

Clark Advanced Learning Center's

Postsecondary Planning Guide

Developed by Tiffany Jones, School Counselor



Letter to Students & Parents Regarding the Use of this Guide

Dear Clark ALC Students and Parents,

I know that your family has spent much time worrying and wondering where you will end up after high school. A student's transition from high school to college is usually a time that is full of stress and anxiety. This guide was designed to answer your questions regarding postsecondary and college planning. This planning should not start senior year; therefore, I have included some information for all high school grade levels.

My goal in preparing this guide is to alleviate some of the stress of this process. Included in the guide is information that will help you and your child when choosing a college, taking college entrance exams, and applying for schools. I have also included information on financial aid and helpful websites that will further assist you in this process. You may still have questions even after reading this guide, and I welcome you to discuss your questions with me.

If you have any input on this guide, please share it with me! I hope you will find it simple and easy to use.

Best Regards,

Tiffany Jones, Ed.S.
School Counselor

Acknowledgement and Disclaimer:

This guide was developed from similar documents prepared by other schools, information from many web sites, and by using Florida DOE information and documents. Acknowledgement and appreciation for all those sources is hereby given. Please be aware that the information in this guide may change from year to year.

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I) INTRODUCTION: CHOOSING A PATH

Many high school students do not actively explore their postsecondary options. Some students go with the flow and do whatever their peers are doing after high school. Others pursue a college path just because their parents expect them to get a college degree. Some students take full time jobs after high school because they want to make money with the hope that eventually they will go back to earn a college degree.

Sometimes students waste time and money because they do not think their postsecondary options through before they graduate high school. Encourage your child to make an educated decision on their postsecondary options so that they are better prepared for the future. An educated decision is based on several important facts:

1. What the student likes (INTERESTS)

Ask them: What are you passionate about? What types of things excite you? What types of jobs appeal to you? What do you truly enjoy? Which classes and activities have you liked best? What did they involve? Why did you enjoy them? There are majors and careers related to every interest that you have!

2. Which areas the student excels at (ABILITIES)

Ask them: What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? What kind of skills and abilities do you have? What are your best subjects? Do you see a pattern there? What kinds of activities have you participated in during high school? What types of things do you seem to do well? Are they technical, adventurous or intellectual?

3. What the student VALUES

Ask them: Do you enjoy helping society, working under pressure, stability, security, status, working alone or in groups, having an impact on others? Is enjoying your work more important than prestige? Is creativity more important than security?

*SPECIAL TIP: There are some great online assessments your child can take to figure out his or her interests, abilities, and values. One great free online tool is called **FloridaShines**. Students can create a login ID and take many free assessments. Please visit www.floridashines.org for more information and to create a student and/or parent account.*

The earlier a student explores these three areas, the better prepared he or she will be to make an educated decision about where to go after high school graduation. A student does not have to know exactly what they want to do for a career, but rather, they should be developing an idea of their interests, abilities, and values so they can begin to make educated decisions about the future.

It's also important that you and your child be realistic about career expectations. Your child must be aware of the amount of schooling and time it will require to pursue certain professions. For example, if your child wants to pursue a career as a physician, does he or she realize the years of training and amount of hard work it takes to become a doctor? Make sure you and your child also recognize if a career is highly competitive. If the career is highly competitive, your child needs a backup plan (examples include professional athletes, actors, singers, etc.). This does not mean you should discourage your child from pursuing their dreams! Instead, encourage them to develop a backup plan in addition to being realistic about their abilities and potential.

II) TIMELINES FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL YEARS

9th Grade – Freshmen

- Get involved in school activities: clubs, teams, special events. Stay active in extracurricular activities. Keep a log of all activities you participate in!
- Start doing community service and keep track of your hours.
- Check your grades and evaluate your progress by frequently logging into FOCUS.
- If you haven't already looked at possible careers and education requirements, explore the Career Planning portion FloridaShines (<https://www.floridashines.org/>) AND see Dr. Bonds, Clark's very own Career Coordinator.
- Start looking at admission requirements for different postsecondary institutions (schools after high school such as community colleges, technical centers, colleges and universities, etc).
- Select your graduation program (college prep or career prep) and plan coursework for all your high school years. Qualifying for graduation, Bright Futures scholarships, the Talented 20 program, and college admissions all depend in part on course selections.
- Take schoolwork seriously because every year counts.

10th Grade – Sophomores

- Pursue and expand extra-curricular interests – focus on activities you are passionate about!
- Continue devoting time to community service – you need 75-100 hours to qualify for Bright Futures; however, you should do more than that!
- Check your grades and evaluate your progress by frequently logging into FOCUS and MyPioneer Portal.
- Take the PSAT test in October (it's a practice test for the SAT-an important college entrance exam).
- If you haven't already done so, use the career planning programs tools on FloridaShines (www.floridashines.org) and meet with your school counselor, Ms. Jones, and your career coordinator, Dr. Bonds, to help identify careers of interest to you.
- Begin to think about where you'd like to attend college, or if you'd like to join the military.
- In addition, use the Explore Institutions and Discover Programs resources on www.floridashines.org. You can also search for colleges based on a variety of variables by going to the College Board's Big Future site at <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>. If you are planning on attending a community college, college, or university, now is a good time to visit college campuses and talk to other college students.

11th Grade – Juniors

- Continue putting time into extracurricular activities – try out some leadership roles as well.
- Continue doing community service and log your hours with your school counselor.
- Monitor your Bright Futures standing through the personalized evaluation which can also be found on the FloridaShines website @ <https://www.floridashines.org/go-to-college/pay-for-college>.
- Register in guidance to take the PSAT test in the fall, even if you took it last year. This year it can qualify you for the National Merit Scholarships.
- Attend career and college/university fairs held at your high school or in the area.
- Take the SAT and ACT tests in the spring at least once.
- Start looking for scholarship and financial aid opportunities. Go to the local library, your school counselor, or the internet to find scholarship and financial aid directories. Request applications and keep track of deadlines.
- Interested in an athletic scholarship? Talk to your coaches, contact the athletic departments of your favorite schools, or go to the NCAA web site for more information.

- Plan visits to campuses. Make appointments, especially if visiting during the summer. If you are unable to travel, you can also do virtual campus tours through www.ecampustours.com, www.campustours.com, and/or many colleges and universities have a virtual tour on their websites.

12th Grade – Seniors

- Meet with your counselor to ensure that you have all graduation requirements met and to discuss your future planning and college applications.
- Continue to monitor your Bright Futures eligibility through the personalized evaluation which can be accessed on the FloridaShines website @ <https://www.floridashines.org/go-to-college/pay-for-college>.
- Turn in all your community service hours – remember, you need 75-100 hours to qualify for Bright Futures, and many colleges and scholarship opportunities require completion and proof of service hours. Continue to keep track of your extracurricular activities.
- Create an account at www.Fastweb.com or www.scholarships.com and start searching and applying for scholarships. You can also search for scholarships through the College Board website @ <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search>.
- Continue taking dual enrollment courses if you qualify.
- Take the SAT or ACT in fall, or retake them if necessary.
- Prepare admissions application packages and begin applying in fall.
- After October 1st, but before the end of your senior year, complete the Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA) to apply for state grant, scholarship (including Bright Futures), and loan programs. The application can be found online at www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org.
- After October 1st, but before the earliest college deadline, complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application. This application is available online www.fafsa.gov (**DO NOT complete an application at www.fafsa.com, as it will charge you for what is supposed to be free**). Send the application early to maximize your chances for financial aid.
- Check with your colleges to see if they require the CSS Profile, a separate financial aid application. No Florida public colleges/universities require this.
- Contact the financial aid offices of the colleges where you are applying to ensure you are meeting all their deadlines. Ask if there are any other scholarships you may qualify for.
- Wait for college admission decisions and financial aid award letters. You need to determine the college best meeting your personal academic goals and financial needs. Many schools have an early decision deadline to accept or decline applicants.
- Upon notification of acceptance let the other colleges you applied to know of your decision. This frees up places and possible financial aid for other students.
- Be aware, after acceptance there may still be things to do such as arranging for final transcripts to be sent, housing applications, and immunizations.

III) CHOOSING A SCHOOL

Choosing a college is a process that you should focus on in your junior and senior years of high school. It is important to select a college based on your needs and goals. Don't choose school because it has a good reputation or a successful football team. The college should "fit" you intellectually and socially, as well as match your particular learning style. Make sure you take advantage of the **Treasure Coast College Fair** or the **Clark ALC College Fair**, which are both being held on October 18, 2018. Be prepared to ask questions and gather any information that the college representatives may have. Remember, college fairs are held to provide a source of information for you and your child.

There are many books and online resources with information on colleges and universities. Each school has its own website with endless information available. Here are a few examples of websites:

www.princetonreview.com

www.usnews.com/colleges

www.petersons.com

A. FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A COLLEGE

When going through the process of selecting a college, there are many factors to think about. It is important to first prioritize your needs by asking the right questions. Consider the following when going about your research:

Size: Colleges come in all sizes, from a school that enrolls 26 students to schools which can enroll 30,000 or more. Which one is better? Well, that depends on you and what you are comfortable with. Did you like the size of your high school? Do you like being places where everybody knows you, or do you like the anonymity of a crowd?

Types: All colleges are not the same. Some have large graduate programs and devote much of their time and resources to research. Others enroll only undergraduates and focus their attention on teaching and learning. Some schools have a specialty in one specific area, like engineering or writing, while others are best known for giving their students a broad education. Other differences include whether schools are single sex or co-ed, if they have a religious affiliation and whether they are public or private. Learn the difference between them and select the type that fits your educational preferences.

- *Liberal Arts Colleges* emphasize undergraduate study and provide a broad education with a wide range of majors. At a liberal arts college, students focus on their major in the junior and senior years of college. While attending a liberal arts college, students are taught a variety of subjects and can be easily trained to go into many areas because of their broad education.
- *Universities* are larger institutions that offer undergraduate and graduate levels of study and are comprised of liberal arts and sciences colleges. Universities offer coursework in a variety of subjects. They also provide research facilities and additional resources to support students' educational needs.
- *Community/State Colleges* are popular among many students who want a quality, low cost education prior to transferring to a traditional 4-year university. Florida's Community/State Colleges offer many advantages, including the ability to transfer to a Florida 4-year public institution. Many also offer a limited number of bachelor's degree programs.
- *Trade and Vocational Schools* are popular because they provide exactly what students want to learn and a degree can usually be obtained in 2 - 4 years.
- *Specialized Institutions* focus on a specific area of study, such as business, engineering, or the arts.

Location: There are colleges in every living environment you can imagine, from tiny towns in Florida to the middle of New York City. If you have always lived in the suburbs, choosing an urban campus can be an adventure. But after a week of urban noise, dirt and lots of people, will you long for a grassy campus and open space? On the other hand, if you are used to the suburbs and mall life and choose a college in a rural area, will you run screaming into the Student Center some night looking for noise, lights and people? Think about where you grew up and how much of a change you want from that environment when you go to college.

Distance from Home: Closely tied to location is the issue of how far from home you want to be. For some people, going to college is a chance to explore a totally different part of the country. For others, they want to make sure they can come home on weekends. When you decide how far you want to be from home, think about how likely you are to get homesick, and how much money you can afford to spend on travel. The farther you are from home, the less often you'll be able to visit. On the other hand, with email and cell phones, you can still feel close to home even if you are in California and your parents are in Stuart!

Cost/Scholarship/Financial Aid: Cost is one thing that most parents think about when the topic of college comes up. There are different types of financial aid at different schools. If your grades - or musical talent or athletic ability - are good enough, you could earn a scholarship. Public universities often offer much lower tuition rates to in-state students, but their fees to out-of-state residents are usually pretty similar to private schools. Private institutions charge everyone the same tuition, but they often have privately funded scholarship monies available, so it is worth applying to them even if the price tag seems too high.

Majors and Requirements: If you know what field you want to go into after college, it is important to make sure you go to college somewhere that will prepare you for your chosen profession. Some schools are particularly well-known for a specific major, like engineering or architecture. Going to one of these schools will put you in a great position to get a job in that area when you graduate. If, however, like many entering freshman, you are not so sure what you want to do, you should choose a school that will give you plenty of options.

Special Programs: Consider your unique interest and expectations when choosing a college. Investigate special programs that will satisfy your personal needs and goals.

Examples:

Study Abroad Programs
Journalism Programs

Sports Programs
Drama Programs

Internship Programs
Honors Program

Housing Options: Is there a requirement to live on campus? Do most students live on-campus? Perhaps you would rather live in an apartment or a house off-campus. Is there plenty of housing to offer the student population? How far will you have to travel to get to campus? Is there ample parking? Is there a student transit service which can take you to campus? If you like the idea of being around other people and want the comfort of knowing that someone is always around, then on-campus life could be your choice.

Athletics and Social Life: Are you a sports nut, or does the sound of a marching band and the sight of a football uniform make you cringe? At some schools, sports are the order of the day, the main social activity on most students' calendars. Other schools may not have a football team at all, or may not pay much attention to it if they do. Some colleges offer a wide variety of intramural sports for the students to participate in. Decide how important your enthusiasm for sports may be when considering colleges.

B. COLLEGE CAMPUS VISITS

A campus visit is your opportunity to get a firsthand view of a college. A college catalog, brochure or website can only show you so much. To really get a feel for the school, you need to walk around the campus, sit in on a class, and visit the dorms. A visit also gives you the chance to talk to students, faculty, and financial aid and admissions personnel.

Helpful Hints for College Visits

Do your homework before visiting the college. You want to go there as an informed, prospective student. Either read the viewbook or look at the school's website. Important things to discover before your visit include:

- Size – undergraduate and total percentage of males and females
- Type – private, public, two or four year, co-ed or not, religious affiliation
- College terms – semester, quarter, trimester, winter term available, study abroad, etc.
- Accreditation – regional and professional
- Admissions criteria – required high school courses, SAT or ACT minimum scores, recommended or required grade point average (GPA), class rank, extra-curricular activities, recommendation letters required
- Cost – tuition, books, room, board, travel, miscellaneous, personal
- Financial aid – scholarships available (especially “no need” or merit variety), loans, academic, athletic or artistic scholarships, required forms to apply for aid
- Deadlines – for admissions and financial aid applications
- Teaching Assistants or Professors – who actually teaches the undergraduate classes?
- What is the average class size? What is the faculty-student ratio?
- Housing – deadlines, types and locations, deposits and refund policies
- Programs of study – majors, double majors, minors, accelerated programs
- Credit by examination – AP, IB, CLEP, institutional
- Foreign language – requirements to get your degree
- Deposit – to hold your place in class (refundable?)
- Miscellaneous -- Co-op Program, study abroad, early action, early decision, special graduation requirements (e.g. must attend a summer session), campus maintenance, etc.

After You're Done Researching...

- Write down any questions that you have that you could not answer with your research. Have these handy for when you are on your campus visit.
- If you are interested in a particular department or major, find out if you can take a tour specific to their facilities while you are on campus.
- You might want to download and print directions to the Admissions building from the school's website.
- If you will be touring a few schools in a short period of time, you might want to take photos while on your tours. Looking at the photos later will help you remember important features of each school.

Trust your instincts. If a place feels right, that's important. Similarly, if it just feels wrong, no matter who wants you to go there or how good it looks on paper, it probably is. College is a very personal choice, and after considering all the other objective factors, the fact of the matter is that it comes down to YOU! Visit colleges you are interested in, and see how you feel walking around their campuses. Talk to the students. Could you imagine yourself going to school there? And don't forget, visits can happen after acceptance and/or before final decisions are made. Once you find a few places that you like, you will be well on your way to finding the college that is right for you.

IV) TESTS REQUIRED FOR COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

Most colleges and postsecondary schools require an entrance examination. The score on this standardized test is one of the most critical criteria college admissions offices consider. The two most often required are the SAT Reasoning Test and/or the ACT. Some colleges recommend or require SAT Subject Tests as well. Students should strive for solid scores on the SAT or ACT. The scores should be consistent with a student's high school performance. The PSAT can be a good indicator of how a student will perform on these tests. All Clark students will take the PSAT their sophomore year. It is recommended that they take the PSAT again their junior year so they can qualify for National Merit Scholarships and other awards. The PSAT is free sophomore year but students must pay approximately \$15 for the test their junior year (test fee subject to change).

Test Preparation

It is recommended that students use various resources to prepare for these tests. Preparing on your own requires self-discipline. SAT and ACT prep books are available for students to check out from Ms. Jones. The College Board (www.collegeboard.org) offers sample questions and tests for the PSAT and SAT tests, and they are also partnered with Khan Academy to provide FREE individualized practice (www.khanacademy.org/sat). The ACT website also offers FREE personalized test prep through www.academy.act.org. In the spring semester, Clark students can sign up for a 9-week test prep course if they prefer live test prep rather than online prep.

Test Registration

To register for the SAT, go to www.collegeboard.org. You may also register for the SAT Subject Tests here, if applicable. To register for the ACT, go to www.act.org.

Test Fees and Waivers

The ACT currently costs \$46. If you wish to take the ACT Plus Writing, the cost is \$62.50. The SAT currently costs \$47.50, but if you take it with the essay section it costs \$64.50. You must register online by the registration date. You can register late but there are late fees associated with the regular cost of the test. Check with the colleges that you are considering to see if they require the writing section of either test.

If you are on free or reduced lunch, you may receive up to two fee waivers for the ACT and/or two fee waivers for the SAT. You can also qualify for up to 4 college application fee waivers.

Sending Test Scores

SAT and/or ACT scores will have to be sent to the colleges directly by College Board (SAT) or through ACT. Make sure your child requests to have the test scores sent to the colleges where he/she will be applying. Your child can do this during the registration process for free; otherwise they will have to pay to have the scores sent afterwards.

Frequently Asked Questions

What type of tests are the SAT and ACT?

- The SAT Reasoning Test is designed to measure the reading, mathematical and writing abilities important for success in college. The ACT gives estimates of students' current level of educational development in knowledge and skill areas, including English usage, mathematics, reading, and science, with an optional writing test available.

When do most high school students take the SAT or ACT?

- Generally, students take the tests during the spring of their junior year and the fall of their senior year. See the chart below for testing dates and registration deadlines.

May I take the SAT or ACT more than one time?

- Yes, you may take the exams as many times as you wish. Most colleges will accept your highest score(s). It is suggested that students retake the type of test that they did better in. Students often feel comfortable with one test over the other. Check with the individual colleges' websites for their particular testing requirement.

How do I register for the SAT or ACT?

- You may register online for the SAT at www.collegeboard.org and for ACT at www.act.org.

What are SAT Subject Tests?

- Previously known as SAT IIs, SAT subject tests are required or recommended by selective colleges, in addition to the SAT or ACT. Some colleges require as many as three subject tests. Check the college's catalog or online for specific requirements. These tests cannot be taken on the same day as the SAT Test. A maximum of three SAT subject tests may be taken on one testing date.

Will the guidance department or my teachers personally remind me to take the SAT, ACT or SAT Subject Tests?

- **NO.** It is your responsibility to apply online and be aware of the testing dates. Testing dates and registration deadlines are posted outside of the guidance office and can also be found online. See the chart below for 2018-2019 dates.

What are the testing dates and registration deadlines for the SAT and ACT?

ACT Test Dates:	ACT Registration Deadline	Late Registration Deadline
October 27, 2018	September 28, 2018	October 14, 2018
December 8, 2018	November 2, 2018	November 19, 2018
February 9, 2019	January 11, 2019	January 18, 2019
April 13, 2019	March 8, 2019	March 25, 2019
June 8, 2019	May 3, 2019	May 20, 2019
July 13, 2019	June 14, 2019	June 24, 2019
SAT Test Dates	SAT Registration Deadline	Late Registration Deadline
October 6, 2018	September 7, 2018	September 26, 2018
November 3, 2018	October 5, 2018	October 24, 2018
December 1, 2018	November 2, 2018	November 20, 2018
March 9, 2019	February 8, 2019	February 27, 2019
May 4, 2019	April 5, 2019	April 24, 2019
June 1, 2019	May 3, 2019	May 22, 2019

Which standardized test is required by Florida public 4-year colleges?

- Florida universities accept either SAT or ACT tests.

How do I have my SAT & ACT scores sent to a college?

- There is a section on SAT & ACT applications to indicate the college(s) to which you wish your scores to be sent. You may request additional colleges after taking the test by using an "Additional Score Report" form that comes with your admissions ticket. The easiest way to have additional colleges receive your test scores is through the testing service's website.

Should students report their scores to colleges as they take the tests?

- The answer is almost always yes. Take advantage of the four free reports. Sending these scores early in the process indicates a strong early interest in that college.

Will your high school receive a copy of all test scores?

- It is very important that Clark receives a copy of your results. Be sure to enter your high school code on the registration application. Test scores will then be posted on your transcript. **Clark's school code is 101965.**

V) APPLYING FOR COLLEGE

College Application - General Information

- College application materials can be obtained online from the individual college websites generally after July 1st.
- It is recommended to apply online vs. a paper application, but it is wise to print and review the application before submitting.
- The Common Application, www.commonapp.org is used by many colleges with supplemental forms required by each college.
- Be sure your email address is appropriate!
- Consider the content of your Facebook, Instagram and/or any other social media sites. Admissions and financial aid offices *may* review these sites.
- Keep all college application materials organized! Make sure to keep track of all deadlines, perhaps using an Excel spreadsheet, Google Sheets, or a wall calendar.
- File a copy of every document you mail to the colleges and keep a hard copy of those submitted online. Materials do, on occasion, fall into postal or institutional *black holes*.
- Colleges communicate via email and US Mail and through their individual school portals. Check frequently for information on your application.
- Teacher recommendations should be requested as early as possible. Consider giving a résumé to the teacher and ask them at the end of the junior year or beginning of senior year. Request recommendations at least 10 days before it is needed!
- List activities on your application in decreasing order of importance. Colleges look for leadership, passionate longevity of commitment, talent, accomplishments and maturity. A job or significant responsibility at home would qualify as an important activity as well as any recognized work in the arts.
- Plan campus visits well in advance. If you can't go in person, visit colleges online through www.campustours.com or www.ecampustours.com.
- Spread a wide net. Consider applying to one or two “reach” schools, two to four possible or “realistic” schools, and one or two probable or “safety” schools.
- College decisions must be made according to the school's deadlines. Notification and non-refundable deposit are due at this time or **YOU WILL LOSE YOUR SPOT**.
- Do not hesitate to stop by the guidance office if you have any questions about the college admissions process.

Early Decision & Early Action

Early decision plans allow you to apply early (usually by October or November) and receive an admission decision from the college well in advance of the usual notification date. There is a catch! **Early decision plans are contractual and binding**, meaning if you apply as an early decision candidate, you agree to attend that college if it accepts you and offers an adequate financial aid package. Although you can apply to only one college for early decision, you may apply to other colleges under regular admission. If you are accepted by your early admission college, you must withdraw all other applications.

Early action plans are similar to early decision plans in that you can learn early in the admission cycle whether a college has accepted you. Unlike early decision, most early action plans are not binding, meaning you **DO NOT** have to commit to the college to which you have applied for early action. Under these plans, you may apply to other colleges. Usually, you can let the college know of your decision by May 1st or earlier.

Some colleges have begun offering a new admissions option called **single-choice early action**. This plan works the same way as other early action plans, but with single-choice, candidates may not apply early (either early

action or early decision) to any other school. You can still apply to other schools regular decision and are not required to give your final answer of acceptance until the regular decision deadline. This allows you to compare offers of financial aid in the spring before making a commitment.

Should I Apply Under One of These Plans?

You should apply under an early decision or action plan only if you are very, very sure of the college you want to attend. **Early decision is contractually binding** and does not allow you to weigh offers and financial aid packages from several colleges later in the spring. Also, you shouldn't apply early if it is to your advantage to have more of your senior year work to show a college.

The Application Essay

The admissions essay gives you the best chance to stand out from the sea of applicants with similar grades and test scores. A good essay conveys a sense of the applicant as an intelligent, motivated and interesting person, someone the college wants to have as a member of its community. Many college applications ask questions requiring short answers and also ask one or two essay questions, requiring longer answers. Frequently, the applicant will be able to choose from several topics for the longer essay. This part of the application process should be completed as early as possible to ensure the student the time to prepare a superior essay and lessen stress as application deadlines approach.

Essay Writing Tips:

- Be Prepared! Before you start the essay-writing process you should learn everything you can about the college admissions essay. Research the essay writing process online (www.collegeboard.org), read online sample essays or look at a book such as 100 Successful College Application Essays. You can also check out college essay-writing books from Ms. Jones.
- Brainstorm with someone. Schedule a brainstorming meeting with a respected writer to talk about what essays you will need to write and how to approach them strategically. Respected writers may include family, friends, teachers, alumni, or administrators.
- Don't procrastinate! Write. Sleep. Read. Repeat. Writing well-planned college essays takes time and iterations. It could take a good 2-3 weeks to polish a 2-page essay into its most potent form.
- Essay planning and structure. Once you have a topic, plan how you are going to set up your college essay. Write a completed draft, put the draft away for a time period to pause and contemplate the topic. Later revisit the essay for completion allowing you to have a fresh mind to revise and edit the essay.
- Answer the question! Do not use one essay for every application, unless the question asked is very similar.
- Pick a topic that lets the reader know you. Your grades and SAT and/or ACT scores are one side of who you are, but your essays need to show your qualities and personality. A school cheerleader who started coaching a Special Olympics cheer squad after neighbors asked her to baby-sit their handicapped 8 year-old daughter has something different to write. The NHS guy who plays bass in a retro-punk band all over the region on weekends has a unique story to tell.
- Make it personal. This is about you, be the star of the story! Don't write about global warming or immigration reform, unless those are issues you have been actively working to solve.
- Start with a catchy first sentence. Admissions officers read so many essays; keep them interested and reading. Make them want to know more about you.
- Follow essay guidelines. Read the directions carefully! If it says 50 words, it means 50 words. Word counts are important; use your software program to assist you.
- DO NOT underestimate the importance of good grammar. Proofread! Typos, using the name of a different college by accident, or spelling mistakes overlooked by your spellchecker (using 'there' for 'their,' for example) are unacceptable. Readers are looking at grammar and writing ability, in addition to your topic and what you reveal about yourself. **This tip applies to scholarship applications as well!

- Get Help! Whether or not you're going to use school faculty and administrators or outside counseling service, you should get someone to look over your essays – preferably someone who's a great writer or has some experience with the admissions process.

Frequently Asked Questions About Applying

When should I apply to college?

- Students should start applying for college in the summer before their senior year or early in the fall of senior year. Chances for admissions are better the earlier you apply. You should plan to have all applications in to four-year universities before winter break of your senior year. Early Decision and Early Action deadlines are in some cases as early as October 1st. Community colleges have an open admissions policy and will generally accept applications somewhat later.

What can I do between now and the time school starts in the fall to obtain information about specific colleges?

- Use books and websites including www.floridashines.org, www.princetonreview.com, www.collegeboard.org, and www.act.org. Ms. Jones has several resources that you can check out from her as needed.
- Contact specific schools' Offices of Admissions to request catalogs and other information. This can easily be done online.
- Visit the campuses of schools you are considering.
- Talk with friends, relatives, and teachers about the schools they attended.

How do I obtain a college application or catalog/viewbook?

- Request this information through the specific college's website. Keywords to look for are 'Prospective Student,' 'Admissions,' 'Undergraduate Admissions,' and/or 'Contact Us.'

What do I need to take into consideration when filling out an application?

- Read directions carefully. Answer questions accurately and clearly.
- Fill out your application neatly and make sure there are NO errors. The neatness of your applications will help determine the impression you make on the admissions office representative.
- Send along any information requested by the college.
- College entrance test scores will be sent directly to the college from the testing service. This can be done when you indicate the appropriate college code number on your SAT/ACT application. However, scores can be requested from College Board or ACT after college selections have been made.
- Many applications require letters of recommendation. A current résumé must be given to the person writing the recommendation or guidance has recommendation requests you can give your teachers.

Exactly what is a transcript and what information does it include?

- A transcript is a copy of your school record in grades 9 through 12. It can include the courses taken, semester grades, level of classes, class rank, credits and standardized test scores. Courses taken at previously attended high schools and high school level classes taken in 8th grade (e.g. Algebra I) will be included on your transcript.
- You may want to view an unofficial transcript before you send them out. Request one from your counselor.

How do I arrange to have a transcript sent to a college?

- Fill out a transcript request form with Mrs. Wood. Forms can be found outside of her office. Also log in to your MyIRSC account to send a copy of your IRSC transcript to the colleges in which you are applying.

Is the application different if I am a Student-Athlete?

- Yes! In order to be eligible academically to play Division I or II college athletics, you must be certified by the NCAA Clearinghouse. You can register during June following your junior year. The website is www.ncaaclearinghouse.net.

VI) FINANCIAL AID & SCHOLARSHIPS

A. FINANCIAL AID

There are two types of financial aid. The first is based on need, and the second is based on merit. Financial aid is one of the more unpredictable facets of college admissions. Qualification for need-based aid is determined through a variety of measures and there are instances when families are eligible for aid they did not expect. In addition to need-based aid, there is a growing pool of schools offering some form of merit scholarship. These scholarships can vary immensely in amount but often can make private college tuition more competitive with public college alternatives.

Our strong recommendation in reviewing cost at each institution is not for you to be overly alarmed by the initial “sticker price” of institutions. Aid packages can serve to make costs relatively close at each college and allow for choice based strictly on other factors.

The first step in applying for aid is to contact the financial aid office of each college and receive information. Colleges often have their own application for aid that must be submitted at the time of application for admission. They also will provide each applicant with detailed instructions on the process including deadlines and which federal forms must be submitted. All need-based aid is determined in part by the submission of the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** and for some colleges the **CSS PROFILE**. While these forms request slightly different information, each is sent to a central clearinghouse. From there the results are processed and sent to the colleges you select.

NEED-BASED AID

As measured by the federal government, need equals COA (Cost of Attendance) minus the EFC (Expected Family Contribution). Need is used to determine the financial aid package for which the student qualifies. The definition of financial need may vary from organization to organization.

The Financial Aid Package will generally consist of three parts: grants, loans, and work-study (often campus-based employment). Your aid package added to your family contribution should equal the total cost. The total should include tuition, room, board, and special fees (such as books and travel costs).

Grants are monies given as outright gifts that do not have to be repaid. Grants can come from various sources: federal aid, state grants, and money awarded directly by individual colleges.

- **Pell Grant**: Need-based federal grant of up to \$6,095. Size and eligibility are determined by financial need. Pell Grants are given only for undergraduate or teacher education programs. The US Department of Education has more information on Pell Grants.
- **Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)**: Federal grant for students with exceptional financial need. Depending on need and COA, the grant ranges from \$100 - \$4,000. The US Department of Education has more information the SEOG program.
- **Florida Student Assistance Grant (FSAG)**: The Florida Student Assistance Grant (FSAG) Program is a need-based grant program available to degree-seeking, resident, undergraduate students who demonstrate substantial financial need and are enrolled in participating postsecondary institutions. Can be applied for with the same application as Bright Futures.
- **First Generation Matching Grant (FGMG)**: The First Generation Matching Grant Program (FGMG) is a need-based grant program available to degree-seeking, resident, undergraduate students who demonstrate substantial financial need, and are enrolled in eligible participating postsecondary institutions. Eligible students have a parent(s) who has not earned a baccalaureate or higher degree. Can be applied for with the same application as Bright Futures.

Loans require repayment to the source of funding. These loans, like grants, can come from federal, state, and institutional sources. Some also are available through private lenders. *Be Careful: Students have the right to choose their own lending institution. You need to shop for good loan interest rates.* Many banks and lending institutions now make special loan programs available to parents to help finance their student's education.

- **Subsidized Loan:** After filing the FAFSA, students with financial need may be eligible to receive a subsidized loan, which does not charge interest until the student graduates or leaves school.
- **Unsubsidized Stafford Loan:** Unsubsidized loans are available for students who do not file the FAFSA or do not qualify for the subsidized loans. However, although loan payments are not required until after the student graduates or leaves school, interest charges will accrue (accumulate to be paid at a later date) while the student attends school.

Work-study consists of on-campus employment for hourly wages during the academic year. There is a weekly limit on hours and yearly limit on total wages. Of course, students can seek other employment to supplement their income.

MERIT-BASED AID

Financial aid, including scholarships, is awarded based on candidate merit (i.e. academic, special talent, citizenship, competition), excluding athletic aid. This form of aid may or may not consider financial need. Many different types of scholarships exist, but most fall into two broad categories: Institution-based, and Community-based.

Institution-based scholarships - Most colleges will publish the scholarships that they offer in their literature. When this is not the case, inquire directly with the admission office.

Community-based scholarships - A broad range exists, from subject-specific to those sponsored by civic groups; from those for students of certain ethnicities to those sponsored by corporations; and from military and religious affiliations to essay contests. While some of these scholarships are based locally, there are many at the national level as well.

Florida Bright Futures Scholarships – Students who graduate from a Florida high school are eligible for Bright Futures scholarships. See below for more information.

B. SCHOLARSHIPS

Students should begin researching scholarships in their freshmen and sophomore years so they know what it takes to qualify for various scholarships. If students prepare adequately, by the time they are a senior they should have plenty of experiences to supplement their scholarship applications. The harder students work in high school, the higher their chances of receiving a scholarship. And of course, the more likely they will get into the college of their choice. Below are several common scholarship opportunities for students in Martin County. Bright Futures is discussed at length since it is the most common scholarship students are awarded. At the end of this section, there is a list of helpful websites for students to research in relation to scholarships.

BRIGHT FUTURES SCHOLARSHIPS

“Bright Futures” refers to a State of Florida scholarship program for students who continue their post-secondary education in the State of Florida. In order to apply for this scholarship and other state scholarships, the students must fill out the Florida Financial Aid Application (www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org). Applications open on October 1st and should be completed by April of the senior year. Even if a student does not plan to attend college in Florida, we still encourage him/her to apply for the Bright Futures Scholarship. The scholarship is valid for two years in the event the student decides to return to a Florida institution.

- **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Bright Futures requires student SAT and/or ACT scores, as well as a social security number, date of birth, and community service hours. This information must be entered into the students' school records so that Bright Futures has access to them. It is the responsibility of the student to have standardized test scores sent to Clark – they do this by selecting Clark as their home school when registering for the ACT or SAT. The student can also call College Board or ACT to have the

scores sent to Clark after they test if they did not report the scores the first time. It is suggested that each student order a transcript from the school guidance office to verify accuracy of this information.

Do you have Florida Prepaid Tuition? *If so, you should talk to a financial aid officer at the college you or your child would like to attend. Prepaid plans can work along with any scholarships you earn to make sure as much of your educational costs are covered as possible. For example, if you qualify for Bright Futures, in most cases, your scholarship will be applied then funds from your Prepaid Plan will be applied. You can use the remaining funds for other school costs, like books. You can also receive a refund equal to what would have been paid to the school.*

Types of Bright Futures Awards

Florida Academic Scholars (FAS) will receive an award to cover 100% of tuition and applicable fees and \$300 for both fall and spring semesters for additional educational expenses. Students attending a public institution will have tuition and applicable fees covered. Students attending a nonpublic institution will receive a comparable amount as noted in the Private Award Chart. FAS students can receive an award during the summer sessions to cover tuition and applicable fees, beginning with the 2018 summer term.

Florida Medallion Scholars (FMS) will receive an award to cover 75% of tuition and applicable fees. Students attending a public institution will have tuition and applicable fees covered. Students attending a nonpublic institution will receive a comparable amount as noted in the Private Award Chart (<http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/SSFAD/PDF/BFPrivateAwards.pdf>). FMS students can receive an award during the summer sessions to cover tuition and applicable fees, beginning with the 2019 summer term.

The applicable fees for both FAS and FMS include activity and service fee, health fee, athletic fee, financial aid fee, capital improvement fee, campus access/transportation fee, technology fee and tuition differential fee

Other award recipients will receive a fixed cost per credit hour based on award level, institution type, and credit type as outlined in the table below.

2018-2019 Bright Futures Scholarship Per Hour Award Amounts			
	Credit Hour Award		Clock Hour Award
	Semester	Quarter	
Gold Seal Vocational Scholars (GSV) & Gold Seal CAPE Scholars (GSC)			
Career Certificate Program (PSAV)	\$39	\$26	\$1.30
Applied Technology Diploma Program (ATD)	\$39	\$26	\$1.30
Technical Degree Education Program (AS, AAS, CCC)	\$48	\$32	\$1.60
Bachelors of Science (BS)* Bachelors of Applied Science (BAS)*	\$48	\$32	
*GSC recipients who earn a qualifying A.S. or A.A.S. degree may receive an award toward a qualifying B.S. or B.A.S. degree.			

Checking your Bright Futures eligibility

If you would like to regularly monitor where you stand in relation to Bright Futures, you can check your status by going to <https://www.floridashines.org/go-to-college/pay-for-college>. On this site, there is also a 30-second video clip that provides tips for checking your Bright Futures eligibility. Once you pull up your evaluation, you will see your current GPA on the Bright Futures scale in addition to your test scores, community service hours, and you can check all the grades and courses you've taken in your high school career. If you notice any errors on the evaluation, see your high school counselor.

Eligibility requirements for the Bright Futures Scholarship Program

The three levels of awards – Florida Academic Scholars, Florida Medallion Scholars, and Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars – each has its own award amount, GPA requirement, required high school credits, community service hours, and SAT or ACT scores.

Florida Academic Scholars (FAS)	Florida Medallion Scholars (FMS)
1290 SAT / 29 ACT	1170 SAT / 26 ACT
100 community service hours	75 community service hours
3.5 GPA	3.0 GPA
<u>Required course credits</u>	<u>Required course credits</u>
4 – English	4 – English
4 – Mathematics	4 – Mathematics
3 – Natural Science	3 – Natural Science
3 – Social Science	3 – Social Science
2 – World Language	2 – World Language

Gold Seal Vocational Scholars (GSV)	Gold Seal CAPE Scholars (GSC)		
Accepts SAT, ACT, or PERT scores	No test scores requirements		
<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><u>ACT</u> Reading – 19 English – 17 Math - 19</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><u>SAT</u> Reading – 24 W & L – 25 Math – 24</td> </tr> </table>	<u>ACT</u> Reading – 19 English – 17 Math - 19	<u>SAT</u> Reading – 24 W & L – 25 Math – 24	30 community service hours
<u>ACT</u> Reading – 19 English – 17 Math - 19	<u>SAT</u> Reading – 24 W & L – 25 Math – 24		
<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><u>PERT</u> Reading–106 Writing – 103 Math – 114</td> <td style="text-align: center;">30 community service hours</td> </tr> </table>	<u>PERT</u> Reading–106 Writing – 103 Math – 114	30 community service hours	Earn a minimum of 5 postsecondary credit hours through CAPE industry certifications which articulate for college credit
<u>PERT</u> Reading–106 Writing – 103 Math – 114	30 community service hours		
Enrolled in a career education or certificate program (ex. A+ Certification)			
3.0 GPA in non-elective courses 3.5 GPA in career education courses			

GPA Requirement

Bright Futures awards require a certain grade point average. BE CAREFUL, however, because this GPA is not the same one that appears on the student’s transcript. Bright Futures has its own way of calculating GPAs. “Challenging” or higher level courses are weighted in their GPA calculation. These courses are given an extra .25 points for every ½ credit (1 full credit = .50 points extra).

PATHFINDER AWARDS (<https://pathfinderawards.org/>)

The Pathfinder High School Scholarship Awards are presented each year to high school seniors in Palm Beach and Martin counties who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in 18 academic, vocational and athletic categories. These seniors are nominated by their schools, they do not self-apply. The Pathfinder Awards program is one of the largest and most comprehensive high school scholarship programs in the state. All public

and private high schools in Palm Beach and Martin counties are eligible to participate. Pathfinders is sponsored by The Palm Beach Post. Scholarship amounts range from \$2,500 to \$4,000. Clark nominates one candidate per category; a student cannot be nominated in more than one category. Teachers and other school faculty determine which students will be nominated. Students are also allowed to self-nominate to represent Clark. Students will be notified in October or November of their senior year if they have been chosen. Nomination packages with supplemental materials are due in January, with judging in March and awards given in early May. Judges are selected by the Palm Beach Post from both the public and private sectors of our community; three judges per category, based on their credentials and expertise. The eighteen categories are: Academic Excellence, Art, Business, Communications, Community Involvement, Computer Science, Drama, Foreign Language, Forensics/Speech, History/Political Science, Literature, Mathematics, Music/Instrumental, Music/Vocal, Reach for Excellence, Science, Sports, and Technical/Vocational/Agricultural.

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS

(<https://www.yourcommunityfoundation.org/scholarships>)

The Community Foundation administers over 100 endowed scholarship funds that are established by people and organizations wanting to assist Palm Beach and Martin County high school students in continuing their education beyond high school. The original charitable gifts are invested, and the income earned each year is paid out annually in the form of grants to qualified scholarship recipients. The scholarship application opens in November of each year.

MARTIN COUNTY COMMUNITY SCHOLARSHIPS

(www.clarkalc.net >> Guidance >> Scholarships/Financial Aid)

In September/October, Ms. Jones will send out information about local community scholarships that are available only to students who live in Martin County. A few of the scholarships have their own specific application, but most scholarships can be applied for using a single standard scholarship application. The deadline for all Martin County community scholarships is November 30th.

SCHOLARSHIP SCAMS

You should be wary of any offer that guarantees or promises scholarship money or low-interest loans. Most of these scams require you to pay an up-front processing fee in return for finding you scholarship money. Legitimate scholarship search websites will NEVER require you to pay a fee and there are no guarantees that you will win any scholarship. Legitimate scholarship search engines, like www.scholarships.com or www.fastweb.com, may ask you to register a user name and password. They may ask for contact information or require you to look at advertisements. However, they will not ask, and you should never give, any financial information such as credit card numbers or bank account information. You should not give your social security number to scholarship search websites.

HELFPUL ONLINE RESOURCES

Bright Futures	<i>Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA) – Opens October 1st of senior year</i>	https://www.FloridaStudentFinancialAidsg.org/ua/sawstua_uaforn.asp
	Track Application and Award Status	https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/home/ApplyHere.asp
College & Career Planning	Find your college major	http://www.findmycollegemajor.org/
	<i>Florida Shines</i> (college, career, and scholarship search site)	https://www.floridashines.org/
	<i>ASVAB Career Exploration Program</i>	https://www.asvabprogram.com/
	<i>College Board's Big Future</i> (college, career, major search, and financial aid resources)	https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/
	Virtual Campus Tours	http://www.ecampustours.com/ https://www.campustours.com/
Community Resources	<i>Whole Child Connection – comprehensive list of service providers in areas such as education, health, social well-being, spiritual well-being, environment safety and economics</i>	http://www.wholechildmartin.com
	<i>Palm Beach/Treasure Coast 211 – Providing assistance and referral in times of emotional, financial, and community crisis</i>	https://www.211palmbeach.org/
	<i>Tykes & Teens – mental health services for students and their families</i>	http://www.tykesandteens.org/
	<i>Helping People Succeed</i>	http://www.hpsfl.org/
Volunteer Opportunities	<i>United Way of Martin County – Martin Volunteers</i> (extensive list of available community opportunities)	https://www.unitedwaymartin.org/volunteer-today
	<i>Florida Oceanographic Society</i>	https://www.floridaocean.org/p/9/volunteer#.W4VYCM5KiUk
	<i>Martin County</i> (libraries and parks and rec)	https://www.martin.fl.us/MCvolunteers
	<i>YMCA of the Treasure Coast</i>	https://www.ymcatreasurecoast.org/volunteer-opportunities/
	<i>Habitat for Humanity of Martin County</i>	https://www.habitatmartin.org/ , then click on the Volunteer link on the right
	<i>The Salvation Army</i>	https://salvationarmyflorida.org/martincounty/volunteer/volunteer-opportunities/
	<i>The Lyric Theatre</i>	http://www.lyrictheatre.com/volunteer-opportunities
	<i>Caring Children Clothing Children</i>	http://www.4cmartin.org/become-a-volunteer.html
	<i>House of Hope</i>	http://www.hohmartin.org/volunteers
	<i>Humane Society of the Treasure Coast</i>	https://www.hstc1.org/volunteermain

	<i>Kane Center - Council on Aging of Martin County</i>	https://www.kanecenter.org/volunteer
	<i>Equine Rescue & Adoption Foundation</i>	http://eraf.org/becoming-a-volunteer/
	<i>Martin County Healthy Start</i>	http://www.mchealthystart.org/volunteer-opportunities.html
	<i>Elliott Museum</i>	https://elliottmuseum.org/volunteer/
	<i>Big Brothers Big Sisters of Palm Beach & Martin Counties</i>	http://mentorbigs.org/volunteer/
	<i>Arts Council of Martin County</i>	http://www.martinarts.org/support_us/volunteer_opportunities.html
	<i>ARC of Martin County (Advocates for the Rights of the Challenged)</i>	https://www.arcmc.org/volunteer
	<i>Special Olympics</i>	https://specialolympicsflorida.org/get-involved/become-a-volunteer/
	<i>Treasure Coast Food Bank</i>	https://stop hunger.org/volunteer/
	<i>Martin Health System Teen Volunteer Program</i>	https://www.martinhealth.org/mhs-teenage-volunteer-program
Financial Aid	<i>Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)</i>	www.fafsa.ed.gov
	<i>FLDOE Office of Student Financial Assistance</i>	http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/
	<i>Federal Student Aid (U.S. Department of Education)</i>	https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/
	<i>Navigating Your Financial Future</i>	http://www.navigatingyourfinancialfuture.org/
Scholarship Search Sites	<i>Fastweb!</i>	https://www.fastweb.com/
	<i>Scholarships.com</i>	https://www.scholarships.com/
	<i>College Board scholarship search</i>	www.collegeboard.com/pay
	<i>Sallie Mae scholarship search</i>	https://www.salliemae.com/college-planning/college-scholarships/
	<i>African American / Black scholarships</i>	www.uncf.org
	<i>Asian & Pacific Islander scholarships</i>	www.apiasf.org
	<i>Latino scholarships</i>	www.hsf.net www.maldef.org www.latinocollegedollars.org
	<i>Native American scholarships</i>	www.collegefund.org www.aises.org www.aigcs.org www.bie.edu
	<i>Athletic scholarships</i>	www.ncaa.org
Testing Info & Prep Resources (FREE)	<i>ACT® registration</i>	www.actstudent.org
	<i>SAT® registration</i>	www.sat.org
	<i>PERT test prep</i>	http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5592/urlt/0078248-pert-studentstudyguide.pdf https://irsc-asc.weebly.com/pert.html
	<i>ACT test prep</i>	https://academy.act.org/ https://www.kaptest.com/act/free/act-20-minute-workout https://www.princetonreview.com/college/free-act-practice-test#!practice

		https://www.march2success.com/ https://www.testprepreview.com/
	<i>SAT test prep</i>	https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/practice/full-length-practice-tests https://www.princetonreview.com/college/free-sat-practice-test#!practice https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat/full-length-sat-1 https://www.kaptest.com/sat/free/sat-practice https://www.march2success.com/ https://www.testprepreview.com/ https://www.4tests.com/sat