



South Dakota College Application Week

**Partner of the
American College Application Campaign®**

SITE COORDINATOR MANUAL 2015 Edition

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Welcome to the American College Application Campaign

The American Council on Education is pleased to provide a home to the American College Application Campaign, a multi-state effort to increase college access through dissemination of ideas, development of practices, and technical assistance for implementation of a College Application Campaign event.

This manual gives an overview of American College Application Campaign and particularly its efforts to assist states and US territories as each implements a College Application Campaign event. This manual is intended for high school site coordinators, typically school counselors or assistant principals, as they plan and implement a College Application Campaign event at their school. A separate guide and resources are available on ACAC's website, www.acenet.edu/acac, for the designated State Coordinator.

This manual has been updated by your state's designated State Coordinator to reflect the implementation of the College Application Campaign in your state. For any questions regarding the information included in this document, please contact your State Coordinator.

The ACAC initiative began in 2005, in a single GEAR UP North Carolina high school in Chatham County. Since that time, the program has expanded statewide in North Carolina with every district and over 470 high schools participating annually. Since 2008, the number of states implementing a College Application program has been growing. In 2014, ACAC took place in over 4,000 schools in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. This manual highlights the most effective practices of participating states.

We hope you find this guide useful as you implement strategies to achieve increased college access in your school.

This document is updated annually. The most recent version will be available on the American College Application Campaign website (www.acenet.edu/acac).

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Joining the American College Application Campaign

About the Campaign

The American College Application Campaign (ACAC), an effort of the American Council on Education (ACE), is a national initiative to increase the number of first-generation and low-income students who pursue a postsecondary education. The purpose is to help high school seniors navigate the college admissions process and ensure each participating student submits at least one admissions application.

The Campaign is conducted state by state and is typically held in October or November. However, there may be variations to the scheduled week in order to accommodate state-specific needs. The 2015 South Dakota College Application Week Campaign will be held November 2-6, 2015. After submitting the admissions application during the college application event, students are then asked to register for their FSA ID. As students depart the event, they are provided with the date of their state's FAFSA Day or College Goal Saturday/Sunday/Weekend event to ensure they apply for financial aid as part of the admissions process.

Responsibilities of Participating High Schools

High schools implementing a successful College Application Campaign event at their school will include the following as part of their initiative:

- Hosting a program during the school day that is open to any student interested in applying with a focus on engaging first-generation students, students from low-income families, and students who may otherwise not apply to college. Your state's initiative may be a week or longer, but most schools host events on only one or two days, depending on the size of the senior class.
- Identifying and convening a school team comprised of staff and community members.
- Leveraging support of the school team to ensure that students are prepared to participate in the event (essays are completed prior to the program, students have researched the institutions to which they want to apply, etc.).
- Engaging the local community, families, and others through volunteer opportunities, information letters, and advertising the program.
- Creating a college-going culture within the school through a variety of approaches – some suggestions are included in this guide.
- Collecting data as requested by the State Coordinator including, but not limited to, the number of students participating and the number of applications submitted.
- Following-up with students after the event to ensure applications submitted are complete (transcripts, college entrance exam scores, letters of recommendation, submitting a complete FAFSA, etc.).

Campaign Resources for your High School

For questions about South Dakota College Application Week, contact Molly Hall-Martin.

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Trainings for the 2015 SDCAW Campaign will be conducted via one-on-one site visits.

Implementing a College Application Campaign Program: Overview

Program Implementation at the School-Level: Site Coordinator

Each high school will identify a site coordinator, typically a high school counselor or assistant principal, who will be responsible for implementing the program locally. ACAC has provided tools and resources that the state and/or participating high schools can use or customize to your state's or school's program. These implementation tools are available in this manual and have been customized by your State Coordinator to reflect your state's implementation of the College Application Campaign program.

Planning and Communicating the Campaign Program

It is important that your school communicate the opportunity to students, their families and your local community. Suggestions for communicating and marketing your state's College Application Campaign event are available in this manual and on ACAC's website, www.acenet.edu/acac under Resources.

Volunteers are a critical component of a school's College Application event. To assist your school in identifying volunteers from your local community, information letters intended for community partners and families of your seniors are included in this guide. In addition, SDCAW will assist you in recruiting volunteers by contacting the admissions offices at South Dakota campuses as well as precollege access programs such as GEAR UP and TRIO.

Although your school's program will not be implemented until the fall, it is important to begin planning for the program early in the calendar year or at the beginning of the school year at the very latest. A timeline to guide the planning of your school's event is provided in this manual.

Identifying Stakeholders and Convening a School Team

Schools that have successfully implemented a College Application Campaign event have done so through the collaboration of multiple stakeholders. A key approach to engaging stakeholders is the creation of a school team that will provide input on and support for the various logistics necessary to implement a successful College Application Campaign event at the school level. Below, you will find a **list of recommended local resources** that you can use to identify the key stakeholders in your community. Keep in mind that this list is not exhaustive and you should engage any other community partners that have a vested interest in college access and success. When planning and implementing your school's College Application Campaign initiative, you should follow all district and school policies regarding non-school personnel visiting, volunteering, or otherwise assisting with your school's program.

Potential community partners include:

- Admissions representatives from local colleges (two-year and four-year)
- Local business leaders
- Local Chamber of Commerce
- College access initiatives (federally-funded, state-funded, or community-based)
- Faith-based community
- Non-profit organizations such as the YMCA, 4H, Boys and Girls Club, etc.
- PTA and other parents/family members who want to be engaged in the process
- Student leaders in your high school
- Retired school personnel
- Local government officials or elected representatives



College Application Event Resource Audit

SCHOOL PARTNERS

Use the table below to identify potential education partners in your school's College Application Campaign event. Space has been provided at the bottom of the table for you to add additional education partners, if needed.

Potential Partner	Name of Contact	Email Address	Phone Number
Admissions Representative from local college			
Local business leader			
Local Chamber of Commerce			
Community-based college access initiative			
Faith-based community representative			
Non-profit representative			
PTA or parent representative			
Student representative			

School Team: Agenda Items for your Convening

As outlined above, a school team comprised of a variety of stakeholders is extremely effective in creating support and buy-in for your school's College Application event. There are a variety of topics that can be and should be discussed with your school team.

Some of the key topics the school team should discuss are:

- What is the College Application Campaign event?
- Outlining the role of school team
- Identifying date(s) for the event (note your state's designated dates during your discussion!)
- Developing a communication strategy: student, parents, school staff, community
- Ensuring students are prepared well before the event (researching schools, learning how to pay for the application, understanding additional admission requirements)
- Creating or enhancing a college-going culture that is visible in the school in the weeks leading up to the event
- Requesting a Mayoral Proclamation
- Encouraging and recruiting students to participate in the initiative
- Including underclassmen in the effort
- Engaging volunteers
- Ensuring a process for evaluation and data collection
- Following-up with applications – ensuring the college and financial aid processes are completed

After your College Application event, your school team should meet to debrief on the successes and challenges of the current year's initiative – feel free to use the topics above to guide the discussion. The debrief meeting should occur as close to the conclusion of your school's College Application event as possible. By quickly assessing what worked and what areas need improvement, your school team can get a jump-start on planning for next year's program and create an action plan to follow-up with participating students who need to complete the college application and begin the financial aid application processes.

Timeline: Implementing a College Application Program

Although your school's College Application program won't be implemented until the fall, it is important that your school begin planning for the program *early*, ideally no later than the start of the school year. Below, you will find a recommended timeline for your school's College Application Campaign program. The timeline may need to be shifted based on the dates selected for your state's Campaign program and other nuances of your state's initiative.

Site Coordinator: College Application Event Timeline⁴

Spring or Start of School Year

- Register your high school for participation in the College Application program
- During spring course enrollment meetings with juniors, make each student aware of the College Application program and encourage them to begin thinking about and researching the colleges and universities to which they want to apply
- Print and review the current Site Coordinator Manual as provided by your State Coordinator
- Establish a school team to assist with your school's preparations; host first meeting
- Add the College Application event to your school's master calendar
- Reserve the computer facilities for your school's College Application event
- Ensure you have adequate counts of fee waivers for those students who are unable to afford the application fees. Contact the College Board, ACT, or NACAC if additional waivers are needed. Links to these resources are included in this manual.

8 weeks prior to event, Week of: September 5, 2016

- Confirm that your school's information is listed correctly on the state's College Application event website. Contact your State Coordinator if there are issues.
- Communicate the opportunity to students, families, and the community using the information letters available in this manual. This is a great way to recruit volunteers!
- Communicate with volunteers for your event using the letters in this manual, or by making announcements at school meetings, PTA/PTO meetings, and/or parent nights. If your school has a criminal background check requirement, be sure to follow those guidelines.

7 weeks prior to your event, Week of: September 12, 2016

- Arrange a schedule for your event, including which groups or classes of students will participate at what time.
- If your state is using a web portal for the program, ensure seniors have created web accounts, if applicable.
- Encourage students to begin career, major, and college research. Use ACT's ACT Profile <http://www.act.org/profile/>, College Board's Big Future <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>, Education Trust's www.collegeresults.org, and other appropriate resources.
- Review supplemental activities provided in this manual and determine which activities you want to use to make your school's event fun and exciting.
- Encourage teachers to begin connecting classroom lessons to your College Application program. Suggestions are included in this manual.

6 weeks prior to your event, Week of: September 19, 2016

- Provide eligible students with application fee waiver information. Discuss or create worksheet with payment options for students who do not qualify for fee waivers.
- If your state has a web portal, determine which students have not created accounts.
- Begin implementing College Application event supplemental activities. Recommendations are included in this manual.
- Contact the Mayor's office to have your College Application Day(s) proclaimed. If other schools in your district are hosting events, coordinate with them on the request.

5 weeks prior to your event, Week of: September 26, 2016

- If applicable, follow-up with those students who have not created state web portal accounts and those who have not begun college research.
- Reconfirm that computer facilities are reserved for the event and that your school's technology coordinator is ready and willing to serve should any technology issues arise.

4 weeks prior to your event, Week of: October 3, 2016

- Create a schedule for volunteers, taking into account the availability of your volunteers, as well as breaks and lunch.

3 weeks prior to your event, Week of: October 10, 2016

- Remind families of your school's College Application event using the phone tree, and let them know that their students may need their help to prepare. Suggested information to share is included in this manual.
- Send a message to your volunteers to give them the details of your event, including when/where to meet.
- If using a web portal to apply, confirm that all seniors have created an account. Follow up with seniors as needed.

2 weeks prior to your event, Week of: October 17, 2016

- Remind teachers, counselors and administrators of the event schedule and ensure all seniors will have the opportunity to participate.
- Be sure that you have and use event materials provided by the State Coordinator.

1 week prior to your event, Week of: October 24, 2016

- Make an announcement to remind students that the event is next week, and remind them that they will need to:
 - Know where they would like to apply
 - Have a plan for application fees and to speak with school counselor if they believe they qualify for a fee waiver
 - Write required essays or personal statements, have them proofed, in a final version, and bring to the event on a flash drive or as an email attachment they can access.
 - Gather the information needed to complete applications. Some information may need to come from parents (residency information, social security number, etc.).
- Make final preparations for your event.
- Encourage school staff to wear college clothing on the day(s) of the event.
- Alert your local media about your event. A press release is included in this manual.
- Send volunteers a reminder about the event a day or two prior to your event.
- Place a reminder about the event of your school's website home page.

Your College Application Week! *Enjoy your College Application Event!*

- Welcome volunteers and thank them for their support!
 - Let them know what their role is for the day; ensure they receive a badge or sticker identifying them as a volunteer. Templates and recommended volunteer tasks are included in this manual.
- Students should register for their FSA ID during the College Application event.
- Participating students should "sign-out" of the event and provide the requested information.
- Ensure students get the Next Steps and FAFSA Completion event handouts after they apply to college.
- If required by your State Coordinator, students, volunteers, and/or site coordinators should complete requested surveys.

After Your Event

- Submit any requested data to your State Coordinator
- Communicate the program's impact with the local media. A post-event press release is included in the manual.
- Thank your volunteers. A sample thank you letter is included in the manual.
- Follow-up with school team to share your success!

Preparing and Implementing a College Application Event

There are a variety of activities that high school site coordinators can do prior to, during, and after the school's College Application event to ensure it is successful and meaningful for participating students. These activities are outlined below and samples are included in corresponding sections of this manual. Following the sample materials, there is a **site coordinator checklist** to assist you with tracking the implementation of each activity.

Pre-event Activities: Creating a College-Going Culture and Getting Students Prepared

There are several activities that schools participating in the College Application Campaign program can do prior to the event in order to prepare students and to generate enthusiasm and support for the program. This section of the manual focuses on pre-event activities that high school site coordinators can utilize as they plan for the program.

- College Research Worksheet
- College Application Worksheet
- Application Fee Waivers
- "Ask Me!" About It Signs
- Information Letters
- Phone Blasts
- Sample Press Release
- Mayoral Proclamation
- Other Pre-Event Activities

During your College Application Program

You have completed all of the planning for your College Application Campaign program and due to the pre-event activities, your students are prepared and the community is engaged in this exciting initiative. Use these activities and resources to help make your event a success!

- Ask Me! Button, Badges, Stickers
- Volunteer Tasks
- Student Instructions for Day of Event
- College Application Sign-Out Sheet
- Reminders and Recognition
- Next Steps Handout
- Reminders for FAFSA Completion Event

After your College Application Program

Congratulations! You have successfully implemented a College Application Campaign program for your students and started them on the pathway to enrolling in college next fall. The following templates and suggestions are provided to assist you with post-event activities.

- Volunteer Thank You Letters
- Post-Event Press Releases
- Understanding Financial Aid Award Letters
- College Signing Day
- Other Follow-Up Activities

As we all know, the journey to successfully enrolling in postsecondary education does not end with the submission of a college application. There are several more steps that each participating student will need to complete over the next few months including, but not limited to, submitting college admissions test scores, submitting transcripts (current and final), submitting recommendation letters, and completing and submitting a FAFSA. As such, it is important that your team implements a plan to follow-up with participating students.

Pre-event Activities: Creating a College-Going Culture and Getting Students Prepared

Samples of the following materials are included in this manual. Common uses for each are detailed below. The materials have been updated by your College Application Campaign State Coordinator to reflect your state's implementation.

College Research Worksheet

Understanding match, fit, and cost is critical to researching colleges. Have students use this worksheet to help them research and identify the colleges to which they want to apply.

College Application Worksheet ^{2,5}

This worksheet is an opportunity for students to identify some of the most common information asked on college applications prior to the event. Ensure students have this well in advance of the College Application event so they can ask any questions they may have before they apply.

Application Fee Waivers

Students who are eligible for fee waivers associated with college entrance exams (SAT or ACT) are also usually eligible for college application fee waivers. It is important to begin talking with students about this payment option early in the school year. This section provides additional details on the fee waiver process and resources to learn more.

"Ask Me!" About It Signs ⁵

This is a quick and low-cost way to create awareness and excitement for your school's College Application event. Send the "Ask Me!" sign to all staff members in the school – ask them to customize it to their school(s) and display it outside their classroom or office.

Information Letters ^{2,5}

To assist getting the word out, sample letters are included that can be sent to parents and community partners about your school's College Application event. These should be sent about two months prior to your College Application event on school letterhead.

Phone Blasts

To remind parents that the College Application opportunity is available to their child, a sample phone blast is included. To ensure students still have time to prepare for the event, it is recommended that this is implemented at least three weeks prior to the program.

Sample Press Release ^{2,5}

Contact your local media to inform them of your College Application event. If school policy allows, invite them to be a part of your program. Media coverage will help students, families, and the community recognize the importance of this program for your school and students.

Mayoral Proclamation

Your state's College Application program State Coordinator is likely seeking a gubernatorial proclamation for the state's initiative. A mayoral proclamation for your school's event is a wonderful complement. If there are multiple schools in your area implementing an event, be sure to coordinate with them so the proclamation is accurate and reflects all participating schools.

Other Pre-event Activities ^{2,5,8}

Other ideas for enhancing a college-going culture prior to the College Application event are included here.

College Research Worksheet

Prior to submitting a college application, you need to research the various college options you have available. During your research, there are three important things for you to consider: fit, match, and cost. This worksheet will help you think through each of them:

Does the college **fit** with your preferences? There are several factors to consider in regard to fit such as the size of the school, the location of the school, and services available on campus. Also, it is important to consider the college's graduation rates and retention rates (the number of students who return to school for their second year) when researching what a college has to offer you. Finally, does the school offer your major? If you're not sure what you'd like to major in, visit ACT Profile (www.act.org/profile) to explore and learn more about careers and majors that align with your interests and talents.

Does the college **match** with your academic record? For this, you'll need to understand how your high school grade point average (GPA), your college entrance exam scores (SAT and/or ACT), and the courses you've taken in high school match to the college's entrance requirements AND to the average GPAs and scores of students admitted. Keep in mind that what a school requires could be different from the averages of who they admit. You should plan to apply to multiple schools and should include at least one of each of the following types of schools:

- Reach School – this does not mean out of reach, it just means that the school may be more selective (look at the percent of applicants admitted) and your academic record may be on the lower end of what the college typically accepts. In other words, you *may* be admitted to this school
- Match School – typically, at a match school, your academic record will be similar to the “average” student admitted to this school. In other words, you are *likely* to be admitted.
- Safety School – a safety school will usually have either open enrollment (meaning anyone who submits a completed application is admitted) or will be considered a “less selective” institution. Your academic record will exceed the institution's requirements and averages for students admitted. In other words, you will almost *definitely* be admitted.

Finally, it is important for you to understand the **cost** of the institutions to which you would like to apply. Keep in mind that the “sticker” price of a college may be very different from the “net” price of a college after you consider the amount of aid that is typically available to students.

Use the worksheet below to think through what type of college you would like to attend. The worksheet will also ask you to detail your academic record by providing information on the various academic indicators that many colleges consider during the application review process. If you're unsure of any of the information requested, be sure to work with your school counselor so you have the most accurate information possible.

After the worksheet you will find a table that you can complete with information specific to the colleges you are researching. Remember, you should plan to apply to at least one reach, one match, and one safety college. Go to [College Planning Tool and Website] to conduct your research.

Use the completed tables to help you identify what colleges you would like to apply to!

Identifying Your College Fit

LOCATION

Where would your ideal college be located (circle one)?

In-state Out-of-state Either

How important is location to you (circle one)?

Very Important Important Not Important

TYPE OF SCHOOL

In what kind of setting would your ideal college be (circle one)?

Rural Suburban Urban

How important is setting to you (circle one)?

Very Important Important Not Important

How big would your ideal college be (circle one)?

Large Medium Small

How important is size to you (circle one)?

Very Important Important Not Important

SUPPORT SERVICES

What services would be available on your ideal campus (circle all that apply)?

Tutoring	Employment Services
Career Counseling	Academic Support Services
Minority Student Services	Disability Services

What other things are important to you at your ideal college? Things to consider are what you want to major in; whether the campus is co-ed or single gender; the diversity of the campus; whether students live on-campus or if a majority of students are commuters; etc. Use the space below to identify any other characteristics your ideal college would have.

Your Academic Record

If you don't know some of this information, check with your school counselor!

My grade point average is: _____

By graduation, how many years of the following classes will you have taken?

My SAT Reading score is: _____

English _____ Science _____

My SAT Math score is: _____

Math _____ Art _____

My SAT Writing score is: _____

Social Studies _____ History _____

My ACT Composite score is: _____

Foreign Language _____ Electives _____

Instructions: Go to [College Planning Tool and Website]. There, you can search for colleges that “fit” and “match” the information you completed on the previous page. Be sure you keep in mind what characteristics are important to you in regard to fit! Or, search for a specific college to which you think you would like to apply to learn more about them. For each college, complete this table to determine if the college is a good fit and match for you and whether the costs seem reasonable based on your anticipated resources.

Name of College: _____

FIT

Location of college (City, State)		4-year or 2-year?	
Size of college		Public or Private?	
Number of undergraduate students		Co-ed? Women only? Men only?	
Setting of college		Students live on campus or commute?	
Do they offer my major?	Yes No	Diversity of campus	
Percent of students that return sophomore year		Graduation Rate	
What services are available on campus that are important to me?			

How well do you think this college **fits** your preferences? Excellent Fit Good Fit Okay Fit Somewhat of a Fit Does not Fit

MATCH

How selective is this college?		Have I taken the required high school courses?	Yes No
Percent of applicants admitted?	%	Percent of students with my SAT score	%
Percent of students with my GPA	%	Percent of students with my ACT score	%

Comparing my academic record to this college, this would be a **Reach, Match, or Safety** college for me (see definitions above)? _____

COST

Total estimated cost to attend	\$	Percent of need met	%
My calculated net price	\$	Percent of need met through scholarships/grants	%
Percent of freshmen with need who received aid	%	Percent of need met through loans	%

I plan to apply to this college: Yes No

If Yes, Application Deadline:

College Application Worksheet

Instructions: Students, complete this College Application Worksheet and bring it with you on the day of your school's College Application event. You may need to ask your family, school counselor, or another adult you trust to assist you in answering all of the questions. **Be sure to keep this information in a safe place given the personal information included.**

Top Three Colleges and Universities you Plan to Submit an Application

Prior to participating in your school's College Application program, you should do some research on the schools to which you plan to apply. Use the worksheet below to keep track of the information you learn during your research on your top three colleges and universities.

1. Name of College:

Is an essay or personal statement required to apply? If so, note the prompt so you can draft a response!:

Deadline for application:

Cost to apply:

Payment option:

SAT and/or ACT required?

Recommendation letter required?

Deadline for scholarship or institutional financial assistance:

2. Name of College:

Is an essay or personal statement required to apply? If so, note the prompt so you can draft a response!:

Deadline for application:

Cost to apply:

Payment option:

SAT and/or ACT required?

Recommendation letter required?

Deadline for scholarship or institutional financial assistance:

3. Name of College:

Is an essay or personal statement required to apply? If so, note the prompt so you can draft a response!:

Deadline for application:

Cost to apply:

Payment option:

SAT and/or ACT required?

Recommendation letter required?

Deadline for scholarship or institutional financial assistance:

It is strongly recommended that you write your essays and personal statements well in advance of your school's College Application event. Your English teacher, school counselor, and other adults you trust are good resources to assist you in getting your essays to a final version. You should bring a final, proofed, electronic copy of your essays and/or personal statements on a flash drive to the event. If flash drives are not allowed on your school computers, talk to your school counselor before the College Application event about how you can access these documents while applying.

Test Scores

Many applications for college admission will request information related to tests that you have taken. Use the worksheet below to list the scores for tests you have already taken. If you have not yet taken the SAT or ACT and the school(s) you are applying to require them, speak with your school counselor about upcoming test dates – you will need to take at least one of these college entrance exams soon! Most colleges will also require an “official” score that is sent by College Board (SAT scores) or ACT (ACT scores). Talk with your school counselor about how to do this.

SAT

Test #1:

Date Taken:

Total Score:

Critical Reading Score:

Mathematics Score:

Writing Score:

Test #2:

Date Taken:

Total Score:

Critical Reading Score:

Mathematics Score:

Writing Score:

ACT

Test #1:

Date Taken:

Total Score:

Critical Reading Score:

Mathematics Score:

Science Score:

Writing Score:

Test #2:

Date Taken:

Total Score:

Critical Reading Score:

Mathematics Score:

Science Score:

Writing Score:

Extra-Curricular Activities

Some applications request information related to the activities that you participate in outside of your high school classes. This could include clubs, organizations or any other activity that you want to share with the college. List your activities below, including the year(s) you participated and if you held a position or received an award related to the activity.

Activity 1:

Years Participated:

Leadership position held:

Awards:

Activity 2:

Years Participated:

Leadership position held:

Awards:

Activity 3:

Years Participated:

Leadership position held:

Awards:

Activity 4:

Years Participated:

Leadership position held:

Awards:

Activity 5:

Years Participated:

Leadership position held:

Awards:

Application Fee Waivers

Who is eligible?

Typically, fee waivers are available to students for whom the college application fees would create a financial burden or hardship. Students who were eligible for fee waivers to college entrance exams, such as the SAT or ACT, are usually also eligible for college application fee waivers.

Who accepts fee waivers?

During 2015 South Dakota College Application Week Campaign (November 2-6, 2015), all students at participating high schools will be afforded up to three free applications to South Dakota Board of Regents institutions of their choosing. For information about fee waivers for South Dakota's technical institutes, tribal colleges, beauty colleges, private colleges, or out of state college, please contact the admissions office at that institution.

What fee waivers are available?

There are three types of fee waivers typically accepted by colleges and universities, but it is important to note that not all colleges and universities will accept fee waivers. Students or school counselors should confirm with the admissions office at specific institutions to ensure fee waivers are accepted.

ACT Fee Waiver

ACT provides a fee waiver application in their *ACT User Handbook for Educators* publication, link below. Students who are eligible for a fee waiver to the ACT college entrance exam are also eligible for a college application fee waiver. School counselors need only print out the number of fee waivers needed and sign-off on student eligibility. Students must also sign the form. The fee waiver may be found on page 37 here:

<http://www.act.org/aap/pdf/ACT-UserHandbook.pdf>

College Board Fee Waiver

The College Board states that students who have received a College Board fee waiver for the SAT or the SAT subject tests may also be eligible for up to four college application fee waivers. Students should receive their college application fee waivers at the beginning of their senior year through their SAT accounts. College Board fee waivers will no longer require school counselor approval.

More information on the College Board fee waiver can be found here:

<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/guidance/applications/fee-waivers>

The College Board also provides additional information including a link to which colleges accept the College Board application fee waiver here:

<http://www.sat.org/fee-waivers>

National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) Fee Waiver

This fee waiver can be downloaded from NACAC's website, provided below. Students must complete their portion of the fee waiver request and a school counselor or TRIO representative must verify that a student is eligible to use the form (a list of eligibility requirements are provided on the NACAC website and on the fee waiver request – students must meet only one of the requirements to be eligible). NACAC recommends that students receive no more than four fee waivers for the college application process. Additional information on the NACAC fee waiver can be found on their website here:

<http://www.nacacnet.org/studentinfo/feewaiver/Pages/default.aspx>



South Dakota College Application Week

South Dakota College Application Week is November 2-6, 2015!

I graduated from

(SCHOOL NAME).

Ask me about it!

(Staff Member's Name)



Student/Family Information Letter

(School Logo)
(School Address)

September 2016

Dear Students and Families,

During the week of October 31 – November 4, the South Dakota Board of Regents will be sponsoring South Dakota College Application Week. On October 31 – November 4, all seniors expected to graduate at the end of this academic year will be encouraged to apply for admission to at least one college or university, if they have not already done so. This event is possible due to the collaborative efforts of the administration, faculty, and staff at (Name of your high school), as well as students, their families, and volunteers across the community.

The purpose of this day is to acquaint students with the college application process and to communicate the importance of applying to college. Information about completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) will also be made available during the event. There is a College Application Worksheet which we encourage students to complete prior to the event that is available on [provide state's College Application website or ask schools to post it to their website and include the link here]. Having this Worksheet completed and available at the College Application event will allow students to quickly and easily complete college applications.

We anticipate that students and their families will need to work together in gathering the information listed in the College Application Worksheet. Families are welcome to visit (Name of your high school) on (Date(s) of event) to assist their student during the application process. In addition, if family members are interested in volunteering or guest speaking during the event, please let me know. Volunteers can greet and sign-in students, assist students with the completion of college applications, or distribute information about financial aid opportunities.

If you have any questions please call (Site Coordinator's Name, Site Coordinator's Title), at (Site Coordinator's phone number). Thank you in advance for your support of this exciting initiative to encourage all South Dakota students to make college a part of their future.

Sincerely,
(Name of Site Coordinator)
(Title)

Community Information Letter

[State's ACAC Logo]

(School Logo)
(School Address)

September 2016

Dear Community Member,

During the week of October 31 – November 4, the South Dakota Board of Regents will be sponsoring South Dakota College Application Week. On October 31 – November 4, all seniors expected to graduate at the end of this academic year will be encouraged to apply for admission to at least one college or university, if they have not already done so. This event is possible due to the collaborative efforts of the administration, faculty, and staff at (Name of your high school), as well as students, their families, and volunteers across the community.

The purpose of this day is to acquaint students with the college application process and to communicate the importance of applying to college. Information about completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) will also be made available during the event.

(Name of your high school) will be hosting our College Application event on (Date(s) of event) to assist their student during the application process. We welcome the community to be a part of the program. If you are interested in volunteering or guest speaking during the event, please let me know. Volunteers can greet and sign-in students, assist students with the completion of college applications, or distribute information about financial aid opportunities.

If you have any questions please call (Site Coordinator's Name, Site Coordinator's Title), at (Site Coordinator's phone number). Thank you in advance for your support of this exciting initiative to encourage all [State's Name] students to make college a part of their future.

Sincerely,
(Name of Site Coordinator)
(Title)

Phone Blast Message

[State's ACAC Logo]

This is a friendly reminder that (Name of High School) will be hosting a College Application event on October 31 – November 4 to encourage all seniors to apply to at least one college if they haven't already done so. Students should come prepared to apply by completing the College Application Worksheet available [ACAC website or ask school's to post to their website and provide link here]. If you have any questions please call (NAME, TITLE), at (PHONE NUMBER). Thank you in advance for your support of this exciting initiative to encourage all (Name of High School) students to make college a part of their future.

Sample Press Release

[State's ACAC Logo]

(School Logo or Letterhead)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: (Name of site coordinator)

(Position title and/or college access program affiliation of site coordinator)

(School name)

(School address)

(Phone number)

(Email of contact person)

(High school website)

[Name of State's ACAC Program] to be held (Dates) at (Name of High School)

(Name of Your High School) will participate in [Name of State's ACAC Program] sponsored by [Names of ACAC Sponsoring Organizations] during [Dates of ACAC Program].

As part of [State's Name] college access initiative, (Name of Your High School) will work with its seniors on (Your School's Event Dates) to complete and submit at least one college application.

The goal of the program is to get more students applying to [State's Name] colleges early in their senior year. During this event, students may apply to any of [State's Name] [Number of Community Colleges] community colleges, [Number of Independent Colleges] independent colleges, and [Number of Public Universities] public universities in which they are interested.

(Name of Site Coordinator), [Name of State's ACAC Program] event Site Coordinator for (Name of Your High School), expects more than (Insert Number) seniors to participate with the help of (Insert Number) volunteers from (Insert school staff, administration, college and community resources, and others who are assisting).

This initiative is part of the American College Application Campaign (ACAC), a national initiative that is an effort of the American Council on Education. In 2014, ACAC campaigns took place in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

For more information: (Insert website link or an email address) or

Contact: (Name of Site Coordinator)

Phone: (Site Coordinator's phone number)

#####

Sample Mayoral Proclamation

[State's ACAC Logo]

WHEREAS the college application process may be a barrier to some high school students pursuing postsecondary education due to an absence of information or support

WHEREAS obtaining a postsecondary degree has been linked to higher income, better health, and increased community involvement

WHEREAS only [percent]% of [State's Name]'s working population, aged 25-64, has an Associate's degree [*Pull data from Lumina's A Stronger Nation Report: http://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger_nation*]

WHEREAS [State's Name] and (participating high school(s) name) are working to prepare students for the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century

WHEREAS (high school(s) name) is/are part of a statewide initiative, [Name of State's ACAC Program], designed to increase the number of students who apply to and enroll in college with a particular focus on first-generation and low-income students

I, (Mayor's Name) do hereby declare (Dates of School's College Application Program(s)) [Name of State's ACAC Program] in (city) and encourage all seniors to take advantage of the assistance provided through this initiative.

Other Pre-Event Activities

[State's ACAC Logo]

There are a variety of other activities your school can implement before your College Application event to help enhance the college-going culture and spread the word and excitement about the upcoming event.

Incorporate College Application Activities into the Classroom

Ask English teachers if they would be willing to assign a college application essay, personal statement, or a scholarship essay as homework prior to the event. Students should be able to research the prompts on the college applications or scholarship applications to which they are interested in applying.

See if Civics or Social Studies teachers will lead a college match lesson where students research and identify schools that are a good fit to their academic records and goals. Educated citizens are more likely to vote and be engaged in their communities.

Ask Math teachers if they would be willing to do a lesson on calculating financial need and repayment options. A critical component to a student being an informed consumer is having an understanding about the cost of attending college, the financial aid that is available, and what, if any, repayment students will need to do. Investigating average salaries of students who graduate with their major is an important piece of the research.

The Federal Student Aid Office at the US Department of Education has grade-level checklists and research tools to help students become academically and financially prepared for postsecondary education here. These checklists and resources can be utilized in classroom preparation activities: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/prepare-for-college/checklists>.

Marquee

Use your school's marquee to inform and remind students, families, staff, and the community about your upcoming College Application event. Post this information about two weeks prior to your school's event:

"[Name of State's ACAC Program]
Class of 2016 Applying to College on (Dates)!"

College T-Shirt/Sweatshirt Day

An easy and fun way to generate some excitement in your school is to host college t-shirt or sweatshirt days. Get everyone involved – students, staff, and administrators! Many schools will host these types of college spirit days on Fridays for a few weeks prior to the school's College Application program.

Door Decorating Contest

Taking the "Ask Me!" signs one step farther, have staff and administrators participate in a door decorating contest focused on the college they graduated from or what college means to them. Students can then vote on which door wins and the winner can be announced the week prior to your College Application program. See if a local store is willing to donate a gift card to the winning educator as a prize.

College Wall

Use a bulletin board in the school to celebrate the applications submitted by your seniors. Have students write their name and the names of the colleges they applied to on construction paper and post it to the college wall. Students who apply prior to your College Application event can participate and get the wall started. Students who apply during your event can join the fun and add their notes after they submit their applications.

Morning Announcements

Generate excitement by highlighting different colleges and universities during morning announcements on the weeks leading up to your event. Students, staff who are alums, community alums, or representatives from the colleges themselves can do the announcements. Make the announcements exciting by having speakers provide a unique fact about the school, sing the school's spirit song, or other creative approaches.

Guest Speaker

Engage a local community leader or a recent graduate of your high school who is attending college to speak with your senior class about the importance of attending college and applying early. Ask the speaker to encourage your students to take advantage of the College Application event that will be hosted at your high school.

School Website

Use your school's website to communicate the opportunity to participate in your school's College Application event to students, their families, and the community. In addition to adding your College Application event to your school calendar, be sure to include pre-event activities as well. Use your website to post any materials that you want students and their families to have access to prior to your event.

Parent/Student Information Nights

Invite students and their families to an information night on your College Application event. Provide details on why your school is hosting this event, the importance of students applying to college early in their senior year, and the resources that are available for their student to plan and prepare for participation in the program. This is also a great opportunity to encourage family members to participate in your school's event.

The Federal Student Aid office at the US Department of Education has checklists for parents to use to track the steps their students need to take to prepare financially and academically for college: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/prepare-for-college/checklists>

Friday Night Lights

Set up an information table at your high school's football games to make students and families aware of your school's upcoming event. Make an information sheet available and a volunteer sign-up sheet for parents or community members who would like to volunteer at your program. During the game, have your College Application event dates flash on the score board.

Engaging Underclassmen in the Program

The earlier students begin thinking about college, the better. Many schools have started engaging underclassmen in their College Application event activities to create awareness and excitement for the school's event. This is a great way to ensure students are prepared when it's their time to apply to college! Here are some information sessions and activities you can implement with your underclassmen prior to or during your College Application event:

- **9th grade:** Decision making, learning styles, study habits, HS transcript and academic planning, connection between school and careers, how to qualify for a scholarship, colleges and the degrees offered, and college admission criteria
- **10th grade:** Progress check, extracurricular activities, earning college credit during HS, world of work, college costs and ways to pay, college visits (online), PSAT, PLAN, etc.
- **11th grade:** Money management, finding scholarships, admission process, college entrance tests, preparing to apply, writing personal statements and essays, etc.

Also, use the grade-level checklists available on the US Department of Education's Federal Student Aid Office website to ensure students understand the steps they need to take to become academically and financially prepared for college: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/prepare-for-college/checklists>

During Your College Application Program

Samples of the following materials are included in this manual. Common uses for each are detailed below. The materials have been updated by your College Application State Coordinator to reflect your state's implementation.

Ask Me! Buttons, Badges, and Stickers ²

These are an easy and low-cost way for volunteers and school staff to identify themselves as a resource to students during your College Application event. If budget allows, create buttons or name tag badges that can be reused for future College Application programs. Otherwise, print these out on stickers or labels for the day of your event.

Volunteer Tasks ²

A list of tasks typically delegated to College Application event volunteers is included.

Volunteer Reference Guide ¹

Complete this reference sheet and email it to volunteers prior to their arrival at your school.

Student Instructions on Day of Event

This handout details the step-by-step process students will need to complete during the day of your event including where to log-in to apply to college online, how to register for a FSA ID, and a reminder of the handouts available after the event. A critical component to a student completing the college admissions and financial aid application processes is submitting a complete FAFSA. The first step in completing the FAFSA is registering for a FSA ID. We encourage all participating schools to make FSA ID registration a part of their College Application event. All students participating in your school's College Application event should register for their FSA ID immediately following the submission of their college application(s).

College Application Sign-Out Sheet ²

Crucial to your ability to know who participated in the program, where they applied to college, and with whom you will need to follow-up after the initiative, please use a sign-out sheet to keep track of individual student's information. Assign this task to one of your volunteers!

Reminders and Recognition ^{2,5}

Reminder Cards and Stickers – Two templates of reminders (a sticker and card) are provided in this manual. Use these the week of your event to ensure students remember.

Recognition Stickers - Similar to the "I Voted!" sticker we receive on Election Day, these stickers are a cost-effective way for students to proudly display their accomplishment – they applied to college! Your state may provide these stickers or you can easily print these on copier labels and have a volunteer assist you in distributing them to students after they submit their college application.

Next Steps Hand-out ⁵

The Next Steps hand-out should be distributed to students **after** they complete their applications during your College Application event. The handout includes a helpful list of reminders and next steps that students will need to do in order to complete the college application and financial application process.

Reminders for FAFSA Completion Event ³

This manual includes a reminder for your state's FAFSA completion event that your students should receive after submitting their college application(s). You can assign the distribution of this reminder flyer to one of your volunteers!

Ask Me! Buttons, Badges, and Stickers

[State's ACAC Logo]

Ask Me! Buttons, badges, or stickers can also be worn by volunteers, teachers, administrators, and the school implementation team members. If you have access to a button maker, simply use the template below. Otherwise, print Ask Me! on name badges that can be reused or on stickers for your event day. Here are some examples of how Ask Me! buttons, badges, labels or stickers can look.

Ask Me!

About
[Name of State's
ACAC Program]

Ask Me!

About
Where I Graduated
from College

ASK ME!

About
Applying To College

How Volunteers can Support the College Application Campaign

Although familiarity with the college application process is a plus, it is not required for someone to fulfill a useful task and have a meaningful volunteer experience at a participating Campaign high school. Here are a few tasks that volunteers could contribute to the initiative at any given Campaign high school:

- Post directional signs in the school for the event. Good signage is key to reminding students of the event and getting them to the right place.
- Greet students as they arrive to the computer lab.
- Help students logon to the website portal (if available) and begin an application. If the state does not have a portal or the school does not have enough computers or stable online service, the counselor office should be prepared with paper applications. Volunteers, in that case, can hand out applications.
- Guide students through the college application process and help answer any questions students may have, regardless of where the student wishes to apply.
- Monitor printers to ensure that any applications that need to be printed remain in order and replenish the paper supply as needed.
- Help ensure students register for the FSA ID after they submit their college application(s).
- Share personal college experiences with students, as requested.
- Instruct each student to complete an evaluation of their College Application event experience, if applicable.
- Handout materials to students after they complete their college application(s) such as an "I Applied!" button or sticker, a "Next Steps" handout, and a reminder to attend the FAFSA Completion event (FAFSA Day, College Goal, etc.) held in your state.
- Congratulate each student on applying to college and encourage them to complete their admission file by sending in their high school transcript, test scores, or any other documentation that the college may require.
- Encourage students to share their experience with other classmates.

(High School Name)

Thank you for volunteering your time and enthusiasm for [Name of State's ACAC Program] at **(High School Name)**! On **(Date(s))**, all graduating seniors will be encouraged to apply to college, if they have not already done so. [Name of State's ACAC Program] is possible due to the collaborative efforts of the administration, faculty, and staff at **(High School Name)**, as well as our students, their families, and volunteers like you from across the community. We appreciate your commitment to making college a reality for our students. Please use this reference guide to familiarize yourself with the logistical information for (High School Name)'s [Name of State's ACAC Program].

Logistical Information for **(High School Name)**:
(High School Name) Site Coordinator
(Name), (Title), (Email and/or Phone Number)

Parking

(Provide information here regarding where volunteers can park (usually visitor parking) and where it is located. What should volunteers do if that parking is full?) Upon entering the school, please go to (location) to check-in.

Event times/Shift times

(What time and date will the volunteer be working at your school?) Please plan to arrive 15-30 minutes prior to the start of your volunteer shift.

Assignment Location

Students will be filling out applications in the (location).

Appropriate Attire

We ask that volunteers please come dressed in (type of attire) attire.

Breaks

(If needed, when will breaks be given?)

Options for Lunch

(If hosting near lunch, what are lunch options for your volunteers?)

Contingency Plans

(What should volunteers do if school is delayed and/or cancelled?)

Location of Restrooms

(Where are the restrooms that volunteers should use on the day of the event?)

Contact information for volunteer questions on day of event

For questions on the day of event, please call (contact) at (phone number).

Directions

(Name of High School) is located at (Address)

Student Instructions on Day of Event

[State's ACAC Logo]

Congratulations! You are taking the first step necessary for going to college – applying! [Name of State's ACAC program] is a program designed to assist you with this process. Be aware, there are several things you will need to do after today to complete the college application process. Most importantly, as part of this event, you will have an opportunity to begin the process of submitting a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) which will help you determine the financial aid you are eligible to receive.

The college and financial application process in 10 Steps!

Step 1: If you are applying online, go to the college application website and find the colleges to which you are prepared to apply. This could be a website with multiple college applications or the specific website of the college(s) to which you are applying. Check with your school counselor or volunteer if you are unsure. If you are not applying to college online, get a hard copy of the admissions application from your school counselor.

Step 2: If you think you qualify for an application fee waiver – talk to your school counselor.

Step 3: Complete the application(s) to the colleges and universities to which you want to apply.

Step 4: Make note of any additional items you need to submit with your application (essay, transcripts, SAT or ACT scores, recommendation letters).

Step 5: Print out a copy of your confirmation page if you applied online. If you are applying through a paper application, talk to your school counselor about how to make a copy of your application. Keep the confirmation page or a copy of the application for your records!

Step 6: Register for your FSA ID – you will need this to complete your Free Application for Federal Student Aid form early next year. Many grants, loans, and scholarships will require that you submit a FAFSA so this is a very important step. Go here to register for your FSA ID: <http://www.fsaaid.ed.gov>

You will need your Social Security Number (SSN), your mailing address, and an email address to complete the process. REMEMBER YOUR FSA ID! Write it down if that will help you remember it and keep it in a safe place!

Step 7: After you submit your college application and register for your FSA ID, be sure to submit the [Name of State's ACAC Program]'s student survey. Your feedback is extremely important to us.

Step 8: Complete the student sign-out sheet before you leave the computer lab. You will need to list the colleges you applied to and whether you completed the FSA ID process.

Step 9: Be sure to get the handouts provided by your school after you sign-out!

Step 10: Follow-up! Make sure you submit any additional information the colleges you applied to require. This could include recommendation letters, test scores, and high school transcripts. Also, the next important step in the process is completing your FAFSA. You already have your FSA ID, make sure you submit your FAFSA early next year – it is available January 1st!

Congratulations! You are on your way!

APPLY YOURSELF!



[Name of State's ACAC Program]
(High School Name)
[Dates of ACAC Program]

[Name of State's ACAC Program]
Reminder

for ALL SENIORS

on (DATES) at (TIMES)

in (LOCATION)

(Site Coordinator's Name), (Site Coordinator's Title)

I
Applied to
College!



I've Applied...What's Next?

Congratulations! You have taken the very important first step to going to college – you've applied! **During the program you also should have applied for and received your FSA ID.** Here are some tips and reminders of tasks that you need to complete over the next several months. If you have questions, contact your school counselor.

Paying Your Application Fee

When you submit your application, you may be required to pay an application fee. If so, you can pay your application fee the following ways:

1. You can pay via credit or debit card online. Some colleges require a credit card to apply online. If you chose this option, you will need the following information: credit card type (Visa, MasterCard, etc.), credit card number, security code, name on credit card, date credit card was issued, or expiration date.
2. You can submit your application online and pay via check in the mail. You will likely need to include a copy of your confirmation page with your check.
3. You can choose the fee waiver option on most applications if you qualify. Check with your school counselor about this option. You will likely need to include a copy of your Confirmation Page with the fee waiver. **DO NOT CHOOSE FEE WAIVER OPTION IF YOU DO NOT QUALIFY.** Ask your school counselor for more information.
4. You can save your application, print it, and mail it in with your payment or fee waiver.

Follow Up with Transcripts, Test Scores, Recommendation Letters and Essays

Many admission offices require students to submit additional information in order to complete the application process. It is important to find out what other information is required and send it to the campus ASAP! The more quickly you submit all the necessary forms, the sooner you will receive a response from the admission office.

Don't forget your confirmation page

If you applied online, do not leave the computer lab without a hardcopy printout of your confirmation page! Also, some schools require this page to be signed and mailed to the admission office to complete the application process. Whether the school requires this form or not, you still need a printed copy for your records. Either way, make sure you put this confirmation page in a safe place. If you are applying by hard copy, be sure to make a copy of your application for your records.

Schools should contact you!

Once you have submitted your online application, campuses should be in touch with you via email or letter to inform you of the status of your application. Make sure to check your email! If you have not been contacted by the school within two weeks of your submission, get in touch with the college or university's admission office to inquire about your application status.

Now that I applied to college, where can I learn more about paying for college?

- [Insert information about state resources for financial aid research.] In addition, the U.S. Department of Education has resources to help you understand the types of financial aid, whether you qualify for aid, and how to apply for aid: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/>
- Speak with your family and school counselor about your financial aid options.
- Mark your calendar for [Name of State's FAFSA Completion Event] at a college, university, or community center near you to learn more about your options.
- Complete and submit the FAFSA as early as possible. The sooner you submit the form, the better chance you have of getting an affordable financial aid package.

Be sure to pick up copies of the handouts before leaving the computer lab today.

[Name of State's FAFSA Completion Event]
[FAFSA Completion Event's Logo]
Assistance with Your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Date: [FAFSA Completion Event Date]
Time: [FAFSA Completion Event Time]
Location: (Nearest location)

Contact Info

Host: [FAFSA Completion Event Group or Organization]
Contact Phone Number: [Phone Number for FAFSA Completion Event]
Contact Email: [Email for FAFSA Completion Event]

What to Bring

The following items are what you should bring to the event.

- Your FSA ID, if you have been assigned one. You should have registered for your FSA ID during [Name of State's ACAC program]. If you do not already have a FSA ID or if you have forgotten your FSA ID and need to retrieve it, you can go here: <http://www.fsaaid.ed.gov>. Be sure to do this prior to the event!
- If you have previously completed a FAFSA Worksheet, please bring it with you.
- Your Social Security Number (SSN).
- Your driver's license (if any).
- Your parents' [Tax Year] W-2 forms (if you are a dependent student). If you earned income in [Tax Year], you should also bring your [Tax Year] W-2 forms.
- Your [Tax Year] untaxed income records (e.g., Veteran's non-education benefit records, child support received, worker's compensation).
- Your current bank statements.
- Your current business and investment mortgage information, business and farm records, stock, bond and other investment records.
- Your resident alien registration or permanent resident card (if you are not a U.S. citizen).

For more information, visit the [Name of State's FAFSA Completion Event] website here:
[FAFSA Completion Event Website]

After Your College Application Program

It is important to ensure that students complete their college applications by submitting other required materials institutions may require such as high school transcripts, college entrance exam scores, recommendation letters, etc. In addition, students should be encouraged to submit additional applications after the event if they did not have time to complete as many as they wanted to during the event.

Other post-event activities are included below. Samples of the following materials are included in this manual. The materials have been updated by your College Application State Coordinator to reflect your state's implementation.

Volunteer Thank you Letters ⁵

It is important to recognize the time, energy, and effort that volunteers contributed to your school's College Application event. A template thank you letter has been provided. Feel free to print this on school letterhead and mail. Or, if you would like to send by email, that is a great way to show your appreciation as well.

Post-Event Press Release ²

You notified your community that the event was coming up – now make sure you communicate about the success of your program! Use this template to update your local media about the impact of your program.

Understanding Financial Aid Award Letters ⁷

Provide this handout to students and/or host information sessions as financial aid award letters begin to arrive. These guidelines to understanding financial aid award letters are pulled directly from the Federal Student Aid office at the U.S. Department of Education (<http://studentaid.ed.gov/>).

College Signing Day ⁶

U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, encourages all high schools to host a College Signing Day. Intended to recognize the important academic achievements of students and their decision regarding where they will enroll in college, College Signing Days celebrate this important milestone. Use these suggestions and watch a video of one high school's approach to help plan and host your own College Signing Day!

Other Follow-Up

As noted on the timeline and checklist included in this manual, it is important that your school team meet after the College Application program to discuss what worked and identify areas for improvement. This time can also be used to share the results of your program. Use the student sign-out sheet to understand the number of students who applied to college and the number of applications that were submitted. During this debrief meeting, the school team should identify a plan to follow-up with participating students to ensure they complete the application process (by submitting transcripts, test scores, etc.) and that they submit a completed FAFSA.

Volunteer Thank You Letter

[State's ACAC Logo]

(School Logo)
(School Address)
(Date)

Dear (Volunteer Name),

On behalf of (Name of Your High School) and our students, I would like to personally thank you for volunteering your time at our [Name of State's ACAC Program] event. This event could not have been a success without your help and the help of many others who volunteered their time. [State Coordinators, include this if you plan to have a volunteer survey: To improve our future [Name of State's ACAC Program] events and your volunteer experience, please complete this short online survey at your convenience: [survey link]]

During [Name of State's ACAC Program], (number of seniors who submitted college applications) seniors submitted (number of college applications submitted) college applications. Thanks to our seniors' hard work and the assistance of volunteers like you, they are one step closer to actualizing their dreams of attending college!

Once again, (Name of Your High School) thanks you for your efforts and contribution of time at our [Name of State's ACAC Program]! We look forward to seeing you throughout the school year and especially at our event next year.

Thank you!
(Site Coordinator or Principal's Name)
(Site Coordinator or Principal's Title)

Post-Event Press Release

[State's ACAC Logo]

(School Logo or Letterhead)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: (Name of site coordinator)

(Position title and/or college access program affiliation of site coordinator)

(School name)

(School address)

(Phone number)

(Email of contact person)

(High school website)

(YOUR HIGH SCHOOL NAME)'s seniors apply to college during [Name of State's ACAC Program] program.

(Insert City, Date)—

(Insert Name of Your High School)'s seniors received hands-on assistance applying to college during the school's [Name of State's ACAC Program] event held on (Insert Event Date/Dates). Roughly (Insert Number of Participating Students) (Insert name of your high school) students participated in the event, held in the school's (Insert location).

(Insert other details specific to your event such as number of volunteers on hand, how students were invited to participate, and/or details on any of the pre-event activities you did).

(Insert quotes from students, parents, volunteers, site coordinator or others).

Additional information about the [Name of State's ACAC Program] program can be found online at [State's ACAC Program Website]. For more information about (Name of High School)'s event, please contact (Site Coordinator's Name) at (Insert Site Coordinator's phone number) or by email at (Insert Site Coordinator's email address).

For more information: (Insert website link or an email address) or

Contact: (Name of Site Coordinator)

Phone: (Site Coordinator's phone number)

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Understanding Financial Aid Award Letters

[State's ACAC Logo]

The Financial Aid Office at a college or university is responsible for sending information letters regarding financial aid. It is important that you read your award letters carefully to understand the type of aid being offered and how you indicate the aid you would like to accept. The information below is provided by the Financial Student Aid office of the U.S. Department of Education. For additional information on the various types of aid, definitions of common language found in financial aid award letters, a budget calculator to help you estimate the amount of aid you need, and other helpful information regarding paying for college, please visit their website at: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/>

When you receive a reward letter, there may be a variety of aid options available. Be sure to read your letter **carefully** in order to make an informed decision about what aid you will accept. The general rule is: accept free money first (scholarships and grants), then earned money (work-study), and then borrowed money (federal student loans). The following outlines the order in which to accept specific types of aid and some important points to keep in mind.

1. The first type of aid to accept is aid that you do not need to pay back: **Scholarships and Grants**. Make sure you understand the conditions you must meet (for instance, you might have to maintain a certain grade-point average in order to continue receiving a scholarship, or a grant may turn into a loan if you don't follow specific requirements).
2. The second type of aid to accept is aid that you earn: through **work-study**. Keep in mind, you don't have to pay the money back, but you do have to work for it, so take into account that that'll mean less time for studying. However, research has shown that students who work part-time jobs manage their time better than those who don't!
3. The third type of aid to accept is **federal student loans**: You'll have to repay the money with interest. Subsidized loans don't start accruing (accumulating) interest until you leave school, so accept a subsidized loan before an unsubsidized loan.
4. The next type of aid to accept is **loans from your state government or your college**: You'll have to repay the money with interest, and the terms of the loan might not be as good as those of a federal student loan. Be sure to read all the fine print before you borrow.
5. The final type of aid to accept is **private loans**: You'll have to repay the money with interest, and the terms and conditions of the loan almost certainly will not be as good as those of a federal student loan.

<http://studentaid.ed.gov/fafsa/next-steps#how-do-i-decide-what-aid-to-accept>

If accepting a loan, always accept the loan with the most favorable terms and conditions. If you have any questions or don't understand what types of loans are in your award letter, contact the Financial Aid Office at the college. Always ask questions and be an informed borrower. Make sure you understand what you're receiving and the repayment terms.

When it comes to loans, you should only borrow what you need. If your living expenses are not going to be as high as the amount estimated in the award letter, you can turn down the loan or to request a lower loan amount. In the award letter, the college will tell you how to do this. Use the budget calculator available on FSA's website to get an idea of your college expenses.

To tell the college what aid you are accepting, read and follow the directions on your award letter. Pay close attention to deadlines!

If you have questions about your award letters, talk with your school counselor, call the Financial Aid Office at your college, and/or visit the FSA website (<http://studentaid.ed.gov/>).

College Signing Day

[State's ACAC Logo]

U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan is encouraging all high schools to host College Signing Days, “a simple and inexpensive way to celebrate our students, their accomplishments, and their futures.” Similar to athletic signing days, during which high school seniors sign a letter-of-intent regarding the college they plan to attend, College Signing Days are an opportunity to recognize the important academic accomplishments of your graduating senior class.

Here are some suggestions for hosting your own College Signing Day to celebrate the important milestone of your students deciding where they will attend college in the fall. Pick one approach, create your own, or incorporate all of them into your celebration! The key to a College Signing Day is to have fun and celebrate!

- 1. Host a College Signing Day pep rally or student assembly.** Have each senior come to the microphone and announce the college they plan to attend. Invite parents/guardians and high school underclassmen to attend the event to cheer each student’s decision. Invite a speaker such as a college admissions representative, community member, high school principal, or district superintendent to open the event.
- 2. Create a College Signing Day bulletin board.** Have students write their name and the college they are going to attend and post it on a bulletin board. Let your creativity flow in how the information is presented! Some ideas include: create a tree with branches and have student announcements on leaves; put a map of your state on the bulletin board and student announcements in the city/town they are attending college (have space for out-of-state students too!); have announcements written on graduation cap cut-outs.
- 3. Print it in the school and/or local newspaper.** Print college enrollment plans in your school newspaper, school newsletter, and/or the local newspaper. Some local newspapers may be willing to “donate” the page – so be sure to ask!
- 4. Have a College Signing t-shirt Day.** On your College Signing Day event, ask students to wear a t-shirt of the school they will attend. Or, they can dress up in their school’s colors. Encourage school staff to wear the t-shirts or colors of their alma mater too!
- 5. Hand out nails with ribbons.** Encourage students and parents to hang the nail on the wall where the college diploma will eventually be displayed.

Most colleges require that students sign enrollment commitment letters by May 1st. So, hosting your College Signing Day in May would be ideal.

For more information on Secretary Duncan’s call to host College Signing Days, please visit the U.S. Department of Education’s blog entry regarding these events:

<https://www.ed.gov/blog/2014/02/the-case-for-college-signing-days/>

The blog includes a link to a video of Houston’s YES College Prep’s College Signing Day event which you can also find here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yp3DMAHh9s>

Site Coordinator Checklist

[State's ACAC Logo]

Use the checklist below to assist you as you implement a College Application event. The checklist includes the activities outlined above.

— — — — —	<p>Pre-event preparation: first steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print and Review [Name of State's ACAC Program] Site Coordinator manual • Identify and reserve site for the College Application event • Add College Application event to school calendar • Identify a School Team to build support and assist with tasks; use Resources Audit available in this manual to identify members of team • Host school team meeting to discuss implementation of program at your school
— — — —	<p>Communicate opportunity to students, their families, and the local community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By information letters • By phone blasts • By posting information on school website, school newsletter, school marquee • Pre-event press release
— — — —	<p>Prepare students for the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on activities that encourage students to research and identify schools that are the best fit for them. Use the College Research Worksheet available in this manual. • Sponsor and/or support participation in college fairs or college visits • Distribute College Application Worksheet for students to complete before event • Implement college exploration and preparation assignments in classrooms • Identify and meet with students eligible for application fee waivers
— — — — — — — —	<p>Implement school-wide activities to build awareness and enthusiasm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College t-shirt/sweatshirt days • College wall bulletin boards • "Ask Me!" signs on offices and classroom doors • Door decorating contests • Morning announcements • Guest speakers • Parent/Student Nights • Engage underclassmen in school's College Application Campaign event
— — —	<p>Get volunteers involved to assist with the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with volunteers (letter and/or email) • Assign tasks • Ensure volunteers have "Ask Me!" stickers
— — — —	<p>HOLD COLLEGE APPLICATION EVENT!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure students receive a 10 Steps document before they begin applying • Ensure students register for the FSA ID • Ensure students sign-out • Ensure students receive Next Steps, and FAFSA Completion flyers
— — — — — —	<p>Post-event follow-up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write thank you letters to volunteers • Submit data to state coordinator if requested • Host post-event debrief with school team • Release post-event press release • Follow-up with students to ensure they complete the college admissions <i>and</i> financial aid application processes. Help them navigate award letters. • Host College Signing Day celebration

References

- ¹ Delaware College Application Month
University of Delaware
<http://www.ipa.udel.edu/cam/>
- ² Georgia Apply to College Materials
University System of Georgia
<http://www.usg.edu/apply-to-college/>
- ³ Go On, Idaho! Statewide FAFSA Day
<http://financialaid.boisestate.edu/timely-tips-archive/goonidahostatewidefafsaday/>
- ⁴ Kentucky College Application Week Materials
Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority
www.kheaa.com/website/kycaw/home
- ⁵ North Carolina College Application Week
College Foundation of North Carolina
www.cfnc.org/caw
- ⁶ U.S. Department of Education
Homeroom – The official blog of the U.S. Department of Education
The Case for College Signing Days
<https://www.ed.gov/blog/2014/02/the-case-for-college-signing-days/>
- ⁷ U.S. Department of Education
Federal Student Aid Office
<http://studentaid.ed.gov/>
<http://studentaid.ed.gov/fafsa/next-steps#how-do-i-decide-what-aid-to-accept>
- ⁸ West Virginia College Application and Exploration Week
College Foundation of West Virginia
www.cfwwconnect.com/caew.html

Every effort has been made to reference the original source of materials presented in this manual. If you believe there is an incorrect reference or a missing reference, please notify the American College Application Campaign team at acac@acenet.edu.