

Applying to College 101

Timeline and Deadlines:

Seniors should begin applying to college in the fall semester. Many schools have priority deadlines in November and December in order to be considered for certain scholarships. Some highly prestigious schools offer the option of “Early Decision” (binding) or “Early Action” (non-binding) to be considered for admission in a smaller pool. We strongly advise students to review these options with their family and counselor to make sure it’s a good choice. College board has an excellent article on the pros and cons of applying via one of these plans: [Early Decision versus Early Action](#)

Application, Transcripts, and Test Scores (oh my!):

All schools will require all three of the above in order to be considered for admission.

****Check with each College for policy changes regarding ACT/SAT scores due to COVID-19****

Applications: Now that we’re well into the 21st century, nearly all schools either require or recommend completing an on-line application. Some will be very short and take only 10-15 minutes, while others will require significantly more information and may take hours (or days). In general, the more selective the college, the more information they will require. Plan your time accordingly, and if the school asks for a personal essay (or three), do NOT procrastinate and submit something subpar. Schools are asking for it because they are a heavy part of the admissions process. Some applications will also require letters of recommendation. (See below for guidelines on letters of rec.) Again, please do NOT procrastinate asking for these letters. We ask a minimum of two weeks to write and submit a good letter on your behalf.

Transcripts: Schools must evaluate your academic successes based on courses and grades as documented on your transcript. Many schools (like NAU and ASU, for example), will allow students to self-report initial grades, but eventually, all schools will ask for the OFFICIAL transcript to verify them.

How do I get an Official Transcript?

Students will need to log in to their Major Clarity account to request an official transcript be sent to colleges. Our Records Coordinator, Mrs. Christmas, will check and send official/electronic transcripts through Major Clarity on your behalf for free. In the event that you need a transcript sent to a coach or for a scholarship, you can usually use the unofficial transcript download that is in Student Vue under the Course History tab. If you need an official transcript mailed directly somewhere other than a college, please email Mrs. Christmas directly with the name and complete address of where to send it. LChristmas@pusd11.net . COUNSELORS ARE NOT ABLE TO SEND OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPTS.

A week or two before you graduate from Liberty, you will fill out a Senior Checkout Form. This will walk you through directions on how to send your final HS transcripts to the colleges of your choice. All colleges must receive your FINAL transcript showing your final grades and that you successfully graduated from high school. ***Mrs. Christmas will send your final transcript to the school you list once grades post (usually a week or two AFTER graduation).*** However, if you do not know where you are going to college, or change your mind, you will need to email Mrs. Christmas a request of when you would like them sent.

Test Scores required for University Admission:

Every junior at Liberty takes the ACT their junior year, and those scores are not automatically reported on your transcript. However, most universities that require test scores for admission, need an official copy of your test scores. Like your official transcript, the official scores must come directly from ACT, untouched by you. ACT offers students the opportunity to send their scores for free to four colleges. When you filled out the paperwork to take the ACT, you would have listed four schools (or left that option blank). Once a student has used their four free score reports, it costs \$12.00 per report, per school to send additional copies. (Rushed scores are \$16.50.) Many students also opt to take the SAT and the same guidelines apply. Costs may vary for this exam. More information can be found on ACT's website or on the SAT website.

Re-taking the ACT or SAT

If you decide to re-take the ACT or SAT, and you need the updated scores to be sent to your school of choice, you will need to have your scores sent directly from ACT or SAT (again, you can select up to four schools). Both ACT and SAT will report ALL scores from all test dates on a single report so if you take the exam multiple times, only one report needs to be sent.

Testing Requirements for the Community College

The Maricopa Community College system does not require an ACT or SAT for admission. Instead, students starting at a community college will take the "ACCUPLACER" exam that will place students in their freshmen Math and English courses. (Students who score well on these exams and/or graduate with a 3.25 GPA qualify for the Presidential Scholarship!)

Letters of Recommendation:

Very few colleges will ask for letters of recommendation, but for those that do, they should be taken very seriously, as they are part of your application. Some schools will require that a counselor complete one, others will allow the student to select a teacher, coach, etc to write one. Choose your recommenders carefully. Think of teachers that know you well and can speak to your work ethic, integrity, personality, and dedication to learning. Some students only think of their senior teachers, but often a teacher you had even two years ago may know you better. When requesting a letter, you must allow your recommender TWO WEEKS to complete. If you procrastinate and ask days before you need it, your lack of planning might be reflected in your letter.

Procedure for requesting a letter of rec:

- 1) Complete the [Profile Sheet for Requesting a Letter of Rec](#)
- 2) Give the sheet to your guidance counselor, teacher, or coach with the following information:
 - a. A cover or information sheet that informs your recommender of what you are applying (this is especially important for scholarships as different scholarships look for different qualities).
 - b. Submission instructions including an address to mail the letter. (Many submissions are now online, and the student will provide the counselor's email for submission links).
- 3) Let your counselor or teacher know of any new applications you are completing that also require a letter. We will customize each letter for the college and/or scholarship you are applying.

Apply for Financial Aid!

Seniors can now apply for financial aid during the fall semester of their senior year (and some have priority deadlines as early as November!). Many schools will require that you've submitted your FAFSA application prior to awarding any monies, even if there is no government aid in your award package. Schools use the results of the FAFSA to award many need-based scholarships, work study, etc. To get started, you and your parent will need to create an "FSA ID" and use this log-in to apply and digitally sign the application. The fall submission uses your parents' tax information from the prior year, and if necessary, students will amend in the spring when the following years' taxes are filed. Check out the [FAFSA TO-DO LIST](#) for helpful information to get you started.

Wait for Admissions and Award Letters

Many students wait to accept an offer until after they've received all of their award packages from Schools they have applied to. This isn't a problem whatsoever; however, if you plan to attend a school where you will be living on campus, you won't be able to select housing until you've committed to attend (and often pay a deposit). If you wait too long, you might not get your first choice of housing. Additionally, once admitted, many schools invite incoming freshmen to orientation experiences as early as spring of senior year to begin selecting courses for freshmen year! The early bird gets the best times for classes, so keep your timing in mind as you wait on admissions.

Final Advice and Suggestions:

Senior year can be a very stressful and whirlwind time. Make an appointment to see your counselor and keep him/her informed of what your plans are and what schools you are looking at. We can be a helpful source of information and advice. It also helps us to know what to expect if you are looking at selective schools as those applications are very timely for us, as well.

Visit the Career Center often! Less than 10% of our seniors typically run away with the most scholarship funds because they spend the time applying for the scholarships that Mrs. Soules advertises in the career center. Some students don't even bother to apply for "smaller" scholarships because they require an essay or some other timely element. Most of these scholarships have 3-4 students apply and even if the application took 2 hours, that's an award at \$500/hour!! Not too shabby. Be diligent, put in the time, and you could take a ton of extra money with you to college!

Use Student VUE to access our scholarship database! It is updated regularly and found at the bottom under the "High School Resources" tab.

Mrs. Soules in the Career Center - ASoules@pusd11.net