

Senior Year

Post-Secondary Presentation from School Counselors

Class of 2025 Presentation

Students enter senior year excited and hopeful about college admissions and other plans they may have made for life after high school. Unfortunately, there are two factors that can bring down these expectations before they ever take flight: disorganization and missed deadlines. It is critically important for each student to develop an organization system that works for him/her. Students are expected to utilize Naviance as their primary organization tool throughout this process, but some students may find it helpful to develop more personal ways of reminding themselves of important, and often non-negotiable, deadlines. Below are some recommendations for helping students stay organized throughout the senior year:

Finalize the college list

The senior year is marked by the shift from the college search process to the college application process. The last step of the college search process is to help students develop a final college list comprised of approximately four to seven schools. These schools should be categorized into *reach schools*, *realistic schools*, and *likely schools*. School counselors work with students throughout September and October to finalize the college list into these categories. A thoughtful, thorough college search should result in a short list of schools at which students will be happy regardless of where they decide to attend. Students are encouraged to continue visiting schools throughout the early part of the fall as they make decisions about where they will submit applications. Seniors are allowed two excused absences for college visits.

The College Application

As students get closer to finalizing the college list, it is time to begin preparing the college applications. The Common Application is accepted by nearly 500 colleges and universities. The "Common App" becomes available for student use on August 1st each year. Students are encouraged to use the Common App to submit applications whenever possible. Some schools do not accept the Common App and many others offer students a choice between the Common App and the school's own application. School counselors work with students to organize these options in Naviance.

No matter which application a student uses to apply to a college, most applications have the same requirements: the application form, an essay/personal statement, an activities list/resume, teacher and counselor letters of recommendation, an official transcript, and official SAT/ACT scores sent directly from the testing organization. It is each student's responsibility to manage the pieces of his/her college applications. School counselors meet with seniors in small groups and individually during the month of September to review the college application procedures at DHS, including how to request an official transcript and letters of recommendation.

Admissions Programs

Whatever the elements of a completed college application may be, the most important factor for being considered for admission is meeting the deadline. Colleges set their own deadlines and they fall into five general categories:

Early Decision

Students apply early, often by mid-November, and if a student is admitted under this program he/she is contractually bound to attend that school.

Early Action

Students apply early, often by mid-November or early December. Students receive a decision usually by the end of December, but are not bound to attend if admitted.

Regular Decision

Students apply by a set deadline, often early to mid-January. Students typically receive a decision in by April 1st.

Rolling Admission

Colleges that offer rolling admissions do not have a set deadline which students must meet. Applications are reviewed as they are received by the college and decisions are mailed out on a rolling basis.

Open Admission

Colleges that offer open admission admit students contingent upon their graduation from high school. Most community colleges and some four-year institutions offer open admission.

Financial Aid

All students are encouraged to apply for financial aid, whether or not they believe they qualify for assistance. In many instances, colleges can not distribute any form of aid, including merit-based scholarships, unless a student has a completed financial aid application on file at the school. Families can begin to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, anytime after January 1st. The FAFSA is used to determine the amount of federal assistance for which a student is eligible. This aid is distributed in three ways:

Loans

Money that must be paid back, typically after a student ceases full-time enrollment. Student loans may be subsidized or unsubsidized.

Grants/scholarships

Money that is awarded to a student based upon meeting certain financial or academic criteria. This money does not need to be repaid.

Work Study

Money that a student earns through on-campus employment. Students are typically expected to

work eight to ten hours per week through work study.

A smaller number of schools, mostly private, require a second financial aid form known as the CSS PROFILE. The PROFILE is a supplemental form used to distribute institutional funds to students and it is typically due in the fall, during the application process. The list of schools that require the PROFILE can be found on the College Board website.

[MEFA Guide to College Financing](#)

Student Athletes

Students who are interested in participating in intercollegiate sports at the Division I or Division II level must register with the NCAA Clearinghouse by completing the application for initial eligibility. The NCAA website also provides information about recruitment of student athletes, academic requirements for participation in NCAA sports, and a list of schools sponsoring NCAA sports.

College Board Fee Waiver Program

The College Board provides fee waivers for eligible students to cover the cost of taking the SAT and some college application fees. The fee waiver program also provides a reduction in AP Exam fees. Students should see their school counselor to determine eligibility for this program.

Parents are encouraged to communicate regularly with students throughout the college application process. The School Counseling Department can be a useful resource for parents as they help students plan for the future. Please check the DHS website regularly for important school notices about post-secondary planning.
