Guide for College Planning

Dear College-Bound Student,

Welcome to an exciting, and perhaps intimidating, time of your high school life. During the next year, you will make important educational decisions. Read this packet, talk with your parents, and meet with your guidance counselor. The college process and post-secondary planning is as individual as you are, so take the lead and use the resources available to you in order to make the most informed decisions on your path to success. When you have a question, please don’t hesitate to contact us. We look forward to working with you!

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2021-2022

Beginning the Journey – A General Plan for Getting It Done

Sophomores –

1. Use the Naviance program frequently to gain a better understanding of your personality, explore possible careers, and investigate college majors. Naviance is a very helpful tool when you begin considering specific colleges, technical schools, or jobs.
2. Take the Practice ACT seriously (given in school to the entire class in the spring). SHHS administers this test to help you determine which college entrance test will serve you best in your post-high school plans (ACT or SAT format).
3. Explore and build new interests in extracurricular activities and community service projects in school or the community.

Fall of Junior Year –

1. Take the PSAT in October (sign up in the 3rd floor office).
2. Compare the ACT Plan results to your PSAT results to decide which test may be better suited to your strengths.
3. Make sure you do as well as possible in every class. Each year is important, but junior year is the last set of grades that an admissions representative will see on your transcript.
4. Begin a discussion with your parents about college and what restrictions (financial, geographic or otherwise) may be in place before you begin thinking about specific schools.

Spring of Junior Year –

1. Register for and take the SAT and/or ACT tests, and the AP tests (if applicable).
2. Meet with your guidance counselor to refine your post high school plans and discuss possible colleges and universities.
3. Develop a list of “Colleges I’m Thinking About” in your Naviance account.
4. Ask two teachers to write your letters of recommendation.
5. Visit colleges over your spring break, and take advantage of local college fairs.
6. Finish your junior year with a strong effort in all your classes.

Summer Before Your Senior Year –

1. Refine your list of colleges in your Naviance account (Colleges I am Thinking About). There is an icon for each college on your list that indicates if you need to apply directly to the college using their website (typically state schools), or if the college uses the Common Application.
2. Set up your Common Application account on commonapp.org and fill it out, if required by some of your colleges. Write down your password! The application should be available in early August. (Make sure the e-mail you use is appropriate for adults to view.)
3. Begin writing your college essays. Check commonapp.org for the essay prompt or the main page on the Guidance tab of the high school website. Now is the time to start – when you are less stressed!
4. Visit colleges, schedule some interviews.
5. File the NCAA eligibility form at [www.web1.ncaa.org](http://www.web1.ncaa.org) if you want to participate in athletics in college.

Fall of Senior Year –

1. Register for SAT, ACT and/or AP tests as needed.
2. Complete your activity sheet, student brag sheet, and parent brag sheet for your counselor. All forms can be found on the Guidance page of the high school website under Forms and Documents on the right hand side.
3. Submit your transcript request on your Naviance account and follow up with the hard copy Transcript Request form (see Forms and Documents on Guidance page) to the guidance office **at least four weeks prior to the college deadline.** Apply on-line; follow the directions carefully.
4. Teacher Recommendations – most colleges will want teacher recs submitted electronically through Naviance. Students should use the pull down menu in Naviance to officially request a letter from a teacher, however students should request the letter earlier in person so the teacher is aware of the request. If a postage stamp icon comes up in Naviance, this indicates that a rec letter must be mailed. Forms for Teacher Recommendations for Mailed Letters are available on the guidance website. Remember to follow up with a thank you note to the teacher!
5. Double check all application deadlines. It is advantageous to submit your applications to colleges with rolling admissions earlier rather than later. If you plan on applying early decision or early action, you should be working on those applications in September as well.
6. Be sure you have two back-up or safety schools.
7. Complete any campus visits or interviews.
8. You can submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) after October 1st. The parent(s) and student **each** must create a federal student aid (FSA) ID on FSAID.ed.gov. and then follow up with your application on the FAFSA website – www.FAFSA.ed.gov. Students will report income information from an earlier tax year, referred to as prior-prior year (PPY).
9. Search for applicable scholarships – some deadlines are as early as December.
10. Meet with the college representatives visiting your school. More colleges and universities are tracking the number of times a student will make contact with them, so it is to your advantage to connect with the representatives!

Winter of Your Senior Year –

1. Complete and file any other necessary financial aid applications (for example, the CSS Profile (College Scholarship Service). Check to see if any of your schools require the CSS Profile, an on-line application used by certain schools to determine eligibility for their aid dollars.
2. Call Admissions to make sure your schools have received the information you or your high school have sent including transcripts, letters of recommendation and test scores. If you receive notification (e-mail or letter) from an admissions office that something is missing, it is best to call the admissions office to check for the latest information. Often items cross in the “mail,” and your file will be up to date.

The End is Near! March, April and May of Your Senior Year -

1. Watch the mail and e-mail. You should be hearing from schools soon. You will be receiving your SAR (Student Aid Report) electronically in response to any financial aid applications.
2. Wait until you hear from your preferred school before you decline any offers.
3. Meet other deadlines such as housing, additional financial aid or scholarships.
4. Make additional visits to accepted schools and talk to your counselor as needed to help make your decision.
5. Make your final college choice. The enrollment deadline for most schools is May 1. Make sure you mail the form and deposit check to the school you have selected by

their deadline date!

1. Decline any offers that other colleges have made to you so that the spot being held for you can be given to someone on their waitlist.

COLLEGE ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

It is true that different colleges look for different things in their applicants for admission. Certain factors are common to all schools in varying degrees.

**Grade Point Average (GPA) and Academic Program**

A strong consistent record of achievement in high school is probably the best predictor of success in college. Consequently, colleges consider a student’s GPA and academic program most significant in the competitive admissions process. Some colleges consider a “D” on a high school record a serious drawback to a candidate’s admission.

**Recommendations**

Counselors and teachers are often asked to make comments concerning a student’s personal, social and academic adjustment to high school and an evaluation of the desire and motivation to succeed in college. It is important to choose teachers who are familiar with you and your work in the classroom to write your recommendations. Students should allow teachers 3 weeks to get the recommendations written to meet college deadlines. **Most teacher recommendation letters are sent electronically through the Naviance program.**  Writing a letter of recommendation for you is something that teachers do on their own time, as a favor to you. It is best to ask your teachers well in advance of the deadline, and remember to thank them with a written note.

**Activities**

Colleges look to a student’s interest and non-academic special skills evidence in school, home, or community as supplemental information. Often colleges are looking for distinguishing features in students – relying more on a student (academic records being equal) who will make some significant contribution to campus life. Admissions officers want to know where your passions lie, what you have been committed to year after year, rather than a large number of activities done in your senior year. You should submit an activities sheet to your guidance counselor or guidance secretary before a complete transcript can be prepared. See an activities template under “Forms and Documents” on the guidance webpage.

**College Entrance Examinations**

Colleges usually set specific requirements for the ACT and/or SAT. It is your responsibility to take all of the required tests for admission and to request that the College Board/ACT send your test record to each of the colleges to which you are applying.

**ACT vs. SAT – Which One Should You Take?**

The Princeton Review compiled the following information:

1. The SAT has 5 Reading passages. The ACT has 4 Reading passages.
2. You do NOT get to use a calculator on all the math questions on the SAT. You get to use a calculator for ALL the math questions on the ACT.
3. The ACT is scored on a scale of 1 – 36. The SAT is scored on a scale of 400 – 1600.
4. The ACT essay is optional. Please consult with your counselor about whether you need to take the ACT with essay.
5. Both tests now have the same advanced math concepts – with questions in arithmetic, algebra I and II, geometry and trigonometry.
6. The ACT has a Science section, while the SAT does not. The ACT science section is meant to test your reading and reasoning skills based on a set of data or conflicting viewpoints. If you are not very confident when it comes to Science, the SAT might be a better fit.

**COLLEGE APPLICATIONS**

Students should apply online. You can check the college’s website during the summer prior to your graduating year to get a sense of what information will be required. Generally speaking, it is to a student’s advantage to apply early (Sept.) when applying to a state-supported college or any college with rolling admissions.

Most college applications require personal information, your high school transcript, essays, and recommendations. Colleges may request the names of teachers, clergymen, or other adults as references. They may also require a letter of reference from these people (always ask permission to use a person’s name as a reference). Also, be aware that some colleges require a medical examination.

A mid-year and final grade report is sent from the guidance office without the student’s request. Under normal circumstances, processing the first application takes a minimum of four weeks. If 1st quarter report cards are required, use the form found on the guidance webpage under Forms and Documents.

Transcript requests must be made through your Naviance account **AND using the paper/hard copy Transcript Request Form.** Submit the paper Transcript Request Form to the Guidance secretary.

***We cannot guarantee that your materials will reach the respective colleges on time if you do not meet the following SHHS deadlines:***

**October 15 deadline** – applications must be submitted to the Counseling Department secretary as soon as possible or by Tuesday, September 14.

**November 1 deadline** – due by Friday, October 1

**November 15 deadline** – due by Thursday, October 14

**December 1 deadline** – due by Monday, November 1

**December 21 through January 3 deadline** – due by Wednesday, December 1

**January 15 deadline** – due by Tuesday, December 14 (because of Winter Recess)

**February 1 deadline** – due by Monday, January 3

**February 15 deadline** – due by Friday, January 14

**SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT**

A Strath Haven transcript and the accompanying school profile include the following information:

1. Student name, address, birth date, date of graduation or withdrawal, and telephone number.

2. School name, address, phone number, accreditation, size, percentage of students entering four-year and two-year colleges, and an explanation of the school's marking system. Our school profile also includes SAT, AP, and Keystone information.

3. All final grades, including the number of credits and credits earned in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12. Grade point cumulative average for grades 9, 10 and 11 is listed. At mid-year of the senior year, a new cumulative GPA is calculated.

4. Enrollment at other schools, if applicable.

5. An activities sheet/resume of honors and awards, if a student submits one.

6. The number of days absent and/or tardy each year.

There is no charge for the first four transcripts. After that, a fee of $4.00 is charged for each transcript.

**ADMISSION POLICIES**

**Rolling Admissions**

This is a term used by admissions officers to indicate that they consider students’ applications as they are received by the college, making decisions periodically (and usually frequently) and notifying the student as soon as the decision is made. In contrast to rolling admissions, some colleges have one deadline for all applications and do not make any decisions until after that deadline notifying all students of their decisions at nearly the same time.

**Early Decision**

A plan whereby the college will consider a student’s application earlier than usual and will make an admission decision in advance of the college’s usual notification date. Early Decision plans take several forms; in many cases, the student must agree that this application is the only one he/she will make; and, if accepted, he/she will attend that college or university. Early decision should not be confused with early admission whereby a student may matriculate in college without graduating from high school.

**Early Action**

This is the same as Early Decision, except that the student is not required to make a commitment to that school. Watch for the term “single-choice early action,” or “restricted early action,” in which case you can only apply to one school under this option.

**Candidate’s Reply Date Agreement**

An agreement sponsored by the CEEB under which subscribing colleges agree not to require a candidate for admission to reply to the college before May 1.

**Deferred Admission**

Many schools offer this option to their newly accepted students. The student can defer his or her admission to college for one year for personal reasons (e.g., travel, work, and personal hardship). Two stipulations usually apply: the student may not enroll in another institution during that year, and the student must pay a commitment deposit before the deferral will be granted. This deposit guarantees the student a spot in the freshman class for the following year. The student does not have to reapply for admission.

**FINANCIAL AID**

At the present time, higher education may cost beyond $60,000 per year. Because of these rising costs, most colleges have 50 percent or more of their students receiving some kind of aid. A large percentage of this financial assistance is granted on the basis of financial need. Merit scholarships, however, continue to be available to certain students. The procedure for attaining both kinds of financial aid will be discussed further.

**TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID**

**Merit (No-Need) Scholarships**

Merit-based scholarships include those awarded in special areas such as athletics, music, and art, as well as those awarded for academic accomplishments and ability. The best source of information for these scholarships is the Financial Aid Office of each college in which you are interested. Community groups, unions, and employers are also possible sources of competitive scholarships. In addition, the counseling office has scholarship information which is available to all students. Colleges use these scholarships to attract students they might not otherwise be able to enroll. You have a much better chance of winning a merit scholarship at your “safety” school than at your “reach” school.

**Need-Based Financial Aid**

The philosophy behind need-based programs is that the prime responsibility for meeting college costs rests with the family. In addition, students are expected to contribute from summer and part-time employment. The family contribution (EFC) is based on many factors, including income, total assets, number of children, and the number of children in college. The comprehensive cost of an institution includes tuition, room and board, fees, books, and travel and living allowance. This comprehensive cost, minus the family contribution, is the established financial need. College Financial Aid Offices put together an “aid package” to meet an accepted student’s demonstrated financial need. Some students receive a scholarship, others a loan, and others a job. Most students receive a combination of all these. Financial Aid officials suggest that you apply for aid, even if you think you are not eligible.

**APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID**

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**

The FAFSA is the one form that all students who hope to get financial aid must submit. It can be filed after October 1 of the senior year. The website for this is www.fafsa.ed.gov. Students are encouraged to apply online since this speeds the process.

**College Scholarship Service (CSS/Profile)**

Some colleges require the completion of the CSS/Profile in addition to the FAFSA. Principally, the CSS acts as a clearing house for the family financial information that all CSS colleges and some non-college sponsors require of their financial aid applicants. There is a fee charged for each college to which you want the Profile information sent. Registration may be done at the College Board website, [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org).

**Institutional Financial Aid Forms**

Some colleges (mostly the more expensive) want even more information before disbursing their own money. They have developed their own financial aid applications. Follow the directions from each college to which you are applying if you hope to be eligible for financial aid.

**Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency**

PHEAA makes grant awards to Pennsylvania residents based on financial need. These awards are used as part of the student's financial aid package to meet the student's computed financial need. PHEAA may be reached at [www.pheaa.org](http://www.pheaa.org).

To apply, high school seniors must complete and file the FAFSA.

**FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS (www.studentaid.ed.gov)**

# Pell Grants

The recipients of these awards receive up to $5,815 during each year of their eligibility. The Department of Education awards these grants to students who are eligible. Students apply for these grants by filling out the appropriate information on the FAFSA application.

**Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) –**

Annual awards range from $100 to $4,000 a year for undergraduate students. Priority is given to students who receive Federal Pell Grants. The amount of an eligible student’s award depends on the amount of funding available at each school and the school’s policies for awarding aid.

**Federal Work-Study**

The Federal Work-Study program provides jobs for students who are in need of earnings to meet a portion of their educational expenses. The institution arranges a job either on or off-campus and pays the student an amount that is equal to the federal minimum wage standards. Completion of the FAFSA application enters you.

**Perkins Loans**

This program is administered by the colleges to assist students who need a loan in order to meet their educational expenses. An eligible student receives the loan but does not begin repayment until nine months after graduation or withdrawal from school. Students may be allowed up to ten years to repay the loan. During the repayment period, 5% interest will be charged on the unpaid balance of the loan principal. Students who enter the teaching profession may receive a cancellation of all or part of their indebtedness. The Financial Aid Officer administers this program based on information furnished through the FAFSA.

**Direct Stafford Loans**

Stafford Loans are for undergraduate, graduate and professional degree students. A Stafford Loan is the best way to pay for college after scholarships and grants. Complete the FAFSA, be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen, be accepted for enrollment at a participating school, maintain at least half-time enrollment status in a degree or certificate program, and be registered with the Selective Service if you are a male between 18-25 years old.

**Direct Subsidized Stafford Loans**

The federal government will pay the interest on this loan while you are in school, during your grace period and during any authorized deferments after repayment has begun. You must have financial need to qualify for the interest subsidy benefits. “Need” is your total Cost of Attendance (COA), minus other student aid you may receive, minus your Expected Family contribution (EFC).

**Direct Unsubsidized Stafford Loans**

You are responsible for all of the interest on this type of loan from the date it is disbursed, including interest that accrues during periods of deferment and forbearance. You have the option of paying the interest while you are in school or you may have the interest added to your principal loan balance.

**Direct Plus Loans**

Parents of dependent students, as well as students pursuing a graduate or professional degree may borrow from the Direct PLUS Loan Program. For a parent to borrow, the student must be a dependent student, be enrolled in an eligible certificate or degree-granting program, making satisfactory academic progress, complete the FAFSA, be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen, be enrolled at least half-time while working toward a degree or certificate, have no educational loans in default and register with the Selective Service if you are a male 18-25 years old.

**Scholarship Opportunities**

The Career Center Coordinator maintains a file on scholarship opportunities. Information is posted on the Guidance page of the school website under Scholarship Opportunities on the right hand side.

**Other Options for Financing College**

If available cash for college costs is a problem, you might consider a home equity loan. Rates for these loans are considerably lower now than are the PLUS rates, however you are using your home as collateral.

**Information You Will Use on Your Applications**

School name: Strath Haven High School

School address: 205 S. Providence Road

Wallingford, PA 19086

Phone number: (610) 892-3470

Fax number: (610) 892-3483

CEEB number: 395015

Your counselor’s name: Jennifer Salvage X2114

Robin Smith X2112

Kristin Dunning X2113

Travis Edwards X2119

**If you have access to the internet, here are some websites that might prove helpful:**

General College Information, Searches and test prep information:

[www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com)

[www.aolatschool.com](http://www.aolatschool.com)

[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

[www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

[www.collegeview.com](http://www.collegeview.com)

[www.campustours.com](http://www.campustours.com)

[www.collegenet.com](http://www.collegenet.com)

[www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)

[www.anycollege.com](http://www.anycollege.com)

[www.unigo.com](http://www.unigo.com)

Financial Information:

[www.finaid.com](http://www.finaid.com) (Financial aid information and links to FAFSA on the web)

[www.pheea.org](http://www.pheea.org) (Financial aid information specific to PA residents)

[www.pasfaa.org](http://www.pasfaa.org) (Financial aid information specific to PA residents)

Other useful sites:

[www.ncaaclearinghouse.net](http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net) (NCAA Clearinghouse eligibility forms)

[www.interimprograms.com](http://www.interimprograms.com) (Opportunities to pursue before going to college)

[www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com) (US News and World Report)

[www.hillel.org/hillel/newhille.nsf](http://www.hillel.org/hillel/newhille.nsf) (Foundation for Jewish Campus Life)

[www.herald-sun.com/hbcu/docs/nation.htm/](http://www.herald-sun.com/hbcu/docs/nation.htm/) The Historically Black Colleges

[www.sshechan.edu](http://www.sshechan.edu) (Pennsylvania State System of Universities)