



College Bound

Application Checklist & Timeline

2008-2009

Dear SMART Alum and Family,

The college selection, application and financial aid process is very lengthy and could be confusing. To help make this process easier, we have designed the SMART College Preparation Program to assist students and their families. Enclosed here is a college application timeline and checklist. It tells you what to do each month from here until next September when you start college to make sure everything is completed.

SMART will be hosting three informational workshops for students and families that will focus on various aspects of the college application process:

#1 – College Preparation Workshop

Tuesday, November 4

4:00 – 7:00pm at the SMART office

RSVP by Monday, November 3. Phone 415 - 865-5400

We will discuss:

- How to choose a college that's right for you
- Everything you need to do to complete the college application process
- How to finance a college degree

#2 – College Essay Writing Workshop

Saturday, November 8

1:00 – 4:00pm at the SMART Office

RSVP by Thursday, November 6. Phone 415-865-5400

- Students should bring a draft essay with them
- Students will work individually with a staff or volunteer to edit and review their essay
- We will discuss strategies on how to write a stronger personal essay

#3 – College Preparation + College Essay Writing Workshop

Saturday, November 15

10:00am – 3:00pm at the SMART Office.

RSVP by Thursday, November 13. Phone 415-865-5400

In addition, we are available to meet individually with students throughout the year by appointment. We are here to help you succeed!

We hope you find this information helpful. Always feel free to contact the office if you have any questions.

***Items printed in red are for financial aid and scholarships**

OCTOBER

7 items

1. Make arrangements to meet one-on-one with your high school counselor.
2. Ask your counselor, teachers, coaches or employers for letters of recommendation. Provide them with stamped and addressed envelopes to send directly to the "Office of Admissions" to the colleges you are applying to. ** Some colleges have their own recommendation forms available with the application.
3. Continue researching the colleges and programs that you will apply to.
4. Some colleges require early submission of "regular decision" applications for priority consideration for merit- or need-based scholarships. This means that your admission and financial aid applications might be due in the winter in order to qualify for some types of scholarships. Find out if your colleges have institutional scholarship deadlines by visiting their websites or reviewing their literature or call their admissions office.
5. Ask your counselor for information on state and local scholarships. Many of these programs require the FAFSA, the PROFILE[®], or both. Make sure these forms are submitted to all scholarship programs that require them.
6. CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE Online is available beginning October 1 for early decision and early action applicants who are applying for financial aid. You can search the PROFILE website to see which institutions require the PROFILE and to research their priority filing dates.
7. Male students who will be 18 at the time they complete the FAFSA are required to register with Selective Service to be eligible for federal and state aid. Students can register for Selective Service at the post office or through the FAFSA form. Call Selective Service toll-free at (888) 655-1825 for more information.

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NOVEMBER

8 items

1. Register for the SAT Test by November 5! The actual test day is December 5, 2008. The cost of the SAT is \$45, but a fee waiver is available through your high school counselor if your income is below a certain amount. Only your high school counselor could provide you with a fee waiver, so plan to meet with them before November 5!
2. Work hard at completing your college essays. Proofread them rigorously for mistakes. ** Attend SMART's Essay Writing Workshop on November 8 from 1:00-4:00pm, or, November 15 from 1:00-3:00pm.
3. Follow up with your teachers to ensure that letters of recommendation are sent on time to meet your deadlines.
4. Mail applications as early as possible for colleges with rolling deadlines (admission decisions are made as applications are received).
5. Finalize the list of colleges you will apply to. You should apply to 5-10 different schools. Consider choosing 1 "safety school", a college that you feel very confident that you will be accepted to, and 1 "dream school", a college that you would love to imagine enrolling in!
6. Apply for scholarships in time to meet application deadlines.
7. You and your parents should request a Department of Education PIN number. The PIN serves as an electronic signature for FAFSA on the Web and significantly reduces processing time.
8. If you're applying for regular decision admissions and for financial aid it is not too early to submit the PROFILE application. Visit PROFILE Online to learn more about the PROFILE service and how to submit the application online. Remember, unlike the FAFSA, you do not need to wait until after January 1 to submit PROFILE

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DECEMBER

6 items

1. Take SAT test on December 6. Make sure your official score is sent to each one of your colleges.
2. Apply for scholarships in time to meet application deadlines.
3. Get a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) from the guidance office before winter vacation begins.
4. If you are planning to submit FAFSA online (highly recommended), you should visit FAFSA on the Web and familiarize yourself with the website's content and features.
5. Start gathering identity and financial documents necessary to complete FAFSA. Visit FAFSA on the Web for a list of required documents.
6. Try to wrap up college applications before winter break. Make copies of each application before you send it.

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JANUARY

7 items

1. Some colleges include your first-semester grades as part of your application. This is called the mid-year grade report. Have your counselor send your grades to colleges that require them.
2. Income and asset figures from your tax return are needed to complete the FAFSA, so it's a good idea for you and your parents to prepare returns as early as possible this year. However, it is not necessary to submit your tax return to the IRS before submitting the FAFSA.
3. If a college requires the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE, start filling out the application as soon as possible to meet February priority deadlines. PROFILE filers who complete the application after January 5 can print out a FAFSA worksheet, which provides answers to most of the FAFSA questions.
4. Sign and submit the FAFSA as soon as possible, but after January 1. Applying early improves the chances of receiving aid from as many sources as possible.
5. If you are submitting FAFSA online you might find it helpful to complete the Pre-Application worksheet, available on FAFSA on the Web. This worksheet is designed to help a family organize its financial information for the online version of FAFSA and should NOT be submitted to federal processors.
6. Don't forget to complete the institutional financial aid application for each college.
7. If you're applying to one or more colleges or scholarship programs that participate in the IDOC service, you may be asked to send tax returns and other documents to the IDOC customer service address. IDOC:
 - Is free to students
 - Streamlines the financial aid application process
 - Reduces costs to families for copying and mailing required form

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FEBRUARY

6 items

1. Contact your colleges and confirm that all necessary application materials have been received.
2. Don't get senioritis! Colleges want to see strong second half grades.
3. February is Financial Aid Awareness Month. Participate in activities, such as financial aid information nights, scheduled by your high school or local colleges. These activities will offer you the opportunity to learn more about how financial aid eligibility is determined.
4. Most priority deadlines for CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE fall in early to middle February. Make sure the application is received in time to meet these deadlines.
5. Priority financial aid deadlines tend to fall in February. Applications received by the priority deadline are given the highest consideration.
6. The Student Aid Report (SAR) should arrive anywhere from two to four weeks after the FAFSA is submitted. The Expected Family Contribution (EFC) figure is printed on the front page at the upper right. If the SAR has not been received four weeks after submitting the FAFSA, call (800) 4-FED-AID or (800) 433-3243/ TTY (800) 730-8913. If there are any errors on the SAR, make corrections and mail it back immediately.

If you provided a valid email address on the FAFSA, you will be sent a link to an electronic version of the SAR. Make corrections to the SAR online at FAFSA on the Web.

MARCH

3 items

Some admissions decisions arrive this month. Read everything you receive carefully, as some of it may require action on your part.

1. Your FAFSA may be chosen for a routine process known as "verification," in which the information reported on the FAFSA is checked against copies of signed tax returns. An asterisk next to the EFC figure on your SAR means your application has been selected for verification. If selected for verification, be sure to submit all requested documentation to the financial aid office in a timely fashion.
2. Some admissions decisions and financial aid award letters arrive this month.
3. Start looking for summer jobs or internships.

APRIL

7 items

1. Most admissions decisions and financial aid award letters arrive this month. Read everything you receive carefully, as some of it may require action on your part.
2. Make a final decision, and mail the enrollment form and deposit check to the school you select before May 1 (the enrollment deadline for most schools).
3. Notify each of the schools to which you were accepted that you will not be attending in writing so that your spot can be freed up for another student.
4. On the waiting list? Contact the admissions office and let them know of your continued interest in the college and update them on your spring semester grades and activities.
5. Admissions decisions and financial aid award letters arrive this month. Read aid award letters carefully and be sure to meet deadlines for accepting awards.
6. If full need has not been met, or if your family's financial circumstances have changed, consider appealing the aid award.
7. Make a final decision and mail the enrollment form and deposit check to your final-choice college before May 1, the reply deadline for most colleges.

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MAY

5 items

1. AP Exams are administered. Make sure your AP Grade Report is sent to your college.
2. Study hard for final exams. Most admission offers are contingent on your final grades.
3. Thank your counselor, teachers, coaches, and anyone else who wrote you recommendations or otherwise helped with your college applications.
4. If it will be difficult for your family to pay the Expected Family Contribution for the semester, it's time to start pursuing alternatives such as parent loans or private loans to close the financial aid gap.
5. If student loans are part of your financial aid package, the college will send instructions about the loan application process. You will need to complete and sign a form called the Master Promissory Note (MPN) in order to receive Stafford or Direct Loan funds.

JUNE

1 item

1. Have your counselor send your final transcript to your college choice – very important!

** If you plan on competing in Division I or Division II college sports, have your counselor send your final transcript to the NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse.

SUMMER

6 items

1. Make travel plans for getting to college and for winter holiday breaks. Book early for the best prices.

2. Finalize your housing plans.

3. Shop for items you will need in college.

4. Make sure to sign up for first-year orientation.

5. The fall semester bill will arrive over the summer. Be sure to return it with proper payment as quickly as possible.

6. If all forms have been completed correctly and all deadlines have been met, financial aid funds should be credited to your student account before the beginning of the semester.

SEPTEMBER OF COLLEGE

3 items

1. Federal requirements state that Stafford Loan recipients must complete loan counseling (or an "entrance interview") before loan funds are disbursed. This is to ensure that the recipient understands all loan obligations. The college's financial aid office will provide you with information about the counseling process—in most cases, you must simply complete a brief online questionnaire.
2. If you have been awarded a Perkins Loan you must sign a promissory note.
3. If you've been awarded a work-study position, you will be placed in a student job.

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