

The Summit Country Day School

**College Counseling
Freshman Handbook**

Overview of The Summit Country Day School College Counseling Team

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FRESHMAN YEAR

AT THE BEGINNING:

Get off to a good start with your high school academic record. (WE CANNOT STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS ENOUGH – THIS IS THE YEAR EVERYTHING STARTS TO COUNT!) To maximize your college options as a graduating senior, you will need a strong four-year academic record. Course selection and grades are the primary criteria used by colleges in making admissions decisions. Make sure to READ – READ – READ!

CHALLENGE YOURSELF:

- Build a strong academic foundation and critical thinking skills by taking challenging courses. (English, mathematics, language, social science, natural science)
- Study hard and work toward the best grades possible.
If you get in trouble or fall behind with your studies, it is IMPERATIVE that you seek out assistance from your instructors, our Academic Advisor, or your College Counselor. The last thing you want to do is dig a deeper hole by not seeking help.
- Make use of the time that your teachers offer to provide any extra help.
- Become involved and begin building your resume of activities, awards, and accomplishments. Do not limit yourself by first impression likes and dislikes. STRETCH YOURSELF! SURPRISE YOURSELF!
- Start a folder (on the computer) in which you list your activities, accomplishments, strengths, positive qualities, and qualities that may need strengthening. This information will be useful in completing college applications, preparing for campus visits and college interviews, and providing background material for those who write your letters of recommendation. It will also assist you in creating your Activities Resume which you will be required to do at the beginning of your senior year. (Please see the last page in this document as a guide to how you should properly format your Activities Resume).
- Strengthen your vocabulary by increasing your reading.
- If you are an athlete, know the OHSAA (Ohio High School Athletic Association) requirements for high school eligibility (see athletic director) & and the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) requirements for college eligibility (<http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net>).
- In the spring, select appropriate courses for 10th grade with the help of your family and Academic Advisor.

IF A SELECTIVE COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY IS A POSSIBILITY:

(A 'Selective' college/university can be defined as any institution admitting less than 60% of their applicant pool).

- Talk with your parents about it
- Share your ideas with your Academic Advisor and your College Counselor
- Work with your Academic Advisor to develop a master course schedule that will enable you to achieve this goal.

WHERE YOU SEE YOURSELF & HOW TO GET THERE FROM HERE

High School Transcript:

This document is the key to your success in college admissions. Your transcript contains all the grades that you will have earned beginning at the start of your freshmen year and ending with your senior year grades. Please keep in mind that you will be applying to college during the fall of your senior year, so the last grades that most admissions offices will see before rendering a decision will be the grades at the end of your junior year. It is **IMPERATIVE** that you start off strong! If you do not start off strong, then you must make sure that your grades demonstrate an 'upward trend'. Remember, if you have a slow start it is much harder to raise a GPA than maintain it. **START and FINISH STRONG!**

What Colleges are **LOOKING** for:

- Overall Performance
- Rigor of Curriculum (College Prep, Honors, Advanced Placement)
- Grade Trends
 - Each Year Counts
 - Grades within a specific discipline
 - Course Difficulty
- Depth & Breadth (Academic Interests)

College Search Timeline:

Your college search will not fully begin until the middle of your junior year. However, that does not mean that you can wait to begin thinking about college. The Summit Country Day School is a college prep school and the expectation is that you will be attending a four-year college/university upon graduation. Of course we are most willing to hear about any other options you may want to pursue after your graduation from The Summit. As a freshman, it is most important to concentrate on your curriculum and your performance in that curriculum. Start listening to the upperclassmen as they proceed through their college process. Take note of important things they say such as, "I wish I would have started the process and visiting colleges earlier." It is always good to start thinking about things like this earlier rather than later.

You will have a one group meeting each year, until your junior year. In late fall of your junior year, we will have one group 'Kickoff to the College Process' meeting, and subsequent individual meetings. This is when the process really gets underway and becomes very personal. Please do not feel that if you are younger than a junior that you are not allowed to use the resources in the College Counseling offices. You are welcome and encouraged to come up to visit us at any time

Academic Preparation:

College admission professionals all say that the curriculum in which you enroll (regular, honors, Advanced Placement level courses), and the performance in that curriculum is the #1 criterion they consider when looking at a student's application. Therefore, it is imperative that you challenge yourself appropriately (if you have a question what 'challenge appropriately' may mean for you, please ask your college counselor).

A good model to follow is:

- 4 credits – English
- 4 credits – Mathematics
- 3 credits – Lab Science (minimum)
- 3 credits – Social Science (minimum)
- 3 credits – Foreign language (minimum) 4 credits are *highly* encouraged)
- 1 credit – Fine Art
- Physical Education (2 seasons of Ohio sanctioned sport or 2 semesters of class offered summers or school year)

This model is a good one to have in mind as you move forward in planning your four-year schedule.

Standardized Testing:

During a student's freshman and sophomore years each student will take the PSAT (a precursor to the SAT). Although this test DOES NOT impact your college admissions decisions, it is a good indicator of future success on similar tests and in related course work at The Summit. We try to de-emphasize standardized testing as it is much more important for our students to concentrate on their current class work.

Careers/Possible Majors:

It is extremely important to The Summit students that as freshman they keep an open-mind about all subject areas. As any upperclassmen will tell you, it is not imperative that you know what you want to do with your life at age 17/18, much less when you are 14/15. Students are encouraged to enroll in and experience a wide variety of classes and educational experiences. This will allow them to have a better feel for what is available to them in the future.

Involvement:

This is a VERY important aspect to the student's experience at The Summit Country Day School. The College Counseling Team encourages students to follow their passions. Your involvement is an important aspect of college applications. However, colleges do not want to see a 'grocery list' of activities. Just remember, Quality before Quantity. *Colleges would much rather see a student become heavily involved in fewer activities, than only partially involved in many activities.*

Reasons to become INVOLVED:

- Current Enjoyment
- Balance (Time Management)
- Ability to Commit & Follow Through
- Creates an Active Campus Community

What Stands Out:

- Length of Involvement
- Depth of Involvement
- Awards and Distinctions

Ways to Become Involved:

- School Activities (clubs, athletics, etc)
- Church
- Community
- Employment

WHAT COLLEGES LOOK FOR IN AN APPLICANT:

- STRONG ACADEMIC PREPARATION
(See the above recommended Academic Preparation list)

- INVOLVEMENT OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM
REMEMBER: QUALITY NOT QUANTITY

Good Examples of Involvement are:

- After-school/weekend job
- Clubs and Activities at The Summit (taking on leadership roles)
- Playing multiple sports (taking a leadership role is important)
- Acting/Dancing/Drawing (concentrating and developing in any area of Fine Arts)
- Tutoring here at The Summit or in other local schools
- Community Service
- Volunteering
- Church Activities

- GOOD STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES

The best preparation for standardized testing is challenging yourself in the classroom. Also, you want to make sure you are reading, not only for school but for pleasure as well. This will help with vocabulary of development.

- STRONG PERSONAL QUALITIES

Colleges are looking for students who have learned and displayed qualities such as:

- Character
- Integrity
- Determination
- Leadership ability
- Honesty
- Adaptability
- Friendly/One who can interact and get along well with others

These qualities can be developed through interaction and involvement on all levels. Make sure you are picking good role models to learn from and doing your best to always ‘do-the-right-thing’.

If you have any questions about this information, please see a member of the College Counseling Team. The door to our offices is always open!

The Summit Country Day School College Planning Calendar 2011-2012

Freshman Year

1. Take challenging academic courses, i.e. Honors courses
2. Get involved in extra-curricular activities
3. Take PSAT in October
4. Commit to a volunteer project
5. Meet with faculty advisor to review academic plan prior to course selections
6. Consider taking SAT Subject Test. Math Level I after Algebra II
7. Plan worthwhile summer activities, i.e. programs at colleges, volunteer work

Sophomore Year

1. Continue taking challenging academic courses, i.e. Honors and AP courses
2. Continue involvement in volunteer and extra-curricular activities
3. Take the PSAT in October
4. Become familiar with resources provided by the college counselors
5. Begin to build a college file, gathering materials about colleges of interest. Use school vacations to visit college campuses
6. Develop personal resume recording activities and achievements
7. Take AP Exams as appropriate
8. After completing the related coursework, consider taking SAT Subject Tests
9. Plan worthwhile summer activities, i.e. programs at colleges, volunteer work

Junior Year

1. Continue taking challenging academic courses, i.e. Honors and AP courses
2. Continue involvement in volunteer and extra-curricular activities. Accept leadership roles
3. Continue to add activities, awards and achievements to your personal resume
4. Develop a broad list of colleges, including “stretch” and “target” schools. Think about what you seek in college: location, size, specific major, competitiveness
5. Take the PSAT in October. This test determines National Merit Scholarship qualifiers. Attend academic review session after receiving the PSAT results
6. Attend college-entrance information session with college counselor as well as Sunday Series
7. Think about which teachers you will ask to write recommendations
8. If you intend to seek an athletic scholarship, start contacting coaches at the schools that most interest you
9. Consider attending SAT and/or ACT preparation courses
10. Take SAT Reasoning test (January), ACT (December) and appropriate SAT Subject Tests
11. Ask colleges of interest to let you know when a representative will be in town; attend their presentations
12. Visit colleges when and if possible
13. Write a response to the common application essay. Submit to English teacher for editing

14. Parents and student will schedule an individual meeting with their college counselor in the spring for college planning
15. Note any early action or early decision deadlines at colleges of choice
16. Develop a timeline for college and scholarship application deadlines
17. Research scholarship opportunities
18. Take AP Exams as appropriate
19. Plan worthwhile summer activities, i.e. programs at colleges, volunteer work

Senior Year

Fall:

1. Continue taking challenging academic courses, i.e. Honors and AP courses
2. Continue involvement in volunteer and extra-curricular activities
3. Meet individually with college counselor to narrow list of colleges and discuss financial aid and scholarship opportunities
4. Student athletes should complete and mail the NCAA Clearinghouse application
5. Note any early action or early decision deadlines at colleges of choice
6. Visit colleges of major interest. Plan an overnight in a dorm if possible
7. Ask colleges of interest to let you know when a representative will be in town; attend their presentations
8. Take any additionally needed SAT or ACT tests in **OCTOBER**
9. Ask for recommendations from faculty well in advance of deadlines
10. Submit drafts of application essays to at least one adult reviewer for editing
- 11. Submit all Secondary School Reports to your counselor before Thanksgiving**
12. Send supplemental information to colleges as it becomes available, i.e., awards

Winter:

1. Complete official FASFA (financial aid form) available on the Internet. If required, complete the CSS/Financial Aid Profile

Spring:

1. Meet Acceptance Reply Date. Write to inform and thank colleges whose offers you did not accept
2. Write thank-you notes to teachers who wrote letters of recommendation
3. Take any remaining AP exams
4. Complete the Future Plans/Final Transcript request form