



Steam Academy at MSB

2022-2023

**College Planning Guide
for Parents and Students**



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INTRODUCTION

Hello! My name is Rayna Blackshear and I will be serving as your school counselor. Ms. Dennis will serve as your College Adviser for the 2022-2023 Academic School year. Mrs. Douthit will serve as your College & Career adviser. It is our pleasure to support and walk alongside you and your family as you navigate the college search, application and decision process. Whether this is your 1st or 4th child going to college - each process is unique for each student. It is my hope that we can assist you by getting to know your student as an individual so that we can, as a team, help them feel comfortable and confident as they transition out of high school into college.

As a strong believer of higher education, we truly feel that each and every student can benefit from continuing their education after graduating high school. Colleges and universities come in many shapes, sizes, locations and methods. Expanding knowledge, building independence, strengthening accountability and forming relationships are all benefits attributed to pursuing higher education.

Please use this guide as a resource throughout the process. You will receive ongoing communication regarding upcoming college workshops, testing information and virtual college admissions representative visits.

We are looking forward to working with you and thank you for allowing us to be a support and advisor for you and your family.

Please feel free to contact us at any time if you have any questions.

Thank You,

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JUNIOR YEAR COLLEGE PLANNING TIMELINE (BY SEASON)

<p style="text-align: center;">FALL (AUGUST - NOVEMBER)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meet with your Academic Counselor (Ms. Blackshear or Ms. Dennis) to review your Junior year courses and check your GPA. ● Set goals for the year regarding intentional ways to improve your grades. ● Plan to take the PSAT/NMSQT in October. ● Begin having a discussion with your parents about financial aid for college ● Start reviewing colleges using SCOIR and begin speaking with college admissions representatives. 	<p style="text-align: center;">WINTER (DECEMBER - FEBRUARY)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organize your testing schedule. Juniors are encouraged to begin taking the ACT and/or SAT during the winter or spring of their Junior year. ● Start visiting local colleges. ● Take part in extracurricular activities. Colleges like well-rounded students who participate in more than just school.
<p style="text-align: center;">SPRING (MARCH - MAY)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Begin taking the ACT and/or SAT. Contact your Academic Counselor for help registering for either of these exams. ● Begin planning your Senior year class schedule. ● Begin exploring college scholarship opportunities. ● Begin speaking with teaching regarding writing letters of recommendation on your behalf. 	<p style="text-align: center;">SUMMER (JUNE-JULY)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visit the colleges that you are seriously considering. ● Begin working on your college applications. Access applications online and review what they entail.

SENIOR YEAR COLLEGE PLANNING

TIMELINE (BY MONTH)



<p>SUMMER BEFORE SENIOR YEAR</p> <p>Start your college list and narrow your choices down to 10-12 schools.</p> <p>Prepare to register for and take the first ACT and/or SAT of the school year.</p> <p>Attend college campus visits.</p>	<p>SEPTEMBER</p> <p>Meet with your Academic and College Counselor (Ms. Blacksher or Ms. Dennis) about your Senior year classes, college list and possible college major.</p> <p>Contact teachers about writing letters of recommendation</p> <p>Begin formulating your college essay.</p> <p>Register for the next ACT and/or SAT exam if necessary. This is usually the last exam score that colleges will see before you begin applying.</p>	<p>OCTOBER</p> <p>Narrow your college list down to 3-5 schools.</p> <p>Begin to complete and submit your applications for submission. Pay attention to the deadlines for each application and scholarship.</p> <p>Complete and submit the FAFSA form.</p>
<p>NOVEMBER</p> <p>Continue completing applications.</p> <p>Update your Academic & College Counselor about the outcome of each application that has been submitted (ie - Accepted, Deferred, Waitlisted or Denied).</p> <p>Submit any college acceptance and scholarship awards you have received.</p>	<p>DECEMBER & JANUARY</p> <p>Submit your college applications.</p> <p>Confirm that your transcripts and letters of recommendation were sent. Request that your ACT and SAT test scores be sent directly from the testing agencies.</p> <p>If you applied early decision or early action, you will begin to receive decision letters in December.</p>	<p>FEBRUARY & MARCH</p> <p>Most colleges will send a confirmation that your application has been received.</p> <p>Review your FAFSA and financial aid award letters.</p> <p>Admission decision letters may start arriving as early as February or March.</p>
<p>APRIL</p> <p>Review your college acceptance letters and financial aid packages and make your final decision by May 1st.</p> <p>Notify the other schools that have accepted you as soon as possible to let them know that you will not be enrolling.</p>	<p>MAY & JUNE</p> <p>May 1st - National College Decision Day</p> <p>Prepare to take final exams and AP exams.</p> <p>GRADUATION!</p> <p>Look for information regarding sending your final transcript to the college you have enrolled in.</p>	<p>SUMMER BEFORE COLLEGE</p> <p>Apply for housing and meal plans.</p> <p>Meet with your college academic advisor and register for classes.</p> <p>Purchase books and additional materials.</p> <p>CONGRATULATIONS! YOU'RE GOING TO COLLEGE!</p>

STANDARDIZED TESTING

For many students, the first steps towards preparing for the college process is taking a number of standardized tests. Standardized tests give students, parents, and colleges an idea of a students' academic capabilities and an idea of how they would perform on college-level work.

PSAT

The PSAT is not only great practice for the SAT, it is also used as the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. All STEAM students will have the opportunity to take the PSAT in October of their Junior year. It is important to remember that the PSAT is not seen by colleges or used for admissions decisions.

Information will be forthcoming regarding registration instructions.

SAT

The SAT is one of the oldest and best known college admissions tests. All schools will accept scores for admissions and to award scholarships. The SAT I Reasoning Test is a three-hour exam that tests reading, writing & language and math. There is an optional fifty-minute essay that some selective colleges require in order to use your SAT scores for admission. Each section (two total) is scored on a scale from 200-800.

Click [HERE](#) for more information and registration instructions.

Click [HERE](#) for instructions on sending your scores to colleges.

ACT

The ACT is accepted equally by colleges. It is a two-hour and fifty-five minute multiple-choice test that measures skills in English, mathematics, reading, and science reasoning and each section is scored from 1-36. The ACT has a reputation for being more direct (fewer trick questions) than the SAT. There is an additional forty-minute essay that some selective colleges require in order to use your ACT scores for admission.

Click [HERE](#) for more information and registration instructions.

Click [HERE](#) for instructions on sending your scores to colleges.

SAT SUBJECT TESTS

The SAT Subject Tests, formerly known as the SAT II, are subject-specific tests. These are one-hour multiple choice tests offered in 15 different subject areas such as Math, Chemistry, Latin, History, and Literature. Most schools requiring SAT subject exams require that you take two, however there are a select few of the most competitive schools that ask for three. It is always a good idea to check with the schools you're applying to and find out if they require SAT Subject Test Scores, and if so, if they require any particular tests. You may take up to three tests in one day, but not on the same day that you take the SAT Reasoning Test.

Click [HERE](#) for more information and registration instructions.

Click [HERE](#) for instructions on sending your scores to colleges.

AP/ADVANCED PLACEMENT

AP exams are not involved in admissions decisions, but they can certainly help you once you get to college. STEAM Academy offers AP courses in a variety of subjects. If you take an AP course and receive a high enough score on the AP exam for that course, you can earn college credit while still attending high school. Additionally, some college admissions officers look for AP courses as a sign of a challenging high school curriculum. The more opportunities you take to academically challenge yourself, the more impressive it is to colleges and universities.

Click [HERE](#) for more information.

Click [HERE](#) for instructions on sending your scores to colleges.

TEST OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (TOEFL)

The TOEFL is a test for non-native English speaking students. Most colleges will not require this unless you have been in the country for four years or less. In the US, students take the TOEFL exclusively by computer. There are four sections: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The test is offered year-round at a number of test sites. If you do not speak English at home or if English is not your first language, the results of the TOEFL may help to explain a lower-than-expected score on the ACT or SAT.

Click [HERE](#) for more information and registration instructions.

Click [HERE](#) for instructions on how to send your scores to colleges.

SENDING SCORES TO COLLEGES

Each testing agency has their own process for sending scores to colleges. Students are responsible for accessing their scores and sending the scores to the colleges or universities of their choice. Students should visit the testing agency's website for instructions on how to send scores to colleges.

***IMPORTANT:** The District-Wide ACT exam offered during a students' Junior year during the school day cannot be accessed through the ACT website. If a student would like to have scores from that test date sent to a college, they should contact Ms. Blackshear to assist in sending those scores to colleges and universities.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE COLLEGE PROCESS

For most students, the college search, admission and selection process will include the following steps:

1. Decide what factors and characteristics will influence your college choice:

- a. Your specific needs
- b. Geographic location
- c. Size
- d. Co-educational
- e. Cost
- f. Programs of study
- g. Resources
- h. Level of difficulty/selectivity
- i. Environment

2. Research colleges that have the characteristics you desire by using various resources:

- a. SCOIR
- b. STEAM Counseling staff
- c. College Websites
- d. College Admissions Representatives

3. Make a list of schools that interest you and do research on each individual school

- Compare and contrast the information that you receive.
- Visit campuses, meet with representatives, explore websites, talk with current students.
- Meet with college admissions representatives when they visit STEAM and make sure to get their contact information.
- From your list, choose approximately 8-10 schools
 - 2 *likely* schools - your high school record exceeds admissions requirements and the school accepts 70% or more of applicants.
 - 2-4 *target* schools - admissions requirements match your high school record and the school accepts about 50% of applicants.
 - 2 *reach* schools - admissions requirements may be higher than your individual high school record or the school accepts less than 40% of applicants.
- Continue to use SCOIR to keep track of your list and communicate your decision to your Academic and College Counselor.

4. Submit applications

- Submit applications either through the college's website, Common Application or Coalition App.

5. Review essay topics from applications

- If a specific essay is requested, be sure to follow the directions
- Try to pick an essay topic that will work for most of your applications
- Create a high school resume to provide more depth and/or supporting information to submit with your application and to bring along to interviews.
- Be thoughtful with your choice of essay question when using the Common Application.
- Observe and note when additional or alternative essays are required with the application

6. Request that at least two teachers write letters of recommendation on your behalf

- Teachers should be from Junior or Senior year
- Teachers should be familiar with you and your work ethic
- Do not forget to write thank you notes or emails to all teachers for spending time to write your letter

7. Complete and submit your applications

- Be aware of deadlines. Be sure to pay attention to when college applications are due and give yourself enough time to gather all of the information you need before applying.
- Ask a friend or family member to proofread your application for errors.
- Be sure to read/follow ALL directions.
- Certain schools require or recommend interviews as part of the application process - call the admissions office to make an appointment.

THE COLLEGE SEARCH

There are thousands of colleges to choose from, but which should go on your college list? Use these steps to begin your college search:

1. Talk to your family.

Open up a discussion. Talk to your family about your interests and goals. Ask them about their experience in college, if any, and find out what kind of support they can give you. If there are financial or any other additional concerns, it is best to discuss them early in the process.

2. Create a wish list.

What do you want in a college? Make a list that includes everything from possible majors to location to extracurricular activities. Even if it does not seem important - write it down. Doing this will give you a better idea of what you are looking for.

3. Get advice.

Talk to your Academic and College Counselor, teachers or principal about starting your college search about what they considered when selecting their college.

4. Check your mail.

Your mailbox and inbox might already be filled with college brochures and emails. If so, browse through them; you may find colleges you haven't heard or considered. If you aren't getting college mail yet, visit college websites and sign up for information.

5. Go to college fairs.

You can get a lot of information about different colleges in one place at a college fair. You will meet college representatives who can talk to you and answer questions about their colleges, and you can sign up for college mailing lists. Click [HERE](#) for a college fair checklist.

6. Explore online.

A visit to a college's website can give you an idea of what student life and classes are like. You can take virtual campus tours, check out the classes and even contact admissions officers and current students with questions. Click [HERE](#) for additional information about doing online college searches.

7. Visit a campus.

Get a taste of campus life by visiting a local college. You can explore the campus, talk with students, and get a better sense of what you do and don't want in a college. Click [HERE](#)

for a campus visit checklist. Students are required to complete a **College Campus Visit Approval Form** so that their absences can be excused on the days that they will be on a college campus visit.

8. Put it all together.

Use all of the information you have gathered to make a list of the colleges you are interested in. Don't limit yourself. You can use this list to get a better idea of what's important to you in a college and where you want to go.

STUDENT & PARENT ROLES IN THE COLLEGE SEARCH & SELECTION PROCESS

STUDENT'S ROLES	PARENT/GUARDIAN'S ROLES
Be honest and think carefully about your goals, dreams, strengths and weaknesses.	Respect your student and his/her thoughts.
Take time to assess who you are and what you like and don't like.	Be honest and provide your student with realistic information, particularly in regards to finances.
Always strive to do your best academic work.	Listen to your student.
Own the process and take the time necessary to research college options.	Encourage your student to explore a variety of options.
Attend local college fairs and speak with college admissions representatives when they visit STEAM..	Contact your STEAM Academic & College Counselor with any questions or concerns you might have.
Be the one to call or email colleges for information.	Visit colleges with your student.
Do not apply to colleges in which you have no interest.	Attend college fairs with your student.
Take care in completing applications.	Allow your students to own their college process.
Use your own voice in your college essays or personal statements.	Don't underestimate your student's potential and don't raise your level of expectations beyond the student's capabilities.
Be aware of all deadlines.	

WHAT DETERMINES COLLEGE ADMISSION?

The strength of your transcript is almost always the most important factor. Colleges are interested in the courses you took at STEAM Academy at McCluer South-Berkeley and how well you performed in them. Your grades are important, however, colleges are specifically looking for the level of challenge in your course selections, for example, AP, ACP, and other dual credit classes show that you are willing to challenge yourself beyond general high school-level work.

Colleges also look at other criteria such as:

TEST SCORES

Colleges do not rely solely on standardized test scores. Colleges look at “the whole person” when making their decisions among thousands of applicants. The importance of test scores will vary from college to college.

ACTIVITIES & AWARDS

Colleges look at the depth of your involvement, not the quantity. It is important to let them know **WHY** you are involved and not just in **WHAT** you are involved in.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Typically, you will need two teachers and one counselor to write letters of recommendation on your behalf. You must ask teachers to write your letters of recommendation as soon as possible. Ask a teacher with whom you have a good in-class relationship. If you would like an additional recommendation, it should be from someone outside of school who can speak to a different attribute you possess (ie - job supervisor, church worker, etc). STEAM students must request letters of recommendation from faculty and staff through SCOIR. Please refer to the Letters of Recommendation section of this guide for instructions.

PERSONAL ESSAYS

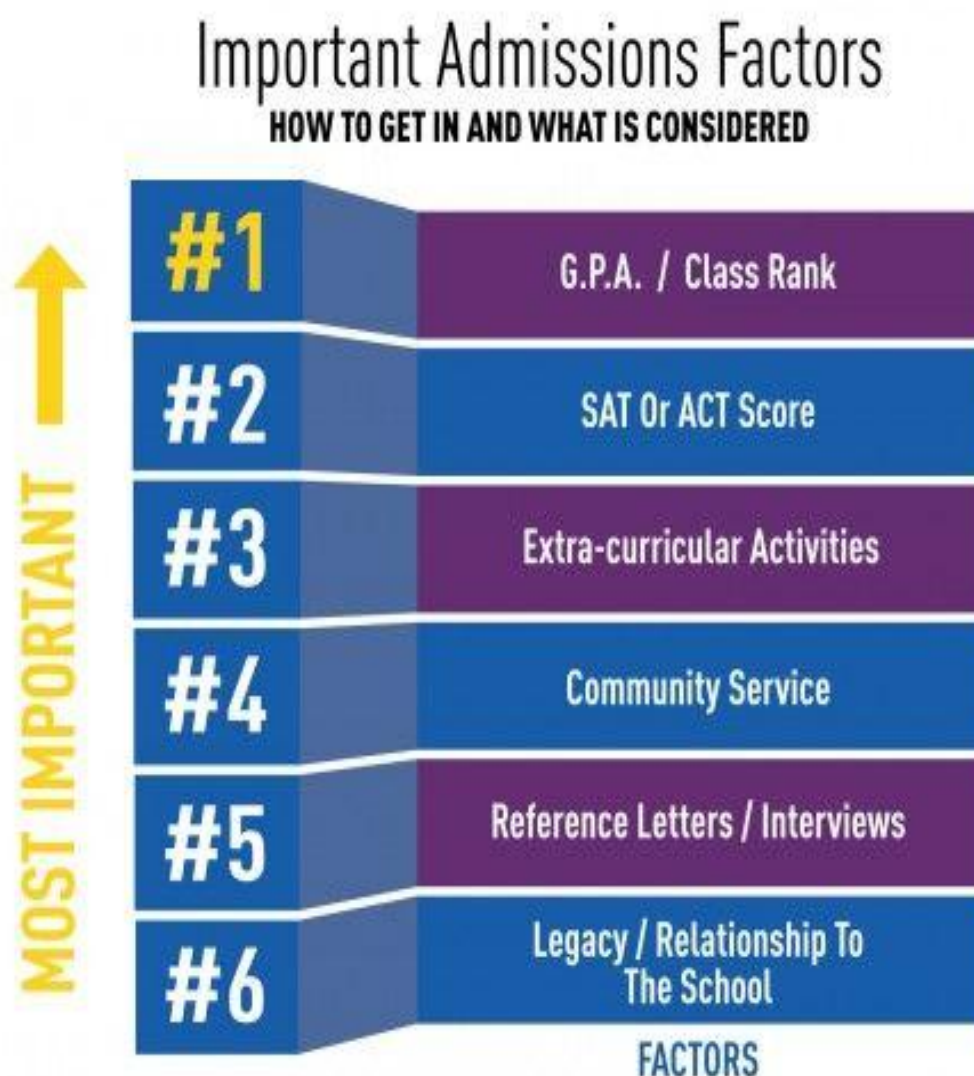
The essay is your opportunity to show who you really are to an admissions officer. How do you spend your free time? What are your passions? WHO or what has influenced you? What do you value? What obstacles have you overcome? Most of your application consists of statistical and biographical data. The essay is where you can demonstrate your own particular strengths, interests or abilities in your own unique voice.

THE PERSONAL INTERVIEW

Colleges that either require or recommend an interview will likely weigh it more heavily in their decision-making process. Like the essay, the interview is your way of showing who you are beyond your grades and test scores. It is also a great place to ask questions and learn more about the school. Call each college to find out how to schedule an interview.

LEVEL OF INTEREST SHOWN

Colleges want to know that you are interested in them as much as they are interested in you. Show your interest by making scheduled visits, attending classes on campus, emailing professors in your intended major, and calling or emailing the admissions officer responsible for reading your application. Contact should be initiated by the students, not the parent.



COLLEGE APPLICATION TYPES

When starting your college application process, it is important to know your admissions and application options.

WHICH COLLEGE ADMISSION PROCESS BEST SUITS YOU?				
NON-RESTRICTIVE APPLICATION PLANS			RESTRICTIVE APPLICATION PLANS	
REGULAR DECISION	ROLLING ADMISSION	EARLY ACTION (EA)	EARLY DECISION (ED)	RESTRICTIVE EARLY ACTION (REA)
<p>Students submit an application by a specified date and receive a decision in a clearly stated period of time.</p> <p>The deadline for regular decisions is normally between January 1st - February 1st.</p>	<p>Institutions review applications as they are submitted and render admissions decisions throughout the admission cycle.</p>	<p>Students apply early and receive a decision well in advance of the institution's regular response date.</p> <p>The deadline for early action is normally between November 1st - November 15th.</p>	<p>Students make a commitment to a first-choice institution where, if admitted, they will definitely enroll.</p> <p>The deadline for early decision is normally between November 1st - November 15th.</p>	<p>Students apply to an institution of preference and receive a decision early. They may be restricted from applying early decision or early action to other institutions, if offered enrollment, they have until May 1st to accept.</p> <p>The decision for restrictive early action is normally between November 1st - November 15th.</p>
Commitment: Non-Binding	Commitment: Non-Binding	Commitment: Non-Binding	Commitment: Binding	Commitment: Non-Binding

IMPORTANT: College admissions options with a BINDING commitment means that if admitted, you will absolutely attend that particular college. The only circumstance that would warrant you breaking your commitment is if you were to prove that your family's financial circumstances have changed and the school is not able to provide you with enough financial aid to assist you.

HOW TO COMPLETE YOUR COLLEGE APPLICATION

Once you have selected the top colleges that interest you, you can begin to apply for admission. Most college applications can be accessed through the college's website. Generally, application instructions can be found on the first page of a college's website. Students who are applying for college for the first time will be applying as **UNDERGRADUATES** or **FIRST TIME FRESHMAN**.

For many colleges, you will need to create an account before starting the application. Please remember your username and password to your account for future access.

The main parts of a college application are:

Application Forms: To complete all of the parts of the application form, itself, you will most likely need to dig up information from various sources and your parents.

Application Fees: College application fees vary, but generally it costs \$35-\$50 to apply to each college. There are a number of colleges that allow you to apply without paying an application fee. Click [HERE](#) for a list of those colleges and universities. Because STEAM Academy at McCluer South- Berkeley is a Title 1 school, every student qualifies for an NACAC College Application Fee Waiver. While not all post-secondary institutions accept them, a large majority of them do so always consult with your Counselor or College Adviser before paying.

High School Transcript: Your high school transcript is a record of the classes you have taken and the grades you received throughout your time in high school. Your high school transcript should be sent directly to each college you apply to and may only be sent by your high school counselor. Your college will receive 3 versions of your transcript:

Your *initial transcript* will be sent when you first apply to college. Generally, your initial transcript will have your grades from your Freshman - Junior year.

Your *mid-year transcript* will be sent after the 1st semester of your Senior year is completed. Colleges will receive these by the 2nd week of January.

Your *final transcript* will be sent after the 2nd semester of your Senior year is completed. Colleges will receive these by the 2nd week of June.

**ALL TRANSCRIPTS MUST BE REQUESTED THROUGH THE STUDENTS' SCOIR ACCOUNT.
PLEASE REFER TO THE SCOIR GUIDE RESOURCES FOR INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO
REQUEST THAT YOUR TRANSCRIPT BE SENT TO COLLEGES.**

Standardized Test Scores: Your ACT, SAT or TOEFL test scores will need to be sent directly from the testing agency to the college or university of your choice. Visit the testing agency's website for more information.

Letters of Recommendation: Many colleges require letters of recommendation from teachers or other adults who know you well. Ask your references well in advance of the deadlines to write you a recommendation.

ALL LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION MUST BE REQUESTED THROUGH THE STUDENTS' SCOIR ACCOUNT. PLEASE REFER TO THE SCOIR GUIDE RESOURCES FOR INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO REQUEST LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION.

Essays/Personal Statements: Your essays are a chance for you to give admission officers a better idea of your character and strengths.

Auditions and Portfolios: If you are applying to a fine arts program (ie - music, film, photography, theater, art), the college may want to see samples of your work. This means you may need to audition or send portfolios or videos showing your artistic ability as part of your application.

Interviews: It is a good idea to ask for an interview, even if it is not required. It shows that you are serious and gives you a chance to connect with someone in the admissions office.

BASIC APPLICATION ETHICS

Students, when completing your application, remember that you cannot:

- Fabricate or exaggerate activities and accomplishments
- Have someone else write or substantially rewrite your essays
- Fail to disclose disciplinary infractions if asked directly about them on an application form.
- Tell more than one college that it's your first choice
- Mislead a college about your intended major just because you think it might help you get in
- Fail to notify the other colleges that have accepted you when you accept an admission offer

THE COALITION, COMMON, AND UNIVERSAL COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

These are examples of college application services that provide standardized applications which allow you to apply to multiple schools with a single application. Instead of filling out several different applications, you can simply fill out one and submit it to each college.

The [Coalition Application](#) is accepted by more than 90 institutions. The platform includes “The Locker,” a private space for you to collect and organize materials throughout high school that you might want to share with colleges and universities.

The [Common Application](#) is a standardized application used by nearly 700 colleges. Each year, nearly a million students use the Common Application to submit over 4 million applications.

The [Universal College Application](#) is accepted by more than 30 colleges and universities. You can register as an applicant in order to start applying.

Be aware that you may need to submit additional or separate documents to some colleges. You also still need to pay individual application fees for each college.

REQUESTING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

There are two types of recommendations that are requested by colleges and universities: Teacher Recommendations and Counselor Recommendations.

TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Most colleges require at least two formal recommendations from teachers. Since you will want to have the best possible recommendations sent to each college, we suggest that you consider the following in choosing teachers who will write on your behalf:

- How well does the teacher know you? Will he/she write well on your behalf?
- Has the teacher taught you more than once? A teacher who taught you over a two or three year period has seen your talents and personality develop.
- Has the teacher sponsored an extracurricular activity in which you made a contribution?
- Do you get along with the teacher?
- Does the college or university specify that a recommendation must be from a particular subject instructor (ie - a science teacher, an english teacher, etc)?

Also...

- If you declare an intended major, try to choose a teacher in that particular field.
- If possible, choose your Junior or Senior year teachers. They are best able to address your ability to do college level work.
- Try to choose teachers from academic subject areas (ie - Math, English, History, etc)
- If you have a strong commitment and/or leadership role in an activity, community service activity, job, etc., you may want to add a recommendation from the supervisor/moderator in charge.

COUNSELOR RECOMMENDATIONS

This can be written by your STEAM Academy at McCluer South- Berkeley Counselors or College and Career Readiness Specialist. This recommendation is a more personal overview of your high school experience, including:

- Your involvement in the school community
- Your progress as a student, especially specific information about obstacles you have overcome and an explanation about a rough patch you may have gone through personally or academically.
- How you are perceived by your peers and your teachers.
- Any other information about your life as a STEAM Academy student. If you have a specific issue you would like to be discussed, be sure to bring this to your counselor's attention.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

If your applications allow for additional recommendations, it would be beneficial to get them from individuals who have seen you in a non-academic environment (ie - Church workers, job supervisors, community workers). These individuals would be able to speak about your strengths as a well-rounded student with the ability to form a variety of relationships in and outside of the classroom.

After your teachers and counselor have written recommendations for you, be sure to write them a thank you note or email. Remember the time and effort it takes to write letters on students' behalf.

ALL LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION MUST BE REQUESTED THROUGH THE STUDENTS' SCOIR ACCOUNT. PLEASE REFER TO THE SCOIR GUIDE RESOURCES FOR INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO REQUEST LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION.

WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT (ESSAY)

The college application provides an overview of who you are as a student: the classes you took, the grades you earned and the activities you participated in. Then there are test scores and recommendations to help round out the picture. The personal statement is your opportunity to get personal - to transform your academic history and statistics into a real story of who you are.

What should I talk about? In the words of Flannery O'Connor, "Anybody who has survived his childhood has enough information about life to last him the rest of his life. If you can't make something out of a little experience, you probably won't be able to make it out of a lot." Here's your opportunity to take a look at your life and examine your accomplishments, your struggles, your adventures, your successes and your failures. No one knows better than you the key experiences in your life that have transformed you into the person you are today.

Get your personal statement edited and reviewed. Use your English teachers and counselors as a resource to help you with your essays. A good personal statement doesn't appear overnight. With hard work, multiple drafts, and an open mind, you can create a strong piece of writing that reflects you well.

And don't forget...

College admissions officers read essays as part of their everyday job. They have strong experience in reading and reviewing pieces written by high school students from all over the world and they are able to recognize when an essay was not written by a high school student. While receiving support and assistance from others, be sure that your essay is written by you in your own words.

Click [HERE](#) for additional information on how to write your personal statement.

COLLEGE APPLICATION DECISION LETTERS (ACCEPTED, WAITLISTED, DEFERRED, REJECTED)

After you have submitted your college applications, you should begin receiving decision letters within a few weeks. No matter what the outcome, your work is still not done and there is still plenty that needs to be done!

IF YOU ARE ACCEPTED:

If you were a regular decision applicant, you have until May 1st to notify colleges if you will be enrolling. Up until that time, do the following:

- Learn even more about the schools that accepted you by visiting their campus one last time. Talk to real students, visit the dorms and cafeteria, and find out about key academic programs and campus activities.
- Compare financial aid packages to see which one makes the most sense for you and your family.
- Talk to your academic and college counselor and ask them for their help with making a decision.
- If you plan to defer your acceptance for a year to work, travel or volunteer, make sure you've done your research. Talk to the admissions office about what it needs from you to consider your gap year request and be sure to ask about any financial aid implications.
- Notify colleges of your decision, and send in your deposit by the deadline.
- Don't slack off in school! Colleges expect you to keep your grades up all throughout senior year.

IF YOU ARE WAITLISTED:

If you land on a school's waitlist, you'll need to decide whether you will pursue or decline the waitlist invitation plus make plans to attend another college. Follow these tips to make sure you're covered.

- Quickly respond to let the school know whether you will accept or decline your position on the [waitlist](#).
- If you accept,
 - Send a follow-up letter to let the school know why you would be excited to attend and the reasons why their college is still the best-fit school for you.
 - Stay focused on your grades and preparing for final exams.
 - Request an interview, so you can reiterate your commitment to the school.

- If you decline, reevaluate the rest of your list. What schools do you need to learn more about? Which schools can you still visit?
- No matter what, get excited about the schools that accepted you. Decide which college fits you best and send in your deposit. If you do get off another college's waitlist (and accept!), you'll forfeit your deposit.

IF YOU ARE DEFERRED:

If you applied early decision or early action, you may receive a notification that your application has been deferred to the regular admission pool. This can happen if a college decides they need more information (like senior year grades or test scores) before making their final decision. Here are your priorities:

- Work hard to keep your grades up.
- If you plan to submit new SAT/ACT scores, prep thoroughly.
- Keep in touch with the admissions committee, and make sure you're sending them the information they need to evaluate your application.
- Keep up your college search! Craft a list of dream, match, and safety schools —any of which is a great fit for your specific personality and interests. Work with your college counselor to stay on top of application deadlines.

IF YOU ARE REJECTED:

If you didn't get the news you were hoping for, it's okay (and normal!) to feel disappointed. But don't dwell too long! There are still some proactive things you can do to find your best-fit college.

- Focus on the schools that said "yes"! It's time to visit or research in more depth the schools that accepted you. Sometimes your dream school has been on your mind for so long, that it can overshadow the rest of your options. There are bound to be plenty of new-to-you programs, internship opportunities, and other on-campus gems to get excited about!
- Stay positive! You might feel tempted to take a year off from academics altogether and apply to your first-choice school again next year. We caution against this route! It is easier to transfer to the school of your choice from a less prestigious school than to start again from scratch (even if you spend your year off doing something productive and character-building).
- Lean on your college counselor. Your counselor is a pro at helping students compare schools and decide which offer of admission—and financial aid package—to accept.

APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID

To apply for most financial aid — including federal and state student grants, work-study, and loans — you'll need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Although this financial aid form may seem complex, there are many free resources to help you. And completing the form is easier than it used to be, thanks to the new IRS Data Retrieval Tool.

Where to Find the FAFSA

The FAFSA is available online at [FAFSA on the Web](#). If you need a paper copy, you can download a PDF at www.studentaid.ed.gov/PDFfafsa or call 800-4-FED-AID (433-3243).

Before You Apply

Complete your income tax return. When completing your FAFSA, you and your family will be able to use your completed tax returns from the previous year. You can transfer your income data directly from the IRS website to your FAFSA, making it easier to accurately complete the FAFSA.

Be sure to complete your FAFSA soon after it becomes available on Oct. 1. Filling out your FAFSA as early as possible can help you get a jump on other financial aid applications (state or institutional aid) that may have early deadlines. It also will give you more information earlier about the financial aid you qualify for and will help you make an informed decision about which college is the best financial fit for you.

If you plan to attend college from	You will submit this FAFSA	The FAFSA is available	Use income and tax information
August, 2022- June 2023	2022-2023	October 1, 2021	2020
August 2023- June 2024	2023-2024	October 1, 2022	2021

Create An FSA ID

When you start your FAFSA on the web application, you will set up your account by creating a user ID and password. These will become your online identifiers for all federal student aid programs. You will need to provide your own email address and password. (Parents will create

their own account using a different email address and password). Set up your user ID and password before you start your FAFSA.

Completing Your Application

You will need the following documents to complete your FAFSA application:

- Social Security Number
- Alien Registration Number (if you are not a US citizen)
- Your federal income tax returns, W-2s, and other records of money earned
- Bank statements and records of investments
- Records of untaxed income
- An FSA ID

The New IRS Data Retrieval Tool

You can save time and effort if you qualify to use the [IRS Data Retrieval Tool](#). It will transfer your income tax data directly from the IRS to your online FAFSA.

You and your parents may be eligible to use this tool if:

- Your family income tax returns were filed electronically at least two weeks before you complete the FAFSA.
- Your family income tax returns were mailed to the IRS at least eight weeks before you complete the FAFSA.

If you are eligible to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool and choose to do so, you'll be transferred from the online FAFSA to the IRS website, which will guide you through the transfer of your tax information. When you're done, you'll be sent back to your FAFSA.

You don't have to use this tool, but it's recommended that you do. If you have to complete the FAFSA using estimated income tax information, you can always return to FAFSA on the Web to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool once you have filed your tax forms.

What Happens After You Apply

Once you submit the FAFSA, your family's financial information is analyzed using the federal need formula.

The Student Aid Report (SAR)

After the information you provided is analyzed, you will receive a SAR that contains the data you entered on the FAFSA. The U.S. Department of Education will send this form to you either by email or by postal mail.

Review the SAR carefully for errors (the form highlights items that may need attention) and follow directions for making and submitting corrections. Submit corrections promptly. Make sure to keep a copy of the SAR for your records.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC)

On the front page of the SAR, you'll find a figure called the expected family contribution (EFC). Your EFC is an indicator of your family's financial strength. It is sent to your state scholarship

agency as well as to the colleges you listed on the FAFSA. They use this number to determine your financial aid award.

Other Financial Aid Forms

After you complete the FAFSA, make sure you submit any additional financial aid forms that your colleges require. For example, some colleges require you to submit the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE® or their own forms.

TYPES OF AID

GRANTS	WORK-STUDY	LOANS
<p>Grants are often referred to as “gift aid” because they are free money - financial aid that does not have to be repaid. Grants are often need-based, which differs from scholarships, which are normally merit-based. Grants can come from the federal government, your state government, or a private non-profit organization.</p>	<p>Federal work-study provides part-time jobs for undergraduate and graduate students with financial need, allowing them to earn money to help pay for education expenses.</p>	<p>If you apply for financial aid, you may be offered loans as part of your school’s financial aid offer. A loan is money you borrow and must pay back with interest. If you decide to take out a loan make sure you understand who is making the loan and the terms and conditions of the loan.</p>

SEARCHING AND APPLYING FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

Although most student aid comes in the form of federal loans and grants from colleges, almost **\$3 billion in scholarships is available annually** — that's free money for college. Given the number of organizations offering scholarships and the sheer variety of criteria on which these awards are based, motivated students can find and apply for scholarships tailor-made for their skills and interests. Help your students find, apply for and win scholarship money.

Work from the inside out

Students and their families can easily get overwhelmed by the number of scholarship options they find online or in the library. So before looking at what's available, students should first think about who they are and where they're headed.

This personal inventory should include the obvious information such as year in school, citizenship, state of residence, religion, ethnic background, disability, military status, employer (and parents' employers) and membership organizations.

Then encourage your students to dig deeper. Have them write down academic interests, extracurricular activities and career interests. Answering these questions specifically will point your students toward the opportunities that are right for them — and save time and wasted effort by eliminating programs that are not a good fit.

Where to look

School counseling department — The STEAM Academy Counseling Department will keep track of information regarding all local scholarships. Visit the Counseling Department for more information.

Online — Finding scholarships is fast and free on the right websites, like [Scholarship Search](#). Students should be cautioned to never pay for scholarship information.

Student Search Service® (SSS®) — STEAM Academy annually offers the PSAT/NMSQT for Junior students. For students who take the PSAT/NMSQT® or the SAT®, SSS is a terrific, free way to receive information about scholarships. When students opt in to SSS, they'll receive information from colleges looking for prospective students with their profile. The PSAT/NMSQT is the gateway to some of the most prestigious national scholarships available, such as the National Merit Scholarships. In addition, students whose scores or personal characteristics make them attractive to certain colleges may receive information about scholarships sponsored by those colleges.

Colleges — The majority of all scholarship money is disbursed by colleges, so students should look into what scholarships are available at the institutions that interest them. Check out college websites or catalogs and financial aid offices. These awards can be offered on a university-wide basis, or within a particular college or major. Eligibility can be based on a variety of factors including merit, financial need, intended major and ethnicity.

Organizations — Groups of all types and sizes sponsor scholarships, so students should search scholarships for any characteristic that applies to them or their families: religion, community service, fraternal organizations, military, union membership or professional field.

Employers — Many large companies offer scholarships or tuition programs for children of employees. Student employers such as fast food chains, department stores and supermarkets often give scholarships.

CHOOSING A COLLEGE WITH RESOURCE AND LEARNING SERVICES

While the general information presented in this guide is valuable for all students, there are issues specific to students with special needs that should also be addressed. Neither student transcripts nor standardized test scores indicate that a student has received support services in school or has used test accommodations. Colleges will know about your learning challenges and special needs only if you choose to release that information.

In general, there are three levels of service on the college level:

Structured Programs: These schools have specific programs for students with learning challenges. They are typically characterized by special admission procedures, specialized and trained professions, compensatory strategies, one-on-one tutoring, additional fees, and compulsory attendance and monitoring.

Coordinated Services: These schools may have some coordination with admission decisions and while they provide more than mandated services, participation is typically voluntary and not all services will necessarily be provided by people specially trained in the area of special needs.

Basic Services: All colleges are required to provide basic services to comply with section 504 mandates. Participation is voluntary and those providing services are rarely trained in the area of special needs. Strong self-advocacy is a must for the student.

When students move from high school to college, their services and test accommodations do not automatically continue. Colleges will make their own determination regarding these issues and typically will require a current (within three years) complete psycho-educational evaluation in order to make those determinations.

When visiting colleges, students with special needs should plan enough time on campus to adequately investigate the program and services provided. This should include seeing the area where services are provided and ideally meeting key staff members who the student would actually be working with.

STUDENT ATHLETES

Students who play sports in high school may want to continue these activities in college. Although the playing field shifts somewhat with progression to collegiate-level sports, many young people continue to participate in organized sports.

Levels Of Play

The [National Collegiate Athletic Association \(NCAA\)](#) regulates college athletes in three different divisions: Division I, Division II, Division III. Larger colleges typically participate as Division I schools, and smaller schools fall into the Division II or III categories. Division I and II colleges can offer students athletic scholarships, but Division III colleges cannot. The NCAA has specific eligibility requirements for student athletes:

- Students must have graduated from high school
- Students must complete a minimum number of academic courses
- Students must maintain a minimum grade point average
- Students must meet minimum test scores for the ACT or SAT

Click [HERE](#) for a complete list of NCAA eligibility requirements.

Student athletes participating in NCAA sports can expect to spend a significant amount of time practicing. The times can vary depending on the division and the type of sport, but athletes can spend up to 20 hours a week practicing during the in-season. Click [HERE](#) for more information about the NCAA.

The [National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics \(NAIA\)](#) is another college sports association. Generally, colleges participating in NAIA are smaller than NCAA colleges. The NAIA divides colleges into two different divisions, and it offers 13 different sports. Division I or the NAIA compares to Division II or the NCAA and Division II or the NAIA compares to Division III or the NAIA. The NAIA offers scholarships for student athletes.

Additional college sports associations include the National Junior College Athletic Association, the National Christian College Athletic Association, the United States Collegiate Athletic Association, and various independent conferences. Each association has specific requirements for eligibility, and schools participate in different associations depending on size and other criteria.