

## COLLEGE PREPARATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS / MR. HOPKINS

While this has been a busy year for you, nevertheless, there are some things which you must start to do now to make yourself eligible for the college you will wish to attend. Below are a list of things which you should be doing between now and October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

1. You must register to take the **SAT EXAM**. Due to the COVID-19 situation testing dates have not been confirmed.
2. Have a serious discussion with your parents about what colleges you should be looking into concerning both the cost of tuition as well as how far from home you will be traveling. Once you and your parents are on the same page, if that is possible, visit the go center and look into the schools and what it would take to get in.
3. Once you have prepared a **list of about 10 possible schools** you may wish to attend, begin to visit the school's web sites. Familiarize yourself with the schools and their offerings. If you are heavily into science, and dream of being a doctor, then you might want to stay away from those schools which emphasize the liberal arts rather than the sciences. In addition, if you are a quiet type of person, and do not like large crowds, then a university with 20,000 undergraduates might not be the place for you. More importantly, print out the application forms and find out whether the school is one of more than 1000 across the nation which accepts the common application. It is also a good idea to visit a few of your top choices to make sure that the school and you are a good fit. They all look good in their booklets or on line, but as they say, while a picture can be worth a thousand words, an actual visit may save you the aggravation and emotional trauma of beginning your college career at a school which you suddenly realize is not for you and you now need to go somewhere else.
4. There are two ways to apply to a college on the internet. If the college accepts the "common app" then you can fill that out at [commonapp.org](http://commonapp.org). If the school does not then you will have to use the school's own application or its supplemental application. When you are considering a particular college find out which type of application it accepts. The good thing about the "common app" is that once you have filled it out you can send it to all the schools on your list who will accept it without making any additional changes. You must, however, pay a separate fee for each college which you apply to. Once you have prepared your list of 10 schools determine which application form they require. Review the application requirements since many schools require that **essay(s)** be filed along with your application. Many schools have their own particular essay questions and you must prepare your response to fit each request. These essays should be prepared over the summer so that by the start of your senior year, and I mean the first week of September, not the last week of December, you are ready to have someone read your essay and work on any corrections that need to be made. These essays are important and should not be treated in a frivolous way.
5. Once you have received your SAT scores, your next step will be to figure out how you will be paying for the college you wish to attend. Do not feel that just because your family does not have much money that a four-year school is outside of your reach. Many colleges offer up to 75% of all of their undergraduates some type of financial assistance. This assistance may be in the form of merit scholarships based on academics, or based on financial need. All colleges

require that to be considered for any financial aid you must complete and file a FAFSA (free application for federal student aid) form. These can be reviewed on the internet at [fafsa.ed.gov](http://fafsa.ed.gov), or in paper form from the guidance office. Some colleges also require the financial aid form established by the College Board (the same people who offer the SAT) and that is known as the CSS/Financial Aid Profile and is available at [collegeboard.com](http://collegeboard.com). Some schools also require SAT IIs, which are subject matter tests, and if the college you wish to attend does require such tests then you must begin to plan when you will take them.

6. There are three (3) types of college applications. The first is known as **Early Decision**. If you apply in this manner and the school accepts you, then you must attend that school. This is known as a “binding” application and should only be done if you are sure that this is the one and only school for you. The good thing about Early Decision is that you will know in November or early December whether the school has accepted you or not. If it has, then you will be going there and nowhere else. If you weren’t accepted, then you are free to apply and attend any other schools. The easiest way to gain admission to your number one choice is by filing an Early Decision application. The percentage of students accepted who apply E.D. is much higher than the percentage who apply in any other format. The second way to apply is **Early Action**. I highly recommend this way. It requires you to file your applications, in most cases, by the beginning of November. The school’s decision is not binding and you may apply to many colleges in this manner. The final way to apply is by the **normal application** deadline, but I warn you, the later you apply the higher the chance that you will be denied acceptance since the school has already reached the number of students it was seeking to grant admission to.

7. Prior to leaving school for summer vacation discuss with the appropriate teacher(s) your request for a **letter of recommendation**. Do not treat such letters lightly. The right letter can be important, but it is not fair to ask for such letters in the middle of your senior year just 2 days before the closing deadline on applications at the particular school you wish to attend. You should also write a thank you note to the teacher(s) who take the time to write these letters on your behalf. Many colleges also require that the school’s guidance department officer submit a letter of recommendation on your behalf. I realize that some of you may not know your guidance counselor that well and thus feel unsure about how to approach the subject with them. The easiest way is to prepare a resume (commonly referred to by the slang term “brag sheet”) in which you list all the accomplishments of your life. These accomplishments should include any clubs, sports, organizations, jobs, advanced placement courses, volunteer work, or unusual family circumstances that you have been involved with. In September provide this form to your counselor so that he or she may be properly prepared to write a letter on your behalf. The guidance department letter of recommendation is usually prepared at the same time that you request the guidance department to send out your transcripts to the schools you have applied to.

8. In September you should be ready with the list of colleges you wish to apply to, your letter(s) of recommendation, your SAT scores, and a fair knowledge as to how you plan to pay for college. At this point you should also begin to consider applying for **scholarships**. There are many organizations out there, and some of them are literally handing out money for those who ask for it, but remember, if you have to pay a fee for a scholarship search then it is not

legitimate and you should avoid that particular organization. You should plan to have all your college applications filed no later than October 31, 2020.

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You must remember that college is but one step along the way in your life and thus is not something to worry about but rather something to look forward to. The most important thing is to try and be timely in your application process. If you keep putting off the SAT exam or the application process then you will not get to make the choice about which direction your life is going, instead life will make the choice for you. If you need my assistance during the summer all you have to do is email me [[shopkins@rialtousd.org](mailto:shopkins@rialtousd.org)] and I will try to help in anyway which I can. Finally, it is important to remember these words:

IT'S NOT WHAT COLLEGE YOU ATTEND THAT COUNTS, BUT WHAT YOU DO WHEN YOU GET THERE.