Three Springs senior packet for graduation and Post-Secondary Readiness

Senior Year Timeline

You have made it!! It is your final year of K-12 education! Some of you may have already chosen your path following graduation, while others are still sorting through their options. Either way, this senior packet should outline important milestones as you navigate your final year. Each month has descriptions and links for what our seniors should be working on during that given month. For more specific details, please see your school counselor.

September:

- Register for the SAT and/or ACT if you didn't take a college entrance exam as a junior or want to take one again. Remember: Your counselor can help with fee waivers.
- Take a look at some college applications. Make note of all the pieces of information you will need to compile.
- Check with your school counselor to make sure you are on track to graduate and fulfill college admission requirements.
- Take every opportunity to get to know colleges. Meet with college representatives who visit your school, attend local college fairs, and visit campuses.
- Narrow down your list of colleges. Collect information about the application and financial aid process at each school.
- Create a checklist and calendar to keep track of standardized test dates, college application due dates, and financial aid deadlines. Make note of the other materials, such as recommendations or essays, you'll need to complete your applications.

October:

- File your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon after Oct. 1 as possible. In addition to determining your eligibility for federal funds, many colleges and states use the form when distributing grants, so don't delay. Watch the mail for your Student Aid Report (SAR)—it should arrive four weeks after the FAFSA is filed.
    - The FAFSA is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. This is the comprehensive process to access federal and state funding for college tuition and other costs of attendance. It is highly recommended for all students to apply.
- Some colleges will have deadlines (rolling, priority, early decision, and early action) as early as this month.
- If you cannot afford the application fees that many colleges charge, ask your counselor to help you request a fee waiver.
- Finalize your college essay. Many schools will require that you submit at least one essay with your application.
- Start gathering letters of recommendation from influential people in your life. Think managers, coaches, pastors, mentors, teachers and administrators. Avoid letters of recommendation from family members.
- Research scholarships. Ask your counselor, your colleges, and local religious and civic groups about scholarship opportunities. You should never pay for scholarship information.

November / December:

- Finalize and send any early decision or early action applications due this month. Have a parent, teacher, counselor, or other adult review the application before it is submitted.

- Every college will require a copy of your transcript from your high school. Follow your school's procedure for sending transcripts.
- Make sure testing companies have sent your scores directly to the colleges to which you are applying.
- Begin to organize regular decision applications and financial aid forms, which will be due in January and/or February.
- If needed, register for the January SAT. It is the last one colleges will be able to consider for a senior.
- Many popular and selective colleges will have application deadlines as early as Jan. 1st. Others have deadlines later in January and February and into March.
- If necessary, register for the February ACT (some colleges will be able consider it).
- In January, ask your guidance office to send first semester transcripts to schools where you applied. At the end of the school year, they will need to send final transcripts to the college you will attend.

Feb/March/April:

- Acceptance letters and financial aid offers will start to arrive. Review your acceptances, compare financial aid packages, and visit your final choices.
- Don't slack in the classroom. The college you decide to attend will want to see your second semester transcript.
- May 1 is the date when the college you plan to attend requires a commitment and deposit. When you've made your college decision, notify your counselor. Send in your deposit by the postmark date of May 1. If you've been offered financial aid, accept the offer and follow the instructions given. Also notify schools you will not attend of your decision.
- Request that your final transcript be sent to the college you will be attending.
- If you are wait-listed by a college you really want to attend, visit, call, and write the admission office to make your interest clear. Ask how you can strengthen your application.
- If you are opting to enroll with a trade school or 2-year college, this is the time to submit that application.

May:

- Commitment to the college you plan to attend. Send notices to schools you will not be attending.
- Request final transcript through Parchment.
- Sign up for college orientation.

SAT/ACT information

Colleges and Universities use SAT and ACT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships. These tests range in subject and take 3-4 hours on average.

Please visit these websites to learn more and register for the exam.

SAT: https://www.collegeboard.org/

ACT: https://www.act.org/

Choosing the Right College

Here are a few things to consider when choosing a college that is the right fit. Consider location from home, Size of student body, academic offerings for the subject you are interested in, atmosphere that aligns with your values and character, and cost as there can be drastic differences between two you are considering.

Financial Aid

There are a variety of aid to help you pay for college, that can come from local scholarships, colleges, to federal and state governments. To start the process, you must create and account and apply for the aid at www.fafsa.gov This is a great starting point that is needed in order to receive grants, loans, and work-study. You qualify for aid based on your income, assets, household size and how many kids are attending college. Please refer to the senior packet link to find out more detailed information about qualifying for aid, application process, types of aid, getting a financial aid ID, transferring tax information, and more.

College Application Process

A lot goes into the application process, and it looks different depending on which college or university you are applying for. Requesting transcripts through SchooLinks (https://www.schoolinks.com/) will be a starting point. Many college deadline applications fall in winter. It is important to start applying early as there are documents and letters of recommendation that need time to be formed.

Deadlines

With college applications, there are different types of deadlines. Regular admission, priority admission, rolling admission, and perhaps more. In our senior packet link, it will explain specifics to the deadlines, more on early application, early decisions, and more tips

for applying in general. These details are important to start reading before the application rush starts.

Letters of Recommendation

When applying to the college of your choice, you will need a good letter of recommendation. These letters tend to come from teachers, counselors, coaches, principals, administrators or anyone who knows you well. It is important to start requesting these letters early in order to give the person plenty of time to write them. More details and follow up after the letter is written can be found in the senior packet.

Considering a Community College

There are numerous reasons why a community college is a great fit for many students. Often times, they are close to home, offer classes to fit a work schedule, financially more affordable, and can directly apply to your future career or job. The senior packet will have more reasons and considerations to think about when you are weighing the benefits of a community college.

Useful Links and Websites

The senior packet has a variety of useful links that include comprehensive help, scholarships, SAT/ACT prep, admissions, FAFSA, study tools, apprenticeships, military information, and athletics.

SchooLinks: https://www.schoolinks.com/

SchooLinks is the college and career readiness platform for Cheney School District. Through SchooLinks, you can explore and apply for colleges, explore careers and apply for internship and apprenticeship opportunities. SchooLinks is also the High School and Beyond platform.

FAFSA (Financial Student Aid): https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa

Students in need of financial assistance to help pay for the cost of post-high school education needs to complete the FAFSA. The student will complete 1 FAFSA application the year prior to attending a program, and re-applying for each subsequent year of enrollment.

US Military careers: https://www.usa.gov/military-requirements

The Military is a great choice for many of our graduates. To explore a career in the armed forces, reach out to your school counselor.

The Washington State Board of Education Graduation Requirements site: Graduation Requirements | SBE (wa.gov)