



ST. CLAIRSVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

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College acceptance letters and notifications have begun to arrive for many of you, and your excitement is off the charts. **CONGRATULATIONS!** This is one of the many benefits of applying early. Now you can start your “next steps” with extra time to make your decision. If you have not started the application process yet, you should get moving.

When you get accepted, the pressure you feel to send in the enrollment deposit and commit to a college can be overwhelming. Let me say this to you: **RELAX, TAKE IT EASY!** Enjoy the moment and wait until you have all the information you need to make an informed decision before sending an enrollment deposit to anyone. **The national decision deadline is MAY 1, 2024.** You have time to decide, and there is information you need before you do that.

The process goes like this,

1. You apply.
2. The college or university sends you a letter of acceptance, maybe even an initial award based on the merit of your academic success, AND a list of the Next Steps you must take.
3. NEXT STEPS:
 - a. Create a student account with the college. Maybe you already created one to apply, then log in to your account.
 - b. Make sure you have (and know) your student email with each school and keep your login information handy. **SCHOOLS COMMUNICATE WITH YOU THROUGH THAT EMAIL...about EVERYTHING!** You might want to add a parent to your account to help you keep everything in order and keep up with it all. **CHECK YOUR EMAIL REGULARLY.**
 - c. Send your FAFSA to that school. ALL financial aid requires that you send the FAFSA to each school to receive any financial aid. Log into your FAFSA account and send your results to each school.
 - d. Communicate with the financial aid office and learn about additional scholarships available to you and the application process. The majority (if not all) of the money you will receive will come from the school you attend.
 - i. Some schools automatically consider you for scholarships.
 - ii. Some schools require you to apply for additional scholarships to compete for them. **IT’S UP TO YOU TO FIND OUT HOW EACH SCHOOL DOES IT.** And there are always deadlines for these other scholarships, so it is in your best interest to get on it right away so you don’t miss out.
 - iii. Honors programs have additional scholarships available if you qualify, and be sure to look into this as well.

- iv. Inquire about housing options. Mainly, you want to know how it is arranged and if you have choices regarding dorms and roommates.
 - v. Ask when you will receive your financial aid packet.
- 4. Financial Aid Packages will be sent to you AFTER they have received your FAFSA and awarded all scholarships. (These offers will start coming to you in January and February, you should have all of them by the end of March.) The Financial Aid Offer (Package) is an Official Statement or Contract they will send to you that lists the total cost of attendance: tuition, estimated fees, book costs, room and board, meal plans, etc. They will subtract grants and scholarships you received, student loans you qualify for, and any other money that will be applied to your package. And then there will be a bottom line, the amount you will have to come up with to attend. THAT is what you will compare with other financial aid offers from other schools...it is called The Gap. The Gap represents the money that is not accounted for and usually comes from your savings account. Sometimes you can enter into a payment plan that allows you to make monthly payments to pay off The Gap.
- 5. Contact the Financial Aid office and discuss their financial aid offer to figure out if you can come up with “The Gap” amount. This is often the deciding factor in whether or not you can attend that school. Be proactive in gathering this information, take the initiative, and call them, especially if it’s March and you haven’t heard from them.
- 6. Compare ALL the information. The type of school, location, degree, financial aid offers, etc., and decide.
- 7. Send in your Enrollment (Housing) deposit and start making plans. Enrollment deposits are usually non-refundable. Don’t double deposit, even if you can afford it. The only acceptable reason to do so is if you are waitlisted at your first choice. Schools can rescind their admission and offer if they find out you have deposited at two or more schools.
- 8. Start making plans! Contact your roommate and begin the journey!