

2023 College Application Guide for 2nd Semester Juniors and Families

3 Tasks for Juniors During 2nd Semester:

1. Take the SAT and/or the ACT this spring at least once.
 - Many colleges are still offering *Test-Optional Applications*, but strong scores seem to assist students in gaining admission into competitive programs.
 - Recommend that students hold off on sending scores until they receive their scores and can make decisions in the fall whether to share their scores. They may choose to send their scores to some schools and not to others.
 - For the SAT, sign up through the student's College Board at www.collegeboard.org. (Do not make a duplicate account. Students should have made accounts as 10th graders in order to view their PSAT scores.) The March test is a good option because it allows time for the student to prepare through Khan Academy and to retest in May or June.
 - For the ACT, sign up for an account at www.act.org. The April date is a good option because it allows time for students to retest in June.
2. College and University Campus Visits:
 - Salem's Spring Break is a great time to schedule visits to college campuses because college campuses are typically active during this week and offer tours and information sessions. Check college websites regularly for updates under their "Admissions" or "Perspective Students" tabs. Begin looking for these opportunities on colleges' websites in January and February.
 - A Pandemic Positive: Most colleges and universities have created and/or have improved virtual college campuses tours if onsite visits are not possible.
 - Rising seniors should have their application lists narrowed to approximately 5 prospective schools by fall 2023: 1st Choice School, Safety School, and 2 or 3 other schools. Remember, students should only consider schools that have majors of study that match their career interests. Schools will list the Majors offered on their websites.
 - For students who are uncertain as to where to start, they can access a college search tool through their College Board (SAT) accounts called, *Big Future*.
3. Finish the School Year as Strong as Possible!
 - Students' cumulative GPAs at the end of their junior years are the GPAs that Admission Offices utilize when making admission decisions.

For those looking to get an early jump start on what the college application process looks like, please feel free to view our resources for current seniors, <https://shs.salem.k12.va.us/seniors>. This information is for current 2023 seniors but can provide an idea of what to expect.

Over the Summer:

- Put together a resume. Resumes are useful when completing college applications, asking teachers for letters of recommendations, and even when completing scholarship applications. Naviance has a resume template.
- Begin searching for scholarships through search engines available such as fastweb.com and goingmerry.com. Students should consider creating email accounts to utilize for scholarships only. Be cautious of any application platforms who charge fees.
- Download a *password keeper*. Upon submission of college applications, students should check their email (and spam folders) for instructions about setting up their guest accounts. (These emails may include additional components that need to be completed for the applications.) Students will utilize these college guest accounts to check to make sure their applications are complete and to learn acceptance decisions.
- View college websites and note the type of application they accept (Common App, Coalition, Directly Online to the Institution) and note deadlines for Early Decision vs. Early Action vs. Regular Decision. Making spreadsheets/charts can be helpful if the student includes the requirements of each colleges' applications.
- The Common App will release their essay questions over the summer so that students can write these over the summer and be ready for fall. Writing these essays over the summer can greatly reduce the stress seniors experience during application time!

Fall, Senior Year:

- Counselors will visit seniors' classrooms and cover the college application process, showing students how to access multiple sites such as: SHS Counseling webpage; Naviance (to request transcripts), College application websites; FAFSA (necessary to receive financial aid and/or for application to be considered *complete*; Scholarship Resources and much, much more.
- Counselors will meet individually with seniors, providing each with a copy of their Initial Senior Transcript. They will offer assistance and also remind each senior what courses/tests are still needed to meet graduation requirements.
- Counselors will hold a *2023 College Application Meeting* for seniors and their families.
- Students should be ready to apply to colleges in September. Counselors will be available to assist students as needed.
- If going directly to a 4-yr school, consider applying to 4 or 5 colleges: 1st Choice School, Safety School, and 2 or 3 others. (Students should have at least one application submitted by Halloween and **all** submitted before Winter Break.)
- When ready to apply, where to begin? **Individual College/University's websites!**
- On their websites, typically under an *Admissions* tab, note all tasks required by specific colleges for their application processes: These tasks usually include:
 - Sending SAT or ACT scores directly from SAT or ACT accounts
 - Requesting transcripts (through Naviance at SHS)

- Completing applications (including essays)
- Completing the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) which will open on October 1, 2023. Students will need their parents' assistance with this piece as it is in reference to your family income. Most schools require this piece to be completed before an application is considered complete and before offering any type of financial assistance.
- Letters of Recommendation (through Naviance at SHS)
- If needed, ask for Letters of Recommendation (Not all colleges require; check websites):
 - Ask teachers in person.
 - Provide teachers with resumes.
 - Provide at least 1 week before deadlines (and never wait until the day before Winter Break!)
- All Transcript and Teacher Letter of Recommendation requests must be made in students' SHS **Naviance** accounts so that we can electronically transmit your transcripts, the School Profile Report, letters of recommendations, and any supporting documents.
- All requests to send SAT and/or ACT scores are made directly in students' College Board and/or ACT accounts. SHS cannot send this information; it must come directly from the testing organizations.
- Check student guest college accounts regularly and check for unmet tasks. Note that often, even after applications are submitted, many Admissions Offices will request students to complete additional tasks. Never assume applications are complete!
- Scholarships, another reason to log into your school **Naviance** account. SHS lists scholarships of which we are made aware of in Naviance. Beginning in the fall, check the Naviance scholarship page weekly and apply, apply, apply! You can't win if you don't apply! Families, these scholarships are also listed on our SHS School Counseling webpage. Also, search other scholarship opportunities such as parents'/grandparents' employers and civic organizations, churches, and scholarship search engines.

Resources and Opportunities

- VWCC, Virginia Western Community College, offers many certifications programs and 2-Year Associates Degrees. Many students who begin at VWCC and complete Associate Degrees then transfer to 4-year colleges/universities and are able to complete Bachelor's Degrees in two more years.
- CCAP: A Scholarship to VWCC for students who apply by deadlines, who meet criteria (including a 2.5 or higher cumulative GPA) and who are awarded the scholarship. (Some students may be awarded half and not all students will receive CCAP).
- VWCC will provide information about CCAP in the fall. The CCAP application will open on Oct. 1 and closes on Feb. 1; The deadline is firm....this is a one-time opportunity.
- The *Seniors and Families Meeting* will cover further information about the college application process in September.

- A College Fair occurs at the Salem Civic Center in September and has approximately 100 colleges/universities represented.
- Many College Representatives visit SHS. To meet with these representatives, seniors schedule appointments through Naviance at least 24 hours prior.
- Career inventories and college-planning information are available to our students on Naviance.
- Naviance has been mentioned multiple times; to access Naviance, students may use the following link, <https://student.naviance.com/salhs>. Bookmark on your chromebooks.

Emails: Daily, students need to check their school email accounts and their personal email accounts they list on their college applications.

Available Assistance: Reach out to our School Counseling Office with questions!

SHS School Counseling Contact Information:

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