**The College Application Process-**

**A "to do list" for the Summer Before Your Senior Year**

If you get as much of the college admissions process out of the way before your senior year, your chances of having a smooth last year of high school increase exponentially. It will give you more time to work on your schoolwork (the fall semester is looked at very closely by college admission counselors), extracurricular activities, and (hopefully) still have some fun. Try to do as much of the following to make your college admission process go as smoothly as possible.

**1. Think about and outline a college essay.**

As more and more schools use the Common Application (over 400 colleges use it now), it is safe to say you will apply to one that uses it for the admissions process. For this reason, you can get a jumpstart on an essay on any of the topics below:

a. Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.

b. Discuss some issue of personal, local, national, or international concern and its importance to you.

c. Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.

d. Describe a character in fiction, a historical figure, or a creative work (as in art, music, science, etc.) that has had an influence on you, and explain that influence.

e. A range of academic interests, personal perspectives, and life experiences adds much to the educational mix. Given your personal background, describe an experience that illustrates what you would bring to the diversity in a college community or an encounter that demonstrated the importance of diversity to you.

f. Topic of your choice.

**2. Make a list of the qualities you desire in a college.**

Everyone knows that college is not all about hitting the books. What other qualities are you looking for in a college? There are many to research: city versus rural life, athletics, the quality of facilities and the tastiness of dining hall food, famous professors, the strength of a potential major, male-to-female ratio, among many others.

**3. Develop your personal interests.**

Colleges want you to be passionate about something. Take extra guitar lessons, join a summer soccer league, or go on extra camping trips to demonstrate your interests. Admission officers love well-rounded people who can bring something unique to campus. A personal interest may help you stand out.

**4. Work to improve your standardized test scores.**

If your scores are not in a school's 50% range, you may want to retake the ACT in the fall. To do better, you must develop a proper study plan. Either buy test prep books or use some of the test prep materials provided through PCTC Career Coaching

**5. Get a summer job.**

Personal responsibility is an important trait all admission counselors are looking for, and nothing says responsibility quite like a job. Even if it is serving ice cream in six-hour shifts, colleges will look on any work experience very favorably.

**6. Take summer classes at a local college/university.**

Enrolling in summer courses can work to your advantage if you are a straight A student or if your grades are weak. Either way, doing well in these courses will show admission officers that you are capable of being an academic success at their school. Doing this will increase your chance of being accepted to a "reach" school or obtaining a lucrative scholarship.

**7. Practice your interview skills.**

If you are shooting for a top ten school, or if your GPA and ACT scores are at the lower end of your dream school's applicant pool, an interview moves from being an option to a requirement for you. You must perform well when meeting with an alumni representative or admission counselor. Setting up one or two mock interviews with your parents, a teacher, your counselor, a friend, or a sibling can be very beneficial.

**8. Volunteer. Admission counselors are looking for certain personality traits, compassion being one of the most important.**

Colleges want good people on their campuses; nothing says benevolent and selfless better than volunteering some time in a nursing home or at a local animal shelter. Call a local nursing home, community center, animal shelter, or other non-profit to see if they need any help. Chances are they do.

**9. Visit two or three colleges.**

Although the campus will not be bustling with activity, visiting college campuses during the summer can be very rewarding. Being on a large state university feels much different than being at a small liberal arts college. Use these summer visits to figure out what kind of college you want to attend.

**10. Think about potential careers.**

This is not entirely necessary, since most people have no clue what they want to do for the rest of their lives…at the age of 17! But, if you have never thought about it, putting some time into thinking about careers that match your interests cannot hurt.

Adapted from [www.unigo.com](http://www.unigo.com)