resume function in Naviance is easy to use.

Parents can also be given access to their child’s NAVIANCE account. In Naviance, you will be able to look up colleges, review your student’s current GPA and standardized test scores, and link to many other important web sites. If you would like access to your Naviance account, please email Dr. Tarbox at: [starbox@aha-net.org](mailto:starbox@aha-net.org)