Guidebook



Poth High School

Poth, Texas

Adapted from O'Conner Senior Guidebook

INTRODUCTION

The Senior Guidebook will provide you and your family with information as you prepare to graduate and transition from high school to the next step. This could include attending a two-year or four-year institution, beginning an apprenticeship program, joining the military, working full or part-time, or any other plans you may have after high school. The section on college is organized so that you can use it throughout the year. Over the next two years, you will begin to sort through the many opportunities that lay ahead. Your guidebook will help you fine tune your future plans. We encourage you to keep your guidebook in your binder and refer to it when needed. We hope that you will carefully follow the steps outlined in the guidebook as you travel down "the decision-making road". The guidebook is printed in a step-by-step or "how to" format to assist you in implementing your plans and goals.

During your senior year, you will need to stay informed about a wealth of information coming at you from many sources. This is not the time to tune out information. STAY FOCUSED AND ORGANIZED!

- *Listen to daily announcements.* If you tune them out, you may miss something of great importance to you such as information on scholarships, college representative visits, etc.

- *Visit the Poth High School Counselor's Corner for updates on scholarships and special program opportunities.* The address is www.pothisd.us. Click on the Counselor's Corner.

- *Keep up with the printed information given to you from the Counseling Center.* Read the paper and scholarship listings for valuable information.

- *Consult frequently with your counselor and parents.* This can help you sort things out and better use the resources in the Counseling Center.

- *Know when college representatives will be on campus.*

- *Utilize the resources in the Counseling Center.* By looking through several easy-to-use sources, you can find descriptions of hundreds of financial aid sources you may qualify for on the basis of academic merit, talent, ethnic or religious backgrounds, gender, parental employment, or intended majors or careers. Take advantage of web sites offering scholarship.

- *Take Advantage!* You and/or your parents should attend all special programs relative to your postsecondary, college, and career goals.

SENIOR INFORMATION

WHAT TO BE EXPECTING …

As the year gets underway, you will be expected to fill out more forms than you have seen since you started your education. Here is a list of senior events that you should know and be prepared for:

- Name you want to appear on your diploma
- Graduation criteria
- Your class ring
- Your senior pictures
- Making your list for graduation
- Ordering your announcements, cap and gown, tassels, thank you notes
- Making prom arrangements
- Attending your senior class meetings
- Project Graduation

You should:

- Visit your counselor and college admissions representatives.
- Meet with college representatives who visit our campus.
- Visit and tour your top college choices.
- Meet deadlines including applications, financial aid, and FAFSA.
- Stay involved and participate in High School and community activities.
- Volunteer! This is important to many colleges and scholarships.
- Check the Scholarship List frequently.

GET ORGANIZED!

Get ready for the college/career exploration process by creating a binder for your important information.

Find a 3-ring binder and dividers. To begin, set up the following categories:

- Standardized Test Scores and Information (ACT/SAT/THEA)
- College Planning and Information
- Resume
- Essays
- Applications
- Scholarships
- Community Service
- Financial Aid
- NCAA Registration (For Athletic Scholarships)
- Career Planning
- School Activities
- Awards
- Campus Visits

As you begin to receive information from colleges, scholarships, etc., file items into the appropriate category.

It's a challenging time and an exciting process. It will flow much smoother if you get organized before you begin!

WHAT CAN THE COUNSELING CENTER DO FOR YOU?

- Career Information
  Books, Magazines, Reference Guides, Websites

- Career Interest Inventories
  Websites to investigate your career options

- Military Information
  Brochures, websites, recruiter information

- College Information
  College search, reference materials, catalogs representing technical schools, community colleges, 2 and 4 year colleges, public universities, private universities, postings of campus visits by representatives

- Registration Packets
  SAT, ACT, TSI

- Financial Aid and Scholarship Information

Come by early to start your future!

What options do I have?

	What is it?	Cost	You get	Advantage	Disadvantage	Comments	For more information
Four-Year College	Private and public universities provide you with a well-rounded education which you can use to secure a professional career	Average tuition and fees at a public university are about $6,000 per semester	Bachelor's degree in an area such as business, art, or science	More money A well-rounded education Campus life can be very rewarding	May be tough to get into May take more than four years to complete School may not be able to find you a job once you graduate	It may take longer, but you will be able to use your degree to apply for higher paying professional jobs	College Websites Counseling Center
Two-Year College	Community and technical colleges offer two-year degrees and technical program certificates and prepare you to transfer to a four-year program	Much less than a four-year university, around $2,000 per semester	Associate degree or a special certificate in an area such as graphic production or technology or basics to transfer	Usually an easy commute Finish quicker	Most students work and attend classes limiting campus social activities	Most students are accepted into the program Junior colleges usually have entrance standards	College Websites Counseling Center
Private Career Colleges and Technical Schools	Specialized education, leading directly to employment Programs vary from several months to two or more years	Prices range and you will also need to purchase equipment	Career related education, technical skills, and hands on training	You will get focused training in a variety of work situations, which can open many doors	Technology changes fast – You will be challenged to stay on top of your specialty	Check out your school before you register or pay tuition	Online Counseling Center Career College Association, 202-336-6700
Apprentice	You are hired as a trainee to learn a craft or trade from a craftsperson or an experienced supervisor	There may be union dues to pay and your own equipment to buy	Real-world training and experience, as well as entry into difficult to break into careers such as plumbing or electrical work	An excellent way to learn your trade	You will probably earn minimum wage or slightly higher during your training	This program exits for over 700 occupations according to the department of labor	The National Apprenticeship Program, Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training, U.S. Dept. of Labor, 202-219-5921
Employment	Entry level positions	Beginning paycheck	Working with a high school education	A chance to figure out what you want to do next	Difficult to budget money	Use it as a path to something better	Employment and temp agencies Newspapers Online websites
U.S. Armed Forces	Enlistment in the U.S. Armed Forces: Navy, Army, Marines, Air Force, or Coast Guard	At least a two year commitment	GI Bill Education credit Monthly salary Opportunity to travel	Paid room and board and skills training	Wardrobe selected for you	Consider carefully the occupational specialty you choose. Some have civilian applications, others are better for the service	Counseling Center Recruiting Center Online websites

Junior Planning Calendar

August

____ Adjust class schedule, if necessary.

September

____ Prepare for the PSAT. Not only is the test good preparation for the SAT, it is also a determinant in selection of award recipients for the National Merit Scholarship Program.

____ Discuss your college and career plans with your parents.

October

____ Plan to take the PSAT in mid October. You can qualify to be designated as a National Merit Scholar by taking this test in your Junior year only.

____ Explore your post-high school choice(s) online at the Counselor's Corner or visit the Counseling Center to explore catalogues, reference books, and other materials on colleges.

____ Make a list of colleges and careers that suit your interests, needs, preferences, and abilities.

November

____ Participate in "College – Go Get It Week" Events including the College Fair, Financial Aid Night, and much more.

____ Visit colleges you are interested in and talk to current students.

December

____ Begin studying for the SAT or ACT that you will take in the Spring.

Junior Planning Calendar

January

____ Examine and update your four-year plan to see if it can be changed to help you better accomplish your long-range goals.

____ Start finalizing your educational plans for your senior year.

____ Make arrangements to take the SAT and the ACT in the Spring Semester of your Junior Year. Test dates are listed on the Counselor's Corner and in the Counseling Center. You are encouraged to take both tests and retest on the one you did better on. Registration deadlines to take these tests generally occur one month or more before the actual test date. Students are responsible for completing the registration form before the deadlines dates. Refer to the registration packet. Don't forget to indicate that you would like your score results sent back to your High School by using the campus school code 445655. The results of your test, with your permission will then be posted on the back of your transcript. Stop by the Counseling Center for fee waiver information if you qualify for Free/Reduced Lunch.

February

____ Start to finalize plans about how you and your family will pay for college.

March

____ Continue to clarify your goals, interests, and needs.

____ Take the SAT and ACT college entrance exams.

April/May

____ Start identifying teachers, administrators, and other adults who could give you a letter of recommendation. Ask yourself whether or not they know your work, personality, and other characteristics to make judgments.

____ Develop a resume for college, interviews, and recommendations.

____ Take the SAT and ACT college entrance exams if you have not done so.

____ Be present for any retake EOCs given in the Spring.

Junior Planning Calendar

June

____ Visit colleges. Most colleges operate with summer sessions in June and July allowing you to view the college in operation. Consider college campus visits in conjunction with any summer trips you and your family plan to take.

____ Obtain a summer job. If possible, find a job that is related to your career interests.

____ Start to narrow your college choices based on your interests and abilities. Try to rank them in order of preference or importance to you.

____ Finalize your Apply Texas Essays.

____ Complete your list of activities/awards/honors/community service in your 4-Year Binder.

See your counselor when your have questions!

Senior Planning Calendar

August

____ Apply for college! Applications open August 1 or sooner and many school accept students on a rolling basis.

____ Discuss plans for college and other plans for life after high school. Your high school counselor can provide valuable information. Reflect on your interests, strengths and weaknesses, accomplishments, outside experiences, goals, and financial capability. Considering these factors will better enable you to determine your needs.

____ Decide on the route you plan to take after high school – community college, four-year college/university, trade and technical school, employment, or the military. Decide on a college major. If college is not in your plans, decide on a career/job field that you would like to pursue.

____ Plan a visit to the college(s) of your choice. *Write visitation dates on your calendar.*

____ Narrow your lists of schools. Obtain applications to apply for admission, acceptance, and employment. Note that some schools will have application fees and deposits. Inquire about fee waivers if you qualify. Check all deadlines for receipt of application forms and test scores. *Note these dates on your calendar.*

____ Complete the scholarship applications for your college. Inquire also about honor or departmental scholarships.

____ Inquire about scholarship possibilities from your parents' employment, organizations, religious affiliations, and the Counseling Center. All scholarship announcements sent to PHS will be posted in all English 1-4 classrooms, on the Scholarship Bulletin, and online.

____ Obtain applications for housing (dormitory or apartment).

____ Register for admissions tests (SAT/ACT/TSI) if you have not already done so. *Write dates on your calendar.*

____ Update your resume - Include summer volunteer and work experiences.

TIP OF THE MONTH: Don't overlook community colleges! Many students go to a community college for 2 years and then transfer to a 4-year university. It is a great way to get an excellent education and save money.

September

____ TOP TEN PERCENT RULE – Students graduating in the Top Ten Percent of their graduating class are eligible for automatic admission into any public college/university in the State of Texas. To be eligible for the top 10 percent automatic admission, a student must:

- Graduate in the top 10 percent of his/her class in a Texas High School
- Enroll in college no more than two years after graduating from high school
- Submit an application to a Texas public college/university before the admission deadline

____ Start preparing for tests. This includes SAT, ACT, TSI, AP Exams, etc.

____ Review your deadlines for applications, financial aid, and scholarships.

____ Ask teachers, counselors, and other adults for letters of recommendations.

____ Review procedures for requesting transcripts.

____ Begin working on admission essays and scholarship essays. It is important to have essays ready for early admission.

TIP OF THE MONTH: It is very important to keep your parents involved in your application process. Your parents are valuable resources and will provide support, suggestions, and contacts.

October

____ Submit FAFSA for processing. Use prior year's tax returns. Information from the tax forms will be used to complete the FAFSA.

____ Take admissions tests for college and military service academies if need.

____ Students entering a Texas 2 or 4-year public college/university must take the TSI test PRIOR to enrolling in a college level course. IF YOU FEEL YOU ARE ELIGIBLE FOR AN EXEMPTION FROM THE TSI, VISIT THE TESTING OR ADVISING OFFICE OF YOUR COLLEGE BEFORE YOU REGISTER FOR THE TEST SO THAT YOUR EXEMPTION STATUS CAN BE DETERMINED.

____ If you are interested in the military, contact the local military recruiter to register for the ASVAB if you plan to enlist.

____ Continue to check the Counseling Center, Counselor's Website, and English 4 classes for scholarships.

____ Make dormitory/apartment reservations.

____ Finalize your essays for applications.

____ Attend College Nights and Weekends.

TIP OF THE MONTH: When interviewing for a job or with a college representative, make the best first impression. Think about what type of questions you might be asked, dress neatly, and listen carefully to the questions being asked and answer fully. Don't forget a thank you letter.

November

____ Take admissions tests for college and military service academies, if needed. Visit the local military recruiter to register for the ASVAB test if you plan to enlist.

____ Take the SAT/ACT.

____ Submit college applications. Follow the procedure for requesting transcripts. Request letters of recommendation, if you have not already done so and submit all forms required for the application to your teachers and counselor.

____ Prepare for deadlines that might occur during the Winter Break.

____ Remember early decision and early action deadlines.

____ Visit the Counseling Center for further scholarship information. See listings posted in your English 4 classroom and on the Counselor's Corner web site.

____ Attend financial aid workshops with your parent(s). Keep a lookout for financial aid workshops offered at school or colleges.

TIP OF THE MONTH: Begin to think about your college major. You don't have to decide on an exact major or career yet, but it helps to have an idea of a broad field you'd like to head toward. See your counselor if you are at a loss or take a career interest inventories.

December

____ Check that all application materials due have been submitted. Follow up with your college to make sure that all application forms, recommendations and any other paperwork that is due has been received or sent. College offices may close for the holidays. Check early in the month, so there will be time to take care of last minute details.

____ Expect early decision and action replies.
- Accepted? Congratulations! Send a deposit and withdraw applications from other colleges.
- Deferred? Stay hopeful. You may be accepted later with regular decision applicants.
- Denied? Don't lose hope. You still have other schools on your list.

____ Plan to visit schools during Winter Break.

____ Plan to take the TSI if you have not already done so.

____ Continue to visit the Counseling Center for scholarship information. Look for listings in the English 4 classrooms and on the Counselor's Corner website.

TIP OF THE MONTH: Set your goals for your last semester of high school. Consider grades, after-school activities, community and school volunteer services, and friendship and family time.

January

____ Continue to apply for scholarships, go on job interviews, and college visits.

____ Keep thinking about possible majors and careers. Take an honest look at your interests, skills, and personality. Don't limit yourself to fields that others expect you to go into. Follow your heart and explore your interests. Learn as much as you can about careers that interest you. Read about them and talk to people who work in your field of interest. Volunteer, get an internship or work part-time in a field you are considering. You will gain valuable experience.

____ Expect some admission decisions to arrive at your home.

____ Continue to do well academically. Many college/universities and scholarship organizations pay attention to how you do up through your final senior grades.

____ Inform your counselor of any scholarships that you have received. Keep your scholarship award letters in your scholarship file in your personal binder.

TIP OF THE MONTH: Practice time management. It is a critical survival skill for college and life. Make a schedule for the week ahead and stick to it. Allow realistic amounts of time for studying, work, after-school activities, socializing, and rest. You will be amazed at how much you will accomplish.

February

____ If you have not done so, submit the completed FAFSA application.

____ Continue to apply for scholarships, go on job interview, and college visits.

____ Expect to receive admission decisions at home.

____ Inform your counselor of any scholarships that you receive.

____ KEEP WORKING HARD IN SCHOOL.

____ Listen for information on AP (Advanced Placement) Exams. Plan to take these if you have been taking AP courses.

____ Expect the Student Aid Report (SAR). This is a summary report of your FAFSA submission. You should receive this a few weeks after you submit the FAFSA. It will show your "Expected Family Contribution." This information will also be forwarded to the colleges you listed on the FAFSA. Read the SAR carefully. Make sure to look for errors, correct them and send the report back. If it has been more than 4 weeks since you submitted the FAFSA and you have not received the SAR, notify the Federal Student Aid Information Center or college financial aid office.

TIP OF THE MONTH: Try to make time to learn a new skill. It can open doors in the future.

March

____ Look for your Student Aid Report (SAR) to arrive. Follow the guidelines from February.

____ Attend the session that begins the registration process for the local community colleges in the Alamo Community College District (San

Antonio College, Palo Alto College, Northwest Vista College, and St. Phillips College).

____ Complete the registration process for community college.

____ Continue to inform your counselor of any scholarships that you receive.

____ Check with ALL institutions to make sure that your files are complete with all necessary paperwork (mid-year transcripts, test scores, and financial aid information, if required.) If any items are missing, send them right away.

____ If you are on a wait list, send in new material or information (recent achievements, awards/honors) that might be considered to boost your chances.

____ Expect admissions decisions.

____ Keep looking for financial opportunities.

TIP OF THE MONTH: Create chances for you to practice decision-making. Seek leadership roles in after-school activities, get involved in community service, or find a part-time job. All of these experiences will help you with life after high school.

April

____ Expect admissions decisions.

____ Start narrowing your choices by reviewing the pros and cons so that you can decide which options you will take. Which school and/or job will accept you? Involve your parents in the decision. Don't forget to consider financial information.

____ Let the school(s) and/or employer(s) know your "yes and no" decisions.

____ Make sure all deposits and fees have been paid.

____ Inform the counselor of any scholarships that you have received.

____ Attend the final registration session for the local community colleges in the Alamo Community College District.

TIP OF THE MONTH: Train yourself to budget your money. Set a spending limit and savings goal for each month. Put your savings money away and prioritize how you want to spend the rest of your money. By doing this, you can have what you want and still save money.

May

____ Forms regarding housing, roommates, courses, orientation, etc. may start arriving from the college/university you will be attending. Respond quickly.

____ Write thank you letters to all adults who wrote letters of recommendation.

____ Sign up for summer school or gateway program, if needed.

____ Obtain a summer job and/or volunteer for community service.

____ Prepare to move from home if this is your plan. Remember to spend quality time with friends and family.

____ Get scholarship award letters to your counselor.

____ Graduation is almost here!!! You made it!!!

____ Make sure you have completed the necessary paperwork for <u>final transcripts</u> to be sent to schools and organizations of your choice.

____ Keep in touch with wait-list schools you would still like to attend. Write a letter to express your enthusiasm. Let the schools know about recent awards and achievements you have received. It is never too late!

____ If you have taken dual credit courses and have earned credit for these courses, you will need to submit a final transcript request. The designated college will grant college credit accordingly upon receipt of your college transcript.

TIP OF THE MONTH: Make the month of May the best ever. Be careful and enjoy. Don't let anyone pressure you into doing something you don't want to. Remember, poor decisions may lead you to take risks you might regret later.

Standardized Testing and College

Most colleges require an entrance examination – either the ACT (American College Test) or the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test). Some use them for placement; others use them as an admissions criterion. These examinations are given at various test centers throughout the area during the year. You should register for a test session during late spring of your Junior year or early fall of your Senior year because most colleges will not grant admission until they have received your test scores. Remember to have your scores sent directly to the colleges of your choice.

Certain colleges that require the SAT I Reasoning also require the SAT Subject test for placement purposes. Applications for all of these tests are in the Counseling Center. On-line registration is preferred for the ACT at www.act.org and for the SAT at www.collegeboard.com.

By checking the appropriate college catalog or website of the college of your choice, you can determine which entrance examination you need to complete. When you register for any of the tests, be sure to use your high school code, which is 445-655. We encourage you to take these tests in the spring of your junior year. If you did not take them during your junior year, you need to have them completed during the fall of your senior year. Many colleges will not process your application without the test results. Remember to have your scores sent directly to your college by indicating the college code on the registration form or on the online registration.

If you are not satisfied with your first SAT or ACT score, you may take the exams as many times as you wish. Colleges and Universities use the scores differently. Check with the admission representative from the college of your choice.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE TESTS

1. Read the preparation booklets, “Taking the SAT Reasoning Test” and “Preparing for the ACT”, CAREFULLY. These booklets are available for you free of charge in the Counseling Center along with the registration materials for SAT and ACT. Practice material is also available on line at www.colloegeboard.org (SAT) and the www.act.org (ACT). Additional study materials can be found at the Counselor’s Corner online.

2. Study and understand the test directions. The directions for answering the questions are given in the booklets exactly as they appear in the actual test. The less time you have to spend reading and figuring out the directions on the test day, the more time you will have to spend actually answering questions.

3. Take the sample tests included in the preparation booklets. Full sample tests and answer sheets are included. Try to take sample tests under conditions as similar to those of the actual test day as possible.

GENERAL TEST-TAKING STRATEGIES

- Pace your self.
- Read the directions for each test carefully.
- Read each question carefully.
- Answer the easy questions first.
- Use logic in more difficult questions.
- Review your work.
- Be precise in marking your answer sheet.
- Erase completely.

PREPARE FOR THE TEST DAY

- Be confident in your ability to do well.
- Be prepared to work hard.
- Know what to expect on the test day.
- Prepare well in advance.
- Get plenty of rest the night before.
- Get up early on the day of the test and eat a good breakfast.
- Arrive promptly to the test center.
- Temperatures vary at test sites. Dress in layers.
- Lay everything out the night before. Take these items to the test center:
    1. Photo identification
    2. Your test center admission ticket
    3. Three sharpened soft-lead no.2 pencils with clean erasers
    4. Wristwatch

Applying for Admission to College

The Application Process

Most colleges accept or reject you on the basis of four major factors:

1. Your academic record
2. Your test scores
3. Your extra-curricular record
4. Subjective opinion of your personality and potential based on personal essays, interviews, etc.

Step One:

Early in the Fall complete the online application at www.applytexas.org. This application can be copied and sent to multiple colleges.

Step Two:

When you receive your application form, read all the instructions carefully before completing. BE AWARE OF DEADLINES.

Step Three:

Complete the application. If your counselor needs to sign or fill out any portion of the application, take it to your counselor two weeks in advance of the mailing date. Leave this information with the office if the counselor is not available. If nothing is required from your counselor, PROCESS THE APPLICATION DIRECTLY TO THE COLLEGE, including any required application fees. If a teacher recommendation is required, take it to the appropriate teacher with an addressed, stamped envelope and ask the teacher to mail it directly to the college. Include a resume with this request. Make sure to include your social security number on the resume so the Admission's Office can identify the recommendation.

Step Four:

Fill out a transcript request form in the office. REQUESTS MUST BE MADE AT LEAST 3-5 SCHOOL DAYS IN ADVANCE. If you are enrolled in dual credit

courses, an additional transcript must be sent from the college. It is the responsibility of the student to mail official transcripts, applications, and supporting documents to the receiving institutions before the deadlines.

Step Five:

When you receive an acceptance letter from the college, be sure to follow its instructions concerning payment of fees, selection of courses, housing reservations, etc. If the college does not require anything immediately, acknowledge the acceptance with a letter to the Director of Admissions, thanking the director for the attention given to you saying that you are looking forward to attending the college. If you have been accepted by more than one college, it is courteous to write to the colleges you have not chosen, asking them to withdraw your name from the rolls, thereby giving another applicant the possibility of acceptance.

Step Six:

In May, request a final transcript from the office. In June, this transcript will be sent to the college you have chosen to attend. REQUEST THE FINAL TRANSCRIPT FROM YOUR HIGH SCHOOL AS WELL AS CBC IF APPLICABLE. IT IS THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO NOTIFY CBC COLLEGE OF THE NAME AND ADDRESS OF THE COLLEGE THEIR TRANSCRIPT IS TO BE SENT.

The Application

A Reflection of You

Schools and employers look for a package of you. The application is your permanent symbol. It reflects your thoughts, interests, and contributions. A well-crafted application can boost your chances for acceptance and employment.

- DON'T BE BORING! Give them a reason to remember and select you. It's not what you say that counts. It's what they hear and read. Test the application on yourself. Is it repetitive? Is it tedious? Ask friends, teachers, family members, and counselors what they think.
- DON'T LIE, EXAGGERATE, OR MAKE THINGS UP. Do not pretend to be something you are not. You run a great risk of being disqualified.
- COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY! This requires hard work. Think about what your assets are. Forgetting to include vital information or part of the application should be avoided. Make sure that your birth date and social security number are correct. Use your formal name throughout.
- PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR PRESENTATION STYLE! Never accept the first draft as the final draft.
- ALWAYS READ AND FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS. Never leave anything blank.
- THE ESSAY IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF THE APPLICATION NEXT TO YOUR GRADES! It should bring out what you want to emphasize and enhance. Never repeat information in the essay that can be found on the application. Spelling and grammatical errors can be damaging to your chances. Don't forget to edit, proofread, and consult with your English teacher before making a final draft.
- GOOD GRADES ARE MORE IMPRESSIVE THAN HIGH TEST GRADES! If you are applying to a select school or company, remember that they seek students who have not only tackled the tough courses, but also who have taken courses in line with their career interest.
- SCHOOLS AND EMPLOYERS LIKE STUDENTS THAT CAN HANDLE RESPONSIBILITY. It's not just being a member of clubs and organizations that's impressive, but becoming a leader in one or two of them gets their attention. Also, include special talents and work experience.
- DO NOT FORGET YOUR APPLICATION FEE! Make sure you submit the application fee along with your application.
- IT IS YOUR JOB TO ASSURE THAT TEST SCORES, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND TRANSCRIPTS ARRIVE ON TIME. Give supplementary forms/requests to the appropriate person at least 2 weeks in advance. Keep a calendar for your application deadlines.

Recommendations

Highly selective schools and scholarship organizations will require recommendations from teachers as well as counselors and other adults. The recommendation is an important aspect of the application process. You are strongly encouraged to discuss your skills, course work, and personal qualities with the person who will be writing your recommendation. Your resume may help the teacher in the recommendation process.

Here are some “tips” on how to get the best recommendation possible.

- Ask an adult for a recommendation in person.
- Get recommendations from people who know you well, who like you, and who can reinforce your strengths.
- Give plenty of notice. The teacher/adult needs at least two weeks notice prior to the date you wish to have the recommendation sent.
- When you have decided which adult you will ask to write your recommendation, be sure you submit all forms as soon as you receive them. Add a note detailing the exact date the recommendation is due and to whom it is to be sent.
- Be sure you have filled out all applicable sections on the form(s) before giving it to the person you are asking to complete the recommendation. Do not deliver the application on the desk, in the teacher’s box, or ask a friend to deliver the form for you. Hand it to the teacher/adult directly.
- Supply information about yourself. Give them a copy of your resume and give it to each person you ask to recommend you. This will help to individualize your letter.
- Remind the adult to keep a copy in case you will be asking for additional recommendations at a later date.
- Wait two weeks. At that time, confirm with the adult the date that the recommendation was mailed.
- Follow up with a personal “thank you” note.

The Application Checklist

Keep track of the application process by inserting a check mark or completion date in the appropriate space.

Preparing the Application:

_____ Campus Visit

_____ Recommendations Requested

_____ Test Scores Requested

_____ Transcript Sent

_____ Application Completed

_____ Essays Completed

_____ All Signatures Collected

_____ Application Fee Enclosed

_____ Postage Affixed/Return Address on Envelope

College Notification:

_____ Letters of Acceptance/Denial/Wait List

_____ Colleges Notified of Intent – Decline or Accept

_____ Tuition Deposit Sent

_____ Housing and Other Forms Submitted to Chosen College

_____ Orientation Scheduled

_____ Awards from College Accepted (FAFSA must be complete)

The Right College Fit

There is no better way to learn about a college, university, trade, or technical school than through a campus visit while school is in session. Students get the opportunity to evaluate the quality of the faculty, facilities, spirit, and campus atmosphere. It is better to see through your own eyes rather than rely on the words of a friend or propaganda material. Don't make the same mistake of many by putting little effort into the campus visit and end up greatly regretting it.

The campus visit can be considered "educational insurance".

- You are more likely to choose an institution that is "matched" or "fits" your needs.
- You will have the opportunity to see what students wear, how they live, etc.
- You will be able to observe where you will eat, sleep, study, attend classes, and take part in campus activities.
- You are likely to do better work if you are in an environment that is congenial to your value systems and needs.

<u>When preparing for a campus visit:</u>

- Arrange for your visit in advance. Avoid being a "drop in."
- Inform your counselor of your choices. Many schools have special weekend events and tours. Some send brochures and registration to the Counseling Center. You can also check on-line for special events, dates, and times.
- Allow sufficient time for a college visit.
- Familiarize yourself with the college before the visit so that you can ask pertinent questions while you are there.
- Be prepared to tell the school about your area(s) of interest. Summarize your awards, activities, honors, test scores. Carry a copy of your transcript with your class rank and grade point average.
- Give careful attention to your appearance, grooming, and conduct. Notes are often kept and placed in your application file.
- If possible, try to visit schools with your parent or guardian.

<u>Try to do the following:</u>

- Carry a notebook or binder to keep important information that is obtained.
- Schedule an interview in the admissions office. Inquire about admission requirements.
- Investigate your major, course of study, or program.
- Tour the campus, meet with faculty, visit several classes, and observe extracurricular activities in progress.

- Talk to students on campus. Ask them about the academic and social climate on campus.
- Check the student residence hall and dining facilities.
- Ask about financial aid and scholarships.
- Find out what is the average class size.
- Obtain a school calendar and fee schedule.
- Identify career planning and placement services for undergraduates.
- Find the library.
- Investigate transportation/parking options.

<u>After the visit:</u>

- Write a thank-you note to the staff or faculty member who assisted you.
- If necessary, see your high school counselor if the visit generated any questions.
- Begin ranking the schools of your choice and narrow them to a manageable few.

What is My Major?

Some Steps for Choosing a Major

Ask yourself the following questions.

- What are my interests?
- What are my abilities?
- What are my values?
- What are my motivations?
- What are the realities?

Identify your academic interests and academic abilities, then imagine your future.

Some Lesser Known Facts

- Most people (75%) change their major at least once.
- Over half of college graduates obtain employment in areas outside of their college major.
- Only you know what is best for you.
- It is OK to be undecided.
- Many career fields do not require specific majors.
- Choice of major is only one factor in determining your future job prospects and career path.
- A major is simply a series of courses that specialize in a particular subject. Many students prefer to delay their choice of a major until they have a chance to discover where their interests and aptitudes lie.
- Delaying a choice of major does not put a student at a disadvantage. Most freshmen and sophomores - regardless of major - take similar courses.

If You Want to Play College Sports

Make sure you read this page and act immediately!

Who needs to apply?

Any student who wants to participate in a competitive sport at Division I or Division II colleges or universities must complete and submit a NCAA Clearinghouse Form. This form can be submitted online at: www.eligibilitycenter.org. Students should register after the completion of their junior year in high school. You must submit an official transcript that includes your junior year in high school. You must send an official transcript at the beginning of your senior and again after fall semester of your senior year concludes.

What is NCAA?

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is a voluntary association of about 1,200 colleges and universities, athletic conferences, and sports organizations devoted to the sound administration of intercollegiate athletics.

Through the NCAA, member schools and conferences consider any athletics problem that has become national in character. Volunteer representatives from these schools and conferences establish rules that govern the Association and programs designed to further it's purposes and goals.

The goals of the association are:

- Promote student-athletes and college sports through public awareness.
- Protect student-athletes through standards of fairness and integrity.
- Prepare student-athletes for life time leadership.
- Provide student-athletes and college sports with the funding to help meet these goals.

From the NCAA Clearinghouse website, www.eligibilitycenter.org, prospective student-athletes are able to access information needed to understand the Division I and Division II eligibility requirements, register with the Clearinghouse, and access individual Clearinghouse records.

Visit the website above to get all the facts and information needed so you can participate your freshman year! This is mandatory to compete on a college team.

☑ *Financial Aid Checklist*

Once a student has been admitted to a college/university/trade or technical school, financial aid can make education accessible.

Financial aid comes in four major sources:

1. Grants
2. Scholarships
3. Loans
4. Work Study

Below is a checklist to for you to use:

____ Investigate the possible sources of aid listed above. Attend a Financial Aid Night program.

____ Consult the financial aid office at each college. Stress unique family financial situations (divorce, separation, death of a major wage earner, unemployment, disability, pending retirement, or recent natural disasters). In addition to this, inform your counselor of these conditions.

____ Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). All students applying for need-based financial assistance are required to complete the FAFSA. Income tax returns for the parent(s) and student must be available when completing this application. FAFSA applications should be available at the beginning of January of your Senior year and need to be completed as soon as possible. You can complete your FAFSA application online at www.fafsa.ed.gov.

____ Upon receipt of your Student Aid Report (SAR), work closely with the college financial aid officer.

____ Apply for scholarships and grants. In addition to applying for the Pell Grant (the major source of financial aid), be sure to inquire about state scholarships, grants, and loan programs, as well as institutional, community, foundation, and corporate scholarship programs. Also, inquire about low-interest educational loans.

____ Plan ahead. Monitor information from the college business office regarding fees, payment schedules, etc. and awards received from the college Financial Aid Office. Be aware that the above procedure repeats itself each school year.

____ Go online to accept or decline scholarships, loans, and grants awarded by the government and university.

Web Connections

Connect with internet addresses for more information on Colleges, Financial Aid, Scholarships, and Career Information.

Alamo Community College District	www.accd.edu
American Association of Community Colleges	www.aacc.hche.edu
ACT AMERICAN COLLEGE TESTING	www.act.org
General college search by state, name, or region	www.anycollege.net
Everything from online registration for SAT to financial aid calculators, etc.	www.collegeboard.com
Resources and advice for high school juniors and seniors looking into college	www.collegebound.net
Search engine for finding schools with degree programs, index of schools, and grants	www.collegedegree.com
College directory, on-line applications, education, career opportunities and SAT/ACT practice tests	www.embark.com
Info about private colleges; includes college search	http://collegexpress.com
Scholarship search, electronic applications, college search, links to financial aid info	www.collegenet.com
College search, student diaries, college applications, and scholarship links	www.collegelink.com

Provides students, families, and education professionals with information on college selection, admission, financial aid and scholarships	www.collegeplan.org
Profiles of colleges, virtual tours, electronic applications, and financial aid gives students and parents a picture of what college life is like	http://collegeview.com
Virtual College Day – streaming video tours of Colleges with focus on academic, curriculum and student life issues	www.criterioninfo.net
Find appropriate schools by matching test results and other variables. An easy to use college search engine. Scholarship information.	www.gocollege.com
Higher Education Information Center	www.heic.org
International Education Service-helps students Worldwide find the right college or university	www.ies-ed.com
General college information including related links, search information by state, region, and athletic program	www.juco.com
Kaplan test prep information as well as a college directory	www.kaplan.com
College directory information	www.petersons.com/ugrad/
Princeton Review-comprehensive information and statistics for over 1200 four-year colleges	www.review.com
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools	www.sacsoc.org

7500 colleges and universities at your fingertips	www.universities.com
US NEWS college directory and general info	www.usnews.com
Scroll down until you see on your right: COMPENDIUM OF TEXAS COLLEGES/ UNIVERSITIES. A project of Minnie Stevens Piper Foundation, Texas Comptroller's Office and the Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Program	www.window.state.tx.us
Foremost online resource for "going-to-college" information for students, information interactive tools to assist with college preparation, evaluation, selection, application, and financing	www.wiredscholar.com
Search 3000 colleges, financial aid information, campus tours, etc.	www.xap.com
Yahoo's education information search	www.yahoo.com.educational/
American Student Assistance – loan information	www.amsa.com
Federal financial aid programs for health Professionals	www.bphc..hrsa.dhhs.gov/
General college information including financial aid	www.collegequest.com
College Parents of America – an advocacy organization in Washington, D.C. that features info on nation wide programs	www.collegeparents.org
U.S. Department of Education – Student financial assistance, research and statistics; FAFSA on the web	www.ed.gov

Student Loan Information	www.estudentloan.com
FAFSA on the web	www.fafsa.ed.gov/
All U.S. Federal Government Student Financial Aid Programs. Listings of many grants and scholarships	www.fedmoney.org
Information about student loans, federal programs, scholarship services, etc.	www.finaid.org/
One of many banking options for educational funding	www.loanstar.com/
Free financial aid information	www.mycollegeguide.org
Nellie Mae – financial aid information	www.nelliemae.org
Sallie Mae – financial aid information	www.salliemae.com
State residency home page – educates students, parents, and counselors about the process of establishing state residency, which can save tuition money	www.savetuition.com
Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corp. – Information on schools and lenders	www.tgslc.org/
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board – financial aid resource listing.	www.thecb.state.tx.us
Financial aid and scholarship search, college resources, virtual bookstore and more	www.collegenet.com/
Listing admissions and financial aid office	

e-mail addresses and phone numbers	www.college-scholarship.com
Online access to a scholarship database and guide to financial aid and scholarships	www.fastaid.com
Scholarship search including student profile	www.fastap.org
Fill out lengthy application online for a scholarship search, and review later updates	www.fastWeb.com/
Scholarship for minorities	www.fie.com/molis/scholar.htm
Provides free access to scholarship databases	www.FinAid.org
Tips on spotting scholarships scams	www.finaid.org/finaid/scams.html
Finding service with database of over 2,000 sources of scholarships, grants, and fellowships, free counseling and more	www.freschinfo.com
Scholarship search by major, state, ethnic groups, religion, school, and sport activities	www.scholarships-news.com
A free scholarship search engine, play fun and challenging contests, plus links to all the hottest scholarship places on the web	www.StudentRewards.com
Awards scholarship money to students who win one of its student competitions	www.worldofknowledge.org/html
Search jobs, company profiles, and college links	www.careermosaic.com
Search jobs internationally as well as by city with the U.S. Includes resume posting. Career Inventory and Career Library are also on the site	www.cweb.com

Information regarding specific occupations within the State of Texas Department of Human Resources	www.dhs.state.tx.us
Comprehensive career research as well as college information	http://cx.bridges.com
Includes information on new job fields as well as interviews with different professionals.	www.futureSCAN.com
Career research, includes career statistics and information	www.job.web/org
Provides college, career, and financial aid info and services for students & families	www.mapping-your-future.org
Overview of military educational career benefit, with links to each service	www.myfuture.com/OUTPUT/moneycol.htm
Helps high school students with careers, jobs, and college preparation, and peer issues.	www.nextstepmagazine.com
Monster.com - includes job search, career advice, and information regarding major employers	www.occ.com
The Occupational Outlook Handbook Online – is a nationally recognized source of career information. It contains thousands of job descriptions.	www.stats.bls.gov/ocohome.htm
COLLEGE, SAT, FINANCIAL AID, ETC.	www.collegeboard.org
A FREE online Test Preparation	http://testprep.collegefortexans.com