

Finding Your Direction:

A Guide to College & Career Planning For High School Juniors



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Junior Planning Checklist for Students & Parents

January/February

1. Continue to focus on your academics and activities:

- Continue to think about what you want to do after high school.
- Begin searches for the college, university or technical school you want to attend.
- If you plan to go to work, continue to take career building classes and build your resume.
- College recruiters frequently make visits to our campus during the Fall Semester; this is a great opportunity to gather preliminary information about different programs and schools.
- **Activities are resume builders**—get involved and participate in at least one or two extra-curricular activities and/or community activities. Be sure you focus on quality rather than quantity--it is more important to have a few activities that you take an active role in versus several just to list them on paper. Choose areas you are passionate about, and take on leadership responsibilities.

2. Register online for the February 8th or April 12th ACT at www.actstudent.org

- Registration deadline is January 10 or March 7, 2014
- NMSA H.S. Code #: **320641**
- Plan to take the June 14, 2014 ACT if your score is not satisfactory - registration deadline is May 9, 2014.

3. Review your course of study and four year plan with your advisor during your Next Step Plan meeting. Make sure your courses reflect your plans after high school.

March

1. If you are college-bound, make sure you are enrolled in appropriate and rigorous college prep courses your senior year. Obtain course requirements from colleges or training programs you are considering so you can be sure to enroll in courses you need for admission.
2. Make sure you keep your grades up! Junior year is probably your most important year for grades, as they are primarily what colleges will be seeing as part of your application.

April

1. Take the April ACT exam.
2. If you don't take the April ACT, or want to re-take it, register for the June ACT (deadline is May 9) and/or SAT I or II. Be sure to check with colleges to determine if you need the SAT, and if so, which subject area tests are needed. Highly selective schools have very specific requirements.
3. Obtain pre-application forms for the Military Academies if you are interested in applying.
4. Register with Fast Web www.fastweb.com or other scholarship search websites. (Fast Web and other websites provide FREE information on scholarships, college search, jobs and internships customized to the INDIVIDUAL student profile. See list of websites on page 9).
5. Arrange enriching summer activities early, including volunteering, an interesting job or internship, or job shadow in a profession that interests you. Many colleges and universities have summer programs geared to juniors.
6. If you are planning to attend college on an athletic scholarship, or are being recruited as a college athlete, you must register with the **NCAA Eligibility Center** and follow specific procedures to ensure your eligibility. Register at: http://web1.ncaa.org/ECWR2/NCAA_EMS/NCAA.html

May

1. Develop and maintain a list of 5-10 colleges that interest you using a college search website. Some examples are below:
 - www.act.org/discover/login
 - apps.collegeboard.com/search/index.jsp
 - www.act.org/college_search/fset_col_search.html
 - www.OfftoCollege.com
1. Plan summer college visits by contacting admissions offices at colleges of interest.

Summer After Junior Year

1. Visit colleges, universities and technical schools of interest. Sort your list into "Not Considering", "Possible", and "Definitely Applying".
2. Schedule interviews with admissions counselors.
3. Request applications and financial aid information from these schools. Requests can be made by telephone or online.
4. Check important dates. Some schools have early deadlines.
5. Begin developing a Senior Resume.

6. Check out helpful websites (see attached list).

Senior Planning Checklist for Students & Parents

September

1. Use calendar/planner to stay organized and keep track of important dates.
2. Be sure to pay attention and participate in your Senior Seminar class! Part of that class will be discussing many of the topics you'll find in this packet, and it will help keep you focused on what you need to be doing to achieve your goals.
2. Narrow your college choices; see list of college search websites in this packet.
3. Request application materials from schools/programs to which you want to apply. Most are available online. Be sure to check whether your schools take the Common Application!
4. Register for the October ACT and/or November SAT I or SAT II tests. The deadline to register for the ACT is in September. NMSA high school code: **320641**
5. Be sure to check with colleges to determine if you need the SAT, and if so, which subject area tests are needed. Highly selective schools have very specific requirements.
6. Participate in ACT or SAT Prep course. Takes place over 8 consecutive Saturdays, starting September 1 for ACT and September 29 for SAT. Cost is \$150, registration forms can be picked up in the Guidance Office.
8. Focus on your academics and activities!
9. College recruiters from all over the country will be visiting our campus; this is a great opportunity to gather information about different programs and schools.
10. Plan to allocate time for college searches and applications. It is a process that takes time; it can't be done in a few minutes.

October

1. Register for December ACT or SAT if you decide to take them again.
2. Ask teachers and/or counselors to complete recommendation letters for schools that require them. Make

your requests at least 3 weeks in advance of due date.

3. Schedule college campus visits and/or interviews.
4. Begin writing essays required for some applications.
5. Begin scholarship search and applications. Popular free websites are listed in this packet. Many deadlines are in the fall so pay attention to those dates.
6. Register with Fast Web <http://www.fastweb.com/> or other scholarship search websites. (Fast Web and other websites provide FREE information on scholarships, college search, jobs and internships customized to the INDIVIDUAL student profile. See list of websites on page 9).
7. Have a frank discussion with your parents/guardians about college costs and how much they're planning to contribute, and how to apply for financial aid.
8. Familiarize yourself with deadlines for schools or programs to which you are applying; some deadlines are as early as November 15.

November

1. If you are applying early action or early decision, complete your applications; deadlines are usually between mid-November and December 1. Make sure all materials are sent completed and on time, with necessary signatures, letters of recommendation if needed, and transcripts and test scores.
2. Give your counselor Secondary School Reports to complete if your application requires them (at least 3 weeks in advance of due date).
3. Continue scholarship search and applications!

December

1. You should try to finish your ACT and/or SAT testing by the end of this month.
2. Turn in completed college applications to Guidance Office for mailing. If you are applying online you still must have a transcript sent from our office. If we are mailing your application please be sure to include a check for application fees if needed.
3. Do not expect the counselor or teachers to write recommendations or see that your applications are mailed after school is out for Winter Break. Some applications have January 1 deadlines; remember school is not in session until AFTER January 1.
4. Visit colleges during Winter Break.
5. Continue scholarship search and applications!
6. Begin to work on your FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) so you can complete it as soon as possible after January 1.

January/February

1. Complete and submit your FAFSA as soon as possible. This must be done online. You must register online for a PIN number prior to submitting your information.
2. Give your counselor Mid-Year School Report Forms if required by the institution to which you are applying.
3. If you need to, register for the February or April ACT.
 - Registration deadline is January 13 or March 9, 2012
 - NMSA H.S. Code #: 320641

March

1. Complete and submit your housing information.
2. Continue scholarship search and applications.
3. Work on your resume and begin a job hunt if you need to work part time!

April

1. Take the April ACT exam if needed.
2. If you have been going through the college application process you will begin to receive admission decisions. Compare financial aid awards; you can sometimes negotiate a better financial aid package.
3. If you are ready, make a decision and send in your deposit.
4. Arrange summer activities early, including volunteering, an interesting job, internship or job shadow in a profession that interests you.

May

1. Request final transcript be sent to chosen college/program.
2. Prepare for final exams. Remember colleges will see your final transcript and GPA.
3. Find a summer job.



June—Congratulations, you made it!

Post-Secondary Planning Websites

TESTING INFORMATION

1. The College Board- Here's where you register online for the ACT and SAT:
<http://www.collegeboard.org>
2. ACT - Includes test registration and test-prep information: <http://www.actstudent.org>

COLLEGE RESEARCH SITES AND TOOLS

3. US News and World Report -Be wary of the rankings, but there is much to learn at this site.:
www.usnews.com/sections/rankings
4. College View - A good source for information on all colleges, has an awesome search tool:
<http://www.collegeview.com>
5. CollegeNET - An all-purpose site with a host of useful links and programs:
<http://www.students.gov/STUGOVWebApp/index.jsp>
6. Mapping Your Future - General info site with a variety of information includes a sign-up for monthly e-mail reminders and a newsletter: <http://www.mappingyourfuture.org>

APPLICATION SERVICES

1. The Common Application - 500+ schools accept it and you should use it.
<http://www.commonapp.org>

FINANCIAL AID

1. **The Financial Aide Information Page** – General information on different kinds of financial aid: www.finaid.org
2. **New Mexico Lottery Scholarship FAQ** – Info on the Lottery Scholarship, which covers 100% tuition for New Mexican high school graduates looking to attend New Mexican public colleges/universities: <http://www.hed.state.nm.us/LotterFAQ.aspx>
3. **The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** - A must for anyone applying for need-based aid. You can apply on line: <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>
4. **Get your PINs for the web-FAFSA** – www.pin.ed.gov
5. **Quest Bridge** – A program that aims to match high achieving low income students with full scholarships to prestigious universities: <http://www.questbridge.org/>

6. Western Undergraduate Exchange – **Information on the WUE, through which you may be eligible for reduced tuition at western colleges:** <http://www.wiche.edu/wue>
7. **How Stuff Works** - Interesting and comprehensive site with loads of details and helpful tools: <http://money.howstuffworks.com/college-financial-aid.htm>
8. **Comparing Financial Aid Awards** - A US News and World Report product that provides helpful charts enabling you to line up and compare awards: http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/index.html

SCHOLARSHIPS

1. www.scholarships.com
2. [_www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)
3. www.gocollege.com

Scholarship Scams - A Federal Trade Commission-run site. It is always good to check on what you learn about on the web: www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/scholarship
SPECIAL INTEREST

- The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) - <http://www.ncaa.org>
- The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) - <http://www.naia.org>
- Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life - <http://www.hillel.org>
- Historically Black Colleges - <http://www.blackhighereducation.com>
- Jesuit Colleges - <http://www.ajcunet.edu>
- American Indian College Fund – www.collegefund.org
- American Association of University Women- www.aauw.org

CAREER INFORMATION

- US Department of Labor - All the numbers one could possibly hope for in career planning in the Occupational Outlook Handbook: <http://www.bls.gov/k12/index.htm>
- Internship Programs - Listings of +7800 programs and 200,000 positions: <http://www.internshipprograms.com/>
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ALTERNATIVE AND YEAR-OFF PROGRAMS

1. Study Abroad - <http://www.studyabroad.com>
2. _AmeriCorps - National Service Program: <http://www.americorps.org>
3. City Year - National Youth Service Organization - <http://www.cityyear.org>
4. Gap Year - A host of travel and work ideas for students prior to heading off to college: <http://www.gapyear.com>
5. Global Routes - Cultural Exchange and service trips: www.globalroutes.org/college_main.htm
6. Eurolingua Institute - **Info on language immersion study abroad programs:** <http://www.eurolingua.com>

ACT & SAT Registration Information

ACT Registration Information: www.act.org
New Mexico School for the Arts Code: 320641

Test Date	Registration Deadline	(Late Fee Required)
September 21, 2013	August 23, 2013	August 14-6, 2013
October 26, 2013	September 27, 2013	September 28-Oct 11, 2013
December 14, 2013	November 8, 2013	November 9-22, 2013
February 8, 2014	January 10, 2014	January 11-24, 2014
April 12, 2014	March 7, 2014	March 8-21, 2014
June 14, 2014	May 9, 2014	May 10-23, 2014

SAT Registration Information--<http://sat.collegeboard.com/register/how-to-register>
New Mexico School for the Arts Code: 320641

2013-14 Test Dates	Test	Regular Registration Deadline (postmark/submit by)
10/05/13	SAT & Subject Tests	09/07/13
11/02/13	SAT & Subject Tests	10/03/13
12/07/13	SAT & Subject Tests	11/08/13
01/25/14	SAT & Subject Tests	12/27/13
03/08/14	SAT only	02/07/14
05/03/14	SAT & Subject Tests	04/04/14
06/07/14	SAT & Subject Tests	05/09/14

Choosing a College

Choosing the right college can seem like a rather daunting task. After all, your college education and overall experience will affect the rest of your life.

With over 3000 colleges and universities in the country, it can become overwhelming to narrow your focus to just the few to which you want to apply for admission. If you do not have an absolute priority like an unusual major, a special learning need, or a unique talent, your choices are wide open.

There are many factors to consider when choosing a college, but the following are some of the key factors you should consider:

1. **Distance from Home:** Do you want to live close to home or live far away? Being close to home can hinder your ability to experience independence, but being too far away may make you lonely.
2. **Size of School:** Do you learn better in a smaller learning community or would you like to be in a large lecture hall? Small schools will offer you more personal involvement, a community atmosphere, and smaller classes, whereas the larger schools tend to be more impersonal, make it easier for you to be anonymous, and have much larger classes.
3. **Setting:** Do you want to be in a rural area, in the heart of a large city, or at least have access to a larger city?
4. **Academics:** Consider the majors, academic support services, and honors programs each school has to offer. Do you have any special education needs?
5. **Campus Life:** Consider the diversity of the campus, residence halls, campus clubs and organizations, fraternities and sororities, and religious programs and opportunities.
6. **Overseas Study Opportunities:** Are you interested in studying for a semester or year in another country? Do you want to study abroad as part of a university-led tour group or independently?
7. **Admission Criteria:** Do you have the required standardized test score and grade point average needed for admission? What is the percentage of students admitted? What courses are required or strongly recommended for admission?
8. **Cost:** Do you have the flexibility to consider an expensive private or public institution or are you limited to a less expensive school?
9. **Scholarships and Financial Aid:** Will you qualify for any institutional academic scholarships for which you can apply?
10. **Reputation:** What are the strengths and weaknesses of the institution?

Applying to Colleges

One of the most commonly asked questions is, “How many colleges should I apply to?” There is no universal answer to this question since each individual is different. Some students only apply to one or two schools while others may apply to eight or ten. Neither approach is best. After carefully investigating your requirements of a college, you should be able to narrow your choice to approximately 4 to 6 schools that provide the services you desire. As you are narrowing your choices, you may want to consider placing schools into the following categories:

“Reach Schools”

- These schools may be “long shots” based on your credentials, the admissions selectivity, and the overall cost of the university; however, consider stretching yourself and taking the risk to apply to these institutions.

“Good Match/Target Schools”

- These schools should possess significant features you want in a school, and it should be realistic that you will be admitted.

“Safety Schools”

- These schools will have many of the features you are looking for, and admission is highly likely.

While there is no hard and fast rule regarding these categories, including one or two schools in each category is sufficient. You want to make sure you apply to at least two “good match” or “safety” schools to insure you will be accepted and be able to make a choice when the time comes.

Resources to Help Identify Schools

1. College Fairs

- This is a good way to gather information from a variety of institutions and talk to admission representatives. Watch the bulletin boards, newsletters, and announcements for information on these fairs and others in the area.

1. Admission Representative

- Admission representatives visit your high school. These visits should be treated as a way to gather information, not as a replacement to the campus visit. Colleges recruit heavily in the fall (September - November) and less so in the spring (February - April). In these meetings, you are able to meet an admission representative, receive literature and an application, and ask questions. To make these meetings most advantageous, you should know which schools you want to meet with that have programs in which you are interested. Check the newsletter and the Guidance Bulletin Board for dates and times of college visits.

1. Navigating the Web for College Bound Students

- Many of the search engines posted on the internet will generate lists of schools based on how you answer specific questions. They are helpful for general information and will have links to the individual college websites if you want further and more concise information.

The Campus Visit

General Information

1. You should contact an Admissions Office **at least two weeks prior** to when you want to visit. This should give them ample time to get everything set up for you. If you are interested in meeting with a professor, attending a class, meeting with a coach, or spending the night, be sure to mention this when you call to set up your appointment. Some college campuses have set visit times whereas others are able to accommodate your schedule. Be prepared to be flexible.
2. You may want to **schedule two visits**, perhaps at a different time of the academic year. The summer is much more relaxed for you and the Admissions Offices. However, you miss seeing what it is like when students are present. Thus making two trips will enable you to see the differences. Summer visits are especially good for first-time visits. If you like a school and it is still on your list you want to apply to it, you should consider visiting again during the school year.

3. It is best to **avoid an unscheduled drop in** to an Admission Office. Many times the admission representatives will already be booked and unable to meet with you and a tour may not be available. You may get lucky and find out that they can accommodate you, but “dropping in” is discouraged and not a productive way to visit.

4. Most college campuses have “**Visit Days**”. These are group visit days that allow you to take a tour of campus, see an admission presentation, possibly meet with professors in major areas you are considering, and meet current students. These types of visits are a good way to get a general overview of the campus. If you like what you see and hear it is probably best to go back for a more in-depth visit.

The Campus Visit

Questions to Ask

Speaking from personal experience as a former admission counselor, the worst college visit is one where the prospective student is not prepared and does not say anything in the admission interview. It is best to go with a list of prepared questions. It makes a great impression. In addition, when asked a question, answer thoroughly and with more than a simple “yes”, “no”, or “I don’t know.” The following are some questions to consider asking when going on a campus visit:

Academics

1. What are the admission requirements?
2. Do certain majors require an additional admission process (e.g., audition, portfolio, review, etc.)?
3. Do you accept advanced placement credit or dual enrollment?
4. Is there an honors program or college?
5. Who teaches the classes: graduate assistants or professors?
6. What academic support services are available?
7. Is there a foreign language requirement for admission and/or graduation?
8. What kind of access is there to computers and technology on campus?
9. Are there opportunities to study abroad?
10. What kinds of services are available for students with undecided majors?
11. What features of their major make it special, unique, or particularly strong?
12. What is the average class size as a freshman and then in future years?
13. What is the student-faculty ratio?
14. How are academic advisers assigned? What kind of interaction will I have with my advisor?

Cost, Scholarships and Financial Aid

1. Including living expenses, what is the total estimated cost for one academic year?
2. Does it cost to park on campus? How do I apply for a parking permit? What scholarships are available? What was the average academic scholarship awarded last year? Is there a separate application for scholarships? If so, how can I get those applications?
3. Are the scholarships renewable? If so, is there a GPA requirement to maintain?
4. How many students receive some sort of aid?
5. What is taken into consideration for financial aid?
6. What types of work-study jobs are available?

Student Life, Housing, and Other Services

1. What extracurricular activities are available? What leadership opportunities are available?
2. Are there fraternities and sororities on campus? What percentage of the campus is Greek?
3. What is the diversity of the student body?

4. How do I get athletic and event tickets? Is there a cost for students?
5. What types of cultural opportunities are available on campus?
6. What percentage of students live on campus?
7. Am I required to live on campus?
8. Do students stick around on the weekends?
9. How are roommates assigned? If you have a problem with your roommate, how is it resolved?
10. Can I request a certain roommate?
11. What are the differences among the various residence halls?
12. What kinds of services are available for students with learning or physical disabilities?
13. What kinds of personal counseling and health services are available?
14. What is the university doing to make the campus safe?
15. Do I need a car to get around campus? Are basic services close to campus? Is there a public transportation system?
16. What is the surrounding community like?
17. What kinds of services are available for students who wish to take advantage of additional tutoring or extra help?
18. What kinds of internships, career counseling, and placement services are available?

The campus visit should be considered a time to look at a school and ask questions about programs, activities, cost, and to see the setting which will help you make a well-informed decision if this may be the place for you. The campus tour is one of the best times to ask candid questions about issues the Admission Office may have only touched on.

Many tour guides are current students who can give you insight from a student perspective. Take advantage of the opportunity to ask them lots of questions.