

## You're a senior! Tick tock!



The checklist below is adapted from the Mapping Your Future website. It is one of many such checklists you can find on the Internet just by searching! College Board and College Foundation of North Carolina also have versions. Just pick one and keep it posted by you this year!

### *A busy fall...*

#### **August**

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- At our CCS Orientation in August, pick up your Senior Packet of information prepared for you by your counselor.
- Review your career plans and decide which type of postsecondary school is best for you.
- Save money from your summer job for college.
- List your top college choices.
- Request admissions information and school catalogs.
- Go on college visits.
- Collect letters of recommendation from your teachers to include with your college applications. Your counselor has a Teacher Recommendation Cheat Sheet which can help you help your teachers write a strong, effective recommendation! Ask her for a copy.
- Start brainstorming about ideas for your college essays.
- Continue to take challenging courses during your senior year; don't slack off.
- Register for community college courses, if you are planning to dual enroll your senior year.
- Stay focused on maintaining or increasing your GPA.
- Obtain registration materials and test dates for the SAT and/or ACT.
- Compare costs of each school that interests you by contacting the colleges by phone, mail, or via their websites.
- Visit college and career planning websites for information about career, college, and financial aid resources in your state. (A list of

some resources can be found on our website under Academics > College Planning.)

- Spend time on YouTube watching videos by college students who provide advice for freshmen. Keywords along the lines of "what I wish I had known before I went to college" can get you started!

#### **September**

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- Mark your calendar with registration, admissions, and financial aid deadlines/fees.
- Determine if the schools that interest you have online admission applications. Remember, all NC colleges and universities online applications can be submitted through [CFNC.org](http://CFNC.org). Many others can be done through the [Common Application](#).
- Create separate folders for each of the schools that interest you and keep the materials organized.
- Begin writing drafts of your college essays.
- Start completing early admission college applications. These deadlines can be as early as mid-October!
- Meet with school representatives who visit your high school.
- Look at virtual tours of college campuses online. Your counselor will arrange for at least two college visits in September and October, but you don't have to wait for that to happen to get started!
- If you haven't already taken the SAT and/or ACT, register for the test(s).
- Ask employers, teachers, and guidance counselors for letters of recommendation to accompany your admissions applications.

## October

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- Take the SAT and/or ACT.
- Have your senior tux and drape pictures taken at CCS by Lifetouch. Your homeroom teacher will give you plenty of information about this as the date draws near (Oct. 24, 2014).
- Continue working on your admissions essays.
- If you haven't already done so, attend college planning and/or financial aid information nights and college fairs. Your counselor will take you to the annual NRCA College Fair this month, but you can visit any college fair on your own.
- Visit your top school choices. If possible, make appointments with faculty, staff, and students in the fields of your interests. For example, if you think you might want to be a teacher, make sure you visit and talk to people in the Education Department of that school.
- Complete applications for every scholarship for which you may be eligible. Lists of possible scholarships are available on our school website under College Planning; any local scholarship information received by the school will be passed along via email by your counselor. She will also post it online under Happening NOW on the school website, on Facebook, and on Twitter. Follow your school!
- Complete a Transcript Request Form for your counselor for all transcripts you need sent to the schools to which you are applying.
- Contact the schools' financial aid offices to determine which forms they require. Some schools may require special forms. You can probably find much of this information on their websites, but then again, some schools do a better job than others in providing information!
- Finalize portfolios, audition tapes, writing samples, or other evidence of talent if required for admission.

## November

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- Complete admissions applications by their deadlines.
- If you haven't already, attend college planning and/or financial aid information nights and college fairs.
- If necessary, register to retake the SAT and/or ACT.
- Request financial aid forms and applications. Double check the deadlines for submission.
- Follow up to ensure your employers, teachers, and guidance counselors send letters of recommendation.
- Stay focused on maintaining and increasing your GPA.



## December

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- Sign up for a PIN at the Financial Aid website to complete your FAFSA online. (Also let your parents know that they will need a PIN.) The FAFSA is your first step in obtaining financial aid in any form (loans, grants, scholarships, etc.) from colleges. The FAFSA is a Free Application for Federal Student Aid.
- Finalize admission applications.
- Urge your parents to file their taxes as soon as possible after January 1 to ease the financial aid process.
- Research and apply for other financial aid, including grants and scholarships. Again, check your school website for any postings. Complete a Transcript Request Form for all transcripts you need sent to scholarship programs.
- Watch for early admissions notices (they tend to arrive in December or January).
- Choose or let your parents choose the 9 pictures to give to Mrs. Choplin for your senior slideshow. Christmas is a great time to go through old photos with your family! Avoid small wallet-sized photos; pictures at least 4x6" work best for the slideshow. Label all your photos in the order you want them, too! Example: Jones-1, Jones-2, etc.



## January

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- As soon as possible after January 1 and when tax forms are complete (they don't have to be filed until April 15; you can use estimates), complete your FAFSA online (or go to [www.studentaid.ed.gov/fafsa](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/fafsa) to download a PDF version of the FAFSA). Keep copies of all documents, including your PIN, in a file.

## February

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- Contact the U.S. Department of Education at 800-4-FEDAID for assistance completing the FAFSA and/or plan to attend a FAFSA preparation event (free FAFSA advice) near you. CFNC partners with local community colleges and banks to provide a FAFSA Day one Saturday in February. Watch [CFNC.org](http://CFNC.org) or your counselor's announcements for this date.
- Be mindful of deadlines. Always submit information on time.
- Research College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams. You might be able to "test out of" a college class if you think you are ready to try a CLEP exam.
- Watch for the e-mail notice indicating your Student Aid Report (SAR) is ready. You will receive this a couple of weeks after you complete successfully your FAFSA.
- Review your SAR for errors and make any corrections as indicated.
- Rank your top school choices.

## March

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- Check with the financial aid offices at your schools to ensure your paperwork is complete. Submit tax forms if they request them.
- Narrow your school choices and make campus visits.
- Be on the lookout for acceptance letters.
- Start looking for summer jobs.

## April

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- Make sure you have given Mrs. Choplin the 9 photos she'll need to create the senior slideshow for graduation before you leave on spring break!
- Compare financial aid award letters.
- Make your final school decision and mail deposits, as required.
- Check with the school you've chosen about returning financial aid award letters.
- Notify the schools you have chosen NOT to attend. Remember, others are on waiting lists or deferred in their applications. The sooner you free up a spot that you don't want, the sooner another student will receive that acceptance letter!
- Plan for registration, orientation, and housing, and mark your calendar with important dates.

## May

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- Be aware of any summer orientation sessions that you must attend at the school in which you will enroll, and make plans accordingly.
- Finalize your summer job plans, and make a plan for saving a portion of your summer earnings.
- Prepare a realistic student budget.
- Follow up with your high school to ensure the counselor forwards your final school transcripts to the college.

## June

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- Plan for college transportation.
- Complete a Transcript Request Form for your counselor to identify where your final transcripts should be sent.
- Follow up with the financial aid office to ensure all paperwork is complete.

## Summary of the year...



In **September**, your counselor will arrange for the North Carolina Early Mathematics Placement Testing (NCEMPT) to take place in your math classes. You will have the opportunity to take it again in the spring so you can compare your progress. The NCEMPT program is free and offered through East Carolina University and is aimed at identifying math weaknesses early so students can be more prepared for college-level math, reducing the need for remedial courses once they get to college. You will lead in more events this year as seniors, such as See You at the Pole, Spirit Week, etc.

In **September** and **October**, seniors usually take the SAT or ACT for the last time. Study for these college entrance exams before you take one so you are not wasting your testing fee! You can find many advice tutorials on YouTube, free full-length practice tests on the College Board or ACT websites, as well as lots of tips and tricks for taking these tests. Do your research. You should be able to stop by your counselor's office and pick up a practice booklet, too.

The counselor at CCS usually plans at least two college visits and attendance to a local college fair in **September** and **October**. Each year, students are exposed to a variety of types of post-secondary choices: public, private, community college, military, and trade schools. However, these visits are meant to show students what to look for and to encourage them to explore *on their own with their parents* at the colleges of their choice.

Two websites you should definitely check out are these:

- **CFNC.org (College Foundation of North Carolina):** <http://www.cfnc.org> - This statewide site has tons of resources here for high school, college & career planning. All the info you need on all the public universities & colleges, private colleges, and community colleges in North Carolina. Great videos on paying for college, too!
- **College Board's Big Future site:** <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/?navid=gh-cp> - This nationwide database of info covers more than 3,000 colleges and universities in the U.S. This site also has links to help students research financial planning, careers, colleges, and majors. College Board is the site where you go to register for the SAT.

## In the spring...

Don't forget to consider military options for a higher education. Review websites and meet with military representatives when they visit your school or visit the schools. Most military academies and colleges start the admissions process earlier than traditional colleges and universities. You may need to take the ASVAB test as part of the admissions process. Your counselor will set up ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) testing in the spring of the year for all 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> graders. An armed services representative will visit the school to interpret the scores with students.

The spring also brings cap and gown pictures! You will receive all the info you need about cap and gown photos from your homeroom teacher.

You'll have the opportunity to take the NCEMPT again to see how your math skills have progressed throughout the year. Use these reports to figure out if you need remedial math help during the summer to prepare for your fall classes.

Enjoy your senior trip in **April**! When you get back, you'll find that the last few weeks of school will fly by. Graduation will take place the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of **May**!