Applying to College 101

(Everything but financial aid! More information about financial aid and paying for college in the "FAFSA & Financial Aid" link in Ms. Patterson's Virtual Office)

Start Here:
Check out this link to see an outline of what needs to be done to get into college, and when!
📄 Preparing for College - Senior Checklist

Exploring Colleges & Building Your College List:
- When looking at different options for college, it is important to consider which schools will be a good *match and fit* for you
    - **Match:** the "Academic Profile" of the school (average student GPA, ACT/SAT scores, etc.)
        - **Ask yourself: Do I have the grades and test scores to get into the school? Do I meet the admissions requirements?**
    - **Fit:** the overall culture and environment of the school (extracurriculars/activities, things to do in the surrounding area, size of the school, proximity to home, etc.)
        - **Ask yourself: Do I see myself fitting in and being happy and comfortable here?**
- **Looking at your options…**
    - College Greenlight https://www.collegegreenlight.com/
        - Make an account with College Greenlight to search schools, see what schools are a match for you, and get a breakdown of each school's cost, admissions requirements, etc.
    - CollegeBoard "Big Future" college search: https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search

Applying to College:
- You can apply to most NC schools through CFNC: https://www1.cfnc.org/Apply/To_College/_default.aspx
- **Common App:** https://www.commonapp.org/
    - **The Common App is a standardized college application that is accepted and utilized by most colleges and universities. You WILL want to/probably have to fill out this application for the schools you are applying to.**
    - First-time Students Guide (Common App's tips & recommendations): https://www.commonapp.org/apply/first-time-students
    - **Required Materials for the Common App:**
        - High School Transcript
        - List of extracurriculars: activities, work, and family responsibilities
        - ACT/SAT Scores

- - ■ Parent/Legal Guardian Info: parents occupation, employment status, and education level. If applicable, may also ask which college(s) they attended and how many degrees they have earned
    - ■ List of any Academic Honors/Achievements

📄 Senior College Readiness Checklist
📗 Comparison/Completion checklist template (google spreadsheet)

Writing a College Essay
- **General tips & tricks:**
    - DON'T write about cookie-cutter topics (death, divorce, COVID-19, etc.). **Colleges want to read about what makes you and your experiences unique** (don't be afraid to stand out!).
    - **The topic you choose to write about should be a reflection of who you are.**
    - If given the opportunity, **talk about why you think you would be a good fit for the school you are applying to.**
    - **Be thoughtful, clear, and concise.** Many essays have short word counts.
    - **PROOFREAD AND EDIT!** Have teachers, parents, and your college adviser proofread your essay and give you feedback until you have the best version of your essay to submit.
    - A final version of your essay will be an authentic expression of yourself, be well-written with professional language, and have no grammatical/spelling errors.
- **General suggestions from college admissions experts:**
    - https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/how-to-write-a-college-essay

Preparing your Resume:
- https://www.themuse.com/advice/43-resume-tips-that-will-help-you-get-hired
- https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/what-to-include-on-a-resume
- **It can be super helpful to look up resume examples online for inspiration.** Simply Google "resume examples" and look around!
- **Canva** can be a really good website to use to build an interesting and eye-catching resume for free!

Recommendation Letters:
- **Ask teachers, coaches, counselors, or community members that know you well** and can speak to who you are as a student and as an individual. If you ask teachers they should be in a field where you are planning to study.
- **Ask them for the letter well in advance of the due date** (at least 3 weeks), they may need time.
- Have multiple people in mind, just in case your top choice says no
- **Give them your resume or similar list of activities/accomplishments** so that they can get inspiration for what to write

- **Provide an outline of what the Letter or Recommendation is looking for when you ask someone to write one.**
  - Is it based on community service, academic excellence, volunteer work, etc.?

The ACT/SAT:
- **Almost all colleges require either an ACT or SAT score (sometimes both!) in their applications**
- Talk to your college adviser or school counselors about registering for the ACT/SAT
- **General tips/tricks for the ACT & SAT:**
  https://www.cfnc.org/plan-your-future/planning-resources/test-preparation/
- **ACT:**
  - All high school students in NC take the ACT their junior year.
  - The ACT can be retaken to improve your school
  - https://blog.prepscholar.com/15-act-tips-and-tricks-to-improve-your-act-score
  - https://www.princetonreview.com/college/act-information
- **SAT:**
  - It is **highly recommended that all students take the SAT at least once** as it is required for applications for many college applications.
  - When you take the SAT, you get 2 separate scores, one for reading, and one for math. The total of these two scores is your total SAT score that you will report to colleges/universities.
  - Many colleges/universities will let you **superscore** your SAT score, meaning that if you have taken the test multiple times, you can average your highest scores from the separate tests.
    - Example: I took the SAT twice when I was in high school. The first time I got a 1160, the 2nd time I still got a 1160. However, because my math score was higher on the 2nd test, I was able to report my score as a 1190 when adding my highest math and highest reading scores.
  - https://www.princetonreview.com/college/sat-information
  - https://magoosh.com/hs/sat-test/
  - https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat/new-sat-tips-plannin

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