

## HIGH SCHOOL PLANNING / TIMELINE

One of the keys to navigating high school successfully and positioning yourself for your college applications is a well thought-out plan. The following is a brief overview of the high school years and points to keep in mind as you move towards graduation and college.

### Freshman Year

- Freshman year is a great time to develop a “road map” for the next three years of high school. It is also a time of transition to the greater rigor and independence of high school.
- The most important component is your curriculum. The classes and subjects you choose to take, the relative strength of your program, and your grades will each have a major impact on your eventual college applications. This is the time to start developing a healthy balance between challenging yourself and taking care of yourself.
- Freshman year is also a good time to get involved in extracurricular activities and to find a few that you might pursue for the next three years.

### Sophomore Year

- Develop/refine your curriculum plan for junior and senior year to make sure it is appropriately challenging and one in which you can succeed.
- Take the PSAT in October, if available, without prepping in advance in order to assess testing strengths and weaknesses and/or potential for National Merit Scholarship consideration as a junior.
- Continue your involvement in those extracurricular activities that most interest you.
- It is not too early to begin visiting college campuses within driving distance in the spring to get a sense for what types of campuses suit you best – small liberal arts colleges (SLACs) with close-knit communities, smaller class sizes, and ample opportunities to make meaningful contributions; mid-sized universities with many of the features of SLAC alongside more opportunities for research; or large state universities with the widest variety of academic programs and big school spirit. You can explore rural campuses versus those in urban areas, Catholic universities versus secular.
- Develop productive, meaningful plans for your summer.
- You may already be taking one or more Advanced Placement exams in May.

*Summer—*

- Take a full length diagnostic practice test of both the SAT and ACT to determine which might be the better test for you and develop an appropriate testing plan for your junior year. Students who are strong testers, as demonstrated in their diagnostic testing, may want to start prepping for fall SAT or ACT test dates at this point, leaving their spring open to prepare for AP exams.

## Junior Year

*Fall—*

- Plan on taking the PSAT in October; these scores are the basis for the National Merit Scholarship competition.
- Continue developing plans for campus visits on long weekends and upcoming winter and spring breaks. You can also learn a lot about various colleges by researching them online and attending virtual admissions events.
- Start taking on leadership responsibilities outside the classroom to develop skills and experience to position yourself for leadership roles in 12th grade.

*Winter—*

- Begin planning a meaningful and productive summer. Remember that you'll want to devote time during the summer to the college process.
- Start test prep for spring SATs and ACTs, if you didn't test in the fall/winter.

*Spring—*

- Continue visiting colleges that interest you and refining your college list.
- Take the SAT and/or ACT; you may also be taking Advanced Placements exams in May.
- Ask two of your 11th grade teachers if they would be willing to write college recommendation letters for you. Consider if there are any outside recommenders you would like to ask.
- Make plans for your summer that will help you explore an interest in greater depth or develop new skills – an academic program, a job or an internship, or athletic showcases and camps.

*Summer—*

- Create online application accounts and fill out the basics.
- Start working on your application essays. You can start with your Personal Essay for the Common Application and/or the Personal Insight Questions for the UC application. Supplementary essay prompts will become available starting August 1.
- Review requirements for art supplements, where available. (You may also find them on individual college web sites.)
- Visit some colleges at the end of the summer when the students are back on campus. Interview where possible.

Note: Division I and II athletes need to register online with the NCAA Eligibility Center.

## Senior Year

### *Fall—*

- Finalize your list of approximately 10-12 colleges. Discuss your list with your school counselor and make sure they are aware of your preferences.
- Decide upon an early application strategy and a back-up strategy.
- Provide your school counselor with any information they request to flesh out their letter of recommendation.
- Take additional SAT/ACT tests if necessary.
- Sign your FERPA waiver, waiving your right to review letters of recommendation.
- Synch up your application accounts with the software your school uses to submit documents (Naviance, Maia Learning, SCOIR).
- Formally request your teacher letters of recommendation through the Common Application or your school's software (Naviance, SCOIR, Maia Learning), and provide them with whatever material they need to write those letters (brag sheet, resume, etc.).
- Request transcripts from your school to be sent to your colleges.
- Decide where you are going to submit test scores and send official score reports, as necessary.
- Fill out self-reported grades and courses (or Self-Reported Academic Record), if necessary.
- Check each college's application checklist on their web site.
- Finalize applications, essays, and art supplements.
- Submit your applications before the respective deadlines. Create and check college portal accounts regularly to be sure all your application materials have been received.

### *Winter—*

- Submit any remaining applications to colleges with later deadlines.
- Update colleges with any successes or achievements since you submitted your applications. (Usually through your applicant portal.)

### *Spring—*

- When decisions are announced, evaluate your acceptance options and revisit colleges to help you decide which to attend.
- When you have decided, be sure to send your tuition deposit to that college before May 1 (and advise the others that you will not be attending).
- Let your recommending teachers and school counselors know where you will be attending and thank them for their support.
- Avoid any temptation to slack off—colleges will look at your year-end grades and IB scores, and have been known to rescind acceptances for students whose performances deteriorate significantly in the spring! Additionally, high AP scores can be taken into consideration for placement and/or distribution requirements.