

**Sabine High School
Office of School Counseling
Senior College Planning Guide**



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INTRODUCTION TO SENIOR YEAR COLLEGE INFORMATION

Welcome to your senior year! This booklet provides you with important instructions to complete the college application process. It includes current and useful information for choosing and applying to college and financing the cost of college. Please pay close attention to deadlines. The colleges, school counseling office, and other organizations to which you may be submitting documents expect you to meet designated deadlines.

It is critical that you thoroughly discuss your post-graduate plans with your parents/guardians, teachers, school counselor, and others whose opinions you value. Communicate with your counselor on a regular basis so I can be of assistance with the process.

Your senior year of high school is important to the college admissions staff. They expect you to continue challenging yourself with rigorous courses and to continue participating in extracurricular activities and contributing to your community. Most of all, your grades should be as strong as possible. The admissions staff will review your mid-year and final transcript to ascertain your continued eligibility for admission to college.

The College Planning Calendar below is a good general plan of the application process.

College Planning Calendar

September

- *Discuss your classes, college plans, & test scores with your school counselor.
- *Activate ApplyTexas.org or CommonApp.org account. (Explained on page 9)
- *Track important dates and deadlines. Stay organized. Set up a filing system.
- *Arrange campus visits.
- *Register to take the SAT/ACT.
- *Search for scholarships & grants (an all year process). Use free online search websites. See list in this book.

October

- *Request transcripts to be sent to colleges. (Transcript request forms are in the front office).
- *Ask for letters of recommendation from school counselor, teachers, coaches, etc.
- *Write college application essays.
- *FAFSA opens in October. FAFSA is now a graduation requirement.
- *Complete early decision/early action applications. (Explained on page 7)
- *Take SAT/ACT if needed.

November

- *Continue completion of applications
- *Determine which financial aid forms the colleges to which you are applying require & complete as soon as they are available.
- *Attend Financial Aid Nights and search for additional sources of financial aid.
- *Take Sat/ACT again if needed.

December

- *Complete college applications ideally by winter break.
- *Complete, or be in the process of completing FAFSA.
- *Take SAT/ACT, if needed.
- *Stay organized. Keep copies of all forms submitted by mail or online.
- *Continue to track important dates and deadlines on your calendar.

January

- *If you haven't already, complete your FAFSA as close to January 1st as possible. Aid is often on a first-come first-served basis.
- *Fill out and submit colleges' required financial aid forms.
- *When you have financial aid questions, contact the appropriate college FAO (financial aid office).

February-March

- *College decision and financial award letters start rolling in. If you are denied admission or are waitlisted, you can send a letter of appeal and offer additional achievement information.
- *Arrange to have mid-year transcripts sent to colleges as needed.
- *Make sure your FAFSA was submitted.
- *Check online for your Student Aid Report (SAR) from the FAFSA.
- *Be sure to discuss any special circumstances affecting your family's financial situation with the financial aid office at the college you are planning to attend.
- *Track important financial aid deadlines.
- *Respond quickly to college requests for additional documentation.

April

- *Carefully analyze your letters of acceptance and financial aid documents.
- *Make a decision & send your deposit by the deadline requested.
- *Send a thank you letter to the colleges that you have been accepted to, but have decided not to attend, so they will be able to give your spot to someone on their waiting list.
- *Carefully follow the instructions in your acceptance letter (important deadlines, instructions on housing, financial aid, orientation, etc.).

May

- *Fill out the form provided by the school counseling office to specify which college should receive your final transcript.

*Respond quickly to requests and return necessary forms--when in doubt, contact the financial aid office. (FAO)

*Notify your FAO of any additional funding you'll be receiving to pay for college (scholarships and loans, etc.).

*Evaluate student loan lenders and take time to understand student loans. Learn about borrowing responsibility.

RESEARCHING COLLEGES

Keep an open mind to the possibilities:

*Use college search websites available in the booklet to narrow the list to a manageable number of colleges.

*Colleges offer open house programs in the fall for seniors and their parents. Physically placing yourself on the campus and talking to staff and students gives you a better sense of yourself in that environment.

*You may also be able to schedule an interview to speak to an admissions representative. Make an appointment prior to the open house visit.

*Take a copy of your transcript with you to the interview.

*There are local college fairs in East Texas and some of the larger high schools. Take that opportunity to visit with representatives in person.

Things to Consider When Choosing a College

Academic program

Location (urban, suburban, rural)

Size (small, medium, large)

Extra-curricular activities

Housing accommodations

Dining provisions

Health and counseling services

Safety

Actual cost of attending

Diversity

Technology resources

Religious affiliation

Co-op, internships, or work-based experiential learning options

Job placement services for graduates

HELPFUL HINTS CHOOSING A COLLEGE

You want to select the college that will best satisfy your needs, interests, lifestyle, and personal and professional goals. A good “match” between you and your college will be the key to your success and happiness over the next four years. Establish with your parents the budget for the application fees and only apply to colleges that you really would attend if accepted.

1. Visit the College

Juniors and seniors are allowed two college visit days per year with an excused absence. Students must obtain a college visit form from the front office and obtain a signature from the admissions representative from your visit.

Visit the colleges you are considering during a week when classes are in session. We recommend that you tour the campus, attend one or two classes, meet with the faculty in the department that interests you, eat in the dining hall, and talk with current students. If possible, plan to spend the night in a college dormitory. It will enable you to communicate informally with students, get the “feel” of the campus, and “sample” life as a student. The Admissions Office at most colleges will arrange an overnight visit for you, either before or after acceptance. Remember that you are not just choosing a place to go to school; you are also choosing a home for the next four years. It should be a place where you feel comfortable, relaxed, involved, and challenged.

2. Consider Actual Cost Rather Than “Sticker Price.”

Unfortunately, some students base their college choice on the “sticker price” - the full cost of tuition, fees, room and board - rather than the actual cost of attending. Most colleges offer significant amounts of financial aid, including non-repayable grants, to students with demonstrated needs. In addition, colleges frequently offer installment payment plans, low interest loans, academic scholarships, jobs on campus, and other forms of aid to students, irrespective of need. When all forms of aid are considered, a college education, either private or public, can be surprisingly affordable. Apply for aid (even if you don’t think you qualify) and consider actual cost when making your final decision.

3. Out-of-State Fee Waivers

Texas does not participate in the Academic Common Market at the undergraduate (Bachelors) level. The ACM is a cooperative agreement among a consortium of 16 southern states allowing students to pursue out-of-state academic degree programs at the in-state tuition rate if the program of study does not exist in their state. However, students may look into this for later graduate level (Masters or Doctorate) work.

Students interested in attending college out of state should look into “out-of-state fee waivers” in the form of scholarships at the out-of-state college or university. Some offer waivers for neighboring states while others offer waivers only for neighboring counties where the students reside. Usually there is a one-year residency requirement.

4. Community/Junior and Technical Colleges

For many students, a community college provides the best fit for the transition from high school to college. Financially, they are much less expensive than four-year colleges. Students are accepted regardless of their educational experience. (Keep in mind, students that do not have college entrance exams with TSI exempt scores may have to take remedial courses at a cost to the student without the potential of getting college credit to be ready for college-level work). Universities within the state four-year public university system have transfer agreements with the community colleges to accept specified credits toward bachelor degree programs. It will be important for the student and parent to check which credits will transfer to the four-year university.

APPLYING EARLY: DEFINITIONS

Many students like the idea of applying to colleges early, having the process completed by winter break, and relaxing during the second semester. Below is an explanation of some of the terms used to describe the various ways of applying early.

Instant Decision

Some students will receive a letter offering “Instant Decision”. Colleges may offer to waive the application fee as well on the essay. They may also ask you to choose one of the options for admissions below. Be sure you understand each. Applying through this process will give you a quick answer as to whether you have what the college is looking for or not. It usually is based on ACT or SAT test scores and your GPA. Some will request a Counselor Recommendation at this time.

Early Admission

Some colleges and universities accept students before they have finished high school, usually at the end of the student’s junior year. Admission is rare under this plan, and is only appropriate for the student, who had taken an accelerated high school academic program, has an exemplary high school record, and who is mature enough to make the early move to college.

Early Decision

Several schools offer an admission plan for those students who are certain of their college choice during the first semester of their senior year. Application deadlines for early decision plans are usually in October or November. A student who applies to a school under an early decision plan must sign a contract (as do the student’s parents and college counselor) which states that the student will attend the school if accepted. The student also states that he/she will withdraw any and all other applications submitted to other schools and that he/she will not submit any others. **Applying to a school as early decision is a serious and binding commitment.** Students applying early are reviewed primarily on the

basis of their performance through junior year, so the early decision option is usually advisable only for students with outstanding academic records. Responses for early decision applicants are usually received before winter break of the senior year. A student may apply to only one school as an early decision candidate, so if you decide to do this, you should be sure that it is the school you would like to attend.

Early Action

This is a decision plan similar to that described above, but the important difference is that your acceptance is not binding. Most early action deadlines are in November and December, and you will usually receive a decision before winter break. You will have until the May 1st Candidate's Reply Date, to decide whether or not you will attend that school. You may still apply to other schools even if accepted under this plan. Decisions under this plan are made primarily on the basis of your performance through junior year. It is usually more difficult to get accepted under an early action plan than it is through the regular admissions process.

Single Choice Early Action

This is a new form of Early Action. Single Choice Early Action is a non-binding early application program that allows you to apply to ONLY ONE College early. Deadlines are November and you will usually receive a decision before winter break. You will have until the May 1st Candidate's Reply Date to decide whether or not you will attend that school. You may still apply to other schools even if accepted under this plan.

COLLEGE ADMISSION TESTING

Most four-year colleges require the SAT/ACT tests. If you were not happy with your SAT/ACT scores, we recommend that you take a prep course or purchase a study guide online at www.collegeboard.org/ for SAT or www.actstudent.org for the ACT, or through private companies such as Kaplan, Huntington, or Sylvan, etc. Another great place for practice is www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat, as well as Question of the Day Apps or Twitter feeds, and other study guides at local bookstores. Register online at www.collegeboard.org (SAT) and www.actstudent.org (ACT) for the October, November, or December tests if you are applying to a college early decision. The October test scores will be needed for you to submit your application. **YOU MUST REGISTER FOR THESE TESTS ABOUT A MONTH IN ADVANCE! DON'T MISS THE DEADLINE!** Students who qualify for free/reduced lunch may qualify for a fee waiver for the cost of the SAT/ACT. See Mrs. Loveless to get the form. It is the **student's responsibility** to request his/her official scores to be sent directly from the College Board or ACT to each college when applying.

RELEASE OF SCHOOL RECORDS

Official Transcript Permission Form

An essential step in the college application process is to have your high school transcript sent to the colleges to which you are applying. Obtain an **Official Transcript Permission Form** (found in front of the main high school office) which allows staff to send your official high school record of classes, grades,

class rank and GPA to colleges in your senior year. At mid-year, your transcript will be sent to colleges that require one. After you graduate, one final transcript will be sent to the college of your choice. I will obtain the above information in the spring by requesting that you fill out a form indicating which college you will attend. Please observe all deadline dates. Allow ten school days for transcript requests to be processed.

TSI Score Request Form

Some schools require your TSI scores to be submitted for admittance. If you took your TSI at Sabine High School and would like those scores, you will need to fill out a TSI Score Request Form. These scores will only be released to the student. It is the student's responsibility to get those scores to the college that they desire. <https://www.sabineisd.org/Page/2520>

Completing the College Application

Each application has the directions for completion on the website or on the document if you have a paper application. The application fee is non-refundable. Complete all required sections and submit in sufficient time so that it is received before the application deadline. Students that used a fee waiver for the SAT/ACT test may also be able to get a fee waiver for some college applications.

How to Obtain a College Application

Apply online with www.applytexas.org or www.commonapp.org so you can use this one application for multiple colleges to save you time or you can go directly to the university's website. Make a copy of your completed application before you submit it. Also, print your confirmation page/email when you submit your application.

Application Essay

The application essay is a perfect opportunity for you to directly address the college's admission committee to introduce them to you from a personal perspective. You can share your reasons for applying to a particular college, career goals, insights, and opinions as well as your accomplishments. Through your essay, the committee will be able to assess your communication skills, while acquiring a broader understanding of your attitudes, feelings, imagination and creativity. The essay should help them to distinguish you as an individual from the other applicants.

Follow-up after Completion of the Application

Contact the college about two weeks after the application has been submitted. This is also a good time to continue to apply for scholarships, and most importantly, to maintain high standards academically. A list of online scholarships can be found on or Sabine Counselor link at <https://www.sabineisd.org/Page/2505>. More scholarships are available in front of the high school office during the spring months and through the counselor's Remind App. Please contact the counselor for the code.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Counselor Recommendation

In the event that your application has a portion which is addressed to the principal or school counselor, it

is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to bring that portion to the School Counseling Office for completion. I will also need you to complete a student assessment form. This helps me to better fill out a recommendation form for you.

Please give me at least TEN school days to complete this before it is submitted to the college in which you are applying. Please watch your deadline date to assure that your paperwork will be completed by the date assigned.

Teacher Recommendation

Some colleges accept teacher recommendations. Carefully consider one or two teachers, preferably ones who you have worked closely with and that you feel confident will write a complimentary recommendation for you. It may be a teacher from a previous year. Please ask the teacher at least THREE weeks prior to your deadline.

TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID

Grants - This type of aid does not have to be repaid, but there may be an obligation regarding grades while in college, selection of major, or employment upon graduation. Grants are awards that may be based on financial need or other eligibility criteria.

Scholarships - Scholarship recipients may have to meet criteria such as academic achievement, extra-curricular activities, community involvement, etc. They may also require certain criteria to be met while in college.

Loans - These usually have lower interest rates than commercial loans and must be repaid generally after you have graduated or left college.

Student employment or work study - This may mean a job that the college located for you or employment you found on your own.

How You Apply For Financial Aid

Contact the colleges to which you are applying, online on their websites to request information about scholarships and financial aid. Complete the applications neatly and accurately (first impressions are important). Meet your deadlines! Be careful of scams from unscrupulous people. ALL COLLEGES OFFER SCHOLARSHIPS, YOU WILL NEED TO SEARCH ON THEIR WEBSITE TO FIND THEM!

Use free websites to do scholarship searches. Start to search for scholarships in August of your Senior year. Criteria for scholarships vary widely: academic merit, leadership, service to school and community, talent, financial need, etc. Also use Sabine Scholarship page at <https://www.sabineisd.org/Page/2505>. I also have scholarships posted in front of the front office.

The FAFSA is the U.S. Department of Education's free application for federal student aid. FAFSA opens on October 1st of every year. You will need to complete your application as soon as possible. This should be done at <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa>. Most colleges award money based on the determination of need on the FAFSA report.

ATHLETES

If you are planning to participate in Division I or II sports, you must register with the National College Athletic Association (NCAA) Clearinghouse ASAP at <https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/>.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

General College Information

The College Board (SAT/AP/PSAT/College Info): <https://www.collegeboard.org/>

The National Association of College Admission Counselors (NACAC) - a good resource to an array of links: <https://www.nacacnet.org/>

ACT: <http://www.act.org/>

FASTWEB - easy to use college and scholarship search site: <https://www.fastweb.com/>

Princeton Review - Test Prep, College search and other college-related info:

<https://www.princetonreview.com/>

Historically Black Colleges Common Application - find applications for 29 different institutions:

<https://commonblackcollegeapp.com/>

Apply Texas - an application site to apply to Texas colleges with one application:

https://www.applytexas.org/adappc/gen/c_start.WBX

The Common Application - 200 + schools accept it and you should use it if applying to more than one school - especially out of state: <https://www.commonapp.org/>

Financial Aid

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) - A must for anyone applying for need-based aid: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa>

College for Texans - a site for comparing college costs: <http://www.collegeforalltexas.com/>

CCS Profile - some colleges require it to apply for non-federal financial aid, check here to see if your school will require this form: <https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org/>

FINAID - general site for anything having to do with aid: <http://www.finaid.org/>

FASTWEB - easy to use college and scholarship search site: <https://www.fastweb.com/>

Sallie Mae - information about loans and payment options: <https://www.salliemae.com/>

Career Information

ASVAB Career Exploration Program - Developed by the Department of Defense; free, comprehensive career site: <https://www.asvabprogram.com/>

U.S. Department of Labor - All the you numbers you could possibly hope for in career planning:

<https://www.dol.gov/>

Department of Commerce - info on government jobs and other data:

<https://www.usa.gov/federal-agencies/u-s-department-of-commerce>

Mapping Your Future - multilingual tool kit on career planning: <https://www.mappingyourfuture.org/>

[SAMPLE LETTER TO COLLEGE OF INTEREST]

(Can also be modified to an email format)

Your Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Date

Director of Admissions
Name of College
Address
City, State, Zip Code

To the Director of Admissions:

I am a senior at Sabine High School, in Gladewater, Texas, and I am interested in knowing more about your school. I would appreciate it if you would send me the following information:

- A general bulletin explaining entrance requirements, college costs, course offerings, and facilities available.
- An application for admissions
- Financial aid information
- Information related to [your special interests such as academic majors and extra-curricular activities]

Sincerely,

(Your signature)

(Your name typed or printed)

COLLEGE TRANSCRIPT REQUESTS

In order for Sabine High School to process student transcripts, please complete and return a permission form. Transcripts sent from Sabine High School do not include student SAT, ACT, or AP score reports.

These scores will need to be requested directly from your College Board or ACT online account to be sent directly to the colleges of your choice. When taking these entrance exams, you may request up to four colleges receive your information free of charge. For additional requests - there is a small fee from the testing agency. If you have a few colleges in mind, it is a good idea to go ahead and send scores when you register.

Transcript forms are located in front of the main office. **A separate transcript form must be submitted to the counselor's office for each college for which you are applying.** Each time a request is made for a transcript, you will need a parent signature unless you are 18 years of age. This is a federal law.

School Counseling Office

Student Activities Form

Student Name _____

Please list all organizations (school related, community based or religious) in which you are currently or previously involved and the years you were involved:

Please list all extra-curricular activities in which you are currently or previously involved and the years involved. List any officer positions held.

Please list all volunteer or community activities in which you are currently or previously involved and the years involved:

College Deadlines and Websites

UT Austin: priority admissions & honors November 1st; regular admissions December 1st
<https://admissions.utexas.edu/apply/freshman-admission>

Texas A&M: December 1st
<http://admissions.tamu.edu/freshman/apply>

Texas State University: March 1st
<https://www.admissions.txstate.edu/future-students/apply-for-admission.html>

SMU: January 15th
<https://www.smu.edu/Admission/Apply>

SFA: rolling admissions
<http://www.sfasu.edu/admissions-and-aid/admissions-process/freshman>

Baylor University: early decision November 1st; regular admissions February 1st
<https://www.baylor.edu/about/index.php?id=89309>

Sam Houston State University: August 1st
<https://www.shsu.edu/admissions/undergraduate/>

TCU: February 1st
<https://admissions.tcu.edu/apply/freshman/index.php#february-1--regular-decision>

LeTourneau University: August 1st
<https://www.letu.edu/admissions/index.html>

Texas Tech University: March 1st
<https://www.depts.ttu.edu/admissions/apply/>

Texas A&M Commerce: priority deadline March 1st; final deadline August 1st
<https://new.tamuc.edu/admissions/howto/?level=freshman&stage=interested&interests=&ab=y#tamuc-section-349>

Kilgore College: year round
<https://www.kilgore.edu/future-students/new-students-start-here>

Tyler Junior College: year round
<https://www.tjc.edu/admissions>

UT Tyler: no deadline
<https://www.uttyler.edu/admissions/apply.php?r=/apply/>

East Texas Baptist University: August 27th
<https://www.etbu.edu/admissions/apply/apply-now>

Texas State Technical College: no deadline
<https://www.tstc.edu/admissions>