

Are You Ready For College?

Student's Step-By-Step Planning Guide

REMEMBER...DON'T WAIT, START NOW!

Discover the possibilities for life after high school. If you've decided to attend college, or even if you're not sure yet, you'll find this planning guide helpful as you prepare for the career of your dreams.

JUNIOR YEAR - FALL

- Start investigating post-high school education opportunities and research the different types of schools and training opportunities available.
- Choose a specific career that you'd like to pursue and visit with your high school guidance counselor regarding schools that will fulfill your educational and career goals.
- Review your recent and current class schedules with your school counselor to verify that you have taken, or are taking, those classes that will help you succeed in college and in your career.
- Attend career and college fairs and presentations.
- List the schools you are considering and send for literature. Request their admissions and financial aid information. Find out if the school requires ACT or SAT. Also ask how many applications they require, such as for admission, financial aid, and scholarships.
- Maintain good records during this entire process. Make copies of everything you send.
- Read all college materials you receive carefully. Decide what you want from an institution: major, location, athletics, reputation, etc. Then, compare the requirements for admission and financial aid.
- If you did not take the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) in the 10th grade, take it now to prepare for college admission's tests and to establish eligibility for the National Merit Scholarship.
- Acquire a study guide for the ACT/SAT and start to prepare for the test.

JUNIOR YEAR - SPRING

- Take the SAT and/or ACT (depending on what is required by the institutions you're interested in attending). Your high school guidance counselor can provide you with the test dates and descriptive brochures.
- Start to narrow your list of post-high school options. Make plans to visit the facilities that are most appealing to you.
- Research scholarship opportunities and visit at least two types of colleges; i.e., large/small, community college/university, academic/technical.
- Contact organizations sponsoring scholarships that you're eligible for and request information.
- Develop a resume of high school activities and awards, if you haven't already done so, and update as needed.
- Find a summer job to set aside money for school.
- Start submitting applications to schools of your choice. Some colleges will accept applications once your junior year is completed. Keep copies of everything you send.

SENIOR YEAR - FALL

- Double check that you are taking the courses that will meet the admissions' requirements of the post-high school institution that you are planning to attend.
- Take the SAT or ACT again if you need a higher score to meet admission requirements, to be eligible for certain scholarships, or if you didn't take it your junior year.
- Apply to the colleges you are considering EARLY. Generally,

during December, January, or February you may apply for regular admission.

- Watch for important scholarship and financial aid information and visit your counselor for scholarship opportunities and applications. Be aware of deadlines and plan accordingly.
- Think about what you want to say in your college essay.
- Ask teachers to write letters of recommendation for you if they are required for admission or scholarships.

SENIOR YEAR - WINTER

- Work with your parents to collect financial aid information and attend financial aid workshops together.
- Pick up and submit financial aid application. The most commonly used form in Idaho to seek federal financial aid is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Get it ready and mail the FAFSA after January 1. You may also need to fill out a separate form for institutional or state aid.
- Keep working on scholarship and financial aid applications. Remember to respond immediately to any requests for more information or for additional documents in your financial aid application.
- Who's home from college for the holidays? Visit with them about their college experience.
- Remind your parents to prepare their income tax statements as early as possible, since a photocopy of their return must be sent to most schools to which you have applied.

SENIOR YEAR - SPRING

- Read all of your mail!! There may be important news.
- You should be hearing from colleges now. After you receive letters of acceptance and financial aid awards, decide which school you'll attend.
- Mail in your acceptance form and deposit check as soon as possible. Pay attention to all deadlines and make sure that your applications are sent in on time. Ask about campus housing deadlines, specifically, because student housing fills up quickly.
- Review the financial aid package of the school of your choice with your parents. Be sure you understand each type of aid offered. Schedule an appointment with the school's financial aid director if you have questions. Don't forget to sign the financial aid award letter and return it by the deadline.
- Notify the financial aid office of the scholarships that you are receiving.
- Decline offers received from other institutions or organizations in writing.
- Complete any separate applications for loans you decide to accept.
- Participate in orientation programs for incoming freshmen offered by the school of your choice.

Congratulations on graduating from high school and good luck in your new adventure!

Source: Adapted from Step-by-Step Planning Guide at <http://www.collegeview.com> and the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.