

This handbook has been prepared to help you with the process of exploring your options beyond high school, and applying to colleges and universities. We hope that you and your parents will find this handbook useful and refer to it often.

The process of choosing a post-secondary plan, completing applications, and navigating the financial assistance process is a complex one that requires you to pay attention to procedures, details, and deadlines. This handbook will simplify things and take you step by step through the process.

Remember, every year of high school is very important! Your grades, test scores, activities in which you participate, and the foresight of your planning will have an impact on your potential acceptance to the college of your choice. ***Your search should not be about going to the best school but going to the best school for you.***

We encourage you to focus on a few things each year. Junior year should be focused on exploring your options after high school. If college is an option, then junior year should be spent researching and visiting colleges. There are many resources in this packet to help you to focus your energy. Senior year should be spent applying to colleges, applying for financial aid, and making your final decision!

The Counseling Office is an important resource for you throughout this process. Please make appointments and meet with your counselor as needed.

Please pay special attention to the calendar at the end of this book. It will give you specific guidance on your journey to find the best post-secondary options for you!

Your counselor can:

- Provide you with information and registration websites for admissions tests (ACT, SAT)
- Review your academic record and test scores to see how they fit in with your future plans
- Advise you in making a list of schools for you to research and explore that match your profile and interests
- Clarify or explain terms, ideas, and experiences that are encountered while researching post high school credentials
- Help you complete your application forms, edit your essays, and prepare you for potential interviews
- Complete your Secondary School Report (if using the Common Application or SendEdu) and/or write letters of recommendation
- Provide resources to help you follow up with schools to which you have applied
- Help you evaluate and understand financial assistance offers
- Finalize your enrollment to the school of your choice

Best Wishes!

Morton High School Counselors

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SECTION 1: Post-Secondary Options

There are many post-secondary options after graduation from high school some of these options include:

- College
- Military
- One-year gap programs
- Workforce
- Vocational and Technical Schools



➤ **College**

The majority of Morton High School graduates continue their education at either two year or four year colleges. For more information about the college search process, see Section 3.

➤ **Military**

Entering and joining the Military can be a very rewarding way to develop a career or get financial support for a college education.

There are five military branches: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. Three of these military departments are headed by the Department of Defense: The Department of the Army, the Department of the Air Force, and the Department of the Navy. The Marine Corp falls under the command of the Department of the Navy and the Coast Guard falls under the command of the Department of Homeland Defense.

Each service has both an active and a part time reserve component, and each service branch has their own unique missions and job offerings. In order to determine which branch could be a right fit for you, first you need to identify what Service Area of Operation – air, sea, or land– you are interested in. If you need more specific information regarding the military branches, you can contact the local branches or speak with your counselor. The ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) test is given yearly in the fall at Morton High School.

➤ **One-Year Gap Program**

If you're unsure about what major you should choose, your career goals, what you are going to do with your college degree, or if you are even going to pursue a college degree, you may wish to consider a gap year program. Students taking a gap year after high school can use this time to broaden their horizons and learn through unique experiences before they hit the structure of the post-secondary academic world.

➤ **Workforce**

There are many alternate routes to success, and if college isn't for you right now, you may find that you want focus on entering the workforce after college. There are several paths you can take toward a career.

One of these is a Cooperative Education Program. A Cooperative Education Program is a broad based, on-campus classroom study program with an off-campus, paying, on the job training program. Many colleges offer this program, and you may want to contact the college admissions counselor to see if this program is offered at their specific college or university.

There are also many employment websites that can assist you with identifying a career path, entering the workforce, applying and training for a job. Sites such as www.illinoisworknet.com have many resources for the job market. Other sites such as www.illinoiseducationjobbank.org and www.ides.state.il.us will allow you to search for a job in today's job market that might match your skills and talents.

➤ **Trade or Vocational Schools**

A vocational school, often referred to as a trade school, is a post-secondary institution that operates for the purpose of giving its students skills needed to perform a certain job. Vocational schools teach job-



specific skills and are considered to be institutions devoted to training rather than education, practical versus academic education.

There are a variety of options including: Agriculture, Automotive, Business, Criminal Justice, Culinary Arts, Diesel, Electronics, Graphic Arts, Health Care Careers, Heating/Ventilation/AC/Refrigeration, Human Services, Child Development, Horticulture, Manufacturing, and Welding.

Most of these programs are offered as certificate degrees through your local community college. You can find out how to apply by going to www.icc.edu. Some vocational careers can be learned by becoming an apprentice through local area unions. To find which unions may currently be hiring apprentices, go to www.illaborers.org or www.ides.state.il.us/employment/apprenticeship.asp

Reasons to continue your Education after High School

Why Pursue a Post-High School Credential?

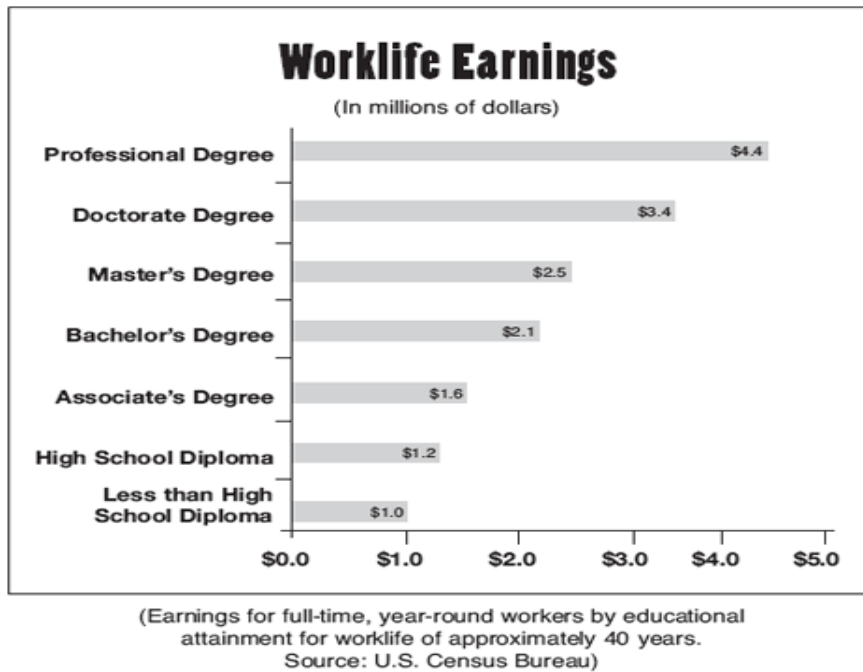
Whether you are uncertain about your plans or you just need some reassurance you're on the right track, here are a few reasons to pursue a post-high school credential:

- Every bit of education you get after high school increases the chances you'll earn a living wage.
- The more education you get the more likely it is you will always have a job. According to one estimate, by the year 2028 there will be 19 million more jobs for educated workers than there are qualified people to fill them.
- Continuing education after high school is much more important for your generation than it was for your parents' generation. Today most jobs that can become a career require more than a high school diploma. Businesses want to hire people who know how to think and solve problems.
- Education beyond high school gives you a lot of other benefits, including meeting new people, taking part in new opportunities to explore your interests, and experiencing success.

Average yearly income by educational attainment

Professional degree	\$101,737
Doctoral degree	\$91,492
Master's degree	\$68,879
Bachelor's degree	\$55,864
Associate's degree	\$42,419
Some college	\$40,175
High school graduate	\$35,035
High school dropout	\$25,705

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 data



SECTION 2: College Search Process



Which college is best?

Two key words are missing in that question. ***It should read, “Which college is best for you?”*** Your choices depend on your interests, career goals and academic record. Talk to your high school counselor about your options and attend the college fair at ICC (Fall 2020, more details to come). MHS students are allowed to use limited excused absences to attend a college campus visit.

Which Type Suits You Best?

What kind of college do you see yourself attending? Different types of colleges suit different types of people. Take a look at these factors to help you see where you fit.

1. Size:

- **SMALL:** Usually has fewer than 3,000 students, may have fewer resources, social activities, academic and extracurricular programs, and specific academic focus. However, they also tend to offer personal attention, smaller class sizes and access to faculty.
Ex: Eureka College, Illinois Wesleyan University, Loras College, Carthage College
- **MEDIUM:** Generally between 3,000-15,000 students. Usually offers more variety in terms of programs and extracurricular activities than the smaller schools, and more personal attention than the largest schools.
Ex: Drake University, Bradley University, Olivet Nazarene University, Western Illinois University, Boston College
- **LARGE:** With 15,000 or more students, access to faculty varies. However, larger schools are most likely to offer a wide variety of academic, extracurricular, and social activities.
Ex: University of Illinois, University of Iowa, Ohio State University, Purdue University, Illinois State University

2. Location:

- **Distance from home:** You may want to consider schools only within a certain radius of your home, or you may look for schools that are farther away. Be sure to consider the ease of travel and possible options for transportation
- **Setting:** Some students prefer schools that are near a beach, mountains or in a particular climate. Consider whether a school's location offers opportunities that appeal to you for social, cultural, entertainment, safety, and opportunities for internships, student teaching, or volunteer work.
- **Networking:** It is never too early to consider where you wish to live and work after completing your degree. Consider schools that may offer internships with employers of interest to you. Local employers are more likely to attend job fairs at schools in close proximity to their place of business.

3. Public vs. Private:

The main difference between public and private schools is in how they are funded. Public schools are funded by state and federal dollars while private schools are funded by tuition, fees, and private supporters. It's best to explore several different options and attend campus visits to different colleges as you decide what a right fit is for you. Attend financial aid presentations to help estimate the real cost of attendance for you.

4. Academic Fit:

- **Liberal Arts Colleges/Universities:** Liberal arts colleges offer a broad base of courses in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. Most are private and focus mainly on undergraduate students. Classes tend to be small and personal attention is available.
- **Comprehensive Colleges/Universities:** Comprehensive colleges offer degrees in Liberal Arts and Sciences as well as a variety of more career specific degrees; comprehensive colleges may also have a college of Nursing, Business, or Engineering.
- **Research Universities:** Research Institutions offer a full range of baccalaureate programs and doctoral programs. They are generally focused on research and graduate education through terminal master's and doctoral programs.
- **Community or Junior Colleges:** Community colleges offer a degree after the completion of two years of full-time study. They frequently offer technical and certificate programs that prepare you for immediate entry into the job market.

5. Selectivity:

- **MOST SELECTIVE:** Competitive even for superior students, these schools admit between 6-20% of applicants. Ex: Harvard, West Point, Brown, Yale, Amherst
- **HIGHLY SELECTIVE:** These schools usually accept between 21-40% of applicants. Ex: Washington University in St. Louis, UCLA, Northwestern, Notre Dame, University of Chicago, Grinnell
- **SELECTIVE:** Moderately selective schools make up the largest group of colleges and universities in the country. Ex: University of Illinois, Drake, Saint Louis University
- **OPEN ADMISSIONS:** A high school diploma is required and admission is usually offered to all applicants, as space is available. Ex: Illinois Central College, Parkland College

6. Campus Life: Questions to consider:

- Do students live on campus or commute? Do they stay on campus over the holidays?
- Can you get involved in music, athletics, drama, or community service?
- Do you see yourself being part of the student body?

7. Financial Fit: Are you and your family able to manage the costs of this specific school? See section #5 for more information.

Six Benefits of Community Colleges

Community colleges were developed, and still exist, for two major purposes. The first is to serve as a bridge from high school to college by providing courses for transfer toward a Bachelor of Arts (B.A) or Bachelor of Science degree (B.S.). Four out of 10 college-bound high-school graduates start their college education this way. The second function of community colleges is to prepare students for the job market by offering entry-level career training, as well as courses for adult students who want to upgrade their skills for workforce re-entry or advancement. Here, then, are some reasons why you might attend a community college:

1. You're Tight on Funds.

Community colleges cost significantly less (particularly for in-state residents) than state or private colleges and universities. This means that they can be a cost-effective way to complete the first two years of college. The money you save by living at home and going to your local community college can help pay for your last two years at a four-year college or university.

2. You're Not Sure about College.

Maybe you'd like to begin by aiming for a two-year associate's degree and assess as you go whether you want to pursue a bachelor's degree. Taking classes toward an Associate of Arts (A.A.) degree, for example, would give you a feel for the type of education you'd get at a liberal arts college.

3. You Aren't Sure What Kind of Program You Want to Pursue.

Many people enter college without a clear idea of what they want to focus on. At a community college, you can explore different subject areas before committing to a program, without having to be so concerned about finances. To assist with the career decision-making process, many community colleges offer intensive advising that can help you assess your abilities, interests, and educational options. You may actually be able to take a wider array of courses (including both liberal arts and career-oriented) than at a four-year institution, making it easier to check out many different options in one place.

4. You've Been out of School for a While or Your GPA Isn't so Great, and You Want to Build Your Skills Before Transferring.

Many four-year colleges and universities have select criteria for admittance, such as a minimum required GPA. Community colleges are open to everyone. If you want to pursue college-level coursework but aren't academically ready, community colleges offer classes and one-on-one tutoring to help you strengthen your basic skills. Keep in mind that the average class size at most community colleges is significantly smaller than at public four-year universities.

5. You'd Like a Career-Oriented Degree, Such as a Fashion Design or Computer Programmer.

Programs like these are often not available at four-year institutions. If you're thinking of seeking employment after finishing up at community college, there are several routes you can take.

You can earn an associate degree—an Associate of Arts or Science (A.A. or A.S.) or an Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.). An A.A.S. usually requires specialized courses in fields such as surgery technology, computer programming, or culinary arts, as well as several general education courses in subjects like English and math. These degrees take about two years to complete.

However, if you want to take courses in a specialized area of study but don't want to spend the time necessary to earn an associate's degree, many community colleges have certificate options that provide intensive training in a specialized field like therapeutic massage, web designing, food service technology, or paralegal studies. These certificates usually take six months to a year to complete.

6. You Work, or Have Commitments, and Need a Flexible Schedule.

At four-year colleges, course schedules are geared primarily toward full-time, traditional students who take classes during the day. At community colleges, the student population tends to be highly diverse with regard to age, experience, family background, socioeconomic level, and employment status. Course schedules are developed with attention to the variable needs of both part-time and

full-time students, so classes are usually offered throughout the day and evening, and sometimes on weekends. Many of these colleges offer online courses.

THE CAMPUS VISIT: Campus visits give you a sense of the college or university that you just can't find through publication materials or even a virtual tour. Visits reflect the faculty, facilities, spirit, atmosphere, academic environment, and student values. If possible, visit when school is in session.

PREPARING FOR THE VISIT:

- Make an appointment! This will make sure that you have arranged to do everything you would like to do during your visit—you may want to take a campus tour, speak with someone in admissions, meet faculty members, have lunch on campus, or sit in on a class.
- Familiarize yourself with the college before you arrive on campus. You are there to learn more, so you don't need to know it all, but you will want to be prepared with general or basic facts.
- Inform the college about your areas of interest, curriculum, and activities. Indicate whether you have applied or plan to in the future.
- Bring a copy of your resume and transcripts.
- Give careful attention to your appearance, grooming, and conduct. You don't need to dress formally, but you should look clean and put together. Colleges create files and notes are kept along with your application. You want to make a good impression.

DURING THE VISIT:

- Try to talk to more than one person. Don't form an opinion based on one student.
- Take notes. After you visit, make some notes while the information is fresh in your mind. Note your reactions, the things you liked best about the school as well as the things you didn't like.
- Take down the names of people you met with and get business cards or contact information for follow up.
- Avoid texting or being on the phone during your visit. You want to appear engaged and interested.
- Ask questions! A list of questions can be found in the back of this packet.

AFTER THE VISIT:

- Evaluate your interest in that school and determine your next step. If you are no longer interested, notify the school. If the visit increased your interest or finalized your selection, communicate that to the school as well.
- Send thank-you notes to anyone who was particularly helpful or who may influence an admission decision.

HELPFUL INFORMATION

Questions for Your Campus Visit/Visit with College Representative

ACADEMICS

- What is the average class size? Average class size for freshman?
- Who teaches courses? Is it the same for freshman as upper classmen?
- How are students advised?
- How accessible are professors?
- What are some of the required classes and when do you start taking courses for your major?
- What makes the academics at this school distinct?

CAMPUS LIFE

- Is transportation readily available on campus? What about the surrounding area?
- Can you tell me more about the area surrounding campus?
- Can freshmen have cars?
- What do students do on the weekends?
- How easy is it to get involved?
- What kinds of activities are available?
- Is housing required for freshmen? Guaranteed?
- How is housing assigned?
- How are roommates assigned?
- How does the meal plan work?
- What percent of students live on campus?
- Do students go home on the weekends?

CAREER PREPARATION

- What types of internships are available?
- How many students do internships/observations?
- What are your placement rates to graduate, professional schools, and in the workplace?
- How will University X prepare me for a career?

COSTS/FINANCIAL AID

- What are the costs of tuition, room, board, and fees?
- What other costs can I expect to pay?
- What type of financial assistance is available?
- When can I expect to receive a financial aid offer?

A FEW HELPFUL WEBSITES:

- The Xello website, www.xello.world/en/ has a great college comparison link that you can use to help gain information and compare college choices side by side. Xello can be accessed through a single sign-on within PowerSchool (web based, not app). Click the upper right corner application.
- www.wisemantech.com This website has links to cover everything from a list of schools, majors, and careers to more information about playing college sports, applying for financial assistance, or information about testing.
- www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org A comprehensive web site sponsored by the makers of the SAT. This site includes test prep, college search function, and financial aid. Also includes great tips on writing essays for college applications. You can also get a financial aid estimate here.

The College Comparison Worksheet

The criteria to be used when making college comparisons will vary according to student needs. Add other criteria as appropriate before comparing colleges. College information may be obtained meeting with your counselor, online, college catalogs, college representatives and local college fairs. Plan to tour colleges before fall of senior year, if possible.

Another great online tool for comparing schools: www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org

COMPARATIVE CRITERIA	College A	College B	College C
Total Undergraduate Enrollment			
Cost/Tuition/Room & Board			
Financial aid/Merit aid available			
Course admission requirements			
Mid 50% ACT/SAT			
Mid 50% GPA			
Majors of interest			
% university housing			
% of commuters / % in state			
% graduating in 4-5 years			
% going to grad school			
Faculty-student ratio			
% Fraternities/Sororities			
Religious affiliation			
% who stay on campus on week-ends			
Campus security available			
Campus crime statistics			
Foreign Language required to graduate			
Thought / Observations:			

*This form is also available in electronic format on www.xello.world/en/

Section 3: Finding a Major

Choosing a College Major: How to Chart Your Ideal Path by Randall S. Hansen, Ph.D.

The most important piece of advice in choosing a college major follows this sentence, so please make note of it and repeat it to yourself as often as you need as you read this article and make decisions regarding choosing a major in college. Are you ready for it? The advice: **Don't panic.**

It's easier said than done, as many students seem in a state of panic if they are uncertain of their major, let alone a career. Choosing a major, thinking about a career, getting an education -- these are the things college is all about. Yes, there are some students who arrive on campus and know exactly their major and career ambitions, but the majority of students do not, thus there is no need to rush into a decision about your major as soon as you step on campus.

And guess what? A majority of students in all colleges and universities change their major at least once in their college careers; and many change their major several times over the course of their college career.

This article is all about giving you some pointers and direction -- some steps for you to take -- in your journey toward discovering that ideal career path for you. But it is a journey, so make sure you spend some time thinking about it before making a decision. And don't be discouraged if you still don't have a major the first time you take this journey...your goal should be narrowing your focus from all possible majors to a few areas that you can then explore in greater depth.

Please also keep in mind that many schools have double majors, some triple majors, and most minors as well as majors. Your major in college is important for your first job after graduation, but studies show that most people will change careers -- yes, careers -- about four or five times over the course of their lives -- and no major exists that can prepare you for that!

The **first** stop on your journey should be an examination or self-assessment of your interests. What types of things excite you? What types of jobs or careers appeal to you? If you are not sure, start the process by taking a career or personality assessment. Many, if not all, college career centers have a variety of self-tests you can take to help you answer some of these questions. (Your counseling office can also help you with this).

The **second** stop on your journey is an examination of your abilities. What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? What kind of skills do you have? You can begin this self-examination by looking at the courses you took in high school. What were your best subjects? Is there a pattern there? What kinds of extracurricular activities did you participate in while in high school? What kinds of things did you learn from part-time or summer jobs?

The **third** stop on your journey involves examining what you value in work. Examples of values include: helping society, working under pressure, group affiliation, stability, security, status, pacing, working alone or with groups, having a positive impact on others, and many others. Identifying your values will help you put into perspective what, in a job, you can compromise and what is non-negotiable.

The **fourth** stop on your journey is career exploration. There are many schools that offer "what can I do with a major in..." fact sheets or websites. You can also learn more about various occupations, including future trends, by Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Occupational Outlook Handbook*.

The **fifth** stop on your journey is the reality check. You need to honestly evaluate your options. Do you really value physicians and have an interest in being a doctor, but have little skills in science? Does your occupation require an advanced degree, but your future commitments preclude graduate study? Do you have a strong interest in the arts, but your family is convinced you will become a CPA like your father? There are often ways to get around some of the obstacles during the reality check, but it is still important to face these obstacles and be realistic about whether you can get around them.

The **sixth** and final stop on your journey is the task of narrowing your choices and focusing on choosing a major. Based on all your research and self-assessment of the first five stops on your journey, you should now

have a better idea of the careers/majors you are not interested in pursuing as well as a handful of potential careers/majors that do interest you.

SECTION 4: College Application Process

Once you have generated a list of schools based on your specific preferences, it is time to start preparing to complete the application process.

Please make careful notes about application deadlines. Enrollment Deadlines generally fall into the following categories:

EARLY DECISION (ED): If you apply Early Decision, you need to be sure that this is the one college you want to attend. If you are accepted to a school ED, you are bound to withdraw all other applications. If financial assistance is important to you, it is best not to apply ED. Remember, ED is a binding commitment if you are accepted to that school.

EARLY ACTION (EA): The time frame for Early Action applications is similar to ED, however, it is not a binding commitment. It gives you a promise of acceptance early in the admissions process, but does not require you to make a decision until May 1st.

ROLLING ADMISSIONS: Colleges and universities accept applications throughout the academic year. Schools may accept applications all year, but they may give preference to earlier applications. It is still best to consider applying by December 1st.

SPECIFIC DEADLINE DATES: Check the schools where you plan to apply early and take note of any specific deadlines.

It is important to understand how colleges evaluate the academic qualifications of a student. Here is a list of factors colleges and universities may consider:

- College entrance requirements
- Rigor of high school curriculum. Each college that you apply to will also receive the MHS profile which reflects the rigor of courses at MHS and average ranges for test scores and gpa
- High school grades
- Trends in grades: consistent strong performance is best, but steady improvement and strong junior year (or first quarter/semester) of senior year is important.
- Standardized test results-both composite and sub-scores.
- Relationship of grades to standardized test scores.
- Academic honors or awards.
- Letters of recommendations.
- Application essays-they are a sample of your writing as well as a chance to 'get to know you better'.

Colleges and universities also evaluate your personal qualifications. They may consider the following:

- Involvement in activities—it is never too late to get involved
- Community service, leadership
- Recommendations, interviews
- Application essays-many essays are meant to demonstrate your personal characteristics or provide information not found on a transcript.
- Your social media presence (Facebook, Twitter, and others)

Other factors that may be considered to make admissions decisions:

- Relationship to an influential alumni
- Geographic, ethnic, gender, socio-economic representations to balance or diversify the student body
- First generation college students

The application generally consists of at least 4 pieces:

1. APPLICATION: You can find these on the school's website or check to see if the school accepts the Common Application or SendEDU.
 - a. Currently many colleges accept a Common Application Form or SendEDU. This form allows students to apply to several different schools with one application. Check your list of schools to determine whether or not this is a good idea for you.
2. TRANSCRIPTS: Requests are electronic through Parchment-see page 21 for further information.
 - a. It is best to request the transcript immediately after you submit the application.
 - b. If your college has a counselor verification form, please include it with the transcript request.
3. TEST SCORES: Your test scores will be on your transcripts, but some schools will only accept them directly from the testing company.
 - a. Some schools may give preference to the ACT or SAT, some will require the writing portion and some may not, some schools take your highest composite score, some may consider the average of all of your test scores, and others 'super score' meaning that they combine your highest subscores from different tests to make a new composite score that reflects your best performance in each area.
4. RECOMMENDATIONS: Request forms are available in the counseling office
 - a. It might be a good idea to consider asking a teacher who had you junior year as they knew you for a whole year vs. senior year teachers who may have only had you for a couple of months before you submit your applications.
 - b. Please allow at least 1 week for recommendations to be completed.

Other common application materials

5. ESSAYS: Essay types and topics vary from school to school. Tips can be found in the back of this packet.
6. INTERVIEWS: Some schools require or prefer a personal interview. Please see your counselor if you need assistance in preparing for a college interview.

College applications can seem overwhelming at first glance. What needs to be done, and when? Use the calendar at the end of this packet to help as a guide through the college application process.

SECTION 5: Financial Aid/Scholarships

There are many options available that may help pay for college. Financial aid is anything that helps you manage the costs of college. There are two types of financial assistance:

- **Merit Based:** Scholarships or grants based on students' unique characteristics, academic profile, or talents.
- **Need Based:** Scholarships or grants based on a students' financial need. Financial need is the difference between what college will cost you and what your family can afford to pay as identified by government guidelines.

In addition to need based and merit based, financial assistance falls into two additional categories:

- **Self Help:** Includes any assistance that the student must earn or borrow. Student or parent loans and work study options are considered self help assistance.
- **Gift Assistance:** Includes scholarships, grants, or awards that do not need to be repaid and/or are not contingent upon the student earning wages to be paid.

To be considered for any federal or state financial assistance and some institutional aid, you must complete the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA). You can find this online application at www.fafsa.gov. Some schools require students to file the FAFSA to be considered for merit based assistance as well as need based assistance. Effective the 20-21 school year, Illinois students are required to file a FAFSA or complete a FAFSA completion waiver in order to receive a MHS diploma.

Law: <https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=101-0180>

When applying for FAFSA, you should plan on submitting your application online as soon as possible after October 1, as awards are made until funds are depleted. **This is three months earlier than previous years.** Please visit: <http://www.nacacnet.org/issues-action/LegislativeNews/Documents/PPYStudents.pdf>

Once you have applied for financial aid, you will need to wait until you are accepted into the colleges of your choice. Remember, you will not know your true financial aid award until you have been admitted. You can get a pretty close idea of the amount you may be awarded by visiting the "early estimator" that is linked to many college websites. This calculator can help you guesstimate what your family contributions will be and what financial aid, if any you can expect. Keep in mind that your aid will depend on many factors including if you attend a state versus a private university, in-state versus out-of-state college, and your families "demonstrated financial need".

On ***Thursday, August 22nd, 2019*** Morton High School will offer a Financial Aid Night. This night is devoted to learning about how to submit your FAFSA, how to interpret financial aid terms, and how to read your EFC, or estimated family contribution. If you plan to attend college, it would be to your benefit to take advantage of the information you will receive at the Financial Aid Night. The date of the night will be posted on the Morton High School activities calendar and announcements will be made to remind students to attend. Of course, if you have any additional questions, you can always ask your counselor.



Be careful of scholarship scams that originate from for-profit organizations and services. A scholarship is based on merit or merit-plus-need, and will not have an application fee or need to be repaid. Some common scholarship scams may look like a real scholarship program, but requires an application fee. Morton High School counselors recommend that no one should pay a fee in relation to scholarships, awards, or financial aid.

Remember to also look on the Morton High School website for updated local scholarship information and to apply through the counseling office for these scholarships each spring, beginning in March. The local community scholarships can be a great additional financial support for books and other fees if you qualify.

The **Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC)** is the college access and financial aid agency in the state of Illinois that administers scholarship, grant, prepaid tuition, and student loan repayment/forgiveness programs. The ISACorps is responsible for assisting students with career exploration, college selection, test preparation, scholarship searches, application completion, and the financial aid process.

- Morton High School ISAC representative, Simone Bridgeforth (simone.bridgeforth@isac.illinois.gov) visits MHS throughout the school year providing assistance with financial aid information, FAFSA completion workshops, and college application workshops. Email the counseling office for more information. Students are emailed throughout the school year with these resource offerings.

Steps in the financial aid process:

- Start researching scholarship opportunities. In the fall of your senior year, ask your counselor for a list of local scholarships, and sign up on websites such as Fastweb.com, finaid.org, and collegezone.com
- The student and a parent should create a FSA ID **BEFORE October 1st**:
<https://fsaid.ed.gov/npas/index.htm>
- File the FAFSA. It is available starting **October 1st of the student's senior year**.
 - Fafsa.ed.gov
 - Check schools for preferential or required deadlines
- Attend virtual Financial Aid Night at MHS on **September 17th at 6pm**.
- Complete CSS Profile if necessary.
 - www.collegeboard.org
- Evaluate offers of all the schools you are considering.

Free Scholarship Searches/Financial Aid Info:

- ✓ www.fastweb.com An excellent resource for scholarships! Fill out the survey and this web site will generate a list of scholarships that you may qualify for.
- ✓ www.wiredscholar.com Sponsored by Sallie Mae (but still FREE,) this web site includes test prep and planning for college financing.
- ✓ www.finaid.org Great site for understanding the financial aid process and how to pay for college.
- ✓ www.brokescholar.com Good financial advice and lots of scholarships.
- ✓ www.collegezone.org Good for financial planning, career planning, and college information.
- ✓ <https://www.isac.org/students/during-college/types-of-financial-aid/scholarships/> The site provides helpful information about scholarships and links to Illinois Scholarship Programs.
- ✓ <https://www.cappex.com/scholarships/> Good website to compare colleges, read reviews, and search for scholarships.

SECTION 6: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

MONTH BY MONTH CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR JUNIOR YEAR

SEPTEMBER:

- Read through this packet
- Complete a list of schools you would like to consider (between 5 and 30 at this point)
- Create or update your resume—consider using Xello
- Discuss college with your family: Talk about schools, finances, majors, your future
- Visit campuses
- Watch the announcements for visits from college representatives
- Consider whether or not to register for the PSAT, see your counselor if you have questions
- Get a professional-sounding email address: Use something based on your name or hobby; nothing cutesy or eyebrow-raising
- Attend virtual Financial Aid Night at MHS to start learning about college financial aid
 - **September 17th at 6:00pm**

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER:

- Start searching for scholarships and ways to pay for your education
- Review different kinds of schools and think about what's important to you
- Attend college fairs and financial aid nights
 - ICC College Night—**October 2020 if offered. More details to come.**
- Plan and make college visits.

DECEMBER—JANUARY:

- Continue searching and learning about colleges
- Talk with your college friends about their schools
- If you took the PSAT, review your results with your counselor. Use Khan Academy (collegeboard.org) for free SAT practice to improve your scores.
- Select senior year courses, meet with your counselor if you have questions

FEBRUARY—MARCH:

- Begin preparing for the SAT/ACT—look for prep courses
 - MHS offers a SAT review.
 - Khan Academy (collegeboard.org) offers free personalized test practice.
- Continue visiting colleges
- Generate a list of colleges you are considering
- Continue talking with friends and family about college

APRIL—MAY:

- Narrow down your choices and begin deciding which school you will apply
- SAT given at MHS-**April 13th, 2021.**

MAY—AUGUST:

- Continue visiting colleges
- Retake the SAT/ACT, if you choose
- Improve your reading and vocabulary skills
- Search for scholarships and ways to pay for college
- Combine vacation plans with campus visits
- Start working on your college application essays
- Decide who you will ask for letters of recommendation

MONTH BY MONTH CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR SENIOR YEAR

SEPTEMBER: Read through this packet

- Complete a list of schools you will be applying to
- Create or update your resume—consider using Xello.
- Discuss college with your family: Talk about schools, finances, majors, your future
- Visit campuses
- Watch the announcements for visits from college representatives
- Finalize and have someone edit your personal statements/essays
- Retake the SAT/ACT (if you choose)—make sure your scores are sent to each of your prospective colleges
- Attend virtual Financial Aid Night at MHS to start learning about college financial aid—**September 17th at 6:00pm**

OCTOBER:

- File the FAFSA, available starting **October 1st, 2020**.
- Take note of any upcoming deadlines—many schools have November 1st, 15th, or 30th as a deadline
- Continue searching for scholarships and ways to pay for your education
- Retake the SAT/ACT (if you choose)
- Attend college fairs and financial aid nights
 - ICC College Night—**October 2020 if offered. More details to come.**
- Plan and make college visits.
- Request letters of recommendation, if necessary
 - Be sure to give recommenders at least 1 week to complete the recommendation.
 - Provide them with a resume or a Student Information Sheet—available in the counseling office
- If you are applying under an early decision or early action program, be sure to get all forms in as soon as possible.
- Register for AP exams (administered in May).

NOVEMBER:

- Continue searching for scholarships and ways to pay for your education
- Take note of any upcoming deadlines—many schools have November 1st, 15th, or 30th as a deadline
- Submit early decision/action applications on time. Be aware that early decision applications are binding agreements
- Work hard at completing your college essays. Proofread them rigorously for mistakes.
- Follow up with teachers to ensure that letters of recommendation are sent
- Mail any additional requirements to the online applications as early as possible for colleges with rolling deadlines and regular decision deadlines.

DECEMBER—JANUARY:

- Talk with your college friends about their schools
- Finish all college applications before winter break. Make copies of each application before sending it.
- Some colleges include your first semester grades as part of your application folder. Request your 1st semester grades be sent.

FEBRUARY—MARCH:

- Check with your college to confirm that all necessary application materials have been received
- Don't get senioritis!!! Colleges want to see strong 2nd semester grades
- Continue talking with friends and family about college
- You may receive college admission decisions this month

APRIL:

- Most admission decisions and financial aid award letters arrive this month. Read everything you receive carefully, as some may require action on your part.
- May 1st—Make a final decision and mail the enrollment form and deposit check to the school you select
- Notify schools that you were accepted to that you will not be attending
- On the waiting list?—contact the school and let them know you are still interested

MAY:

- AP exams are administered. Make sure your AP score report is sent to your college
- Study hard—most admission offers are contingent on your final grades
- Thank your teachers, coaches, counselor, and anyone else who wrote you recommendations or otherwise helped with your college applications.
- Meet with your counselor for a final record check, and to have your final transcript sent to your college choice

- List three academic faculty members who could give you a positive appraisal. What did you learn about yourself in their class?

○		-	
○		-	
○		-	

Personal Attributes

- Who are your personal heroes, men and women you admire, and why?
- What special interests or hobbies do you pursue outside of school? What have these experiences taught you about life?
- What personal experience, summer experience, school/work experience, or travel has been of significant importance to you and why?
- Any additional information to emphasize? Any accomplishments or awards to highlight?

Self-Assessment

Please choose five descriptive words from the list on page 3 and provide an example of how each word applies to you.

Descriptive Word	Example

Accountable	Confident	Energetic	Instinctive	Persuasive	Serious
Active	Conscientious	Enterprising	Intelligent	Pleasant	Sincere
Adaptable	Consistent	Enthusiastic	Intuitive	Poised	Skilled
Aggressive	Constructive	Experienced	Knowledgeable	Positive	Sophisticated
Alert	Conversant	Expert	Leader	Practical	Spontaneous
Ambitious	Cooperative	Excessive	Logical	Precise	Stable
Analytical	Creative	Extraverted	Loyal	Problem-solver	Stimulating
Articulate	Critical	Fair	Mature	Productive	Strong
Assertive	Curious	Forceful	Methodical	Professional	Sympathetic
Attentive	Decisive	Goal-Oriented	Motivated	Proven	Systemic
Broad-minded	Dependable	Helpful	Objective	Realistic	Tactful
Capable	Determined	Honest	Observant	Reflective	Talented
Charismatic	Diplomatic	Humorous	Open-minded	Reliable	Team member
Clever	Discerning	Imaginative	Optimistic	Resourceful	Tenacious
Collaborative	Disciplined	Implementer	Organized	Respected	Tolerant
Committed	Economical	Improviser	Outgoing	Responsible	Understanding
Communicative	Effective	Independent	Patient	Responsive	Versatile
Competent	Efficient	Industrious	Perceptive	Self-directed	Warm
Concise	Empathetic	Innovative	Persevering	Self-reliant	Well-read
			Personable	Sensitive	Well-rounded

Please rate yourself in the following areas and explain why you choose the rating:

Quality	Below Average	Average	Good	Excellent	Exceptional	Does not Apply	Explain/Example/Comment:
Academic Motivation							
Academic Achievement							
Extracurricular Involvement							
Leadership Ability							
Independence & initiative							
Character/ Integrity							
Creative/ Original Thought							
Self-Confidence							

Potential for Academic Growth							
Reaction to Failure, Disappointment, Criticism							

Extra-Curricular (school activities, religious organizations, summer programs, etc.)

Activity	Organization	Years (9, 10, 11, 12)	Description of Your Role	Awards/Recognition

Volunteer Work

Activity	Organization	Years (9, 10, 11, 12)	Description of Your Role	Estimated Hours

Work Experience

Employer	Position/Title	Years (9, 10, 11, 12)	Job Responsibilities	Length of Employment

Teacher Recommendation:

Please answer the following questions if you are asking a teacher for a recommendation.

- Which courses (and which years) did you take with this teacher?
- Describe your favorite or memorable assignments or projects that you completed in the class. What did you learn or enjoy the most?
- What would you like the teacher to highlight in their letter related to this particular subject or your involvement in the class?

Student Questions to Gather Information for Organized Narrative Letter
[2 or 3 questions yield the best response rate]

1. Please share an anecdote from the classroom that best reflects your curiosity for learning.
2. Does your transcript accurately reflect you as a student? Why or why not?
3. If you could write the introductory paragraph for your letter of recommendation, what would it say?
4. As you reflect on your high school years, what are you most proud of and why? How would you say these accomplishments have affected your life?
5. Tell me about a time you struggled or failed both academically and outside the classroom. How did you adapt?

Parent Question

My student's high school experience has been... painful or pleasurable. Please explain. How has this affected their life? How will they use what they learned from these experiences in college?



School Counseling

Requesting Transcripts Through Parchment

The Counseling Office is excited to announce that we are now using [Parchment](#) to send transcripts! Read below to find out more about Parchment and get answers to some frequently asked questions.

What is Parchment? Parchment is a digital credentials platform that allows current students (and alumni) to quickly, easily and securely send their transcripts to destinations worldwide. Current students receive an email to their MHS Gmail account with a unique registration code from Parchment providing instructions on how to create an account. Parchment allows current students to send their transcripts electronically for free to any college, university or other institution worldwide. Parchment allows its users to track their transcript requests from start to finish through their account. Alumni are charged a processing fee through Parchment.

Do I still need to pay \$1 for my official transcript request if I use Parchment? No. When using Parchment, all requests by current students are processed electronically for free. If you need an official paper copy the cost is still \$1 per official copy. Current students can use Parchment to request an unofficial copy of their transcript to be emailed as a PDF copy for free at any time.

When does my Parchment account expire? Never! Your Parchment account will be available even after you graduate. After graduation you will be moved from current student status to an alumni status. Seniors should make sure to add their personal email address to their Parchment account before they graduate because their MHS Gmail account will be deactivated.

How long does it take to send my transcript through Parchment? Please allow 2-3 school days for transcript requests to be processed. You can track the status of your request from start to finish through Parchment.

I'm a senior, how does my final transcript get sent to my college/university? All graduating seniors must request their final transcript through Parchment after graduation. The date final transcripts are available for request will be posted in the ordering message on the Parchment website. [Click here to access the MHS Parchment ordering page.](#)

Have any other questions? Contact the Counseling Office!

[Click here to view the Parchment Quick Start Guide](#)

[Click here to watch a quick how-to video](#)