

Fayetteville Academy
College Counseling Guide

FAYETTEVILLE ACADEMY

PREPARING FOR COLLEGE: 9th GRADE

When students enter their freshman year, grades and extracurricular involvement starts to matter for the college application process. The Fayetteville Academy grade point average (GPA) used for college applications includes grades earned during freshman year, making academic performance more crucial than ever. Additionally, freshman year GPA, extracurricular activities, honors classes, and awards can all be featured on college and scholarship applications. Below are some tips and strategies to begin building a strong profile for your future college applications.

Monitor Your Grades and Seek Help When Needed

- Keep track of progress reports and semester grades.
- If you're struggling in a class, don't hesitate to ask your teacher for help.
- Use Extra Help after school to improve study skills and build relationships with teachers, which can lead to strong letters of recommendation.
- Remember, freshman year grades count toward your transcript and will be reviewed by college admissions officers, so take your school work seriously.

Get Involved in Extracurricular Activities

- Participate in activities at school and outside of school (e.g., church, scouting, club sports).
- Colleges value leadership, depth of involvement, and commitment, so focus on quality over quantity.
- Keep in mind that the Common App allows you to list up to ten activities, so prioritize meaningful experiences over trying to do too much.

Volunteer and Explore New Interests

- Volunteer work or community service stands out on college applications.
- Get involved in activities you enjoy, including volunteer opportunities, and use this year to explore new interests.
- Maintain a record of your school activities, honors, awards, leadership roles, employment, and community service in SCOIR to build a strong resume over the next four years.

Plan Your Academic Path Thoughtfully

- Meet with Mrs. Fagan to create a four-year plan and ensure you're taking the most suitable courses for your goals.
- Challenge yourself with the level of courses you enroll in, based on your academic strengths. If you’re ready for an additional challenge, explore Honors and AP coursework. Select electives that align with your academic or extracurricular interests.
- Attend the 9th Grade College Planning Night to learn ways you can set yourself up for success early in the college application process

Make the Most of Your Summer

- Find meaningful activities like work, volunteering, or classes—many opportunities are available on college campuses.
- Schedule a meeting with Mrs. Fagan to brainstorm summer plans and ways to explore your interests further.

PREPARING FOR COLLEGE: 10th GRADE

By the start of tenth grade, students should be fully adjusted to Upper School life. Sophomore year is an opportunity for personal growth. Along with maintaining strong academic performance and participating in activities, students should focus on identifying their unique abilities, strengths, and interests. This year should be marked by steady and consistent effort.

Continue Building on Your 9th Grade Foundation

- Follow the steps outlined in your 9th grade College Counseling checklist
- Take challenging courses, such as honors and AP classes, to maximize Fayetteville Academy's curricular offerings.
- Focus on earning strong grades to maintain a GPA aligned with the schools you are interested in applying to, ensuring you have a wide range of college options.

Engage with College Counseling Resources

- Attend College Counseling events and meet with college representatives who visit Fayetteville Academy. These events provide valuable insight into different types of colleges and help you practice engaging with admissions representatives.
- Encourage your parents to attend College Counseling events to familiarize themselves with Mrs. Fagan and future programming.
- Schedule a meeting with Mrs. Fagan to discuss your academic and career goals.

Prepare for Standardized Testing

- Start taking practice SAT and ACT tests to familiarize yourself with the format and identify areas for improvement.
- Consider enrolling in test preparation services if needed to strengthen your skills.

Pursue Leadership Opportunities

- Look for ways to take on leadership roles in your classes and extracurricular activities.
- Commit to an activity or sport that you can continue throughout high school, focusing on becoming a leader in that area.

Begin Exploring Colleges

- Attend a fall college fair to start researching potential colleges.
- Use online resources like SCOIR, College Board, U.S. News, and others to gather information about colleges that align with your interests.
- Discuss college options with your parents and visit campuses while traveling to begin envisioning your ideal college experience.
- Attend Preparing for College: 10th Grade Session to learn ways you can set yourself up for success early in the college application process.

Consider Summer Opportunities

- Explore pre-college summer camps or academic programs held on college campuses. If you're interested, consult with Mrs. Fagan for suggestions and resources.
- Keep up with your summer homework to enhance your learning and critical thinking skills.

PREPARING FOR COLLEGE: 11th GRADE

The College Counseling process will fully ramp up in the second semester of your junior year. Remember, this is the final full academic year of grades colleges will review before you submit your applications!

First Semester

Maximize Your Academic and Personal Growth

- Continue to challenge yourself by taking the most rigorous courses you can handle while maintaining strong grades.
- Regularly update your accomplishments in SCOIR, including awards, certificates, jobs, internships, community service, and other achievements.

Engage with College Representatives

- Check your SCOIR account frequently for college representative visits to Fayetteville Academy.
    - Register for events under the “Upcoming Events” section on the right-hand side of SCOIR.
    - Monitor weekly updates for all visiting colleges and receive notifications for schools on your “Following” list in the “My Colleges” section.

Stay Informed

- Listen to announcements, read the Weekly Newsletter, and check your emails for special opportunities, such as scholarships, leadership programs, and fly-in events.

Pursue Leadership Opportunities

- Seek meaningful leadership roles that showcase your contributions to an activity. Focus on quality over quantity.
- If no relevant organization exists that you are interested in volunteering with, consider starting one to address a need in your community and create lasting change. Colleges value students who can identify a need in their community—whether at school, church, or within the local area—and take initiative to inspire others and create meaningful, lasting change.

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Prepare for Standardized Testing

- Visit the ACT and/or SAT websites for test dates and deadlines.
    - Aim to take one test in October and another in November or December.
    - Compare scores to decide which test to focus on and retake in the spring.
    - Fayetteville Academy's high school code: **341-307**.
- Explore test preparation options like tutoring, boot camps, online courses, or study books to achieve your best scores.

Build Your College List

- Use SCOIR's College Search tool to identify about six schools and add them to the "Colleges I'm Following" section in SCOIR.
- Plan for a balanced final list (8-10 schools) by the fall of your senior year:
    - **2-3 Reach Schools**: Your academic credentials are below the school's average range. These institutions are typically reach schools for anyone who applies!
    - **2-3 Target Schools**: Your academic credentials align well within the school's average range. While there are no guarantees you will be admitted to a Target school, your academic credentials have prepared you well to be admissible to these schools.
    - **2-3 Safety Schools**: Your academic credentials exceed the school's average range.

Plan College Visits

- Schedule campus tours via individual college websites.
- Review resources on how to prepare for and what to ask during a college visit.
- Visit a variety of schools to broaden your perspective (even if you think you know exactly where you want to attend).

Special Considerations for Student-Athletes

- Inform your coaches and Mrs. Fagan about your plans to pursue collegiate sports.
- Create an NCAA Eligibility Center account as the first step in the recruitment process.
- Stay proactive in meeting recruitment requirements and deadlines.

Special Paths to Consider

- **Military Academies**: Meet with the Director of College Counseling to discuss specific timelines and next steps.
- **Gap Year**: Research options and decide whether to apply to colleges before deferring admission or after your gap year.
- **Intercollegiate Athletics**: Notify your coach and Mrs. Fagan as soon as possible to stay informed about NCAA and NAIA requirements.

Second Semester

- Revisit ACT/SAT websites for test dates and deadlines. Plan to retake your chosen test in April or May.
- Schedule the required Junior meeting with Mrs. Fagan. Before this meeting:
    - Log into SCOIR and complete the Junior Questionnaire (required).
    - Ensure your parents complete the Fayetteville Academy Parent/Guardian Brag Sheet.
- Research admissions and scholarship deadlines on college websites and platforms like FastWeb.com.
    - Create a spreadsheet to track important deadlines, many of which fall between October 15 and December 15 of your senior year.
- Request letters of recommendation:
    - Ask two teachers verbally for letters of recommendations by April 1.
    - During the second Junior Group Meeting with Mrs. Fagan (late April), formally request these letters in SCOIR. Students must bring their laptops to this meeting.
    - **Teachers will receive your Junior Questionnaire for context when writing their letters.**

Summer Before Your Senior Year

- **College Visits**: Tour campuses and consider attending summer programs hosted by colleges.
- **Testing**: Retake the ACT or SAT early in the summer to refine your college application list.
- **Refine Your College List**: Narrow it down to 8-10 balanced choices by September 1.
- **Enrichment Opportunities**: Attend academic or leadership camps or programs.
- **Scholarships**:
    - Scholarships are the student's responsibility to find and apply for.
    - Research national, regional, local, and college-specific scholarships.
    - Look into scholarships offered through community organizations, churches, or your parents' workplaces. The Cumberland Community Foundation is a great place to start, and scholarships are updated each year. If you are a military dependent, many military organizations and units provide scholarship opportunities.

- **Common App Essay**:
    - Start drafting your Common Application essay using the prompts the Common App releases in the spring of your Junior Year (Mrs. Fagan will send an email once the prompts are released each year).
    - Utilize resources like The College Essay Guy for guidance.
    - Schedule summer appointments with Mrs. Fagan for essay assistance.
    - Aim to complete your Common App Essay before the start of senior year.
    - Don't know where to start? Begin with these five tips for writing your Common App Essay (also referred to as your Personal Statement):
        - Be vulnerable. Do not be afraid to be honest in your personal statement, and open up to the reader. This is a great way to be memorable.
        - So what? Your personal statement should have at least three "so what" points. Reflect on your experiences that show your values.
        - Tell a story. While a personal statement can be a great place to discuss your growth, make sure you tell a story and give examples as to how you grew, and why it's important for colleges to know this.
        - Be different! Everyone writes about sports, volunteering, and leadership experiences. While I am not discouraging you from writing about these topics, as they are important, they can make it harder to stand out.
        - Less is more. The Common App's essay prompts are a maximum of 650 words. If your personal statement is only 400 words, but strong and conveys the message you want colleges to know about you, do not add in filler words and sentences to make your essay longer. Oftentimes this dilutes your message.
- **SCOIR Updates**:
    - Sign the FERPA Waiver and Release (sent with your application to colleges).
- **Meet with Mrs. Fagan**
    - Mrs. Fagan is available all summer for meetings, whether you would like assistance with refining your college search, essay guidance, or to answer any questions. Schedule a meeting on her calendar to meet.

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PREPARING FOR COLLEGE: 12th GRADE

How Does Mrs. Fagan Assist You?

- Conduct individual college advising appointments upon request.
- Evaluate transcripts to ensure students are meeting graduation credit requirements.
- Write counselor letters of recommendation for college applications.
- Submit transcripts and school materials (e.g., recommendations, school profile, school report, FERPA Release and Waiver) through SCOIR.
- Coordinate on-campus visits by college representatives.
- Assist students in using SCOIR to manage their application requirements.

How Can Parents/Guardians Support?

1. **College Exploration:**
    - Visit colleges with your Senior when possible.
    - Help brainstorm ideas for college essays and ensure all activities are included in the application.
2. **Financial Preparation:**
    - Discuss financial responsibilities and expectations with your Senior.
    - Complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Note that some colleges require the CSS Profile for non-federal financial aid.
    - Assist in searching for scholarships.
3. **Organization:**
    - Help your senior create a master calendar that includes:
        - SAT/ACT registration deadlines, test dates, and fees.
        - College application deadlines and required supplemental materials (e.g., essays, NC residency number for in-state schools, SRAR for certain out-of-state schools).
        - Financial aid forms and their deadlines.
        - Recommendations, transcripts, and other materials needed for applications.
    - Regularly check SCOIR for college representative visits.
4. **Maintain Integrity:**
    - Allow your Senior to complete their applications independently. Proofread if needed, but avoid being overly involved—application readers can detect when adult influence is too strong.

As a Senior, What Should I Be Doing and When?

First Semester

Meetings:

- Schedule your senior meeting with Mrs. Fagan.
    - All seniors are encouraged to meet with Mrs. Fagan over the summer if possible!
- Before the meeting:
    - Create a Common App account which will generate your Common App ID.
        - Add 8-10 schools to your Common App account (these are the schools you intend to apply to)
            - If your school does not use the Common App, create an applicant account on the school specific website.
    - Move 8-10 schools from your "Following" list in SCOIR to "Applying," specifying the application round (e.g., Early Decision, Early Action, Regular Decision).
        - To do this, select My Colleges, then click on the school in your “Following” section and select “Mark as Applying” or you can drag the school from “Following” to “Applying”.
        - State how you are applying to each school, whether through the Common App, the College Website, or Other.
            - Make sure you include your Common App ID if you are applying using the Common App.
        - All schools on your SCOIR account should match what schools you have listed on your Common App or if you are applying on the individual school website.
    - Finalize your school lists in SCOIR.
    - Determine if retaking the SAT or ACT would improve your chances of college admission and register if needed.
- At the meeting:
    - Confirm your schedule includes required credits for graduation.
    - Ensure you have requested two teacher recommendations in SCOIR and that you have completed the REQUIRED Junior Questionnaire in SCOIR.
    - Discuss your college list in SCOIR.
- Prepare for college interviews if offered (mock interviews are available with Mrs. Fagan. While not many colleges offer/require interviews, many scholarship opportunities require an interview so make sure that you are researching this if it applies to you).

Applications:

- Be aware of and meet all deadlines for applications and scholarships. **Submit all applications two weeks before the official deadline to allow the college ample time to process your documents, and ensure Mrs. Fagan has time to send your required materials.**
- Mrs. Fagan recommends you apply to colleges and universities using either the Common Application or apply directly on a school's website
    - Once you decide where you are applying, add these schools to your Common App and mark them as "Applying" in SCOIR; if you are applying directly on a school's website, please mark that you are applying on the College Website in SCOIR.
        - When applying on the Common App, make sure you answer the questions on the "Common App" tab as well as all school specific questions in the "My Colleges" tab.
- Write your Common App Essay (personal statement). Have 2-3 people review it to ensure it reflects your values and voice.
    - Keep in mind that many colleges will also have supplemental essays in the "My Colleges" tab, and should always be completed, even if they are optional.
- Communicate regularly with those writing recommendation letters to ensure they know your college application deadlines..
- Complete Early Decision/Early Action or Rolling Admission applications as soon as possible (deadlines often fall between Oct. 15 and Dec. 1).
- Once you submit a college application, log into your SCOIR account and move the school from "Applying" to "Applied".
    - To do this, you can either drag the school from "Applying" to "Applied" or click on the school name and select "Mark as Applied".
        - Once you move a school from "Applying" to "Applied" this notifies Mrs. Fagan to send your transcripts, letters of recommendation, school profile, school report, and FERPA waiver and release to the college.

Letters of Recommendation:

- Letters of Recommendation are only sent through SCOIR by Mrs. Fagan
- While the Common App may require you to add a recommender to your application, please note that your teachers will not send any letters of recommendation through the Common App.
    - All letters of recommendation must first come through Mrs. Fagan before being sent to any college/university.

College Visits/Rep Visits:

- Check SCOIR regularly to view and register for upcoming college representative visits.
- Attend the Cumberland County Independent Schools College Fair (hosted at Fayetteville Academy) and visit schools on your "Applying" list.

Testing:

- **Beginning with the Class of 2026**
    - **Students must have a minimum weighted GPA of a 2.50 to apply to ANY UNC System Schools (Here is a list of all UNC System Schools).**
    - **Students with a weighted High School GPA greater than or equal to 2.50 and less than 2.80 are required to submit a standardized test score of a 17 or higher on the ACT or a 930 or higher on the SAT.**
        - Please note that while these are the minimum requirements for consideration, they do not guarantee acceptance to any North Carolina Public College/University.
- Take or retake the ACT/SAT by November if needed. Review each school's testing policy to determine if scores are required.
- Submit official scores from the ACT or College Board if needed. Contact Mrs. Fagan for test-optional policy questions.

Stay the Course:

- Maintain strong grades; senior year performance matters. Remember Mrs. Fagan sends transcripts to all colleges at the end of the First Semester. Colleges may use this transcript as a critical piece of your admissions materials, especially if you have been waitlisted or deferred.
- Stay active in sports, extracurriculars, and continue tracking service hours.

Financial Aid:

- Complete the FAFSA and, if required, the CSS Profile. Ensure both you and your parent/guardian have unique FAFSA IDs.
    - The FAFSA and CSS profile must be completed by the student and parent/guardian together.
- Monitor for your Student Aid Report (SAR), which should arrive about four weeks after filing.
- Use a dedicated email for scholarships and track required materials for applications.
    - Scholarships are the responsibility of the student to research and apply for.

Second Semester

Decision Time:

- Wait for college decisions to be released. Most will arrive by mid-April.
    - Once you receive an admissions decision, update your SCOIR account.
        - To update your admissions status in SCOIR, click on “My Colleges”, then under your “Applied” schools select the school you have received an admissions decision from. Select “Edit Outcome” and then change the Application Outcomes to the decision you received.
- If admitted Early Decision, immediately inform other schools of your withdrawal from their admissions processes.
- Plan revisits to campuses as needed after receiving admission offers.

Financial Aid:

- Review financial aid packages carefully.
- Note renewable scholarships and requirements for maintaining aid.
- Notify colleges about any external scholarships you’ve received, which may impact your financial aid package.
- Keep track of any scholarship you receive and email this information to Mrs. Fagan.

Choosing and Enrolling:

- Decide on which college you plan to attend and pay the enrollment deposit by **May 1, the National Decision Day**.
- Send a deposit to only one school. Depositing at multiple schools can result in rescinded admissions offers.
    - Once you pay the enrollment deposit, you will begin to receive emails to set up your student portal.
- Notify Mrs. Fagan of your final decision on where you intend to enroll, and update SCOIR with your enrolled school.
    - To mark a school as “Enrolling” in SCOIR, select “My Colleges”, then under your “Applied” schools select the school you intend to enroll at, select the three dots, and click “Mark as Enrolling”. If you have not already marked this school as “Accepted” you must first do this before you can mark it as “Enrolling”.

Waitlist Plans:

- Update schools where you are waitlisted with any accomplishments or additional materials in a Letter of Continued Interest, if applicable. Work with Mrs. Fagan on this should you have any questions.
- Inform Mrs. Fagan of your intent to enroll if accepted.

Keep College Counseling Updated:

- Share information about any scholarships received, even if you decline the associated admission offer.
    - Mrs. Fagan keeps track of where students receive scholarships to report at the Upper School Awards Ceremony!
        - The best way to keep track of scholarship information and report this back to Mrs. Fagan is through a spreadsheet (Google Sheets).

Final Steps:

- Track deadlines for deposits, fees, and paperwork. Mrs. Fagan will send your final transcript in mid to late June. Ensure all requirements are met to transition smoothly to college!

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TIPS FOR PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL COLLEGE VISIT

Plan Ahead

- Schedule your visit for a time when classes are in session and campus life is active.
- Check Fayetteville Academy's calendar for early release days and breaks to minimize missed class time.

Make Necessary Arrangements

- Register for a tour or information session in advance, typically through the college's website or by contacting their Admissions Office.
- When contacting the Admissions Office, ask to:
    - Reserve a tour (specify the number of attendees).
    - Sit in on a lecture.
    - Eat in a dining hall.
- Take responsibility for making the arrangements yourself. If booking online, use a professional email address, such as janedoe@gmail.com, rather than one that could appear unprofessional.

Arrive Early

- Download a campus map and review any paperwork the college has sent.
- Allow extra time for parking, navigating the campus, and finding the Admissions Office.

Be Prepared

- Tours often start at the Admissions Office, where you may need to provide information like your GPA, test scores, and areas of interest. Have this information ready.

Ask Thoughtful Questions

- Prepare questions in advance about aspects of the school not typically covered on the tour.
- Take notes during the visit and reflect afterward on what you liked and didn't like about the school.

Explore Beyond the Tour

- Tour guides often highlight the best parts of campus, but take time to explore on your own.
- Ask to see a dorm room, attend a class, or meet with a professor in your area of interest.
- Spend time in student areas like commons or cafeterias, listen to conversations, and check bulletin boards to get a sense of the campus culture.

Evaluate Key Resources

- Look for security features like blue light kiosks and shuttle services for nighttime safety.
- Visit dorms to see if you can envision yourself living there.
- Investigate the student health facilities, counseling services, and academic advising resources.

Engage with Students

- Talk to current students beyond your tour guide to get an authentic perspective on campus life.

Explore the Surrounding Area

- Take time to discover the town or city where the college is located. Consider whether you'd enjoy spending time there when you're not on campus.

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MAKING A GREAT FIRST IMPRESSION: THE POWER OF ASKING QUESTIONS

Did you know it only takes 7 seconds to form a first impression? Asking thoughtful questions is a fantastic way to not only leave a positive impression but also demonstrate genuine interest in a school.

General Questions

- What sets your school apart from others?
- How many undergraduate students are enrolled here?
- What is the average class size?
- What is your retention rate?
  (This is the percentage of first-year students who return for their second year—a good indicator of student satisfaction. The national average retention rate is 76% as of 2023.)
- What is your graduation rate?
  (This refers to the percentage of students who graduate within six years from a four-year school. The national average is 63% as of 2022.)

Academics

- What is the most popular major at your school?
- Do you offer study abroad programs? Which countries can students visit?
- What percentage of graduates enter the workforce immediately, and how many continue to graduate school?
- Are undergraduate courses taught by professors or graduate students?

Campus Life

- How big is the campus?
- If the school is far away, how close is it to the nearest airport?
- Does the college provide transportation to local areas, airports, or shopping centers?
- Are freshmen allowed to have cars on campus? What about sophomores?
- How are roommates assigned?
- Are dorms co-ed, or are they single-gender?
- What amenities are available in the dorms (e.g., laundry, kitchen, air conditioning)?
- What meal plans are offered?
- What athletic teams does the school have?
- What extracurricular activities are available on campus?

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Admissions

- What is the application deadline?
- Are letters of recommendation required?
- Does the application include an essay or multiple essays?
- What GPA is typically needed for admission?
- What ACT or SAT scores are you looking for?
- How much is the application fee?

Financial Aid

- What is the cost of attendance?
- What scholarships are available, and how can students apply?
- Are on-campus jobs available to all students?
- What percentage of students receive financial aid?

Academic Support

- What kind of academic advising is offered? Who helps students plan their courses?
- How can I meet with professors if I need help or have questions?
- Are free tutoring services available?
- Are internships offered, and are they accessible to all majors?
- Does the campus have a career counseling office to assist students in finding jobs after graduation?

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SERVICE ACADEMY TIMELINE AND GUIDELINES

- U.S. Military Academy (USMA), or West Point at West Point, New York (Average Acceptance Rate - 12%)
- U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) at Annapolis, Maryland (Average Acceptance Rate - 11%)
- U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) at Colorado Springs, Colorado (Average Acceptance Rate - 16%)
- U.S. Coast Guard Academy (USCGA) at New London, Connecticut (no nomination required because they're not part of DoD but Homeland Security, you're a law enforcement officer) (Average Acceptance Rate - 24%)
- U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) at Kings Point, New York (Average Acceptance Rate - 27%)

General Guidance

- **Applying to a Service Academy is a highly rigorous process.** Seek a mentor—preferably a Service Academy graduate—to guide you through the application process.
- **Appointment Timeline**: Most appointments are offered between late January and April.
- If denied a Congressional nomination, explore other sources such as the Vice President, President, Senators, Branch Secretaries, or the Academy Superintendent.
- If denied admission, consider reapplying during your freshman year of college.
- **Key Dates**:
    - July 1st: Typically the first day of training for accepted candidates.

Freshman Year

- Inform Mrs. Fagan about your interest in a Service Academy or ROTC program.
- Challenge yourself academically, particularly in math and science.
- Join clubs or organizations where you can demonstrate leadership potential.
- Begin a fitness routine, building on strength, endurance and agility.

Sophomore Year

- Continue discussing with Mrs. Fagan the service academy you are interested in applying to.
- Continue to challenge yourself academically.
- Assume a leadership position and make an impact in your club, sport, or community.
- Attend online Service Academy admissions events.
- Take the PSAT and/or PreACT to prepare for future standardized tests.

- Continue working on your fitness routine, as service academies require candidates to pass a Candidate Fitness Assessment.

    - Familiarize yourself with the required exercises and benchmarks.

Junior Year - 1st Semester

- Apply for Academy Summer Sessions (applications open in October for the summer before senior year).
- Continue excelling in challenging courses, especially in math and science.
- Assume leadership roles in activities you are passionate about.
- Contact your local Academy liaison officer or representative for guidance on the application process.
- Familiarize yourself with Candidate Fitness Assessment (CFA) requirements.
- Review medical eligibility requirements through the Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board (DoDMERB).
- Enroll in an SAT/ACT prep course to prepare for standardized testing.

Junior Year - 2nd Semester

- Complete the Pre-Candidate Questionnaire (Preliminary Application) for each Academy of interest, which opens as early as January.
- Take the SAT and/or ACT for the first time.
- Submit applications for Academy Summer Programs:
    - **USAFA**: Due by January
    - **USNA and USMA (West Point)**: Due by March
    - **USCGA**: Due by April
- Research nomination procedures through your Congressional offices. (If you have military parents, you may be eligible for a Vice Presidential nomination; otherwise, seek nominations from Senators or Congressmen.)
- Retake the SAT/ACT as needed to improve your scores.
- Begin drafting application essays.
- Practice mock interviews to prepare for the nomination process.
- Formulate a backup plan by exploring Senior Military Colleges such as:
    - Norwich University
    - The Citadel
    - Texas A&M University
    - University of North Georgia
    - Virginia Military Institute
    - Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
        - Should you not be interested in attending a Senior Military College, explore colleges you may be interested in attending and research if they offer ROTC programs and scholarships.
- Review Academy application deadlines, which typically open in July.
- Request letters of recommendation from teachers, emphasizing academics, athletics, and leadership. Provide recommenders with details about the Service Academy's specific recommendation form. Request these by **April 25th**.

Senior Year - 1st Semester

- Maintain a rigorous academic schedule, focusing on math and science.
- Submit your Congressional nomination packages.
- Complete and submit your Service Academy applications.
- Perform the Candidate Fitness Assessment (CFA).
- Schedule an interview with your Academy liaison officer.
- Submit ROTC scholarship applications (deadlines as early as October).
- Apply for a Vice Presidential nomination (deadline in January).
- Schedule and complete the DoDMERB medical exam (note: certain conditions such as asthma, specific allergies, or ADHD medications may not be waivable).

What to Do If You're Not Accepted

- Enroll in an Academy Prep Program.
- Join an ROTC program (note: you are not required to enlist, but there is a post-graduation service obligation of 3–5 years).
- Attend a Senior Military College.
- Reapply the following year
    - Approximately **20-30%** of Service Academy students have completed at least one year of college before being admitted. This varies slightly between academies, but it's common for students who were not accepted directly after high school to strengthen their applications by attending college, participating in ROTC programs, or enrolling in preparatory programs.

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COMMON COLLEGE COUNSELING TERMS

Accreditation: Official recognition granted to a college or university by regional or national accrediting agencies, signifying that the institution meets established standards and fulfills its stated objectives.

ACT: The ACT is a standardized college admissions test, considered equivalent to the SAT. It assesses academic skills in English, mathematics, reading, and science reasoning, and is administered at designated test centers throughout the year. An optional writing section is also available. ACT scores range from 1 to 36. In collaboration with the College Board, ACT has conducted a concordance study to analyze the relationship between ACT and SAT scores. While concordance tables do not directly equate scores, they offer a guide for finding comparable results. The provided link includes registration details, test dates, and study materials.

Admissions Application Types:

- **Early Action (EA):** This is a non-binding application process with earlier deadlines for both the student and the college, prior to the regular deadlines. By applying early action, you receive admission decisions earlier than usual. You can apply to other colleges and have until May 1st to accept an offer of admission. Some colleges offer a variant called EA II, which has a later application deadline than their regular early action plan.

- **Early Action Single Choice (also called Restrictive Early Action (REA)):** This is a non-binding early admission option for students who have conducted a thorough and thoughtful college search. It allows students to receive their admission decision in December, without requiring a response until May 1st or committing them to attend that school. While applicants can only apply to one school under this early action option, they are free to apply to other colleges during the regular admission period. This gives students more time to consider their options and explore other institutions that may align with their goals and needs.

- **Early Decision (ED):** This option allows you to apply to your first-choice college before the regular deadline. By applying early decision, you receive an admission decision earlier than usual. Early decision plans are binding agreements, meaning that if you are accepted, you are committed to attending that school. Admission notifications typically occur by December 15th. You can only submit one ED application, and if accepted, you must withdraw any other applications. Some colleges offer an ED II option, which has a later application deadline than the standard ED plan.

- **Regular Decision:** Deadlines typically start on December 15th. Students are notified by April 15th and must reply to the college by May 1st. It is advised that students submit their application as early as possible and not wait until the postmark deadline.

- **Rolling Admissions:** Applications are reviewed as they are submitted, rather than waiting for a set deadline to evaluate them all at once. While candidates may receive a decision within a month, they can still wait until May 1st to accept an admission offer. Applying early is advantageous, as spaces may fill up quickly—even highly qualified applicants might face limited availability if they apply later, such as in April.

College Application Essay: A personal essay, also known as a personal statement, or the Common App essay, is a written piece that many colleges require as part of the application process. Some institutions provide specific prompts or questions for applicants to address, while others ask for a general essay about the applicant's experiences, goals, or personal story.

Common Application: The Common Application is a standardized form used by member colleges of the Common Application Association. By completing it once, you can submit it to one or multiple schools from the nearly 700 institutions that accept it. The maximum number of colleges you can apply to using the Common Application is 20 schools.

Deferred Admission: Deferred admission is an approval granted by a college allowing an accepted student to delay their enrollment, typically until the spring semester or the following fall. Students planning a gap year often apply to college during their senior year and request deferred admission to postpone starting their studies.

Demonstrated Interest: Some colleges monitor a student's level of engagement with their events and marketing efforts. This includes tracking whether you open or respond to emails or mailings and whether you register for in-person or virtual events.

FERPA Release and Waiver: FERPA §99.30 mandates obtaining "a signed and dated written consent" from a "parent or eligible student" before disclosing "personally identifiable information from the student's education records." According to §99.3, an 'eligible student' is defined as "a student who has reached 18 years of age or is attending an institution of postsecondary education."

Under §99.5(c), a student’s right to inspect records, including those related to their application for admission, is limited to educational institutions where the student is both accepted and enrolled. Because these rights are contingent upon attendance at a postsecondary institution, students are considered eligible regardless of their age.

Students are encouraged to sign this release and waiver in SCOIR, which restricts their access to application files, including letters of recommendation. Colleges generally advise students to waive their rights to review these letters, as doing so assures admissions offices that the letters are candid and unbiased. Choosing not to waive this right can raise concerns with admissions committees. If you have reservations about a potential recommendation, it is strongly recommended that you select a different individual to write your letter.

Financial Aid: Money given or loaned to you to help pay for college. Financial aid can come from federal and state governments, colleges, and private organizations. The two major types of financial aid are Merit-based aid and Need-based aid.

- Merit-based financial aid is funding awarded to students based on their academic achievements, talents, skills, or other specific accomplishments rather than financial need. This type of aid can include scholarships or grants provided by colleges, universities, or private organizations, and is often renewable if the student maintains certain performance criteria, such as a minimum GPA or continued involvement in specific activities.
- Need-based financial aid is financial assistance awarded to students based on their family's financial situation. It is designed to help cover educational expenses for those who might not otherwise be able to afford them. This type of aid is typically determined by financial information provided in forms like the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) or the CSS Profile and can include grants, scholarships, work-study opportunities, and low-interest loans. Unlike merit-based aid, need-based aid focuses solely on financial need rather than academic or extracurricular achievements.

Priority Date or Deadline: The deadline by which your application—whether for college admission, student housing, or financial aid—must be submitted to receive the highest level of consideration.

Registrar: The college official who registers students. The registrar may also be responsible for keeping permanent records (transcripts) and maintaining your student file.

SAT: The College Board's SAT: The College Board's standardized college admissions test is considered equivalent to the ACT. It consists of three main sections: Math, Reading, and Writing, which includes an optional essay. Scores range from 400 to 1600. Many colleges use superscoring, where they combine the highest section scores from multiple test attempts to calculate the highest overall score. Additionally, the College Board and ACT have conducted a concordance study to compare scores between the two tests. While concordance tables do not equate scores, they provide a way to identify comparable results.

SCOIR: SCOIR is a personalized college application platform that supports students in their college and career planning journey. It provides students and their parents/guardians with tools to make informed decisions about college options, offering insights into admissions statistics, tuition costs, class sizes, available majors, and more.

FAYETTEVILLE ACADEMY

At Fayetteville Academy, students are required to use SCOIR. SCOIR enables students to:

- Research colleges and universities.
- Access anonymous historical data from previous FA students.
- Build a resume.
- View the schedule of college representatives visiting the school.
- Coordinate with teachers regarding letters of recommendation.

Additionally, SCOIR serves as the platform Mrs. Fagan uses to send essential college admissions materials—such as transcripts, letters of recommendation, the school profile, and school reports—to the institutions students apply to. It is crucial for students to keep their SCOIR account updated throughout the college application process to ensure that all required materials are submitted on time.

Semester: The semester is the division of the academic year, serving as an independent grading period. The First Semester grade is calculated by combining Term 1, Term 2, and midterm exam grades, while the Second Semester grade is determined by combining Term 3, Term 4, and final exam grades. For seniors, Semester 1 grades are sent to colleges at the end of the first semester.

Transcript: The official record of your coursework at a school or college. Your high school transcript is usually required for college admission and for some financial aid packages.

Wait List: A list of applicants who may be offered admission to a college if additional space becomes available. Colleges wait to confirm whether all admitted students accept their offers by submitting an enrollment agreement and deposit (typically to only one school). If some admitted students choose not to enroll, the college may offer those spots to students on the waitlist.

HOW TO USE SCOIR

SCOIR is a personalized college application platform that supports students in their college and career planning journey. It provides students and their parents/guardians with tools to make informed decisions about college options, offering insights into admissions statistics, tuition costs, class sizes, available majors, and more.

At Fayetteville Academy, SCOIR enables students to:

- Research colleges and universities.
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- Coordinate with teachers regarding letters of recommendation.

Additionally, SCOIR serves as the platform Mrs. Fagan uses to send essential college admissions materials—such as transcripts, letters of recommendation, the school profile, and school reports—to the institutions students apply to. It is crucial for students to keep their SCOIR account updated throughout the college application process to ensure that all required materials are submitted on time.

9th Grade

9th graders should use SCOIR to:

- Maintain a record of your school activities, honors, awards, leadership roles, employment, and community service to build a strong resume over the next four years. It is much easier to track this information as you go along, instead of having to remember something four years later!
- Research colleges you are interested in, and begin to look at information such as acceptance rates, cost of attendance, location, size of the school, and academic program offerings.

10th Grade

10th graders should use SCOIR to:

- Continue maintaining a record of your school activities, honors, awards, leadership roles, employment, and community service experiences.
- Further research colleges you're interested in, discuss college options with your parents/guardians, and begin college tours.
    - Parents can be invited to your SCOIR account so that they can suggest colleges you might not have previously thought of, and also research schools.
    - Use SCOIR as a way to begin envisioning your ideal college experience.
    - When you find a school you are interested in on SCOIR, go to that school's website to schedule a campus visit. Refer to Planning a Successful College Visit and College Visit Questions for any questions related to campus tours.

11th Grade

11th graders should use SCOIR to:

- Register for College Representative visits on Fayetteville Academy's campus
    - Register for events under the "Upcoming Events" section on the right-hand side of SCOIR.
    - Monitor weekly updates for all visiting colleges and receive notifications for schools on your "Following" list in the "My Colleges" section.
- Regularly update your accomplishments in SCOIR, including awards, certificates, jobs, internships, community service, and other achievements.
- Build your College List
    - Use SCOIR's College Search tool to identify about six schools and add them to the "Colleges I'm Following" section in SCOIR.
    - Plan for a balanced final list (8-10 schools) by the fall of your senior year:
        - **2-3 Reach Schools**: Your academic credentials are below the school's average range.
        - **2-3 Target Schools**: Your academic credentials align well within the school's average range. While there are no guarantees you will be admitted to a Target school, your academic credentials have prepared you well to be admissible to these schools.
        - **2-3 Safety Schools**: Your academic credentials exceed the school's average range.
- Complete the Junior Questionnaire
- Request Letters of Recommendation formally by late April during the Junior Group Meeting
- Sign the FERPA Waiver and Release.

12th Grade

12th graders should use SCOIR to:

- Register for College Representative visits on Fayetteville Academy's campus
    - Register for events under the "Upcoming Events" section on the right-hand side of SCOIR.
    - Monitor weekly updates for all visiting colleges and receive notifications for schools on your "Following" list in the "My Colleges" section.
- Regularly update your accomplishments in SCOIR, including awards, certificates, jobs, internships, community service, and other achievements. This helps Mrs. Fagan and your teachers with your Letters of Recommendation.
- Research colleges using the College Search tool
    - You can filter colleges based on criteria like location, size, major, and cost
- Use the Scattergram tool to see how your GPA and test scores compare to accepted and not accepted students from Fayetteville Academy at colleges you may be interested in applying to.
- Finalize your College List by September 1
    - Use SCOIR's College Search tool to identify about six schools and add them to the "Colleges I'm Following" section in SCOIR.
    - Plan for a balanced final list (8-10 schools) by the fall of your senior year:
        - **2-3 Reach Schools**: Your academic credentials are below the school's average range.
        - **2-3 Target Schools**: Your academic credentials align well within the school's average range. While there are no guarantees you will be admitted to a Target school, your academic credentials have prepared you well to be admissible to these schools.
        - **2-3 Safety Schools**: Your academic credentials exceed the school's average range.
- Track your Letters of Recommendation.
    - Students can see in SCOIR if their recommenders have submitted their Letters of Recommendation for Mrs. Fagan to send with their transcripts once they have submitted a college application.
    - **Letters of Recommendation are only sent through SCOIR, not through the Common App.**

- Inform Mrs. Fagan on where you are at in the college application process (Applying, Applied, Admissions Decision, Enrolling)
    - Once you decide where you are applying, add these schools to your Common App and mark them as “Applying” in SCOIR; if you are applying directly on a school’s website, please mark that you are applying on the College Website in SCOIR.
        - If you are applying Early Decision to a school you, your parent/guardian and Mrs. Fagan must sign the Early Decision contract in SCOIR. This contract is sent along with your application to the school.
    - Upon submitting a college application, log into your SCOIR account and move the school from “Applying” to “Applied”.
        - To do this, you can either drag the school from “Applying” to “Applied” or click on the school name and select “Mark as Applied”.
            - **Once you move a school from “Applying” to “Applied” this notifies Mrs. Fagan to send your transcripts, letters of recommendation, school profile, school report, and FERPA waiver and release to the college through SCOIR**.
    - When you receive an admissions decision, log into SCOIR and update your admissions status:
        - To update your admissions status in SCOIR, click on “My Colleges”, then under your “Applied” schools select the school you have received an admissions decision from. Select “Edit Outcome” and then change the Application Outcomes to the decision you received.
    - After you decide where you want to enroll, update your SCOIR account:
        - To mark a school as “Enrolling” in SCOIR, select “My Colleges”, then under your “Applied” schools select the school you intend to enroll at, select the three dots, and click “Mark as Enrolling”. If you have not already marked this school as “Accepted” you must first do this before you can mark it as “Enrolling”.