

Senior Year Planning

Your senior year is your opportunity to strengthen your skills and broaden your experiences, in school and out, and to prepare for all the challenges ahead. A successful senior year can help launch you on the path to a successful future. Make the most of your senior year by maintaining a challenging course load. Stay active and involved. Continue involvement in activities, sports, volunteer work, etc. Take advantage of internships or career focused-jobs.

September

- **Begin and maintain a college notebook including a calendar of all admission and financial aid deadlines.**
- Review your transcript in detail and check credits for graduation. Your course selection says volumes about your ability, motivation and maturity. Tempting as it may be, taking an easy course load your senior year sends the wrong message about you to colleges.
- Register for ACT as soon as possible whether you are retaking the test or taking it for the first time.
- If you haven't already, make a list of colleges that interest you and request information from them. Make sure you and your parents are on the same page. Iron out any area of disagreement before the search process gets too far along.
- Look at application deadlines. Develop a calendar with your parents.
- If you haven't already, make plans to visit the colleges of interest to you.
- Consider volunteering or getting involved in a service project. This can help make you stand out from the crowd in college applications and scholarships.
- Check the counseling office or the *Academic Newsletter* for scholarship applications

Some scholarship applications can be filled out online. Pay close attention to DEADLINES. Pay attention to "mail by" or "received by" deadlines. (NOTE: IF it says to be "mailed by" a certain date, do not put it under the Counselor's door after she has left for the day. It won't get mailed on time).

- Preparing yourself for college involves several factors:
 1. Seriously think about your long-term goals. While many students change career directions and majors several times in their undergraduate years, knowing yourself will be very helpful.
 2. Read the newspaper or news magazine; watch the national news on TV.

Stay

informed about local, national and international events.

3. Develop a study schedule that works for you. Developing discipline in your

habits now will make the adjustment easier when you get to college and there is no one there to tell you to study.

4. Have a POSITIVE attitude and believe in yourself.

October

- Narrow colleges of interest to less than five. Research these thoroughly. (Good website for this is www.usnews.com/planner which contains a planner organized to help you compare characteristics of different schools.
- All high school athletes wishing to compete in Division I or II college sports must register with the NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse. Information about the clearinghouse can be found in the Guide for the College Bound Student Athlete at www.ncaaclearinghouse.net. The Clearinghouse maintains and processes all initial eligibility certifications. ALSO, be sure to send your ACT to the Clearinghouse by entering their code (9999) on your ACT Registration. They now require that it come directly from ACT. **The high school cannot send that score.** If you have further questions, you may call the NCAA initial Eligibility Clearinghouse at 877-262-1492.
- Begin preparing applications with great care.
- Begin requesting teacher recommendations. **Ask at least 10 school days prior to deadline.**
- File *Early Decision* or *Early Action* applications before December 1.
- Begin checking the school web site for special scholarship announcements.
- Find out if the colleges in which you are interested have institutional scholarship deadlines by visiting their web sites or reviewing their literature.
- If you are not planning to attend college, begin making plans for other post-high school opportunities including scoping out the job market.

November/December

- Continue to search and apply for scholarships. Many scholarship deadlines fall on or around December 1.
- Be sure to apply for scholarships in time to meet application deadlines.
- Start gathering identity and financial documents necessary to complete FAFSA. Visit FAFSA on the web for a list of required documents.
- Both student and parent should request a Department of Education PIN number. The PIN serves as an electronic signature for FAFSA on the Web and significantly reduces processing time. The web site is www.fafsa.ed.gov.
- Early decision and early action responses from colleges should arrive this month. Read the award letter carefully.
- Financial award letters may arrive with the early admissions. If you have questions about the financial aid award, contact the financial aid office directly. Make sure you understand the terms and conditions of the award before making a final commitment.

January

- Parents should file financial aid forms (FAFSA) as soon as possible after January 1.

Applying early improves the chances of receiving aid from as many resources as possible.

- Be sure to complete the financial aid application for each college.
- Male students who will be 18 at the time they complete the FAFSA are required to register with Selective Service to be eligible for federal and state aid. This can be done on www.sss.gov.
- Continue to apply for scholarships.

February/March/April

- **Participate in financial aid night!!**
- **Avoid Senioritis!** Senior grades can be crucial to your admissions (including 3rd and 4th quarter grades, especially for those on waiting lists). All acceptances are conditional until colleges deem your final grades have met their standards.
- Watch deposit deadlines for housing.
- Colleges will begin notifying students of admissions status and financial aid.
- If financial aid is not adequate, call the specific financial aid office. The first offer is not necessarily firm! Perhaps you can provide special circumstances that exist.
- Many priority financial aid deadlines fall in February. Applications received by the priority deadline are given the high consideration.
- The Student Aid Report (SAR) should arrive two to four weeks after the FAFSA is submitted. The Expected Family Contribution (EFC) figure is printed on the front page at the upper right. If the SAR has not been received four weeks after submitting the FAFSA, call 1-800-4-FED-AID. If there are any errors on the SAR, make corrections and mail back immediately. If you provided a valid e-mail address, you can view and make corrections on-line. Results will be received MUCH faster if the FAFSA is completed on-line.
- Continue to apply for scholarships. Apply! Apply!
- Begin looking for summer jobs or internships.

May

- Colleges often have an acceptance reply deadline of May 1 (excluding early decision candidates) which you must confirm with an acceptance letter and deposit.
- If there is a gap between the cost of attendance and the financial aid offered, families should start pursuing alternative payment methods.
- Complete the semester with good attendance and academic standing.
- Make request for final transcript. The counselor will ask for the name of the college you plan to attend at one of the final senior meetings. If this changes after graduation, you will need to contact the counseling center to request this transcript to be sent.
- Make sure you request transcripts from any colleges that you enrolled in for Dual Credit.

