



## FOUR YEAR PLAN FOR COLLEGE

Believe it or not, you will begin to assemble the package that will constitute your College Application from the first day you step into 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Welcome to high school! Sonoran Schools is committed to preparing you appropriately for college and beyond; much of that preparation will emanate from the College Counseling Office, not only through 1:1 counseling, information assemblies, and meetings, but also through resources such as this College Planning Guide and our on-line program Family Connection by Naviance.

Sonoran Schools' students are regularly accepted to some of the most prestigious colleges in the United States, and frequently receive significant scholarships. We are committed to ensuring you have the resources and support to challenge yourself academically, grow emotionally and intellectually, and make well-informed decisions about the best college, funding, and career path for you.

### FRESHMAN YEAR

#### All Year Round

It is never too early to get started for College! Here is what high school freshmen need to be doing during 9<sup>th</sup> grade:

- Meet your high school guidance counselor and discuss your plans for the next four years.
- Build strong academic, language, mathematics and critical thinking skills by taking challenging courses.
- Study hard and get excellent grades.
- Strengthen your vocabulary by increasing your reading.
- Become involved in extra-curricular activities.
- Get familiar with your Family Connection account and start customizing your profile to help identify colleges and careers that might be a good fit for you.
- Check out what high school courses colleges require.
- Consider taking the PSAT in October. The PSAT is a preliminary test that will prepare you for the SAT Reasoning Test.
- Find out NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) requirements if you want to play sports in college.
- Keep an academic portfolio and extra-curricular record.
- Get involved in school trips to college campuses.
- Research career possibilities!

### SOPHOMORE YEAR

#### ALL YEAR

- Keep a record of your co-curricular involvement, volunteer work, and employment.
- Save your best work in academic courses and the arts for your academic portfolio.

#### FALL

Concentrate on academic preparation and continue to develop basic skills and extra-curricular interests.

#### September

- Take the PSAT in October. The PSAT is a preliminary test that will prepare you for the SAT Reasoning Test.
- If you plan on taking the ACT, talk to your guidance counselor about taking the PLAN this fall. The PLAN is a preliminary standardized test that will give you some preparation for the ACT. The PLAN does not have national testing dates, so ask your guidance counselor about test dates offered by your school.
- You need to register several weeks in advance for both the PLAN and the PSAT, so consult your guidance counselor early in September.

- Take NCAA-approved courses if you want to play sports in college.

### **October**

- Take the PSAT for practice. The results will not be used for college admission.
- Sign up, if you have not done so already, for extra-curricular activities that interest you. The level of involvement and accomplishment is more important than the number of activities.

### **November & December**

- Make sure you are "on top" of your academic work. If necessary, meet with your teacher(s) for additional help.
- Receive results of PLAN and/or the PSAT. Read materials sent with your score report. Consult your guidance counselor to explore ways to improve on future standardized tests and courses to discuss which may be required or beneficial for your post-high school plans.

### **WINTER**

#### **January - February**

- Keep studying!
- Volunteer-a great way to identify your interests and to develop skills.
- Utilize your Family Connection account to check out colleges and career options.

### **SPRING**

- Register for June SAT Subject Tests. These are one-hour exams testing you on academic subjects that you have already completed. Among the many to choose from are biology, chemistry, foreign languages and physics. Many colleges require or recommend one or more of the SAT Subject Tests for admission or placement. You can take SAT Subject Tests when you have successfully completed the corresponding course in high school study (B+ average or better). Talk to your teachers and counselor about which tests to take.
- See your guidance counselor for advice.
- Continue to research career options and consider possible college majors that will help you achieve your career goals. Plan now for wise use of your summer. Consider taking a summer course or participating in a special program (e.g., for prospective engineers or journalists or for those interested in theatre or music) at a local college or community college. Consider working or volunteering.
- Prepare for AP® Exams. Do well on AP Exams and receive credit or placement at most colleges.

### **SUMMER**

#### **June - August**

- Take the SAT Subject Tests that you registered for in April.
- If you work, save some of your earnings for college.
- During the summer, you may want to sign up for a PSAT/SAT prep course, use computer software, or do the practice tests in books designed to familiarize you with standardized tests.
- Make your summer productive. Continue reading to increase your vocabulary.

## **JUNIOR YEAR**

### **FALL**

- Prepare to take the PSAT/NMSQT® in October.
- Make lists of your abilities, preferences, and personal qualities. List things you may want to study and do in college.
- Utilize your Family Connection account to identify majors and careers that align with your life goals.
- Start Thinking about Financial Aid. Use a FAFSA estimator to understand how much you and your family can expect to contribute.
- Talk to your counselor about your college plans.

### **WINTER**

- Plan your spring testing schedule. Will you take the ACT and the SAT? You can take either the SAT Reasoning Test™ or up to three SAT Subject Tests™ on one test day. Plan your testing schedule carefully if you want to take both types of SAT®. Make sure you stay on top of testing dates and registration dates.
- Continue to explore and refine your list of colleges and majors in your Family Connection account.

## SPRING

- Prep for the standardized tests you have registered for.
- Prepare for AP® Exams. Do well on AP Exams and receive credit or placement at most colleges.
- Plan ahead for the summer and your senior year. Review your senior year class schedule with your counselor. Challenge yourself with honors and AP classes and stick with sequences you've begun, in the languages, for example. Plan summer activities early. Enrich yourself by volunteering, getting an interesting job or internship, or signing up for special summer learning programs.

## SUMMER

- Keep your momentum up. Visit colleges. Take campus tours and, at colleges you're serious about, schedule interviews with admissions counselors.
- Check important dates, such as early admissions or test dates cut-offs for.

### SUMMER PLANNING ACTIVITIES FOR COLLEGE BOUND SENIORS

Although summertime is a welcome break for most students from their high school education, it is a good time to make progress in planning for education beyond high school. During the summer before the senior year, there are several things students can do to help prepare for college applications in the fall. Listed below are some suggested activities related to college selection and the application process:

◆ Using resources, including your Family Connection account, to develop and expand your current list of schools to investigate. Summer is a good time to do the research you may not have found the time to do in the spring. Learn the competitive level of the different colleges, the entrance requirements and the difference between liberal arts and specialized majors.

◆ Try to visit colleges which are difficult to reach during the school year. Even though the regular students may not be present, you can still gain much information about the college environment that will help you make final selections about the schools to which you want to apply.

◆ Write letters or email to colleges in which you have an interest, requesting a catalog and any other desired information such as financial aid. Applications are usually available at the college website. Check to make sure it is a **current** application.

◆ Talk with older students who are home from colleges about which you want to learn more. They have great "first hand" knowledge to share.

◆ Review college entrance exam dates for the fall and mark them on a calendar with registration deadlines (Deadline for registration for the first exam is soon after school starts in September).

◆ If you haven't scored as well on previous entrance exams as you would like, consider using the summer for individual preparation or for an SAT/ACT review course.

◆ Consider summer sources of character references such as employers, activity group leaders, coaches, etc. Ask these people for a reference during the summer so they will have time to prepare it by the fall. You should also identify one or two teachers you might ask for a reference soon after the start of the school year.

◆ Begin a rough-draft list of activities and interests. You should include extra-curricular activities, honors and awards, volunteer or work experience, travel or special interests. This information will eventually be sent to colleges and is often asked about during interviews.

◆ Try writing drafts of the types of essay questions most commonly found on applications. It helps to begin thinking of how you might respond to questions concerning books, career goals, influential people in an applicant's life, special interests, achievements and events of particular importance.

## SENIOR YEAR

### FALL

- Narrow your list of colleges to between 5 and 10 and review it with your Guidance Counselor. Get an application and financial aid info from each.
- Make a master calendar and note:
  - *Test dates, fees, and deadlines*
  - *College application due dates*
  - *Required financial aid applications and their deadlines*
  - *Recommendations, transcripts, and other necessary materials*
  - *Your high school's deadlines for application requests, such as your transcript*
- Ask for recommendations. Make sure you give each person your resume, a stamped, addressed envelope (if the letter is to be mailed directly to the college), and any required forms.
- Write application essays and ask teachers, parents, and friends to read first drafts.
- Take the SAT and/or ACT if you have not taken it. Have your scores sent to colleges.
- Get Financial Aid info. Try to apply for different kinds of scholarships. Your Family Connection account is a great resource for scholarship opportunities. You never lose anything when you apply. But surely, you will not get/win anything if you don't.

### WINTER

- Most regular applications are due between January 1 and February 15. Keep copies of everything you send to colleges.
- Get your transcripts and send them to colleges.
- Contact colleges to make sure they've received all application materials.
- You and your family should save this year's pay stubs to estimate income on aid forms that you'll file early next year.
- Submit your FAFSA as soon after January 1 as possible. Men 18 or older must register for selective service to be eligible to receive federal financial aid.
- Many priority financial aid deadlines occur in December and January. To get the most attractive award package, apply by the priority date. Keep copies of everything you send.

### SPRING

- You should get acceptance letters and financial aid offers by mid-April.
- When decisions are made, make sure to compare awards (if any) from different colleges. Questions? Talk to financial aid officers. Not enough aid? Ask if other financing plans are available.
- If you haven't already, visit your final college before accepting.
- You must tell every college of your acceptance or rejection of offers of admission or financial aid by May 1. Send a deposit to the college you choose.
- Wait-listed? If you will enroll if accepted, tell the admissions director your intent and ask how to strengthen your application. Need financial aid? Ask if funds will be available if you're accepted.

### SUMMER

- Ask us to send a final transcript to your college.
- Start preparing for the year ahead!