

SENIORS

Checklist for College Planning

July, August, September

- Review career plans. Determine which type of school is right for you. Begin to narrow your choices of schools.
- Apply online to the colleges of your choice with a goal of completing applications as early as possible to get as much financial aid as possible. The best goal: Finish applications by the end of October.
- If applying to a Texas public university, you may fill out the Texas common application which can be found at ApplyTexas.org.
- Visit college campuses. Meet with an admission representative & a financial aid officer. **GET TO KNOW YOUR ADMISSIONS COUNSELOR AT EACH SCHOOL YOU ARE INTERESTED IN.**



- Most colleges begin accepting applications **August 1st**. **It is crucial to apply early. Texas A&M requires you to pick a major when applying, and they automatically admit the first 85% of accepted students who request engineering.**

- If you are interested in playing a sport in college, sign up for a service such as **berecruited.com** where college recruiters can review your information and contact you if they are interested. You will need a 3-4 minute video of highlights of you playing your sport in order to fully register. There may be a one-time fee for this service.



- ❑ Register to take the ACT or SAT to improve your score. By now, you should have taken at least one of these tests to help you to apply for college. Register online at www.collegeboard.com and www.act.org.
- ❑ Make a list of college application deadlines, and financial aid applications and deadlines. Remember: it takes at least six weeks to get SAT and ACT test scores. Most colleges using “early decision” admissions require test scores and applications by November 1.
- ❑ Think of which teachers, counselors and employers you would like to ask for letters of recommendation, if your college requires that for admissions. You should give each person you ask TWO WEEKS NOTICE before the letter is due.
- ❑ Maintain or improve academic grades during the year. Colleges look unfavorably upon failing grades or an extremely “light load.”
- ❑ Keep your list of volunteer activities and hours spent up to date. You will use this when you interview with college officials or apply for scholarships.

October, November

- ❑ Chances are you will have to submit at least one essay as part of your application. Your essay is a crucial part of your application and deserves special attention. So spend adequate time on it and get feedback from adults such as your academic advisor or your English teacher.
- ❑ Continue to research financial aid options. Look into local scholarships. The deadlines for most of them are in April.
- ❑ If you applied in August, you will begin receiving Letters of Acceptance and merit-based financial aid offers.
- ❑ Apply for housing at the universities of your choice in early fall, especially if dorm room space is highly competitive. This is a **must** for most of the larger and competitive public and private universities. You can request a refund for the deposit in May if you decide not to attend school there.



- ❑ Attend financial aid seminars.



- ❑ Complete the FAFSA. To avoid costly delays in processing your applications, make sure to complete the FAFSA online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. **Everyone needs to complete the FAFSA application, even if you don't think you will qualify for assistance.** You will need a FAFSA pin which could take up to 3 days to receive.

❑ Take ACT and/or SAT exams again, if necessary. When test scores are received, check to see that you have the score needed for entrance to your colleges of choice. Even if they say scores are optional, they are still looking at those scores!

December

- ❑ December 15 is the latest that you should submit college applications and your high school transcript, unless the college says otherwise. Waiting until December to apply for college is not wise, because it puts you at the back of the line for financial aid. Each university is allotted a certain amount of federal aid. After that aid is given (on a first-come, first-served basis), there is no more. **DON'T WAIT UNTIL THE DEADLINE or you will be last in line for financial aid!**



- ❑ To avoid costly delays in processing your applications, make sure to complete the FAFSA online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. **Everyone needs to complete the FAFSA application, even if you don't think you will qualify for assistance.** You will need a FAFSA pin which could take up to 3 days to receive. Apply for your FAFSA PIN in December and begin completing the FAFSA online in

❑ Begin completing other student financial aid applications. Accuracy and clarity can mean the difference between receiving a scholarship and not. Check deadlines for state government-sponsored student aid programs.



- ❑ Complete your essays. Type them and be sure they are clean, neat, attractive, grammatically correct, interesting, and easy to read. **Keep copies.**

January

- ❑ If you have not submitted your FAFSA, do so ASAP. You can use the FAFSA to apply for all forms of federal aid, including Pell Grants, as well as for state government sponsored student assistance. This will also qualify you for low interest student loans. **Keep copies of all forms you send.**
- ❑ PARENTS: Get your income tax returns prepared early – schools will require them to prove eligibility for financial aid. If you file electronically, you can automatically populate the FAFSA form with your information.

February

- ❑ Men who are 18 years old or over must prove draft registration in order to receive federal financial aid. Inquire at your local post office about providing this information.
- ❑ If interested in credit-by-exam, check on your college's policy regarding credit. This is a great way to “place out” of college classes by simply taking a test. This saves you time and money once you are in college.

March

- ❑ Look for your Student Aid Report from the federal government. If you have not received your Student Aid Report and at least four weeks have passed since you submitted your FAFSA online, contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center at (319) 337-5665.
- ❑ Once the college receives your SAR, they will send you a formal offer of financial aid.
- ❑ Carefully review financial aid award notices from colleges. Call or e-mail the financial aid office if you have questions. Don't just look at how much aid you are offered; look also at what the award will cover. If you don't get any (or enough) financial aid, ask the college if other financing plans are available to help families meet the costs.



- ❑ Make sure that you **accept the financial aid award from the college you decide to attend and decline all others** so that the funds can be made available to other students. Find out from the college you choose what else you need to do, if anything, to establish and maintain your eligibility for financial aid.

April

- ❑ Reply promptly to colleges asking you to notify them of your decision. Meet deadlines or you may lose the acceptance you have gained.
- ❑ Find out about CLEP testing at Collin College, if interested in placing out of basic college classes. But first learn which CLEP credits your university will accept.



May

- ❑ If you are “wait-listed” by a college and intend to enroll if accepted, then call, visit, or write to the admissions director to state your intention and ask how to strengthen your application.
- ❑ After you graduate, request your final high school transcript to be sent to the college you will be attending.



- ❑ Register for summer school at a community college near home. This will help you get some of the basics out of the way and can be a lot less expensive than the cost of a university.

- ❑ Get a summer job. This will look great on a resume later.

