

## Preparing for college as a high school junior

The transition from high school to college can be a busy road that will go by fast. Believe it or not, it is helpful to prepare for college while you are still in high school. There are many things that you can do to prepare ahead of time so that the transition to college is a smooth one that will not stress you too much. Here are a few tips to help high school juniors get a head start on the college application process:

### Talk with your Guidance Counselor

Set up an appointment with your high school guidance counselor. He/she will be able to help guide you in the right direction to make sure you are taking the appropriate classes to help prepare you for college. They will also talk to you about your career intentions and what possible schools would best fit your intended major. He/she can tell you what requirements are needed for college, such as SAT exams and essay requirements. Your high school guidance counselor is available to help you with your future educational goals.

### SAT Exams

Most colleges require students to take the SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test) or ACT test. These exams help colleges assess a student's readiness for college level work. You can prepare for these tests by purchasing preparation books at the bookstore or some high schools even offer SAT or ACT Prep classes so that you know what to expect when the test comes. Don't worry; if you get a lower than expected score, you can take the test again. Most schools will take the highest score received.

### Visit Colleges

It is never too early to start visiting colleges. You can attend the college's open house events or you can call and make an appointment for a personalized tour. This is your chance to ask questions such as class size, majors offered, campus life, and anything else that is important to you when selecting a college. If you can't visit colleges, then request information from your prospective schools. Every school has a website now and usually you can request an information packet via the web. College fairs are also a good way to obtain information. These are sometimes held at high schools or other local venues and include representatives from local colleges to answer your questions.

### Extracurricular

Be sure to participate in extracurricular activities such as clubs and sports. Believe it or not, these are just as important as the classes you take. Colleges want to see that you are a well-rounded student who can handle classes as well as other activities. This will show that you can be an asset to their school.

### Financial Aid

Start thinking about how you will pay for college. This will probably have an impact on which college you choose. If your parents have already handled that for you, then you have nothing to worry about. However most students apply for Federal Financial aid, so you may want to start researching loans, grants, and scholarships. If you have questions, you can talk to your guidance counselor or even attend financial aid events that are sometimes hosted by high schools or other local organizations.

Applying to college can be a complicated and long process, but if you are prepared, you can make the application process seamless and less stressful.