**College Checklist and Information**

What You NEED to Know!!!

The following information will help you navigate the path toward starting your freshman year at college.

* **What do you want to study?**  What career or job path are you interested in pursuing?
  + It’s important to have an idea about things you like or are interested in because that will help you narrow down what program you want to study in college.
* **FAFSA!! (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)**
  + **What is the FAFSA?**
    - The **FAFSA** is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and is the first step in the financial aid process. A FAFSA is used to apply for state and federal financial aid programs. In addition, some colleges use it to award institutional aid. The application is available at no fee charged to the student. The **2022-2023** **FAFSA is available online starting October 1, 2021.**  [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/).
  + **The FAFSA is REQUIRED for graduation now in the state of Illinois**
  + **What information do I need to complete my FAFSA????**
    - 1. **Social Security Number**, for yourself and your parent(s)
    - 2. **Records of income**, such as income earned from work and business, child support paid or received and any other untaxed income. If available, refer to the W-2 forms or Federal Tax Return IRS 1040, 1040A or 1040EZ.
    - 3. **Information about assets**, such as savings, certificates of deposit, stock options, bonds, 529 plans and other college saving programs; and investment real estate, business and farm.
    - 4. **Driver’s License number**, if you have one
    - 5. **Alien Registration Number**, if you are not a U.S. Citizen
    - It will be a much easier process if you have everything you need when you sit down to fill it out.
  + **Note to applicant:** 
    - It is essential that you apply as soon as possible! Applicants need to understand that they may use records of income from the previous year to file their FAFSA. Applying early will make it possible for eligible applicants to have a chance to secure available grants ($$$$). Some grants are given on a first come first serve basis. Applicants will need to UPDATE their FAFSA after new year financial information is available.
  + Ask Mrs. Cearlock for help or information. Mrs. Cearlock can NOT complete the FAFSA for you, but is willing to help you complete it.

* **Have you applied to college yet?!?!**  Once you know or have an idea of where you’d like to go to college then you can fill out the online application. You can fill out applications to as many colleges and universities as you want.
  + Be aware that there is a fee attached to some college and university applications. **Many offer a specific time frame when it is free for you to apply.** Check the college website or ask Mrs. Cearlock for those dates.
  + Mrs. Cearlock is a good resource to ask questions.
  + You will need the following information when applying to college:
    - Name, address, contact number, email address
    - School information (name, address, phone number)
    - GPA (grade point average) ask Mrs. Cearlock or Mrs. Wilkinson
    - Transcript (request a transcript on the website) Please email Mrs. Cearlock if you need a transcript last minute (because maybe you got busy and forgot...do not make it a habit)
    - Test scores if available (SAT)
    - Also any high school activities you were involved in, awards, other community service activities, extracurricular activities
* **Schedule a College Visit!!**
  + Please inform Mrs. Cearlock in the counseling office and Mrs. Kenny in the main office of your college visit day in advance.
  + College visits are important for many reasons.
    - Meeting with a college admissions representative helps give you more specific information about the college and the program you are interested in studying.
    - You get a tour of the college and dorm rooms (if they have them).
    - You might get to meet with current students and hear helpful information from them.
    - You might also have a chance to sign up for classes or at least get an idea about the classes you need to take freshman year.
* **Requesting a Letter of Recommendation** 
  + Many colleges and some scholarships require applicants to submit letters of recommendation. Some have specific forms to be used and others simply ask for a letter; it's important to determine what each college or scholarship program requires.
  + Follow these steps to request a letter of recommendation:
    - 1. Obtain any required forms and complete the sections that the applicant is to fill out.
    - 2. **At least three weeks** before any deadlines, ask the teacher, counselor, principal, employer, etc. to write a letter of recommendation for you. Remember that some people are asked to write many letters and won't be able to do a good job if not given enough time.
    - 3. Provide the person you will be asking with the recommendation forms or instructions, stamped envelopes addressed to the college(s) or scholarship programs, and a list of the due dates for each one.
* **Scholarship Information**
  + Where can you find scholarships?
    - HHS website (About Us, Scholarships)
    - College or University you plan to attend
    - There are so many scholarships out there and it is hard to know every scholarship. Do not hesitate to do your own research on scholarships. If there is a specific scholarship you are not sure about I am more than happy to help. **Also ask for transcripts for scholarships in advance** as I may not be able to get a transcript printed or sent that specific day.
  + Ask teachers for any specific subject area scholarships.
* I know this can be a difficult and stressful process. Please know you are not alone and I am here to help. I have provided my email address and the school number.
  + [jcearlock@hillsboroschools.net](mailto:jcearlock@hillsboroschools.net)
  + 217-532-2841
* Email is the best way to reach me.