

# THE SENIOR BULLETIN

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## COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY ADMISSION

### *Special points of interest:*

- Top 10% automatically admitted to Texas Public universities, but policy is under review!
- \$2000 tuition waiver to a public state school for early high school graduates
- College representatives are coming

Applying for admission to college, while somewhat complicated, is not an insurmountable task. Applying for admission to a two year college, such as San Jacinto College, is usually a simple process involving submitting an application and transcript, and taking the THEA (Texas Higher Education Assessment) test or an approved alternative. Most often, these tests are in the areas of English, reading, and math and are used to place freshmen in appropriate levels of these courses. In addition, certain programs at some two year colleges may require that students take a test such as the ACT or SATI and earn a certain score to be admitted to that program.



DECISIONS, DECISIONS!

Finally, all students who are enrolled in a Texas public institution of higher education (i.e. a college, university, or technical institute) as a full-time or part-time student in an associate (two year) or baccalaureate (four year) program must take the THEA (TASP). Students must take this test before they can register for any college courses. Students can be exempted from this test if they meet any of the exemption criteria listed on page three of this bulletin.

It is important to realize that a student's GPA or class rank does not enter into the admission process when applying to a two year college. In short, any student who graduates from an accredited high school (or any student who has a GED) will be accepted into any two year college in the state of Texas as long as he/she has completed the application process.

Your application and subsequent admission to a four year college or university is somewhat more involved than that of the two year school. The application process usually involves submitting applications for admission and housing (if living on campus), score reports sent directly from the proper entrance test center, required medical records, a most recent official high school transcript, letters of recommendation (if required), student essays (if required), and family financial information when applying for financial aid. Your acceptance by the college you have chosen will usually depend upon how satisfactorily that college views your high school academic history (GPA/class rank), entrance test scores and any other information that is pertinent to their admission process (i.e. extracurricular activities, community service, etc).

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# COLLEGE ENTRANCE TESTS

There are two nationally administered general college entrance exams, commonly known as the SAT I and the ACT. The SAT I (Scholastic Assessment Test) is part of the SAT program which is a service of the College Entrance Examination Board. The ACT (American College Test) is a part of the ACT Assessment Program. (If you have access to the internet, you can find out more about the SAT @ <http://www.collegeboard.com> and the ACT @ <http://www.actstudent.org>.) In order to determine which test should be taken, you must first decide which colleges you plan to consider, and then find out which of the two tests they require. (Generally, most colleges and universities will accept results from either test.) This information can be found in college catalogs or from the individual college websites.



**TESTS, TESTS, AND MORE TESTS!**

In addition, some colleges and universities (for example, Rice and University of Texas at Austin) require one or more of the SAT Subject Tests for admission. These tests are one-hour tests measuring knowledge in seventeen areas including languages, math, science, and history. To determine if you are required to take these tests, consult the college catalogs or the college website. If you are undecided about your vocational/career plans, you might consider taking the ACT. In addition to receiving the usual scores in English, Math, Reading, and Science Reasoning, this test includes an Interest Inventory that is designed to help students identify their vocational/career interests as they relate to the world of work.

At this point, you might be wondering when you should take these tests and which one is best for you. Seniors were encouraged to take one of these tests at the end of their junior year; however, seniors who have not taken any of these tests yet should take them early in their senior year. Applications and practice exercises for these tests can be found in the counselors' office. Since the deadline for each test is about a month before the test, you are encouraged to pick up the applications early so that they can be postmarked before the deadline. It is also possible to register for these tests on the internet. Consult the registration bulletins for details. Fee waivers are available for students who are on free or reduced lunch. If you use a fee waiver on the SAT, then you may receive up to four fee waivers for college applications. **YOU CAN TAKE THESE TESTS AS MANY TIMES AS YOU WANT, AND THE COLLEGE WILL ALWAYS ACCEPT YOUR HIGHEST SCORE WHEN CONSIDERING YOUR APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION.**

The SAT is a test which involves a lot of test-taking skills and questions are written in unique formats. On the other hand, the ACT uses very straight-forward questioning that tests your knowledge in a subject. The ACT also tests over a higher level math than the SAT. Some students do well on one test but not the other because of the differences in the way they are written. To determine which test is best for you, take the practice test, score it, and decide for yourself.

In summary, seniors should take college entrance exams in the following order:

1. SAT I or ACT—for any student considering college or financial aid—take as early as possible. It takes about 4 to 6 weeks to get test results, so please keep college admissions deadlines in mind when registering.
2. THEA—a placement test required by all colleges—take prior to enrolling at college (unless exempt)
3. SAT Subject Tests—only for some colleges—refer to specific college websites or catalogs to determine if required

## **SAT PROGRAM TESTS (\$45—LATE REGISTRATION FEE+\$23)**

TEST DATE	REGISTRATION DEADLINE	LATE REGISTRATION
October 4, 2008	September 9, 2008	September 16, 2008
November 1, 2008	September 22, 2008	October 10, 2008
December 6, 2008	November 5, 2008	November 18, 2008
January 24, 2009	December 26, 2008	January 6, 2009
March 14, 2009	February 10, 2009	February 24, 2009
May 2, 2009	March 31, 2009	April 9, 2009

**ACT PROGRAM TESTS (\$31.00 +Writing sample \$15.00= \$46.00) (LATE FEE ADD \$20.00)**

**\*A Writing portion is required for college entrance.**

<u>TEST DATE</u>	<u>REGISTRATION DEADLINE</u>	<u>LATE REGISTRATION</u>
October 25, 2008	September 19, 2008	September 20– Oct. 3, 2008
December 13, 2008	November 7, 2008	November 8-20, 2008
February 7, 2009	January 6, 2009	January 7-16, 2009
April 4, 2009	February 27, 2009	Feb 28-March 13, 2009

**THEA (Texas Higher Education Assessment) TEST**

Recently passed legislation by the Texas Legislature has brought about some changes in the THEA Test. Freshmen who plan to attend a Texas public community college, public technical college, or public university must take the THEA Test or an approved alternative test before they will be allowed to register for any classes.

In addition, students must pass all sections of the exit-level TAKS before they can take the THEA Test.

Students can be exempted from the test under certain conditions, HOWEVER, certain programs have a mandatory requirement. Check with your college counselor. General exemption conditions are:

- Have an ACT composite score of 23 with a minimum of 19 on both the English and math parts
- Have an SAT combined score of 1070 with a minimum of 500 on both the critical reading and math
- Score 2200 on the TAKS ELA and Mathematics tests and a “3” on the Essay
- Graduate from high school with a grade point average of 3.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale and have completed the recommended plan. You must enroll within two years of the graduation date.

*Students can be exempted from the THEA under certain conditions.*

Registration forms are available in the counselors' office or go online to [www.thea.nesinc.com](http://www.thea.nesinc.com).

**THEA TEST REGISTRATION (\$29.00 - LATE FEE ADD \$20.00 BY PHONE ONLY)**

<u>TEST DATE</u>	<u>REGISTRATION DEADLINE</u>	<u>LATE REGISTRATION</u>
October 18, 2008	September 19, 2008	October 8, 2008
February 28, 2009	January 30, 2009	February 18, 2009
April 25, 2009	March 27, 2009	April 15, 2009
June 27, 2009	May 29, 2009	June 17, 2009
July 25, 2009	June 26, 2009	July 15, 2009

## ACT/SAT/THEA PREPARATION CLASSES, ONLINE SERVICES, AND BOOKS

Need help preparing for college admissions tests? If so, there are several resources to investigate.

SHHS will try to offer classes depending upon student interest. The cost of each class is \$35.00. Interested students should see their counselor at least TWO weeks prior to the SAT date for more information and /or to register for the preparation class.

Students may also use the internet to take advantage of online reviews, such as [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

Study guides by Peterson's and

Kaplan's are available at your local bookstore. These books offer test-taking tips and practice tests.

In addition, when students register for the SAT, they can pick up a practice booklet in the counseling office.

Regardless of the method of preparation, students will benefit from familiarizing themselves with the test format and taking a practice test, which is given in the SAT booklet available in the counseling office.



Give a hoot! Study for those tests.

## TOP 10% ADMISSION POLICY

A few years ago, the Texas legislature passed a law that provides for the automatic admission to any Texas **public** four-year college or university for any student who graduates in the top 10% of his/her graduating class on the State Recommended Plan or higher.

Even though students in this category are guaranteed admission, they must still go through the same admission steps that are required

by any college they might attend. This includes meeting all admission deadlines. Students however, are NOT guaranteed acceptance into their particular school of choice within the university (i.e. school of Business, etc.)

Current senior ranks will be distributed to all seniors when they are released by PISD. At South Houston High School, any senior whose class rank falls between 1

and 45 is eligible for this program as long as he/she applies for admission before the end of semester one. Ranks will be subject to change after semester one grades are finalized.



Focus on college

## RESUMES AND REFERENCE LETTERS

This year you will probably be asking adults to write reference letters for you. When requesting references from teachers, counselors, or employers, give them your resume and allow **two weeks** for them to create a letter that will impress and allow readers to know you better. Be sure to ask an adult who truly knows your personality and abilities for the best resume

possible.

Some of your senior English teachers are assigning resumes as one of your required assignments. Take this seriously—add to your resume, polish it, refine it. It is important during your senior year because it gives the person who is writing your reference a “whole picture” of you. It provides them with material to convince readers that

you should be admitted to a particular college or university or that you should win a necessary scholarship.

It is also appropriate to THANK the individual who writes a recommendation for you!

## SAN JACINTO COLLEGE OFFERS MANY TECHNICAL PROGRAMS

The San Jacinto College system offers a multitude of programs that lead to technical certificates or a technical degree, and these programs are designed for “students who wish to plan a career in a technical area or to prepare themselves for employment at the entry level in the shortest time possible.”

The degree programs, which lead to an Associate of Applied Science Degree, are usually two year programs. This degree is not designed to transfer to a four year college, but some colleges may accept certain courses.

The general requirements for the technical certificate program vary widely; students will need to refer to the college catalog for details about these programs.

Usually, the training required for these programs is designed to prepare students for entry level jobs in a particular field of work.

Some of the areas in which students can earn certificates or degrees are Accounting, Aeronautics (including pilot training), Automotive Technology, Child Development/Family Studies, Computer Information Systems, Culinary

Arts, Fashion Merchandising, Nursing, Music/Business, and many more.

Students who do not wish to pursue a four year degree, but who desire some post-high school training would serve themselves well by looking into these programs. See your counselor for more information about these programs.



## COMMON APPLICATION NOW AVAILABLE TO APPLY TO TEXAS PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, under a mandate from the 75th Texas Legislature, created a form entitled “Common Application for Freshman Admission to Texas Public Universities.”

Students will be able to use the common admission application form to apply for admission to any of the thirty-five public four-year universities in the state. Because the appli-

cation will be so widely accepted, it will be possible for students to complete only one application, make copies of it, and then submit it to as many of the institutions as they wish.

Seniors can obtain an application in the counseling office. Since different universities may require that different parts of the application be completed, it is important

that seniors read the application carefully! If you plan to apply for financial aid, you will need to submit your application in time to meet the financial aid deadline, which is sometimes earlier than the admissions deadline.

Students are encouraged to apply **online** at [www.applytexas.org](http://www.applytexas.org). Processing time is faster and is also preferred by colleges.

## BE PREPARED WHEN ORDERING TRANSCRIPTS

When requesting a transcript from the registrar, Mrs. DeLeon, remember the following:

- The first *three* transcripts ordered during the school year are free. Each additional transcript is **\$1.00**.
- Order early. Do not wait until the last minute. Transcripts

require a 48-hour turnaround; requests **MUST** be made by **10:00 a.m. to be postmarked in two days**. Although we will make every effort to assist you with the application process, you must pay attention to deadlines. Mrs. DeLeon may not be available, and she is the only one who can print an official transcript.

- Plan ahead. The U.S. Mail is not an overnight operation. Students are responsible for overnight fees.
- Scholarship **deadlines** are important. If it must be turned in to the counselor to mail, there will be an earlier deadline.

# COLLEGE APPLICATION HELP AVAILABLE

San Jacinto College Shared Counselor, Kimberly Steele, is on the SHHS campus every Thursday and Friday. Students may sign up in the counseling office to see Ms. Steele. She is an excellent resource for assistance in completing the application process. In addition, Ms. Steele provides help with SAT/ACT registration and college searches.

Having good grades may seem like the easy part for many high school students applying for college admission. For a large number of students, writing the personal application essay can be the most difficult part. A few tips may

give students an edge when opening those college doors. When writing your essay:

- Convey a positive message overall. Avoid cynicism.
- Strive for depth, not breadth. Focus on one event or idea. Think personal and anecdotal.
- Use the active instead of the passive voice.
- Avoid rehashing accomplishments or activities already mentioned elsewhere in your application.
- Use the word I, but avoid

starting too many sentences with the word "I."

- Proofread! Proofread!
- Write and rewrite. You may ask others for their opinions.

Additional college preparation information is available at [www.collegefortexans.com](http://www.collegefortexans.com).

Readers want to hear your "voice" and learn about your attitudes, interests, and values. Write something readers will remember.

## MAKING A CAMPUS VISIT IMPORTANT PART OF THE COLLEGE SEARCH PROCESS

Throughout the year, most Texas colleges invite students and their families to visit their campus in order to learn more about that school—its admission policies, financial aid practices, etc. (Watch this publication throughout the year for information about these programs.)

Seniors are urged to take advantage of these programs so that

they and their parents can make informed decisions during the college search process.

Don't be afraid to ask questions to ask at this important time. Make a list of things you want to know more about before the visit.

*"If possible, eat a meal in one of the student cafeterias."*

## COLLEGE INFORMATION ABOUNDS

Not sure where to go to find information about colleges/universities, financial aid, etc? Well, your first step could be your very own internet access! In your quest for information, the websites of colleges and universities are the BEST source.

At [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com), you may find information that covers all colleges in the USA with in-depth

descriptions, addresses, degrees offered, cost, and financial aid information.

If you do not have internet access at home, then you can use the internet at the public library, school library, or computer lab. Take advantage of these resources!



**COLLEGE SEARCH  
ON THE NET**

# FINANCIAL AID FOR COLLEGE

**To ensure maximum consideration for all types of aid awarded by colleges, submit applications, before the DEAD-LINE.** Also keep in mind that most families qualify for some form of financial aid.

There are three types of financial aid available:

- Grants/scholarships - funds that do not have to be repaid
- Work/study programs -students work part-time on campus or in a local community to earn money for college
- Education loans - low interest loans with flexible payment options.
- Military Services: The US Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines all have programs that allow you to earn money for college in exchange for enlisting in a branch of the military.

More than **95** percent of all financial aid comes from federal or state-sponsored programs and the individual colleges. Students desiring financial assistance should contact the financial aid office at the college when applying for admission.

Private organizations also offer some educational funding.

Some scholarships are handled here at SHHS, and they will be publicized in senior bulletins throughout the year.

Since both the student and his/her parents will be expected to contribute at least in part to financing their child's education, one of the first things families need to do is sit down together and figure out how much they can afford to pay. Keep in mind that in the case of divorce, policies may vary from school to school regarding the financial responsibilities of the custodial and the non-custodial parent.

Financial aid may be need-based or non-need-based: Need-based financial aid is primarily determined by students' and parents' income and assets. Other factors considered are family size, the number of family members in college, and the age of the oldest parent. Non-need based aid is not contingent upon financial status, it is based upon criteria such as grades, musical or athletic ability, or other talents.

All colleges require the **FAFSA (Free Application For Financial Aid)**, a federal form which takes a snapshot of families' financial situation to determine eligibility for federal aid. These forms will be available in the counselors' office in

December. The **FAFSA** cannot be filed until after **January 1, 2009**. Students and parents should obtain a personal identification number at [www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov). This will allow them to complete and sign the FAFSA online, which will speed up the filing process.

Rice University, Southern Methodist University, and several Ivy League schools also use the *CSS/Financial Aid Profile*, which collects additional financial aid information to determine eligibility for non-federal financial aid. Many colleges also require their own financial aid forms. Therefore, contacting the financial aid office at the particular university is the best way to go.

The information that families provide on financial aid forms is used to calculate a number called the Expected Family Contribution or **EFC**. Financial aid administrators subtract the EFC from the college's annual cost of attendance to determine students' eligibility for aid. Colleges then notify students about their financial aid eligibility through an "**award letter**," which explains the amount and type of financial aid available to students. Students must actually contact the financial aid office and accept the award if that is what they desire.

## EARLY HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

The state of Texas established a scholarship program for early graduates.

To qualify for this program, students must complete the requirements for **Recommended Plan** (24 credits) for high school graduation in no more than 36 months, attend a public high school in Texas only and be a Texas resident.



The program provides a \$2000 exemption from the payment of tuition for eligible college students. It cannot be used to pay for fees or to pay for remedial education courses in college.

There is no time limit on when it can be used. The money can be used at any accredited public college or university in Texas or any nonprofit independent institution

which agrees to provide the student matching funds.

Students who qualify for this program should consult with their counselor for more information. Their counselor will need a letter from their parents, saying that the student has permission to graduate in three years. If you have an early graduate, please write the counselor a letter and have your student bring it to us.

# STUDENT LOAN SHOPPING: LEARN HOW TO BARGAIN HUNT

Isn't it great to find good deals? Bargain-hunting helps you find good deals to pay for your college education. The key is knowing how.

When you receive financial award letters from the colleges where you were accepted, you may find that you need a student loan to cover the costs of your education. Before choosing a student loan lender, learn the facts about loans and how to bargain-hunt for money-saving borrower benefits.

Most colleges and universities participate in one or two programs offered by the federal government - the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP) or the Federal Direct Student Loan Program (FDSLPL). Under FFELP, students borrow money from a financial institution, such as a bank or credit union. Under

the FDSLPL, students borrow money directly from the federal government.

Both programs offer Stafford Loans for students and Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students (PLUS). Stafford and PLUS loan borrowing limits, interest rates and origination fees are the same under the FFELP and FDSLPL. FFELP and FDSLPL are very similar, but depending on which program your college participates in, you could save hundreds of dollars in repayment.

Some financial institutions that provide student loans through the FFLEP offer benefits that significantly reduce repayment costs and help borrowers to manage their loans. While it may seem early to think about repaying your loans, a little extra thought now before choosing a

lender is worth the money you'll save later.

- Look for lenders that offer borrower discounts. Many lenders reward borrowers with interest rate reductions and account credits for making timely payments or making payments electronically.
- Look for lenders that offer flexible repayment alternatives. As your income grows after graduation, you may want to have the ability to increase your payments.
- Look for lenders that offer toll-free customer service both during and after regular business hours.

For more information about these programs, consult with your college financial-aid officer.

## DEBT LOAD TAKES ITS TOLL

Planning to borrow big bucks to close the higher education cost gap? Proceed cautiously.

According to several recent studies, student-loan borrowing has hit its highest level ever, and the burden of paying such heavy debts is causing many young people to delay starting families, purchasing new homes, and making many other life decisions.

So before you sign for a loan, figure out the top monthly payments you are willing to pay and the length of time

you are willing to be in debt, and let this be your guide.

A good source for more information about this topic can be found at the web site of Nellie Mae, the country's largest nonprofit student loan provider: [www.nelliemae.org](http://www.nelliemae.org). On this web site you can compare student loan programs, check interest rates, request loan applications, and plan a college funding budget.

*"Consult with your college financial-aid officer."*

## APPLYING FOR SCHOLARSHIPS THROUGH SHHS

In each senior bulletin, you will find information about one of the most important aspects of going to college—money! Scholarships for which SHHS seniors are eligible to apply will be listed in this section. Each scholarship will be listed by name and number. When asking for a scholarship application that has been publicized in a senior bulletin, please ask for it by number. *Throughout the year, to obtain an application for a particular scholarship, come to the counselors' office and ask Mrs. Brogan for that application. If you have any questions about the application, see the senior counselor. When appropriate, be sure to return your application to the counselor by the deadline date. (On some scholarship applications, there may be a deadline date that is different from the date you are to return the application to the senior counselor. Always return the application by the "due to counselor" date.) It is most important that you observe the deadline dates, for late applications could cost you some much needed money for college.*

For those of you with access to the internet, it can be a great source of information concerning college and financial aid. However, searching for the exact information needed can be like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack.

Without an idea of where to begin a search for something, you're less likely to find what you need - if you're not sure where to start, you might end up with lots of information you don't need, and just a little bit of what you do need.

What makes a good Internet search? First, determine what type of college or college financing information you seek. Are you looking for details on specific schools? specific majors? scholarships? private loans? federal grants?

Once you decide, access an Internet search engine or directory such as Yahoo, Alta Vista, HotBot, Excite, Infoseek, or Web-Crawler. In the "search" box, key in phrases such as *college search, the name of a specific college, scholarships, student loans, college loans, education grants, financial aid, or paying for college*, and you'll quickly (usually) receive a list of links to related websites. Most search engines will sort the findings so that the most closely aligned sources will be listed first, thus narrowing your search.

Be aware that this type of search will take some time to complete. Therefore, if your time is limited or you want more information, you might consider directly accessing some of the most popular and informative websites available.

- **College for Texans ([www.collegefortexans.com](http://www.collegefortexans.com)) provides information on financial aid resources, a college search and preparation. It is a good resource for scholarships.**
- **The Financial Aid Information Page ([www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)) This website is an independent, comprehensive and objective guide to student financial aid. It offers facts about student loans, sources of financial aid, a roster of books and periodicals on financial aid and a thorough glossary of terms. This site also features links to other financial aid/student loan websites.**
- The College Board ([www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)) provides on line registration for the SAT and information about colleges, scholarships, and careers.
- The ACT ([www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)) provides on line registration for the ACT, a college search and a financial aid estimator.
- Texas Coordinating Board ([www.applytexas.org](http://www.applytexas.org)) has the common application on line.
- Texas Coordinating Board ([www.theccb.state.tx.us](http://www.theccb.state.tx.us)) provides links to state college web pages, financial aid information and publications, TASP information, and a practice TASP test.
- Financial Aid Search Through the Web ([www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)) This website is one of the largest free scholarship search sites on the Internet.
- Adventures in Education ([www.adventuresineducation.org](http://www.adventuresineducation.org).) A comprehensive website is a significant resource for financial aid information, including student loans. The site provides the student with college preparation information and scholarships
- U. S. Department of Education ([www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)) Students and parents can receive and complete the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) through this website. The FAFSA is submitted to the U.S. Department of Education processor, schools of choice and an individual's state to determine Expected Family Contribution (EFC). Instructions for completing and submitting the form are also available.
- U.S. Department of Education Student Financial Aid ([www.ed.gov/finaid/html](http://www.ed.gov/finaid/html)) This organization posts information about financial aid.
- NCAA ([www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org)) Provides information, requirements, and regulations for athletes interested in playing college sports.
- TOPCAT is a FREE online SAT and ACT test prep program <http://testprep.collegefortexans.com>
- Bridges—Choices Planner and Choices Explorer, **SITE ID** is **0052039** and **PASSWORD** is **shhs**

While these are just a few of the many college and financial aid websites to be found on the Internet, they represent a wide range of useful information and services available to college-bound seniors and their families.

**HAPPY SURFIN'!**

# SENIOR PLAN OF ACTION



## FALL

Take SAT or ACT ASAP!! (be sure to take the tests no less than 6 weeks before the college deadlines; if you miss the first fall date, your next opportunity may be too late to send the scores to your choice colleges)

Contact schools that interest you requesting information about admissions procedures, programs offered, financial aid, etc

Narrow list of colleges to 3-5; visit each school

Look for scholarships and financial aid resources in you Senior Bulletin and at [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com), [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org), [www.aie.org](http://www.aie.org)

Apply for FAFSA PIN (Personal Identification Number) at [www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov)

Investigate post high school opportunities: college, technical programs, military, etc.

Think about abilities, preferences, and personal qualities

Read about various majors and careers. Look at websites like [www.careersandcolleges.com](http://www.careersandcolleges.com), [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov), [www.cdr.state.tx.us/realitycheck/start.htm](http://www.cdr.state.tx.us/realitycheck/start.htm)

Look through college guides and catalogs (the College Room is a great resource)

Create a college, technical program, military or career planning calendar

List tests you need to take with fees, dates, and registration deadlines

College or technical program deadlines

Financial aid (FAFSA) application forms and deadlines

Materials needed to complete application packet (recommendations, transcripts, etc.)

Complete senior profile and resume for recommendations; notify any person that you will be asking for a recommendation so he/she can start preparing

If interested in military service, consult military recruiters

Student athletes should register with the NCAA clearinghouse at [www.ncaaclearinghouse.net](http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net)

Prepare Early Decision and Early Action applications as soon as possible

Submit at least one college application by Halloween

Request transcripts be sent to the colleges of your choice; be aware if your colleges want a copy of your first semester senior year grades, a number of them will

Go to College Night at Sam Rayburn H.S. on September 30<sup>th</sup>

Be aware of college admission representatives visiting the campus or surrounding area; make a point to meet with them



## WINTER

Keep copies of everything submitted!

Expect to be notified of early decision or deferral by December 15<sup>th</sup>

Complete FAFSA (online) as soon as possible after January 1<sup>st</sup>

If mid-year transcripts are needed by the colleges, be sure to follow up with Registrar to make sure they have been sent to the schools for which you have applied  
Continue applying for any scholarships for which you are eligible; contact financial aid offices at the schools that you are applying to see if they have scholarships available  
Check deadlines for financial aid, scholarships, and grants, many forms are due March 1<sup>st</sup>



## **SPRING**

Register for AP tests if appropriate  
Carefully evaluate offers of admission and financial aid award letters  
Register to take THEA test if required by 2 or 4 year public Texas colleges (possibility of exemption with high test scores in TAKS, SAT, ACT)  
Expect to receive admission decision and financial aid offers by mid-April  
Visit final college before accepting if have not done so  
Notify colleges of intent to enroll by no later than **May 1**: colleges cannot require (unless admitted as an Early Decision) a deposit or commitment to attend prior to May 1<sup>st</sup>; at this time you must inform every college of your acceptance or rejection to the admission offer and/or financial aid by this date  
Send enrollment deposit to the college you will attend  
Work with financial aid office at college to resolve any financial aid problems



## **SUMMER**

Request to have your final transcript sent to the college you will be attending  
Watch for mail regarding important housing, orientation, and registration information  
When you receive your AP test scores, request the College Entrance Examination Board that the scores be sent to the college you will be attending  
Enjoy your summer  
Pack and move off to college

# SCHOLARSHIP FRAUD: BEWARE THE RIP-OFFS

About this time each year, approximately two million high school seniors apply for college. At some point, they and their parents must face the inevitable question: *How are we going to pay for this?*

Then out of the blue, a postcard arrives practically guaranteeing a scholarship—for a fee. It proclaims that every year millions of scholarship dollars go unclaimed and unused. It further states that for *only* \$179.00, the company will do a custom scholarship search for you with the promise that it will find at least ten scholarships that you qualify for.

At this point, the old adage *Buyer Beware* should be triggered by your brain, for most likely, this program is a scam.

The Federal Trade Commission estimates that thousands of families per year are ripped-off to the tune of many millions of dollars by these unscrupulous companies. Few students ever receive scholarships; the information sent to these families is old and out of date, and much of the information can be found free of charge in other sources.

*What can you do to protect yourself and your family from these rip-off artists?* The FTC offers these six suggestions for judging the merit of scholarship offers:

- *"The scholarship is guaranteed or your money back."* No one can guarantee to get you a grant or a scholarship.
- *"You can't get this information anywhere else."* Scholarship search companies simply access databases that you can surf for free on the internet.
- *"The scholarship will cost some money."* Financial-aid expert Mark Kantrowitz warns, "If you have to pay money to get money, it's probably a scam." Occasionally there could be a processing fee of \$3 to \$5 for certain legitimate scholarships, but even this is rare.
- *"May I have your credit card or bank account number to hold this scholarship?"* Never give out your credit card or bank account number.
- *"We'll do all the work."* You must apply for legitimate scholarships or grants yourself.
- *"You've been selected by a national foundation to receive a scholarship."* According to the FTC, a number of bogus search companies falsely claim they are foundations or nonprofit organizations to make their offer look legit.

If you have any doubts about any offers you have received, check it out. Your counselor, a college financial aid officer, etc. can help you decide about the legitimacy of that program.

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