

## **FRESHMAN CHECKLIST**

- ❑ **Take the right courses.**  
*Talk to your counselor or adviser to make sure you are taking the right courses for your desired college plan.*
- ❑ **Challenge yourself.**  
*Colleges look at the rigor of your courses in addition to your grades so sign up for tough classes. More rigorous courses will also better prepare you for the SAT/ACT and college coursework.*
- ❑ **Get off to a strong start.**  
*All your freshman courses and grades will be on your transcript that you send to colleges, so do your best to get off to a good start academically.*
- ❑ **Explore career options.**  
*Continue thinking about your interests and what career fields might match up with them. What kind of postsecondary education or training is required? How many years of training or college will you need?*
- ❑ **Research colleges.**  
*Look for information about colleges that fit with your career interests. Check out college websites and visit your campus College and Career Center. Your post-secondary options include two-year schools, technical schools, certificate programs, and universities. Consider all your options and make the choice that is right for you.*
- ❑ **Create a college admissions plan.**  
*Talk to your parents, counselors, teachers and advisers about creating a college admissions plan and set goals for yourself every semester throughout high school.*
- ❑ **Get involved.**  
*Participate in activities in which you're interested whether it's sports, clubs, community service, church, etc... Colleges look for well-rounded students so it is important to show you are involved in activities outside of the classroom.*
- ❑ **Start a brag sheet.**  
*Include a list of your activities, community service projects, accomplishments and awards so you can refer to it when you fill out college applications.*
- ❑ **Consider taking the PSAT.**  
*Talk with your counselor about registering to take the PSAT for practice.*
- ❑ **Sign up for summer programs.**  
*Apply to participate in summer enrichment programs, camps, internships and/or youth leadership programs. You'll meet new people who might be able to help prepare you for college.*
- ❑ **Start a college savings account**

## **SOPHOMORE CHECKLIST**

- ❑ **Talk about your goals.**  
*The more people you tell, the more support you will have to help you reach your college and career goals.*
- ❑ **Do well in school.**  
*Continue taking challenging courses and keep your grades up. If a course is difficult, seek help from a teacher or a tutor,*
- ❑ **Read as much as possible.**  
*Reading will build your vocabulary and help prepare you for standardized tests.*
- ❑ **Start a college search file.**  
*Include testing information, your brag sheet, letters of recommendation and report cards as well as college brochures and literature.*
- ❑ **Attend college and career fairs.**  
*Meet with college representatives, ask questions and gather information.*
- ❑ **Visit college campuses.**  
*Find out when admissions tours are offered and visit those colleges that interest you. Visiting schools will help you determine whether the size, location, and personality are right for you.*
- ❑ **Stay involved.**  
*Keep active in extracurricular activities and begin thinking about in which activities you might want to take a leadership role.*
- ❑ **Sign up for the PSAT.**  
*GPISD offers the PSAT to all sophomores free of cost.*
- ❑ **Sign up for summer programs.**
- ❑ *Apply to participate in summer enrichment programs, camps, internships and/or youth leadership programs. You'll meet new people who might be able to help prepare you for college.*
- ❑ **Gather recommendations.**  
*Ask your employer or camp counselor for a letter of recommendation that you can include when you apply for college. Keep in touch with teachers who have had an impact on your education.*
- ❑ **Save, save, save!**  
*Continue putting money away from college and investing in your college plan.*
- ❑ **Seek out scholarships.**  
*Fill out as many scholarship applications as possible and submit them by required deadlines.*
- ❑ **Consider getting a job.**  
*Not only is this a great way to add to your savings, but it can be a great source for references and recommendations. It's also another activity to add to your brag sheet.*

## **JUNIOR CHECKLIST**

- ❑ Visit your College and Career Center  
*Meet with your counselor to discuss colleges, find resources, and ask about upcoming college events and opportunities.*
- ❑ Make sure you're on track.  
*Familiarize yourself with the college entrance standards and make sure you're on track academically with good grades and the right courses to meet your post-secondary goals.*
- ❑ Earn college credit.  
*Start earning credit through AP courses, Dual Credit courses, and/or Tech Prep courses.*
- ❑ Narrow your list of colleges.  
*Develop a list of 5-10 colleges that interest you. Explore each school's website to find information on academics, financial aid and admission requirements.*
- ❑ Attend college events.  
*Go to local college nights, college fairs and other informational events.*
- ❑ Visit college campuses.
  - ❑ Find out when admissions tours are offered and visit those colleges that interest you. Visiting schools will help you determine whether the size, location, and personality are right for you.
- ❑ Stay involved.  
*Continue your extracurricular activities and take on leadership roles. And continue updating your brag sheet!*
- ❑ Add to your college file.  
*Add copies of test scores, application forms, draft essays and any other relevant paperwork to your file.*
- ❑ Take practice tests.  
*Use your PSAT score report to create a study plan for improving your scores. Look for SAT/ACT prep materials, prep classes, or other free online resources.*
- ❑ Create a professional email.  
*If you don't have one already, set up a professional email address that can be used for all your online college-related accounts and get in the habit of checking it regularly.*
- ❑ Take the PSAT.  
*Make sure you sign up to take the PSAT in October. This may qualify you for several scholarships including National Merit Scholar. It's also great practice for the SAT.*
- ❑ Sign up to take the SAT/ACT.  
*Register for spring test administrations.*
- ❑ Download applications.  
*Begin downloading and familiarizing yourself with applications from those colleges to which you plan to apply.*
- ❑ Start your college essays.  
*Begin drafting your essays for your college applications and have someone review them.*
- ❑ Sign up for summer programs.  
*Apply to summer enrichment programs, internships, and/or leadership programs.*
- ❑ Study up on financial aid and seek out scholarships.  
*Continue researching the different types of financial aid available and go through it with your parents. Have a conversation with them about it. Fill out as many scholarship applications as possible and submit them by required deadlines.*
- ❑ Download a sample Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA.)  
*Review the FAFSA with your parents to become familiar with the information you will need when you complete it your senior year.*
- ❑ Continue saving for college.

## SENIOR CHECKLIST

- ❑ Review your class schedule.  
*Ensure you meet all of the necessary college requirements. Continue taking rigorous classes and keep your grades up.*
- ❑ Create a master calendar.  
*Keep a calendar of dates such as test dates and registration dates, college application deadlines, financial aid deadlines, scholarship and grant deadlines, and any other important dates*
- ❑ Attend college events and visit college campuses.  
*By now, you should narrow your list of colleges to between three and five. Visit the colleges that interest you and try to sit in on a class and talk to current students.*
- ❑ Stay involved in your activities.  
*Continue pursuing leadership roles and consider projects or challenges you want to take on to make you stand out as an applicant. Continue to update your brag sheet with your activities and leadership roles.*
- ❑ Start your college applications early.  
*Get started early, especially if you are applying early decision.*
- ❑ Edit/proof your college essay.  
*Ask a teacher, parent, counselor or a college advisor to review your college essays and provide feedback and edits.*
- ❑ Take the SAT or ACT.  
*Take the exams in fall/early winter. Don't forget to ask for your scores to be sent to the colleges to which you are applying. Find out if there are any additional tests you need to take by checking the colleges' websites.*
- ❑ Research CLEP and/or AP exams.  
*These tests give you the opportunity to earn college credit by exam. Make sure to check with your target schools first to see which test scores they will accept for college credit.*
- ❑ Secure recommendation letters.  
*Ask people who are familiar with you to write letters of recommendation. Make sure to give them plenty of advance notice in order to meet the college application deadlines.*
- ❑ Pay attention to deadlines.  
*Be sure to submit college applications by the required deadline and keep copies of all your application materials.*
- ❑ Check your application status.  
*Check the status after you submit your application to ensure the college received all of your materials on time.*
- ❑ Take the THEA or Accuplacer, if necessary.  
*Find out whether you need to sign up for one of these tests to satisfy the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) and register if necessary.*
- ❑ Submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA.)  
*Complete and submit your FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1 (as soon as your parents' tax information has been submitted to the IRS. The sooner you submit, the better your chances of receiving aid.*
- ❑ Talk to a financial aid counselor.  
*Review and compare financial aid award letters. Learn how to use your college savings and scholarships to reduce your college loan amounts.*
- ❑ Mail your final grades/official transcript.