



Applying to 4-Year Colleges – A Step by Step Guide for SENIORS

Class of 2025



Seniors,

Applying to 4-year colleges is LITERALLY a part-time job that begins in June following junior year. The process will last through graduation. While I'm here to help you every step of the way, here is some information to help get you started with the process, as well as help you stay on track!

You can do this! Do not procrastinate. Always reach out with questions, whether it be on Remind, through email (candice.odell@osceolaschools.net) or stopping by during your lunch or an elective period (check in with your teacher first for permission).

-O'Dell

All schools will evaluate your admission based on:

1. Unweighted & weighted GPA
2. Rigor of your course load
3. SAT/ACT scores
4. Leadership & life experience – co-curriculars and paid work experience
5. Project-oriented community service

Admission committees will also consider:

1. Strength of your letters of recommendation
2. Strength of your personal statement/essay

General Tips:

- You cannot do all of this in one day, or even one week. Do not put these steps off.
- Not sure? Ask Mrs. O'Dell! *Don't guess!*
- Save all usernames and passwords for Common Application, CollegeBoard, ACT, FAFSA, SSAR, Spark, etc in one place.
- Treat every college communication like an interview (text, email, phone call)
 - Be sure to use proper grammar (proper capitalizations in pronouns, complete sentences, etc.)
- Use your full name (even if you hate it, even if you have a nickname, and even if your teachers/family do not use it) on all documentation.
 - Your full name is what is on your birth certificate
 - Check Focus – if your name is wrong, talk to guidance about correcting it
 - Not doing so can delay the processing of your application and your financial aid
- Check your work – *did you type your email correctly? Are there typos in your application?*
- Do not wait until you have the perfect ACT or SAT score to apply to college. *It is better to apply early and send updated test scores later than wait to apply.*
- Colleges will not review your application until they have received all application materials.
- Check application portals and email weekly AT LEAST after submitting
 - It is not uncommon to ask for grade reports, updated class schedule, mid-year transcript, etc. before an admission decision is made.

- It is not uncommon for schools to have you complete financial aid verification before awarding scholarship money

Step 1: Get organized and connected.

- Join SCHS **Class of 2025** Remind
 - You will be updated on scholarship deadlines, field trips, appointments, financial aid resources, application fee waivers, testing fee waivers, graduation requirements and updates, and more.
 - You can also “text” Mrs. Malfara using the Remind application. Mrs. Malfara gets your Remind messages on her phone **AND** email
 - To join...
 - Text **@2025schs** to **81010** OR
 - Click **Join Existing Class** on the Remind application or website, and type in code **2025schs**
- Make a new, personal professional email account through Yahoo or Gmail
 - Examples: Jane.Foster2@gmail.com, jfoster23@gmail.com
 - **DO NOT** use your birthday or graduate year as part of your email address (that makes your accounts easier to hack)
 - Make this email the email account for ACT and CollegeBoard.
 - Make note of your passwords for ACT and CollegeBoard. These are your personal accounts. The school cannot unlock your account for you if you forget your password.
 - **DO NOT** use this email account for anything other than scholarship applications, college applications, CollegeBoard, ACT, and FAFSA
 - This will make it easier to both check and keep up with your email. *Colleges will contact you for additional application materials through your email. If you miss it, you will miss the chance to be accepted. You will also miss out on scholarship money.*
 - Check this email account AT LEAST weekly
- Check in with your College & Career Counselor (Mrs. O'Dell) to see if you are eligible for college application fee waivers and ACT/SAT Saturday test fee waivers - [Testing Information / Requesting a Fee Waiver for SAT or ACT \(osceolaschools.net\)](#)
- Identify your School Counselor if you do not know who it is already [Meet the Counselors / Meet the Counselors \(osceolaschools.net\)](#)
 - Last name A-D: Mrs. Jenifer Wright, Jenifer.Wright@osceolaschools.net
 - Last name E-L: Mrs. Kristi Parks, Kristi.Parks@osceolaschools.net
 - Last name M-Ri: Ms. Judi Crowell, Judith.Crowell@osceolaschools.net
 - Last name Ro-Z: Mr. Peter Cordero, Peter.Cordero@osceolaschools.net

Step 2: Set yourself up for success.

- Create your college list. You should apply to at least 6 4-year colleges (*if you are serious about attending a 4-year school*)
 - Do a little research and find out if your school is a *reach*, *target*, or *safety* school for YOU
 - *Reach* - test scores and GPA encouraged for admission are higher than yours
 - *Target* - test scores and GPA encouraged for admission match yours
 - *Safety* - test scores and GPA encouraged for admission are lower than yours
 - Average GPAs for students accepted to schools, as well as average ACT/SAT scores for students accepted to schools can be found on Xello. Just search the school you are interested in and view the profile.
 - Decide if you need to take the ACT or SAT again to help make your college applications more competitive
 - Decide which semester you will apply for at each school. *Applying to start in the summer can help your application be more competitive.*

- Ask at least 1 academic teacher you feel connected to (math, science, ELA, history) and at least 1 other teacher (electives) or community member (old boss, mentor, coach, etc.) if they can write you a **STRONG** letter of recommendation for college
 - If they say yes, provide them with a completed brag sheet and the deadline to write your letter. You must give your letter writers at least 1 month to write your letter.
 - You can find a copy of the brag sheet on the SCHS webpage under Guidance Hub
- Make sure you have the classes required for admission to the schools you are interested in.
 - Most schools will require at least the following classes: *(It always makes you more competitive to have more.)*
 - 4+ years of history
 - 4+ years of math (highest math class needs to be at least Algebra 2)
 - 4+ years of ELA
 - 4+ years of science *(recommended – biology, chemistry, physics, and 1 additional science class)*
 - 2 consecutive years of the same foreign language *(for example - Spanish I and II, AP Spanish Language and AP Spanish Literature, French 3 & 4, etc)*
 - Most 4-year colleges will want to see successful completion of 4-6 AP or DE classes
- Check to see what you are missing to be eligible for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program - [Community Service & Bright Futures Information / Community Service & Bright Futures Information \(osceolaschools.net\)](https://www.osceolaschools.net)

Step 3: Start your applications.

- You'll find most colleges around the country use something called Common Application (Common App). Go to the Common App website and create an account using the professional email you created in **Step 1** above. <https://www.commonapp.org/>
 - The only school on Common App you **SHOULD NOT** use CommonApp for is the University of Central Florida. Always apply to UCF directly through the school's website: <https://www.ucf.edu/>
 - You'll need to connect your CommonApp account to your Xello account for your letters of recommendation and to request transcripts.
 - Instructions for connecting Common Application to Xello:
 - Click on *ClassLink*
 - Open *Xello*
 - Click on *College Planning*
 - Click *View My Applications* (under *College Applications*)
 - Click *Connect*
 - You only have to enter your SCHOOL counselor for one school. *The counselor will then automatically show up for the rest of your schools.*
 - You will need to type in who will write your letters of recommendation for each school in your list. *(This is because different schools can require different types of letters.)*
 - Be sure you've asked your letter writers for a letter via email or in person before entering their names in as a letter writer
 - You can also apply to colleges not on Common App directly on the college's website
 - **You always apply** as an undergraduate, freshmen, first-time-in-college student (even if you finished your AA)

All 4-year college applications, regardless of deadline posted on the school's website, should be submitted, and completed by October 31st. (Oct. 15th for FSU & FAU)

This means, you should have your counselor's letters of recommendation (Common Application/Xello), transcripts requested, and counselor forms requested prior to this.

Step 4: Submit your academic record.

- As of right now, FAMU, FAU, FGCU, Florida Polytechnic University, New College of Florida, UF, FSU, USF, UNF, and UWF require the Self-Reported Student Academic Record (SSAR). **(Not a transcript)** - <https://ssar.selfreportedtranscript.com/login.aspx>
- UCF requires the SPARK form **(Not a transcript)** – You receive information on Spark via email after submitting your UCF application - <https://www.ucf.edu/admissions/undergraduate/spark/>
- All other schools NOT on Common App – request a transcript on Xello
 - Click on *ClassLink*
 - Open *Xello*
 - Click on *College Planning*
 - Click on *Create your First Application* or *Add New Application*
 - Add your school
 - Then click *Request Transcript*
- You must update your SSAR, SPARK, and send updated transcripts to schools you apply to if your senior schedule changes

Step 5: Submit your official SAT and ACT test scores.

- Each college has specific deadlines for receiving ACT/SAT scores.
- If you put on your college applications that you are taking the ACT or SAT any time during your senior year, the schools will likely hold your application until they receive your new scores.
 - If your updated scores are not received by the schools by the college's final deadline, the college will evaluate your application with whatever scores have already been submitted.
 - You need to send all of your ACT and SAT scores. Colleges will *superscore*.
 - *Superscoring* is when they take your highest score of each section.
 - Some colleges do not superscore the ACT but take the highest Composite score instead.
- You must send your scores officially through your CollegeBoard (SAT) and/or ACT accounts. Sending scores are free at the time of registration for ACT/SAT but will cost you money later.

Step 6: Wrapping up your application cycle

- Keep track of your application portals and email to be sure your schools aren't requesting any additional materials.
- Let's celebrate your success! *Be sure to TELL O'DELL each acceptance and financial aid award letter via email, by stopping by the office, or by forwarding me your acceptance email.*
- Bring your financial aid award letters to Mrs. Malfara for review – they can be tricky to interpret!
- You will fill out a Senior Survey at the end of senior year to tell Mrs. O'Dell where to send your final transcript.