

Timeline to College Junior Year Calendar 2009-2010

This packet provides an overview of the college admissions process at Parker. It is meant to provide information so that parents and students feel informed about what kinds of activities and meetings will be provided over the next two years.

Junior year is very important. The narrative assessments you receive carry more weight in your overall application than any previous year. Your academic work, attitude and habits of learning are extremely important factors in a college's decision about your admission.

September

- Attend College Fair at Mt. Wachusett Community College.

October

- Take the PSAT (results delivered in December).

Now is a good time to analyze your habits of learning and determine what weak areas need strengthening. What can you see from the final assessments received over the past two years? Recognize and improve in all the areas you possibly can.

November

November 19th, 7-9 pm.
Financial Aid Information Meeting for Division 3 families (students welcome)

December

PSAT results delivered.

January 2010

Catherine Yates, the College Counselor, will begin having individual meetings with juniors.

If you will require accommodations for SAT or ACT, get an eligibility form from Catherine.

February

Catherine will be in advisory once each month through the end of the school year. She will teach college research skills and how to navigate our user-friendly resources for college-search information.

- Look at the collegeboard.com website and begin looking at college websites.
- Talk with Catherine and teachers about taking SAT Subject Tests in the spring. Not all colleges require them but the best time to take them is at the end of a course of study you will not continue to pursue (for example: Chemistry). If you do take SAT Subject Tests, do so in June and take the SAT I in May.
- Create an initial list of colleges to contact for additional information.
- Compare and contrast admission criteria and your preferences.

March

- ❑ Catherine will discuss the college admissions process in each advisory.
- ❑ Register for the May 1st SAT I by March 25th.
- ❑ Register for the June 5th SAT by April 29th.
- ❑ For those who want to take the ACT, register for the June 12th test by May 7th.

SAT: www.collegeboard.com

ACT: www.act.org

- ❑ **Parent Nights** will be held to introduce parents to the college admissions process (organized by advisory). Parents will receive the *Life After Parker Guidebook* at this meeting, describing in detail many aspects of the application and admissions process.

April

- ❑ Visit colleges that interest you over spring break.
- ❑ Register for the June 5th SAT Subject Tests by April 29th. **if you think your schools require them.**

May

- ❑ Senior panels visit junior advisories for Questions and Answers and general advice giving.
- ❑ Register for the ACT.
- ❑ For those who want to take the ACT, register for the June 12th test by May 7th.

June

- ❑ Take the SAT I if not taken in May, or SAT Subject Tests, or ACT.

FYI: Many colleges accept the **ACT** *instead of* the **SAT I and SAT Subject Tests**.

Summer 2010

Get involved in an internship or some experience relevant to your career interest.
Read.

Make arrangements for campus tours.

Glossary

SAT I: Most colleges use this or the ACT as part of their admissions requirements. They look at it as a tool for estimating how well student may do at their school. People take this in their junior year and early senior year. This is a 3.75 hour long exam that measures critical reasoning and math reasoning skills and writing skills. The writing portion is rarely considered by colleges because the test is not reliable.

SAT Subject Tests: The Subject Tests assess your skills in specific subject areas and how well you apply them. Students generally take these at the end of their junior year. The scores can help you present your academic strengths to a college. Each Subject Test is one hour long. The admission requirements of each of the schools you are applying to will tell you which Subject Tests you will need to take. (see www.compassprep.com). You can take up to three Subject Tests on one test day, but not the same day you take the SAT I. Most colleges require only two, if they require them at all. In most cases, schools will accept the ACT instead of the SAT I and Subject Tests!

ACT: This is another standardized test used in the admissions process by some schools, instead of the SAT. It is offered five times a year and measures achievement in four areas: English, Math, Reading, Science and Writing. Each section is scored and the final score is the average of those four scores. The writing test is optional and the score is reported separately.

FINANCIAL AID INFO:

Students and parents/guardians applying to college need to be aware of financial aid deadlines. Many applicants will need to complete a two-step application process with the **PROFILE** form, administered through the College Board at www.collegeboard.com. Those schools who require the profile are listed on the website as well. Only some private schools require this, but the two-step process involves registration and obtaining a **PIN** number, then receiving a customized form that must be filled out and submitted by a school's financial aid deadline.

All families interested in receiving financial aid should fill out the **FAFSA**, the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid**. This also requires a two-step process. To obtain a worksheet, go to www.fafsa.ed.gov. The form cannot be filed until January 1, **2010**.

To do this, you need to obtain a **PIN number**. A parent and the student will each get their own PIN number. This is the equivalent of an electronic signature. Do not try to do this at the last minute. **PINs** are available at www.pin.ed.gov.

What is the PIN?

The PIN serves as your identifier to let you access your personal information in various U.S. Department of Education systems. It's like the Personal Identification Number that you get from your bank that enables you to access your account. Because your PIN serves as your electronic signature, you should not give it to anyone.

Once you successfully complete a request, you will receive your PIN within two or three days.

Electronic FAFSA registration is becoming very popular. Ninety percent of applications are now filed electronically. One advantage is that if you make a mistake or omit something, the computer will point it out immediately and you won't need to wait for the clearinghouse to find

the paper mistake and mail it back to you. The paper version was returned to people because of errors 17% of the time.

Because the computer is sensitive to errors in the making, the electronic version is returned only 2% of the time. When it comes to the **FAFSA**, time is of the essence. The **FAFSA** clearinghouse will send families a **Student Aid Report** based on the information received.

“**SAR**” is what indicates the **Expected Family Contribution or EFC**. Colleges, universities and scholarship programs will also receive this information if you have indicated their code numbers on the **FAFSA** at the time of its filing. The financial aid package is based on the **EFC**.

The best place to get accurate information when filling out these forms is from the college’s financial aid office that has the nearest filing deadline.

The **SAR** will be received electronically for those who filed electronically.

There is an EFC calculator that takes about twenty minutes to complete that will give families a “ball-park” figure for how much they may be expected to contribute. It can be found at www.collegeboard.com. Another reliable website for information is www.mefa.org.

Scholarships and grants awarded students from outside sources (not the school they plan to attend, but from private organizations) may require disclosure during the summer after senior year. When financial aid offices learn of these awards, they are likely to deduct all or part of the award from the financial aid package awarded the student. It is important to know this because it may affect how much scholarship searching you do.

Note to parents: Catherine Yates welcomes your call and emails. Contact her to schedule an appointment. Email: cyates@parker.org Phone: 978-772-3293.

Campus visits

by Kelly Nelson

There is no one way to visit a campus. You could tour a dozen schools during the spring and summer of junior year or wait till April of senior year to sample a few of the colleges that accepted you. Usually, parents come along, but some folks go solo or with peers. On campus, you might be part of a crowd of hundreds of teenagers attending an open house or one of a few visitors. No matter which path you take, there is one question you need to answer: "Can I picture myself at this school for four years?"

Start your visit by calling the admissions office at least two weeks in advance. An admissions counselor can tell you the dates and times for campus tours (they're usually held weekly), information sessions (a Q & A with an admissions office rep that takes place before the tour), and open houses (a day of events aimed at prospective students, scheduled once or twice a semester). The counselor can also recommend classes to observe, help schedule individual meetings with faculty and coaches, and send out a campus map, a parking permit, and information on nearby lodging.

The best time to visit is on a weekday in fall or spring semester—not too close to the beginning of the semester and definitely not during finals week. That way, you'll see students and teachers going about their regular routines. For some families, however, a weekend, summer, or winter break visit may be easier to schedule. While you obviously won't see an average day during those off times, you can still get a sense of the campus and the local area. On a blitz tour of schools in a particular region, don't try to cram in more than two schools a day. It takes at least half a day to cover a campus.

Before your visit, learn everything you can about the school: Read the school catalog and browse the Web site. Come up with questions to ask that aren't answered in these materials. (In other words, don't pipe up at the information session and ask, "How many students go to school here?" But do ask questions such as "What percentage of freshmen drop out?" and "How do you help students who are in danger of failing?") Decide beforehand what's important to you—anything from a strong political science department to single sex dorms to a rugby team. Make a list of priorities and investigate them during your visit.

Begin your visit with an information session, if available, and a campus tour. Then strike out on your own. Sit in on a class, see a few dorm rooms, eat in the cafeteria, read the bulletin boards, meet a faculty member or coach, check out the drama or computer or gym facilities, pick up the student newspaper, try to find your favorite book on the library's computer system and then look for it in the stacks (multiply the time it takes by 1.2 million for an idea of how your term paper research will go during your college career). Everywhere you go, ask current students what they like—and don't like—about the school. Remember to check out the area surrounding the campus, too: What restaurants, stores, and bars are nearby? How close is the bus or train station? Think about what you'd need to live around there: a bike? a car? warmer clothes? If you visit with your parents, split up at some point so you can roam the campus alone for a taste of what it would be like to be on your own in this new place. Parents might use this time to meet with a financial aid officer.