

Dear Eagle Ridge Academy Seniors and Parents of Seniors:

Welcome to the second half of the school year! This is the February update from your counselor. You're getting much closer to graduation; however, it's important to finish strong! Hard work in high school will make college MUCH easier! Learn all you can from your classes and your teachers so you'll be prepared for success in college next year.

### College tasks!

**Most colleges are still accepting applications** – check the admissions website for the college you're interested in to determine the deadline. Many applications are quite easy to complete.

**Send mid-year grade reports.** Some colleges request mid-year grade reports and if you've been deferred from a college, you'll want to send them mid-year grades. These updated transcripts can help you make a case that you're a great candidate for admission! ***The form to request a transcript can be found on the College Prep page on our website. Fill out form online and note that the turn around time is 3 days.***

**Watch your email for notification from colleges.** It's common for important messages from colleges to be sent via email. They can even end up in your junk mail. Make sure that you check both regularly. Don't miss out on an admissions notification or a scholarship opportunity because you missed the email.

**Deferred or waitlisted?** If you've been notified that you're deferred or waitlisted, read the information that they've sent you carefully. The admissions office will give you specific instructions about next steps. All colleges will want you to send mid-year grades, some will want an email or letter confirming your interest, others will accept additional letters of recommendation or information about recent accomplishments. Carefully follow the instructions and give the college as much information as they will allow you to submit.

### Financial Aid

**Apply using the FAFSA and your 2017 Taxes** - All seniors and their families should consider completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid found at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). Note that all students, regardless of need are eligible for federal loans through the FAFSA. These loans are the best first choice because they have the potential for income based repayment and other federal support. FAFSA help is available from the college financial aid offices.

**Does your college require the CSS Profile?** Some private colleges require the CSS Profile. It's another application for financial aid, but it's used by colleges to award institutional aid. If your college uses it, make sure you know the deadline for application and get it submitted in plenty of time.

**Consider a financial aid appeal**—If your family's circumstance has changed, or if a college's financial aid package does not meet your need, reach out to the financial aid office ASAP to appeal the offer. Some families will find that their financial situation is much different than it was in 2017. You must submit the 2017 information and then file an appeal.

**Scholarships:** Most scholarships are targeted to second semester seniors. This is the time! Don't miss out! Go to scholarship websites and check local organizations for opportunities.

**National Scholarships:** There are many great sources for national scholarship lists. Below are a few of the best.

**Peterson's** - ([www.petersons.com/college-search/scholarship-search.aspx](http://www.petersons.com/college-search/scholarship-search.aspx).) has scholarship search filters and many other college tools.

**UNIGO** (<https://www.unigo.com/scholarships>) has many tools including a scholarship list that students can browse and scholarship-matching based on a profile.

**Fastweb** (<http://www.fastweb.com>) has long been the go-to site for scholarships. You must make an account and a profile.

**Scholarships.com** has a very large database updated daily. It is searchable without a profile, but you can make one.

**Scholarships from colleges:** The biggest sources of scholarship money are the colleges where you apply. Make sure that you have done everything necessary to be eligible for scholarships offered by the schools. Don't hesitate to ask financial aid or the admissions office for more information if you can't find it on the school web pages.

#### **You've been accepted to multiple schools – how to decide?**

**Cost!** Take a careful look at the financial aid offers from the schools you are considering and talk to your parents. Make a plan to pay for college. The plan should include no more student debt than you will likely earn in your first year working, or about \$40,000. More than this amount of debt will seriously limit your choices well into adulthood.

**Academic programs:** What are you interested in studying? Pull up the curriculum for your major on the college websites and look at the classes you will take. Do you like the classes? Can you go to the college and sit in on a class? Talk to a professor and students who are in the major? Which school offers a better experience?

**Career Services and Placement Support:** Call or visit and ask about which companies recruit on the campus. Talk to current students and ask about their internship and job search experiences.

**Visit!** Eat in the cafeteria, stay in a residence hall, visit a class, talk to students. Many schools will help seniors arrange a visit. Does this college feel like it could be home for you? Are students happy and challenged? Are there activities and clubs that interest you?

Remember that I am here to help you!

Best,

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