

COLLEGE TIMELINE

9TH GRADE

During the Year

- **Investigate college requirements** and plan accordingly.
 - Investigate which high school classes colleges require you to complete.
- **Take challenging classes.** Take a look at our guide to [Choosing Classes while in high school](#) for more detailed information on how to choose a balanced workload.
- **Meet with your counselor** early in your freshman year to discuss your high school and college goals.
- **Participate in meaningful extracurricular activities.** Demonstrating leadership, commitment, and passion beyond the classroom can enhance your college application. It can also add balance and fun to a challenging academic schedule.

Over the Summer

- **Take summer school/community college courses.** For instance, you can take summer courses to improve your writing. Or, if your high school does not offer a rigorous science curriculum, taking courses at a local community college can enhance your academic record.
- **Read** as much as you can, and read a variety of materials. Reading builds your vocabulary and strengthens writing skills.
- **Prepare for the PSAT** to score especially well and qualify for awards such as the [National Merit Scholarship](#), a prestigious national award for which you can only qualify if you score well on the PSAT.

10TH GRADE

During the Year

- **Take a rigorous course load.** Especially if you are interested in a science major or a science career, take rigorous courses in those areas. Be aware of pre-requisites for classes you may need to take this year in order to qualify for junior and senior year classes.
- **Take the PSAT in the fall.**
 - The PSAT is required of all Albany Leadership students in October of their Sophomore and Junior years.
 - The PSAT allows you to qualify for some opportunities, such as the National Merit Scholarship program.
- **Meet with your counselor** to discuss your progress and future plans.
- **Continue to participate in meaningful extracurricular activities.**

Over the Summer

- **Prepare for the SAT/ACT.** Visit our [test preparation guide](#) for information on how to prepare for your exams.
- **Take summer school/community college courses.**
- **Participate in summer enrichment programs** offered by organizations and colleges. This can also be a useful way to spend time at a college you may be interested in attending. These programs can be costly, but some [programs offer financial assistance](#).
- **Read** as much as you can.

11TH GRADE

During the Year

- **Take a rigorous course load.** *This is your most important academic year*, because these will be the most recent grades available to colleges.
- **Get to know your teachers.** They will likely be writing college recommendation letters for you. The more they know you, the better their letters will be.
- **Meet with your counselor** to discuss your progress and future plans.
- **Take the SAT.** All students at Albany Leadership take SAT Prep during their Junior year. Depending on your level of preparedness, you may wish to take the SAT/ACT in the winter, however students are required to take the SAT by May or June of 11th grade. That way you will have time in case you need to take it again.
 - Register early, because early registration enables you to use fee waivers (waiver for: [SAT](#) / [ACT](#)). Speak to your school counselor if you require a fee waiver before registering.
- **Take SAT Subject Tests.** 2 or 3 required or highly recommended by many competitive colleges. Check to see if the colleges you are interested in have specific requirements or recommendations. Best to take after a year in a particular subject.
- **Continue to participate in meaningful extracurricular activities.** Take on a leadership role if time allows.
- **Research colleges** and prepare for the application process.
- **Attend any local college fairs.**
- **Put yourself on college mailing lists.**
- **Begin to request letters of recommendations from your teachers.**

Over the Summer

- **Prepare for the SAT/ACT** if you have not yet taken it or would like to improve your score.

- **Take summer school/community college courses.**
- **Read** as much as you can.
- **Participate in summer enrichment programs** offered by organizations and colleges. This can also be a useful way to spend time at a college you may be interested in attending. These programs can be costly, but some programs offer financial assistance.
- If you are able, get on the road and **visit colleges.**

1 2 T H G R A D E

Early Action/Decision: September – December

Please see below if you only intend to apply for **early action or early decision.**

September

- Request applications for each school and/or open online applications. Check deadlines and application costs, and preview the essay questions and general format.
- Determine whether or not to apply early action / decision to any school.
- Make a master calendar and note deadlines for items such as:
 - College application due dates.
 - Your high school's deadlines for application requests, such as your transcript or secondary school report.
 - College due dates for recommendations, secondary school reports, transcripts, and test scores.
 - Deadlines for required financial aid applications and forms.
 - Scholarship application deadlines.
- Write the first draft of your essays, and begin revisions.
- If you need to take or re-take standardized tests (SAT/SAT Subject Tests/ACT), the October test date is the last one that will be considered for Early Action/Decision admissions. Registration for this test is in September.
- If applicable, request an application fee waiver. You can get this from your high school's guidance counselor. Also, most colleges participate in test fee waivers programs (SAT / ACT) that allow students who receive test fee waivers to also receive application fee waivers for up to four colleges/universities.

Early October

- Request recommendation letters from your guidance counselor, teacher(s), or others who know you well. As a courtesy, make your requests a month or more before the letters are due. Recommendation writers often appreciate a packet of materials to make their task easier, including:
 - Continue revising your essays.
 - Request that your high school sends your transcript to the colleges.

Mid-October

- Finalize your application essays.
- Have your test scores sent to the schools to which you are applying.
- Remind/confirm with your counselors and teachers that all requested materials are sent. It is **your responsibility** to make sure the letters are sent on time. Teachers are often busy, and appreciate gentle reminders. As soon as they submit your letters, write a thank-you note to each recommender.

November

- Early Action / Decision application deadlines are typically on November 1st or in early November.
- Complete the CSS Profile. Most schools will require this form in addition to the FAFSA. The College Board charges a small fee to fill out this form.

December

- Decision notifications will be sent around mid-December.
- If accepted, be sure to finish your senior year academically strong; colleges may rescind their decision based on your academic reports.

(courtesy of <http://www.questbridge.org/>)

Regular Decision: September – December

Please see below if you intend to apply **Regular Decision** to any schools.

September

- Request applications for each school and/or open online applications. Check deadlines and application costs, and preview the essay questions and general format.
- Research and draft a list of scholarship opportunities available to you.
- Write the first draft of the application essays, and begin revisions.
- Depending on the admissions deadlines of the colleges to which you are applying, November may be the latest date you can re-take any standardized tests (SAT/SAT Subject Tests/ACT) and still have your scores considered by colleges. Registration for the November test is usually in late September or early October. Be sure to check whether colleges will accept scores from this test date. You might have to rush the sending of your scores to admissions offices.

Early October

- Continue working on your essays.
- Familiarize yourself with the essay prompts on all of your applications, and determine the extent to which you can use the same essays for different applications. Often, essays require some modification to fit a new prompt.

Mid-October

- Request recommendation letters from your guidance counselor, teacher(s), or others who know you well. As a courtesy, make your requests a month or more before the letters are due. Recommendation writers often appreciate a packet of materials to make their task easier, including:
 - The college's guidelines for recommendation letters and any required forms
 - A list of your activities and achievements, and if possible, a solid draft of your essay
 - A stamped envelope addressed to the proper recipient

November

- Request a fee waiver from your high school's guidance counselor.
- Request that your high school send your transcript to the colleges.
- Finalize your application essays.
- Have your test scores sent to the schools to which you are applying.

December

- Remind/confirm with your counselors and teachers that all requested materials are sent. It is **your responsibility** to make sure the letters are sent on time. Teachers are often busy, and appreciate gentle reminders. As soon as they submit your letters, write a thank-you note to each recommender.
- You may want to submit your applications by December so that you don't need to worry about them over winter break. However, if your essays could use additional editing, you should spend time polishing them. Just be sure to submit it by the deadline.
- Depending on the admissions deadlines of the colleges to which you are applying, December may be the latest date you can re-take any standardized tests (SAT/SAT Subject Tests/ACT) and still have your scores considered by colleges. Be sure to check whether colleges will accept scores from this test date. You might have to rush the sending of your scores to admissions offices.
- Complete the CSS Profile. Most schools will require this form in addition to the FAFSA. The College Board charges a small fee to fill out this form.

All Students: January - August

January

- Apply for financial aid by submitting the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which is free of charge.
- Focus on completing your scholarship applications and submit them in a timely manner.

April

- Schools will notify you of their admissions decisions by mid-April.
- They will also send financial aid offers around the same time. Compare financial aid packages before deciding on a school.
- If you have not already visited the college you hope to attend, it is a good idea to visit before accepting. Most colleges will have an admit weekend for their prospective freshmen.

Early May

- Notify the colleges to which you were accepted of your decision.

June

- Ask your high school to send a final transcript to the college you will attend.
- Get to know the college you have chosen by reading brochures, exploring the web site, and looking through course catalogs. Learn about options for housing and meal plans.
- Fill out any forms your college sends to you. These might include requests for board and meal plan preferences, a roommate matching questionnaire, additional financial aid forms, course- or major-specific forms, and many others.
- Enjoy your summer, and prepare for your college experience.