

## 12<sup>th</sup> Grade

### Time to Apply to College

The senior year is when everything comes together. Students are busy in the fall selecting and applying to colleges. Some areas to consider include:

#### 1. GRADES STILL COUNT

Sometimes students think that senior grades are not important, especially since the college applications ask about grades in courses through the end of the junior year. However, many schools rely on the mid-year transcript (which reflect 7<sup>th</sup> semester/10<sup>th</sup> trimester grades) to make admissions decisions. In addition, seniors must successfully complete all of their courses and graduate, and the college of their choice does receive the final transcript.

#### 2. DECIDE ON A LIST OF COLLEGES TO APPLY TO

Fall is the time to make up a list of college choices, but what's the best way to go about this?

- ❖ Meet with college counselor (Student Services Coordinator or college advisor) to discuss a list of possibilities based on factors that are important to you (size of school, location, majors)
- ❖ Attend the local college fair, which is usually held in October
- ❖ Attend school's college recruiting visits through the fall
- ❖ After doing some research on (and hopefully visits to) the colleges of interest, cull down your list
- ❖ The general rule of thumb is to have 1-2 "reach" schools, 2-3 "good fit" schools, and 1-2 "safety" schools; the size of the list is completely up to you

#### 3. GET ORGANIZED

Because there are multiple deadlines and multiple forms to be completed for the application process, students need to get organized early on:

- ❖ Set up a calendar for the year with SAT/ACT registration and test dates, college application deadlines, scholarship deadlines, and key Crater dates
- ❖ Get a filing system (hard copy or zip drive) for college applications, which includes your academic résumé and college essays
- ❖ Organize college recruiting materials for the schools in which you are interested; recycle the rest

#### 4. EVALUATE SAT/ACT SCORES

Hopefully, you took the SAT and/or ACT test during your junior year. If not, you should sign up for one in the fall as soon as possible. When you have received the results, look at your scores and determine if you should retake the SAT/ACT

- ❖ Highly selective colleges require high standardized test scores (Stanford and Pomona look for SAT scores of 1350 or better, or ACT scores of 30) while competitive schools look for SAT scores ranging from 1100-1300 and ACT scores ranging from 24-29
- ❖ Merit-based scholarships are also based on test scores and cumulative grade point average (usually at least 3.5 or better and a 1200 or better SAT and a 27 or better ACT) but the criteria varies from school to school

#### 5. OBTAIN COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

If you have been receiving recruiting information from a college, chances are that they will invite you to fill out an application online sometime in the fall. If not, you have a variety of options:

- ❖ Download the application from the college's website (typically a pdf)
- ❖ Apply online at the college website
- ❖ Complete the Common Application (over 500 colleges across the country accept this form- go to [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org) to find a list of schools and to download the forms, or create an account to complete online)
- ❖ If using the common application, check to see whether or not the individual college also wants you to complete a supplemental application
- ❖ State colleges and universities do not accept the common application

#### 6. COMPLETE COLLEGE APPLICATIONS IN A TIMELY MANNER

- ❖ Students should notify their Student Services Coordinator or college advisor when they have a list of schools they're applying to and the deadline (postmarked or received by date) of when each application is due; at least a month's notice is preferred as the bulk of college applications are due between November and February
- ❖ Students should ask for teacher recommendations early by personally talking to junior and senior year instructors (usually I suggest one English/Science instructor); however, they should bring the teacher recommendation forms to their Student Services Coordinator or college advisor instead of giving them directly to the instructor
- ❖ Students should complete their portion of the application as neatly and thoroughly as possible; typing the application online or with a word processor is always a good idea

- ❖ If they haven't already done so, students should prepare a résumé of their high school activities and awards to include with their application
- ❖ Parents should help their senior by making sure the student has obtained the correct forms, proofreading the application essay, and generally offering support and encouragement
- ❖ If students would like help with proofreading essays, résumés, and applications, they should get them to the Student Services Coordinator, college advisor or other teachers 2-3 weeks prior to the deadline
- ❖ Many colleges have January 1<sup>st</sup> deadlines, which falls during Christmas Break, so the student will need their application materials the first week of December
- ❖ Even if a school doesn't require a recommendation essay, you still may include them to strengthen the application if necessary
- ❖ Be sure to write a thank you note to the teacher(s) and counselor/advisor who have assisted you in the application process

#### 7. COMPLETE THE FINANCIAL AID FORMS AND SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS

- ❖ The earliest date for filing the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is January 1<sup>st</sup> of the student's senior year. This form can be accessed at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov)
- ❖ Some colleges will ask you to complete the CSS Profile which can be found at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) while others have their own financial aid statements for you to complete
- ❖ For many colleges, the student's application for admissions also functions as the scholarship application, and no additional paperwork is required
- ❖ Look for talent scholarships- athletics, art, music, forensics- at each college; usually these require an audition and separate form
- ❖ Local scholarships are typically announced in December and January

#### 8. THE WAITING GAME

Once all the applications are submitted, then the difficult part comes- waiting to hear.

- ❖ Colleges that have rolling admissions will typically notify you within 6-8 weeks from when you applied
- ❖ Most of the admissions committees meet in February and March to make their decisions (after receiving the 7<sup>th</sup> semester/10<sup>th</sup> trimester grades) and will notify students in March and April
- ❖ If students go through the special/conditional admissions process, they may not hear from the school until mid to late April

9. MAKING A DECISION

- ❖ The national deadline to make the choice and notify colleges of your decision is May 1<sup>st</sup>
- ❖ Please ***do not choose a college before making a college visit, if at all possible!***
- ❖ Submit the necessary forms and deposit to the college of choice as soon as possible as the preferred housing fills up the quickest
- ❖ Out of courtesy, notify the other colleges of your decision. A brief email works best