

NORTH STAR SENIOR COLLEGE PLANNING

Step-by-step process for helping seniors prepare for life after North Star

How do I begin this process?

- ❖ *Planning for college is a family decision, but the application process must be YOURS! Initiate a conversation with your parents soon about how much they can afford, private vs. public, in-state vs. out-of-state, etc. The earlier you know your parameters, the easier it is to begin your search.*
- ❖ *Meet with your counselor soon so we can help you with this process. We can help you with basic information about schools as well as coming up with an organizational system, if needed.*
- ❖ *GET ORGANIZED: stay on top of deadlines for each college and financial aid opportunity (both application and financial aid deadlines).*
- ❖ *This is a time of anxiety, so don't fall victim to talk in the halls ☺ It always seems like someone is more organized and ahead of you in the process, but everyone has their own schedule. DO WHAT WORKS FOR YOU!*

College Application Checklist

(Schools needing a recommendation)

- ❖ *TEACHERS AND COUNSELORS NEED THREE WEEKS NOTICE TO COMPLETE ALL LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION! If you want us to do our best work, we need adequate time to reflect on our letters. Check to see if teachers have any special paperwork they like you to submit with your request.*
- ❖ *Invite counselor and teachers through Common Application just as soon as you are able to do so. DO NOT wait until you have completed your portion.*
- ❖ *Submit a Senior brag sheet to your counselor when you ask them to write a letter.*
- ❖ *Please, please talk to teachers prior to inviting them electronically to write your letter.*
- ❖ *Check to see if test scores must be sent directly from the testing agency (ACT & SAT). Some schools will accept scores on North Star transcripts, but others do not accept those scores as official.*

Where Should I Apply?

- ❖ *A “Reach” school may be a college you have always dreamed on attending, but perhaps your academic profile doesn’t exactly match their average incoming class. It is fine to apply to one or two of these, but realize they generally have traditionally low admission rates.*
- ❖ *A “Match school is one where their average GPA, test scores, class rank, etc. are comparable to yours. Their admission rates may be lower, so acceptance isn’t a sure thing.*
- ❖ *A “Safety” school is one where your academic profile matches their profile, and you are fairly certain you will be admitted.*
- ❖ *Narrowing down your list of schools prior to applying is a good idea. The average application fee is in the range of \$70 - \$100 and this can add up quickly. Don’t apply somewhere just because they offer a free application. Do your research prior to applying.*

Know Your Admission Terminology

- ❖ *Early Action – students who apply prior to a certain date will receive their admission decision early. This is a non-binding decision. Students may be accepted, wait listed, deferred, or denied.*
 - ❖ *Early Decision – this is a binding commitment. You should not apply ED unless you are certain you will attend this school if you are admitted. Students applying ED may not apply early to any other school. You may apply as a regular decision applicant. If you are accepted, you must pull your applications from all other schools.*
 - ❖ *Regular Action –*
 - ❖ *Restricted Early Action – it can vary from school to school, but is generally a binding commitment. Make sure you are fully aware of the*
- **Occasionally schools will have high admission rates for Early applicants***

Financial Aid

- ❖ *The majority of student Financial Aid comes from the institution. This may be based on grades, test scores, special aptitudes or abilities, etc. Some schools require a separate application for both admission and financial aid, so make sure you check to see what forms are required. All colleges are required to have a Net Price Calculator on their website.*
- ❖ *This year the window for filing a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) opens October 1. You and your parents will be using your 2015 tax information to complete this form. Please go to www.fafsa.ed.gov for information on how to set up an account.*
- ❖ *If you are attending a state school in the west, research WUE requirements. Some schools may require the CSS Profile as a part of their scholarship application.*
- ❖ *We encourage all students to search for scholarships on your own. This may seem a daunting process, but if you need financial assistance beyond what the schools or government can award, this is a necessary process.*
- ❖ ***PAY ATTENTION TO PRIORITY FINANCIAL AID DEADLINES.** These may vary from application deadlines.*

College Visits

- ❖ *It is difficult to get to know a college just from their website. If at all possible, visit a school prior to applying for admission. Make sure you have thought about things ahead of time and come prepared with a list of questions (study abroad, financial aid, majors, etc). Ask to see a residence hall, eat in the cafeteria, read the student newspaper, walk around campus (are people plugged in to electronics, or do they socialize).*

Resources

- ❖ *Common Application* – www.commonapp.org
- ❖ *Idaho Career Information System* – www.idahocis.org
- ❖ *College Board's Big Future* – www.bigfuture.org