

Senior Year Planner

August-September

- Stay focused on maintaining and increasing your GPA.
- Review your career plans and start to determine which type of postsecondary education is best for you.
- Meet with your counselor for your Senior Conference. Review high school records, including graduation requirements. Make sure you are taking the classes you need for the schools of choice. Talk with your counselor about your academic progress.
- Continue to take challenging courses during your senior year. Rigor is a consideration in college admissions.
- Prepare to take the ASVAB with your senior class at the high school. This will allow you to engage in career exploration through the Occu-Find program. Additionally, these scores can be used, if the student releases the results, to determine potential careers within the armed services.
- Narrow your list of colleges and/or trade and vocational schools to between three and eight. Meet with a counselor about your choices and, if you haven't done so yet, determine if the schools that interest you have online admission applications. Download applications and financial aid forms or request them by mail now.
- Begin completing early admission college applications. If required with the college application, begin writing drafts of your college application essays. Plan on completing at least three college application by November 1st.
- Ask employers, teachers, and guidance counselors for letters of recommendation to accompany your admissions applications, if required.
- Plan to visit as many of these colleges as possible. Look at virtual tours of college campuses online.
- Create separate folders for each of the schools that interest you and keep the materials organized.
- Meet with school representatives who visit your high school, and attend college planning and/or financial aid information nights and college fairs.
- Set up your FSA ID (and your parent will need one, too) and start gathering information so you can complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as early as October 1.

- Create a master list or calendar that includes:
 - Tests you still need to take and their fees, dates, and registration deadlines
 - College application due dates
 - Required financial aid application forms and their deadlines
 - Other materials you'll need (recommendations, transcripts, etc.)
- Take the SAT or ACT one more time. Many seniors retake these tests in the fall. Additional course work since your last test could help you boost your performance. Plus you already know what to expect on test day. Ask a counselor to help you request a fee waiver if applicable.
- Be sure to have your SAT and/or ACT scores sent to directly to the schools to which you are applying.
- Students applying to a U.S. military academy should follow through on necessary requirements.
- Athletes should review the NCAA Guide Student Athletes and file with the NCAA Clearinghouse.

October

- Register to take spring dual credit classes at Rock Valley College. Applications are in the counseling office.
- Turn in early the graduation form to the counseling office. (If applicable)
- Continue working on your admissions essays.
- Attend college planning and/or financial aid information nights, college fairs, and college and trade/vocational school open houses. Visit your top school choices. If possible, make appointments with faculty, staff, and students.
- If you haven't already done so, sign up for an FSA ID, to complete your FAFSA online. (Also let your parents know that they will need an FSA ID.) Make sure to protect your FSA ID and keep it in a secure place so that you will have it later when you need it. Keep copies of all financial aid and enrollment documents in a file.
- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). To apply for most financial aid, you'll need to complete the FAFSA. Oct. 1 is the first day you can file the FAFSA (fafsa.gov). Funds in IL are awarded until they are depleted on a "first come, first served" basis.
- Contact the U.S. Department of Education at 1-800-4FED-AID or 1-800-433-3243 for assistance completing the FAFSA and/or plan to attend a FAFSA preparation event (free FAFSA advice) near you.

- Contact the college and/or trade and vocational schools' financial aid offices to determine which forms they require. Some schools may require special forms. You may need to complete the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE®. This is an online application used by certain colleges and scholarship programs to determine eligibility for their aid dollars.
- Watch for the e-mail notice indicating your Student Aid Report (SAR) is ready. Review your SAR for errors and make any corrections as indicated.
- Start submitting college applications. Prepare early decision/early action or rolling admission applications as soon as possible. Some colleges may require test scores and applications between Nov. 1 and Nov. 15 for early decision admission and merit scholarship consideration.
- Ask a counselor or teacher for recommendations, if you need them. Give each teacher or counselor an outline of your academic record and your extracurricular activities. For each recommendation, provide a stamped, addressed envelope and any forms required.
- Revise your college application essays and ask teachers and others to read them if you're submitting essays. If you're applying for early decision, finish the essays for that application now.
- Finalize portfolios, audition tapes, writing samples, or other evidence of talent, if required for admission.
- Finish sending your applications and essays, and keep copies of everything.

- Complete the transcript request form at the counseling office to send your transcripts to colleges. An official school transcript is sent separately by mail from the high school to post-secondary institutions.

November

- Continue completing admissions applications by their deadlines.
- Complete the transcript request form at the counseling office to send your transcripts to additional schools.
- If necessary, register to retake the SAT and/or ACT.
- If you have not already completed the FAFSA, attend a FAFSA preparation event.
- If it has been a few weeks since you completed your FAFSA and you have not received your Student Aid Report (SAR), call 1-800-4-FED-AID. If you have received your SAR, review it for errors and make any corrections.

- Complete applications for every scholarship for which you may be eligible.
- Follow up to ensure your employers, teachers, and guidance counselors send letters of recommendation.

December

- Complete all SAT and/or ACT testing.
- Verify that all schools have received your test scores.
- Finalize any remaining admission applications.
- Continue to research and apply for other financial aid, including grants and scholarships. The Community Foundation of Northern Illinois will have a scholarship fair this month.
- Watch for acceptance letters if you applied to colleges during the early decision time frame.
- Research deadlines at the college you plan to attend, such as for housing applications, school-specific financial aid applications and deadlines.

January

- Do not let senioritis get a grip on you this semester, finish strong on your last semester of high school. Some will take an offer of admission due to poor grades in the final semesters.
- If you are waitlisted, the college will want to know what you have accomplished between the time you applied and the time you learned of its decision. If you intend to enroll if you are accepted, tell the admission director your intent and ask how to strengthen your application. Ask whether scholarship or grant funds will be available if you're accepted.
- Visit your final school choices before accepting. You should receive acceptance letters and financial aid offers by mid-April. Notify your counselor of your choice. If you have questions about housing offers, call the college.
- Inform every college of your acceptance or rejection of the offer of admission and/or financial aid.
- Keep a watch out for scholarship applications and make notes of the deadlines. Getting an early start completing them. The Community Foundation of Northern Illinois scholarships application is due February 1st.
- Review your financial aid awards. Not all financial aid awards are the same, so it's important to choose the aid package that's best for you and your family. Be sure to note what you have to do to continue receiving financial aid from year to year, and how your aid might change in future years.

February

- If considering job training through military service, take the ASVAB again. The portion known as the AFQT determines if one has met the minimum requirements for enlistment. The sub-scores of the AFQT are used to measure your knowledge and aptitude in various occupational areas and qualify you for jobs within the armed forces.
- If considering an apprenticeship, attend apprentice training open houses.
- Apply to community colleges. Take advantage of priority registration by applying early.
- Research if you are ready to take a College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams. Sign up for one if you are prepared.
- Rank your top school choices.
- Research local scholarships at the high school and apply as applications are available.
- Send thank you notes to teachers and counselor for recommendations.
- Check for emails from colleges.
- If you were admitted and accepted somewhere by early decision, you must withdraw all other applications

March

- Check with the financial aid offices to ensure your paperwork is complete.
- Narrow your school choices and make those final campus visits.
- Be on the lookout for acceptance letters.
- Start looking for summer jobs.
- Complete any remaining student service hours.

April

- Review Financial Aid packages and financial aid award letters received (usually between April 1 and May 1) and compare your choices.
- Update FAFSA once your tax returns are complete.
- Make your final school decision and mail deposits, as required.
- Check with the school you've chosen about returning financial aid award letters.
- Plan for registration, orientation, and housing, and mark your calendar with important dates. Check for any other deadlines (e.g. housing, scholarships)—some deadlines will be in early May.
- Send Intent to Register, and then notify the schools you have chosen not to attend. The Deadline for Intent to Register is usually May 1.

- Notify your high school's College and Career Center of your school selection and any scholarships received.

May

- Take the Advanced Placement Exam(s) from College Board.
- Be aware of any summer orientation sessions that you must attend at the school in which you will enroll, and make plans accordingly.
- Finalize your summer job plans, and make a plan for saving a portion of your summer earnings.
- Prepare a realistic student budget.
- Complete and submit final transcript request form at graduation practice.
- Request college transcripts for any dual credit courses you took in high school from the college institution (a copy for you and a copy for the college you plan to attend).
- Send deposit for housing.
- Complete enrollment paperwork for your selected college.

June

- Plan for college transportation.
- Follow up with the financial aid office to ensure all paperwork is complete.
- Attend or register to attend college orientation.
- Make sure thank you notes for graduation gifts are written.
- Work with your parents or guardians on things that you need to know how to do, or how to do better, while at college, like doing laundry, taking care of your car, and balancing your bank account.

July

- Save money from your summer job.
- Send "thank you notes" to everyone who helped you plan and prepare for college, starting with your parents.
- Make copies of your financial aid forms, health forms, etc. for your files to aid in resolving future issues.
- Register for the fall semester.
- Prepare a contact list with addresses of friends and family members and make labels with your new address, some for you and some to share with others.
- Prepare for the new adventures that await you in the future! Congratulations! It's time to begin the new chapter in your life.