

**Milton Academy Upper School Parents' Association**  
**Q&A with Rod Skinner**  
**December 12, 2019, 8:30am**

**Featured Speaker:**

Rod Skinner - Dean of College Counseling

**President's Welcome - Leah Goldberg, President**

Meeting was called to order at 8:30am

**I. Opening Remarks on College Counseling**

-Dean Skinner sent a letter last week to all senior families. All colleges are seeing an increase or the same number of early applicants again this year. Because of these numbers, colleges are more inclined to deny than ever before. Therefore kids are getting the bad news early rather than dragging it out.

-In this senior class, greater than 95% applied early in some way or other. If history repeats itself, slightly half of them will have positive news of some sort.

-College counseling will be sending colleges a 2nd mailing in January which includes seniors' first semester grades. Many colleges rely on these grades to decide waitlist applicants, therefore the senior year grades can be really critical for kids on the wait list.

-If students are deferred in the early cycle, college counseling is advising them not to send a follow-up letter in December, but rather to wait until January with more significant information that can make a difference.

-Students have already started receiving decisions from schools and will continue to over the next few weeks. This can be an emotional period for students and college counseling is always available.

**II. Questions and Answers**

-Can you comment on sports and college admissions? Communication is very important and families need to keep in contact with coaches at Milton and College Counseling at Milton. You should not just rely on comments made by outside coaches.

-Is there any relief in college admissions with fewer 18 year olds graduating? No. We have an increase in recruitment of students that were never in the admission pool before and an increase in international students.

-Question on deferral and the high rates of deferral this year? Many colleges are seeing an increase in applications and hence an increase in deferrals. We recommend students wait until January to send a letter of continued interest in the school. Sometimes colleges may ask for a follow up letter from senior teachers.

-What is the recommended timeline for standardized tests? The main rule is that students should take it when they are ready. Many schools are evaluating whether to get rid of standardized testing all together. Some recommendations are:

- Spring of junior year or fall of senior year - take SAT or ACT. Often see a 30 point improvement between spring and fall.

- PSA-offered to juniors in October.

- Practice ACT offered to sophomores in the spring.

- Subject Tests:

- If taking a 4th level foreign language class, then can take the subject test.

- If doing well in Chemistry, then can take subject test.

- Do Literature subject test after junior year or early senior year.

- Math 1 subject test can be taken after Algebra 2 and Math 2 after Precalc Honors.

-PSAT and Merit scholarships? If you do well, you may qualify for scholarships. Each state has a different qualifying score.

-What % take the SAT and ACT? 25% do both.

-Is superscore really recognized as final score? Or best sitting? Most schools see superscore as best, but some institutions do best sitting. Most superscore.

-Is it mandatory to send subject tests if doesn't go well? It all depends - some schools say we want to see 2 subject tests, so need to send at least 2. Georgetown recommends 3. Some schools don't require it.

-If subject tests are optional or not recommended, do you still recommend sending it? No, unless mid 700 or better.

-GPA or course selection: is it better to take easier classes and get better grades (Ex: Honors Bio) or harder classes but lower grades? Difficulty of course load is very important at elite schools, but you need to be smart about your own capacity and challenge yourself without overwhelming yourself. Sophomores should talk to college counseling about course planning for the next 2 years.

-Are Milton students at a disadvantage because we have no AP and very few Honors classes? Elite schools know Milton and its rigorous curriculum. College counseling is making more of an effort to describe our school to the next tier schools as well. We are revising our transcripts and Profile.

-For current class III, there were no grades in their first year, will that hurt them? No, it can only help. Many students struggle their first year. CA schools have been doing this for some time and many colleges are comfortable with this approach.

-How do you present students to colleges? There are a number of ways:

- We ask students who they are, and what is their narrative.
- 2 teacher recommendations - helps describe student's character.
- 360 letter from college counselor: describe all of these things.
- Supplemental essay about why our college? This is really important to colleges and can really differentiate students from others.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:30am**