

Winter Park High School College & Career Center

Senior Year College Application Checklist

(modified Month-by-Month Senior Year College Application Timeline by Allen Grove on www.about.com)

Senior year is a busy and extremely important time in the college admissions process. This is your last chance to get the ACT and SAT scores you need, and senior year is when you have to narrow down your college options to the handful of schools to which you will apply. You will need to get your college essay up to snuff, line up your letters of recommendation, and apply for financial aid. During the application process, you will need to keep active in extracurricular activities and maintain high grades.

Visit the WPHS College and Career Center in room 109. Explore the College and Career Center web page (www.wphs.ocps.net; the center is listed under the *Guidance* tab) for links to common forms and helpful articles. Be sure to “like” WPHS College and Career Center on Facebook for up-to-date resources and information. The volunteers in the Center are here to help you with your questions.

August/September

- ✓ With your parents, fill out the FAFSA4caster online at www.FAFSA4caster.ed.gov. This will give you and your parents an idea of what the federal government determines your EFC (estimated family contribution) will be based on income and non-retirement assets. Discuss college financial options with your family.
- ✓ Develop a balanced list of colleges that includes likely, match, and reach schools, both academically and financially. If you are looking for university-sponsored merit scholarships, consider that you should be in the top 10-15% of the college's applicant pool. Your list should be between 3 and 8 colleges. Carefully and honestly consider your interests, strengths, and weaknesses. Some helpful websites include www.cappex.com, www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org, www.mycollegeoptions.org, and www.collegeanswer.com.
- ✓ Explore the websites of the colleges that interest you to learn about admissions requirements. Pay particular attention to early decision, early action, and preferred application deadlines. Confirm that you have taken or registered for all required standardized tests. If necessary, register for the ACT, SAT, or SAT Subject Tests at www.collegeboard.org or www.actstudent.org.
- ✓ Check your senior year class schedule to make sure you are taking the classes you will need for your top-choice colleges.
- ✓ Request your high school transcript and check it for accuracy. Closely review your courses, grades, and community service hours. Create a list of all of your courses and grades for reference later.
- ✓ Clean up your social networking pages and use only a professional-sounding e-mail account.
- ✓ Look over the applications and begin thinking about potential topics for your personal essay.
- ✓ Write your “senior autobiography.” A blank autobiography can be found on the WPHS website (click on Guidance tab, under Forms).
- ✓ Meet with your guidance counselor to discuss the colleges to which you are thinking of applying.
- ✓ Register in the College and Career Center to speak to visiting college representatives (September to November and spring). A listing of all of representatives, dates and times is located in the College and Career Center. Dress for success and come with questions about their campus and programs. Send a thank you note to the representative.
- ✓ Continue to accumulate and record community service hours.
- ✓ Take leadership roles in clubs, activities, and volunteer organizations and continue to update your high school resume. A template for this resume can be found on the College and Career Center web page (www.wphs.ocps.net; the center is listed under the *Guidance* tab).
- ✓ Request letters of recommendation from teachers, guidance counselors, coaches, and employers. For guidance counselors and teachers, be sure to use the request form and envelope available in the guidance department. Provide a copy of your senior autobiography and high school resume, along with a pre-addressed stamped envelope for each college, to each person. Be aware of the colleges which encourage online submissions of recommendations and provide those instructions if necessary.
- ✓ Research financial aid and scholarships. Do the colleges on your list require a separate financial aid or scholarship application? Start checking our WPHS scholarship database weekly for updates and additions at www.winterparkpts.com/scholarships. Review the test, GPA, and community service requirements for the Bright Futures scholarships at www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org.
- ✓ If you are a student athlete, register with www.ncaaclearinghouse.net and/or www.naia.org, if you have not already done so.

October/November

- ✓ Visit campuses and interview with college representatives if appropriate.
- ✓ Submit "transcript request" form (available in the Guidance Department) or order online at the WPHS website (*Guidance* tab).
- ✓ Take advantage of college fairs. Valencia will host over 130 colleges each fall at their annual College Night on October 8, 2015 at the West Campus. For more information, visit <http://valenciacollege.edu> and search for "college night." Visit <http://www.nacacnet.org> for a schedule of college fairs across the nation. Prepare mailing labels to take with you to the College Fair – it will save you time when filling out the college information reply cards. Include your name, phone, email, address, high school and year of graduation.
- ✓ Get your college essay in shape. Get feedback on your writing from a guidance counselor and/or teacher. The volunteers in the College and Career Center will happily read your essay also.
- ✓ Keep track of all application components and deadlines: applications, test scores, letters of recommendation, and financial aid materials. Stop by the center for a form to help keep you organized.
- ✓ Do not let your grades slide. It is easy to be distracted from school work when working on applications. Senior slump can be disastrous for your admissions chances.
- ✓ Make sure you have submitted all components of your applications if you are applying to colleges with November deadlines for early decision or preferred application.
- ✓ Continue to research scholarships.
- ✓ Attend the Financial Aid Night hosted by the WPHS Guidance Department.
- ✓ Do not put off applying to schools with rolling admissions or late deadlines; the available spaces can fill up.

December/January/February

- ✓ Complete your applications for regular admissions.
- ✓ Make sure you have had your test scores sent to all colleges that require them.
- ✓ Confirm that your letters of recommendation have been sent.
- ✓ Submit the FAFSA (Free Application for Financial Aid) at www.fafsa.ed.gov, as early as January 1.
- ✓ Complete the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE for non-federal aid funds at www.collegeboard.org, if required by the colleges on your list (this is not common).
- ✓ If you are accepted to a school through early decision, be sure to follow directions carefully. Submit required forms, and notify the other schools to which you applied of your decision.
- ✓ Continue to focus on your grades and extracurricular involvement. Keep your high school resume current.
- ✓ Have midyear grades sent to colleges.
- ✓ Continue to keep track of all deadlines and application components.
- ✓ Continue to research scholarships. Apply for scholarships well in advance of deadlines.

March

- ✓ If you submitted the FAFSA, you should receive the Student Aid Report (SAR). Carefully look it over for accuracy. Errors can cost you thousands of dollars.
- ✓ Keep your grades high. Colleges can revoke offers of admission if your grades take a nosedive senior year.
- ✓ Some acceptance letters may arrive. Compare financial aid offers and visit campus before making a decision.
- ✓ Continue applying for appropriate scholarships.

April/May

- ✓ Keep track of all acceptances, rejections, and waitlists. If waitlisted, learn more about waitlists and move ahead with other plans. You can always change your plans if you get off a waitlist.
- ✓ If you have ruled out any colleges that accepted you, notify them. This is a courtesy to other applicants, and it will help the colleges manage their waitlists and extend the correct number of acceptance letters.
- ✓ Go to accepted student open houses if offered.
- ✓ Avoid senioritis! An acceptance letter does not mean you can stop working.
- ✓ Most schools have a deposit deadline of May 1st. Do not be late!
- ✓ Have your final transcripts sent to colleges.
- ✓ Send thank you letters to everyone who helped you in the application process. Let your mentors and recommenders know the results of your college search.
- ✓ Keep on top of procuring student loans. Notify your college if you receive any scholarships.
- ✓ Graduate. Congratulations!