



## COUNSELING DEPARTMENT

September 7, 2017

Dear Parents,

As we begin the school year, the members of the Saint Joseph Academy Counseling Department would like to welcome you to what we hope will be a rewarding and successful year for all of our students. One of Saint Joseph Academy's unique and special qualities is the emphasis we place on caring for each student as an individual. As a Marist school, we believe in the idea of the Marist "family spirit," and we operate as a family does – celebrating together when our students succeed, and standing together to help them when they experience challenges. As school counselors, we are committed to seeing that all students are given the support that they need to grow personally, academically, socially, and spiritually. We want to be sure that all parents are aware of the services offered through the Counseling Department.

There are 3 grade level counselors: Mrs. Stephanie Machinena is the counselor for students in grades 7 and 8; Mrs. Vilma Wolfe is the counselor for students in grades 9 and 10; and Mrs. Olga Cisneros is the counselor for students in grades 11 and 12. All grade level counselors provide personal and academic counseling for their students, and they also offer personal growth group counseling for students who would like to participate. Throughout the year, counselors make class presentations to discuss a variety of topics related to adolescent concerns as well as college planning. Students may stop by to schedule an appointment with their grade level counselor at any time; they may also be referred by teachers or parents if there is a concern where the counselor can help.

As Student Advocate, I work individually with any student who could benefit from additional academic support. When a student comes to me for help, we will decide together how to address the academic challenge. Sometimes students just need someone to help them get organized. Sometimes they will need help with the content of a course, and then my job will be to assist them in getting that help – possibly by scheduling a regular time to meet with their classroom teacher, or perhaps by connecting them with other forms of help. I will then meet regularly with the student to assess their progress and support them as they work to improve their performance.

In addition, all members of the Counseling Department assist students with college and career counseling. As a college preparatory school, we recognize that all of our students are college-bound, and we begin working with them as early as 7<sup>th</sup> grade to ensure that they are preparing themselves academically and thinking about potential colleges, majors, and careers. Beginning in the junior year, students are assigned to a college counselor who will work individually with them throughout the college application process.

At every step along the way, our goal is that all Saint Joseph Academy students will feel that they belong to a school community that supports them, challenges them, and cares for them. I hope that you will encourage your son or daughter to see any of the members of the Counseling Department if we can help them in any way. I would also encourage any parents with concerns about their son/daughter to contact us by telephone or email. All contact

information for Counselors is listed below. We look forward to working with you and your sons and daughters to help all of our students have a happy and successful school year.

Sincerely,



Lindsay R. Irwin  
Director of School Counseling/Student Advocate

**Saint Joseph Academy Counseling Department:**

Mrs. Stephanie Machinena, Counselor for Grades 7 and 8; College Counselor  
[swaller@sja.us](mailto:swaller@sja.us) ; (956) 542-3581, ext. 335

Mrs. Vilma Wolfe, Counselor for Grades 9 and 10; College Counselor  
[vwolfe@sja.us](mailto:vwolfe@sja.us); (956) 542-3581, ext. 353

Mrs. Olga Cisneros, Counselor for Grades 11 and 12; College Counselor  
[ocisneros@sja.us](mailto:ocisneros@sja.us); (956) 542-3581, ext. 354

Ms. Lindsay Irwin, Director of School Counseling; Student Advocate; College Counselor  
[lirwin@sja.us](mailto:lirwin@sja.us); (956) 542-3581, ext. 318

**Upcoming Events:**

September 19 – Senior Parent Meeting: College Applications and Financial Aid; 7:00 PM, Upper Division Library

September 20 and 21 – Iowa Tests for grades 7 – 10

September 24 – SJA College Fair for all students and parents; 3:00 – 5:00 PM, Middle Division Gym

September 28 – Junior Ring Orders 8:00 AM – 12:00 noon, College Resource Center

October 11 – PSAT for students in grades 8 - 11