

Freshman and Sophomore College Planning

Freshman Year

- With the assistance of your High School Guidance Counselor review your high school graduation requirements and develop a four year academic plan. Colleges look for students who meet and exceed the requirements set by their high school.
- High school course rigor is a key factor in college admissions. Are you signing up for advanced courses, honors or dual enrollment classes? Are you choosing electives that stretch your mind and help you develop new abilities? Colleges are more impressed with respectable grades in challenging courses than outstanding grades in easy courses.
- Visit the *Florida Shines* website. *Florida Shines* is a personalized hub for college and career-related information and resources. Here you can learn about college requirements and the college application process for all in-state public and private college/universities. This personalized site allows you to track your academic progress and plan for your future.
 - <https://www.floridashines.org/>
- *Big Future* is a college research and planning tool offered by the College Board. It is a search engine and planning tool for colleges/universities throughout the U.S. and the world.
 - <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>
- Begin assembling a file of important documents. This should include lists of awards and honors, a record of school and community service, evidence of paid and volunteer work, letters of recommendations, classroom products or projects or note, research, or any descriptions of what you have accomplished either at school or in the community. These will be the basis of your personal resume and the substance of your college application.
 - Please note: The newly launched *Coalition for Access, Affordability and Success* application which many of you will use provides a repository for this information (called The “Locker”). The goal of the Locker will be to include such information in your college application, much like a portfolio.
 - <http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org>
- Become active and stay involved in clubs, activities, and sports that you enjoy. It is very important to pursue activities outside of the classroom as colleges look for more than academics. While you may be tempted to be involved in many, it is better to be more deeply involved in fewer activities than lightly involved in too many.
- Attend various Career and College Planning events. Some key dates for 2016-17 include:
 - September 8th – Sarasota College Night, Robarts Arena
 - November 9th - South County College Planning Night
 - Tampa NACAC College Fair – February TBD

Sophomore Year

- Learn what college resources are available by meeting with your guidance counselor. Visit and consult the *Florida Shines* and *Big Future* websites for timelines, resources, links and answers to questions related to the college planning process.
 - *Florida Shines* website <https://www.floridashines.org/>
 - *Big Future* website <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>

- Begin your college search. Create a list of colleges and universities that interest you. Explore different types of schools. Decide which characteristics are most important to you such as size of school, distance from home, majors and programming offered, and extracurricular activities. Discuss the list with your parents and counselor.
- Research the costs associated with attending college. Talk frankly about costs as a family, and start researching what resources are available to help you pay for college. There are net price calculators that can help estimate costs for all colleges and a FAFSA estimator to help determine your financial aid eligibility.
 - Net Price Calculators <http://collegecost.ed.gov/netpricecenter.aspx>
 - FAFSA4Caster <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa/estimate>
- There are many other tools and websites that help with investigating financial aid eligibility and scholarship opportunities.
 - Office of Student Financial Assistance <http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/>
 - Bright Futures <http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/SSFAD/bf/bfmain.htm>
- Continue your genuine involvement in extracurricular activities. Continue and deepen participation in enrichment programs, workshops, and/or research opportunities.
- Update your list of important artifacts and descriptions of activities. Begin assembling a resume based on this information. Look ahead to the *Coalition for Access* (CAAS) application.
 - *Coalition for College Access* <http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org>
- Start looking into the SAT and ACT, noting the differences between the two exams. Determine a schedule for testing during Junior year and start preparing! If paying for the test is a financial hardship ask your counselor about fee waivers. Use free web-based study resources
 - College Board/SAT website <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat>
 - ACT website ACT website <http://www.act.org/>
 - Khan Academy SAT preparation <https://www.khanacademy.org/sat>
- Sign up for challenging Junior year courses.
- Attend various Career and College Planning events. Pay attention to dates for upcoming local College Nights and Financial Aid Workshops (dates TBD). Some key dates for the 2016-17 academic year include:
 - September 8th – Sarasota College Night, Robarts Arena
 - November 9th - Rotary South County College Planning Night (Venice PAC)
 - Tampa NACAC College Fair – January/February TBD
 - South County College Fair – February TBD (Venice HS)