

### **To Do In 11<sup>th</sup> Grade:**

- Check your GPA. It's never too late to improve. Colleges like to see an upward trend in grades.
- Take the PSAT (practice SAT) in October. This is the qualifying test for the National Merit Scholarship Competition, National Achievement Scholarship Competition for African American Students.
- Make sure you have a social security number. College applications require you to have one.
- Make a list of colleges that fit your most important criteria. Visit college fairs and campuses.
- Explore career interests using various web programs such as Career Cruising, Bridges
- Notify your counselor if interested in pursuing NCAA Division I or II collegiate athletics. Start the certification process by completing the NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse form on-line and notify your counselor
- Start the application process if interested in any of the military academy appointments.
- Take the MME (includes college reportable ACT) in the spring.
- Consider whom you will ask to write any recommendations required by some colleges.
- Request information from colleges of interest on their websites.
- Research/compare schools and careers and save to your EDP (Educational Development Plan).

### **To Do In 12<sup>th</sup> Grade:**

- Continue to take a full course load of college prep courses and keep up your grades.
- Complete your college and technical school applications by Halloween. All applications should be completed and turned into the Counseling Office. Please complete college application request form in order to organize this process and clarify the location of the campus and school.
- Any teacher recommendation forms/letters MUST turned in to be included with transcript request.
- Update your EDP (Educational Development Plan) and bring the signed copy to counseling.
- Retake the ACT or SAT in fall/winter. Colleges will consider your best composite score.
- Complete the NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse form on-line, if you have not done so already and would like to pursue collegiate athletics at the Division I or II level. Notify your counselor when you have completed the registration process.
- Research and apply for scholarships. Use websites, the scholarship bulletin, and scholarship folders in the counseling office.
- Male students who turn 18 must register for selective services on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday to be eligible for federal and state financial aid.
- Visit the FAFSA website at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). Register in the fall for a PIN # at [www.pin.gov](http://www.pin.gov) and fill out the financial aid form after January 1<sup>st</sup>. Then, compare the financial aid packages from college and universities that have accepted you.

### **Preparing for a College Campus Visit-Know Before You Go**

It may be tempting to just yell "roadtrip!" and head out to campuses, but you'll get more out of your visits if you plan ahead.

#### **What's Important to You?**

Make a list of what college characteristics are most important to you, so you know what to evaluate. Do you feel overwhelmed in a large lecture hall? Check out the class size. Do you have your heart set on joining a sorority or fraternity? See what the Greek system is like on campus. Is there a particular major that you want to pursue? Talk to current students or professors in that department. Develop a list of your preferences. Take this list to the schools that you plan to visit, and compare them when you get back home.

### **Research the College**

It's important to know something about the college before you arrive on campus, especially if you have an interview scheduled.

- Review the viewbooks, course catalogs, and any other materials the college sends to prospective students.
- Spend some time surfing their website.
- Talk to currently enrolled students or alumni about their college. Some college websites let you contact them online, or you can get their contact information from the admission office.

### **Scheduling Your Trip**

Pick a time that's convenient to you, but try to go when classes are in session. That way, you can sit in on a lecture or stay in a dorm overnight. You'll only get a true feel for the campus if you're there on a day when classes are in full swing. Schedule your time on campus to make sure you'll have time for everything you want to do:

- Find out how often college tours run, and if you have to sign up in advance.
- Be sure to get a map of the school. You don't want to spend half your day trying to park or find the admission office.
- If an interview is suggested, make an appointment. Also, consider meeting with the financial aid officer.
- If you're curious about a club, program, or a sport, arrange to attend a practice, rehearsal, or meeting.

### **Pack a Camera and Notebook**

You think you'll remember everything, but you'll be surprised how colleges start to merge after you've seen a few.

Was it X College or Y University that had that excellent exercise equipment in the gym?  
Where did I talk to that cool psychology professor?

### **Campus Visit Checklist: Make the Most of Your Trip (edited from college.board.com)**

Here are things you shouldn't miss while visiting a college. Take a look at this list before planning campus trips to make sure that you allow enough time on each campus to get a sense of what the school -- and the life of its students -- is really like.

- Take a campus tour.
- Have an interview with admissions officer.
- Get business cards and names of people you meet for future contacts.
- Pick up financial aid forms.
- Sit in on a class of a subject that interests you.
- Talk to a professor in your chosen major or in a subject that interests you.
- Talk to coaches of sports in which you might participate.
- Talk to a student or counselor in the career center.
- Spend the night in a dorm, eat in the cafeteria
- Read the student newspaper.
- Scan bulletin boards to see what day-to-day student life is like.
- Read for a little while in the library and see what it's like.
- Ask a student what he/she likes/dislikes about the college.
- Browse in the college bookstore.
- Walk or drive around the community surrounding the campus.
- Listen to the college's radio station.
- Imagine yourself attending this college for four years.

### **What to Do About Senioritis-Make Your Senior Year Count**

Seniors have worked hard for three years, taking tests, completing projects, and preparing for college admission. When senior year rolls around, some students just want to get through college applications and relax before they head off to the college of their choice.

Also known as senioritis, taking it easy senior year may seem like a nice break, but is likely to do more harm than good. Not only does senioritis jeopardize your chances for success later on in college, it can also affect your grades -- and college admission officers pay close attention to your performance senior year. According to recent reports, incomplete high school preparation can contribute to academic problems in college.

- "As many as half of all college students do not have adequate academic preparation, and are required to take remedial courses."
- "More than one quarter of the freshmen at 4-year colleges and nearly half of those at 2-year colleges do not even make it to their sophomore year."

### **Senior-Year Grades and Applying for College Admission**

Many students mistakenly believe that prepping for college ends after the eleventh grade. However, the senior year -- the entire senior year is actually of particular interest to colleges. Many college applications (including the Common Application) require you to list your senior courses, including information about course levels and credit hours. It will be very obvious to the admission officers if you've decided to "take the year off." Many colleges also include as part of the application a form called the mid-year grade report. Your counselor completes this form with first half grades and sends it to the colleges to which you've applied. It then becomes a crucial part of the application folder.

### **If You Are Accepted**

Many college acceptance letters include warnings to students such as "Your admission is contingent on your continued successful performance." This means colleges reserve the right to deny you admission should your senior year grades drop. Mary Lee Hoganson, College Counselor for Homewood-Flossmor Community High School, Flossmor, Illinois writes: "It is not at all rare for a college to withdraw an offer of admission when grades drop significantly over the course of the senior year. (I have a folder full of copies of these letters.)"

### **Stay Active and Involved**

Your continued involvement in activities, sports, volunteer work, etc. will help you stay active and focused throughout your final year. A great internship or career-focused job opportunity can help motivate you to start considering your career options. Meaningful and significant experiences will help prepare you to make informed decisions about your education/career goals.

### **Maintain a Challenging Course Load**

You should take the most rigorous courses available, and be sure to continue taking college-track subjects. Consider AP® courses, which can also earn you credit at many colleges.

### **How to Make the Most of Your Senior Year**

Senior year is your opportunity to strengthen your skills and broaden your experiences, in school and out, to prepare for all of the challenges ahead. A successful senior year can help launch you on the path to a successful future. If you're interested in pursuing a subject further, consider taking a class at a local college. This challenge can help you avoid sliding into an academic slump, and stimulate your interest in the possibilities of college.

*Adapted from:*

*National Commission on the High School Senior Year, The Lost Opportunity of Senior Year: Finding a Better Way Youth at the Crossroads: Facing High School and Beyond. Washington, DC:*