



## Winter Quarterly Update

### For 2020-2021 Sophomores

**College Prep Priorities for Sophomores.** With COVID conditions changing so much of our current school experience, preparing for college right now may feel impractical. However, the most basic things have not changed! The two most important things sophomores can do to prepare for college are to (1) maintain strong academic performance with a challenging curriculum and (2) continue developing one or more extra-curricular activities that demonstrate growth in and commitment to an interest, organization or cause over the next two years. Read on!

#### Making School Count

- **Choose your courses for 2021-2022!** Counselors will be sending information soon with details about how to plan and register for next year's classes, but it's not too soon to review and update your 4-year plan. The [RSD curriculum planning website](#) offers links to the [RSD High School Course Catalog](#), with descriptions of all high school classes, and the district's **4-Year Planning Tool**, which provides curriculum guidelines based on your college and career track (you'll need a user login to use the 4-Year Planning Tool). Remember that colleges look for students who have taken advantage of some of the most academically challenging courses their high schools offer.
- **Do's and Don'ts of choosing classes.** Your grades and the strength of your curriculum matter when it comes to college admissions. Find out why course selection is important and learn [how to create a rigorous but balanced schedule](#).
- **Consider AP courses.** Advanced Placement classes offer an important opportunity for students to challenge themselves, improve college admissions chances, earn college credits, win scholarships, and arrive at college better prepared. Learn more about [why students should take an AP class](#) and check out this [complete list of AP courses and tests](#), including data on course popularity and passing rates. (Note that your high school may not offer all of these courses.) Read this blog for guidance on [how to choose your AP courses](#).
- **Explore dual enrollment.** Dual enrollment is a program in which students can earn college credit by taking college-level classes in high school in partnership with a local or regional university. Learn more about the [requirements and benefits of dual enrollment](#) and talk to your counselor if you are interested.
- **Other ways to gain college credits in high school.** The [Running Start program](#) offers eligible high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to enroll in college classes at [Columbia Basin College](#) or [WSU Tri-Cities](#) and receive both high school and college credit.
- **Athletes who intend to play college sports.** NCAA requires [core high school courses for college athletes](#) – check out the requirements and talk to your counselor if you have any questions about your projected eligibility.
- **Prepare for National Honor Society (NHS) membership.** NHS recognizes juniors and seniors who have demonstrated excellence in scholarship, leadership, service, and character. Gaining membership in NHS is a great way to build your credentials for college. Membership also offers access to college planning resources at the national level. [Learn about NHS membership](#) and begin preparing for your fall application as a junior.

## SOPHOMORES - HANFORD HIGH SCHOOL

### Looking Ahead to College

- **Create a college admissions test plan.** It's useful to have a testing plan well before you head into testing season (usually, spring of your junior year). This is particularly important for students who are pursuing a challenging course load and who have substantial extracurricular commitments. Learn more [about college admissions tests here](#) and review this [SAT and ACT Planning Strategy](#) for tips on how to create your test prep plan.

### Careers & Majors

- **Look up an interesting college major.** Read up on a college major that sounds interesting and see which high school classes can help you prepare for that major. Use this tool to [browse interests, majors and careers](#).

### Finding Colleges for You

- **List what matters to you in a college.** Identifying your learning and living preferences for college — for example, college location, size, and available majors— helps keep your search focused on what you want and need in a college. This video and related article discuss [what's key to finding a college that fits](#).
- **Visit two college websites.** See what life is like at different colleges. Check out everything from course descriptions to campus sports, art events or the dining hall special of the day. [Here are 10 ways to learn about colleges online](#), including taking virtual tours, exploring dining options, and reading the campus newsletter.

### Applying to College

- **Get the facts about getting into college.** College admission doesn't have to be a big mystery nor is it necessarily daunting. Learn [5 things you should know about getting in](#).

### Paying for College

- **Get the facts about paying for college.** Learn the basics about financial aid so you and your family can get the most money for college. Here are [15 facts about financial aid eligibility you should know](#).
- **Maximize your financial aid.** While dated, this article discusses what high school students and parents can do to [maximize your financial aid for college](#).
- **Find out why college may cost less than you think.** Most students don't pay the full tuition price that colleges publish (the "sticker price"). With financial aid offered through the college, the actual cost (or net price) is usually less. Learn about [net price vs. sticker price](#).

### Mark Your Calendar!

- **Updated 2021 AP Testing Schedule.** The College Board has updated its [2021 AP testing schedule](#) to allow more options for its administration, including more test dates (May 3-17, May 18-28 and June 1-11). Check with your AP teacher(s) to learn what schedule your high school is following.



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