Guided by Faith:

Your Journey Beyond the Basilica

2026 - 2027

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College Bound: Your High School Roadmap by Year

Freshmen Year

Fall

- Begin thinking about colleges and careers that fit well with your interests.
- Take the most challenging (and realistic) courses for which you are eligible.
- You'll take your first PSAT (Fall) & PreACT (Spring). Review these score reports as they provide valuable insight into your academic strengths and areas for growth—and can help guide your planning for the future.
- Make an appointment to meet with your guidance counselor and seek their advice on college planning. Together choose the right classes to prepare you for college.
- Explore Career Training – College, Vocational, On-The-Job Training, Military
- Know Graduation, Bright Futures and post high school education requirements.
- Establish a savings plan while learning about financial aid.

Spring

- Get involved! Clubs, activities, and community involvement look great on a college application.
- Record and keep track of your credentials and achievements (awards, volunteer hours, etc.). Gradelink is where all your service hours should be entered.

Summer

- Maximize Your Summer! Boost your resume with a summer job, service project or other volunteering opportunities.
- Plan a challenging but realistic 10th grade course load.

Sophomore Year

Fall

- Practice makes perfect! Take the PSAT and PreACT to get valuable practice and to familiarize yourself with the SAT and ACT, the two most important college readiness exams.
- If you haven't started, get involved in extracurricular and volunteer activities.
- Begin looking for leadership opportunities and document your success.
- Continue to discuss career interests with your guidance counselor.
- Your GPA counts! Stay on track with your courses. If you're struggling, ask your teachers for help.

Spring

- Begin your college search. Go to www.FloridaShines.org and check out the College and University Profiles tool.
- Begin preparing for the SAT and ACT by using at home test prep tools.
- Begin putting together a job resume. (Even if you're not ready to get a job, learning how to write and present a resume is a skill that will come in handy throughout your life.)

Summer

- Find a summer job! A steady summer job can offer valuable work experience, allows you to network, and will help you along your path to college and have a successful career.
- Plan a challenging 11th grade course load.
- Consider taking the SAT or ACT.

Junior Year

Fall

- Continue to stay on track in your classes. Build up that GPA!
- Take the PSAT to get more practice. This PSAT could qualify you for National Merit.
- Schedule and take the SAT and ACT!
    - Know the dates and locations of the SAT, ACT, and other tests you might be planning to take, and put them on your calendar.
- Start building a balanced list of your top six colleges. The College and University Profiles tool lists the admission requirements, deadlines, and other important information about each public college and university in Florida. See the Appendix for quick links to our Florida schools, financial aid, and more.
    - Safety colleges: Your GPA, test scores, and class rank are above the average range of the most recently admitted freshman class.
    - Target colleges: Your GPA, test scores, and class rank fall within the average range of the most recently admitted freshman class.
    - Reach colleges: Your GPA, test scores, and class rank fall at the lower end of, or below, the average range of the most recently admitted freshman class.

Spring

- Search for scholarships – check out *Funding Your Future* below for reputable scholarship search engines. But beware of scams!
- Make sure your community service hours needed for Bright Futures Scholarships are on track.
- Create a list of the individuals from whom you plan to request letters of recommendation.
    - Ask Teachers, Coaches, Supervisors, Community and Religious Leaders
    - Don't Ask: Your Parents, Your Siblings, Your Peers
- Start communicating with admissions officers and recruiters at colleges on your list – and begin making the visits.
    - Before you go, Check!. See the Appendix for helpful tips when planning your college visits.
- Organize financial aid information – be sure the family tax documents are in order.
- Begin your college resume. This will be used to help solicit letters of recommendation and give you ideas to pull from when it comes time to write your college essay(s).

Summer

- Stay involved in extracurricular activities and seek out leadership roles in your community that will enhance your resume.
- Begin tracking early admission deadlines! Generally, colleges set early admission deadlines in November and December, but some colleges have deadlines as early as mid-October.

Senior Year

Fall

- Check requirements and deadlines for the colleges of your choice. We recommend tracking these on a spreadsheet or Word document.
- Consider creating a CommonApp account. → The CommonApp makes it easy to apply to multiple colleges using one application.
    - Begin writing your Personal Statement/Essay. For more information, see the section on *Common Application* below.
- Finalize your resume.
- Finalize college essays.
- Ensure transcripts and records are up to date and GPA calculations are accurate.
- Take the SAT and/or ACT – Improve that Superscore.
- Begin asking your reference for letters of recommendation.
    - These will be for both college admissions and scholarship applications. Some recommendations will ask the writer to respond to specific questions or points. Be sure to share these with your reference.
- Complete and submit all your college applications by their deadlines.
- Verify that colleges received your application, letters of recommendations, and test scores.
- October: Apply for Financial Aid.
- Write a thank you note to those who gave you a recommendation. You never know when you might need another for scholarships.

Spring

- National Merit Scholars → Check to see if you qualify for the Benacquisto Scholarship Program
- Complete your Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA).
- Submit your FAFSA along with any other financial aid forms required by the college. (FAFSA usually opens in October)
- Maintain your second semester grades and beware of "Senioritis." (Colleges can withdraw their acceptances if your grades drastically decline.)
- Admission letters begin arriving. Watch for them in the mail!
- Compare financial aid packages.
- Complete final scholarship applications.
- Make a final choice of the college you will attend.
- Graduate high school!

Crack the Code: Testing & Why It Matters

PSAT

The PSAT is used to help students gauge their readiness for the SAT and identify areas where they may need improvement. The PSAT is also the qualifying test for the National Merit Scholarship Program, which recognizes and awards scholarships to high-achieving students.

PSAT/NMSQT testing may occur on a school day between these dates

October 1–31, 2026

SAT

The SAT is used by many colleges and universities in the United States to assess a student's readiness for college-level coursework, primarily focusing on reading comprehension, math, and writing skills. It is recommended that students take the SAT at least two times during their junior and senior years. The SAT is scored on a scale of 400 to 1600. Many schools use your "superscore," which combines your highest scores from each test section.
The Basilica School College Board Code (CEEB): 102853

Testing Dates for the 2026 - 2027 School Year

August 15, 2026
September 12, 2026
October 3, 2026
November 7, 2026
December 5, 2026
March 06, 2027
May 1, 2027
June 5, 2027

What to Bring on Testing Day

- Your fully charged testing device with the Bluebook™ application installed and exam setup completed (see detailed device requirements).
- Your up-to-date admission ticket from the Bluebook app. Bringing a printed ticket is preferred, and you can access the ticket after completing the exam setup (available starting 5 days before the test).
- Acceptable photo ID.
- Pencils or pens for scratch work.
- Your College Board username and password.
- An acceptable calculator for use on the Math section of the test (there will be an embedded graphing calculator available to use within Bluebook).
- Epinephrine auto-injectors (like EpiPens) are permitted without the need for accommodation. They must be placed in a clear bag and stored under the student's desk during testing. For policies on other medications and medical devices, contact Services for Students with Disabilities.

Optional Items to Bring

- A watch without an audible alarm. (The Bluebook application has a built-in timer that tells you exactly how much time you have left, but you might still want to time your break.)
- A charging cable or portable charger.
- A bag or backpack.
- A drink or snacks (for your break).
- A backup testing device.

Raising your SAT as a Junior

- Short-term preparation: 50-100 points
- Comprehensive preparation: 75-150 points
- Anticipate greater gains when with lower baseline scores (below 1000 points) and smaller gains when baseline is higher (above 1300 points).

How to Login to CollegeBoard and Send AP/SAT Scores to Colleges

Step 1: Log in to Your CollegeBoard Account

- Go to CollegeBoard.org.
- Click the blue "Sign In" button at the top right corner.
- Enter your username and password, then click "Sign In."
    - If you forgot your login info, click "Forgot username or password?"
    - If you've never created an account, click Create Account and follow the prompts.

Step 2: Sending SAT Scores to Colleges

- After logging in, go to your SAT homepage by clicking here: SAT Dashboard.
- Click on the "Send Scores" button.
- Use the search bar to find your college(s) by name.
- Select the school(s) you want to send scores to.
- Choose which test date's scores you'd like to send.
- Click "Continue" and complete the checkout process.
    - You can send 4 score reports for free if it's within 9 days after your test.
    - After that, additional score reports are $14 each.

Step 3: Sending AP Scores to Colleges

- Go to your AP Scores page: View and Send AP Scores.
- Log in using the same CollegeBoard account.
- Click "Send Scores to Colleges Now."
- Search for the college you want to send scores to.
- Select the correct institution and confirm the details.
- Complete the process and submit your request.
    - You can send one free AP score report each year by June 20. After that, additional reports cost $15–$25 each.
    - More info: AP Score Sending Help

Tips & Reminders

- Double-check college deadlines for score submissions.
- Make sure your personal information (like name and date of birth) is consistent across your applications and CollegeBoard.
- Contact CollegeBoard if your school's name isn't correct on your account: 866-315-6068.

ACT

The ACT is a standardized test used for college admissions, assessing skills in English, math, reading, and science, with an optional writing section. Each section is scored on a scale of 1-36, and a composite score (the average of the four sections) is also calculated. Colleges and universities use the ACT scores to make admissions decisions and for scholarship purposes.

Dates

September 19, 2026
October 17, 2026
December 12, 2026
February 27, 2027
April 10, 2027
June 17, 2027
July 10, 2027

What to Bring on Testing Day

- Admission Ticket - Print a copy of your admission ticket to bring to the test center. Your ticket contains important registration match information or your online launch code.
    - Once you have uploaded your photo, you can print your admission ticket in MyACT.
- Acceptable Photo identification - Acceptable photo identification is required to be admitted to the test center. You will not be admitted to the test if your ID does not meet ACT requirements.
- Number 2 pencil - (no mechanical pencils or ink pens).
- Watch or Other Timing Device
    - You may bring a watch, timer, or stopwatch to pace yourself during testing, but it may not have an alarm. Your watch or other timing device must be removed and placed on your desk while in the test room, so that it remains visible to staff during the test. If an alarm sounds, you'll be dismissed, and your test will not be scored.
- Calculator - Bring a permitted calculator to be used on the mathematics test only. You are not required to use a calculator at all, but if you do, it is your responsibility to know whether your calculator is permitted.
- Snacks- You may bring a snack to eat outside the testing room during break.

Admission Speak: A Glossary for Getting In

Early Decision
If you're accepted, you must attend the school and withdraw your applications from other schools. Early decision plans are restrictive, meaning you can only apply Early Decision to one school.

Early Action
If you're accepted, you're not required to attend the school and can keep your options open. Early Action plans are non-binding and non-restrictive, meaning you can apply Early Action to multiple schools.

Priority
Priority admission is a non-binding process that allows students to apply earlier than the regular deadline, giving them earlier consideration for acceptance, scholarships, and housing, without the commitment to attend if accepted.

Regular Decision
The most common application type, with deadlines ranging from December to March. Regular Decision is non-binding, meaning students aren't obligated to attend the school if accepted

Rolling admissions
An admissions process where applications are considered as soon as all required credentials are received.

Open admission
A policy where a college accepts any high school graduate until the incoming class is full. Many community colleges have an open admission policy

Funding Your Future: Scholarships, Aid & More

Application Tips

- FAFSA Submission: Many Florida grants and loans require the FAFSA.
- Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA: Required for Bright Futures and some other state-specific scholarships.
- Deadline: Be aware of both federal and state deadlines to maximize aid eligibility.

FAFSA (Federal): The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is a free form used to apply for federal and state student aid: Federal grants, Work-study funds, and Loans
Opens: October 1st
Due: August 31st

FFAA (State): The Florida Financial Aid Application is a form that students use to apply for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarships and other state-based grants.
Opens: October 1st
Due: August 31st

Bright Futures: State-funded initiative that rewards Florida high school graduates for academic achievement, offering scholarships to help cover post-secondary education costs.

Basilica High School Scholarship Portfolio: The Basilica High School has procured a variety of local scholarships to support students in their academic pursuits. These scholarships are designed to help our students with the financial burden of post-secondary education while recognizing the achievements of our students.

Fast Web
The Fast Web Scholarship Search is the largest, most accurate, and most popular free scholarship search site – serving over 30 million students. Known for its accuracy and frequent updates, Fastweb helps students discover scholarship opportunities tailored to their unique profiles. With personalized email alerts, students can stay on top of the latest awards as they become available. As a pioneer in online scholarship databases, Fastweb continues to lead the way with a user-friendly, student-centered experience.

College Board's Big Future Scholarship Search

College Board's Fund Finder offers access to a wide range of scholarships and financial aid opportunities from over 3,300 national, state, public, and private organizations. The database is refreshed each year to ensure students have up-to-date information as they explore ways to fund their education.

Hispanic College Fund

For students currently enrolled in colleges, universities, vocational programs, or trade schools are eligible to apply for these scholarship opportunities. Award amounts differ and can be used to help cover educational costs.

United Negro College Fund

The UNCF offers a wide range of scholarships and faculty development grants designed to support students attending UNCF-member colleges and universities, while also enhancing the academic excellence of these institutions. Use this site to explore hundreds of scholarship and grant opportunities managed by the United Negro College Fund.

Hispanic Association Colleges and Universities Scholarship Program

(HACU) Over 160 scholarships worth $270,000. Click here for a complete list of HACU member institutions.

Ouch! Students Getting Stung Trying to Find $$$ for College

This site highlights common pitfalls and scams that students may encounter while searching for college funding. It provides valuable insights on how to avoid falling victim to deceptive practices and ensures you're equipped to make informed decisions about financial aid.

Financial Aid Scholarship Scams

This resource educates students and families about fraudulent scholarship opportunities. It outlines the red flags of financial aid scams and offers tips on how to safely navigate the search for legitimate scholarships and financial assistance.

Florida State Grants (Need-Based & Merit-Based)

Florida Student Assistance Grant (FSAG)
Eligibility: Florida residents enrolled at least half-time in a public postsecondary institution
Amount: $200–$2,610 per academic year, depending on financial need and enrollment status
Application: Requires FAFSA submission
Note: Priority is given to Pell Grant recipients

First Generation Matching Grant (FGEN)
Eligibility: First-generation college students whose parents have not earned a bachelor's degree
Amount: $200–$3,000 per academic year
Requirements: Must be a Pell Grant recipient, enrolled full-time, and meet other academic criteria.

Florida Resident Access Grant (FRAG)
Eligibility: Florida residents attending eligible private, nonprofit colleges or universities in Florida
Amount: Varies annually; subject to legislative appropriations
Requirements: Must be enrolled at least half-time and pursuing a bachelor's degree

Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program
Eligibility: Florida high school graduates with a GPA of 3.0 or higher, meeting service hour requirements
Amount: Up to 100% of tuition and fees at public colleges or universities
Application: Requires completion of the Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA), not FAFSA

Benacquisto Scholarship Program
Eligibility: National Merit Scholars who are Florida residents
Amount: Covers tuition and fees not met by other scholarships
Requirements: Must enroll full-time in a bachelor's program at an eligible Florida institution

Florida Work-Study Programs

1. Florida Work Experience Program (FWEP)

Eligibility: Florida residents with financial need.

Purpose Provides part-time employment opportunities related to the student's field of study.

Application Requires FAFSA submission.

Federal Work-Study Program (FWS)

Eligibility: U.S. citizens or eligible non-citizens with financial need.

Purpose: Offers part-time employment to help students pay for education expenses.

Application Requires FAFSA submission.

Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)

Eligibility: Undergrads with exceptional financial need.

Award Range: $100 to $4,000/year.

Limited funding, schools award on a first-come, first-served basis.

Linked to FAFSA: Yes.

Pell Grants

Eligibility: Undergrads with exceptional financial need.

Max Award (2024–25): ~$7,395/year.

Linked to FAFSA: Yes.

Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH Grant)

Eligibility: Students planning to become teachers in high-need fields.

Max Award: $4,000/year.

Requires service agreement—must teach in a qualifying school or it becomes a loan.

Linked to FAFSA: Yes

Federal Student Loans (Repayment Required)

Direct Subsidized Loans
Eligibility: Undergraduate students with financial need
Interest: The federal government pays interest while the student is in school at least half-time.
Application: Requires FAFSA submission.

Direct Unsubsidized Loans
Eligibility: Undergraduate and graduate students; no financial need required.
Interest: Interest accrues during all periods.
Application: Requires FAFSA submission.

Private Loans
From banks, credit unions, and private lenders.
Used if federal aid doesn't cover costs.
Not tied to FAFSA.
Often requires co-signer and credit check.

Additional Florida-Specific Scholarships

Minority Teacher Education Scholarships
Eligibility: Florida African American, Hispanic American, Asian American, and Native American students enrolled in education preparation programs.
Amount: $4,000 for juniors and seniors.
Requirements: Agreement to teach in a Florida public school for one year for each year of scholarship received.

Jose Martí Scholarship Challenge Grant Fund
Eligibility: Florida Hispanic American students pursuing an undergraduate or graduate degree.
Amount: Up to $2,000
Application: Requires FAFSA submission.

Your Future is Bright: Bright Futures Scholarship

Eligibility Requirements

- Be a Florida resident and a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen.
- Complete the FFAA no later than August 31 after high school graduation.
- Earn a standard Florida high school diploma.
- Not have been found guilty of, or pled nolo contendere to, a felony charge.
- Be accepted by, and enroll in a degree or certificate program at, an eligible Florida public or independent postsecondary institution.
- Be enrolled for at least six non-remedial semester credit hours (or the equivalent in quarter or clock hours) per term.
- FAS students will receive an award that covers 100% of tuition and applicable fees for the summer term. FMS students will receive an award that covers 75% of tuition and

Florida Academic Scholars (FAS):
GPA: 3.50 weighted GPA (16 core academic credits)
Test Scores: SAT 1330 (Evidence-Based Reading & Math) and ACT 29 composite (CLT 95)
Community Service Hours: 100 hours
Covers: 100% of tuition + applicable fees at a Florida public institution

Florida Medallion Scholars (FMS):
GPA: 3.00 weighted GPA (16 core academic credits)
Test Scores: SAT 1190 and ACT 24 and CLT 82
Community Service Hours: 75 hours
Covers: 75% of tuition + applicable fees at public institutions

Approved Coursework for FAS and FMS:
4 English
4 Math (Algebra 1 and above)
3 Natural Science
3 Social Science
2 World Language (same language)

Scoir – College and Career Planning

The Basilica High School uses **Scoir** as its primary college and career planning platform. Scoir is designed to help students explore colleges and careers, organize their college search, communicate with the school counseling office, and manage important steps in the college application process.

Scoir is an important component of The Basilica School's college counseling program. Students are expected to maintain an active Scoir account and to use the platform as directed by the school counseling office.

Purpose of Scoir

Through Scoir, students can:

- Explore colleges, universities, technical programs, and career pathways.
- Research colleges based on academic programs, location, size, cost, activities, athletics, and other factors.
- Develop and maintain a personal list of colleges they are considering.
- Explore potential careers, majors, and areas of academic interest.
- Complete college and career assessments when assigned by the counseling office.
- Receive assignments, reminders, resources, and communications from the school counseling office.
- Communicate with their counselor regarding college and career planning.
- Request letters of recommendation from teachers and counselors when appropriate.
- Coordinate the submission of transcripts, school reports, recommendations, and other application materials.
- Track college application-related requirements and deadlines.
- Connect Scoir with the Common Application when applicable.

Scoir also allows parents and guardians to participate in the college search process by creating their own accounts and collaborating with their students.

Student Responsibilities

Students are responsible for maintaining accurate and current information in their Scoir accounts. Students should:

1. Activate their Scoir account when instructed by the school.
2. Complete required Scoir assignments and assessments by the deadlines established by the counseling office.

3. Keep their college list and personal information current.
4. Regularly monitor Scoir for messages, assignments, deadlines, and requests from the counseling office.
5. Enter or update colleges to which they intend to apply.
6. Follow all school procedures for requesting transcripts, counselor documents, and letters of recommendation.
7. Provide teachers and counselors with adequate notice when requesting letters of recommendation.
8. Verify that application information and college selections are accurate before submitting applications.
9. Notify the counseling office promptly if an application, document, recommendation, transcript, or other item appears to be missing or incorrect.

Students should not assume that adding a college to Scoir automatically constitutes an application to that college. **Students are responsible for completing and submitting their actual college applications and meeting each college's application requirements and deadlines.**

College Application Documents

The counseling office uses Scoir to help manage and transmit appropriate school documents to colleges and universities. Depending on the institution and application method, these documents may include:

- Official transcripts
- Mid-year transcripts
- Counselor evaluations or recommendations
- Secondary School Reports
- Teacher recommendations
- Other documents requested by a college or university

Scoir allows school counselors to send application documents to participating colleges through its document-sending system.

Students must follow the procedures established by The Basilica School's counseling office for requesting these documents. The counseling office cannot guarantee that a document will be sent immediately upon request. Students should submit requests well in advance of college deadlines.

Letters of Recommendation

Students who need letters of recommendation from teachers or counselors should make requests through the process established by the counseling office and, when directed, through Scoir.

Students should:

- Ask teachers and counselors respectfully and well in advance of the application deadline.
- Provide any information or forms requested by the recommender.
- Ensure that the correct colleges and application deadlines are identified.
- Understand that submitting a recommendation request through Scoir does not eliminate the student's responsibility to complete the remainder of the college application.

Scoir provides tools that allow students to request recommendations and allows recommenders to submit letters through the platform.

Common Application

Scoir integrates with the Common Application for schools participating in the Scoir/Common App integration. This integration allows students to synchronize college lists and application activity and helps reduce duplicate recommendation requests.

Students should follow instructions provided by the Basilica counseling office regarding when and how to connect their Scoir and Common App accounts.

Parents and Guardians

Parents and guardians are encouraged to participate in their student's college and career planning process. Scoir provides parent/guardian accounts that allow families to research colleges, review a student's college list, make suggestions, explore college costs, and communicate with their student and counselor.

The student's Scoir account remains the student's responsibility. Parents and guardians should work with their student and the school counseling office rather than creating or maintaining a student's account on the student's behalf.

Important Deadlines

Students are responsible for knowing and meeting all deadlines associated with college applications, scholarships, financial aid, and admission programs.

A college deadline is not automatically a Basilica School deadline. The counseling office may establish earlier internal deadlines to allow sufficient time to process transcripts, recommendations, school reports, and other documents.
Students should never wait until the day of a college deadline to request required school documents.

Accuracy of Information
Students are responsible for the accuracy of information they enter into Scoir and other college application systems. Students should carefully review application information before submitting it and should immediately notify the counseling office of any errors involving school records or documents.

Scoir is a college and career planning tool and does not replace direct communication with a college or university. Students should always consult the individual college's official admissions website for its current application requirements, deadlines, testing policies, financial aid requirements, and other admission information.

School Support
The Basilica High School counseling office is available to assist students with the college and career planning process. Scoir is one tool used by the school to organize and support that process; it does not replace individual counseling, student responsibility, or direct communication with colleges and universities.

Common Application

Common App is a free online platform that helps students apply to colleges and universities. The Common App streamlines the college application process and includes:

- A set of common questions that students fill out once
- College-specific questions
- Guides for first-time applicants and transfer students
- Advice from counselors, advisors, and mentors
- Access to financial aid and scholarship opportunities
- Application process timeline

The Common App goes live on August 1st of each year. Application deadlines vary by school and whether the student is applying for an early decision or a regular decision. CommonApp is free, but each school may still charge application fees, which vary in cost.

Perfecting Your Personal Statement

In his comprehensive guide, Ethan Sawyer, known as the College Essay Guy, emphasizes that the college essay serves as the heart of your application, offering admissions officers a window into your personality, values, and potential contributions to their campus community. Recognizing that this form of writing may be unfamiliar to many students, he underscores the importance of understanding the essay's purpose and its varying weight in the admissions process.

Sawyer advises beginning with thorough brainstorming to identify compelling and authentic topics that reflect your unique experiences and perspectives. He introduces two primary structures for organizing your essay: the Narrative Structure, which follows a chronological sequence highlighting a specific event or challenge and your growth from it; and the Montage Structure, which connects various life experiences thematically to showcase different facets of your identity.

Throughout the writing process, Sawyer stresses the importance of authenticity, specificity, and self-reflection. He encourages multiple revisions and seeking feedback to refine your essay, ensuring it effectively conveys your story and leaves a lasting impression on admissions officers. By following these steps, students can craft a compelling personal statement that enhances their college applications.

College essays are more important when a student's academic profile is not easily distinguishable from others—such as when they have average test scores or grades. In these cases, the essay helps set the student apart by showcasing their personality, values, and unique experiences. The essay is also crucial for selective colleges that evaluate applicants holistically.

On the other hand, essays are less important for students who already have strong academic credentials, including exceptional test scores and grades, especially for schools that primarily focus on academic performance. For these applicants, the essay may be viewed as a secondary factor in the admissions decision process. However, even then, a well-written essay can still serve as a differentiator in a highly competitive applicant pool.

Most colleges require a Personal Essay or Statement as part of the application process. After adding schools to your College List, you'll be able to see which institutions require the Personal Statement and which do not.

We recommend composing your essay outside of the Common App, using tools like Google Docs or Word, which will allow you ample time to revise and proofread for any errors. Once you're satisfied with your essay, simply copy and paste it into the Common App's Writing section. Keep in mind that formatting issues, such as spacing, indentation, and text styling (like bold or italics), may not transfer correctly. Be sure to double-check the appearance of your essay after pasting it into the application.

Inside the Admissions Office:

How Colleges Review Applications in Order of Priority

1. **Standardized Testing Scores:** Used to compare academic readiness across students from different schools.

- SAT – Nationally recognized college entrance exam measuring math, reading, and writing skills.
- ACT – Alternative college entrance exam that includes science reasoning along with math, reading, and English.

2. **High School Transcripts:** A record of academic performance throughout high school.

- GPA – Reflects overall academic achievement; weighted GPAs may account for course difficulty.
- Course work (Strength of classes taken) – Demonstrates how rigorous a student's course load is (e.g., AP, IB, DE, Honors); shows readiness for college-level work.

3. **Letters of Recommendation:** Offer insight into a student's character, work ethic, and potential from those who know them in an academic or leadership setting.

- Principal – Can speak to a student's leadership or contributions at the school level.
- School counselor – Provides context about the student's academic journey and personal growth.
- Teachers – Highlight academic strengths, classroom behavior, and intellectual curiosity.
- Coaches – May comment on discipline, teamwork, and perseverance.
- Employer – Offers perspective on responsibility, reliability, and work ethic in a professional setting.
- Minister – Reflects moral character, values, and involvement in faith-based or service-oriented communities.

4. **Personal Essay / Statement:** An opportunity for students to showcase their voice, reflect on experiences, and make a personal connection with the admissions team.

5. **Extracurricular Activities: Reveal passions, time management, and how a student contributes to their community.**

- Leadership roles – Show initiative, responsibility, and influence.
- Community service – Reflects empathy, values, and engagement beyond self.
- Athletics – Demonstrates commitment, resilience, and teamwork.
- Academic clubs – Highlight intellectual interests and collaborative skills.
- Internships – Show career exploration, initiative, and real-world experience.

6. **Additional Factors**

- Unique elements that may support or enhance an application.
- Legacy Status – Indicates a family connection to the college, which may be a factor at some institutions.
- Portfolios – Required for arts programs; demonstrate creative or technical skill.
- Interviews – Provide a more personal interaction and chance to show interest or clarify elements of the application.
- Demonstrated Interest – Includes campus visits, emails, and applications that show genuine enthusiasm for attending the school.

Exploring New Horizons:
Alternative Paths Beyond Traditional Universities

Trade Schools or Technical College

Trade schools focus on providing practical, hands-on skills for specialty areas including plumbing, electrical work, welding, carpentry, automotive repair, and marine maintenance. These schools are typically shorter in duration and more affordable than traditional colleges.

Southern Technical College

Lineman Training School

Apprenticeships

Work based learning programs that combine on the job training with classroom instruction. These programs allow students to gain valuable work experience while earning a salary.

College of the Florida Keys Construction Apprenticeships

Military

Enlisting in the military provides students with the opportunity for personal development, discipline, leadership development, and the honor of serving our country. Several branches of the military offer tuition assistance to help cover the cost of earning a degree.

The United States Air Force - Eligibility Requirements

The United States Army - Eligibility Requirements

The United States Coast Guard - Eligibility Requirements

The United States Marine Corps - Eligibility Requirements

The United States Navy - Eligibility Requirements

Fire Academy

Fire Academy prepares students to become professional firefighters by teaching them essential skills in fire safety, emergency response, and rescue operations.

Monroe County Fire Rescue Program

Police Academy

Police academies train students to become law enforcement officers, teaching skills like criminal law, ethics, and physical fitness through classroom learning and practical exercises.

Florida Universities & Beyond 2027 - TBD

University of Florida
Early Action Deadline: November 1st
Regular Decision Deadline: January 15th

University of Central Florida
Early Action Deadline: October 15th
Regular Decision Deadline: May 1st

Florida State University
Early Action Deadline: October 15th
Regular Decision Deadline: December 1st

Florida Atlantic University
Early Action Deadline: October 15th
Regular Decision Deadline: February 15th

Florida International University
Early Action Deadline: November 3rd
Regular Decision Deadline: December 17th

Ave Maria University
Priority Deadline: December 1st
Regular Decision Deadline: February 1st

University of South Florida
Priority Deadline: November 1st
Regular Decision Deadline: December 15th

Florida Gulf Coast University
Early Action Deadline: November 1st
Regular Decision Deadline: March 1st

University of Miami
Early Action Deadline: November 1st
Regular Decision Deadline: January 1st

University of Georgia
Early Action Deadline: October 15th
Regular Decision Deadline: January 1st

University of West Florida
Priority Deadline: December 1st
Regular Decision Deadline: April 1st

Florida A&M University
Early Action Deadline: November 1st
Regular Decision Deadline: April 1st

University of Alabama
Priority Deadline: November 1st
*Admissions considered on an availability-basis

Auburn University
Early Action Deadline: December 1st
Regular Decision Deadline: February 1st

University of Southern Mississippi
Priority Deadline: August 17th
Regular Decision Deadline: August 17th

Mississippi State University
Regular Decision Deadline: August 1st (varies by department)

NCAA High School Timeline

See NCAA Eligibility Steps in Appendix for More Information

Freshman Year

- Register for a free Profile Page account at eligibilitycenter.org
- Use the NCAA Research's interactive map to locate NCAA schools you're interested in attending.
- Find your high school's list of NCAA-approved core courses at eligibilitycenter.org/course list to ensure you're taking the right courses

Sophomore Year

- If you're being actively recruited by an NCAA Division I or II school, transition your Profile Page account to the right certification account.
- Monitor the task list and sign up for text alerts in your Eligibility Center
- Research the admission requirements for NCAA schools you're interested in attending.
- At the end of the school year, ask your high school counselor to upload your official transcript via the High School Portal.

Junior Year

- Ensure your sports participation information is correct in your Eligibility Center account.
- Check with your high school counselor to make sure you're on track to complete the required number of NCAA-approved core courses and on track to graduate on time.
- Share your NCAA ID with NCAA schools recruiting you so each school can place you on its institutional request list.
- Take unofficial and official visits to NCAA schools you're interested in attending and start applying early.
- At the end of the school year, ask your high school counselor to upload your official transcript via the High School Portal.

Senior Year

- Be accepted to the NCAA school you plan to attend.
- Ensure your sports participation information is correct and request your final amateurism certification beginning April 1 (fall enrollees) or Oct. 1 (winter/spring enrollees) in your Eligibility Center account.
- Complete your final NCAA-approved core courses as you prepare for graduation.
- After you graduate, ask your high school counselor to upload your final official transcript with proof of graduation via the High School Portal.

APPENDIX

UNIVERSITIES	Early Action Deadline	Regular Decision Deadline	Website
University of Florida	EA Nov 1	Jan 15	https://admissions.ufl.edu/apply/freshman/
University of Central Florida	EA Oct 15	May 1	https://www.ucf.edu/admissions/undergraduate/freshman/
Florida State University	EA Oct 15	Dec 1	https://admissions.fsu.edu/first-year/apply
Florida Atlantic University	EA Oct 15	March 12	https://www.fau.edu/admissions/freshman/how-to-apply/admissions-requirements/
Florida International University	EA Nov 3	Dec 17	https://www.fiu.edu/admissions/freshman-guide/index.html
Ave Maria University	EA Oct 15	Feb 1	https://www.avemaria.edu/admissions/admissions-process
University of South Florida	Priority Nov 2	Dec 16	https://www.usf.edu/admissions/freshmen/admission-information/
Florida Gulf Coast University	EA Nov 1	March 1	https://www.fgcu.edu/admissionsandaid/undergraduateadmissions/
University of Miami	EA Nov 1	Jan 1	https://admissions.miami.edu/undergraduate/application-process/admission-requirements/freshman/index.html
University of Georgia	EA Oct 15	Jan 1	https://www.admissions.uga.edu/admissions/first-year/
University of West Florida	Priority Dec 1	April 1	https://uwf.edu/admissions/
Florida A&M University	EA Nov 1	Feb 1	https://admissions.famu.edu/apply-now.php
University of Alabama	Priority Dec 04	Admissions considered on an availability-basis	https://admissions.ua.edu/freshman/steps/
Auburn University	EA Dec 1	Feb 1	https://auburn.edu/admissions/index.php
University of Southern Mississippi	Rolling	Aug 17	https://www.usm.edu/undergraduate-admissions/freshmen.php
Mississippi State University	August 1 / Rolling	Aug 1 (varies by department)	https://www.admissions.msstate.edu/apply/admission-process/freshman-admissions

AID, GRANTS, LOANS, ETC.	Opens	Due	
FAFSA (Federal): The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is a free form used to apply for federal and state student aid: Federal grants, Work-study funds, and Loans.	Oct 1	Aug 31 of graduation year	https://studentaid.gov/
FFAA (State): The Florida Financial Aid Application is a form that students use to apply for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarships and other state-based grants.	Oct 1	Aug 31 of graduation year	https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/SAPHome/SAPHome?url=home
Common App: a free, online platform that helps students apply to many colleges and universities.	Aug 1	Varies depending on the university/college	https://www.commonapp.org/
Bright Futures	Oct 1	Aug 31 of graduation year	https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/PDF/BFHandbookChapter1.pdf
TESTING			
SAT (College Board)	Junior Year/ Senior Year	Recommendation: Take at least 2x	Schools will take your "superscore", the combination of your best score of each section
ACT	Junior Year/ Senior Year	Recommendation: Take at least 2x	
SCHOLARSHIPS	Make applying for scholarships a part time job!	Create an account and get matched with scholarships	https://www.scholarships.com/financial-aid/college-scholarships/scholarships-by-state/florida-scholarships
			https://www.fastweb.com/
Bright Futures Volunteer/Service Hours Log			Click Here

Before You Book: College Visit Checklist

- Check the Academic Fit: Does the college offer your intended major or program of interest?
- Check Admission Requirements: Are your GPA, test scores, and coursework on track for this school?
- Check Visit Opportunities: Are there special visit days for prospective students, open houses, or guided tours?
- Check Your Calendar: Avoid conflicts with major school events or exams; consider visiting during a regular class day to get the real campus vibe.
- Check Travel Logistics: Is the campus within driving distance? Will you need overnight accommodations?
- Check Campus Culture: Review the college's website or social media. Does it feel like a good fit?
- Check for Interviews or Appointments: Can you schedule a meeting with admissions, financial aid, or a department you're interested in?
- Check Questions You Want to Ask: Prepare a list of things you want to know—from dorm life to study abroad opportunities.
- Check for Faith Life or Clubs: Interested in campus ministry, student government, or a niche club? See if they're active and available to visit.
- Check Parent/Guardian Availability: If they're going with you, make sure their schedule works too!

Before You Submit: Resume Checklist

Contact Information

- Full name
- Phone number
- Email

Objective or Summary

- In one or two sentences, describe your goals and highlight what strengths or accomplishments make you a strong candidate.

Education

- School name, expected graduation date
- GPA (if it's strong)
- SAT/ACT (whichever is highest & only if it’s competitive)
- Relevant courses, honors, or academic achievements

Experience (This can include part-time jobs, internships, or volunteer work)

- Role
- Organization
- Dates
- Responsibilities
- Accomplishments

Projects (especially for tech or design roles)

Skills (Technical skills, software knowledge, languages, etc)

Extracurricular Activities / Leadership (if relevant)

Clubs, sports, student orgs, positions held

JOSÉ MARTÍ
SCHOLARSHIP CHALLENGE GRANT FUND

ELIGIBILITY

Students must:

- Complete the Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA)
- Be of Spanish culture, born in or having a natural parent who was born in either Mexico or a Hispanic country of the Caribbean, Central or South America.
- Have earned, by the end of the seventh semester, a minimum unweighted cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale based on subjects credible toward a high school diploma for an undergraduate scholarship
- Demonstrate a minimum of $2,000 in financial need by completing and submitting the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- Be a Florida resident and a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen
- Not owe a repayment or be in default under any state or federal grant, loan or scholarship program
- Not have previously earned a baccalaureate degree.
- Enroll as a degree-seeking student at an eligible postsecondary institution and enroll each academic term for a minimum of 12 credit hours

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- FFAA application opens October 1st. (This must be done before a student completes high school).
- FASFA opens December 31st. This must be completed and processed by U.S Department of Education by May 15th.
- Click here to complete the Florida Financial Aid Application
- Click here to complete the Free Application for Federal student Aid
- Click here to learn more about the Jose Marti Scholarship Challenge Grant Fund

BRIGHT FUTURES
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

ELIGIBILITY

- Be a Florida resident and a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen.
- Complete the FFAA no later than August 31 after high school graduation.
- Earn a standard Florida high school diploma.
- Not have been found guilty of, or pled nolo contendere to, a felony charge.
- Be accepted by, and enroll in a degree or certificate program at, an eligible Florida public or independent postsecondary institution.
- Be enrolled for at least six non-remedial semester credit hours (or the equivalent in quarter or clock hours) per term.
- FAS students will receive an award that covers 100% of tuition and applicable fees for the summer term. FMS students will receive an award that covers 75% of tuition and fees

Scholarship Type	High School Course Credits (16 Hours Total)	High School Weighted GPA	College Entrance Exam	Volunteer Service Hours	Paid Work Hours Only	Combination of Volunteer / Paid Hours
FAS (Covers 100% of tuition)	4 - English (three must include substantial writing) 4 - Mathematics (at or above the Algebra I level) 3 - Social Science 2 - Foreign / World Language (sequential, in same language)	3.50	ACT - 29 CLT - 96 SAT - 1340	100 Hours	100 Hours	100 Hours
FMS (Covers 75% of tuition)		3.00	ACT - 25 CLT - 84 SAT - 1210	75 Hours		

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- FFAA application opens October 1st. (This must be done before a student completes high school).
- Deferment of the Scholarship Students who enlist in the military, or engage in a full-time religious or service obligation lasting at least 18 months may defer the commencement of their scholarship.
- Click here to complete the Florida Financial Aid Application
- Click here to learn more about the Bright Futures Scholarship Program

NCAA Eligibility for College-Bound Student-Athletes

Students at private Catholic high schools who are interested in participating in NCAA Division I or II athletics must meet specific academic and amateurism standards established by the NCAA Eligibility Center. Below is a summary of key steps and deadlines to help guide you through the process.

Step 1: Register with the NCAA Eligibility Center

To be eligible to play NCAA sports at the Division I or II level, students must register online with the NCAA Eligibility Center:

- Website: eligibilitycenter.org
- When to Register: Typically, during the sophomore or junior year of high school.
- Type of Account: Students should create an *Academic and Amateurism Certification Account*.
- Registration Fee: $100 for U.S. students. Fee waivers are available for those who qualify through the school counselor.

Step 2: Track Academic Requirements

The NCAA requires all prospective student-athletes to complete a specific number of NCAA-approved core courses and maintain a qualifying GPA and standardized test score (if applicable).

Core Course Breakdown (Division I):

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of Math (Algebra I or higher)
- 2 years of Natural/Physical Science
- 1 additional year of English, math, or science
- 2 years of Social Science
- 4 additional years of approved courses (from any category above, or foreign language, religion/philosophy)

For Division II, the requirements are similar but include 3 years of English and only 2 years of math.

You can check whether your high school's courses are NCAA-approved using the NCAA High School Portal.

Step 3: Secure & Share Transcripts and Test Scores

- Official Transcripts must be submitted directly from the high school.
- Standardized Test Scores (SAT/ACT) must be sent directly from the testing agency using code 9876.
- While some schools may be test optional, the NCAA still considers test scores for initial eligibility if they are submitted.

Step 4: Request Amateurism Certification

All prospective NCAA student-athletes must also request amateurism certification through their Eligibility Center account. This confirms that the student hasn't received payment or benefits that would compromise their eligibility.

- When: Request amateurism certification beginning April 1 of senior year (for fall enrollees).
- Deadline: Must be completed before participating in any NCAA sport at a Division I or II school.

Key Deadlines and Timeline

Grade	Task
9th	Start tracking NCAA-approved courses
10th	Register with the Eligibility Center (optional)
11th	Register with the Eligibility Center and take SAT/ACT
12th	Submit final transcripts and request amateurism certification

All final transcripts must be submitted after graduation, including your graduation date.

Additional Resources

- NCAA Eligibility Center
- NCAA Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete (PDF)
- High School Portal: Check your school's approved courses

NCAA High School Timeline

High School Timeline

9th GRADE REGISTER

» If you haven't yet, **register** for a free Profile Page account at **eligibilitycenter.org** for information on NCAA initial-eligibility requirements.
» Use NCAA Research's **interactive map** to help locate NCAA schools you're interested in attending.
» Find your high school's list of NCAA-approved core courses at **eligibilitycenter.org/courselist** to ensure you're taking the right courses, and earn the best grades possible!

10th GRADE PLAN

» If you're being **actively recruited** by an NCAA Division I or II school, **transition** your Profile Page account to the right **certification account**.
» Monitor the **task list** and **sign up for text alerts** in your **Eligibility Center account** for next steps.
» Research the admission requirements for NCAA schools you're interested in attending.
» At the end of the school year, ask your high school counselor from each school you attended to upload your **official transcript** via the High School Portal.
» If you fall behind academically, ask your high school counselor for help finding **approved courses** you can take.

11th GRADE STUDY

» Ensure your **sports participation** information is correct in your Eligibility Center account.
» Check with your high school counselor to make sure you're on track to complete the required number of NCAA-approved **core courses** and graduate on time with your class.
» Share your **NCAA ID** with NCAA schools recruiting you so each school can place you on its **institutional request list**.
» Take **unofficial and official visits** to NCAA schools you're interested in attending and start applying early.
» At the end of the school year, ask your high school counselor from each school you attended to upload your **official transcript** via the High School Portal.

12th GRADE GRADUATE

» Be accepted to the NCAA school you plan to attend.
» Ensure your **sports participation** information is correct and **request your final amateurism certification** beginning April 1 (fall enrollees) or Oct. 1 (winter/spring enrollees) in your Eligibility Center account.
» Complete your final NCAA-approved **core courses** as you prepare for graduation.
» After you graduate, ask your high school counselor to upload your **final official transcript** with **proof of graduation** via the High School Portal.

The Basilica High School Graduation Requirements		
English/Language Arts	4.0 Credits	
Mathematics	1.0 Credits	Algebra I
	1.0 Credits	Geometry
	2.0 Credits	Additional Math
Science	1.0 Credits	Biology
	2.0 Credits	Equally Rigorous Science
Social Studies	1.0 Credits	World History
	1.0 Credits	US History
	0.5 Credits	US Government
	0.5 Credits	Economics
World Language	1.0 Credits	Spanish I
	1.0 Credits	Spanish II
Religion	1.0 Credits	Christology
	0.5 Credits	Old Testament
	0.5 Credits	New Testament
	1.0 Credits	Philosophy & Ethics Honors
	1.0 Credits	TBD
Fine or Performing Arts	1.0 Credits	Fine and Performing Arts, Speech and Debate, Career and Technical Education, or Practical Arts*
Physical Education	1.0 Credits	Health Opportunities Though Physical Education (HOPE)
Personal Financial Literacy	0.5 Credits	Personal Financial Literacy
Electives:	1.5 Credits	
TOTAL	24.0 Credits	
Service Hours	100 Total	
Grade Point Average	Cumulative, unweighted GPA of 2.0 on 4.0 Scale	

The Basilica High School Scholar Designation Requirements		
Scholar Designation	In addition to meeting the standard high school diploma requirements:	
	1.0 Credits	Algebra II
	1.0 Credits	Statistics or Equally Rigorous Math
	1.0 Credits	Chemistry or Physics and another Equally Rigorous Science
	2.0 Credits	Same world language
	1.0 Credits	AP,IB, AICE or Dual Enrollment Course
	1.0 Credits	Pass the Geometry EOC
	1.0 Credits	Pass the Biology 1 EOC or AP Biology
	1.0 Credits	Pass the U.S. History EOC or AP US History