

College Applications & Senior Year Reminders

After you've narrowed down your list of colleges (4 -6), it is time to apply!

Consider the following when looking at **college websites**:

- **Appropriate level of challenge:** Does your list of schools reflect academic criteria similar to yours in terms of test scores, grade point average (GPA). Your GPA on your SJHS transcript is out of a 4.0 scale.
- **Finances:** Is there at least one school on your list that your family can definitely afford? You may want to complete a "financial aid estimator" available at www.collegeboard.org
- **Test Requirements:** Have you taken all the necessary tests for the colleges to which you plan to apply?

Early Decision and Early Action: Early applications are generally due as early as November 1. Deadlines and early admissions information can be found on each school's website. Know the difference between applying *Early Decision* vs. *Early Action* and whether or not it is binding with the school to which you are applying. This information is found on their websites.

IT IS THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO BE AWARE OF ALL IMPORTANT DEADLINES FOR EACH SCHOOL!

College Application Checklist

It is the student's responsibility to know the requirements for each college application and to make sure that the components are sent by the deadlines.

- ✓ **The Application:** Applications are completed online at each school's admissions website either through their own online application or through The Common Application.
- ✓ **Official Transcript:** Required by all colleges for admission. It reflects grades by semester, GPA, rank and ACT score. For official transcripts to be sent, students must complete a "Transcript Request Form" for each school to which they are applying. These forms are on pink paper and can be found in the counseling office or on the counseling dept. webpage.
- ✓ **Official Test Scores:** Even though SJHS will include your ACT scores, many colleges require students to send scores directly from ACT. Visit www.actstudent.org to have your scores sent directly from ACT.
- ✓ **Essay or Personal Statement:** This is often the first impression many colleges have of you. Give this item your full attention and effort. You may want to have a teacher proofread your essay and offer suggestions.
- ✓ **Secondary School Report or Counselor Form:** Some colleges ask for additional information to be sent with your transcript. This is completed by your counselor, but you must supply your counselor with this form unless it is found online (e.g. The Common Application).
- ✓ **Letters of Recommendation:** Be sure to provide 1-2 weeks notice when asking for a recommendation. Complete a "Recommendation Questionnaire" which can be found on the SJHS counseling department webpage under "Forms". Your counselor will not be able to provide a letter of recommendation if given the request at the last minute.
- ✓ **Portfolio:** Some schools, such as art schools, ask for a professional portfolio of your work. Specific criteria should be listed in the application or on their admissions website.
- ✓ **Application Fee/Waiver:** Fees usually range from \$0-\$75 per college. Applications that have a fee are considered incomplete until the fee is paid. Fee waivers are available to qualified students for most schools. Visit the SJHS guidance website, and click on "Forms" to download the universal NACAC (National Association for College Admission Counseling) fee waiver form. Most schools accept this form, but some do not. Check each school's website for specific information about an application fee waiver.

(Additional Important Information on reverse side)

Additional Important Information

FAFSA: The Free Application for Federal Student Aid can be completed online now **beginning Oct 1, 2016** by visiting www.fafsa.gov. Both student and parent need to complete the FAFSA online using information from your 2015 Federal Tax Return. When you complete the FAFSA, be sure to indicate which colleges you would like to receive your FAFSA information from the US Department of Education. Once these schools receive this information, they will generally send you a financial aid package explaining what aid (if any) the student and family qualify for including grants and loans, as well as the specific costs and fees for attending their specific school. Visit the FAFSA help page by clicking on "Help" on FAFSA's main page for additional information.

Scholarships: Scholarships are literally all over the place! Finding them can be the challenge. Visit our counseling department webpage for up-to-date local scholarship opportunities AND for useful scholarship search tools (e.g., "scholarships.com" or "fastweb.com"). These search tools are the best resources for finding scholarships all around the country.

SJHS Counseling Department webpage: We cannot emphasize enough the useful resources and information found on our webpage! The answers to many of your questions can be found on our webpage including questions related to scholarships, college search tools, NCAA eligibility requirements, graduation requirements, FAFSA, The Common Application, counseling department forms and our counseling department calendar which lists all counseling activities including when and which colleges are visiting SJHS during lunches. To visit our counseling department webpage, go to www.stjoeshs.org and click on "**Counseling Department**" under the **Academics** tab.

Graduation Requirements: In addition to your academic class requirements which can be found on page 10 of your SJHS Student Handbook, do not forget that 40 hours of approved and documented service are also required for graduation. Do not wait until semester 2 to complete these hours as all hours need to be completed by mid-April, well before graduation. See Ms. Walsh in Room 404 if you have questions about service hours.

Application Steps At-A Glance:

1. Search for colleges that meet your criteria.
2. Apply online through each school's admissions webpage and submit your applications.
3. Complete a "Recommendation Questionnaire".
4. See your counselor and turn in:
 1. Transcript Request Form for every school you've applied to
 2. Recommendation Questionnaire (if requested)
 3. Any additional forms that your applications may require
5. Search for scholarships by using the search tools found on our department webpage.
6. Complete the FAFSA beginning Oct 1, 2016.
7. Continue to search for and apply to additional schools.
8. When you start to receive financial aid packages from schools, review and compare costs & financial aid offered.
9. Make your decision and notify your school before May 1, 2017 or before their deadline. (Housing deposit due)