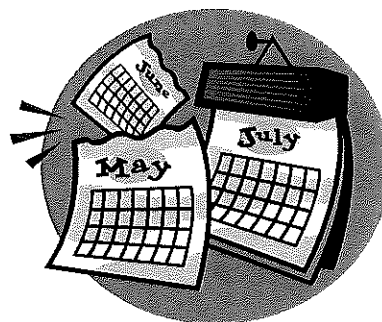


Countdown Calendar

For the College Bound Student



HIGH SCHOOL FRESHMEN AND SOPHOMORES

Get your academic game plan- Meet with your guidance counselor to discuss your college plans and lay out a plan for your high school career. Take a challenging but manageable course load. Don't be so aggressive that you max out your subjects your junior year and have little left to create a strong schedule your senior year. Stay strong in the core classes and make sure to get 4 years of English, history, math and science. Have at least 2 years of a foreign language, 3 is even better since more schools are now requiring it. Find out which AP courses and dual enrollment courses are offered at your school and we will factor those into your plan.

Get disciplined and organized in managing your time and assignments- Maybe you've always been a student who can sail through without a lot of organization or effort. Prepare for that to end. Develop a dependable time management system, using a planner or smartphone calendar (especially if it syncs to an internet based calendar for backup), in which you track all of your assignments, tests and other commitments. Create your good habits now.

Plan your activities at school- Look into what extracurricular activities are offered in your high school and decide which ones you can pursue without sacrificing your grades. Don't hop around to every club. Pick some activities you can truly enjoy and grow in, not just ones that will look good on paper.

Plan activities outside of school, especially volunteering- Volunteering is important in its own right. It can also provide a way for students to demonstrate their commitment to their community or special causes about which they feel strongly. There is an emerging genre of scholarships available to students who have demonstrated a passion for serving.

Be creative- Whenever possible, look for ways to discern an unmet need and take the initiative to meet it. Such an effort shows leadership and an entrepreneurial spirit in addition to your desire to serve others. (For example, rather than volunteering to deliver meals on wheels, which is admirable, how much more would it say about you if you negotiated a program with local grocery stores to donate certain items on a regular basis that could be used for meals on wheels to expand their services.)

Set up your scholarship search profiles- Refer to the handout on Online Scholarship Searches and set up profiles on 2 or 3 sites. Set a goal to apply for one a month, just to get the experience.

Look for ways to have meaningful summer experiences- Go on mission trips with your church, volunteer at a camp for disadvantaged children, pursue an interesting internship. Do something that will reflect your interests and passions.

Start exploring colleges/universities you might like to attend. Try to visit them while students are still on campus to get an authentic “feel” for the school.

Look for ways to find leadership roles. Pursue leadership roles that actually mean something and aren’t just empty titles.

HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS

Take the PSAT/NMSQT- Registration is in the early fall of your Junior yr. through your guidance dept. Don’t miss it! Go to www.collegeboard.com for tips and a free practice SAT test. Prepare for it as if it were the SAT, using books, online resources and even classes if needed. A strong PSAT (over 209 in SC and over 217 in NC) can translate to automatic full rides at many good schools. Homeschoolers will need to take this through a school that will allow them to sit in.

Narrow down your college choices. Research the admission stats for your favorite 5-8 schools. Choose 2 that are “safe” schools, 2 or 3 that are good fits and 2 that are “reach” schools. You can buy an annual report through US News & World Report in bookstores which provides admissions stats for almost all colleges and universities in the US. Also use www.nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator as you look into schools. Personally tour as many as possible.

Attend College Fairs and Financial Aid nights- Right now, knowledge is power so use every opportunity to get all the information you can.

Confirm your schedule for the next 2 years, making sure to keep a challenging but manageable schedule. What AP classes can you take? Dual credit? These really help strengthen your transcript and your gpa.

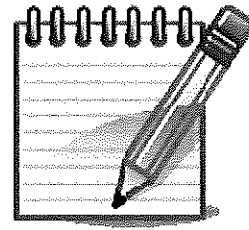
Prepare for the SAT in the spring. Your PSAT scores will show you which areas you need to strengthen before your SAT’s in the spring. There is a free SAT prep course on www.collegeboard.com and some similar resources on the Charlotte Mecklenburg school system website. There are also some good resources for SAT prep available at bookstores. Other good help sites are www.DomeSATreview.com and www.Number2.com.

Spend your summer wisely.- Choose activities that are challenging and enriching. Governor’s school, educational travel, volunteering and internships are all good choices. Pre-college camps at various universities can also be a great choice.

Research scholarships you want to pursue. What opportunities are available at each of the universities in which you are interested? Do they require nomination by your school? If so, provide a list of your interests to your counselor.

Countdown Calendar

For the College Bound- **SENIOR YEAR**



This is your year of paperwork! Get organized with a filing system. Keep copies of everything you send out, noting the date it was sent.

August

- ACT registration, if needed
- Research scholarships and colleges more, narrow down search
- Finalize your student resume
- Finish your SAT/ACT prep
- Make a poster with your schools & to-do checklist for each. (deadlines, log ins, etc.)

September

- SAT registration
- Take ACT
- Touch base with your counselor to review your plans, scores, scholarship plans
- Pull together all the resources you'll need for your applications and scholarships. (Transcript, test scores, FAFSA, essays)
- Make a **MASTER PLANNER** to track deadlines, test dates, applications and scholarship events (A big piece of poster board works well for this.)

October

- Take SAT again- Also- do you need Subject tests for any of your schools?
- Decide whether you'll consider early action or early decision to each school. (only 1 ED allowed)

November

- Prepare for your 1st semester exams
- Continue with your applications and scholarship pursuits. Stay focused!
- Send in your early action or early decision applications
- Confirm with your colleges that they have received everything they need for your file.

December

- Wrap up the rest of college applications before break, even if they aren't due yet. It will be good to get them over with!
- Early decision/early action decisions begin to arrive
- Some scholarship interviews begin, most are in Feb

January

FAFSA submission begins- DO ASAP & send to all your schools
Find out if any of your schools also require CSS/Profile and do that too.
Admission deadlines are approaching
Usually another SAT offered but may be too late for many schools unless they'll just use the info for placement, not admission. Scores can still qualify SC students for state lottery money.
Many scholarship interviews begin, with many in Feb.

February

Stay focused and avoid senior-it is! You still need a strong 2nd semester!
You can check with your colleges to make sure they have all of your information
Scholarship interviews throughout Feb & March- Prepare and practice!

March

Some regular-admission decisions start to arrive. Read them carefully to find out when you need to respond. Keep everything organized and in a file. Highlight key info. Make note of all your login and passwords for the financial package results. (You'll be notified by the school how to do this.)

March & April- Go to "Accepted Student" weekends at all your schools to which you have been accepted. Some will have you sit in on classes.

April

The remaining admission and financial aid information usually arrives very early this month (no later than the 10th). Write an appeal letter to try to get a better package if needed. If you're thrilled with an offer and want to go ahead and commit, send in your deposit and be done.

Get organized with all of your responses, financial offers, scholarship offers, etc. Discuss your options as a family. Revisit campuses together.

May 1st! MAY 1- Universal deadline- Have your deposit in and formally reply to the school you plan to attend no later than May 1.

By May 1- Also respond to all the colleges to which you have been accepted but are declining. Thank them but let them know you aren't coming.