

# Insight

## No Better Preparation for College: Classical Christian Education

### How will The Ambrose School Prepare My Student for College?

The Board of Directors has been working for several years to ensure that The Ambrose School students will be both admitted to and prepared for success at the college of their choice. From the beginning, our school has operated under the principle that God's truth prepares students for life better than secular education. Consistent with this view is the belief that a truly great education for life will naturally be excellent preparation for college.

Remember the homework your students have struggled with over the years? The challenge of Latin? Algebra? Calculus? The extensive writing, reading, and speaking? The pace of the subjects? The strong independent learning skills fostered in our students? Few students will enter college with the established study skills or educational base of The Ambrose School student. When other students fail their first freshman composition assignment after staying up late the night before and rushing to complete it, The Ambrose School graduates will have been trained to complete it well on time, in less time.

In the case of education, the practical and ideal are well-matched. The ideal for a Christ-centered, classical education produces a practical, well-grounded student ready for college. This said, some parents are curious about the reaction of colleges to a high school diploma from The Ambrose School. The Board would like to provide insight into our present and future work that will help ensure your student's admission to the college of his or her choice.

### In the footsteps of great ACCS classical Christian schools:

We are not alone. The Ambrose School was founded in 1995. By looking at other ACCS schools that were started a few years earlier, we can see where we will be when we finish our high school. The promise of classical Christian education is very real. Standardized test scores, national merit scholars, and college entrance test scores for these schools are very impressive. Rather than go into the extensive list of honors achieved, we have selected two representative ACCS member schools that provide public data on where their graduates go to college. The following list represents the last two graduating years from Bear Creek Christian School in Redmond, Washington, and Regents School of Austin, Texas.

<i>Acadia University – Nova Scotia</i>	<i>New York University</i>
<i>Arizona State University, AZ</i>	<i>University of Chicago</i>
<i>Berklee College of Music, MA</i>	<i>University of Notre Dame</i>
<i>Baylor University, TX</i>	<i>Davidson College, NC</i>
<i>Biola University, CA</i>	<i>US Air Force Academy</i>
<i>Boston University, MA</i>	<i>Furman University, Furman Scholars</i>
<i>Cal State-Long Beach, CA</i>	<i>University of Colorado</i>
<i>Chicago Art Institute, IL</i>	<i>University of Georgia</i>
<i>Claremont McKenna College, CA</i>	<i>University of Mississippi</i>
<i>Emory University, GA</i>	<i>Texas Christian University, Honors Program</i>
<i>George Fox University, OR</i>	<i>University of Texas at Austin, Honors Program</i>
<i>Gonzaga University, WA</i>	<i>Texas A &amp; M University, Honors Program</i>
<i>Gordon College, MA</i>	<i>Baylor University, Honors Program</i>
<i>Kettering University, MI</i>	<i>University of Oklahoma</i>
<i>Linfield College, OR</i>	<i>University of Arkansas</i>
<i>Northwest College, WA</i>	<i>Colorado State University</i>
<i>Oregon State University, OR</i>	<i>Auburn University</i>
<i>Otis School of Design, CA</i>	<i>Southern Methodist University</i>
<i>Pacific Lutheran University, WA</i>	<i>Texas Tech University</i>
<i>Parsons School of Design, NY</i>	<i>Savanna College of Art and Design</i>
<i>Pepperdine University, CA</i>	<i>Westmont College, CA</i>
<i>Pomona College, CA</i>	<i>Wheaton College</i>
<i>Point Loma University, CA</i>	
<i>Purdue University, IN</i>	
<i>Richmond University – London</i>	
<i>Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, IN</i>	
<i>Santa Clara University, CA</i>	

This list is from only two schools! In speaking with representatives of these schools, we are about three years behind them in terms of growth, building projects, and graduates. We are using very similar academic tracks. Given our comparable academics and standardized test scores, we believe that students at The Ambrose School will have a similar advantage in college admittance.

**Accreditation:** The subject of accreditation can be a bit complicated. First, The Ambrose School does not seek nor will it accept accreditation from the State of Idaho under its current regulations. The obligations put upon us by the state would compromise the very education we seek to provide. Numerous private accreditation organizations offer accreditation processes for Christian schools. The accrediting body for Christ-centered, classical education is the Association of Classical and Christian Schools ([www.accsedu.org](http://www.accsedu.org)).

While the ACCS accreditation is not yet recognized by the state of Idaho, it is recognized by the state of Texas. Several other states have reciprocity with Texas. We would like Idaho to be one of them and are working on this goal. For the time being, our students will graduate with a diploma from The Ambrose School. As far as we can ascertain, there are few if any drawbacks, and many advantages to this diploma for college admission.

The ACCS uses a rigorous accreditation process with requirements that are specific to classical and Christian schools. They seek to ensure that a school is financially sound, well-run, and following the essentials of a classical Christian education.

For example, the ACCS requires a school has policies consistent with the ACCS's vision and supports those policies from the board. Teachers must have a classical understanding of method and content, as well as a college degree. The board must have a unified vision of classical education and the curriculum must be extensive and thorough. Standard achievement tests must demonstrate effectiveness and be consistent across grades.

We are presently on “candidate status” with our ACCS accreditation. We must complete the accreditation process by May of 2006. We plan to become accredited by the year of our first graduating class.

**The Cornerstone of College Admissions--**

**The SAT/ACT:** Grade inflation and wide academic disparity among high schools have minimized the significance of the high school transcript (more on this later). Homeschool and private school students have increasingly developed a reputation as competent students who excel. These developments have caused colleges to put more weight on standardized test scores.

The Ambrose School education is excellent preparation for the SAT. The test focuses on language, math, and thinking skills. Fast reading with excellent comprehension, a precise vocabulary, and mathematical and logical competence are all central to our school's core curriculum. These are also the core of the SAT. SAT authors attempt to create a test for which you cannot study. It is not content based as much as “thinking” based. The Ambrose School begins preparing students in elementary school for the skills this test requires.

In addition, the Latin background provided at The Ambrose School has been shown to boost student's scores on the SAT. In 2001, students who had a background in Latin scored an average of 665 on the SAT, 149 points above the overall average of 506. (Source: The College Board as referenced by the National Committee for Latin and Greek)

Language studied	SAT verbal scores in 2001
Overall	506
Spanish	583
German	625
French	633
<b>Latin</b>	<b>665</b>

In addition to the SAT, we strongly recommend that our students take at least 3 SAT Subject Tests. Some colleges require these tests from schools like ours.

The following are the subject tests for which our students are well-prepared. Some may depend on the electives which students have chosen to pursue.

*Literature\**  
*U.S. History*  
*World History\**  
*Mathematics Level 1*  
*Mathematics Level 2*  
*Biology E/M*  
*Chemistry*  
*Physics*  
*French*  
*Latin\**

\* SAT Subject Tests which we specifically recommend for our students. More information is available at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

**GPA and Class Rank:** Some parents express concern that our standard grading scale will hurt their child's GPA and consequently, their child's college admission. As you know, our school values integrity in our grading system with "C" as an acceptable score for the average student. We have made special accommodations on our transcripts to help college admissions officers better compare the GPA of an Ambrose student to the GPA of a public school student.

### **Advanced Placement (AP) Testing— Entering college with a head start:**

Our school's curriculum naturally prepares students for several Advanced Placement college tests. The AP tests, as they are called, are administered by the College Board (the administrators of the SAT) and are used by colleges to grant credits to students who complete the tests. Generally, graduates of The Ambrose School will be prepared for the following AP tests (except for transfer students after the 9<sup>th</sup> grade): literature, European history, and English language. Optionally, students may be able to pass:

Latin, world history, chemistry, physics, and calculus.

Passing an AP test does two things for a college applicant. First, it demonstrates the level of work one has achieved. "Admissions officers are well aware of the difficulty of AP courses and exams, and sending them your AP Exam grades can only be a positive step toward potential admission into competitive colleges." (*The College Board*)

Second, AP scores are accepted for credit at most colleges and universities. In fact, it is possible for students to enter college as sophomores based on AP tests. This can represent substantial savings given the high cost of college. Another Headmaster at a classical and Christian School recently sent this note after reviewing the The Ambrose School graduation requirements: "Your curriculum looks to be on target, too. I appreciate your balance of 'Classical Purity' with 'AP Necessity.' A colleague in another school sent his son to Westmont and transferred 16 units, which saved him around \$12,000; a classmate went to Wheaton with 24, a savings of over \$20,000."

**Extracurricular-- The "other" college criteria:** The tipping point for many college admissions decisions is the "whole student." Colleges may judge this qualification by looking at a student's extracurricular involvement. The Ambrose School "house" program offers a wide variety of competitive activities while also providing important leadership opportunities. Extracurricular leadership is often cited as a desirable attribute for successful college applicants. One of the reasons we chose to pursue a "house system" of extracurricular activity was that it provided mentoring and experience for leadership.

We also have an interscholastic athletic and activities program that allows us to compete in basketball, mock trial, and other events against regional schools. Because we are a relatively small high school, more students have the opportunity to participate and lead in these types of activities. As colleges look for "well rounded" students who have

leadership and athletic experience, we provide these opportunities for a higher percentage of our student body.

**College Admissions Committee:** We have established a position of College Admissions Advisor at The Ambrose School. We will also be establishing a college admissions committee made up of individuals with specific knowledge of college and university admissions. Dr. Shelton Woods is the board liaison to this committee. Dr. Woods is the Associate Dean of the School of Social Sciences and Public Affairs at Boise State University.

This admissions committee will be primarily focused on helping parents and students prepare to apply for college. It will be also chartered with opening lines of communication between colleges and The Ambrose School. We hope to establish special admissions and possibly scholarship relationships with a select group of colleges that understand and appreciate our form of education.

Most importantly, the college admissions office will provide parents with the resources and information necessary to enter the college of each student's choice. Seminars and workshops for parents and students are forthcoming.

**Unique College Opportunities for The Ambrose School Students:** At this point, it is probably obvious that The Ambrose School is committed to helping your student enter the college of his/her choice. Graduates who wish to pursue traditional college alternatives in science, technology, healthcare, or other fields of study will be well prepared. Their mastery of language, math and science, and their thinking skills will serve students in almost any educational institution.

There are also a couple of unique options for The Ambrose School students. The ACCS has its own college—New St Andrews College ([www.newsaintandrews.org](http://www.newsaintandrews.org))—which specifically seeks students from classical and Christian schools. This college is an excellent choice for anyone seeking further study in classical studies from a

Christian worldview. In addition, Biola University's Torrey Honors program (<http://www.biola.edu/academics/torrey/>) is tailored to the classical ideal as are other colleges around the country. These programs provide opportunities for The Ambrose School students to further their education in an atmosphere where they are uniquely prepared to succeed. Many other "liberal arts" focused schools like Hillsdale College, Gutenberg College, Belhaven College, and St John's College offer programs that specifically seek out students with classical backgrounds. Albertson College of Idaho has also expressed specific interest in working with The Ambrose School students. Graduates of other classical and Christian schools have received full-ride scholarships at Albertson College.

As you can see, we believe The Ambrose School students are positioned for success at any college or university. Three of the five board members have students in the graduating class at The Ambrose School. Our priority is clear, as is our desire to educate the whole person—spiritually and academically.