

A headache or an adventure?

By Elizabeth Cady

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As students settle into new school routines, those anticipating graduation in the spring must also begin thinking about their next big adventure — college.

Colleges are becoming more competitive, and high school seniors wishing to be accepted must be prepared for the application process ahead. High schools, from public to private, aim to aid seniors by providing counseling services.

Applying for college can intimidate students, but it doesn't have to, explained Sam Moss, dean of college guidance at Darlington School. "Students tend to put off applying as much as they can, but it is not as bad as they think."

Moss said a great way to reduce stress is to visit college Web sites and look at applications over the summer.

By becoming familiar with what colleges expect, students will be better prepared when admission dates are near.

Graduation counselors, sometimes called coaches, are available year round to answer questions and to simplify a process that may appear overwhelming. These advisers are able to help because they know what colleges expect and how well the student is prepared.

Undergraduate admission requirements usually include, but aren't limited to: an application form and fee, an official high school transcript, and an official SAT or ACT report (which must be sent from the testing agency). Many colleges also require application essays and teacher recommendations.

Students may request official high school transcripts from their schools, which are sent to up to four colleges of their choice. In the initial registration fee, SAT and ACT agencies include official score transcripts to be sent up to four colleges for free. After the first four colleges, additional score reports can be sent for \$9.50 per SAT report, and \$8.50 per ACT report. Priority score reports and archived scores have extra fees applied.

ON THE WEB

Look at the Back to School content on our Web site to see a list of application deadlines for some Georgia colleges.

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Jeff Cavaness, guidance counselor at Rome High School, advises his students to take the SAT or ACT their junior year.

"But, taking the exams as a junior is not a have-to," he said. "It depends on where a student wants to end up. If they are going to a more competitive college it is best to take it your junior year. That way, you have more time before the early admission deadlines."

Cavaness emphasized that early admissions are not only important for getting accepted, but for receiving financial aid. He suggested students begin looking for scholarships in September. Searching early, he said, is crucial for students who need a lot of financial aid to attend their top choice of college.

"Every college has scholarships, but you can also search online and find a lot that you are eligible for," Cavaness said.

According to Teresa Perry, senior coach at Pepperell High School, it is important to apply early for both admission and scholarships, but it is more important for a student to be active during their senior year of high school.

"I always advise students not to take the year off their senior year," she said. "They'll be more prepared for college if they have a challenging academic schedule instead of just fluff."

Perry said colleges are becoming more competitive, but they are more likely to recognize a student who has been consistently involved academically and in extra-curricular activities. When a college starts making final acceptance decisions, they are more likely to choose a well-rounded student.

The advice not to slack off senior year of high school was echoed by both Moss and Cavaness.

"One of the biggest pieces of advice I have for students,

is not to slack off in their senior year." said Moss, "Most students try to take a lighter load in the fall semester of their senior year, and this hurts their chances at the competitive colleges."

When students choose which colleges they are going to apply, Perry suggests that students focus on three schools.

Please see COLLEGE 6



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