



RICHLAND HIGH SCHOOL

SENIOR PACKET

2023-2024

Courtesy of the RHS Career & College Center, room 1223

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Senior Timeline

September

- Create a new, professional email address to use for ALL college-related communication (applications, tests, FAFSA, etc.) and commit to check this email address often.
- Register for the SAT and/or ACT if you haven't taken one yet or want to improve your scores. Many schools are test-optional, so check with the colleges you're interested and see what they require. Even if the SAT or ACT is NOT required for admission, it may be required for scholarship eligibility.
- Review the college and trade school applications and gather the information you will need.
- Keep a folder or binder with all of your passwords, logins, scholarships you've applied to, applications, etc. [Check out this spreadsheet to help you manage everything online!](#) You want this information easily accessible!
- Take every opportunity to learn more about your post-high school options. Get to know colleges, trade schools, military options, employers, etc. Visit campuses and talk to admissions representatives & students who attend. Don't be afraid to ask questions!
- Narrow down your list of colleges/programs to "safe," "realistic," and "reach" schools.
- Create your FAFSA ID (FSA ID) at <http://studentaid.gov/fsa-id> at least a few days before you plan to file the FAFSA. Write down your FSA ID Number on your google reference sheet.
- Create a checklist of ([use this spreadsheet!](#)):
 - Test dates, registration deadlines, and feed
 - College application due dates
 - Financial aid application forms and deadlines
 - Other materials you'll need for college applications (recommendations, transcripts, essays, etc.)

October

- Well before application deadlines, ask teachers, registrars, and counselors to submit transcripts and letters of recommendation.
- [Complete the Senior Summary for a letter of recommendation.](#) Make copies of this document and share it with those who are writing your letters of recommendation.
- Fill out the FAFSA, which opens December 2023. You will need the FSA ID you created earlier!
- Check your deadlines and make sure you are on track (application deadlines, scholarship deadlines, etc.)
- Talk with your counselor if you need an application fee waiver.
- Finalize your college essays, personal statements, and resume. Visit the Career & College Center if you'd like them reviewed.
- Research scholarship opportunities, and make sure to review the [scholarships on our website](#). Never pay for scholarship information!

November

- Finalize and send any early decision or early action applications that are due this month. Have a parent, teacher, counselor, or other adult review the application before it's submitted.
- Make sure you request your transcripts in advance from Parchment. [Click here](#) and make sure to select the correct Richland High School (there are several).
- Make sure your SAT and/or ACT scores have been sent to the schools of your choice.
- After finishing applications, continue to apply for scholarships. Deadlines continue into April or May.

December

- The [FAFSA](#) and [WASFA](#) are open to complete for financial aid assistance.
- Questions about financial aid? [Set up an appointment with Colleen Hall.](#)
- Begin to organize your regular decision applications and financial aid forms, which will be due in January or February (check the college websites for deadlines).
- Follow-up on your requested letters of recommendation. Don't expect people to write them over Winter Break.
- [Continue to check the scholarship page weekly.](#)

January

- Keep track and observe deadlines for sending in all required fees and paperwork. Make sure you are meeting all your deadlines.
- Send 1st semester transcripts to the schools where you've applied. [Use Parchment to make your transcript request.](#)
- Review your Student Aid Report (SAR) by logging in to your FAFSA and make sure all the information is correct.
- [Continue to check the scholarship page weekly.](#)

February/March/April

- While most of your applications will be complete and you are waiting to receive admissions decisions, don't slack in the classroom! The college you decide to attend will want to see your 2nd semester transcript. **NO SENIORITIS!!!**
- Continue to research and apply for scholarships. [Check the scholarship page weekly.](#)

May

- May 1st is usually the date when the college you decide to attend requires a commitment and deposit. When you've made your college decision, notify your counselor and colleges. Send in your deposit by the postmark date of May 1. If you've been offered financial aid, accept the offer and follow the instructions given.
- Once you've confirmed your decision at your selected college, notify the other colleges that you will not be attending.
- [Make sure you have requested through Parchment your final transcript](#) to be sent to the school you will be attending.
- If you are "wait-listed" by a college you really want to attend, reach out to them. Visit, call, or write the admissions office to make your interest clear. Ask how you can strengthen your application.
- Sign-up for your college's orientation programs!

June

- Finish strong!!
- Find a summer job to work and save money for college!
- Enjoy your summer and stay sharp for any post high school plans come Fall!

SAT vs ACT Information

	SAT	ACT
Why take it	Some colleges use SAT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships.	Some colleges use the ACT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships.
Test Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Writing & Language • Math • Essay (Optional) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English • Math • Reading • Science Reasoning • Essay (optional)
Length	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 hours (without essay) • 3 hours, 50 minutes (with essay) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 hours, 55 minutes (without essay) • 3 hours, 40 minutes (with essay)
Reading	5 reading passages	4 reading passages
Science	None	1 science section testing your critical thinking skills (not your specific scientific knowledge)
Math	Covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arithmetic • Algebra I & II • Geometry, Trigonometry, and Data Analysis 	Covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arithmetic • Algebra I & II • Geometry & Trigonometry
Calculator Policy	Some math questions don't allow you to use a calculator.	You can use a calculator on all math questions.
Essays	Optional. The essay will test your comprehension of a source text.	Optional. The essay will test how well you evaluate and analyze complex issues.
How It's Scored	Scored on a scale of 400-1600	Scored on a scale of 1-36

Richland High School CEEB code is 481000

SAT Information

SAT Dates 2023-2024

Test Dates	Regular Registration	Late Registration
August 26, 2023	July 28, 2023	August 15, 2023
October 7, 2023	September 7, 2023	September 26, 2023
November 4, 2023	October 5, 2023	October 24, 2023
December 2, 2023	November 2, 2023	November 21, 2023

Test Fee:

SAT	\$60
Late Fee	\$30

Registration Information:

[Click here to register for the SAT.](#)

- You must have a valid credit card to register online. If you need a fee waiver, talk with your counselor.

Students should have their scores sent to their TOP 4 colleges & universities when registering for the SAT. It's free to send scores to colleges this way. It will cost you money to send your scores after you've taken the test.

ACT Information

ACT Dates 2023-2024

Test Dates	Regular Registration	Late Registration
September 9, 2023	August 4, 2023	August 18, 2023
October 28, 2023	September 22, 2023	October 6, 2023
December 9, 2023	November 3, 2023	November 17, 2023
February 10, 2023	January 5, 2023	January 19, 2023

Test Fee:

ACT (no writing)	\$66
ACT (with writing)	\$91
Late Fee	\$36

Registration Information:

[Click here to register for the ACT.](#)

- You must have a valid credit card to register online. If you need a fee waiver, talk with your counselor.
- You must also upload a photo ID online. The deadline is one week after the last day of the late registration to get it uploaded.

Students should have their scores sent to their TOP 4 colleges & universities when registering for the SAT. It's free to send scores to colleges this way. It will cost you money to send your scores after you've taken the test.

Choosing the Right College

Choosing the right college can feel difficult, but it doesn't have to be. Here are a few things to consider that will help make your choice easier.

Location:

Climate and distance from home can be huge considerations, but we urge you to think more broadly. For instance, colleges seeking geographic diversity may give an out-of-state student a competitive edge in the admission and financial aid process. [Click here to learn more about the Western Undergraduate Exchange \(WUE\)](#). It is America's largest regional interstate tuition savings program.

Size:

There are pros and cons for both small and large colleges. It's important to consider what environment will help you be most successful. Some factors to consider are small vs large classes, athletics & clubs, student support resources (tutors, etc.), multicultural resources, etc. Ask yourself if you will feel overwhelmed or challenged by a large university atmosphere. Or would a small school make you feel claustrophobic or supported?

Academic Offerings:

Many students look for big-name schools without knowing their personal academic strengths. We suggest that you use websites like <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org> or <https://www.cappex.com> to help you understand the academic profiles of different colleges and universities. In addition, think about what it is you want to study and how a school aligns. Use the Career Planner in your 4-year planning tool to help give insight into your interests and skills.

Character:

Ultimately, a school has to feel right to YOU – not your family, your best friend, your counselor, or the neighbor down the street. What atmosphere best suits you? Intellectual? Preppy? Nonconformist? Religious? Are clubs important? Athletics? Are you interested in the Greek system? College visits should happen this summer and into the fall. Some schools even offer scholarships for registering and attending a college visit day!

Cost:

In researching different colleges or programs, be sure to note the different scholarships and types of aid schools can offer. Don't overlook private schools entirely because they often provide robust financial packages. You need to complete your WASFA or FAFSA to receive a financial aid package. The amount of aid school can offer you is usually known in early Spring. Once you've been accepted and receive your financial aid package, compare them to other university offers and make sure it fits with what financially works for you. Consider these questions:

- How much will you have to pay out of pocket?
- Are you okay with taking out loans? How much are you comfortable taking out in loans?
- How much is your family able to contribute? Are your parents willing to take out loans?

Remember: factor in ALL costs, not just tuition and food and housing. Consider travel costs (airline tickets?), parking fees (if you take a car), extra monthly expenses, etc.

Remember to check out WUE! [Click here to learn more about the Western Undergraduate Exchange \(WUE\)](#). It is America's largest regional interstate tuition savings program.

Financial Aid

Financial aid is money to help pay for college. It comes from federal and state governments, colleges and universities, banks, and organizations. Applying for financial aid is a separate process from applying for admission to college. You have to do both. To receive financial aid, you must apply for it using the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at www.fafsa.gov or the Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) at <http://readyssetgrad.org/wasfa>. Colleges use the results of the FAFSA or WASFA to create a financial aid package.

FAFSA

The FAFSA requires students to have a valid Social Security number. U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, U.S. permanent residents (those with a green card), and some non-residents can file the FAFSA. Please check the Federal Student Aid website (<http://studentaid.gov>) to see if you're eligible. Students granted refugee statuses are eligible to file the FAFSA. The WASFA is for non-citizen students who don't fall into any of the above reference non-citizen categories.

WASFA

Eligibility for several Washington State financial aid programs has expanded to include students who are ineligible for federal financial aid due to immigration status. Students who meet individual program, income, or residence requirements for the Washington College Grant, the College Bound Scholarship, State Work Study, or Passport to College Promise Scholarship should complete the free WASFA (Washington Application for State Financial Aid) to apply for state financial aid. For more information, please go to <http://wasfa.wa.gov/wasfa>.

Qualifying for Aid

Need-based financial aid programs are designed with the assumption that students and parents have a responsibility to pay a share of educational costs. The amount you and your family are expected to pay will vary based on factors like income, assets, the number of children in the family, and the number of children attending college.

The process for determining your eligibility for financial aid establishes what you and your family can reasonably be expected to pay. This is called your **Student Aid Index (SAI)** and is used to identify your financial need.

Calculating your financial need:

Cost of Attendance (COA) – Student Aid Index (SAI) = Financial Need

Federal and state need-based financial aid is only offered if your SAI is not enough to cover the cost of attending a particular school. Although your SAI will stay the same, your financial aid eligibility may increase when you apply to higher-priced colleges.

How to Apply for Financial Aid

To qualify for financial aid, you must apply. The most important application is the FAFSA, or Free Application for Federal Student Aid. All federal financial aid programs, most programs offered by Washington state, and many programs offered by colleges require you to complete and submit the FAFSA. If you do not have a social security number, you should complete the WASFA (Washington Application for State Financial Aid) instead of the FAFSA.

The FAFSA release date has changed to December 2023. Please contact Colleen Hall, our Financial Aid Outreach Specialist, for more information. Once it has been released, you should completed your FAFSA as soon as possible. Financial aid dollars are limited and often awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Important FAFSA Facts

- Make sure you visit the official FAFSA webpage at <https://studentaid.gov/>. It's FREE to file the FAFSA! Be cautious of websites requesting you to pay a fee.
- At <https://studentaid.gov/>, you can complete, submit, and track your application.
- Visit our Financial Aid Outreach Specialist in the Career & College Center for help filing your FAFSA.
- You will need to fill out the FAFSA to qualify for the Federal Pell Grant program. Pell Grants are need-based grants given to help meet the cost of college.
- You must file the FAFSA for every year you attend school.

Important WASFA Facts

- Make sure to visit the official WASFA website at <http://wsac.gov/wasfa>. It's free to file the WASFA!
- You will need to fill out the WASFA to qualify for the State Need Grant.
- You must file the WASFA every year you attend school.

Types of Aid

Very few students get all their financial aid for college from one source. When you are searching for financial aid, consider a wide variety of options and apply to as many programs as possible.

Grants

Grants do not have to be repaid if you successfully complete the courses in which you were enrolled. They are given to students who have high financial need. Most grants come from federal and state governments.

Scholarships

Scholarships do not have to be repaid provided that you successful complete your coursework. They are awarded for good grades, cultural or religious background, sports, and special talents. Most scholarships come from organizations and colleges. [Click here to visit the Career & College Center scholarship page for more information.](#)

Work Study

Work study helps you earn money to pay for your education by working a part-time job offered through the college. There are federal, state, and institutional work study programs.

Loans

Loans for students have lower interest rates than most other types of loans. Unlike grants or scholarships, loans must be repaid with interest when you finish college, even if you do not graduate. Student loans are offered through banks, colleges, and other institutions.

College Deadlines Explained

There are four different types of application deadlines:

1. **Regular Admissions** – This is the most common application option. You apply by the college's deadline, hear from them on their release date, and make your decision and notify the college by May 1st (known as the universal candidate reply date) about whether or not you will attend.
2. **Priority Admissions** – Priority is sometimes misinterpreted as another name for Early Action. While priority deadlines can be similar in timing to early action deadlines, they are not the same. Institutions that use Priority give most consideration to applications received by the deadline. If Priority is offered, it's in your best interest to apply by that deadline.
3. **Early Application** – There are TWO types of early plans. One is **nonbinding** and the other is **binding**.
 - **Early Action (EA):** This is a **nonbinding** plan that requires you to submit your application early in the fall, typically by November 1st. Always check with the college website to make sure you have the correct date. The college lets you know about your acceptance by early January, but you have the right to wait until May 1st before making your decision. This gives you time to compare your various college offers (including financial aid packages) before making a final decision. An Early Action (EA) application doesn't commit you to enrolling if you're accepted.
 - **Early Decision (ED):** This is considered **binding**, so it is essential that you are certain about attending this particular college, regardless of the financial package. As with early action, you submit your application in early fall. Sometime between mid-December and early January, the college notifies you about their admissions decision. You could be accepted, deferred to the pool of regular applicants for spring decision, or denied admission. By applying under Early Decision (ED), you make the commitment to attend that college if you are accepted. This commitment is taken very seriously. Going back on your agreement after being offered ED admission could result in other colleges refusing to admit you.
4. **Rolling Admissions** – You apply and usually receive an admissions decision within 2-6 weeks from the time you submit your application. Most community colleges use this timeline. There are a few 4-year universities that also use this timeline, but don't let that delay your application. It's always best to get applications submitted early! Always check with the college you are applying to by calling the admissions office or looking online at their admissions website.

Should you apply early?

For students who have found their "ideal" college and feel confident in their grades, college essay, and their application, applying early allows them to bypass the regular spring notification deadline and can reduce the time spent waiting for a decision. Students who have already completed their college search can accelerate the admissions calendar by applying under one of the early plans, if offered. If your grades, essays, and application are not where you want them to be or you have not double checked everything, then applying early application could hurt you. You must be clear in your desires and future plans, and prepared.

College Application Tips

- Schedule college visits! If you're unable to visit in person, most schools have virtual tour options. Learn all you can to make sure the school is a good fit for YOU! [Check out The College Tour](#), which has created a library of virtual tours of college campuses throughout the country!
- Apply to a "safe" school, a "realistic" school, and a "reach" school.
 - Safe school – a school you know you'll be accepted
 - Realistic school – a school you want to go to but may be a little unsure as to whether or not you'll be accepted.
 - Reach school – a school that you want to go to but know that it's competitive and may be more challenging to get into. You never know, you may be the person they're looking for!
- Know the application deadlines & apply before the deadline! [Use this spreadsheet to help you!](#)
- Does the college have any scholarship and financial deadlines? Check their website!
- Know your chosen college's application preferences and requirements
 - Review the college website for information regarding applying.
 - If you are visiting the campus, set up a meeting with an admissions counselor.
- Spend time on your essays and personal statement. Sell yourself! What makes you stand out? Why should a college choose you? Ask someone to review your essays and personal statement to give feedback. (Hint: attend a workshop in the Career Center)
- [Request your transcripts early through Parchment](#). Make sure to select the correct Richland High School (there are many!).
- Make sure to complete every part of the application. Ask someone to review your application before it's submitted!
- Don't forget to submit the application fee or ask your counselor for a fee waiver.
- Colleges are moving to a comprehensive review for admissions. Here is what they look at (in no particular order):
 - Transcript (the classes you took; did you challenge yourself?)
 - GPA
 - Personal essay
 - Extracurricular activities/volunteer experiences
 - ACT/SAT scores
 - Many schools have become test optional. Visit college websites.
 - Schools may not use test scores for admit purposes but use them for scholarship selection.
- Once you hear back from the schools you applied to, compare your packages:
 - Tuition costs
 - Financial aid package
 - Scholarship
 - Loans
 - Any extra expenses (ex. Travel)

Letters of Recommendation

Everyone wants a good letter of recommendation – whether it's for a college application, a job, a scholarship application, an apprenticeship opportunity, etc. These letters should come from people who know you well: a counselor, employer, coach, volunteer supervisor, etc. Here are some helpful tips:

1. Ask the person for permission to use them as a reference.
2. Complete the [Senior Summary for a Letter of Recommendation](#) and make copies so you can share with references, as needed.
3. Give them at least 2 weeks' notice before you need the letter of recommendation.
4. Provide them with all YOUR necessary information. Give them your [Senior Summary for a Letter of Recommendation](#), transcript, and resume.
5. Once you receive the letter, be sure to make copies or create a PDF version online that you can save.
6. Write a follow-up thank you note.

Letters of recommendation require time and effort to write. Demonstrate your gratitude by making their task as easy as possible to complete.

Campus Visit Questions

- What makes this college unique?
- What are the school's strengths?
- How accessible are administrators, registrars, academic advisors, financial aid officers, etc?
- What majors are popular?
- What departments or programs have the best reputations?
- Do professors hold office hours or meet with you outside of class?
- Are most classes taught by professors or teaching assistants?
- What is the largest class size I'll have as a freshman?
- What are the supports in place to help freshman be successful?
- What kind of support is available if I'm struggling in class?
- How is the WiFi on campus?
- Are there computer labs?
- Is it popular to study abroad?
- What's it like to be a first-year student here?
- What's a typical day like?
- What types of activities are offered on campus?
- How much time do students spend studying a day?
- What kinds of things are there to do around town?
- What are the residence halls like?
- What are other facilities like? (Science labs, libraries, theaters, gyms, etc.)
- Is it easy to get around?
- Is there a lot of school spirit?
- How would you describe students who attend this school?
- Is there diversity on campus?
- Are there opportunities to build leadership skills on campus?
- Do employers recruit students on campus?
- How visible is the school's alumni association on campus?
- Do you have an honors college?
- What is your average financial aid package?
- What work study opportunities are available?
- What is your 4-year graduation rate?
- What is your 5-year graduation rate?
- What does it take to graduate in 4 years?
- What percentage of freshman return for sophomore year?

RHS Career & College Center

The Richland High School Career & College Center provides a variety of resources for college and career readiness. The Career & College Center is a place where students can learn more about 2- and 4-year colleges, apprenticeships, the military, financial aid & scholarships, career exploration, and major exploration. In addition, we help with resume building, cover letters, personal statements, and college & scholarship applications. Our goal is to help YOU be better equipped and prepared as you complete high school and pursue your next steps.

We also offer a variety of programs & events throughout the year:

- The Career & College Expo
- Application workshops
- College information workshops for students & parents
- Financial aid workshops for students & parents
- Guest speakers
- “On the Spot” Admissions
- ‘Next Steps” Workshops
- Assistance with the High School & Beyond Plan
- CTE Worksite Learning
- Parent/School Authorization Forms for employment

We encourage students to stop by our office in room 1223 to introduce themselves. You may also visit the [Career & College Website](#) to learn more about our programs and events. You can also contact us directly by email:

- Stephanie Schirm, Career & College Specialist, stephanie.schirm@rsd.edu
- Dana Stadelman, Career & College Assistant, dana.stadelman@rsd.edu
- Colleen Hall, Financial Outreach Specialist, colleen.hall@rsd.edu

