

Katy ISD Counseling Department: "I'm a Senior. What do I do next?"

- 1. Pick a goal...** a college major field of study, a program for a technical school, a tour in the military service, or a full-time job. Having trouble deciding on a major? Avail yourself of one of the resources offered by Katy ISD. You can take an interest inventory test through TBEC Achieve Texas Education and Career Planning System (log in codes available in the counselors' offices). You also can use the log in code provided on your 11th grade PSAT results to take a personality test and to find compatible majors and careers through College Board's free **MyRoad** tool.
- 2. Decide upon a college.** Want a 4 year university? Or maybe a 2 year junior or technical college? Go on-line and read about admissions requirements for each school; you can email or call the college and ask them to send you information or view books. Find colleges that are right for you through College Board's **MyRoad** resource. The Katy ISD College and Career Night will be held at the Leonard Merrell Center on Wednesday, Oct. 14 from 6:30-8:30pm. Another resource available in the district is **TOPQUEST**, a college resource for detailed information about 4,000+ accredited colleges, thousands of records of scholarships and funding, including college-specific scholarships, and a unique CZ Auto-fill Tool™ which lets you apply to multiple colleges with the click of a few buttons. **TOPQUEST** streamlines the college prep/application process, allowing you to search, match and apply to colleges and for funding. Detailed results are based on your academic profile (SAT, ACT, GPA, class ranking) and personal criteria. 12th graders who are economically able can go to www.topquest.net and select sign up at a cost of approximately \$60 per year. From there just follow the prompts. For seniors who are economically disadvantaged, the service is FREE. Contact your counselor with questions about this program. You can also visit the Counselor College Resource center for books, DVD's, and brochures.
- 3. Texas Public Universities-** You can use the Texas Common Application. This is available on-line at www.applytexas.org There is a code book that goes with this application and gives you the specific codes for each college. There will often be an essay attached to the application. **ALWAYS DO THE ESSAY...**it may be optional for regular admissions, but not for scholarship/financial aid purposes. The essay should be unique to you and should let the college know who you really are. Spend time on writing a great, grammatically correct essay!
- 4. Private Colleges or Universities-** The application is either on-line or in a paper version. Contact the school directly if you need the paper version. For private schools, many institutions use the admissions application found at www.commonapp.org Check with your campus counselors about how to complete these forms.
- 5. Pertinent Applications-**Make sure you complete ALL of the applications necessary for your school of choice: regular admissions application, housing application, and scholarship/financial aid application(s). Many dorms fill up before the regular application is due. **Watch your deadlines!**
- 6. Apply early.** NOW is a good time. College representatives tell us that you should have everything in by Thanksgiving; some colleges begin the selection process in October. Apply NOW.
- 7. College Entrance Exams-**Sign up for and take the SAT and the ACT. Dates are listed in the **SUCCESSFUL SENIORS** Handbook on page 20 and also on the registration forms (found in the counselors' office). You can register on-line for these.
- 8. Texas State Initiative (TSI)** is a state mandate that requires students to be assessed in reading, writing and math skills prior to enrolling in college, and to be advised based on the results of that assessment. Each institution determines an individualized education plan to encourage academic success for those students who score below the deviation standard (or do not pass the THEA test). Students will be required to retest if they do not pass the initial test. Students who are non-degree seeking or non-certificate seeking must also meet

TSI standards.” If your TAKS, SAT, or ACT scores do not exempt you from the THEA, you will need to take this test in the spring. Students cannot enter a public college without having taken the THEA or received an exemption. The THEA is scheduled for Saturday morning, May 22, 2010 at CRHS or you can locate test centers on the THEA website <http://www.thea.nesinc.com/>

9. Check with your campus counseling department. For example, the “**Student Profile Packet for Recommendations**” for CRHS students is found on the CRHS website <http://kisdwebs.katyisd.org/campuses/CRHS/Counselors/Pages/Seniors.aspx> This packet helps the counselor write a detailed letter about them and/or to fill out a section on a college or scholarship application regarding class rank, GPA, etc. Students bring the completed form to the main counselors’ office to be kept on file until needed.

10. Check with your campus counseling department. For example, at CRHS, the “**Counselor’s Checklist for College Applications, Recommendations, Scholarships**” (bright green form) is used. Students complete this form for **each** letter of recommendation or the counselor portion of **each** college or scholarship application. This is available in the CRHS counselors’ office and in the counselor section of the school website (see #9). Students indicate exactly what is needed and indicate the deadline. **Allow a minimum of 3 weeks for a counselor letter of recommendation!**

11. **Transcripts**-Colleges will need to receive a transcript of your grades. Follow the steps on the “Transcript Release Forms Procedure” found in your counselors’ office. This form must be signed by the parent/guardian if the student is under the age of 18 and has not graduated. The college will need a final transcript as well. You will learn more in the spring.

12. **Financial aid** can be accessed in at least 4 ways. #1. Complete the federal form called the FAFSA (available on-line) and submit it in as soon as possible after January 1st. Be sure to only go to the official website at www.fafsa.ed.gov (Note: you should obtain a pin #, that will help you log on, ahead of the January 1 deadline at www.pin.ed.gov). The government will review your family’s finances and decide how much aid you qualify for. They will report this information to the colleges of your choice. The college will then evaluate your situation and prepare a financial aid offer (this occurs in late spring). #2. Colleges sometimes have their own financial aid/scholarship applications. Check with them and request any forms available. Watch your deadlines! #3. Scholarship searches are available on-line (see the senior handbook); **BE AWARE OF SCAM COMPANIES THAT CHARGE YOU A FEE FOR SCHOLARSHIP SEARCHING!** #4.

13. **Campus Scholarship Newsletter** may be available on-line on your school web page and also in locations around your school: the counselors’ office and teacher bulletin boards. Check this newsletter weekly. Most scholarships require that an application be completed online. If the scholarship says “nomination only,” notify the counselors’ office that you are interested in being nominated. Many scholarships expire without students applying for them; apply for as many as you can...you might be the only one in the running!

14. **Deadlines**-Watch your deadlines and keep your grades up. Colleges don’t want to see a pattern of falling grades. Be aware of any opportunities to visit the college and take a tour and/or meet with a college representative. Seniors are entitled to one college visit. Obtain the form in the Attendance Office **AT LEAST 2 DAYS AHEAD**. Fill out form and get all required signatures. Return form to Attendance Office. Once you are accepted, watch for college orientations offered and get your request in to your college EARLY for these.

15. **GPA/Class Rank**- Last, but not least, seniors receive a copy of their transcript showing their GPA. They may receive another copy in the spring. After graduation, they will receive a transcript form to send a final transcript to their colleges. **Your Counselors wish you all the best in your future schooling and career!**