

Maria Finan: Welcome back to College Bound, Notre Dame's admissions podcast. We're super excited to be offering a bit of advice to students. We often are getting asked about classes and things like that at Notre Dame. So before we dive into all of our advice for what you should be focusing on academically during your time in high school, we just want to reintroduce ourselves. So, I'm Maria Finan, one of the Senior Assistant Directors in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. I'm also a double-domer, so I received my bachelor's and my master's degrees in English from Notre Dame, and I'll kick it off to my co-host to reintroduce herself as well.

Montanna Kirven: Hey, I'm Montana Kirven. I'm an Assistant Director of Admissions here at Notre Dame. I'm also a Notre Dame grad. I graduated with a degree in English as well. And we're going to be talking about, kind of, what classes to take, and giving you guys guidance on rigor. What's kind of a question we get, Maria, from students?

Maria Finan: Yeah, so I feel like I'm often being asked by students, like, what classes should I take specifically to be a strong applicant for Notre Dame? Students may also ask this in the form of, you know, what classes should I take if I'm planning to major in engineering, or science, or business. So, sometimes it's general advice, sometimes students know exactly what they want to study, so can you talk a little bit about just, you know, what classes should students be focusing on while they're in high school?

Montanna Kirven: Absolutely. So, yeah, on that kind of general sense, one thing to keep in mind is that when we read applications, we read them contextually. So, in terms of your rigor, whatever your high school determines to be the most rigorous type of coursework, whether that's AP classes, IB coursework, dual enrollment, some other form of advanced coursework, we're going to consider that to be the most rigorous. So, in alignment with what your high school offers, we would never expect you to take a school your high school doesn't offer, so just hoping to see, you know, students are taking advantage of what they have in front of them, hoping to see you're taking the rigorous coursework offered to at your school, whatever that may be. So I think that's key number one. And hoping that you're taking, you know, three to four years of each subject. So, especially those core subjects, so really focusing on, you know, math, English. Science, social science, and foreign language. Notre Dame has a core curriculum, so we want you to have that breadth and depth to set you up for success. So when you come here, regardless of your major, you're prepared to take those variety of classes that you will take as a student here. And then it's good to be prepared for your major, like you were asking, Maria, about, you know, what if I want to be an engineer, or go into, a science, or even business? And so taking classes for your major is super important. For our, you know, STEM students, our... and our business students, and our architecture students, I would really recommend taking, 4 units of

math and calculus, if possible. And, you know, if you can't have calculus at your school, if it's not offered, you know, pre-calculus could be a good alternative. Or the IB analysis and approaches.

Montanna Kirven: Could be a good alternative as well. And then, for students who want to do STEM, I would definitely encourage you to take, you know, four units of science, which should include biology, chemistry, and physics. So really making sure you're prepared well for your major, but then also have that breadth across the board in all those core subject areas. And like I said, like, context matters, so looking at what is offered to you at your school, looking at what is rigorous to your school. And then finding that balance. That can be the hardest part sometimes, but it's important, you know, so making sure you are challenging yourself to the best of your ability, but never taking too many APs, or, for example, that it's hurting your ability to sleep at night, or, you know, get involved outside the classroom. Striking that balance is super important, so definitely challenge yourself. But make sure that you are a well-rounded student in other areas of your life, and only you can figure out where that balance lies. So grades are important, but certainly don't have to be perfect, so figuring that out is an important part of your high school process. As you, you know, edge towards graduation and start looking at college courses, you're gonna have to find that balance again later. So, it's a good time to practice now.

Maria Finan: I love that. I think that's really great advice, and obviously we have a lot of this information on our website, so if you want to go a bit more in depth, I recommend checking out our counselor blog posts, our evaluation criteria, just having a good sense of, you know, how to be prepared for not just Notre Dame, but any of the colleges you might be considering applying to. Thanks so much for joining us on this week's episode of College Bound. We'll be back talking about when to apply next.