James Monroe High School



Senior College Planning Guide

\*This guide was adapted from Pikesville High School in Maryland. The original can be found at www.phs.edu.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | | |
|  |  | **TABLE OF CONTENTS**  Introduction……………………………………………………………………. 3  College Planning Calendar…………………………………………………….. 3  Researching Colleges…………………………………………………………... 5  Applying Early Definitions…………………………………………………….. 7  Helpful Hints in Choosing a College……………………………………………8  College Admission Testing (SAT/ACT)……………………………………….. 9  Release of School Records……………………………………………………... 9  Completing the College Application………………………………………….. 10  Letters of Recommendation…………………………………………………… 11  Financial Aid…………………………………………………………………... 12  Helpful Websites……………………………………………………………... 13  Forms  Questions to Ask on a College Open House Visit…………………… 17  Steps for Timely Application Document Processing…………………. 18  Senior Bragg Sheet………………………………………..…………. .20  College Transcript Permission Form…………………………………. 21  Office of School Counseling Page 2 |  |  |
|  | | | | |

**COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS**

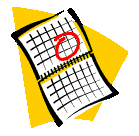
Welcome to your senior year! This booklet provides you with important instructions to complete the college application process. Please share it with your parents and keep it as a resource to use throughout the year. The booklet includes current and useful information for choosing and applying to college and financing the cost of college.

Please pay close attention to deadlines. The colleges, school counseling office, and other organizations to which you may be submitting documents expect you to meet designated deadlines.

It is critical that you thoroughly discuss your post-graduate plans with your parents, teachers, school counselor, and others whose opinions you value. Communicate with your counselor on a regular basis so he/she can be of assistance with the process.

Your senior year of high school is important to the college admissions staffs. They expect you to continue challenging yourself with rigorous courses and to continue participating in extracurricular activities and contributing to your community. Most of all, your grades should be as strong as possible. The admissions staff will review your mid-year and final transcript to ascertain your continued eligibility for admission to college.

**College Planning Calendar**



**September**

o Return the parental consent for release of records

o Discuss your classes, college plans, & test scores with your school counselor.

o Activate CommonApp.org account.

o [Stay organized.](http://www.collegeanswer.com/selecting/content/sel_srch_keep.jsp) Set up a filing system.

o Arrange [campus visits.](http://www.collegeanswer.com/selecting/content/sel_nar_visit.jsp)

o Register to take the [SAT/ACT.](http://www.collegeanswer.com/preparing/content/prep_test.jsp)

o Search for scholarships & grants (an all-year process). Use free online search

websites. See the list in this booklet.

Office of School Counseling Page 3

**October**

o Se[nd transcripts](http://www.collegeanswer.com/applying/content/app_applications_trans.jsp) to colleges.

o Ask for [letters of recommendation f](http://www.collegeanswer.com/applying/content/app_applications_rec.jsp)rom school counselor, teachers, coaches, etc.

o [Write](http://www.collegeanswer.com/applying/content/app_applications_ess.jsp) college application essays.

o Complete early decision/early action applications.

o Take SAT/ACT if needed.

**November**

o Continue completion of applications.

o Submit your [FAFSA a](http://www.collegeanswer.com/paying/content/pay_aid_fafsa.jsp)s soon after November 1 as possible. Aid is often on a first-

come, first-served basis.

o Determine which financial aid forms the colleges to which you are applying

require & complete as soon as they are available.

o Attend Financial Aid Nights and search for [additional sources of financial aid.](http://www.collegeanswer.com/paying/content/index.jsp)

o Take SAT/ACT if needed.

**December**

o Comple[te college applications ide](http://www.collegeanswer.com/applying/online_app/oas_select.jsp)ally by the winter break.

o Collect information needed to [complete the FAFSA.](http://www.collegeanswer.com/paying/content/pay_aid_fafsa_ways.jsp)

o Take [SAT/ACT,](http://www.collegeanswer.com/preparing/content/prep_test.jsp) if needed.

o [Stay organized.](http://www.collegeanswer.com/selecting/content/sel_srch_keep.jsp) Keep copies of all forms submitted by mail or online.

o Continue to track important dates and deadlines on your calendar.

**January**

o Fill out and submit colleges’ required financial aid forms.

o When you have financial aid questions, contact the appropriate college FAO

(financial aid office).

**February–March**

o College decision and f[inancial award letters](http://www.collegeanswer.com/deciding/content/ac_awdltr.jsp) start rolling in. If you are denied admission or are wait listed, you can send a letter of appeal and offer additional achievement information.

o Arrange to have mid-year transcripts sent to colleges as needed.

o Make sure FAFSA has been submitted by March 1 (Promise Scholarship

deadline).

o Check online for your [Student Aid Report (SAR) f](http://www.collegeanswer.com/paying/content/pay_aid_fc_rep.jsp)rom the FAFSA.

o Be sure to discuss any [special circumstances a](http://www.collegeanswer.com/paying/content/pay_aid_fc.jsp)ffecting your family’s financial

situation with the FAO at the college you are planning to attend.

o Track important financial aid deadlines.

o Respond quickly to college requests for additional documentation

Office of School Counseling Page 4

**April**

o Carefully analyze your letters of acceptance and financial aid documents.

o [Make a decision &](http://www.collegeanswer.com/deciding/content/ac_findec.jsp) send your deposit (most colleges ask for response by 5/1).

o Send a thank you letter to the colleges that you have been accepted to but have

decided not to attend so they will be able to give your spot to someone on their

waiting list.

o Carefully foll[ow the directions in your acceptance letter (](http://www.collegeanswer.com/deciding/content/ac_findec_next.jsp)esp. important deadlines, instructions on housing, financial aid, orientation, etc.).

**May**

o Fill out the form provided by the school counseling office to specify which college should receive your f[inal official transcript.](http://www.collegeanswer.com/applying/content/app_applications_trans.jsp)

Respond quickly to requests and return necessary forms—when in doubt contact the financial aid office (FAO).

o Notify your FAO of any additional funding you’ll be receiving to pay for college

(scholarships and loans, etc.).

o Evaluate [student loan lenders a](http://www.collegeanswer.com/financing/content/f_lender.jsp)nd take time to understand [student loans.](http://www.collegeanswer.com/paying/content/pay_under.jsp)

Learn about [borrowing responsibly.](http://www.collegeanswer.com/financing/content/f_resp.jsp)

**RESEARCHING COLLEGES**

**Keep an open mind to the possibilities**:

Use college search websites available in the booklet to narrow the list to a manageable number of colleges.

Colleges offer open house programs in the fall for seniors and their parents. Physically placing yourself on the campus and talking to staff and students gives you a better sense of yourself in that environment. You may also be able to schedule an interview to speak to an admissions representative. Make the appointment prior to the open house visit. Take a copy of your transcript with you to the interview. Take a copy of the “Questions To Ask On A College Visit”, that is included in the booklet, with you to the open house program.

There are also virtual tours and interactive communication sites with current students on the internet that can help in your search for the college that is the best fit for you.

The College and Career Fair at JMHS provides opportunities to speak with college representatives in person.

Office of School Counseling Page 5

Representatives from many colleges schedule visits to our school throughout the first semester. Information about the visits will be published on a regular basis through the school counseling office and website.

The **Academic Common Market** is a consortium of 16 southern states including West Virginia. This program allows a student to enroll in certain out-of-state programs that are not offered at a public college/university in an individual’s home state at a reduced tuition rate. Information about this program can be accessed at: [www.mhec.state.md.us.](http://www.mhec.state.md.us)

For many students, a community college provides the best fit for the transition from high school to college. Also, difficult economic times have required students and parents to explore alternatives to entering four-year college programs as freshmen. Community Colleges provide many opportunities for students. Financially, they are much less expensive than four-year colleges. Students are accepted regardless of their educational experience. The State four-year public university system has transfer agreements with the community colleges in West Virginia to accept specified credits toward bachelor degree programs.

Students considering application to military academies and ROTC programs must start the process prior to senior year. Seek the assistance of your counselor with this application process.

**Athletes**

If you are planning to participate in Division I or II sports in college, you must register

with the NCAA Clearinghouse ASAP at [www.eligibilitycenter.org.](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org/)

**Things to Consider When Choosing a College**

Academic program

Location (urban, suburban, rural) Size (small, medium, large)

Extra curricular activities Housing accommodations Dining provisions

Health and counseling services

Safety

Actual cost of attending

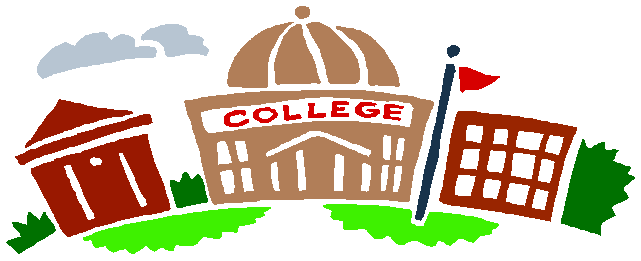
Diversity

Technology resources

Religious affiliation

Job placement services for graduates

Office of School Counseling Page 6



**“Applying Early” Definitions**

Many students like the idea of applying to colleges early, having the process completed by winter break, and relaxing during the second semester. Applying early might, in fact, be a good idea for some students, but it is not the recommended route for most. Below is an explanation of some of the terms used to describe the various ways of applying early:

***Early Admission***

Some colleges and universities accept students before they have finished high school,

usually at the end of the student’s junior year. Admission is rare under this plan, and is only appropriate for the student, who has taken an accelerated high school academic program, has an exemplary high school record, and who is mature enough to make the early move to college.

***Early Decision***

Several schools offer an admission plan for those students who are certain of their college

choice during the first semester of their senior year. Application deadlines for early decision plans are usually in October or November. A student who applies to a school under an early decision plan must sign a contract (as do the student’s parents and college counselor) which states that the student will attend that school if accepted. The student also states that he/she will withdraw any and all other applications submitted to other schools and that he/she will not submit any others. **Applying to a school early decision is a serious and binding commitment.**

Students applying early are reviewed primarily on the basis of their performance through junior year, so the early decision option is usually advisable only for students with outstanding academic records. Responses for early decision applicants are usually received before winter break of the senior year. A student may apply to only one school as an early decision candidate, so if you decide to do this, you should be sure that it is the school you would like to attend.

***Early Action***

This is a decision plan similar to that described above, but the important difference is that

your acceptance is not binding. Most early action deadlines are in November and December, and you will usually receive a decision before winter break. You will have until the May 1st Candidate’s Reply Date, however, to decide whether or not you will attend that school. You may still apply to other schools even if accepted under this plan. Decisions under this plan are made primarily on the basis of your performance through

junior year. It is usually more difficult to get accepted under an early action plan than it is through the regular admission process.

Office of School Counseling Page 7

***Single Choice Early Action***

This is a new form of Early Action – adopted by Harvard, Stanford and Yale. Single Choice Early Action is a non-binding early application program that allows you to apply to ONLY ONE College early. Deadlines are in November and you will usually receive a decision before winter break. You will have until the May 1st Candidate’s Reply Date, however, to decide whether or not you will attend that school. You may still apply to

other schools even if accepted under this plan.

**Helpful Hints in Choosing a College**

You want to select the college that will best satisfy your needs, interests, lifestyle, and personal and professional goals. A good "match" between you and your college will be the key to your success and happiness over the next four years. Establish with your parents the budget for application fees and only apply to colleges that you really would attend if accepted. To help you make that difficult final decision, the following "helpful hints" may assist you in determining which college is right for you.

**1. Visit The Colleges**

Visit the colleges you are considering during a week when classes are in session. We

recommend that you tour the campus, attend one or two classes, meet with the faculty in the department which interests you, eat in the dining hall, and, perhaps most importantly, talk with current students. Students are the best sources of information about the college; they will talk honestly and knowledgeably about the social life, academic program, and atmosphere on campus, dorm life, and other topics that are important to you. If possible, plan to spend one night in a college dormitory. It will enable you to communicate informally with students, get the "feel" of the campus, and "sample" life as a student. The Admissions Office at most colleges will arrange an overnight visit for you, either before or after acceptance. Remember that you are not just choosing a place to go to school; you are also choosing a home for the next four years. It should be a place where you feel comfortable, relaxed, involved, and challenged.

**2. Consider Actual Cost Rather Than "Sticker Price."**

Unfortunately, some students base their college choice on the "sticker price" - the full

cost for tuition, fees, room and board - rather than on the  *actual* cost of attending. Most colleges offer significant amounts of financial aid, including non-repayable grants, to students with demonstrated need. In addition, colleges frequently offer installment payment plans, low interest loans, academic scholarships, jobs on campus, and other forms of aid to students, irrespective of need. When all forms of aid are considered, a college education, either private or public, can be surprisingly affordable. Apply for aid (even if you don't think you qualify) and consider actual cost when making your final decision.

Office of School Counseling Page 8

**COLLEGE ADMISSION TESTING**

Most four-year colleges require the SAT Reasoning Test/ACT and some also require SAT Subject Tests. If you were not happy with your SAT/ACT score from last spring or have not taken an SAT/ACT test yet, we recommend that you sign up for an after school tutoring session at JMHS or take an SAT/ACT prep course online at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) or through private companies such as Kaplan, Huntington, or Sylvan, etc. Register online for the October, November, or December [tests at www.collegeboard.com.](http://www.collegeboard.com) If you are applying to a college early decision, take the test in October so your scores will be available at the time you submit your application.

At the time of registration for your SAT/ACT tests, you may request your scores be sent to up to four colleges of your choice at no additional cost. Students who qualify for free/reduced lunch may qualify for a fee waiver for the cost of the SAT/ACT. See your counselor to get the form. Additional requests for score reports can also be made at a

later time for a fee. Determine if the colleges to which you want to apply will require SAT/ACT scores, and/or SAT Subject Test scores. It is the **student’s responsibility** to request his/her official scores be sent directly from the College Board or the ACT to each college. It is to the student’s benefit to have his/her appropriate test scores available

when submitting your application to the college.

**SAT Score Reports ACT Score Reports**

866-756-7346 319-337-1313 [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org/)

**RELEASE OF SCHOOL RECORDS**

**Official Transcript Permission Form**

An essential step in the college application process is to have your high school transcript

sent to the colleges to which you are applying. Have your parent/guardian, **if you are under 18 years old**, sign the **Official Transcript Permission Form**, (provided in this booklet) which allows our staff to send your official high school record of classes, grades, class rank and GPA to colleges in your senior year. This is a federal law. Complete the required information and return the form to the counseling office at the beginning of senior year if you have not already done it during your junior year.

During your senior year, transcripts will be sent to colleges and universities at your request.

After you graduate, one final transcript will be sent to the college of your choice. Your counselor will obtain the above information in the spring by requesting that you fill out a form indicating which college you will attend.

Please observe all deadline dates. We process a very high volume of applications. Allow at least five school days for transcript requests to be processed.

Office of School Counseling Page 9

**Completing the College Application**

Each application has the directions for completion on the website or on the document if you are completing a paper application. The application fee is non-refundable. Set up a realistic schedule for the completion of your applications. Prepare your part of the application **completely**, **accurately**, and **neatly** online, if possible (some colleges require it to be done online). Complete all required signatures and registration payments. Students who use a fee waiver for the SAT/ACT test may also be able to get a fee waiver for some college applications. Submit your application packet in sufficient time so that it is received before the application deadline date.

**How to Obtain a College Application**

1. Apply online: [www.commonapp.org (](http://www.commonapp.org/)you can use this one application for multiple colleges to save you time), go directly to the university’s website, or [www.eduinconline.com](http://www.eduinconline.com) (if applicable). Be sure to print any supplemental forms and provide them to teachers and/or the counseling office at the appropriate time. Make a copy of your completed application before you submit it. Also, print your confirmation page/email when you submit application.

2. Use colleges’ proprietary online application, when required. Websites, addresses, and telephone numbers are available from directories, catalogs, and School Counseling office resource books.

**Application Essay**

The application essay is a perfect opportunity for you to directly address the college’s admission committee to introduce them to you from a personal perspective. You can share your reasons for applying to a particular college, career goals, insights, and opinions as well as your accomplishments. Through your essay, the committee will be able to assess your communication skills, while acquiring a broader understanding of your attitudes, feelings, imagination and creativity. The essay should help them to distinguish you as an individual from the other applicants.

Arrange with a mentor to have him/her read the rough draft of your essay and assist you with changes, as needed. Remember, this is a process that takes time. Start in September to afford yourself the time to create a well written essay that you will be proud to submit to the admission committee.

Office of School Counseling Page 10

**Follow-up after Completion of the Application**

Contact the college about two weeks after the application has been submitted online or mailed to make sure it has been received. You will receive communication from the college at varying times regarding additional information that may be needed as well as the admission decisions. It is beneficial to develop a speaking relationship with the admission staff member who is reviewing your application if possible, but don’t overdo it. Send a thank you note to each college that you have chosen not to attend. In the event that you decide to change colleges, it can be helpful to have a specific contact person with whom you have communicated in the past. This is also a good time to continue to apply for scholarships, and most importantly, to maintain high standards academically. A second visit to your top choice colleges can assist you in making the final decision as to where you will attend college.

**LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION**

**Counselor Recommendation**:

In the event that your application has a portion which is addressed to the principal or secondary school counselor, it is  **Your Responsibility** to bring that portion to the School Counseling Office for completion along with the forms indicated below:

a. Know your school counselor’s email address and provide that on your online application. If you are completing a paper application and the recommendation form is attached to the application, a photocopy will be made for the counselor to complete and the application will be returned to you.

b. Bring your completed student assessment form and activity summary/resume. They will be kept on file in the school counseling office; however, it may be wise to make copies for your own records. The forms are located in this booklet.

The counselor will need at least **TEN (10) school days** to complete the package before it is submitted to the college to which you are applying. Please watch your deadline date to assure that your paperwork will be completed by the date designated.

**Teacher Recommendation**:

Some colleges accept teacher recommendations. Carefully consider one or two teachers, preferably ones who you have worked closely with and that you feel confident will write a complimentary recommendation for you. It may be a teacher from a previous year. Complete a teacher recommendation request form and include a copy of your student activity summary/resume. Deliver the forms to the teacher  **at least three weeks** prior to your deadline date.

Office of School Counseling Page 11

**Types of Financial Aid**

**Grants –** This type of aid does not have to be repaid, but there may be an obligation regarding grades while in college, selection of major, or employment upon graduation. Grants are awards that may be based on financial need or other eligibility criteria.

**Scholarships –** Scholarship recipients may have to meet criteria such as academic achievement, extracurricular activities, community involvement, etc. They may also require certain criteria to be met while in college.

**Loans –** These usually have lower interest rates than commercial loans and must be repaid generally after you have graduated or left college.

**Student employment or work aid –** This may mean a job that the college located for you or employment you found on your own.

**How to Apply For Financial Aid**

Contact the colleges to which you are applying, either online or by mail, to request information about scholarships and financial aid. Complete the applications neatly and accurately (first impressions are important). Meet your deadlines! Be careful of scams from unscrupulous people.

Use free websites to do scholarships searches (list available in this packet). Start your search for scholarships in September of your senior year. Scholarships are available throughout the year. Criteria for scholarships vary widely: academic merit, leadership, service to school and community, talent, financial need, etc.

The FAFSA is the U.S. Dept. of Education’s free application for federal student aide. In December go to [http://pin.ed.gov t](http://pin.ed.gove/)o request a pin number that you will need to be able to complete the FAFSA. Complete the FAFSA as early as possible in January. The form should be done online at: [www.fafsa.ed.gov (](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/)this is the only free website). Most colleges

award financial need monies based on the determination of need on the FAFSA report. You will need your pin number to access the student aid report (SAR) online.

The State of West Virginia requires that you complete the FAFSA to be considered for any State financial aid programs. The State deadline is March 1 of your senior year. Information about scholarships available through the West Virginia Higher Education Commission can be accessed at: https://secure.cfwv.com/Financial\_Aid\_Planning/Scholarships/Scholarships.aspx

There are many local scholarships available for students. Local scholarship packets will be distributed during the fall semester. The school counseling office publishes lists of scholarships throughout the year. It is your responsibility to complete applications and meet the submission deadlines.

Attend the financial aid evening presentation with your parents here at our school (date to be announced).

Office of School Counseling Page 12

**HELPFUL WEBSITES**

**James Monroe School Counseling Webpage:** [www.jmhscounseling.weebly.com](file:///C:\Users\mtjones\AppData\Local\Temp\www.jmhscounseling.weebly.com)

**GENERAL COLLEGE INFORMATION**

**The College Board:** [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com/)

**The National Association of College Admission Counselors (NACAC)** - a good resource to an array of links: [http://www.nacacnet.org](http://www.nacacnet.org/)

**ACT** - includes test registration and test-prep information: [www.act.org](http://www.act.org/)

**Peterson's** -links to the companies many resources: [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com/)

**US News and World Report** - be wary of the rankings, but there is much to learn at this site. The "school comparison" feature is great: [www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/eduhome.htm](http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/eduhome.htm)

**Colleges That Change Lives** - site based on best-selling, highly regarded college advisor, Loren Pope. Insights about some wonderful and sometimes overlooked places: [www.ctclonline.com](http://www.ctclonline.com/)

**College View** - a good source for information on all colleges: [www.collegeview.com](http://www.collegeview.com/)

**CollegeNET -** an all-purpose site with a host of useful links and programs:

<http://www.students.gov/STUGOVWebApp/index.jsp>

**FASTWEB** – easy-to-use college and scholarship searc[h site: www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)

**Fiske Guide Books –** from the author of the reliable and popular guidebook comes a full array of college admission-related resources: <http://www.fiskeguide.com/index.html>

**Peterson's Guide -** College search, test prep and specialty schools information based on

Peterson's Guides: <http://www.petersons.com/ugchannel/>

**Princeton Review -** Test prep, college search and other college-related info:

<http://www.princetonreview.com/college-rankings.aspx?uidbadge>

**Don't have your school's application-** Check one of these sites; you're bound to find both hard copy and on-line applications.

**Student Gateway to the Government -** a multi-purpose site with info. On college, careers and the government: <http://www.students.gov/STUGOVWebApp/index.jsp>

Office of School Counseling Page 13

**The Common Application** - 200+ schools accept it and you should use it. We have the paper copy as well. : [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org/)

**Historically Black Colleges Common Application** - find applications for 29 different institutions: [www.eduinconline.com](http://www.eduinconline.com/)

**FINANCIAL AID**

**Compare Financial Aid Packages** – part of College Board site that allows you to compare financial aid packages: [http://www.collegeboard.com/student/pay/scholarships-](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/pay/scholarships-and-aid/index.html) [and-aid/index.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/pay/scholarships-and-aid/index.html)

**The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** - A must for anyone applying for need-based aid. You can apply on line: [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/)

**FAFSA Pin Registration –** You must have a pin number to complete the FAFSA

application online. You can apply for the pin number at: [www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov)

**Completing the FAFSA** - detailed, step-by-step guidance on completing the form:

[studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/completing\_fafsa/index.html](http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/completing_fafsa/index.html)

**FAFSA4caster** – provides an early estimate of your eligibility for federal student aid:

[www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov)

**CSS Profile** - If applying to private schools, check to see if they require this form. You can apply online: <http://profileonline.collegeboard.com/index.jsp>

**INAID** - general site for anything having to do with aid: [www.finaid.org/](http://www.finaid.org/)

**FastWeb** - general financial aid site with great scholarship search engine as well as an

EFC calculator function: [www.fastweb.com/](http://www.fastweb.com/)

**Sallie Mae** - information about loans and payment options: [www.salliemae.com/](http://www.salliemae.com/)

**How Stuff Works -** Interesting and comprehensive site with loads of details and helpful tools: <http://money.howstuffworks.com/college-financial-aid.htm>

**Comparing Financial Aid Awards -** A US News and World Report product that provides helpful charts enabling you to line up and compare awards: <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/college/tools/brief/awards_brief.php>

**Mach 25 Scholarship Search -** CollegeNet's search tool <http://www.collegenet.com/mach25/>

Office of School Counseling Page 14

**Student Guide on Financial Aid -** Government site, a comprehensive site with info available in both Spanish and English: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/index.html>

**Peterson's** - Comprehensive guide for financing your education:

[www.petersons.com/finaid/](http://www.petersons.com/finaid/)

**Scholarships** - A free resources for finding scholarships and other information about aid:

[www.scholarships.com](http://www.scholarships.com/)

**Savings Plans** - Though by the time you are in your junior year, this information might

be too late, finding out about 529 Plans may offer some help: [www.savingforcollege.com](http://www.savingforcollege.com/)

& [www.collegesavings.org](http://www.collegesavings.org/)

**Broke Scholar** - Free search engine with links to more than 900,000 college scholarships: [www.brokescholar.com](http://www.brokescholar.com/)

**Scholarship Scams** - A Federal Trade Commission-run site. It is always good to check on what you learn about on the web: [www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/edcams/scholarship](http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/edcams/scholarship)

**SPECIAL INTEREST**

**The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)** - [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org/)

**The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA)** - [www.naia.org](http://www.naia.org/)

**Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life** - [www.hillel.org](http://www.hillel.org/)

**Black Excel: The College Help Network** - designed to help African-American students navigate the college admission process: [www.blackexcel.org/](http://www.blackexcel.org/)

**Historically Black Colleges** - [www.blackhighereducation.com](http://www.blackhighereducation.com/)

**Jesuit Colleges** - [www.ajcunet.edu](http://www.ajcunet.edu/)

**Macleans** - For those looking into Canadian schools, this is an invaluable resource:

[www.macleans.ca/universities/](http://www.macleans.ca/universities/)

**Canadian Colleges** - A general and very helpful site: [http://uwaterloo.ca/canu a](http://uwaterloo.ca/canu)nd [www.canadianembassy.org/studyincanada](http://www.canadianembassy.org/studyincanada)

**Association on Higher Education and Disability -** host of information posted by international, multicultural organization of professionals committed to full participation in higher education for persons with disabilities: <http://www.ahead.org/>

Office of School Counseling Page 15

**Children and Adults with ADD** - [www.chadd.org](http://www.chadd.org/)

**Mindplay -** Special education resources "learning from the RIGHT side of the brain." <http://www.mindplay.com/resource.html>

**American Association of University Women** - [www.aauw.org/](http://www.aauw.org/)

**LD Online** - Interactive learning guide on disabilities for parents, children and educators:

[www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org/)

**Attention Deficit Disorder Association** - Resource on huge array or ADD/ADHD- related issues: [www.add.org](http://www.add.org)

**Security on Campus** – [www.securityoncampus.org](http://www.securityoncampus.org)

**Peace Corp -** main resource on the ultimate service learning project:

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/>

**CAREER INFORMATION**

**ASVAB Career Exploration Program** - Developed by Department of Defense; free, comprehensive career site: [www.asvabprogram.com](http://www.asvabprogram.com/)

**US Department of Labor** - All the numbers on could possibly hope for in career planning: <http://stat.bls.gov/>

**Department of Commerce -** gov. site with host of info on government jobs and other data: <http://www.fedworld.gov/>

**Mapping Your Future -** multi-lingual tool kit on career planning:[http://mapping-your-](http://mapping-your-future.org/planning/) [future.org/planning/](http://mapping-your-future.org/planning/)

**Occupational Outlook Handbook** – provides job descriptions, required education, future opportunitie[s. www.bls.gov/oco](http://www.bls.gov/oco)

**ALTERNATIVE AND YEAR-OFF PROGRAMS**

**Internship Programs** – Listings of +7800 programs and 200,000 positions: <http://www.internshipprograms.com/SearchInternships.asp>

**Time Out** - are you looking for options for taking some time off before heading off to school? [www.timeoutassociates.com](http://www.timeoutassociates.com/)

**Study Abroad** - [www.studyabroad.com](http://www.studyabroad.com/)

**Americorps** - National Service Program: [www.americorps.org](http://www.americorps.org/)

Office of School Counseling Page 16

**QUESTIONS TO ASK ON A COLLEGE OPEN HOUSE VISIT**

You have only a short time on campus for the open house visit. Prioritize the questions that are most important for you to have answered.

What percent of students receive financial aid?

What is the faculty like? Caring? Friendly? Aloof? Rigid? Do professors or graduate students teach freshman courses?

What is the typical class size, and how much individual attention will I receive?

Does the college have an active Career Center to help me prepare for a successful transition to the world of work after graduation?

What is the atmosphere on campus? Friendly? Relaxed? Competitive? Pressured? What tutorial assistance is available to students?

What part do fraternities and sororities play in the social and extra curricular life of the college?

Does the college provide study abroad and internship opportunities?

Does the college support an active visiting speaker’s program as well as a diverse

mixture of entertainment?

What are the percentages of graduates accepted to graduate, medical, and law schools?

How flexible are dormitory living spaces?

Are there medical and counseling services available on campus?

Are there part time employment opportunities on campus and in the surrounding community?

Is there public transportation to shopping, airports, train stations, and the bus depot?

Office of School Counseling Page 17

**Follow these steps to ensure timely and efficient processing of college applications:**

*(It would be wise to check them off to ensure that they’re all complete.)*

1. Write your college essay so that it is ready to go.

2. Ask no more than 2-3 teachers to write letters of recommendation that reflect what you were like in their classes and make sure they know what your deadlines are, giving them at least three weeks’ notice.

3. Send your ACT and SAT scores directly from [www.actstudent.org a](http://www.actstudent.org/)nd [www.collegeboard.org.](http://www.collegeboard.org/)

4. Bring in your transcript release form to the school counseling office.

5. Once the release form is logged and the counselor recommendation request is complete allow the school counseling office ten school days to write your letter and process the request. This does not mean that it would be wise to count back ten school days from your deadline. Allow an extra two weeks to problem-solve any logistical issues.

6. With Common App or any other online application, you must sign, pay for, and send the application. Just doing one of these does not complete the process.

7. Follow up with the teachers you asked to write your letters of recommendation to ensure that they both uploaded and SENT your letters to the colleges you indicated.

8. Once you know for sure that your documents have been sent, allow the college

2-3 weeks for processing.

9. Write a thank-you note to each person who wrote a recommendation letter on your behalf.

Office of School Counseling Page 18

SENIOR BRAG SHEET

Please fill out this form as accurately and completely as you wish. This information will be helpful to provide someone that you ask to write a recommendation (college applications, scholarships, etc.) – for example, your counselor, teachers, community members, etc. Remember to write a thank you note to anyone who writes you a recommendation.

PRINT Full name Name you go by

Requested Reference from Date Requested

**List ALL activities and leadership roles beginning with 9th grade Clubs / Organizations:**

Name of club School Yr(s) or Grade involved Offices held

**Awards and Honors:**

Name of award Reason for award Year received

**Athletics:**

Sport School Yrs or Grade involved Position played Awards/recognition?

**Community Service:**

Many colleges and scholarship programs are now emphasizing community service. List ways you have given back to the community. Give dates, approximate hours spent, type of activity, responsibilities, etc.



Office of School Counseling Page 19

**Community, church and youth group activities:** Include date, type of activity, responsibilities, length of time, etc.

**Plans after leaving high school: (**Check one only)

 College/Technical schools (Proposed major?) List top three schools you have applied,

or plan, to apply to: Accepted: Yes / No

 Military (Which branch?): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Work (Where, doing what?):

**Career Goal:** (What do you want to be when you “grow up”?)

1st choice 2nd choice 3rd choice

**Work experience:** (Past and present)

Employer Position Dates

What do you consider your **strongest personal asset?**

What three adjectives best describe you?

Name three teachers who know you well and would speak highly of you:

Is there anything else you would like for someone writing a recommendation to know about you?

(Hardships you have overcome; accomplishments you’re particularly proud of, ect.)

The above information is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signature Date 

Office of School Counseling Page 20

**James Monroe High School**

**TRANSCRIPT PERMISSION FORM**

Transcripts sent from James Monroe High School do not include student SAT, COMPASS, or AP score reports. The transcripts do include ACT scores, but some colleges will only accept these scores directly from ACT. All scores should be sent directly from the testing entity to the colleges of your choice.

I authorize James Monroe High School to release the transcript for :

Name of Student (Print Full Legal Name)

In accordance with the Family Education Rights and privacy Act (FERPA) Public Law

93-380, release of a student’s school records requires the written signature of the parent if the student has not reached the age of 18. A student who has attained the age of 18 may declare his/her majority and sign for release of his/her records.

Parent Name (print) Parent Signature Date

I am 18 years of age and assume full responsibility for requesting my high school transcripts be sent.

Student Signature Date

\*This guide was adapted from Pikesville High School in Maryland. The original can be found at www.phs.edu.

Office of School Counseling Page 21