

Junior Year College Planning Timeline

Winter: Stay involved, organize college lists, and prepare for standardized tests

Evaluate your education options.

Now is the time to follow a more specific path. Decide whether you want to pursue full-time employment, further education or training (such as a vocational-technical school, career college, or two-year or four-year college), or a military career. If you're interested in attending a military academy, talk to Mr. Burkee or Mrs. Hammerling about starting the application process now.

Make a college list.

Your list of colleges should include schools that meet your most important criteria (for example, size, location, cost, academic majors, or special programs). Weigh each of the factors according to their importance to you and develop a preliminary ranking of the schools on your list.

Continue gathering college information.

Go to college fairs, attend college nights, and speak with college representatives who visit your high school; use an online college finder and search top college lists. You may be able to narrow your choices or add a school to your list. College search tools can be found at www.martinlutherhs.org under the Guidance/College Prep menu and College Options tab.

Organize a testing plan.

Figure out when you'll be taking important tests like the ACT and AP exams, and mark the dates on your calendar. You'll want to have plenty of time to prepare. We strongly suggest the April 9th test date if you have not taken the ACT yet. Many students retake the ACT this summer or fall of senior year to work on improving their score. Find out if the colleges you are interested in require the ACT or ACT plus Writing test. <http://www.actstudent.org/testprep/> has good test prep resources. We recommend the ACT online test prep which costs around \$25 for a year.

Make sure you're meeting any special requirements.

If you want to play Division I or II sports in college, start the certification process and check with Mr. Burkee or Mrs. Hammerling to make sure you're taking a core curriculum that meets NCAA requirements.

Stay involved with extracurricular activities.

Colleges look for consistency and depth in the non-academic activities you pursue. Taking on leadership roles and making a commitment to the same groups are more important than trying out tons of new activities each year.

Organize your college information.

Set up a filing system with individual folders for each college's correspondence and printed materials. This will make it easier to locate the specific information you're looking for.

Begin narrowing down your college choices.

Make sure you have all the information you need about the colleges you're interested in (entrance requirements, tuition, room and board costs, course offerings, student activities, financial aid, etc.). Then begin comparing the schools by the factors that are most important to you and rank your choices.

Talk to your family.

Have a discussion about the colleges you're interested in. Your family can learn about what you want to pursue and you can hear any concerns or suggestions they might have.

Learn more about financial aid.

Examine the financial aid information provided in your packet. Develop a plan that includes a list of the aid sources, requirements for each application, and a timetable for meeting the filing deadlines. Getting organized will make the process of applying a lot easier because you'll know where to find important information. Every student is eligible for financial aid regardless of family income.

Prepare a challenging schedule for senior year.

Meet with Mr. Burkee or Mrs. Hammerling to determine what classes you'll take next year and to make sure you're on track for graduation. When you pick your classes, don't load up on easy electives. Colleges do consider your senior year courses and grades, so stick with a schedule that challenges you.

Spring: Search for scholarships and prepare for summer

Start a scholarship search.

There are many scholarships out there; you just need to spend a little bit of time and effort to find them. Check with the Office of Student Services for scholarships from local organizations and use online scholarship search tools to find a wider range of options. The sooner you start looking for scholarships, the easier it will be to select some to apply to during your senior year. Most scholarships available through the OSS won't begin until senior year. Scholarship search tools can be found at www.martinlutherhs.org under the Guidance/College Prep menu and Scholarship Info tab.

Apply for a summer job or internship.

Summer employment and internships in fields you're interested in will look appealing on a college application or resume. The money you earn can also be used to help pay application and testing fees in the fall.

Set up appointments at your top college choices.

You'll often have to plan ahead when visiting colleges. Call the admissions office to set up a personal interview, tour, and a meeting with a professor or coach if you're interested. You can also ask them to send you an application.

Summer: Visit colleges and work on application essays

Visit colleges.

Visit the campuses of your top five college choices. Take a tour and speak with the admissions and financial aid staff. You may also be able to talk to students if some classes are in session. If you have an interview, be sure to send a thank-you letter to the interviewer once you return home.

Get advice from other college students.

If you have friends or relatives in college, talk to them about what college life is like; especially if they attend a school you're interested in. Although it's important to hear what the admissions staff has to say about a school, it's also important to get the students' perspective.

Start working on your application essays.

Compose rough drafts of the essays you'll need for your college applications. Have a teacher read and discuss them with you so you can see what to work on. Make any revisions to your application essays and prepare final drafts. Don't forget to proofread your final essays a few times.

Contact your recommendation writers.

Teachers and counselors are often asked to write recommendations for lots of students. Consider whom you want to ask now and let them know so they'll have time to prepare before getting tons of requests in the fall. It's recommended that you have a letter from a teacher who can give examples of your strengths in the classroom especially in the areas of Math and Science. When asking for a recommendation be prepared to provide information about yourself that you would like highlighted in your letter. This could include accomplishments, awards, memberships, sport participation, leadership roles, etc.

Make early decision preparations.

If you plan to apply early decision to any school, take the time to visit the school again and make sure you're willing to commit. If you elect to apply early decision, you should start working on your application as soon as possible because its deadline will be earlier than others.