

Senior Year Checklist

Here is a checklist to help you get started on the right track. Check off each item as you complete it. This list is just a beginning, so there's no doubt you will have many more questions. Continue to look at this checklist regularly with your parents and counselor.

SEPTEMBER

- Be sure to continue collecting information on options for postsecondary education. Keep it all in a folder.
- Be sure that your psycho-educational testing is up-to-date. For students with cognitive disabilities, request that your final evaluation contain standardized intelligence and achievement tests using adult norms.
- Beware of "senioritis!" Your senior year grades, especially from the first semester, count heavily in postsecondary admissions. If you do well, it is a plus for you. Although good grades are important all through high school, colleges/universities believe your junior and senior year grades often are a good indication of how you might do in postsecondary education.
- You might think about taking a study skills class or program through your community college or high school.
- Be sure you know your learning strengths and weaknesses and compensating techniques or accommodations that work best for you.
- If you need audio textbooks, be sure you register with Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic and Wolfner Library to secure an audio player.
- Make sure that your independent living skills are adequate (e.g. keeping a checking account, doing laundry, cleaning, cooking, and transportation).
- Learn about Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. These laws explain what kinds of accommodations postsecondary institutions must provide when a student requests them. It is your responsibility to ask for the necessary accommodations (See Section 2).
- Be sure to sign up to take an admission test (SAT/ACT) if one is required by the college/university that interests you. Ask your high school counselor for test registration forms. If you need testing accommodations, such as a reader or additional time, so that test scores will accurately reflect your knowledge, talk to your counselor about making these arrangements.
- Stay in contact with your Division of Vocational Rehabilitation counselor.
- Create a checklist of deadlines for admissions application, test registration, fees, test dates, financial aid applications, and other materials you will need to submit. Keep all of this in a folder. Make sure you know the necessary steps to have your transcript sent to the colleges/universities to which you are applying.

- Narrow your postsecondary options to 3 or 4. Write for application materials. Inquire about support services to be sure they can meet your needs. Ask for the number of students with disabilities who attend and whether or not there are modified admission procedures for students with disabilities.

OCTOBER

- If a postsecondary institution requires an application essay, begin preparing notes and outlines this month. The essay is an important part of your application. It deserves special attention. You might want to ask your English teacher for some help.
- Visit colleges and universities and attend College Fairs to help decide which postsecondary institution is best for you. Do these places have the support services you will need? Again, it's best to visit and be sure.
- If you need letters of recommendation for your college application, talk to your teachers, past employers, coaches, etc. and give them copies of forms provided by the postsecondary institution to which you are applying.
- Most postsecondary institutions charge a nonrefundable fee (usually from \$10 to \$30) at the time you file your admission application. Remember to enclose a check! Community Colleges do not have application fees.

NOVEMBER

- Some postsecondary institutions have application deadlines as early as November 1, particularly for early decision plans. Check application deadlines for postsecondary institutions that interest you, and ask if there are early deadlines to qualify for certain majors, campuses, or housing.
- Your library has books and pamphlets about financial aid; look for special state, federal, and local programs. Continually check out all possible sources of financial aid. Ask about any private programs, such as churches, community groups, or minority organizations and write for more information and application forms. You can find out about these programs at your local public library and your school counselor's office.
- You should try to complete the first draft of your application essay this month. Give yourself enough time to revise.
- Keep working on your grades since your transcript will be sent with your applications.

DECEMBER

- To get financial aid, you have to apply for it. Ask your school counselor for the College Board's Financial Aid Form (FAFSA) packet, which consists of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and the FAFSA. Find out from the postsecondary institutions to which you are applying which forms to fill out.
- Check also to see if the postsecondary institutions have a separate institutional aid application. Many do. Begin filling them out now and avoid the rush created by pressure from end-of-year holidays and term papers.

- Are there any postsecondary institution representatives visiting your school this month? Check bulletin boards and the counseling office and make appointments with appropriate school representatives.
- Complete the final draft of your essay. It should be typed, neat, attractive, interesting, easy to read, and grammatically correct! Remember to keep a copy for your records before mailing it.
- Double-check your admission application deadlines.
- The holidays are a good time to talk with relatives and older friends who may have gone to college. They may have some suggestions for you.

JANUARY

- Now is the time to complete your financial aid forms. Send them in as soon after January 1 as possible. Be sure to include all postsecondary institutions you want to receive copies of your forms.

FEBRUARY

- Men 18 years and older must prove draft registration in order to receive federal financial aid. Inquire at the local post office about registering.
- If your grades and test scores are high, consider taking College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams. CLEP tests generally are offered each month for credit at participating postsecondary institutions. For more information about CLEP, ask your school counselor.

MARCH

- If any of the postsecondary institutions you are considering have application deadlines in March, be sure you meet them. Many students like to pick some "wishful thinking" postsecondary institutions to apply to, some "probable," and some "sure things." You never know which applications may pay off.
- Watch announcements, bulletin boards, and newspapers carefully for scholarships. Many local organizations and individuals award scholarships to students at each local high school.

APRIL

- You may start receiving offers of admission and financial aid this month. Continue to make long-range plans with your family about how you're going to pay for postsecondary education.
- Stay in contact with your Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) counselor. Financial aid information must be updated regularly with your DVR counselor.
- Develop a college portfolio of materials to document your secondary school program and to facilitate service delivery in the postsecondary setting. The following list are possible items to include in your college portfolio:
 - ✓ Get Ready for Your First Meeting with DSS form
 - ✓ Documentation of disability
 - ✓ Copy of most recent IEP

- ✓ ACT/SAT results(4 year colleges)
 - ✓ High school transcripts
 - ✓ 2 teacher recommendation letters (4-year colleges)
 - ✓ Awards/scholarships
 - ✓ SS#
 - ✓ Newspaper articles
 - ✓ Vocational assessments
 - ✓ Resume/activity sheet
- Review your “Get Ready for Your First Meeting with DSS” form with your Resource/Special Education teacher.
 - Understand and be able to discuss the contents of your reports concerning your disability history and diagnosis.

MAY

- As soon as you have decided which offer to accept, notify the postsecondary institution of your decision. Be sure to let the financial aid office know if you intend to accept or decline their offers. Also, tell your high school counselor which postsecondary institution you've selected so that final grades, class rank, and proof of graduation can be submitted.
- Find out who is responsible for assisting students with disabilities at the postsecondary institution of your choice. Get an appointment as soon as possible before starting school to discuss your disability, the documentation requirements needed, and the accommodations you will need.
- If you are placed on a postsecondary institution's waiting list and you intend to enroll, you should call or write to the director of admissions to ask how to strengthen your application. Recent evidence of high academic achievements or other accomplishments might help.
- Be sure to arrange to have your final transcript showing graduation sent to the postsecondary institution you will attend. Also, have one sent to your Vocational Rehabilitation counselor. Sign release of information so your records can be sent as needed.

JUNE

- Send thank you notes to anyone who helped you on your postsecondary education quest, such as school counselors, teachers, and other adults. They'll appreciate it.
- Use the summer to earn extra money for postsecondary education.
- If you decide at the last minute that you want to pursue postsecondary education, you may still have a "walk-in" option. During the two-to-three week period just before classes begin, postsecondary institutions sometimes discover that they still have room for students. If you apply, you might be accepted.