Things to Know about the College Application Process

**Junior Year:** A lot of kids fall asleep at the wheel, and cruise on by junior year and then summer hits and senior year hits and everyone is in a scurry and stressing out! I recommend students in junior year start their college planning process in January, after the break, yes now. I have created the Junior to Senior Checklist to help you prepare. What students don’t realize is, the college application opens in August of their Senior year, and most have not prepared. By August Seniors need to know already, exactly where they want to go and apply to and what they need to send. There’s a lot at stake: GPA’s, Final Junior year transcripts, essays, and letters from teachers and counselors, etc…

**SAT/ACT-** Students can start taking the SAT/ACT as early as 9th grade for practice. You don’t need to send to any colleges. It is strongly recommended that students have taken by the beginning of Senior year, as the colleges will ask for these scores when you submit your initial application. Many students use Khan Academy (which a free online tutoring resource, buy study guides, or use tutors to prepare. I recommend taking both and get a feel of which you are better at. The universities take either or, and most super score. Which means if you take the SAT 3 times, they combine the top scores of the sections you did the best at, same with ACT.

**Grades and GPA**- It’s important to maintain a strong GPA throughout junior year, as this is the first representation the universities will receive of you! The first transcript the university will receive from your counselor or registrar has to have final grades posted, so the final Junior transcripts is all that is available in the beginning of Senior year when the applications open. Many students “slack” junior year, and begin their focus Senior year, unbeknown of the process. Once you hear from the University on your acceptance status, then the high school personnel will send your Senior final transcript at the end of the year, but again your acceptance is based on you GPA from 9th to 11th grades!

**Common App, Coalition App**- So every school has their way of taking applications. Public Universities ask that you apply directly thru their websites and pay a fee.

Private and most out of state universities ask that you fill out the Common Application or better known as the Common App ([www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org).)This is one application and you add the schools that participate, so you only have to upload your information once and they all receive it and you pay a one time fee.

There is a new application called the Coalition App ([www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org](http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org)). UF is the only university, in Florida, at the moment with this application format but I believe a lot of out of state universities are taking it too. If you use the Common App you don’t have to add the school again thru Coalition.

\*Students need to research the universities they are interested in, and narrow down to at least 5. In their search they should check the type of application the school requires. There are a lot of application fee’s. But realistic on your search, don’t apply to 20 school and spend your parent’s money on schools you know you’re not going to.

**Recommendation Letters:**

Not all schools require recommendation letters, basically it’s the Common App schools and Coalition Schools (Private Universities). Whatever you do, don’t send more recommendation letters than the university requires just to look good, they frown upon this! A rep. from UM mentioned at a conference: if we ask for 2 letters and the student sends 3 or more, we see this as a show off and not very good at following directions. They observe and scrutinize everything, even your handwriting on an envelope!!!! Create a checklist or spreadsheet. I’ll show you below. Do not ask teachers on short notice for recommendation letters, they dislike this, it makes you look irresponsible and disheveled, as it puts a lot of pressure on teachers who have a million things to do and they have to drop everything their doing to write a nice complimenting letter about you. I ask you to approach teachers at the end of Junior year and always hand them a personal resume so they can add all the juicy stuff about you. If you forget, then as soon as school starts approach them but give them at least 3 weeks’ notice. Oh and always return with a Thank you note of appreciation.

**Sample University Organizer:**

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| University | GPA Req. | SAT | ACT | Application Type  CA, Coallition, or General | Application Opens Date | Early Decion or Reg. | Rec.  Letter |
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There’s a lot of researching involved on your side, Counselors will not sit with you and help you apply and research. You must do this on your own. Counselors will listen and give you advice on looking for a college match or college general information.

I recommend to students to research on CAPPEX.com, this website gives you statistics on applying to universities according to your GPA, SAT/ACT scores.

Research the universities themselves under their- Admissions Tab. You can always call and email University Advisors if you are really interested and have questions, they admire this.

Good Luck!!!

Mrs. Terry