

College Ready Parent – Monthly College Prep Timeline

July

- Finalize or revise your college list - aim for a balance of safety, match, and reach schools.
- Create a resume or brag sheet for recommendation writers.
- Begin drafting personal essays - start with the Common App or flagship scholarship prompts.
- Look up ACT/SAT test dates and plan retakes if needed.
- Research top-choice schools' scholarship deadlines (some are as early as October!).

Notes:

August

- Start school strong - double check your class schedule includes college-prep courses.
- Begin asking for recommendation letters from teachers and mentors.
- Create accounts for Common App, Coalition App, and/or institutional applications.
- Finalize your main college essay draft and begin supplemental essays.
- Identify schools with rolling admissions or early action options.

Notes:

September

- Register for the October ACT/SAT if retaking.
- Start completing early college applications.
- Build a calendar of scholarship deadlines.
- Create your FAFSA account (student + parent).
- Begin state financial aid applications if available in your state.

Notes:

October

- FAFSA opens - submit as early as possible for best aid consideration.
- Submit Early Action or Priority applications if applicable.
- Apply for school-specific competitive scholarships.
- Send ACT/SAT scores to colleges (unless test optional).
- Check on your recommendation letters - make sure they've been sent.

Notes:

November

- Finalize and submit any remaining Early Action or Honors College applications.
- Apply for national scholarships (e.g., Coca-Cola, Equitable Excellence, etc.).
- Confirm FAFSA submission and review your Student Aid Report (SAR).

- Review admissions portals to track updates and missing items.
- Prepare for December deadlines (many major scholarships fall here).

Notes:

December

- Submit final rounds of scholarship applications with December deadlines.
- Wrap up any remaining college applications before winter break.
- Continue monitoring your application portals for updates.
- Begin prepping for January deadlines (Honors College, Leadership Scholarships, etc.).
- Take a breath - you're nearly halfway there.

Notes:

January

- Submit final applications with early spring deadlines.
- Apply for local scholarships (school counselor often shares these now).
- Check FAFSA processing and fix any flagged errors.
- Write thank-you notes to teachers who submitted recommendations.
- Prepare a spreadsheet to compare college costs as aid offers roll in.

Notes:

February

- Keep applying to local and regional scholarships - many are open now.
- Monitor college portals for Honors or scholarship interviews.
- Finalize housing forms or deposits if accepted.
- Talk through realistic budget expectations for next year.
- Double check all financial aid documentation is in order.

Notes:

March

- Review financial aid award letters as they arrive.
- Appeal for more aid if your financial situation has changed.
- Submit any outstanding verification forms for FAFSA.
- Visit admitted student events or virtual sessions.
- Keep applying for scholarships - some are still open!

Notes:

April

- Compare cost of attendance across schools - focus on net price, not sticker price.
- Accept or decline offers and submit enrollment/housing deposits.
- Register for orientation or summer bridge programs.
- Make sure your FAFSA and state aid files are complete.
- Help your student stay focused academically - colleges still see final grades.

Notes:

May

- Celebrate your student - it's award season, senior events, and graduation prep!
- Send final transcripts to the college your student is attending.
- Confirm all financial aid steps are complete (FAFSA, state grants, verification).
- Finalize dorm checklist and begin shopping for essentials.
- Discuss expectations around money, independence, and support before move-in.

Notes:

June

- Attend orientation if scheduled this month.
- Help your student create a personal budget (books, travel, meals).
- Ensure immunizations and health forms are submitted to the college.
- Check for any required summer reading or placement tests.
- Take a deep breath - this next chapter begins because of your hard work too.

Notes:
