



# COLLEGE PLANNING PACKET

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## Class of 2024: Welcome to the College Planning Process!

The junior and senior years of high school require a decision from you that will probably be one of the most important of your lifetime: choosing a form of higher education and making post-secondary plans. Your college choice often impacts many other life choices – lifestyle, values, and occupation– and you should be thoughtful and strategic about this decision.

We recognize that each student begins the college process at a different place, and as your counselor, we hope to meet you where you are. We hope that you will take the lead in researching and applying to colleges, and we will work to support you through every step of the way.

In this packet, you will find a number of resources designed to help you stay on track and be prepared throughout the college application process. However, you are bound to have questions that are not covered in this guide that are more specific to you, your career and

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college choices. Strive to become your best advocate and be sure to seek out your counselor to let us know how we can best support you. You should also feel comfortable talking to the admissions office.

We look forward to working with you and your family during this exciting time. Best of luck!

## Class of 2024 School Counselor Assignments

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## College Planning Timeline for Juniors

### Winter

- Make an appointment with your school counselor for your Junior Conference. Finalize a testing plan for the SAT / ACT test.

### Spring

- Fill out your student profile sheet. Your counselor will write a letter of recommendation, upon request.
- Visit schools that you are interested in. Take a tour, go to an informational meeting, sit in on a class, and try to get a feel for what it would be like to go to that school. If you visit a school you are very interested in, consider making an appointment for an on-campus interview, if available.
- Decide what teachers you would like to write your recommendation letters and ask them if they can do that for you. Typically, students ask two academic teachers to write.

### Useful Links

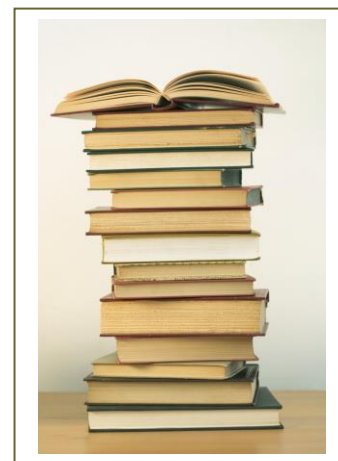
- [www.connection.naviance.com](http://www.connection.naviance.com)
- [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)
- [www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com) – search tool
- [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)
- [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)
- [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) – scholarships
- [www.goingmerry.com](http://www.goingmerry.com) – scholarships
- [www.unitedway.org](http://www.unitedway.org) – community service opportunities
- [www.pheaa.org](http://www.pheaa.org) – financial aid information
- [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org) – financial aid information
- [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org) – college athletes
- [www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org](http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org)

### Summer

- If you know the essay prompt for any of your applications, write a draft of your college essay.
- Compile your resume, audition portfolio or other evidence of your talents for college admissions or scholarship applications.
- Continue to visit schools. Set up on-campus interviews, if applicable.
- Narrow your list of potential college choices. Begin to research scholarship opportunities. Make a Common Application account on [commonapp.org](http://commonapp.org) and fill it out. The application should be available August 1st.

### Looking Ahead...

- Many colleges have Early Decision (ED) or Early Action (EA) deadlines on **November 1<sup>st</sup>**, **November 15**, and **December 1<sup>st</sup>**. \*\*Check with each individual school for accurate deadlines\*\*
- Many colleges have Regular Decision (RD) deadlines on **January 1<sup>st</sup>**, **January 15<sup>th</sup>** and **February 1<sup>st</sup>**. \*\*Check with each individual school for accurate deadlines\*\*
- Students can apply for financial aid by filling out the FAFSA form beginning **October 1<sup>st</sup>**.



## ACT vs. SAT: Which One Should I Take?

<u>ACT</u>		<u>SAT</u>
Four required separate sections – Reading, English, Math, Scientific Reasoning; one <b>optional</b> section – Writing with an essay	<b>CONTENT</b>	Three parts –Reading, Math & Writing; essay is optional
Four separate sections ranging from 35 – 60 minutes, each subject area is completed before moving on to the next content area; 30 minute essay section at end of test	<b>FORMAT</b>	Reading – 65 minutes, 52 questions; Math: 80 minutes, 58 questions; Writing & Language – 35 minutes, 44 questions; Optional Essay – 50 minutes
Each subtest scored 1 – 36; composite score also 1 – 36 (not a strict average of the four sections)	<b>SCORING</b>	Each section scored 200 – 800; both sections included in overall score for a maximum possible total 1600
ACT (No Writing): \$60 (Fee Waivers are available for eligible students)	<b>COST</b>	\$50 for test (Fee waivers are available for eligible students)
Four scores can be sent to colleges along with registration fee; \$13 per school after fourth selection; students not obligated to send scores anywhere, but will pay an additional fee if sending scores after testing (\$13 – \$16.50 per score per school)	<b>SENDING SCORES</b>	Four scores can be sent to colleges along with registration fee; \$12 per school after fourth selection; students not obligated to send scores anywhere, but will pay an additional fee if sending scores after testing (\$12 per school)
Each individual ACT test is independent and must be sent separately to schools – scores do not accumulate on test record	<b>TEST RECORD</b>	Each individual SAT test is independent and must be sent separately to schools – scores do not accumulate on test record
Every four year school in the US accepts the ACT (with the exception of the Webb Institute in NY)	<b>SCORE ACCEPTANCE</b>	Accepted by all four–year colleges in the US – preferred by schools outside the US
No penalty for incorrect answers – blank and incorrect responses incur the same “points off”	<b>TEST STRATEGY</b>	No penalty for guessing
Six times per year	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	Seven times per year
<a href="http://www.actstudent.org">www.actstudent.org</a>	<b>REGISTER</b>	<a href="http://www.collegeboard.org">www.collegeboard.org</a>

## Getting the Most Out of a College Visit

Being on a college campus, even for a few hours, can tell you a lot about the college and how well you might fit in at that institution. Below are some tips for how to get the most out of visiting college campuses.

### Things to Consider Before You Visit:

- While it is tempting to visit only the most prestigious schools on your list, you should make sure you visit colleges that are within the realm of possibility for you.
- Good times to visit:
  - Any school breaks you may have during 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade
  - Summer before senior year – remember that campuses may not seem lively over the summer because the student body is not there. Try not to let this sway your opinion.
- Visit the admissions office website to look at different opportunities for prospective students.

### Things to Do During Your Visit

- **Campus Tours**
- **Information Sessions**
- **Meeting with an Academic Department or Professor**  
If you have specific questions about the opportunities in a specific major, use this occasion to try to meet with someone in the department. Be sure to arrange this in advance.
- **Meeting with a Financial Aid Counselor**  
If you will be applying for financial aid, this is your opportunity to ask about grants, scholarships and student loans. Pick up any forms or applications you may need to apply for aid.
- **On-Campus Interviews**  
If you are visiting a school that offers interviews and you are very interested in the school, make an appointment before you get to campus for an interview. Be prepared to sell yourself as a successful candidate for admission. Also prepare some school-specific questions for your interviewer.

### Making the Most of Your Visit:

- **Don't get too emotionally involved with your tour guide.**  
These students love their college and are trained by the admissions office to be honest, but to say positive things about the school. Their view may not be the most objective.
- **Pay close attention and ask questions of the tour guide.**  
Why did you choose College X? What do you like best about the college? What do you like least? What courses have you enjoyed the most and why? What are the big issues on campus right now?
- **Things to consider and observe while you are on tour:**  
The appearance of campus; student dress – casual or sophisticated; friendliness of the community; hot topics – pick up a student newspaper to see what's happening on campus; how are students getting around campus; library; residential options; amenities; food.
- **If there is something you want to see that wasn't on the official tour, ask your guide if you can see it!**

## Campus Visit Worksheet

College: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State: \_\_\_\_\_

### Campus

Are the facilities up to date and operating?

Notes:

Is the campus safe?

Is the library good for studying and research?

Is there a student health facility?

What is the surrounding city or town like?

### Academics

What is the average class size?

Notes:

What is the most popular major or classes?

Are there Teaching Assistants (TA)?

What academic supports are available?

### Student Life

Diversity

Notes:

Clubs/Organizations

Dorms

Dining

Athletics/School Spirit

Social/Greek Life

### Overall Impressions

## Essay Writing Tips

Most college applications ask for a personal statement, giving you a chance to share something about you, your life experience or your personality with the admissions office. Take advantage of this opportunity to let the college learn something new about you!

### 2022–2023 Common Application Essay Prompts

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma – anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on a topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

### *Be Yourself and Start Early!*

- **Get started by brainstorming** – identify your strengths and important aspects of your life experience.
- **Be honest.** Your essay topic should be something that was important to you and showcases your voice.
- **Develop three essay parts:** introduction, body and conclusion. Ask someone to read your introduction to see if they can identify what the subject of your essay is.
- **Be specific** – go deep instead of going broad by focusing on one aspect of yourself.
- **Show, don't tell** – Including specific details, examples and reasons will help bring your essay to life for the reader, showcasing your personality.
- **Get feedback** – but not too much. Try to limit yourself to getting feedback from two people.
- **Proofread and make corrections.** Don't rely on a computer's spellcheck to catch errors. Ask a teacher, counselor or parent to look over your essay with a fresh set of eyes before submitting.

## College Planning Timeline for Seniors

### September

- Use a planner to keep track of college-related dates (see Tracking Worksheet)
- Meet with your school counselor for your senior conference to finalize your list of colleges.
- Go back to the teachers you asked to write your letters of recommendation for you. Give them any materials they need and let them know of any early application due dates.
- Review the list of college reps visiting EHS on Naviance. Sign up to attend any sessions with colleges that you are likely applying to.
- Visit college campuses, if you have not already been there.
- Register for the fall SAT or ACT if you would like to improve your scores.
- Begin to fill out admissions applications.
- Continue to work on your application essays.
- Attend College Application Night at EHS for a thorough explanation of the application process.

### October/November

- Continue to visit your potential colleges, if possible.
- Continue to meet with college reps at EHS.
- Also consider attending a college fair.
- Prepare final drafts of your application essay. Visit the Writing Center for help with editing. Take the SAT or ACT, if applicable.
- Check all application deadlines and submit your materials on time. Use the College–
- Application Tracking Worksheet to stay organized.
- Request transcripts on Naviance at least 10 days prior to any application deadlines. For November 1<sup>st</sup> deadlines, requests must be made by October 15<sup>th</sup>. For November 15<sup>th</sup> deadlines, requests must be made by November 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Follow up to make sure all early action or early decision application materials have been received.

- Remind teachers writing your letter of recommendation of early deadlines for applications, if applicable.
- Be sure to include any required fees with your applications. If you think you might be eligible for a fee waiver, see your counselor.
- Make copies of all documents you send through the mail or submit online. Keep organized files.

### December

- Take the SAT or ACT, if applicable.
- Remind teachers of the deadlines for submitting your college recommendations for regular admission.
- Request transcripts for any regular decision applications. For January 1<sup>st</sup> deadlines, requests must be made by December 1<sup>st</sup>.

### January/February

- Continue to meet application deadlines.
- Confirm that all your application materials have been received by each school.
- Write thank you notes to the teachers who wrote recommendations on your behalf.

### April

- Maintain organized files of all admissions correspondence that you receive.
- Make sure that you accept an offer of admission before May 1<sup>st</sup>, and send in any required deposits and paperwork.

### May/June

- Take AP exams, if applicable, and request that your scores be sent to the college that you will be attending.
- Make sure your counselor sends your final transcript to your selected college. Graduate!

## College Application Tracking Worksheet

<b>Name of College</b>				
<b>Preparing</b>				
Decision Type (ED/EA/Regular/Rolling)				
Application deadline				
Institutional financial aid deadline				
# of letters of recommendation required				
Type of Application (CA? Electronic?)				
Supplemental Materials? List items.				
Tests Required: SAT? ACT? SAT II?				
Interview Required?				
<b>Applying</b>				
Requested letters of recommendation				
Requested SAT or ACT scores to be sent				
Requested high school transcript to be sent				
Filled out, signed and submitted application forms				
Filled out signed and sent ED agreement (if applicable)				
Sent supplemental materials, if needed				
Sent application fee or fee waiver				
Scheduled interview (if applicable)				
Verified receipt of all materials				
Completed institutional financial aid app.				
Requested 1 <sup>st</sup> quarter grades to be sent (if applicable)				
<b>Accepting</b>				
Received admissions notification letter - Let your Counselor know				
Received financial aid letter (if applicable)				
Accepted offer of admission with deposit				
Requested final transcript to be sent				



## Quick Guide to Application Plans

There are a number of different admissions plans that colleges and universities offer to students. The type of plan offered can impact the timing of submission for your applications, so it's important to know what plan(s) the colleges you're applying to offer. The possibilities include:

### Rolling Admissions

Schools that use a Rolling Admissions plan generally begin accepting applications in the fall, and will make decisions on applicants on an ongoing or rolling basis. Students can improve their chances of acceptance at Rolling Admissions schools by getting their applications in as early in the admissions window as possible. Since these schools fill their incoming spots over the course of a couple of months, the longer you wait to submit your application the less space they have available and the higher the admissions standards become.

### Regular or Deadline Admissions

Many schools set a deadline for applications to be submitted. The deadline is usually January 1<sup>st</sup> or January 15<sup>th</sup>, though some schools might set a different deadline date. With deadline schools, all application materials must be present in the admissions office before the date set by the school. No decisions will be made on applications until after the deadline has passed and the admissions office has had the opportunity to review all applications. Therefore, the timing of your submission does not impact your admissions decision, as long as you submit prior to the deadline. Generally, decisions for deadline schools go out in the early spring, well ahead of the May 1 deadline to put in a deposit.

### Early Decision (ED)

Colleges and universities that offer an Early Decision option require that these applications be submitted early, usually by November 1 or November 15. Students can only submit an ED application to one school. The benefit of applying ED is that students that apply using this option will receive a decision usually in mid December or early January. Keep in mind, ED applications are binding; students are agreeing in advance that if the school accepts their application, they will withdraw applications from any other schools and attend their ED school. Students are required, as part of the ED application, to submit an ED agreement form, which is essentially a contract signed by the student, parent and counselor. Because these applications are binding, it's crucial that students only apply ED if they are fully confident that this is the right school for them.

### Early Action (EA)

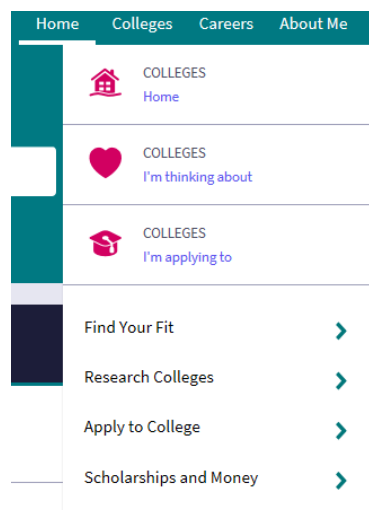
Some schools offer an Early Action option, which provides the same benefits as an ED application (early submission date, early notification of admissions decision) without the binding contract. Students have no obligation to attend an EA school, and may submit multiple EA applications.

### Restrictive Early Action (REA)

Very few schools offer Restrictive Early Action (REA) plans, but those that do set specific conditions for applicants. Usually, schools that offer REA admissions don't allow students to submit either an ED or EA application to any other school. Be sure you read carefully and follow any restrictions the school places on this program. These applications generally follow a similar timeline as ED and EA, but like with EA applications, students are not obligated to attend if accepted.

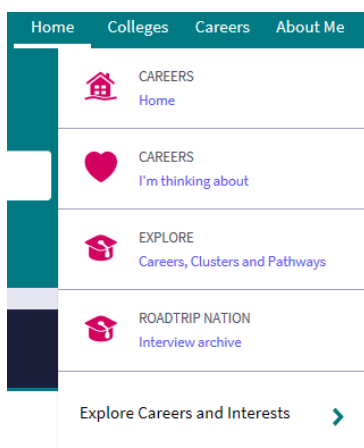
## Naviance Information

Naviance is a web-based college and career database to which students and parents have access. Below is a quick guide to useful features and information in Naviance. **If you have any trouble logging in or need your username and password, please contact your school counselor.**

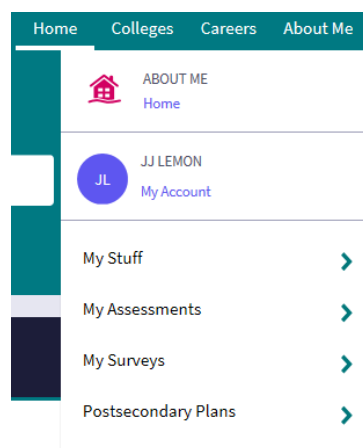


Under **Colleges**, you will find useful search and organizational tools to help you with your college journey.

- **Find Your Fit** will take you to different search options that will allow you to sort through the thousands of post-secondary options to find the ones that meet your criteria in terms of location, size, academic program and selectivity.
- Click on **Research Colleges** to see a list of upcoming **college visits** scheduled at East High School as well as **enrichment opportunities** during the summer.
- **Scholarships and Money** shows you various scholarships that we have added to Naviance with information on criteria for selection, application materials and deadlines.
- During your search process, add college to your **Colleges I'm thinking about** list to stay organized.
- When you are ready to begin applying to schools in your senior year, be sure to add them to your **Colleges I'm applying to** list so that you can request transcripts and letters of recommendation.



In ninth and tenth grades, students completed personality and interest surveys which led them to a list of careers that may be a fit for them. You can find these survey results under **Career Home**.



The **About Me** section will show student's demographic information including current GPA as well as SAT and/or ACT test scores.

## Financial Aid Information and Important Terms

An important part of finding the right fit college is affordability. As you and your family go through your college search, it is important to have open conversations about affordability and financial aid. Below are some tips and information to help you navigate the financial aid process during your junior year:

- ❑ **Take an inventory of your interests and passions.** Scholarships are not only based on academic achievement. Many scholarships award money for college based on a student's activities, talents, background and intended major.
- ❑ **Research the various types of financial aid.** Find out the difference between a grant and a loan, the way work-study can help with college costs, and any college-specific aid or programs.
- ❑ **Talk with your family about ways to pay for college.** Start planning your financial strategy. Most families use a combination of savings, current income, and loans to pay their share of tuition.
- ❑ **Learn the different between sticker price and net price.** A college's sticker price is its full published costs, while the net price is the cost of attending a college minus grants and scholarships you receive.
- ❑ **Look up colleges' estimated net prices** – every college must have a net price calculator that is updated every year. Pick a college you are interested in, and find their net price calculator on their website to calculate the estimated net price for you – the cost of attending that college minus the grants and scholarships you might receive.
- ❑ **Start researching scholarship opportunities.** Scholarships are free money; that is, unlike student loans, they don't have to be paid back. Use various databases like Naviance's Scholarship Search, fastweb.com, or College Board's Scholarship Search to find scholarships for which you might qualify.

**Award letter or notification.** A document or online notification telling an admitted student about the financial aid the college is offering. The award notification describes the types and amounts of aid offered, as well as the student's responsibilities and conditions governing the awards.

**Cost of attendance.** The combined expenses of attending college, including tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, transportation, and living expenses. These expenses vary because no two colleges have the same costs. The cost of attendance is compared with the student's expected family contribution to determine the student's need for financial aid.

**CSS Profile.** A web-based financial aid application provided by the College Board and used by some colleges and private scholarship programs to award their private financial aid funds. It can be completed online at [cssprofile.org](http://cssprofile.org).

**FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).** The form must be completed by everyone applying for federal financial aid. It can be completed online at [fafsa.gov](http://fafsa.gov).

**Financial Aid Package.** The total financial aid offered to a student by a college, including all grants, scholarships, work-study, and loan opportunities.

**Grant.** A monetary aid award given to a student that does not have to be paid back. The terms "grant" and "scholarship" are often used interchangeably, but grants tend to be awarded solely based on financial

need, while scholarships may require the student to demonstrate merit.

**Merit aid.** Financial aid awarded based on academic qualifications, artistic or athletic talent, leadership qualities, or similar attributes. Most merit aid comes in the form of scholarships.

**Need-based aid.** Financial aid given to students who have demonstrated financial need. It is calculated by subtracting the student's expected family contribution from a college's total cost of attendance.

**Priority date.** The date by which applications for financial aid must be received in order for a student to be given the strongest possible consideration. Thereafter, applications are considered on a first-come, first-served basis, and only to the extent that college still has aid money left after all the priority offers have been made.

**Self-help aid.** Student financial aid that requires repayment or employment (e.g., loans, part-time jobs).

**Subsidized loan.** A need-based loan in which the entity awarding the loan pays the borrower's (student's) interest while he or she is in college at least half-time, thereby subsidizing the loan.

**Work-study.** An arrangement by which a student combines employment and college study. The employment may be an integral part of the academic program (as in cooperative education and internships) or simply a means of paying for college.

## 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Financial Aid Checklist

### September

- ☐ Research scholarship opportunities and deadlines, and request application materials, if needed.
- ☐ Apply for a Federal Student Aid ID (FSA ID) for yourself and at least one parent at [studentaid.gov/fsaid](https://studentaid.gov/fsaid).
- ☐ Work with your parents or guardians to start gathering what you need to complete the FAFSA. Visit FAFSA online at [fafsa.gov](https://fafsa.gov) for a list of required documents.
- ☐ If you are applying **Early Decision** to a college, and financial aid is an important part of your decision to attend, review application deadlines and requirements carefully.
- ☐ Complete the Net Price Calculator on the college website. This tool gives you an early indication of how much and which types of financial aid you might receive.

### October

- ☐ Complete and submit the FAFSA and other aid forms now. Remember: some funds may be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Apply early to ensure you meet deadlines and maximize your aid reward.
- ☐ Follow the directions in all financial aid correspondence that you receive from the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) in a timely manner.
- ☐ If you need to fill out the CSS Profile, visit [cssprofile.org](https://cssprofile.org) and complete the application.
- ☐ Continue to complete and submit scholarship applications.

### November

- ☐ Check each college's financial aid section of their website for deadlines and the required forms.

### December

- ☐ Check the status of your admission and financial aid applications. If any outstanding items are required by your college, ensure you respond by required deadlines.

### January

- ☐ If needed, correct or update your Student Aid Report (SAR) that follows the FAFSA. Contact the college financial aid office for additional guidance.
- ☐ If you submitted the CSS Profile and you have not received communication from your college's financial aid office, check in to see if the review of your application is on track.

### March

- ☐ Submit any final, outstanding information or documentation that may be required to process your aid award.

### April

- ☐ Review and compare the financial aid packages offered in the financial aid award letters sent by the colleges that accepted you.
- ☐ Contact the colleges if you have any questions about the financial aid packages they've offered you. Make sure you understand all terms and conditions.
- ☐ If you didn't get enough aid to be able to attend a particular college, explore other alternatives to cover the cost. Additional options might include federal loans, such as the Parent Loan to Undergraduate Students (PLUS). If your family's financial circumstances have changed or you have special circumstances that may impact your eligibility, contact your financial aid office to discuss your options.
- ☐ Make a final decision, accept the aid package, and mail a deposit check to the college you select before May 1<sup>st</sup>.

### May/June

- ☐ Double-check with PHEAA to make sure that your grant funds are sent to the correct college.
- ☐ Visit [www.studentloans.gov](https://www.studentloans.gov) to complete your Loan Entrance Counseling and Master Promissory Note for any federal loans noted on your financial aid letter.