

JUNIOR CHECKLIST

You've got high school wired. But, when it comes to planning for college, you are entering uncharted territory. There are so many steps! To help you out, here's a handy checklist of things you can do now to make the process easier.

THIS FALL

- ✓ Make getting good grades your personal goal. Yeah, it's hard work but doing it will give you more options in your college search. Now is the time that early "senior-itis" sets in, but keep in mind that junior-year grades are critical to prospective colleges.
- ✓ Schedule some face time with your guidance counselor to discuss starting your scholarship and financial aid search. Talk to them about how the college major(s) you are looking at will translate into career choices. While you are there you can look at college brochures and catalogs and locate their website address. You can also go to MCIS for some of this information.
- ✓ Sign up with your counselor to meet college admissions representatives planning to visit your school. Watch the bulletin for the announcements of when they will be in Baker and sign-up on the guidance office door.
- ✓ Start researching scholarships and grants online. Register on www.fastweb.com. Don't get scammed! Never pay for scholarship searches. There are many free ones that will give you the same information as the ones that charge.
- ✓ You'll be receiving a lot of college mail. Return the reply cards to the schools that interest you. You will then start receiving view books, catalogues, e-mail and applications.
- ✓ Put together a list of things you would like in a college. Do you want a big university or a small college? Which schools have the best programs for your prospective major? Check out MCIS to help you answer some of these questions.
- ✓ Take the PSAT in October. The test may qualify you for National Merit Scholarship Competitions. Plus, it is good practice at taking college entrance type exams.
- ✓ Start preparing to take the ACT by doing online practice tests and tutorials. You can find them on MCIS and through the high school website. If you don't like doing things online, you can purchase books of practice tests and tutorials.
- ✓ Interested in pursuing a career in the military? Finaid.org lists U.S. Armed Forces recruiting programs that let you earn money for college while serving your country. If you are interested in ROTC or the military academies, you need to visit with your guidance counselor soon.
- ✓ Interested in volunteering? You should give it some strong consideration. Many scholarship applications ask you to list your community service activities.
- ✓ Create a resume' file on your MCIS portfolio, saving such items as report cards, diplomas and certificates; a list of awards and honors you receive; a list of all school and community activities you take part in; a list of offices you hold in organizations; and a list of volunteer or paid jobs you hold. Update your portfolio every semester.

- ✓ Run for leadership positions in the organizations that you are involved in. If you aren't involved in many activities/organizations, now is the time to

THIS WINTER AND SPRING

- ✓ All the juniors will take the ACT this year free of charge and you may want to consider taking the SAT. By taking the tests now, you are leaving yourself the option to retake the test next year. Both testing companies prefer that you register on-line or, if that's not possible, stop in the guidance office for a packet. On collegeboard.com there is a SAT Question of the Day that you can sign-up to receive daily. It's a wonderful way to do test preparation.
- ✓ Investigate specific colleges or do side-by-side comparisons with MCIS.
- ✓ If portfolios, audition tapes or essays are required for admission or scholarships, start working on those now.
- ✓ Start looking for a summer job to earn money for college expenses. Having trouble finding one? Try the classifieds in your local paper. Or, consider starting your own business - anything from dog walking to tutoring.
- ✓ Investigate summer programs, workshops, internships and camps in your community or on college campuses and apply to any that interest you.
- ✓ Visit the college campuses of the schools that interest you. Summer is a great time to do this, so schedule appointments early. Line up interviews with the admissions people, if needed, during those visits. If you need help, see your guidance counselor.
- ✓ Determine to which colleges you'd like to apply. If you want to apply to several schools, you may want to pick at least one "safety" school where you are sure you will be accepted. But, don't be afraid to add those long shots, too.

NEXT FALL

- ✓ Narrow down your list of potential schools and contact them for an application and a new student information packet. Research that info to make sure you're aware of admission requirements and application deadlines.
- ✓ Evaluate your finances. Need extra money for tuition, books or rent? Begin researching student loans online and plan to attend the financial aid workshop in January.
- ✓ Attend College Nights and Career Fairs in your area.
- ✓ Register to take the ACT and/or the SAT again.
- ✓ Apply for the scholarships that you have found online and that your guidance counselor will give you.
- ✓ Make it a goal to have all of your college applications done and sent in by Thanksgiving of your senior year.