The State University of New York
COUNTDOWN TO SUNY

9th Grade Plan
10th Grade Plan
11th Grade Plan
12th Grade Plan

SUNY
Welcome

Your college journey begins now...plan ahead and be a winner. We’ll help you get started and provide advice and guidance along the way. Your success is important to us.

Explore the tips and ideas offered here. Combine it with the input and feedback you get from others along the way. Work hard, do well, have fun, plan for the future, contribute to your school and community and you’ll be prepared to take on all that a college education has to offer.

Check out our college planning guides and learn how to manage your college search process. You’ll find advice on preparing for college and careers, as well as helpful hints for making the most of your summer. We’ll guide you through the college preparation process – from creating your list of colleges to securing recommendations and submitting applications – and provide tips on when to visit colleges and what to do while you are there. Our timelines will guide you through your freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years in high school so you can make the most of your college opportunities.

Good luck! Let us know if we can assist you.
Did you know . . .

That college graduates earn substantially more money than high school graduates? Here is a breakdown of the median 2008 earnings by college degree:

- $100,000
  - Professional Degree
- $91,900
  - Doctoral Degree
- $67,300
  - Master’s Degree
- $55,700
  - Bachelor’s (4-year) Degree
- $42,000
  - Associate (2-year) Degree
- $33,800
  - High School Diploma or GED
- $24,300
  - No High School Diploma

Source: Education Pays 2010, The College Board

The courses you take in high school are important.

Whether you plan to attend a 4-year college, technology or community college, take at least five academic classes every semester in high school to develop skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening and reasoning.

Colleges are looking for a solid foundation of learning that you can build upon. Keep in mind that even though they may not be required for high school graduation, most colleges prefer the following:

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of social studies
- 3 years of math (including Integrated Algebra, Geometry, and Algebra 2/Trigonometry)
- 3 years of laboratory science
- 2-3 years of the same foreign language
- Courses in fine arts and computer science are strongly recommended

Many states have diploma options available to students, and these options frequently require additional high school coursework. For example, to be eligible for the New York State Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation, the following courses are required in high school:

- 4 units of English
- 4 units of social studies
- 3 units of mathematics
- 3 units of science
- 0.5 unit of health
- 1 unit of the arts (dance, music, theatre or visual arts)
- 3 units of languages other than English *
- 2 units (typically four school years) of physical education
- 1.5 units of sequence courses, electives *

* Units required are adjusted for students taking a sequence in career and technical education or the arts.

Except where noted, each unit typically represents one school year of successfully completed coursework.

Your counselor can help you make the right class choices.

Take academics seriously and keep your grades up.

Your high school grades are important and the difficulty of your courses may be a factor in a college’s decision to offer you admission. College admission officers will pay close attention to your grade point average (GPA), class rank, Advanced Placement (AP), and other honors-level courses, as well as your scores on standardized tests and state exams such as the Regents in New York State. Regents’ scores are reflected on your transcript and will be viewed by colleges. So, challenge yourself by taking tougher courses and maintaining good grades. Not only will this help prepare you for standardized tests (such as the PSAT, SAT and ACT), but it will also determine your eligibility for some
colleges. Many high school seniors realize their grade point average is too low for the colleges they wish to attend simply because of the grades they earned in the 9th and 10th grades. Don’t let this happen to you! All grades count—from 9th to 12th.

**Get a head start on your SUNY application.**

Begin building your SUNY Online Academic Record (SOAR) at the end of 9th grade. You will be able to return at the end of each academic year to update SOAR with additional courses and test scores. And, by the time you are ready to apply in your senior year, your academic record will be nearly complete! Request an unofficial transcript from your school counselor to begin your SOAR. Then, go to [https://www.suny.edu/soar](https://www.suny.edu/soar) and create an account. Be sure to remember your login and password and keep them in a secure location.

**Get to know your teachers, counselor and principal.**

Show them that you are both serious about learning and are a hard worker. When you begin applying to college in a couple of years, you will have people who know you well. Those who know you well will write the strongest recommendation letters.

Review your transcript yearly, especially if a grade has been changed on your report card by a teacher or a transcript update has been submitted by your counselor. Be sure to have these changes verified by your parent/guardian. This is crucial as teachers and counselors retire and without written proof, your transcript and GPA may be negatively affected.

Be sure to check out the College Board’s 20 Questions to Ask Your School Counselor at [https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-started/building-support-networks/20-questions-to-ask-your-school-counselor](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-started/building-support-networks/20-questions-to-ask-your-school-counselor).

**Get involved.**

In school activities . . . community service . . . part-time work . . .

Find something you like and stick to it! Colleges pay attention to your life outside of the classroom and value these types of experiences. Begin getting involved now. Be sure to keep (and update regularly) a list of your activities, awards, honors, jobs, and offices you have held in organizations. Colleges want to see passion and commitment, and the key is not to be involved in every club, but to select a few that really appeal to you.

It is not the quantity but the quality and longevity of involvement in activities or organizations that matters. For example, if, as a 9th grader, you join the school newspaper and are a club reporter and then in 10th grade become a sports reporter, in 11th, a sports editor and in 12th, the editor-in-chief, it demonstrates growth in leadership. In community service, the same applies. It is not a sign of commitment if you simply participate in a charity walk once a year for four years. Rather, you should find something in which you have an avid interest. Whether it is an animal shelter, a nursing home, or a soup kitchen, the idea is that you stay and put in significant time. As your commitment becomes obvious to the program coordinator, you should be given more responsibility and by your fourth year, a special project which you lead. For example, if you were to work in a nursing home and gained the respect and trust of those in charge, by the fourth year, they might acknowledge your sense of responsibility and leadership skills allowing you to plan, implement, and supervise a special program like a “Seniors Prom.”

**Make the most of your summer.**

Keep busy by doing something meaningful such as finding a summer job, identifying a volunteer experience in a career field that interests you, learning or perfecting a skill or hobby, going to summer school to get ahead or catch up, attending a summer program or camp, or catching up on your reading. Additional ideas include the following:

- Find a community service project and commit significant hours
- Attend a summer camp and hone your testing skills, athletic skills, or a hobby such as music
- Find a summer college program where you can master subject areas of interest or leadership training
- Go to summer school to advance or to repeat a subject that was failed
- Utilize the 10th grade reading lists for English, social studies, etc. to complete assignments and free up time during the beginning of the school year
- College Board’s 5 ways to stay on track in summer at [https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-started/outside-the-classroom/5-ways-to-stay-on-track-in-summer](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-started/outside-the-classroom/5-ways-to-stay-on-track-in-summer)

There are many helpful resources! Here are a few to get you started:

- Hourly employment opportunities at [www.snagajob.com](http://www.snagajob.com)
- Summer jobs at [www.summerjobs.com](http://www.summerjobs.com)
- Jobs for teenagers at [www.teens4hire.org](http://www.teens4hire.org)
- Internships at [www.fastweb.com/content/featured-internships](http://www.fastweb.com/content/featured-internships)

**Start saving for college.**

It’s not too early to begin saving for college. Learn about 529 plans at [www.savingforcollege.com](http://www.savingforcollege.com). The College Savings Plans Network is a national non-profit association dedicated to making college accessible and affordable for families.

Another way to begin saving for college is by earning points when you shop. Learn more at [www.upromise.com](http://www.upromise.com).

Links to non-SUNY Web sites and information are provided for your convenience and do not constitute an endorsement.
Get ready for college tests.

Begin your year by practicing and then taking the PSAT and/or PLAN (PSAT is the pre-SAT test and PLAN is the pre-ACT test). Consult your counselor about taking either or both of these tests in the 10th grade to help you prepare for the SAT or ACT college entrance exams, which you will take in the 11th and/or 12th grades.

Visit the College Board at www.collegeboard.org and ACT www.actstudent.org Web sites to learn about these assessments and take the practice tests.

Get to know yourself.

Learn more about your personality, skills, abilities, likes, and dislikes. An understanding of these will assist in determining what career will bring you the most satisfaction. There are many assessments available to assist you in learning more about yourself such as the Campbell Interest and Skills Survey, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Self-Directed Search, and Strong Interest Inventory. Check with your counselor to see which are available through your high school.

Talk to your family, friends, teachers, and counselor and ask for their perceptions about what you do well. Then, ask yourself questions and make a list of your answers. Here are a few questions to get you started:

- What are 5 things I like to do?
- Which classes do I enjoy?
- Which classes do I least enjoy?
- How would my friends describe me?
- How would my family describe me?
- What 5 adjectives describe me?
- What are 5 of my strengths?
- What are 5 of my weaknesses?
- What 3 accomplishments am I most proud of?
- What careers or professions are attractive to me?

Explore careers that interest you.

Consider volunteering or job shadowing in a career that interests you. Ask people whose jobs look or sound interesting to explain what they really do and how they got to where they are now. Here are a few questions to get you started:

- Describe your typical day.
- What did you study in college?
- What courses best prepared you for your career?
- What do you like most about your job?
- What do you like least about your job?
- What advice do you have for someone interested in this career?

Research job trends.

Find out more about the careers that interest you. What level of education is required? What is the average salary? What are the expected job prospects? The U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics at www.bls.gov/oco offers answers to these questions and provides information about occupational projections by state, as well as career exploration information.

Make a list of colleges that interest you.

- Do you wish to attend a large, medium or small-sized college or university?
- Close to home or far away?
• Public or private?
• Two-year or four-year?
• How important is cost?
• How important are clubs, activities and sports?
• Does your list include colleges and universities that offer your areas of academic interest?

Explore free college search programs such as the College Board’s College MatchMaker at [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) and ACT’s College Search at [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) to assist you in finding colleges that are a good match.

**Begin visiting college campuses.**

It’s not too early to begin visiting campuses. Check Web sites for information about campus tours and open house programs, as well as summer opportunities such as workshops and camps - these are often referred to as pre-college programs. Remember, a visit is not a commitment to attend a college but rather an opportunity to experience a campus first-hand.

The College Board at [https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-started/know-yourself/6-steps-to-get-the-most-out-of-a-campus-visit](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-started/know-yourself/6-steps-to-get-the-most-out-of-a-campus-visit) offers tips on planning your visit, as well as suggestions on when to visit and how to prepare for your visit.

**Don’t forget:**

• The courses you take in high school are important
• Take academics seriously and keep your grades up
• Get to know your teachers, counselor and principal
• Get involved
• Make the most of your summer
• Add your 10th grade courses and test scores (if applicable) to your SUNY Online Academic Record (SOAR)

**Explore ways to pay for college.**

Here are a few Web sites to get you started:

• [How to pay for college](http://www.nyangearup.org/collegesense/index.htm)
• SUNY’s Net Price Calculator [www.suny.edu/howmuch](http://www.suny.edu/howmuch)
• Federal grants [http://mappingyourfuture.org/paying/scholarshipresources.htm](http://mappingyourfuture.org/paying/scholarshipresources.htm)
• State financial aid [www.mymoney.gov/category/topic1/going-college.html](http://www.mymoney.gov/category/topic1/going-college.html)
• Scholarships [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)

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SUMMER - Prior to your junior year

• **Learn** more about your personality, skills, abilities, likes, and dislikes by taking an interest inventory or personality profile. Be sure to investigate the searches available from the College Board at [https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-started/know-yourself](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-started/know-yourself) and ACT at [www.actstudent.org/career](http://www.actstudent.org/career).

• **Research** careers by talking with people, searching the Internet, and reading books and magazines.

• **Research** colleges by visiting the College Board and ACT Web sites or check out the SUNY campus search at [www.suny.edu/student/search-campus/search-campus_start.cfm](http://www.suny.edu/student/search-campus/search-campus_start.cfm).

• **Prepare** for the PSAT/NMSQT or SAT by visiting the College Board’s SAT Preparation Center at [www.SAT.collegeboard.org/practice](http://www.SAT.collegeboard.org/practice), or take the practice ACT at [www.actstudent.org/testprep/index.html](http://www.actstudent.org/testprep/index.html).

FALL

• **Take** the most challenging courses you can as it is the rigor of your curriculum, along with a solid grade point average, that will be evaluated by college admission committees. Taking challenging courses shows that you are ready for a competitive college environment. Be sure to meet with your counselor to review the courses you’ve taken and determine what you still need to take.

• **Maintain** your grades – grades earned in your junior year will be evaluated by college admission officials when you apply for admission. You should be spending a minimum of two hours per night on homework and participating in study groups.

• **Make** sure you have a social security number.

• **Establish** U.S. citizenship. For some non-U.S. citizens, now may be the time to consider pursuing U.S. citizenship.

• **Obtain** schedules for the SAT, SAT Subject Tests, and ACT and determine which exams you’ll take. Complete the registration forms and mark the dates on your calendar – see your counselor for information.

• **Register** to take the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) if you didn’t do so in the 10th grade – see your counselor for information.

• **Investigate** Honors and Advanced Placement classes - meet with your counselor to discuss whether these are appropriate for you.

• **Inquire** about national competitions and scholarships, such as the Intel Science Talent Search, by visiting with your counselor.

• **Complete** SAT II subject exams as you finish subject areas – see your counselor for information.

• **Develop** your leadership skills and stay involved. Colleges look for consistency and depth in activities.

• **Attend** college fairs, financial aid nights and college-planning workshops – encourage your parent(s)/guardian(s) to accompany you.

• **Sign-up** to participate in college visits at your high school and collect business cards from the representatives with whom you visit.

• **Establish** an e-mail account specifically for your college search. Remember, a “funky” e-mail address is best left for communicating with friends and family.

• **Talk** to your counselor if you are interested in a military academy to find out about requirements and timelines.

WINTER

• **Prepare** for the SAT or ACT by taking a preparation course – see your counselor for recommendations.

• **Register** to take the SAT or ACT. (If you and your family are experiencing financial hardship, ask your counselor about a fee waiver.)
• Consult your counselor about registering to take AP classes during your senior year.
• Generate a list of 10-20 colleges and contact them for information. Research costs and make note of upcoming campus visit programs.
• Organize! Make folders for your college information, along with deadlines and important dates. Check it often.
• Send e-mail messages to your colleges of interest to get on their mailing lists. To request information from SUNY go to www.suny.edu/student/req_info/request_info.cfm?
• Start early! Learn about federal financial aid, as well as your potential eligibility and EFC (Expected Family Contribution) at http://studentaid.ed.gov.
• Learn how the EFC (Expected Family Contribution) works at www.knowhow2go.org/juniors_costs.php.
• Research scholarships at www.fastweb.com and see your counselor for additional information.
• Create a first draft of your résumé to maintain a record of college courses taken, college programs in which you’ve participated, awards you’ve won, projects you’ve completed, extracurricular achievements, and volunteer work.
• Review your senior year class schedule with your counselor to ensure that it fulfills graduation requirements.
• Start the certification process if you are interested in participating in college athletics. Consult with your athletic director or coach(es) to determine whether you are a candidate for an athletic program. Be sure to check with your counselor to make sure you’re taking a core curriculum that meets NCAA requirements. For more information go to www.ncaa.org.

SPRING

• Research Early Decision and Early Action programs and schedule your testing to meet early deadlines.
  • Continue to attend college fairs, financial aid nights and college-planning workshops – many spring events are designed for high school juniors.
  • Utilize your college list to arrange visits to campuses during spring break and encourage your parent(s)/guardian(s) to attend, too. Remember to send thank you notes following your visit(s).
  • Contact your U.S. Representative or U.S. Senator to express your interest in and desire to be nominated to attend a military academy.
  • Consult your coach and counselor BEFORE submitting the NCAA Clearinghouse form to compete in Division I or II college athletics. The form may be found at www.eligibilitycenter.org.

SUMMER - Following your junior year

• Take the SAT or ACT.
• Search for summer pre-college programs, workshops and classes at SUNY campuses or apply for internships and summer jobs in your field of interest.
• Find a summer job or internship that reflects your career interests.
• Pace yourself. Don’t spend so much time trying to improve standardized test scores that your grades and involvement in activities suffer – find and maintain a balance.

Have fun, too!

• Consider whom you’ll ask to write letters of recommendation (current teachers and counselors). Then, provide a summary of what you wish for them to include and politely ask if they can assist. Remember to send each a thank you note.
• Inquire about personal interviews or group information sessions at your favorite colleges. Call or write for summer appointments.
• Consult your coach and counselor BEFORE submitting the NCAA Clearinghouse form to compete in Division I or II college athletics. The form may be found at www.eligibilitycenter.org.

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COUNTDOWN TO SUNY

SUMMER - Prior to your senior year

• Take the SAT II subject tests if your potential colleges require them and you have finished the curriculum which would help you score well. (If you and your family are experiencing financial hardship, ask your counselor about a fee waiver.)

• Narrow your list of colleges to 4-8. Make sure these are a right match for you. Just because a relative attended an Ivy League school, doesn’t mean it is a good fit for you.

• Visit the three schools at the top of your list (be sure to include SUNY). Schedule your visit in conjunction with a family vacation or when colleges are hosting events.

• Decide whether you’ll apply as an Early Decision or Early Action candidate and begin preparing your application for admission. These deadlines are typically in early to mid-November of your senior year.

• Compose rough drafts of essays and ask your family, friends, and teachers to review your essays for grammar, punctuation, readability, and content.

• Contact coaches, if applicable, and include your high school sports schedule and game tapes. Be sure to tell them why you are interested in their program and school.

• Create an arts portfolio, if applicable, to showcase your performing, visual or creative arts work. Your portfolio may include essays, photographs, illustrations, slides or other forms of artwork. A portfolio should represent your best creative work from class projects or assignments and be consistent with portfolio instructions given by an individual campus program.

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

• Have a strong senior year... take at least four academic courses and earn good grades. Colleges may ask to review your mid-year grades.

• Review your high school transcript in mid-September to be sure it is accurate.

• Plan ahead! This is a busy time for your school counseling office. Provide your counselor with a list of schools to which you intend to apply and give him/her a list of dates for letters, forms, etc.

• Identify teachers and counselors from whom you will ask for letters of recommendation. Give serious consideration to teachers that can speak to the rigor of your curriculum and your potential for success.

• Discuss essay topics with your teachers and/or counselor. If you haven’t done so already, write a first draft of your college essay. Visit the College Board at https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/essays/tips-for-writing-an-effective-application-essay-college-admissions for tips on writing your essay.

• Organize! Create a folder for each college to which you are applying and make special note of deadlines. Also create separate folders for tests you’ve taken or plan to take, financial aid forms and fee waivers.

• Inquire about dates (and pre-registration dates) for upcoming standardized tests such as the ACT, SAT and AP.

• Create a résumé which includes your high school graduation date, grade point average, class rank, standardized test scores, special courses taken, academic honors and awards, activities (including athletics, leadership, community service, and work), interests and major goals. Keep your résumé brief... one to two pages maximum.

• Apply to SUNY at www.suny.edu/applysuny. It’s fast, easy, secure and available 24/7. Check out the Online Application Worksheet at www.suny.edu/student/forms.cfm to draft your answers first.

• Attend upcoming college fairs - most will occur in September, October and November.

• Keep your counselor updated about where you’ve applied for admission and let him/her know how you’ve applied (SUNY Application, Common Application, etc.).
• Remember to print and proofread your entire application before submitting it for review.

• Submit your SUNY Online Academic Record (SOAR) to the SUNY campuses to which you have applied at www.suny.edu/soar. You will need to request an unofficial transcript from your school counselor before you begin.

• Follow-up with your counselor and/or teachers to ensure that your letters of recommendation have been sent.

• Contact colleges regarding support services if you have a learning or physical disability.

• Continue to investigate scholarship opportunities. A good resource is FastWeb at www.fastweb.com.

• Plan on auditioning for a music program or scholarship? Each SUNY campus has its own process for scheduling auditions. In some cases, the department will contact you directly to schedule an audition after receiving your application. Other programs ask that you schedule your audition as soon as possible whether you have submitted your application or not. Check with each campus about how and where to schedule an audition.

• Plan on playing a sport? Be sure to file the proper paperwork with the NCAA Clearinghouse - see your coach, athletic director or counselor, or go to www.eligibilitycenter.org.

• Update SOAR with your senior year schedule. Be sure to include courses in progress and courses you plan to take next semester.

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

• Attend area financial aid programs or workshops.

  • Focus on financial aid and enlist the assistance of your parents/family members. For each college on your list, calculate the total cost of a year (two semesters) using the college’s net price calculator. SUNY’s calculator will be available at www.suny.edu/student under the “Paying for College” section.

  • Give your counselor enough time for completing forms and sending transcripts for scholarships for which you are applying.

  • Practice your college interview skills by participating in a mock interview. Ask your counselor for information or to organize an interview.

JANUARY/FEBRUARY

• Stay focused and keep studying.

• Attend area financial aid programs or workshops.

• Ask your counselor to send mid-year grades to colleges to which you’ve applied, if required.

• Obtain your financial aid PIN.

• Ask your parents/family members to complete their tax return as soon as possible - this is important as federal financial aid and most scholarships work on a first-come first-served basis. If your family receives assistance from government social services, make sure your caseworker knows that a copy of your family’s financial budget will be needed in January. Go to www.fafsa.ed.gov and fill out your FAFSA.

• Register for May AP exams.

MARCH/APRIL

• Look for decision letters.

• Make photocopies of all decision letters and scholarship letters/awards you’ve received and give them to your counselor. These copies will help your counselor know from whom you’ve heard and will enable him/her to compile yearly school profile statistics.

• Maintain good senior year grades. Failure to do so may result in your acceptance offer(s) being rescinded.

• Review financial aid and scholarship offers you’ve received. If you have questions, call offices directly.

MAY/JUNE

• Make your college decision by May 1. Notify the colleges you won’t be attending so other students who were placed on waiting lists can be admitted.

• Send your tuition deposit (if required).

• Notify your guidance counselor of your college decision and request that a final transcript to be sent to that college.

• Notify your counselor and those who’ve awarded you a scholarship (for scholarship recipients) about where you’ll attend as most will send a scholarship check directly to the college you plan to attend.

• Ask your counselor to send your final transcript to the NCAA Clearinghouse (for athletes).

Links to non-SUNY Web sites and information are provided for your convenience and do not constitute an endorsement.
What does it all mean?

**ACT**
A college entrance examination generally taken during the junior and/or senior year that assesses a student’s general educational development and his/her ability to complete college-level work. The ACT is comprised of four subject tests — English, mathematics, reading, and science and an optional writing test (essay).

**AP (Advanced Placement)**
Courses and exams that enable high school students to earn college credit or advanced standing at most American colleges and universities. To learn more about AP courses and subject area exams go to [http://www.collegeboard.org/student/testing/ap/about.html](http://www.collegeboard.org/student/testing/ap/about.html).

**Associate Degree**
The associate degree is awarded to students who complete a minimum of 60 college credits with a 2.0 GPA.

**Athletics**
Colleges and universities belong to leagues that have their own rules, regulations, and eligibility requirements. SUNY participates in NCAA Divisions I and III and NJCAA Divisions I, II, and III, NAIA, and USCAA.

NCAA - National Collegiate Athletic Association at [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org)
Division I and II schools offer athletic scholarships and students are required to meet NCAA’s academic requirements. Division III schools do not offer athletic scholarships and students are not required to meet NCAA academic requirements.

A future student athlete should meet with his/her counselor as early as possible to review the NCAA requirements to ensure he/she is taking the right high school courses.

NJCAA - National Junior College Athletic Association at [www.njcaa.org](http://www.njcaa.org)
NJCAA Division I and II schools offer scholarships, while Division III schools do not. There are no academic eligibility requirements for student athletes entering junior or community colleges.

NAIA - National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics at [http://naia.cstv.com](http://naia.cstv.com)
NAIA schools have an option of awarding full or partial scholarships. In order to play a sport or receive an athletic scholarship, a student must meet eligibility requirements.

USCAA - United States Collegiate Athletic Association at [www.theuscaa.com](http://www.theuscaa.com)
USCAA schools have an option of awarding full or partial scholarships. In order to play a sport or receive an athletic scholarship, a student must meet USCAA eligibility requirements.

**Bachelor’s Degree**
(also called Baccalaureate Degree) – The bachelor’s degree is awarded to students who complete a minimum of 120 college credits. Bachelor’s degrees are found at four-year colleges and universities.

**Certificate Programs**
Certificate programs provide specific job skills, require a minimum of 30 college credits and are generally offered at community colleges.

**Class Rank**
Many high schools use class rank to show where a student stands academically in relation to other members in his/her graduating class. The student who has the highest GPA is number one in the class. The student with the second highest GPA is number two, etc. Therefore, it is necessary to have a high GPA in order to have an impressive class rank.

**Community/Junior College**
A community/junior college is also known as a two-year school. Courses offered include transfer curricula with credits transferable toward a bachelor’s degree at a four-year college and occupational or technical curricula with courses of study designed to prepare students for employment in two years.

**Credit**
College courses are measured in credit hours and typical college classes are 3 credit hours. A full-time student will generally take 15 college credits, or 4 to 5 classes, per semester.

**Early Action**
An admission program under which students apply early to one or more colleges and receive a decision, prior to regular notification dates, without an obligation to attend. Admission is non-binding. Students typically have until May 1 to declare their intent to enroll and may apply under Early Action to as many schools as they wish.

**Early Decision**
An admission program under which students apply early and receive a decision prior to regular notification dates. Admission is binding. If they are offered admission, they must commit to attending the college. As a result, students may not apply under Early Decision to more than one college.

**FAFSA**
The Free Application for Federal Student Aid at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) is required for students wishing to apply for financial aid - including federal, state, and campus-based aid. The FAFSA should be completed as soon after January 1 of the senior year in high school as possible, even if the family tax returns have not been filed.
**GPA (Grade Point Average)**
Grade point average reflects the average of a student's semester (or end of term) grades, starting with the freshman year. Although GPA scales differ among schools, they are usually reported as letters or numbers.

Numeric grades can be converted to letter grades as illustrated below in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numeric Grade</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Grade Point Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 60</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Minor**
A second field of study requiring fewer credit hours than a major.

**PLAN**
A “pre-ACT” test that also assists students with their career and college planning. Typically PLAN is administered in the fall of the sophomore year.

**PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test)**
A practice test for the SAT that is also used to determine National Merit finalists. The PSAT/NMSQT is given in October, primarily to juniors, and measures critical reading, math problem-solving and writing skills.

**Recommendation**
Most colleges request two or three letters of recommendation when submitting an application for admission. These are generally written by people who know you inside and outside of the classroom (usually an academic teacher and a college advisor/school counselor).

**SAT Reasoning Test**
A college entrance examination generally taken during the junior and/or senior year that measures the critical thinking skills needed for academic success in college. The SAT includes critical reading, mathematics and writing sections.

**SAT II: Subject Tests**
One-hour tests that measure a student's knowledge in specific subject areas that should be taken as the high school subjects are completed. These tests are required by some of the more competitive colleges.

**Transcript**
A document that details a student's academic achievement in high school. Although the appearance of the transcript varies from school to school, all high school transcripts generally contain the following information: Courses, grades, and credits for each grade completed, beginning with grade nine; current cumulative GPA and class rank; and anticipated graduation date. An unofficial transcript is exactly the same as an official transcript except that there is no signature, stamp, or seal.