

College & Scholarship Planning Calendar

September:

- Prepare a resume (find examples online)
- **Register for the College Opportunity Fund (COF)** at www.collegeincolorado.org. If you plan to attend college in Colorado. If you do not do this approximately \$86.00 per college credit hour will be added to your tuition costs each semester!
- Register for the ACT test in October or December if you want to retake them. Mail-in packet available in the counseling office or online at www.actstudent.org (ACT) or www.collegeboard.com (SAT)
- Think through which college or colleges you want to apply for. **Each college charges an application fee** (except community colleges).
- Check the scholarship website to see what you may be eligible for. Look in the guidance office for other scholarship opportunities.
- ATHLETES: Register for the NCAA Clearinghouse if planning to participate in inter-collegiate sports. Register online at www.ncaaclearinghouse.net
- Listen for announcements about colleges that are planning to visit the high school. Pick up passes in the guidance office.
- Visit Colorado colleges on-line at www.collegeincolorado.com
- Letter of Recommendation: give request form to those people writing recommendations for you. Give at least 2 week's notices. (Don't ask at the last minute! Start planning **NOW!**)
- Continue to research scholarships and financial aid. Make sure you ask the college to which you are applying about scholarships available. Talk to the financial aid officer at the college.

October:

- Continue to meet with college reps that visit FHS. Listen for announcements of days and times. Be sure to sign up in the Guidance Office.
- Make a decision on colleges and begin working on the applications. **Be aware of deadlines for applications. ALL COLLEGES ARE DIFFERENT!**
- Sign up for the December ACT test if you will be retaking the test.
- Follow up on your letters of recommendation.
- Work on scholarship applications. Check specific college websites for information about the school's scholarships offered. Other scholarship links are: www.fastweb.com www.scholarships.com or www.collegeboard.com.
- Apply to 3-4 of top choice schools.

November:

- Meet with Jostens representative to prepare for graduation.
- **Attend the College Day Fair. You will be able to talk with college reps from in state and out-of-state colleges. Parents are welcome to attend.**
- **Turn in orders for graduation caps, and gowns to Jostens Representative.** You can order graduation announcements from Jostens or make other arrangements.
- Visit college campuses you are interested in if possible. Pre-arrange absences through the main office and bring back documentation from the college. This can help you narrow your choice.
- Narrow your college choices to three colleges.
- Register for the December ACT by the November deadline if you plan on retaking the test.

- Continue to keep tabs on deadlines like college applications, financial aid forms, scholarships etc.

December:

- Continue to push yourself academically. Colleges want to see focused seniors and not senioritis.
- Finish working on applications over Christmas Break
- Apply for your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) online Personal Identification Number (PIN) at www.pin.ed.gov Do not submit the FAFSA form until after January 1.
- You must have a (PIN) personal identification number, an electronic access code number before you complete your FAFSA application!
- **Fill out FAFSA.** All students going to college must fill out the FAFSA form. You can complete a Free Application form Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) from online at www.fafsa.ed.gov (recommended).

January:

- All students going to college MUST fill out the FAFSA form. You can also complete a Free Application form Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) from online at www.fafsa.ed.gov (recommended) or call Federal Student Aid Information at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243).
- No paper or electronic FAFSA application will be accepted prior to Jan. 1.
- Find out college deadlines for financial aid forms and file the FAFSA before the deadlines
- Bring college acceptance letters into the Guidance Office.
- Check to see if the colleges you are applying to require any other financial aid forms.

February

- Continue to focus on your grades in classes. Even after a student has been admitted to college, a college can rescind that acceptance if grades fall below levels of acceptance. 2nd semester grades really do matter!
- Listen for scholarship announcements and/or check the Guidance office list for any scholarships that become available. Check online scholarship website through FHS.
- Send in or submit your FAFSA if you haven't already (you should receive your Student Aid Report (SAR) several weeks after submitting the FAFSA).
- Remember to monitor your applications to be sure that all materials are sent and received on time and that they are all complete.

March:

- Continue to apply for scholarships. Make sure you meet all **DEADLINES.**
- Be sure you have received a FAFSA acknowledgment.
- Stay focused; keep plugging along only a couple of months to go!
- Listen and attend senior activities and enjoy yourself.

April:

- Finalize your college choice. You will receive offers of acceptance and financial aid packages by April 15th. Compare costs of your preferred schools. Most schools expect your decision by May 1st. Let schools know if you decide not to attend so that others may have your spot.
- Complete the dorm/housing form you receive from the college you selected. The sooner you get this in, the better the chance you have of getting the dorm you prefer. Mail deposit if necessary.
- Request that your final transcript be sent to your chosen school. Fill out the requests in the Guidance Office.

May:

- Send in any required deposits for college housing. Remember May 1st is NATIONAL DECISION DAY. Deposits should only be sent to one school!
- Scholarship Night
- **GRADUATION! Congratulations! All of the hard work has paid off!**
- Write thank-you notes to the organizations awarding you scholarships. Keep all scholarship contact information so you will know how to get your scholarship monies awarded.
- Remember to request official transcripts from PCC and CSU-PUEBLO if you took classes that awarded dual credit.
- Be proud-you have completed a difficult task while attending FHS!

Letters of Recommendation

- Ask three people you know well if they would be willing to write you a letter of recommendation.
- When requesting a letter of recommendation from teachers, employers, or friends, make sure you do the following:
 - Make your request in person.
 - Give them a copy of your Letter of Recommendation Request form filled out. (available in the guidance office).
 - Plan ahead to meet your deadlines. Make your request at least two weeks before your deadline. That will allow them plenty of time to write an effective letter for you. They may have other letters to write, too.
 - Letters sent directly to the college or scholarship committee is more powerful since they are confidential.

Tips on Your College Applications

The importance of the college application cannot be underestimated. The application is the first impression of you that the admissions committee has. Put your best foot forward on your college application.

DO

- Read the application and directions carefully
- Fill out your own application. Only you can prepare your application in the best and most authentic way.
- Apply early. Applications rushed through immediately before the deadline will reflect a lack of care and planning. Deadlines are setup to eliminate people.

- Neatness. Applications that are difficult to read will not be well received. Type or neatly print your answers, then proofread the application several times for accuracy. Ask someone else to proofread it for you.
- Make sure the application is complete.
- Be truthful, and do not exaggerate your accomplishments.
- Make copies of everything you send to the college.
- Be thorough and on time. Missed deadlines will mean automatic missed admissions.
- Ask teachers for recommendations early. Don't hurry teachers with their recommendations by asking them to write a recommendation at the last minute. Please remember to write thank-you notes!

DON'T

- Use correction fluid.
- If you handwrite your application, print neatly.
- Leave blank spaces. Missing information may cause your application to be sent back or delayed while admissions committees wait for complete information
- Be unclear. If the question asks for a specific answer, don't try to dodge it by being vague.
- Put it off! Do your applications early.
- Submit materials not required by the application. If the application asks for two recommendations, send two only.

Writing the College Essay

College essays show the way you think and how you write. They also reveal additional information about you that is not in your application material. Not all colleges require essays, and those that do often have a preferred topic. Make sure you write about the topic that is specified.

- The essay should not be a summary of your high school career. The admissions committee gets that from your application and transcript.
- The essay is your chance to tell something positive and enriching about yourself, so highlight an experience that will make the reader interested in you.
- Write, rewrite, and edit. Do not try to dash off an essay in one sitting. Proofread and concentrate on spelling, punctuation, and content. Have someone else look over the essay. Make copies and save them after mailing the original.
- Write the essay from the heart. It should have life and not be contrived or one-dimensional. Avoid telling the admission committee "what they want to hear", and, instead, be yourself.
- Give the college a reason to admit you over all the other applicants. Show yourself to be unique.

TIPS FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

- Apply early. Meet all deadlines!
- Search for scholarships especially on the Internet.
- Apply, apply, apply! Check the scholarship's requirements and apply for every scholarship that you qualify for.
- Plan ahead. It takes time to get transcripts and letters of recommendation, and the applications can be time consuming.
- Be organized. Know deadlines and what you have done for the scholarship and what is left to be done.
- Follow directions. Don't disqualify yourself by filling the forms out incorrectly, missing the deadline, or failing to supply important information. Type the application and have someone proofread it for you.
- Apply for all local scholarships. Spending the time to fill out an application will pay off in scholarship dollars.