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COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS

Welcome to your senior year! This booklet provides you with important instructions to complete the college application process. Please share it with your parents and keep it as a resource to use throughout the year. The booklet 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, teachers, school counselor, and others whose opinions you value. Communicate with your counselor on a regular basis so they can be of assistance with the process.

Your senior year of high school is important to the college admissions staffs. They expect you to continue challenging yourself with rigorous courses and to continue participating in extra-curricular 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 report and final transcript to ascertain your continued eligibility for admission to college.

College Planning Calendar

September

- o Discuss your classes, college plans, & test scores with your school counselor.
- o Activate CommonApp.org account.
- o Keep your Family Connection/Naviance account up-to-date and track important dates and deadlines.
- o Stay organized. Set up a filing system.
- o Arrange campus visits or make time to visit with college reps when they are at CAPA.
- o Register to take the SAT/ACT.
- o Search for scholarships & grants (an all-year process). Use free online search websites. See the list in this booklet.

October

- o FAFSA Aid forms need to be submitted. October 3 is FAFSA night (more information to come)
- o CSS Profile opens on Oct 1. **You submit the CSS Profile at cssprofile.org.**
- o Ask for letters of recommendation from teachers, coaches, etc.

- o Write college application essays.
- o Complete early decision/early action applications.
- o Take SAT/ACT if needed. Free SAT will be given on Oct 10 at CAPA (Verbal and Math only...no writing!!)

November

- o Continue completion of applications.
- o Determine which financial aid forms the colleges to which you are applying require & complete as soon as they are available.
- o Attend Financial Aid Nights and search for additional sources of financial aid. The FAFSA can be completed at any of the college fairs. There will be on site support should you have any questions or need help filling out the forms online.
- o Take SAT/ACT if needed.

December

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

January

- o Fill out and submit colleges' required financial aid forms.
- o When you have financial aid questions, contact the appropriate college FAO (financial aid office).

February–March

- o College decision and financial award letters start rolling in. If you are denied admission or are wait listed, you can send a letter of appeal and offer additional achievement information.
- o See your counselor to arrange to have mid-year transcripts sent to colleges as needed.
- o Check online for your Student Aid Report (SAR) from the FAFSA.
- o Be sure to discuss any special circumstances affecting your family's financial situation with the FAO at the college you are planning to attend.
- o Track important financial aid deadlines.

- o Respond quickly to college requests for additional documentation

April

- o Carefully analyze your letters of acceptance and financial aid documents.
- o Make a decision & send your deposit (most colleges ask for response by 5/1).
- o Carefully follow the directions in your acceptance letter (esp. important deadlines, instructions on housing, financial aid, orientation, etc.).

May

- o Fill out the form provided by the school counseling office to specify which college should receive your final official transcript.
- o 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.).
- o Evaluate student loan lenders and take time to understand student loans. Learn about borrowing responsibly.

June

Graduation!

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

June 30- FAFSA deadline

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 (6-8).

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 the appointment prior to the open house visit. Take a copy of your transcript with you to the interview. Take a copy of the “Questions To Ask On A College Visit”, that is included in the booklet, with you to the open house program.

There are also virtual tours and interactive communication sites with current students on the internet that can help in your search for the college that is the best fit for you.

College Fairs-

November 14 HBCU Fair

November 26 PASSHE Fair(State schools in PA)

December 4 Meet the MAC (private schools in PA)

Remember that onsite FAFSA Completion is available at every fair

Representatives from many colleges schedule visits to our school throughout the year. Information about the visits will be published on a regular basis through the school counseling office.

For many students, a community college provides the best fit for the transition from high school to college. Also, difficult economic times have required students and parents to explore alternatives to entering four-year college programs as freshmen. Community Colleges provide many opportunities for students. Financially, they are much less expensive than four-year colleges. Students are accepted regardless of their educational experience. The State four-year public university system has transfer agreements with the community college in Philadelphia to accept specified credits toward bachelor degree programs.

Athletes If you are planning to participate in Division I or II sports in college, you must register with the NCAA Clearinghouse ASAP at www.eligibilitycenter.org.

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 Job placement services for graduates.

“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. Applying early might, in fact, be a good idea for some students, but it is not the recommended route for most. Below is an explanation of some of the terms used to describe the various ways of applying early:

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 has 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 that 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 early decision is a serious and binding commitment. If applying Early Decision you are also committing to the cost of the college because you will not know how much financial aid you will receive until April.

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 Candidate's Reply Date, however, 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 admission process.

Single Choice Early Action/Restrictive Early Action

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

Helpful Hints in 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 application fees and only apply to colleges that you really would attend if accepted. To help you

make that difficult final decision, the following "helpful hints" may assist you in determining which college is right for you.

1. Visit The Colleges 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 which interests you, eat in the dining hall, and, perhaps most importantly, talk with current students. Students are the best sources of information about the college; they will talk honestly and knowledgeably about the social life, academic program, and atmosphere on campus, dorm life, and other topics that are important to you. If possible, plan to spend one 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 for tuition, fees, room and board - rather than on the actual cost of attending. Most colleges offer significant amounts of financial aid, including non-repayable grants, to students with demonstrated need. 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 and scholarships and consider actual cost when making your final decision.

COLLEGE ADMISSION TESTING

Most four-year colleges require the SAT Reasoning Test/ACT and some also require SAT Subject Tests. If you were not happy with your SAT/ACT score from last spring or have not taken an SAT/ACT test yet, we recommend that you take an SAT prep course at school if it is offered, online at www.collegeboard.org, or through private companies such as Kaplan, Huntington, or Sylvan, etc. Register online for the SAT tests at www.collegeboard.org. Register online for the ACT tests at www.act.org. If you are applying to a college early decision, take the test in October so your scores will be available at the time you submit your application.

At the time of registration for your SAT/ACT tests, you may request your scores be sent to up to four colleges of your choice at no additional cost. Students who qualify for free/reduced lunch may qualify for a fee waiver for the cost of the SAT/ACT. See your counselor to get the form. Additional requests for score reports can also be made at a later time for a fee. Determine if the colleges to which you want to apply will require SAT/ACT scores, and/or SAT Subject Test

scores. It is the student's responsibility to request his/her official scores be sent directly from the College Board or the ACT to each college. It is to the student's benefit to have his/her appropriate test scores available when submitting your application to the college.

RELEASE OF SCHOOL RECORDS

Designate on your Naviance Connection account the colleges to which you want your transcript to be sent. Once a college receives any information through Naviance, it cannot be removed from you list.

At mid-year, your transcript will be sent only to the colleges that require one.

After you graduate, one final transcript will be sent to the college of your choice. Your counselor 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!!!!

Completing the College Application

Each application has the directions for completion on the website or on the document if you are completing a paper application. The application fee is non-refundable. Set up a realistic schedule for the completion of your applications. Prepare your part of the application completely, accurately, and neatly online, if possible (some colleges require it to be done online). Complete all required signatures and registration payments. Students who use a fee waiver for the SAT/ACT test may also be able to get a fee waiver for some college applications. Submit your application packet in sufficient time so that it is received before the application deadline date.

How to Obtain a College Application

1. Apply online: www.commonapp.org (you can use this one application for multiple colleges to save you time), go directly to the university's website, or www.eduinonline.com (HBCU). Be sure to print any supplemental forms and provide them to teachers and/or the counseling office at the appropriate time. Make a copy of your completed application before you submit it. Also, print your confirmation page/email when you submit application.
2. Use colleges' proprietary online application, when required. Websites, addresses, and telephone numbers are available from directories, catalogs, and School Counseling office resource books.

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.

Arrange with your English teacher to have him/her read the rough draft of your essay and assist you with changes, as needed. Remember, this is a process that takes time. Start in September to afford yourself the time to create a well written essay that you will be proud to submit to the admission committee.

Follow-up after Completion of the Application

Contact the college about two weeks after the application has been submitted online or mailed to make sure it has been received. You will receive communication from the college at varying times regarding additional information that may be needed as well as the admission decisions. **It is beneficial to develop a speaking relationship with the admission staff member who is reviewing your application if possible, but don't overdo it.** In the event that you decide to change colleges, it can be helpful to have a specific contact person with whom you have communicated in the past. This is also a good time to continue to apply for scholarships, and most importantly, to maintain high standards academically. A second visit to your top choice colleges can assist you in making the final decision as to where you will attend college.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Counselor Recommendation:

In the event that your application has a portion which is addressed to the principal or secondary school counselor, it is Your Responsibility to bring that portion to the School Counseling Office for completion along with the forms indicated below:

- a. Know your school counselor's email address and provide that on our online application. If you are completing a paper application and the recommendation form is attached to the application, a photocopy will be made for the counselor to complete and the application will be returned to you.
- b. Bring your completed Brag Sheet to the school counseling office. They will be kept on file in the school counseling office; however, it may be wise to make copies for your own records. The forms are located in this booklet.

Parents are invited to add their own thoughts to the information the counselor will use for the letter of recommendation. Although counselors may not use all of the information provided, the broader perspective is useful as we seek a thorough understanding of the students we recommend.

a) Examples of information that would be helpful:

- Significant childhood experiences
- Critical events that had either a positive or negative impact
- Family events that impacted your child (marriage, divorce, adoption, death of a loved one, etc.)

b) We would appreciate you limiting your comments to one page. You may use a separate sheet of paper if you prefer; however, please make sure the student's full name is included.

Teacher Recommendation: 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. Ask them in person if they are willing to write the recommendation for you, then complete a teacher recommendation request form through Naviance. Provide them with a Brag Sheet at least three weeks prior to your deadline date.

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. **Typically, do not have to be repaid.**

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 aid – This may mean a job that the college located for you or employment you found on your own.

How to Apply For Financial Aid

Contact the colleges to which you are applying to request information about scholarships and financial aid. Complete the applications accurately and meet your deadlines! Be careful of scams from unscrupulous people.

Use free websites to do scholarships searches (list available in this packet). Start your search for

scholarships in September of your senior year. Scholarships are available throughout the year. Criteria for scholarships vary widely: academic merit, leadership, service to school and community, talent, financial need, etc.

The FAFSA is the U.S. Dept. of Education's free application for federal student aid. **Remember to go to <http://pin.ed.gov> to request a pin number that you will need to be able to complete the FAFSA.** Complete the FAFSA as early as possible in October (FAFSA opens Oct 1). The form should be done online at: www.fafsa.ed.gov (this is the only free website). Most colleges award financial need monies based on the determination of need on the FAFSA report. You will need your pin number to access the student aid report (SAR) online.

The CSS Profile is an online application that collects information used by nearly 400 colleges and scholarship programs to award non-federal aid. Some colleges may require the CSS Profile from both biological/adoptive parents in cases of divorce or separation. **Check your colleges' information to determine whether they require the CSS Profile.** A list of participating colleges is also found on the CSS Profile Homepage.

There are many local scholarships available for students. Contact civic organizations for applications. The school counseling office publishes lists of scholarships throughout the year. It is your responsibility to complete applications and meet the submission deadlines.

Attend the financial aid evening presentation with your parents here at our school (date to be announced).

HELPFUL WEBSITES

Naviance: accessible through your Student Portal on philasd.org

The College Board: www.collegeboard.org

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

ACT - includes test registration and test-prep information: www.act.org

US News and World Report - be wary of the rankings, but there is much to learn at this site. The "school comparison" feature is great: www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/eduhome.htm

FASTWEB – easy-to-use college and scholarship search site: www.fastweb.com

Fiske Guide Books – from the author of the reliable and popular guidebook comes a full array of college admission-related resources: <http://www.fiskeguide.com/index.html>

Princeton Review - Test prep, college search and other college-related info:
<http://www.princetonreview.com/college-rankings.aspx?uidbadge>

The Common Application - 200+ schools accept it and you should use it. We have the paper copy as well. : www.commonapp.org

Historically Black Colleges Common Application - www.eduinonline.com

FINANCIAL AID WEBSITES

Compare Financial Aid Packages – part of College Board site that allows you to compare financial aid packages: <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/pay/scholarships-and-aid/index.html>

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) - A must for anyone applying for need-based aid. You can apply on line: www.fafsa.ed.gov

FAFSA Pin Registration – You must have a pin number to complete the FAFSA application online. You can apply for the pin number at: www.pin.ed.gov

Completing the FAFSA - detailed, step-by-step guidance on completing the form: studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/completing_fafsa/index.html

FAFSA4caster – provides an early estimate of your eligibility for federal student aid: www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov

CSS Profile - If applying to private schools, check to see if they require this form. You can apply online: <http://profileonline.collegeboard.com/index.jsp>

PHEAA- Pennsylvania State Grant Program: www.pheaa.org

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

How Stuff Works - Interesting and comprehensive site with loads of details and helpful tools: <http://money.howstuffworks.com/college-financial-aid.htm>

Comparing Financial Aid Awards - A US News and World Report product that provides helpful charts enabling you to line up and compare awards: http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/college/tools/brief/awards_brief.php

Student Guide on Financial Aid - Government site, a comprehensive site with info available in both Spanish and English: http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/index.html

Scholarships - A free resources for finding scholarships and other information about aid: www.scholarships.com

Savings Plans - Though by the time you are in your junior year, this information might be too late, finding out about 529 Plans may offer some help: www.savingforcollege.com & www.collegesavings.org

Broke Scholar - Free search engine with links to more than 900,000 college scholarships: www.brokescholar.com

SPECIAL INTEREST

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) - www.ncaa.org

The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) - www.naia.org

Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life - www.hillel.org

Black Excel: The College Help Network - designed to help African-American students navigate the college admission process: www.blackexcel.org/

Historically Black Colleges - www.blackhighereducation.com

Jesuit Colleges - www.ajcunet.edu

Macleans - For those looking into Canadian schools, this is an invaluable resource:
www.macleans.ca/universities/

Association on Higher Education and Disability - host of information posted by international, multicultural organization of professionals committed to full participation in higher education for persons with disabilities: <http://www.ahead.org/>

Children and Adults with ADD - www.chadd.org

Mindplay - Special education resources "learning from the RIGHT side of the brain."
<http://www.mindplay.com/resource.html>

American Association of University Women - www.aauw.org/

LD Online - Interactive learning guide on disabilities for parents, children and educators:
www.ldonline.org

Attention Deficit Disorder Association - Resource on huge array of ADD/ADHD- related issues:
www.add.org

Peace Corp - main resource on the ultimate service learning project: <http://www.peacecorps.gov/>

CAREER INFORMATION

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

US Department of Labor - All the numbers on could possibly hope for in career planning:
<http://stat.bls.gov/>

Department of Commerce - gov. site with host of info on government jobs and other data:
<http://www.fedworld.gov/>

Occupational Outlook Handbook – provides job descriptions, required education, future

opportunities. www.bls.gov/oco

ALTERNATIVE AND YEAR-OFF PROGRAMS

Internship Programs – Listings of +7800 programs and 200,000 positions:

<http://www.internshipprograms.com/SearchInternships.asp>

Time Out - are you looking for options for taking some time off before heading off to school?

www.timeoutassociates.com

Study Abroad - www.studyabroad.com

AmeriCorps - National Service Program: www.americorps.org

City Year - National Youth Service Organization- www.cityyear.org

Gap Year - A host of travel and work ideas for students prior to heading off to college:

www.gapyear.com

Outward Bound - link for adventure-based environmental program:

<http://www.outwardbound.org/>

World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms - dedicated to helping those who would like to volunteer on organic farms internationally: <http://www.woof.org/>

QUESTIONS TO ASK ON A COLLEGE OPEN HOUSE VISIT

You have only a short time on campus for the open house visit. Prioritize the questions that are most important for you to have answered.

What percent of students receive financial aid?

What is the faculty like? Caring? Friendly? Aloof? Rigid?

Do professors or graduate students teach freshman courses?

What is the typical class size, and how much individual attention will I receive?

Does the college have an active Career Center to help me prepare for a successful transition to the world of work after graduation?

What is the atmosphere on campus? Friendly? Relaxed? Competitive? Pressured?

What tutorial assistance is available to students?

What part do fraternities and sororities play in the social and extra curricular life of the college?

Does the college provide study abroad and internship opportunities?

Does the college support an active visiting speaker's program as well as a diverse mixture of entertainment?

What are the percentages of graduates accepted to graduate, medical, and law schools?

How flexible are dormitory living spaces?

Are there medical and counseling services available on campus?

Are there part time employment opportunities on campus and in the surrounding community?

Is there public transportation to shopping, airports, train stations, and the bus depot?

Follow these steps to ensure timely and efficient processing of transcript requests: (It would be wise to check them off to ensure that they're all complete.)

1. Create a common app account and sign the FERPA waiver at Common App. It is recommended to Download Common application's mobile app. In Naviance, match your Family Connection account with your common app.
2. Ask no more than 2-3 teachers to write letters of recommendation that reflect what you were like in their classes and make sure they know what your deadlines are, giving them at least three weeks' notice.
3. Send your ACT and SAT scores directly from www.actstudent.org and www.collegeboard.org.
4. Write your college essay so that it is ready to go.
5. In Naviance, add transcript requests for each college you are applying to.
6. In Naviance, add recommendation requests for the 2-3 teachers you identified earlier.
7. Follow up with the teachers you asked to write your letters of recommendation to ensure that they uploaded your letters to the colleges you indicated.
8. If you add colleges after the initial request, teachers and counselors do not get automatic notification of the addition. It is incumbent upon you to advocate for proper and timely processing of your requests.
9. Once you know for sure that your documents have been sent, allow the college 2-3 weeks for processing.

STUDENT BRAG SHEET FOR LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

First Name _____ Last Name _____ ID # _____

1. **INTRODUCTION:** Please tell me about yourself. List 3-5 adjectives that you or others use to describe you.

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | |

What do you hope to accomplish in life and why?

2. **ACADEMICS:** What types of courses interest you and why?

What are your proudest **academic** accomplishments and why?

Do you feel your GPA and/or test scores reflect your true academic ability?

3. **PERSONAL:** In what areas have you grown or matured since freshman year?

How do you express your creativity? (Academically, artistically, athletically, interpersonally, musically, etc.)

Are there any difficult challenges, disabilities, special circumstances, or struggles that you would like to mention?

4. **ACTIVITIES:** What activity or work experience has been the most meaningful to you and why?

Give an example(s) of how you have demonstrated leadership skills.

List your **high school activities** and the years of participation. You may also add comments regarding leadership roles, committees, special responsibilities, etc.

List activities **outside of high school** and the years of participation. You may also add comments regarding leadership roles, committees, special responsibilities, etc.

List your **community service/volunteer activities** during your high school years and years of participation.

List **part-time jobs** and dates of participation.

5. Please include any other comments about yourself that you think would be helpful for me or a college rep to know.
