

11/12 School Counselors

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OCTOBER

Senior Newsletter

Souderton Area High School

Education

Students should be in full swing with college applications. By this time, students should be finalizing their list of schools that they want to apply (if they haven't already done so). Remember, all highly selective schools should be considered "reach" schools and are not a guarantee for acceptance, no matter how great your academic accomplishments have been. Students should have at least two safe schools to which they apply.



Students should know if they will need teacher recommendations and admissions essays. Please plan ahead accordingly with contacting teachers to write recommendations or proofread your essay. Students should be in the process of completing applications with some even receiving a decision already. Rolling admissions schools begin to view applications during this month.



Employment



Many students think that because they are going to enter the work world, their year is different than those attending college. That is INCORRECT! Students planning to join the working world should be planning just as much as their college-bound peers. Students entering employment should be preparing a resume, searching for jobs, and practicing interviews. With the current economic situation and a competitive job market, students need to best prepare themselves for being hired. In looking for employment, try and set yourself up with a job in which there is room for advancement, which will help increase



experience, leadership, and pay. The most important thing is to give yourself options. When obtaining a job, see if there are certifications or licensure options that you can earn. This can make you more marketable in obtaining future employment.



Military

Students interested in the military should contact a local recruiter for the branch they are interested. Students are required to take and pass the ASVAB and a physical, and must graduate high school before leaving for basic training.





Financial Aid



The three things that the average person will spend the most money on in a lifetime are a house, cars, and education! Furthering your education is a major financial expense on a family/student. In buying a house or car, you will take meticulous steps to make sure that you get the best possible fit and deal for you money. Same should go for college. You should look for the best fit/deal for your educational and financial commitment.

So what steps can be made to help alleviate some of the cost? Please note that school counselors are here to give the facts about financial aid and will not provide financial advice. Please consult a financial professional for questions regarding your financial status.

Filling out the FAFSA: <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>

1. First you will want to click on the Apply for Pin link.
2. Check application deadlines. The closer to January 1 of your senior year the better. If you don't have all your tax forms, estimate. You should be pretty accurate as to your information based on personal records.
3. Complete the FAFSA application after October 1 of your senior year, (REMEMBER TO SIGN WITH YOUR PIN FROM STEP 1) using your previous year's tax returns.
4. FAFSA will send you your Student Aid Report (SAR). Review, change if necessary, and then confirm the information.
5. Once confirmed, FAFSA will send your financial aid information to all the colleges that you listed on the form.
6. By late March, each individual college will then send you their financial aid "package". If that package does not work for you and you really want to attend that school, see your HS counselor to discuss possible options.

All student loans and college costs must be paid. So whether you finish one semester or graduate, loans need to be paid. So leaving school before earning your diploma does not exempt you from paying back owed money!

Be realistic—College is not free. According to Educationplanner.com, over 75% of college costs are covered by students and parents through income, savings, and borrowing.

CSS / Financial Aid Profile

The CSS Profile is a supplemental form for gathering personal financial information. The CSS Profile is typically used at private institutions with high cost. This form should only be filled out when required by a school that you apply. Students can submit online at: www.collegeboard.com. This site does have a fee, so only fill out if needed.



Regardless of income, whether \$0 or \$500,000 each student should complete the FAFSA form. FAFSA should be complete as close to January 1 of your senior year to qualify for the upcoming school year starting in the fall. You can apply at:

<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>

State grants and college specific grants, awards, and scholarships are generated from this information.

Make sure you complete financial aid forms each year you are in school! This is not a one and done form.. Students interested in financial aid need to renew their financial aid form each year. There is a separate renewal form.



Get an early idea of your EFC through:
www.FAFSA4caster.ed.gov



Scholarships



Although the conversation may be uncomfortable, **it is imperative for families to discuss college finances and responsibilities.** In making decisions on college, it is important for both students and parents to actively communicate who will take on which costs. In some situations students take on all costs, sometimes parents take on all costs, and others it is split in some way between both. This is extremely important with our current economic situation that this understanding is known. The potential financial responsibility could be an important factor in making a final college decision.

Best places to look for local scholarships

- Parents/relatives workplace
- Student employment (such as Dunkin Donuts or Target)
- Church or community service organizations
- Clubs or places of membership of both parent and student

Students are much more likely to receive a local scholarship than a national scholarship due to the intense competition on the national level.

Scholarship tips

- FOLLOW DEADLINES!
- **Do not pay** for a scholarship application. Talk to your counselor to make sure this is not a scam.
- Look at the scholarship search like a job. If you take four hours to complete applications and earn a \$100 scholarship, that is like \$25 an hour!
- Unfortunately, scholarships are not guaranteed despite all the time you may put into it.



National Scholarship searches

NAVIANCE—colleges tab, scholarship section at bottom of the page

Fastweb.com

Collegeboard.com

Gocollege.com

Petersons.com

Educationplanner.com

Meritaid.com

It is recommended to make a new email address for just scholarships/college (and make it sound professional, especially if use it for college contacts). Once signing up for national scholarship searches, you may receive a lot of emails and do not want your personal email to be overloaded with “business” email.....plus, scholarship important emails can easily get lost in your personal account, especially if you keep a lot of emails. Finally, once this process is over, you can easily delete the account without having unnecessary things get sent to your personal account.

Additional financial aid information can be found at:

<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>

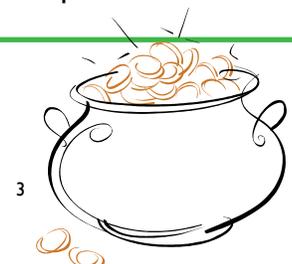
www.pheaa.org

www.collegeboard.com/students ('pay for college' link)

www.collegeboard.com/parents ('pay for college' link)

www.aessuccess.org (PA Loans)

www.finaid.org



College Interview

Some students that will be attending private or highly selective schools, may want to schedule an interview (or may be required to do so). Interviews are a way to interact with a school official or alumni so you can learn more about the school and for them to learn more about you. An interview is another piece of supporting information to go along with your transcript, extracurricular activities, essay, recommendation, etc. An interview can better help you and them determine if this school is the right fit for you.



SAMPLE QUESTIONS

(Be prepared to give more than a one word answer)

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What do you want out of a college?
3. What are your strengths and talents? Weaknesses? What areas would you like to improve?
4. Are there accomplishments you are proud of?
5. What do you like best and least about high school?
6. What will you contribute to our school community?
7. Which courses have challenged you the most and why?
8. What teacher has had the biggest influence on you?
9. What has been your most challenging leadership experience?
10. What has been your biggest disappointment in high school? How would you change it?
11. What is your favorite activity outside of school?
12. What activities do you plan to continue in college and why?
13. How would others describe you? Parents? Teachers? Friends?
14. Describe your community and volunteer experiences.
15. What do you think about (insert a current event or topic)?
16. If you could meet one person who would it be? Why? What would you do?
17. What questions do you have for me?

INTERVIEW SUGGESTIONS:

1. BE ON TIME!
2. Dress appropriately (business casual).
3. Be honest. Tell them the truth, not what you think they want to hear. Lies will come back to you.
4. Answer the question. Try not to go off on tangents.
5. Be confident, yet humble.
6. Go solo....don't have a parent sit in with you.
7. Ask questions.
8. Turn off your phone!!!
9. Don't chew gum.
10. Say thank you.

WHEN/WHY SHOULD YOU INTERVIEW

1. To learn more about a specific school or programs that they offer.
2. Explain something that may be a limitation in your transcript (ex. High number of absences, low grades in a specific year, etc.)
3. Show your personality since that is not conveyed in the transcript and test scores.
4. If offered, do not refuse. This will show disinterest in their school.

Interviews should be more of a discussion that goes back and forth rather than someone asking you a question and you answer. They are trying to learn more about you and want to do so through a conversation not Q & A.



College Planning Time Line

Senior Year

August/September

- meet with your counselor as soon as possible to discuss your current college status (**student must be registered in Naviance before meeting with counselor**)
- discuss/decide on early decision/early action strategy
- register for the ACT/SAT I (and/or SAT II) if necessary
- continue to discuss the cost of your education with parents
- visit colleges, if applicable, set up meeting with admissions and/or professors
- meet with admission reps that visit SAHS
- attend college fair at SAHS (date TBD)
- if applicable, visit colleges and set up interviews
- begin and complete admission applications
- be very attentive to application deadlines:
 - it is highly recommended to apply to rolling admission colleges no later than October 31
 - it is highly recommended to apply to specific deadline colleges no later than 1 month before deadline to ensure all materials are received by deadline date
- once applications are complete, request transcript through Naviance
- request teacher/counselor recommendation through Naviance, only if needed (**must complete student profile on Naviance for a recommendation**)
- complete and edit essays (teacher/counselor – proof read)
- make/update personal resume
- check on status of faculty recommendations
- finalize college choices (prefer 4- 8 schools) with parents

October

- take ACT/SAT I/SAT II
- complete applications/essays
- once applications are complete, request transcript through Naviance
- request teacher/counselor recommendations through Naviance if needed
- Complete FAFSA form (cannot be completed before October 1)
- continue contact with counselor and parents to update strategy/plans

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College Planning Time Line

Senior Year

(CONTINUED)

November

- take ACT/SAT I/II, if necessary
- ALL** college applications are strongly recommended to be submitted by Thanksgiving
- If applicable, access CSS Profile online to complete
- Search Naviance for scholarship opportunities

December

- Attend any applicable financial aid nights
- If applicable, access CSS Profile online to complete
- FAFSA – register for PIN number
- Keep parents and counselor informed regarding acceptance/rejection college letters

March/April/May

- Notify guidance with your college decisions (accepted, denied, waitlisted) when received
- Compare financial aid packages from each school you were accepted
- Discuss with your parents your college choice
- Send in deposit to final choice college no later than May 1
- Finish your senior year strong!

June

Graduation!!!