

Senior Handbook

For the Class of 2010

A guide to applying to colleges and trade schools.
Presented by the Liberty High School Counseling Office

Congratulations! You are a senior. It has been a long and winding road to arrive where you now stand, but believe it or not, the real journey has only just begun. That's right; the past eleven years of school have simply served as the foundation for what comes next: adulthood. You are poised to leap into the most interesting, frightening and exhilarating time of your life.....are you ready?

IS COLLEGE RIGHT FOR EVERYONE?

The short answer is no. But if you aren't at least thinking about college, you are making a big mistake! Whatever your plans after high school, college should be on your mind, but not for reasons of status or prestige. College should be on your mind because higher education will allow you to pursue your dreams more completely, and with access to more resources, than any single pathway. No exceptions (at least that I'm aware of). Whether its art or automotive technology, math or machine technology, linguistics or landscaping, college can help you do it better. And, as anyone knows, if you learn to do something better you'll be more competitive, make more money and be more successful than your competition. Interested? Then read on.....

College should never be about snobbery or exclusivity, though sometimes people find the idea of higher education elitist. That's an unfortunate bias. College should really be about taking that one thing you love most, and learning everything you can about it. Who wouldn't want to do that? What's really exciting to me is that however you performed in high school, and whatever your grades have been, there is a school out there that would be happy to have you! If you believe that, and I hope you do, today can mark the start of your search for that school. It's out there!

You have dozens of options when searching for colleges! There are a number of website search engines that allow you to identify specific criteria you hope to find in a school, and then have the computer do the work; Princeton Review and The College Board are two of the most polished websites, but there are many others. Consider talking to your parents, friends and relatives about their experiences in college; very often, that is where some of the most heartfelt information will come. Finally, schedule an appointment with your counselor; it's a great place to get feedback, ideas, suggestions and information!

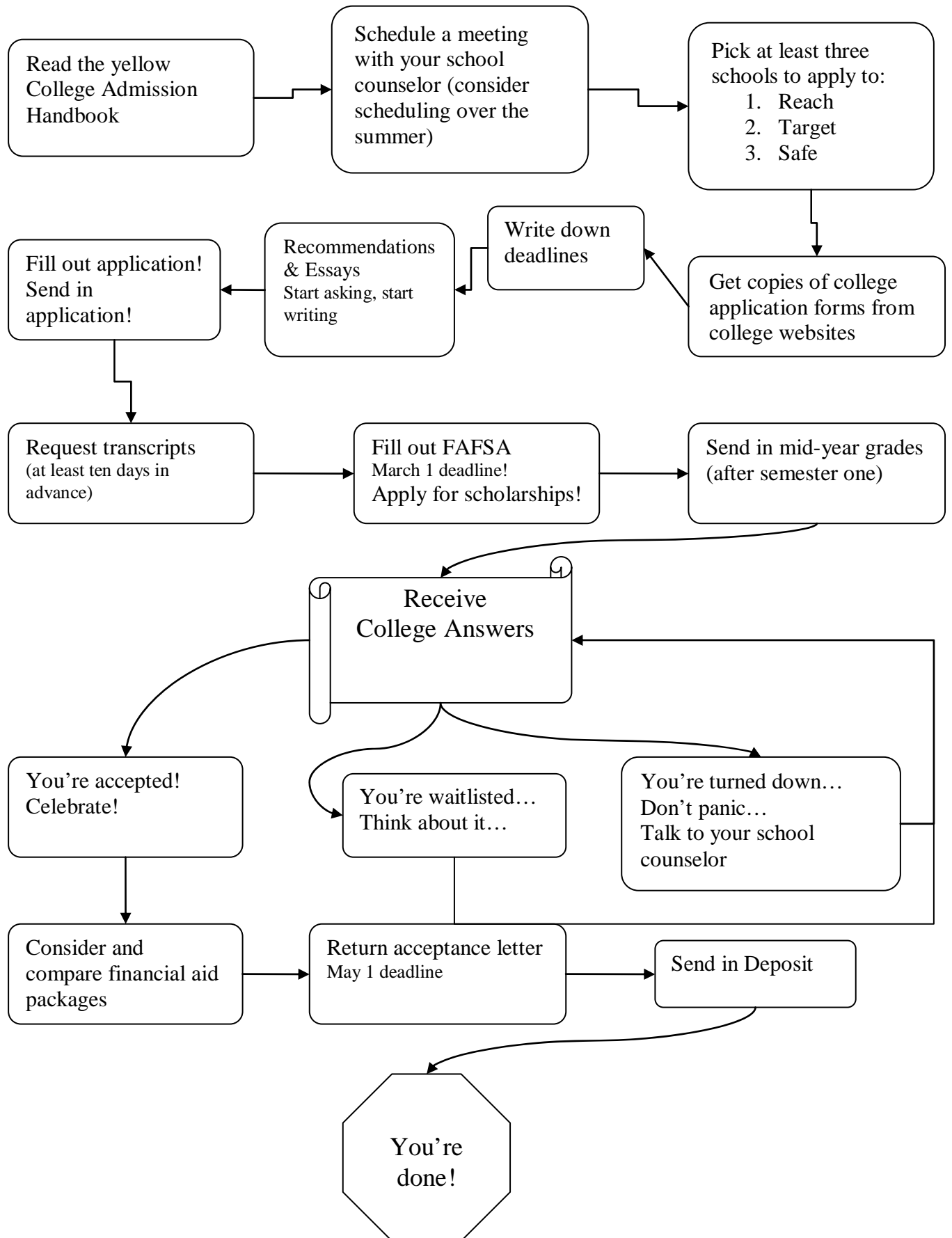
When you graduate from high school, you will have a fresh start, a new you. Don't miss the chance to become the person you have dreamed about becoming, because with some hard work, dedication and a belief in yourself.....it will happen. The information in this packet will help you prepare for the college application process. It contains a combination of information, suggestions and actual forms that you will need to apply to community colleges, trade schools, four-year colleges and universities. You may not need all of what's in this packet, so take what you need, learn what you can, and see your counselor with questions.

You're a senior. The time is now. Get started!

Sincerely,

The Liberty High School Counseling Department

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PREPARING FOR COLLEGE, VISIT
www.getin2college.com/protected/websource.html



WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TRANSCRIPTS?

Transcripts are the foundation of nearly all college applications. Simply put, they are a record of your classes and grades during high school. Students and parents may review an unofficial copy of transcripts upon request, but official transcripts are never given directly to students; they must be mailed directly between schools. Included with every transcript is a school profile, a two-sided document that includes information on Liberty High School: its grading system, how students are ranked, how courses are leveled, a listing of AP course offerings, its scheduling structure, and graduation requirements.

Information on transcripts includes:

- **The student's name and address**
- **Liberty High School's address and phone number**
- **List of courses** including course number, name and level (ie. Honors or AP)
- **G.P.A.** (grade point average)
- **Class Rank** (where a student ranks among other seniors)
- **SAT scores**, if requested by the student
- **School seal**
- **Counselor signature and date**

HOW DO I REQUEST A TRANSCRIPT?

1. Pick up a green *Carroll County Public School Transcript Request Form* from the School Counseling office.
2. Complete the form, on which you may request transcripts for up to three separate schools. Additional schools require additional forms.
3. Return the form to Mrs. Seegren, our secretary, located in the School Counseling Office.
4. Pay particular attention to the following:
 - **Test scores:** You must indicate whether or not they want SAT scores included with your transcript. Some schools WILL NOT accept scores directly from high schools, but rather require that scores come directly from the testing agency. In these cases, it is YOUR responsibility to contact and coordinate with the testing agency.
 - **Name and address of college:** You must provide an accurate address for the admissions office, not simply the school's main campus address, otherwise the transcript may not go directly to the admissions office and could be significantly delayed or lost.
 - **Secondary School Report:** Many schools ask that a counselor complete additional forms or recommendations. If such forms are required by the college, you must indicate this in the Secondary School Report column and attach the form(s) to the transcript request form. If such forms are not included with the transcript request form, transcripts will be mailed without them in the interest of adhering to deadlines. If recommendations are needed remember to complete the **College Recommendation Information form**.
 - **Application deadline:** It is very important that you provide an accurate deadline for the application. Deadlines are often given by colleges as a "must be postmarked by..." date; this is the deadline the School Counseling Office prefers as it allows us to forward material to schools in a timely fashion.
 - **Processing time:** School deadlines are not flexible, so your awareness of deadlines is vital! While we recognize that "emergencies" arise, the School Counseling Office requires at least ten school days to process transcript requests. Requests that require a turn-around time quicker than ten days, from the time our office receives the transcript request form, may not be completed in time.
 - **Cost:** The first three transcripts are free. Additional official transcripts cost \$1.00 each.

**Carroll County Public Schools
Transcript Request Form**

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Phone Number: _____

Graduation Date: _____

Please check items to be sent:

_____ Transcript: A transcript lists courses, final grades, courses in progress, current grades where applicable, GPA and class rank.

_____ Test Scores: * (circle) SAT ACT

* It is the student's responsibility to have scores sent directly from the testing center.
(SAT: www.collegeboard.com ACT: www.act.org)

_____ School Counselor Recommendation Letter Requested (attach recommendation form).

_____ PLEASE DO NOT SEND MY TEST SCORES.

Name / Address of College	Secondary School Report <i>(Check & attach if required)</i>	Application Deadline
1. _____ _____ _____		
2. _____ _____ _____		
3. _____ _____ _____		

Please allow 10 school days for processing.

First 3 transcripts are free of charge.

\$1.00 each additional request (both official and unofficial).

\$5.00 for graduates or withdrawn students.

Be sure to attach Secondary School Report Forms if required by the college or university.

I authorize the release of my records under the Family Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-579).

Student Signature

Date

What to do about Senioritis: Make your Senior Year Count

Seniors have worked hard for three years, taking tests, completing projects, and preparing for college admission. When senior year rolls around, some students just want to get through college applications and relax before they head off to the college of their choice. Also known as senioritis, taking it easy senior year may seem like a nice break, but is likely to do more harm than good. According to recent reports, incomplete high school preparation can contribute to academic problems in college. As many as half of all college students do not have adequate academic preparation, and are required to take remedial courses. More than one quarter of the freshmen at four-year colleges and nearly half of those at two-year colleges do not even make it to their sophomore year. Not only does senioritis jeopardize your chances for success later on in college, it can also affect your grades—and college admission officers pay close attention to your performance senior year.

Senior-Year Grades and College Admission

Many students mistakenly believe that prepping for college ends after the eleventh grade. However, the senior year—the entire senior year—is actually of particular interest to colleges.

Applying

Many college applications (including the Common Application) require you to list your senior courses, including information about course levels and credit hours. It will be very obvious to the admission officers if you've decided to take the year off.

Many colleges also include as part of the application a form called the mid-year grade report. Your counselor completes this form with first-half grades and sends it to the colleges to which you've applied. It then becomes a crucial part of the application folder.

If You Are Accepted

Many college acceptance letters include warnings to students such as "Your admission is contingent on your continued successful performance." This means colleges reserve the right to deny you admission should your senior year grades drop.

Mary Lee Hoganson, college counselor for Homewood-Flossmor Community High School, Flossmor, Illinois writes: "It is not at all rare for a college to withdraw an offer of admission when grades drop significantly over the course of the senior year. (I have a folder full of copies of these letters.)"

How to Make the Most of Your Senior Year

Senior year is your opportunity to strengthen your skills and broaden your experiences, in school and out, to prepare for all of the challenges ahead. A successful senior year can help launch you on the path to a successful future.

Working with Your Counselor During the College Application Process: Four Simple Tips

Completing the college application process can certainly be nerve-racking, for students and parents alike. By the time colleges have been selected, recommendations requested, essays written, and applications filled out, most families have hit the height of anxiety.

Then, quite often, the unthinkable happens. You ask your school counselor to send out your transcript, and he informs you that it will go out within the next week. "That's not soon enough," you think to yourself. "It needs to go out tomorrow." The reality, though, is that counselors need a lot more than 24 hours to process college applications.

A Counselor's Work

The American School Counselor Association recommends that the student-to-counselor ratio in schools be 250 to 1. The national average, however, is 478 to 1. This means that most counselors have many students they're trying to help. Counselors also have other duties on top of college counseling, including: helping students with academic, career, and personal issues; providing classroom assistance; administrative support; and more. In short, counselors are busy people.

Helping students apply to college is a priority for counselors. However, sending application packets along with recommendations and transcripts takes time. Plus, at peak application times, counselors can be inundated with requests to process college applications.

Four Tips for Working with Your Counselor

So what can you do to make sure that your applications go out on time and that you keep your stress level to a minimum during this anxiety-filled process?

1. Be Responsible.

Ultimately, you want to go to the college of your choice. Because you have one counselor and that counselor has many students, take charge of the application process. Know your deadlines, keep in contact with your counselor, and perform the legwork necessary to get the job done.

2. Be Organized.

Make a chart to keep track of different colleges' requirements, and mark a calendar with your application deadlines. Have a separate folder for each application so you can keep materials organized and easy to access. Ask for recommendations in September, and write your essays well ahead of the deadlines.

3. Be Early.

In the case of college applications, on time might not be good enough. Essays, recommendations, and transcript request forms should all be completed and submitted at least two weeks prior to the application deadline. Counselors and support staff fill these requests on a first-come, first-served basis, so get in the line as early as possible. Most application packets are mailed, so don't forget to leave time for the U.S. Postal Service to deliver your application and for the college's internal mail service to process it. Finally, factor in some additional time for unanticipated errors and delays.

4. Be Relaxed.

Filling out college applications can be stressful. Try not to let it get you down. Make sure to go out and have fun with your friends; to take breaks when you need them; and to remember that, in the end, the college application process is just a series of steps you need to complete. Just focus on the tasks at hand. The college application process can be stressful and exhausting—but it doesn't have to be. Organization, communication, patience, and reasonable expectations are the keys to making it a manageable and successful experience.

Letters of Recommendation: How to Stand out from the Crowd

Most college applications request two or three recommendation letters from people who know you in and out of the classroom.

Whom should I ask?

Read the application carefully. Often colleges request letters of recommendation from an academic teacher (sometimes a specific discipline) and/or your school counselor. If a non-specified academic teacher is requested, your English or Math teachers usually make good candidates. Also, you should use a teacher from junior year, or a current teacher if they have known you long enough to form an opinion. It is best not to go back too far, as colleges want current perspectives on their potential candidates. All the better if you get a recommendation from a teacher who's also been involved with you outside the classroom, but unless a college specifically requests it, don't use a coach or someone who can't speak to your academic achievements and potential.

When should I ask?

Make sure to give your recommendation writers plenty of time—at least one month before letters are due—to complete and send your recommendations, but as with anything, the earlier the better. Many teachers like to have the summer to write recommendations, so if you asked last spring, you're doing great. If you apply under early decision or early action plans, you'll need to ask at the start of the school year, if you didn't request one last spring.

How can I get the best possible recommendations?

Talk to your recommendation writers. For teachers, it's important that they focus on your academic talents and accomplishments within their classroom, because that's what colleges are looking for in teacher recommendations. Talk to them about what you remember about their class and your participation in it. Highlight a particular incident, paper, or anything else that might help them provide anecdotal information and specific examples of your achievement, rather than just vague praise.

It's also important that you spend time talking with your counselors and ensure they know about your plans, accomplishments, and involvements. You may want to provide them with a brief resume of your activities and goals; a resume can provide the best overview of your high school involvement and contributions. Also, if there is some aspect of your transcript that needs explaining—perhaps low grades during sophomore year—it's helpful to talk with your counselors to explain why and how you've changed and improved.

Helpful Tips

- Don't be shy. Teachers and counselors are usually happy to help you, as long as you respect their time constraints.
- Include addressed and stamped envelopes for each school to which you're applying.
- Provide teachers and counselors with deadlines for each recommendation that you are requesting, especially noting the earliest deadline.
- On the application form, waive your right to view recommendation letters. This gives more credibility to the recommendation in the eyes of the college.
- Typically, you know your teachers well enough to know who can provide favorable reviews of your accomplishments. If in doubt, don't hesitate to ask if they feel comfortable writing a recommendation. In some cases, you may have no choice as to who to use, but when you do, make the best choice possible.
- Follow up with your recommendation writers a week or so prior to your first deadline, to ensure recommendations have been mailed or to see if they need additional information from you.
- Once you have decided which college to attend, write thank-you notes to everyone who provided a recommendation and tell them where you've decided to go to college. Be sure to do this before you leave high school.

Liberty High School

College Recommendation Information

Student Name: _____

This form is designed to help your counselor write an accurate, informed college recommendation for you.

Please take the time to fill out the information requested and return it to your counselor at the time you are requesting a recommendation.

Include your transcript request form.

Thank You!

Self-assessment:

1. What are your three most distinguishing or admirable qualities? Explain each in several sentences.
2. Describe the academic accomplishment (major paper, science experiment, artistic project) you are most proud of, and tell why you take pride in it.
3. What kind of learner are you? Which academic setting or assignments make you thrive? What interests you?
4. What do you hope to accomplish in college and after? Consider your career goals and broader goals.
5. Is your high-school academic record an accurate measure of your ability and potential? If not, please explain.

6. **School Activities:** List the activities you have participated in, the number of years, and the amount of time you spent per week, and what you have gained or learned from each activity. Consider artistic, athletic, literary, community service, and leadership positions. Which of these were most important to you and why?

Grade-Year	School Activities	Outcome

7. **Community Activities:** What do you consider your most important activities outside of school? List jobs, paid or voluntary, religious activities, hobbies, travel, music, art, and drama. Include the number of years of involvement and the amount of time you spent on this weekly and explain why this activity was important to you.

Grade-Year	Community Activities	Outcome

8. In or out of school, which awards and honors have you received? Which elected offices have you held?

Grade-Year	Activities/Organization	Awards, Honors, Offices Held



SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION REQUEST FORM



DATE REQUESTED _____ DATE RETURNED _____

Student _____

Grade _____

1st Period

A Days _____

B Days _____

Advisory/Homeroom _____

Please list on the back of this request form the scholarship application/information you are requesting **OR** you may print off the current Scholarship Listing, highlight the individual scholarships you are interested in and attach to this request form. Every effort will be made to gather this information and return to the student within 2-3 days from date of request.

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS FORM TO THE SCHOOL COUNSELING OFFICE.

THANK YOU AND GOOD LUCK IN YOUR SCHOLARSHIP ENDEAVORS!

PLEASE LIST THE FULL NAME OF THE SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION/APPLICATION YOU ARE REQUESTING. PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

13. _____

14. _____

15. _____