De-stressing the College Application Process

Junior Program
Feb. 2013
Determine selected pathway

- Four year college or university – 78%
- Two year colleges – 17%
- Military/Work – 1%
- Other Educational Plans – 2%
Major Preliminary Considerations

- Have a serious conversation with your students regarding finances and any other factors which will impact college selection

- Major considerations
  - Size
  - Location
  - Curriculum
  - COST!
Research Options

- College Resources available through:
  - School Counselor
  - College & Career Center
    - Family Connection
    - College Board
    - College Handbooks
      - College Board
      - Peterson’s
      - Fiske
  - College Fair – NOVA Regional on April 18 (Patriot Center)
  - College Fair – FCPS in October (Fair Oaks Mall)
  - College Rep Visits to Oakton
Research Options cont.

- Campus Visits
- Take formal campus tours (set-up in advance)
- Informal visits – “Can I see myself here?”
  - Visit classes, visit the library, check on computer access and availability, eat in the cafeteria, spend a night in a dorm, talk with current students, read bulletin boards, school newspaper, etc.
Admissions Options

- Make sure you are familiar with these Admissions Options
  - Early Decision
  - Early Action
  - Rolling Admission
  - Regular Admission
  - Open Admission
Begin to Formalize List of Schools

- Narrow list of schools of interest to a reasonable number
  - “Safety” Schools
  - “Comfort Zone” Schools
  - “Reach” Schools
The Application Process

- Prior to senior year, gather all materials needed to complete applications
  - High school grades
  - List of senior year courses
  - Resume/list of extracurricular activities – will be an assignment later this year in your English class
  - SAT/SAT Subject Tests/ACT/TOEFL scores
  - Ideas for essays/personal statements
  - List of possible recommenders
The Application

- College applications usually come online sometime in early to late August – most schools prefer or only accept online applications.
- Students can begin to fill in the identifying information and save the application for completion at a later date.
The Essay or Personal Statement

- Most schools require/request some form of writing (essay or personal statement) as part of the application. Emphasis should be on “what you learned, not what you did.”
- Students can begin to compose their rough draft once the applications are available.
- Senior English classes will work on one essay as a class assignment.
- Students are encouraged to have others edit/critique their work.
Transcript Requests

- Students will learn how to request transcripts during the Senior Program to be held in early September.
Secondary School Reports

- Many schools have a Secondary School Report (sometimes called Counselor Report) as part of the application. Oakton does not use the individual school reports. We have our own which we automatically send with your transcript.
Resumes

- It is recommended that all students compose a resume to include with their application and their request for letters of recommendation. This can be done on Family Connection. This will be an English assignment later this Spring.
Letters of Recommendation

- The need for letters of recommendation vary by school.
- Many will ask for a counselor recommendation.
- If a teacher recommendation is requested, it is usually suggested that the teacher be from a junior or senior year core class (English, Science, Math, Social Studies, or Foreign Language).
- Others recommendations may be included for specific fields (Fine/Performing Arts, Business, etc.).
- Student will be given more information at the Senior Program in September.
It is the student’s responsibility to have their standardized test scores sent to the colleges.

Colleges and universities report that they will accept either the SAT or the ACT – they will take into consideration whichever score puts the student into the best light.

Students may still take these tests during the fall of their senior year.

Not all schools require SAT Subject Tests.

See your counselor for more information on the TOEFL.
SAT vs ACT

**SAT**

- 10 sections:
  - 3 Critical Reading
  - 3 Math
  - 3 Writing sections
  - 1 Experimental (masked)

- Score 200-800 on each section (and subscores for writing)

- 3 hours and 45 minutes of testing

**ACT**

- 5 tests:
  - English
  - Math
  - Reading
  - Science Reasoning
  - Writing (optional but recommended!)

- Score 1-36 on each test with subscores for writing that count towards English/Writing score

- About 3 hours and 30 minutes
SAT and ACT Registration

The earlier you sign up, the better chance that you will get a spot close to OHS for the SAT!!

Sign-up online at:

SAT
www.collegeboard.com

ACT
www.actstudent.org
Testing Timeline

- Review your PSAT scores
- Plan for SAT or ACT testing during spring of this year
  - SAT – March, May and June
  - ACT – April and June
- Consider SAT Subject Tests in June
- Prepare for AP Exams
What are colleges really looking at?

- The college representatives report that these are their priorities when reviewing your student’s application packet.
  - Course selection and rigor
  - Grades
  - Test Scores
  - Recommendations
  - Extracurricular Activities
    - Athletics
    - Clubs
    - Community Service
    - Work Experience
  - Leadership Position
  - Honors/Awards
The “X” Factor(s)

- What special talents might influence an admissions decision?
  - Athletic talent
  - Fine/Performing Arts talent
- Personal relationship with institution
  - Legacy
  - Demonstrated Interest
- These factors may outweigh “academic” criteria.
Financial Aid

- All families are encouraged to complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) during their students’ senior year.
- The FAFSA may not be completed until January, 2014 for your class.
- We will host a Financial Aid Night in December to make parents more familiar with the types of aid available and how to complete the FAFSA.
Scholarships

- All students are encouraged to seek scholarships.
- Scholarship information is posted on the Family Connection site.
- Information on scholarships is also available on the Career Center website.
Questions?????