

Career and College Planning -

Planning for your future work life and education can leave you with a lot of questions:

What happens after High School?

What should I be doing right now?

Is college even right for me? What alternatives do I have?

Do I want to attend a trade school, 2-year program, 4+ year program?

What can I do now to make my college application stronger?

How do I apply for financial aid or scholarships?

SCHS has several programs in place in order to help with answering these questions: career shadowing, aptitude exploration, college rep visits, integrated lessons about career choice from a Christian point of view, scholarship information distribution and standardized testing options.

Here is a college admissions timeline adapted from the Khan Academy version to make it more specific to our SCHS students.

Throughout high school (freshman - senior year)

- **Focus on your grades**—Your high school transcript is considered one of the most important parts of your college application, and good grades will distinguish you from many other applicants.
- **Complete your service hours** - Colleges and scholarship organizations like to see that you care about helping others.
- **Explore and commit to extracurricular and leadership activities**—Freshman year is a great time to try several different extracurricular activities to see which ones are most interesting to you. Once you decide what you like, dedicate more time to fewer activities in order to become deeply involved. Leadership experience will make your college application AND scholarship applications stronger.
- **Find summer volunteer opportunities/jobs/internships**—Summer is a great time to earn extra money for college while exploring different career fields. Volunteering is also a good way to strengthen your college and scholarship applications.
- **Begin an ongoing dialogue with your parents about how to pay for college**—Start discussing ASAP, both in terms of why you want to go to college and how you're going to pay for it. That way, you and your family will be comfortable with the topic when it's crunch time in 11th and 12th grade.
- **Start saving for college**—Even if you can only put aside a few dollars each month, every little bit helps, and creating a college savings account makes the idea of going on to higher education much more real.

Junior year, fall (September to November)

- **Take the PSAT**—Take the PSAT as a junior to practice for the SAT and qualify for the National Merit Scholarship program. Sophomores may also take the PSAT for earlier practice.
- **Take the ASVAB** --The military gives this aptitude and career guidance test to all juniors at no cost. It can help students figure out where their abilities and interests lie.
- **Learn more about colleges**—Use online search tools, attend college fairs, speak with college reps, and ask friends already in college for their thoughts on different colleges to begin formulating an opinion of where you want to go. Continue this process throughout junior and senior year.
- **Make local visits to college campuses**—Take time in the fall of your junior year to visit local colleges. Even if these aren't schools you want to attend, this will provide you with an initial sense of what college is like.
- **Determine if you will need college entrance exams (SAT/ACT)**--Many colleges are going test-optional or even test-blind (do not consider tests at all). You may want to take the SAT/ACT just to keep your plans flexible, but if you have already assembled a list of colleges, you may find that you don't need to.

Junior year, winter (December to February)

- **Take the SAT and/or ACT**—If you will need college entrance exams, take the SAT and/or ACT for the first time in the winter or spring of junior year. Most students do better their second time, so plan to test again the spring of junior year or fall of senior year.
- **Start developing your list of target colleges**—Identify colleges of interest with the goal of having several schools at varying levels of selectivity: some "probables" (sometimes referred to as "safety schools") some "match," and some "reach" options. Continue updating this list throughout junior year and at the beginning of senior year.
- **If possible, set up appointments to visit and speak with representatives at your target colleges**—Call ahead to admissions offices of colleges you want to visit. Note that certain colleges offer "fly-in" programs to cover cost of travel for students with financial need. Continue setting up appointments throughout junior and senior year, but don't worry if it's not possible for you to visit your target colleges.

Junior year, spring (March to May)

- **Career Exploration/YouScience** -Complete YouScience activities and games in order to learn your aptitude strengths and explore the database of careers that are a good "fit" for you. This activity also includes comparison and program information for colleges. The program is free.

- **Take the SAT and/or ACT**—If you will need admissions exams, take the SAT and/or ACT for the first or second time in the spring of junior year. We typically offer a "School Day" SAT option in late April.
- **Career Shadowing** - Juniors and seniors take two school days each spring to shadow community members in job areas that interest them. This is a great opportunity to try out some of the careers you matched with in the YouScience or ASVAB activities.

Junior year, summer (June to August)

- **If possible, visit colleges**—If possible, travel to top target colleges the summer after junior year to visit dorms, classes, and recreation centers. Check individual college websites for details on info sessions, tour times, and interview opportunities.
- **Begin drafting college application essays**—Senior year is very busy, so the summer after junior year is a great time to begin college application essays.
- **Identify potential teachers to provide recommendation letters**—During the summer after junior year, begin identifying potential recommenders. These should be teachers from your core classes (math, science, history, English, or world languages) who know you best.
- **Outline your financial aid plan**—Use the financial aid calculators found on individual college websites, also known as net price calculators, to determine how much your family will need to contribute for your college education. Create a list of all the financial aid options you plan to pursue along with the deadlines for each.
- **Apply for traditional scholarships**—Many seniors apply to more than 30 scholarships. Don't shy away from local options or ones that require essays. Since fewer students apply for these, you often have a better chance. In general, local scholarship opportunities become active in the spring of your Senior year. Online searches can be confusing, but do turn up legitimate scholarships. [This article](#) contains advice for spotting legitimate scholarships that are worth your time.

Senior year, fall (September to November)

- **Take the SAT and/or ACT**—If you feel like you can improve on your initial SAT and/or ACT results, take the tests for the second (or at most, third) time in the fall of senior year.
- **Determine the application deadlines for each of your target schools**—Early decision and early action applications are typically due in November of your senior year, while most regular admissions applications are due between January 1 and March 1. Private University deadlines can vary. Many will waive their fee for students who apply earlier in the year. The Common App, usually available at the beginning of August, will consolidate the deadlines for you and can be used to apply to all Common App accepting schools.

- **Talk with your college adviser about your plans** -- Your college adviser is here for you to help you navigate college websites, answer questions about applying, and provide your transcript to you and the colleges you are applying to. Parents and students can arrange to meet with the college adviser at any time.
- **Begin preparing for your interview**—Research the colleges where you plan to apply, identify those that may offer optional interviews, and begin practicing for the interviews with an available teacher or friend.
- **Begin drafting college application essays**—Senior year is very busy, so if you have applications that are due early, make sure you give yourself plenty of time to write your essays. The English teacher often does a unit on writing application and/or scholarship essays in early November.
- **Ask for letters of recommendation**—At least a month prior to the deadline, provide your recommenders with bullet points listing how you excelled academically in their classes along with the letter of recommendation forms and stamped envelopes addressed to the colleges where you are applying.
- **Gather all application materials**—Make sure you, or your guidance counselor, have the necessary materials for college admissions including forms, test scores, essays, recommendations, and transcripts. If you are worried about the cost of the application, ask your guidance counselor or college of interest for a fee waiver!
- **Fill out and submit the FAFSA**—FAFSA, the main determinant of federal financial aid, can be submitted after October 1 of your senior year. Submit ASAP, as some schools give aid on a first-come, first-serve basis. In 2023 the FAFSA window will open on December 1. studentaid.gov

Senior year, winter (December to February)

- **Apply for College-specific Scholarships**—Many colleges have leadership, departmental, and activity scholarships. You can find them in the financial aid section of most colleges. Deadlines are typically December through January.
- **Apply for local and regional scholarships** - Many local scholarships in the Yakima Valley are published and have deadlines between January and April. The College Adviser will distribute information to advertise these scholarships as they arise.
- **Submit regular decision applications**—Many colleges have regular decision due dates sometime between January 1 and March 1 of each year.
- **Ensure official SAT and ACT score reports are sent to regular decision schools** - In addition to your application forms, letters of recommendation, essays, and other requested materials, your regular decision application will require you to go to the College Board (SAT) and ACT Student (ACT) websites to send colleges your official test score reports.

- **Update your FAFSA and CSS PROFILE applications**—Revise your financial aid applications with data from your most recent year tax returns if this information was estimated on your initial FAFSA / CSS PROFILE.

Senior year, spring (March to May)

- **Peak Local Scholarship Season** - Most local scholarships have a deadline between March 15-April 15, so push yourself to get those applications in!
- **Compare financial aid packages from multiple schools**—Once you are accepted, colleges will offer a financial aid package consisting of grants along with suggested loans and work-study.
- **Consider work-study**—Many students consider work-study options offered by their college if they cannot fully cover the cost of attendance through grants and scholarships. You can indicate your interest for work-study on the FAFSA and by contacting your college's financial aid office.
- **Consider loans**—Many students consider loans for college if they cannot fully cover the cost of attendance through grants, scholarships, and work-study. The best deals are often from subsidized federal loans, specifically Stafford loans (now often called Direct Loans) and Perkins loans.
- **Consider a financial aid appeal**—If your family's circumstance has changed, or if a college's financial aid package does not meet your need, reach out to the financial aid office ASAP to appeal the offer.
- **Career Shadowing** - Juniors and seniors take two school days each spring to shadow community members in job areas that interest them. Seniors may use this opportunity to "dial in" on a career or try something new for personal growth.
- **National Decision Day: May 1 - Submit your enrollment deposit**—The final date to submit a deposit and lock in your place for regular decision colleges is typically May 1.

Senior year, summer (June to August)

- **Complete ongoing enrollment paperwork for your college**—Once you've decided on a college, you will receive updates regarding orientation, scheduling, housing, etc. Complete all paperwork by the necessary deadlines.
- **Conduct work-study job search**—Coordinate with the financial aid office to identify work-study options. Finalize your job search the summer before college begins or in the fall of your college freshman year.