

Dear Eagle Ridge Academy Seniors and Parents of Seniors:

This is the November update from your counselor. Many of you are busy applying to colleges, so most of this email is a review of the college application process. **Note that if you haven't started applying yet, it's not too late to get started!**

Financial Aid Tips - Students and families were able to begin applying for financial aid as of October 1st. Financial Aid offices at all schools welcome questions, so don't hesitate to call the offices at the colleges you are applying to.

Know the deadlines! Every college has a different Priority Deadline for applying for financial aid. You can find this information on their financial aid websites. If you miss the deadline, you can still apply, but you may not be eligible for the maximum aid.

Complete the 2019-20 FAFSA. All students should apply for federal aid. Regardless of need, you will be eligible for federal student loans, which are the best option. Also, applying for financial aid tells a college that you want help in paying for college.

Use 2017 Tax Data with the IRS Data Retrieval Tool. Financial aid for the 2018-19 school year is based on 2017 tax data. Families will be able to import their 2017 tax data into the FAFSA using the Data Retrieval Tool. Using this tool reduces the need for additional documentation. Here is a video explaining the tool: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMmnp3GpA>.

Complete the CSS Profile IF your college requires it. Some colleges require families to complete an additional financial aid application for institutional aid. This application was also available as of October 1st. You can find out if your colleges require it by going to their financial aid websites.

Monitor your email. Financial aid offices may request additional information and you'll want to respond promptly. Students and parents should regularly read email and respond to any requests.

College Applications Reminders

1. **Use Admissions Websites to make a list of deadlines and application requirements.** Many colleges have multiple deadline options. Know when you need to have the application submitted. You should determine if there is more than one option for the application (Common App? Coalition app?) and know what the other required components are – letters of recommendation (how many? From whom?), ACT/SAT, SAT subject tests?, Transcript, etc.
2. **Complete the application thoroughly. Proofread carefully.** Many colleges are a part of the Common Application, so it may save you time to use it. Always carefully review the application and have one other person look at it to check for typos and other mistakes.
3. **If a college requires an essay, remember that it's an opportunity to tell them something about you that they may not find elsewhere in your application.**
 - a. What do you care about? What are your best qualities? What stories in your life illustrate those qualities and things you care about?

- b. If a college is asking why you're applying there, tell them something about YOU and your interests and experiences and how you fit with the school and specific opportunities at the school. If it's your first choice school, make sure to mention that!

Scholarships you can apply for!

- Due December 1 - **Fleet Reserve Association 7-12 Americanism Essay Contest:** Write a Write a 350 word essay on the theme "What Freedom of Speech Means to Me".
<http://www.fra.org/essay>
- Due December 5 - **Stephen J Brady STOP Hunger 9-12 Scholarship** (Sodexo Foundation) <http://us.stop-hunger.org/home/news/content-col1-area/latest-news/sodexo-stop-hunger-foundation-ex.html>
- Due January 18th - **John F. Kennedy Profiles in 9-12 Courage Essay Contest:** Up to 1,000 word essay describing act of political courage by U.S. Jan 18 elected official during or after 1917.
<http://www.jfklibrary.org/Education/Profile-in-Courage-Essay-Contest.aspx>
- Due January 20th - **C-SPAN Student Cam Documentary Competition:** Teams of 1-3 students create a 5-7 minute video documentary expressing the following theme: "What does it mean to be American?" <http://www.studentcam.org>
- Due February 7th - **Optimist International Essay Contest:** Write 700-800 word essay on "Is there a fine line between Optimism and Reality?" <http://www.facebook.com/EPOptimists>

Remember that I am here to help you!

Best,
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