Four-Year College Counseling Overview

9th Grade — Settle In, Discover, and Grow

Freshman year is all about settling in, building confidence, and exploring who you are—both in and out of the classroom. College may feel far away right now, and that's okay. The most important thing is to focus on doing high school well: develop good habits, try new things, and start imagining what excites you about the future.

- Build a strong foundation: practice good study habits and time management.
- Start forming relationships with your teachers—they're here to support you.
- Explore new clubs, sports, or interests—follow your curiosity!
- Take the PSAT in March (administered at school).
- Engage with Freshman Seminar to get a gentle introduction to the college process.
- Plan a tentative four-year course path with your advisor—flexible, but thoughtful – that includes classes that excite you!
- Drive through a few college campuses on family trips—just to see what's out there. They don't even have to be colleges that you will apply to. It's a chance to explore and start to identify what you like and don't like about different types of colleges.
- Think about summer: volunteering, camp, creative projects, or a job can all help you grow. It's a great time to dive deeper into current interests or discover new ones.

In spring, you'll be introduced to your college counselor and Scoir, our digital college counseling platform for organizing all things related to your college journey.

Focus on becoming your best self. Freshman year is about exploring your strengths, discovering what matters to you, and building a high school experience you'll be proud of—college planning will come in time.

10th Grade — Think Strategically

Sophomore year encourages students to make thoughtful choices in academics and extracurriculars while taking the first formal steps in the college process.

- Take increasingly challenging courses in your areas of strength.
- Learn about our IB Program, AP options, and long-term course planning.
- Take the PreACT in October (school administered).
- Attend the Charlotte Area Case Studies program in April—an opportunity to understand how applications are reviewed.
- Meet with your college counselor beginning in winter (and as needed).
- Visit a few colleges locally or during travel to begin developing an understanding of fit and culture.
- Deepen your involvement in clubs or teams, and consider introducing new initiatives or taking on leadership roles.
- Begin thinking intentionally about how summer can enhance your interests. This is a time that if well used, can augment your application and help you engage more deeply and authentically.

- Explore and expand. This is the time to challenge yourself academically, show initiative, and learn more about the broader landscape of college admissions.

11th Grade — Engage with Purpose and Begin Your College Search

Junior year marks the beginning of more personalized, strategic work with your college counselor.

- Stay fully engaged in your classes—find your academic voice and participate actively.
- Continue developing strong relationships with your teachers.
- Attend the College Night for Juniors in November and college rep visits throughout the fall and spring.
- Meet one-on-one with your counselor at the start of second semester to discuss interests, strengths, and goals.
- Use Scoir to complete your student questionnaire and begin crafting a thoughtful college list.
- Visit a range of colleges—large and small, near and far—to explore what feels like a good fit.
- Take the PSAT in October (National Merit Qualifying Test).
- Register for and take the SAT and/or ACT; consider a second test in spring or early fall of senior year.
- Ask 1–2 teachers for recommendation letters by the end of junior year.
- Start drafting college essays and begin the Common Application over the summer.

In the junior year, the College Guidance Counselors:

- Introduce students to the logistics of the college process, including standardized testing, Scoir (our college planning software), application timelines, and the basics of selective admissions.
- Begin one-on-one counseling meetings in the winter to get to know students on a deeper level and start building individualized college lists.
- Help students reflect on their academic and personal goals and explore how different types of colleges can support their ambitions and interests.
- Encourage students to keep an open mind, stay engaged in the learning process, and view college planning as a meaningful opportunity for growth and self-discovery.
- Own your process. The choices you make now—academically, personally, and interpersonally—help shape your future options. It’s your time to lead with intention.

12th Grade — Find colleges that are right for you

Senior year is a culmination of thoughtful preparation and personal insight. The focus is on refining choices and presenting your best self in the college application process.

- Attend College Application and Essay Workshop in August to finalize essays and receive guidance.
- Take advantage of college rep visits at school throughout the fall.
- Complete testing (if needed) and self-report or submit scores as required.
- Keep your Scoir account updated to manage deadlines and documents.
- Finalize your college list in collaboration with your counselor.

- Stay organized and proactive—give yourself time to write, revise, and reflect.
- Keep making a positive impact in your extracurriculars—this is your chance to leave a legacy.
- Navigate interviews, financial aid forms, SRAR (if required), and waitlist decisions with your counselor's support.
- Trust the process. You've done the work—now you're ready to find the college that aligns with your strengths, goals, and values.

Optional Path — Consider a Gap Year

For students seeking time to travel, volunteer, or explore before beginning college, a Gap Year can be a transformative experience. Our counselors are happy to discuss accredited programs and how to structure a meaningful year between high school and college.