

September 2010

10th and 11th grade students register & prepare for PSAT

Seniors – Finalize college list; work on applications & essays; review transcript for accuracy; request letters of recommendation

Meet with visiting college reps

11th – ACT and ACT plus Writing – in selected states only

October 2010

Review test materials & take PSAT either 10/13 or 10/16

9th – SAT

Reasoning and Subject Tests

(register by 9/10—late registration 9/24)

23rd – ACT and ACT plus Writing

(register by 9/17—late registration 10/1)

Attend area college fairs and meetings

Meet with college reps visiting high school

Seniors - Continue work on applications; complete Early Decision/Early Action applications; complete CSS Profile if required

Submit "rolling" admissions applications ASAP

Making the Most of Your High School Years

Here's a list of the most important tasks to accomplish while in high school:

- Take care of business
- Find out who you are and what you like to do
- Don't worry too much about what other people think
- Keep yourself healthy
- Learn all that you can

Let's take them one at a time.

Taking Care of Business

Set goals and learn how to achieve them. For example, to achieve your goal of attending the college that's right for you, you'll need to:

Choose your classes carefully

Know the requirements for high school graduation and for college admission

Take standardized tests in a timely fashion

Use resource people (educational consultant, teachers, counselor) to get answers to your questions

Who Are You?

Use high school as a chance to explore: get involved with the newspaper, performing arts, sports, student government or school clubs.

Make friends: as a child, you made friends by *chance*; now you make them by *choice*. Your decisions will be based on common interests, similarities or differences. As you learn more about yourself, you might move around from one group of friends to another until you find the place that feels right. Allow yourself the freedom to do this.

Take time to be yourself and give some time to others: pursue an interest; take a class in art, music, dance, martial arts, drama or language; volunteer your skills in

a meaningful way.

Don't Worry Too Much About What Others Think

Attitude and priorities: academic success requires greater effort...you have to decide if you are willing to meet these demands and find a way to balance them with the rest of your interests. Your friends may not always share your priorities or values; you may have to stand up and be true to yourself.

Understand what peer pressure is, and try to figure out how you will deal with it when or if you are faced with a tough choice.

It's OK not to have all the answers yet. Just try and concentrate on asking questions.

Keeping Yourself Healthy

Stress is a given at this time of your life! You will experience stress and anxiety in varying degrees in high school – it just comes with the territory. Physical symptoms might be fatigue, headaches or stomachaches. Learn to recognize the signs in yourself so you can figure out how to cope.

And here are some ideas: talking helps! Find an "anchor" – someone with wisdom and perspective who is also a good listener. Exercise is another good way to alleviate stress – a long walk, a bike ride, a workout or a friendly game of basketball can help sort out problems and make them seem more manageable. Getting enough rest is important, too.

And finally, **Learn All You Can**

Be open to new ideas, concepts and perspectives, both academically and personally.

Read!

Learning doesn't end when the class period, school day, or even formal schooling is over. You'll learn from jobs, academic programs, volunteer activities, community service, travel and self-exploration. Be a lifelong learner and keep your brain active!

Military Academies

While the beautiful grounds and views of the Hudson River make for an idyllic campus, the U.S. Military Academy isn't like any traditional college. The 4,000 students, who are called cadets, don't spend their afternoons tossing Frisbees or enjoying naps, and you won't find them eating pizza in the dorm at midnight. Life is much more regimented at a service academy. Where most college students spend about 15 hours a week in class, cadets can spend twice that much time in class, and they are required to participate in sports. Meal breaks are brief, study time dominates the evening, and lights are out at midnight.

Cadets at the Air Force Academy and midshipmen at the Naval Academy face similarly demanding schedules. It is a jarring transition to go from civilian to military life, and students need to be very sure that they want this kind of experience. While the academies are very thorough in their admission processes, there are always some cadets and midshipmen who drop out during the summer basic training program before the start of the first semester.

The cost of attending a service academy is paid by the taxpayers. Not only do cadets and midshipmen not contribute any money to the cost of their education, they are actually paid more than \$10,000 a year to cover the cost of uniforms, books, computer and other expenses. That doesn't mean anyone is getting off scot free, since graduates are obligated to serve for five years of active duty and three years of reserve duty.

Candidates for admission to any of the service academies except the Coast Guard Academy must be nominated. In addition to having a strong academic record, they need to have demonstrated leadership potential, and must be in excellent physical condition, with no ongoing medical problems. Start doing those push-ups early.

Leadership potential is crucial, and a student who shows promise may be admitted even if the academic record is not stellar. Like most colleges, the service academies would rather see applicants with sustained involvement and leadership experience in a few activities than superficial participation in a lot of activities.

Admission to service academies is extremely competitive. If you want to be considered, you need to get a nomination from your congressman, senator or the vice president. Students should check the website of their congressional representatives to learn about the nomination process.



ROTC programs offer college scholarships and preparation for military life.

Students who do not receive an appointment to an academy but show potential may be referred to a preparatory school. There, they can strengthen their academic, physical and military preparation before re-applying to the service academy the following year.

Another option is the Reserve Officers Training Corps or ROTC program offered at over 1,000 colleges and universities across the U.S. In exchange for a paid college education and a guaranteed post-college career, cadets agree to serve in the military for a specified amount of time. You can learn more about the various ROTC branches at www.todaysmilitary.com.

High school juniors who are interested in one of the service academies can apply for a summer seminar, a one week program where you get a taste of life at the academy and learn about the admissions process.

Since applying to a service academy is a more complex process than applying to other colleges, students should start planning early. In addition to going to the website of each service academy, students who want to know more can get a lot of information at www.serviceacademyforums.com.

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Focus on Finances: College Costs and Your College List



Our uncertain economic climate has prompted many families to eliminate all but public colleges and universities when compiling a college list. While the sticker price for tuition at state-

supported colleges does appear to be lower than that at private institutions, it's important to consider the real costs involved in college education.

Budget cuts have forced public institutions to increase tuition, eliminate academic programs, raise class sizes, and reject greater numbers of applicants. Private colleges have also had to tighten their belts, but larger endowments have generally reduced their cost-cutting measures. As in the past, students attending private colleges receive significant amounts of financial aid and scholarships, often reducing their final cost to amounts close to or even less than what they might pay at a public institution.

Further affecting the total cost of education is the number of years required to obtain a degree. Students at private colleges have a much better chance of completing their undergraduate studies in four years than do those at state-supported schools. Of even more concern are the results of a recent study by the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). Using statistics compiled by the U.S. Department of Education, the AEI found that the graduation rates of private universities are 62% greater than those of public colleges.

Smaller class sizes, more contact with professors, higher likelihood of timely graduation, tuition breaks through campus-based financial aid—for all of these reasons, private colleges can be the more affordable choice for college. Factor this information in when compiling your final college list. Include both public and private colleges on the list and you'll be able to evaluate the best option for your family in the spring.

Getting Recommendations That Can Make A Difference

Teacher recommendations are an important part of college applications, especially at private colleges. With so much at stake, how do you decide which teacher to ask? Surprisingly, it may not be the teacher who gave you the highest grade.

Sure, it's great to have a teacher rave about how you are the best writer she's seen in ten years of teaching AP English. But if a teacher writes that you fought to be admitted to AP Chemistry even though you didn't meet the school's requirements for taking the class, and that you came in for extra help after school every week and were committed to mastering the material even though it was a struggle, the character and commitment described in that recommendation would impress admissions officers.

Most importantly, you want a letter from a teacher who knows you well and can provide details about your academic endeavors so the recommendation doesn't sound like a hundred other letters the admissions officer is reading that week.

An English or history teacher is often a good choice since admissions officers like to know that students can write well. If you're submitting two recommendations, it can be helpful to ask a math or science teacher for the second one. If you're applying to engineering programs, a math teacher recommendation would be especially important.

Students often want to submit letters from everyone who would write something nice about them. But

more is not always better. If a college asks for one letter of recommendation, it might be okay to send two, but six is overkill. You don't want admissions officers wondering why you need to try so hard to convince them you're a worthy candidate.

If you are submitting one teacher recommendation, it should be from a teacher you had during junior year. Your favorite teacher from sophomore year can write a supplemental letter.

A supplemental letter could also come from a coach or employer. You might think working in a supermarket is not very impressive, but if you have worked at the store for two years and your supervisor writes that you've never been late or called in sick, you take on new responsibilities without being asked, and you come up with ideas to make operations more efficient, that's evidence of a terrific work ethic.

If you're going to submit an extra letter from someone outside of school, make sure that person knows you well and can talk about your character. A letter from your mother's business partner or an influential acquaintance of your father whom you've met briefly probably won't have much impact in an admissions office, unless, of course, that person is a major donor to the school.

Give your recommenders adequate time to write and be sure to write a thank-you note in appreciation of their time and effort.

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Rants, Raves, and Vents of College Admissions Officers

Get a group of college admissions officers together, and they'll be happy to share some of their pet peeves. The essay is most often the breeding ground for these stories, such as the student who proclaims his love of College A when applying to College B. Boring essay topics can sink the applicant's chance of admission—admissions officers have read just about every version imaginable about "The Big Game" or how parents or grandparents are their most influential people. Using the thesaurus too often in an attempt to impress generally backfires; bright 17 year olds should not sound as if they were 45. Not answering the essay prompt makes it obvious that you've attempted to substitute a generic college essay for what was being asked. Even proofreading comes into play here; be sure to have several people proofread your essay to

makes sure it conveys your message and to check spelling and grammar.

Over-involved parents also cause concerns. Since **you'll** be attending the college, **you** should be the one contacting the admissions office. The favorite rant: the parent who says "**We** are in the process of applying to your college."

Embarrassing or inappropriate e-mail addresses and outgoing cell phone messages, or questionable facebook or myspace pages can also raise the admissions officer's eyebrows. Don't send an e-mail to admissions that looks like a text message to your BFF.

Even college visits provide admissions personnel with reasons to vent—don't wear a College X sweatshirt when visiting College Y, or talk/text message on your cell phone during a college tour or info session.

Website of the Month: www.campuscompare.com

CampusCompare uses U.S. Department of Education data along with college-produced information and student reviews to provide a simple-to-use college search engine. Visitors can search out college information by majors, location, sports, or career choices. You can compare schools, side by side. See which college offers the best financial aid, the most clubs, or the toughest academic programs. The site also provides a financial aid calculator as well as links to student reviews on *facebook* and *twitter*.

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