

Key Milestones

Wherever you are in the college search journey, use this guide to make sure you're on track! Missed a milestone? Don't panic. Talk to Mrs. Bucher and see how you can catch up. It's never too late to find the right college.

If you're a **Senior**

In the fall

- ✓ Stay on track to graduate-make sure to stay focused, and ask for help if you need it.
- ✓ Take challenging courses.
- ✓ Take the SAT, ACT, or SAT Subject test if necessary.
- ✓ Schedule visits to colleges that interest you. Narrow down your list of colleges to apply to.
- ✓ On your list of colleges, write down each college's application deadlines requirements, and fees. Stay ahead of deadlines. Staying organized is key!
- ✓ Decide if you are applying for Early Action or Early Decision.
- ✓ Ask teachers, counselors, and mentors for letters of recommendation for your college applications. Pay attention to how many recommendations you need, guidelines about who should write them, and the required format. Mrs. Bucher recommends you have two teachers and your school counselor recommendations on file.
- ✓ Finalize and submit your college applications and research scholarship opportunities. Complete your applications carefully, including the essay if required. Pay attention to details, proofread everything, and be sure to submit them on time.
- ✓ Tell Mrs. Bucher where to send your transcripts. *Make sure you link your common application with Naviance.
- ✓ Attend financial aid workshops.

- ✓ Begin to gather materials you'll need to complete the FAFSA, which is critical to securing financial aid. **You can fill out the FAFSA as early as October 1st.**
Most colleges recommend you complete it as soon as possible to maximize the amount of aid you receive. New York students should include a college or university in the state on your list of colleges so you can begin to file the state's Tuition Assistant Program (TAP) application at the end of FAFSA.
- ✓ Stay committed to your extracurricular activities.
- ✓ Reach for high course grades! Aim to get your best grades.
- ✓ Some colleges require a mid-year report. Mrs. Bucher sends out midyear reports when 2nd quarter grades are added to transcript and finalized to all schools applied to.
- ✓ Follow any additional instructions you receive from colleges. Stay on top of your emails and post mail.
- ✓ Check your email, college student portal, and/or post mail for acceptance letters and scholarship offers.
- ✓ Pay attention to important paperwork and deposit deadlines.

In the spring

- ✓ Review the financial aid packages you receive from colleges and calculate your net costs. If you have questions, contact the colleges' financial aid offices.
- ✓ Accept financial aid/scholarship awards and make decisions about housing.
- ✓ If possible, make any last college visits before you make a final decision.
- ✓ Complete any next steps to finalize your acceptance.
- ✓ Make your final college decision.
- ✓ Plan for your summer job or internship.
- ✓ If you're taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses, check with your teachers for details about exam dates and the school's plan for administration of the AP exams.

- ✓ Stay focused-most college acceptances are contingent on students maintaining good standing in their senior year.
- ✓ **Decision time:** Choose the college you will attend, sign a letter of intent, accept or decline financial aid, and send in the required deposits by the college's stated deadline. The traditional date to notify colleges of your decision is **May 1st**.
- ✓ Follow up on your grants, scholarships, loans, and any other aid you received.
- ✓ Celebrate! Don't forget to send a thank you note or email to everyone who helped you through your college search.