

Senior Year - College Planning Outline

Basic Checklist

- Contact teachers and request recommendations.
- Ask a teacher or parent to proofread entrance essays.
- Utilize college comparison worksheets and pro/con organizers to help assist you in making a good decision about college
- Request transcripts be sent to schools
- Finalize applications and make sure you have enclosed all materials you are responsible for: Essay, Application, Application fee.
- Send in all applications to ensure receipt by or before the priority deadline.

Pre-College Checklist Outlined by Month

July

- Create filing systems for electronic and paper documents you will write and receive from colleges during the college admission and financial aid processes.
- If you're interested in applying to Military Academies, start the application process now. United States Military Academies give full-ride scholarships in exchange for years of military service after you graduate.
- Prepare for taking the SAT™ and the ACT® this fall if you need to improve your scores.
- Discuss costs of college with your parents to get an idea of what your family can afford.
- Think about selecting a college major (if you haven't already done so). Consider not only your interests but your skills, talents, and personality.
- Clean-up any questionable personal information you and your friends have posted on internet social networking sites (i.e., Facebook.com). Many colleges and universities review information and photographs posted by student applicants (and their friends) to see the personal side of students. Also, set your social network account privacy settings so unwanted persons cannot view your information.
- Visit your selected colleges and conduct interviews before the end of the summer. Visiting campuses builds a foundation from which you can compare colleges and universities.

August

- Register for the ACT® Test and/or SAT™ (if you want to improve your test scores).
 - www.collegeboard.org www.actstudent.org
- Plan to start early on your college applications and essays. The application process is very involved; most colleges require multiple essays and supplemental forms.
- Research the application materials required by your colleges and download PDF files of those materials. Print paper copies of all application forms, teacher recommendation forms, financial aid applications, and other required documents; complete these forms by hand so you can copy the information onto online applications at a later time.
- Continue to research scholarships. If you haven't registered for free national scholarship search services at Fastweb.com, do it now. Print application materials for scholarships you wish to apply to.
- Narrow your college list to 3 to 5 schools of choice.

September

- Consider college major options. Consider not only your interests but your skills, talents, and personality. How will a particular major help you capitalize on your natural talents and interests?
- Work on application essays. Essays are the most time consuming part of the application process; start to think about essay topics and begin writing essay rough drafts as soon as possible.

- If you're interested in attending one of the Military Academies, start the application process immediately. Note that ROTC scholarship applications are due in December and January.
- Determine if interviews are REQUIRED for college admission and/or scholarships. If so, schedule interviews with college admission officers as soon as possible. Many colleges require interviews to be conducted two to four weeks BEFORE early action or early decision applications are due.
- Schedule auditions if your college major is one of the performing arts. Auditions (and sometimes interviews) are required of students applying as performing arts or music majors. Research deadlines for conducting auditions and interviews; as soon as possible, contact your major department at each college you will apply to and schedule auditions and/or interviews. Work with your parents to make travel and lodging arrangements, if necessary.
- Finalize your list of teachers, coaches, employers, community members, or other adults you will ask for letters of recommendation.
- Remember you must take tests like the ACT® and SAT™ at least six weeks before the deadline for scores to be submitted to colleges.

October

- Request assistance from teachers and principal in the first week of October to write letters of recommendation (or to complete recommendation forms) on your behalf – DON'T DELAY IN MAKING REQUESTS.
- Continue to spend time working on your application essays. Writing essays is a lengthy, involved process; many colleges require multiple essays.
- Find out which financial aid applications your college choices require and when the forms are due.
- Keep up your grades. Many universities require mid-year reports (a report card of this fall semester's grades) to be submitted in January. Earning top grades this fall increases your chances for earning significant scholarships in the spring.
- Be sure to send your ACT® and SAT™ scores to the colleges and programs you're applying to.

November

- Recommendations should be submitted electronically (by your teachers and principal) or returned to you to be included with application packets you will mail to each college.
- Submit all college applications and supplemental application forms online; the deadline for most college Early Action applications is November 15. Don't wait until the last day to submit online applications.
- Photocopy all paper application materials (transcripts, letters of recommendation, etc.) before you mail them. If your application packet gets lost in the mail, you'll be very glad you have a back-up copy to send.
- Mail all paper application materials (official grade transcripts, recommendations, student résumé, and other required documents) using U.S. CERTIFIED MAIL with a RETURN RECEIPT or FedEx/UPS tracking services.
- Work on completing national scholarship applications. Apply to only those national scholarships whose eligibility requirements perfectly match your student qualifications.
- ROTC scholarships and programs are offered by the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps. Deadlines are fast approaching for ROTC scholarship applications (Air Force: December 1, Army: January 1, and Navy: January 20).
- Learn about the FAFSA process.
- FAFSA PINs (Personal Identification Numbers) are required for both you (the student) and one of your parents. The FAFSA must be completed as soon as possible after January 1; now is a good time to apply for your FAFSA PINs.
- Take the ACT® and SAT® if necessary.

December

- Make sure applications have been received by your colleges. If you haven't received confirmation online or through the U.S. mail from your colleges, CALL EACH ADMISSIONS OFFICE to verify all application materials has been received.
- Watch for decision letters from the colleges and universities you applied to in November to arrive this month. They may arrive via your personal e-mail account, U.S. mail, or through college websites using a login ID and password.
- Consider applying to additional colleges using the regular admission process (if you missed submitting early applications in November). Regular admission deadlines are usually between January 15 and March 1.
- If you are deferred for admission by your top choice college and really want to attend that school, contact the college admissions office within a few days of being notified of your deferral. If you're flat-out rejected by your top choice college and you really want to attend that school, one last attempt to get accepted can be made by writing a Letter of Appeal.
- Print and fill out the FAFSA Worksheet or complete it online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Do not submit your FAFSA before January 1.
- Make sure your parents complete the CSS/PROFILE® financial aid application as soon as possible if it's required by the colleges and universities you've been accepted to (or applied to).
- Students - Minimize money in your bank accounts. Colleges and universities expect you (the student) to use virtually your entire savings to help pay for college. Consider using your money to purchase items for college (i.e., laptop computer) before applying for financial aid. Be aware that any money held in a student's name will reduce that student's eligibility for need-based scholarships.
- Visit with college students you may know who are home on winter break. Hear what they have to say about their first semester in college. What advice do they have for you?

January

- Submit the FAFSA online in the first week of January.
- Additional financial aid and scholarship applications may be required by your schools. Check with your colleges and universities regarding "institution specific" (special) financial aid forms.
- Remind your parents to complete their Federal tax returns in early February. You want to be ready to submit all required information if you are selected for FAFSA verification in February – March or you need to make corrections to the FAFSA or CSS/PROFILE® application.
- Consider applying to additional colleges if you wish you had applied to a specific college or two, but didn't. Use the regular admission process.
- Watch for announcements of local and regional scholarships. Apply to all those in which you are eligible.
- Plan to visit colleges and universities that have accepted you.
- Continue participating in extracurricular activities (inside and outside of school). Dedicate yourself to a few extracurricular activities and work toward leadership positions.
- Keep up your grades this final semester of high school. Grades and course curriculum continue to count throughout the entire senior year.

February

- Remind your parents to complete Federal tax returns in early February.
- See your doctor about required immunizations for college. Numerous colleges and universities require incoming freshman to receive Hepatitis B immunization. The Hepatitis B vaccination is given in 3 doses over a 5- to 6-month period.
- Make any needed corrections to the FAFSA and CSS/PROFILE® based on your parents' Federal tax returns.
- Continue watching for announcements of local and regional scholarships. Apply to all those in which you are eligible.
- Mail all supplemental financial aid documents requested by your colleges. Any delay in mailing these materials will delay your receipt of financial aid awards.

- Consider sending a letter of special circumstance to the financial aid office at each of your colleges. Financial aid officers have the ability to increase financial aid based on "unusual" family situations.

March

- If you're still not sure which college is your favorite, visit the colleges and universities you've been accepted to one more time.
- Good grades and good behavior are very important until the last day of high school. Colleges have the right to revoke their offer of admission if your academic performance drops or if you demonstrate behavior problems during the months prior to enrollment.

April

- Watch your mailbox and e-mail inbox for arrival of financial aid award letters early this month. These letters will outline the types of financial aid (scholarships, grants, loans, and work study jobs) and the amounts offered by each college. Be ready to compare awards from each college and to calculate the cost of attending each school.
- Make sure your financial aid awards are clearly understood and all uncertainties are resolved before you accept admission to college. Three issues typically must be clarified with college financial aid offices. These include GPA requirements to maintain scholarships and grants, if scholarships are renewable, and the impact of receiving scholarships from "outside" sources.
- Decide on the college or university you will attend.
- Sign and mail the Enrollment Confirmation Form to the school you will attend. Send the Form using U.S. Certified Mail with a Return Receipt or FedEx/UPS tracking services.
- Accept financial aid awards offered by the college you will attend. Sign and mail your financial aid award letter or accept your awards online through your college's website (using your login ID and password). Accept financial aid offers according to instructions of the college. Keep a copy of your award acceptance for your files.
- Send a letter of non-acceptance to each college you're NOT attending.
- Watch for important deadlines (housing, financial aid, etc...) at your chosen college.

May

- Send an Enrollment Confirmation Form no later than May 1. Mail all documents using U.S. Certified Mail with a Return Receipt or FedEx/UPS tracking services.
- If you did not get accepted to any college (or to the college of your choice), several schools still have available spaces. Go to the database: "NACAC Survey: Space and Financial Aid Still Available for Students on College Campuses" and search for colleges with openings for incoming freshmen.
- Keep focused on academics. If your final semester grades drop significantly, your college has the right to place you on academic probation or revoke its offer of admission.
- Work with your college to complete and return all necessary forms. Respond promptly to additional requests for information from your college.
- Contact your college to see if math and foreign language placement tests are required. Many colleges and universities require incoming freshmen to take math and foreign language placement tests BEFORE they are allowed to pre-register for fall classes.
- Work with your parents to create a budget plan for next year.
- Finalize summer job plans.
- Get excited about going to college!! You may need to make a list of items you will need if you're moving into a dorm. Have fun preparing!