

The Truth about College Admission  
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St. Johns Classical Academy has successfully graduated its second class of scholars. Throughout their time at SJCA, scholars were immersed in classical literature, Latin, philosophy, logic and rhetoric, history, science, and mathematics. Our scholars completed a beautiful liberal arts education. The liberal arts are defined as the studies of the trivium, which includes grammar, logic, and rhetoric, as well as the study of the quadrivium, which includes arithmetic, astronomy, music, and geometry (Merriam-Webster, 2023). “A liberal arts education is a vital foundation for both individual flourishing and the well-being of our society” (Princeton University, 2023). The mission of St. Johns Classical Academy “is to develop graduates in mind and character through a classical, content-rich curriculum that emphasizes the principles of virtuous living, traditional learning, and civic responsibility. We are building intelligent, virtuous American citizens” (St. Johns Classical Academy, 2022). Solely focusing on college and career readiness is not our goal; rather, it is a natural byproduct of our classical, content-rich curriculum.

SJCA’s graduating class of 2022 consisted of an average SAT score of 1076, a cumulative scholarship offering of \$193,812.64, five scholars qualifying for a Bright Futures Scholarship, nine scholars attending four-year Universities, and 10 scholars attending community colleges. SJCA’s graduating class of 2023 consisted of an average SAT score of 1141, an average ACT score of 23, a cumulative scholarship offering of \$676,225, five scholars qualifying for a Bright Futures Scholarship, 10 scholars accepting offerings at four-year universities, 12 scholars attending community colleges, and our first scholar enlisted in the United States Navy as an E1 HM corpsman. The class of 2023 had college acceptance letters from Savannah College of Art and Design, Mercer University, Florida State University, University of South Florida, University of Florida, University of Central Florida, University of North Florida, Stetson University, Jacksonville University, Belmont Abby University, Auburn University, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Florida Institute of Technology, and Ferman University.

Throughout my first year as the Academic Advisor, I learned an abundance of information that aided and will continue to aid all SJCA scholars graduating from high school and applying for any post K-12 opportunities. During this time, I have also heard many misconceptions about what colleges and universities are seeking as scholars prepare their applications. These are the most common misconceptions I encountered this past year: It is important to get all A’s; test scores will make or break my chances of being accepted; I need numerous letters of recommendation for my application: I must have several advanced placement or dual enrollment classes

on my transcript; and the GPA on your transcript is the GPA that is used to determine admission and scholarships. Demystifying these misconceptions will help put parents and scholars at ease as they better understand all SJCA is doing to prepare scholars not only in applying for college, but in fostering their roles as virtuous American citizens.

After scholars have completed their college applications, either through the college or university or through Common App, scholars will either submit their transcripts to the college or university or use the Self-reported Student Academic Record (SSAR). All the universities in the State University System of Florida utilize SSAR when determining admissions for each scholar. If scholars are required to utilize SSAR for college applications, they will self-report all the courses they have completed, and the grades earned. Scholars will also include the courses they are currently enrolled in for their senior year. SSAR will use the courses, grades earned, and weight of each course to determine a GPA calculation that each university sets for the admissions process. Marissa Hollenbacher, Regional Admissions Counselor at Florida State University, asserts that “they will not look at the physical transcript and will not look at the GPA that comes from the school.” SARR allows all scholars applying to the same university a level playing field when considered for admissions. According to Ana Masterman, Executive Director of New Student and Graduate Admissions at New College of Florida, all colleges and universities in the State University of Florida have specific “regulations and procedures for re-calculating GPAs.” Colleges and universities that do not use the SSAR system will evaluate the transcripts submitted similarly within that specific college or university. The GPA on all high school transcripts is not utilized to determine admissions into any university or college. Instead, each college or university has its own method of evaluating GPA based on the courses earned and the level of the course. This is the same GPA that will be used to determine scholarship offerings from the college or university. When admissions counselors are evaluating admission applications, they want to see rigor, success, and consistency in the courses scholars have taken throughout their time in high school, and rigor is woven into SJCA’s curriculum.

While the culture of education is pushing scholars to take AICE, Dual Enrollment (DE) classes, and Advanced Placement (AP) courses, Stetson University Admissions Counselor Shannon Greeley encourages scholars to take AP or DE courses *only* if they are an option at one’s school. Students, however, should not risk their GPA to simply have college-level courses on their transcript. It may raise concern when a neighborhood public school offers an abundance of AICE, Dual Enrollment, and AP courses, and SJCA does not offer the equivalent courses. Current trends show clearly that scholars are not assessed for admissions compared to their counterparts in nearby schools. When scholars are assessed for admission, colleges and universities consider the profile of the school the scholar attends, which

is found on the Florida Department of Education's website and submitted by the high school's Academic Advisor. Scholars are therefore highly encouraged to take the highest level of courses their school offers, which is what is evaluated by the admissions committee. By focusing on the school's profile, college admission counselors level the playing field for all applicants regardless of the schools they attend. Adam Kinnick is Ava Maria's Associate Vice President of Enrollment Management, and his biggest piece of advice for families is to directly ask the college admissions office what they seek in a stellar college application. The more prepared one is when applying, the higher the chances are of achieving admittance into the institution one wants to attend. College admissions counselors are delighted to answer any questions over the phone, through email, or in person.

The purpose of education is to do more than have a result in the conferral of a degree or prepare scholars for college and careers. It must also educate one to be a "virtuous, free, liberty-loving citizen" (Smith, M., 2022, June 19). Therefore, college and career readiness are not the sole purpose of education at St. Johns Classical Academy; rather, it is a natural byproduct of the beautiful, enriching, and rigorous education each scholar receives.

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