

## **SOPHOMORE YEAR – Month-by-Month**

While your freshman year was all about transitioning to high school, your sophomore year is all about kicking off your college planning. This is the best time to start thinking seriously about what's in store after high school. You don't have to make any major decisions just yet, but you do need to start exploring and understanding your options—as well as what it takes to make them a reality.

### **August**

Before heading back to school, review your objectives for this year—and for high school in general. As a benchmark, research a college you might want to attend and see how you stack up thus far with the average admitted student in terms of GPA and activities. If 9<sup>th</sup> grade could've gone better—you know who you are!—get yourself in shape for this year. You've still got time to improve that GPA and get more involved, so if you have some ground to make up, start now. You can't afford to blow it in 10th grade!

#### To Do:

- ◆ Set your goals for the year—both academic and personal.
- ◆ Review your schedule and make sure you've signed up for the right classes; see your counselor before classes start if there are any problems.
- ◆ Consider taking a more challenging course load if you aced your freshman year (or a less challenging course load if you didn't).
- ◆ Buy a calendar or organizer to stay on top of assignments, events, and your social life.
- ◆ Look up data on at least one college.

### **September & October**

Check in with your counselor about taking the PLAN as a sophomore. If you will be taking it, find out how (and if) you want to prepare. Your PLAN score gives you an idea of how you will do on the ACT, you want to do your best, if only to give you confidence for next year.

#### To Do:

- ◆ Get to know your teachers—you probably won't have any of the same ones from last year.
- ◆ Take note of any major assignments.
- ◆ Prepare for the PLAN test. Your counselor should have information about this.

### **November & December**

You'll be busy finishing out your semester and preparing for your end-of-term exams, but don't lose your college-prep momentum. Researching colleges is a skill in itself. The more info you can gather about what makes a school a great match for you, the better chance you'll have of making an informed choice when that time comes (and it's sooner than you think!).

Consider investigating the different TYPES of colleges, especially if you have very specific interests, such as arts schools, or military academies, or culinary programs at a CTE (Career and Technical Education) school. Sophomore year is a great time to learn about the broad categories of post-secondary opportunities that exist. On top of this, make sure you're involved with at least one extra-curricular activity.

#### To Do:

- ◆ Start researching a few colleges and see what it takes to get in.
- ◆ Take the PLAN test.

## **January**

You're halfway through the academic year! Stay focused, but try to have some fun along the way too (extra-curricular activities are a good release!).

### To Do:

- ◆ Think about your summer plans (even if there is snow on the ground).
- ◆ Join a club or a team or something and get involved!

## **February & March**

You're thinking about summer by now, right? That means summer school, summer travel programs, community service, work opportunities (especially unusual or creative ones)—anything to bolster your experiences and stay focused.

### To Do:

- ◆ If you're still looking for something to do this summer, get moving. Many programs (especially travel and Camp programs) have Spring application deadlines.
- ◆ Keep an eye out for a College Fair in the area—while it will likely be geared toward juniors, attend if you can.

## **April & May**

By now, your parents have probably started in with the advice on preparing for college. Listen to what they say, but trust your own experience and interests too. Keep exploring colleges, majors, and career options. The more familiar you are with all the options out there, the more you'll be able to focus on things that interest you the most.

Speaking of exploring, it wouldn't hurt to familiarize yourself with some scholarships, even just ones from local universities and colleges. A ton of scholarships are based on grades and test scores, and many scholarship apps ask for a list of activities, letters of recommendation, and sometimes essays. In other words, it's important that you know now what you'll be judged on later.

### To Do:

- ◆ Keep an eye out for College Fair in the area—while it will likely be geared toward juniors, attend if you can.
- ◆ Stay focused on your academics with Spring comes the “fever” but you have only a few short weeks left to work on raising your grades, passing exams, improving your GPA and earning those credits.

## **June & July**

Congrats! You've made it through another year of high school. You know what this means—your high school career is halfway over and you are an Upperclassman.

### To Do:

- ◆ Get ready for your summer program (if you're going on one).
- ◆ Get a summer job. It'll look good on your college application—and you'll earn some extra money.
- ◆ Touch base with your parents about your saving-for-college plan.
- ◆ Stay busy doing things you enjoy. College may seem like a long way off, but what you do now will help your chances of admission later.
- ◆ Stay on top of any correspondence from school; you don't want to miss important deadlines.