



Fall Quarterly Update

For 2020-2021 Juniors

A Note on COVID and College Planning. Online learning, test optional policies, and new pressures on financial aid are changing the equation for students heading to college soon. These changes might encourage you to relax your college preparation efforts. Don't do that! Despite current uncertainties, the basics haven't changed: as juniors, attention to your course selection, GPA, extracurricular activities, and testing strategy, along with a thoughtful college search, will still put you in the best possible position for attending the college of your choice in two years! Read on! 😊

Making School Count

- **Check your 4-Year Plan.** Your junior year is important academically for college admission. If you've maintained a strong GPA, it's important that you continue to challenge yourself and stay on track. If you've struggled with your GPA so far, showing you are on an upward trend this year can be extremely valuable. Here is a list of [high school classes that colleges look for](#). If you have questions about whether you are taking the right classes for your college aspirations, your counselor can help make sure that your curriculum is on track for where you want to go!
- **Showcase your skills.** Colleges want to know that you'll be a positive addition to their classrooms and community, and that you'll thrive not only in college but beyond. Here are [ten key skills](#) that show you have what it takes to succeed. Consider how you can strengthen some of these skills this year so that you can emphasize them in your applications next year.

Looking Ahead to College

- **PSAT/NMSQT deferred to January 26, 2021.** The [Preliminary SAT \(PSAT\) and National Merit Qualifying Scholarship Test \(NMSQT\)](#), normally administered in October, will instead be offered at Hanford on Tuesday, January 26. Juniors who score in the top ~1% of the PSAT/NMSQT will be considered for [National Merit Scholarships](#). Signups begin this month (October) for a fee, and seats may be limited; check with the Counselors' office to learn more.
- **What does "test optional" mean?** Many colleges have adopted test optional or test flexible admission policies in order to accommodate COVID-19 conditions. This typically means they will not *require* test scores for admission, but will consider scores if provided; applications without test scores will depend more on other information about students' academic performance (e.g., GPA, class rank). Students whose GPA puts them "on the bubble" for admissions at their target colleges might especially benefit from a strong test score. Learn more about how [test-optional admissions](#) might affect you.
- **Create a college admissions test plan.** Despite test optional policies, college admission tests (SAT or ACT) will continue to be considered if provided at almost every 4-year college for the near term. Most students take the test for the first time during spring of their junior year, with an opportunity to retest the following fall. While important, these tests needn't be daunting. Deciding which tests you'll take, when you'll take them, what score you're targeting, and how you'll prepare will go a long way towards making these tests work best for you.

- **SAT or ACT?** Almost all colleges will accept either the SAT or ACT, but the tests differ in important ways. Now's a good time to decide which test you will focus your preparation time on. To help you out, Princeton Review offers this [comparison of the ACT and SAT](#).
- **2020-2021 SAT and ACT Test Schedule.** Check the [SAT test dates](#) and the [ACT test dates](#) for test-taking options during your spring semester this year. Note that local test sites may close depending on COVID-19 and it will be important to check availability as test dates approach.

- **Call Sage College Prep Services for professional test preparation! Sage offers prep classes for both the SAT and the ACT.** We are already enrolling students in our SAT Prep Course for the March 13, 2021 SAT. [Visit the Sage website](#) for more details.

Careers & Majors

- **Explore internships.** Real-world experiences offered by internships can boost students' college and career success, as well as help with college admissions. Now is a good time to think about whether and how you want to fit an internship into your high school plan. Check out [how to find and apply to high school internships](#). COVID conditions may create challenges in pursuing internship opportunities; speak with Mrs. Richardson in the HHS Career Center to learn what you can do now to anticipate internship opportunities later this year.

Finding Colleges for You

- **Make a list of 10 interesting colleges.** Set a goal of finding ten colleges you might like to attend, and learn a little about each one. Look up the profile of their most recently admitted class (size, GPA, test scores, diversity), learn what the college costs and what students pay, and read about campus and community life. The College Board's [College Search tool](#) will help you get started.

Applying to College

- **Social media and admissions.** More colleges and students are factoring [social media into the application process](#). While students' online presence plays at best only a peripheral role in admissions relative to traditional considerations (academics, activities, essays and recommendations), students should understand that their digital trail can help as well as hurt their chances of admission. Check out Kaplan's [complete guide to social media and admissions](#).

Paying for College

- **Get the facts about paying for college.** Learn the basics about paying for college so you and your family can get the most money for college. Here are [7 Things You Need to Know About Financial Aid](#) from the College Board.
- **Find out why college may cost less than you think.** Most students don't pay the full tuition price that colleges publish. With financial aid, the actual cost (or net price) is usually less. Learn how to [focus on net price, not sticker price](#). If you choose to use a college's "net price calculator" (available on every college website), keep in mind that a good portion of the calculated financial aid may come in the form of loans which you may or may not want to take.
- **The college cost conversation.** If you haven't raised the subject yet, it's not too soon to have a family conversation about the cost of and budget for college. Consumer Reports offers [10 key questions every family should discuss](#) when it comes to paying for college.

Mark Your Calendar!

- **Sage College Prep Services** has partnered with Gesa Credit Union to present a webinar series on college planning. The next two seminars will be on **October 28** (Planning Ahead for Your College

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Career) and **November 18** (Paying for College). The seminars are free and open to the community – [use this link to register](#), scroll to the Sage seminars you are interested in, and click the registration buttons to sign up.

- **November 6, 2020 – End of 1st Quarter.** This is a good time for students to check their grades, and consider whether they need to make changes in order to meet their GPA targets.



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