



## MY CHILD IS IN HIGH SCHOOL, SO NOW WHAT? Understanding the College Application Pathway

*By Lainie Leber of College Lane Consulting*

The path to college admissions can seem complex. By knowing what to do and when, you will create manageable steps. Arming yourself with a loose timeline will help you be both proactive and calm as you reach your child's goals.

### Freshman and Sophomore Years

- These years should be dedicated to academics, extracurricular activities and maximizing summers.
- Have your child select rigorous coursework and try to take as many AP courses as possible.
- Form a relationship with a guidance counselor or an academic consultant. You should meet twice a year to create a long-term coursework plan.
- Your child should be immersed in activities that are meaningful, exhibit their talents and allow them to explore their interests. Use this time to identify their passions and work towards taking leadership roles in those activities.
- Sophomore year they take the PSAT and it will be their first exposure to such a test. Use the results as a tool to understand your child's strengths and weaknesses.
- To capitalize on their summer breaks; identify academic programs, community service, or travel opportunities that speak to their interests.

### Junior Year

- Your child should regularly engage in test preparation through a course or with a tutor. This is the year when they take the SAT, ACT and Subject Tests. It is important to note that the family must register for the exams. It is not the school's responsibility.
- As your child's rigorous coursework continues, be sure that they maintain or improve their grades.
- Focus their extra-curricular activities to their passions and ensure they take on leadership roles.
- To learn more about schools and form a college list: take college tours, attend college fairs and explore college websites. Utilize the school guidance counselor or a college consultant to guide you as you explore your options.

### **Summer following Junior Year**

- Finalize your list of 8-12 colleges which includes safety, target, and reach schools. Utilize this time to find schools that will be a great fit both academically and socially for your child.
- Set up the online college applications and begin filling them out with personal data.
- Create a detailed spreadsheet or calendar with application deadlines, requirements and details.
- Have your child create a resume to highlight their experiences and interests.
- Your child should craft their personal essay statement and other essay supplements. These essays need to capture your child's uniqueness and convey their message clearly.

### **Senior Year, Fall Semester**

- Know the deadlines; early decision applications are due in November while regular admissions are generally due in December.
- If your child is retaking the SAT / ACT you will need to register for the exam(s).
- Help your child strategize who will write their letters of recommendation. Make sure the educators/community leaders have ample amount of time to fulfill the request.
- Complete the college applications forms. Compile and attach all necessary documents as well.
- Have someone proof-read the applications before submitting.
- Contact the admissions office of each college you applied to and arrange for interviews.
- Work with a consultant or your school to sharpen your child's interviewing skills.
- Your child should follow up each interview and/or school tour with a thank you note.
- Submit completed applications and send in all additional documents including test scores, transcripts and letters of recommendation.
- Research financial aid packages.

### **Senior Year, Spring Semester**

- Colleges will start to send you their decisions. Online you can let the universities know whether your child will be accepting or declining their offer.
- Most schools want a deposit by May 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Have your child's final transcripts sent to their college.

The above is meant to be a guide. As with anything, some people do things earlier and some later. The most important thing is to support your child in finding their passion and to generate a list of schools that is right school for them. Every school on their list, safety to reach, should be a great fit. This way, they will always reach their fullest potential.



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