Senior year is a whirlwind of activity. It’s a big year for your child—balancing schoolwork, extracurricular obligations, and the college application process. Use the suggestions below so you and your child can meet these challenges.

**SUMMER**

- **Visit colleges together.** If you haven’t already, make plans to check out the campuses of colleges in which your child is interested. Use the Campus Visit Checklist to learn how to get the most out of these experiences.
- **Ask how you can help your senior finalize a college list.** You can help him or her choose which colleges to apply to by weighing how well each college meets his or her needs, for example. Find out more about how to finalize a college list.
- **Find out a college’s actual cost.** Once your 12th-grader has a list of a few colleges he or she is interested in, use STEP UP Utah’s Net Price Calculator together to find out the potential for financial aid and the true out-of-pocket cost— or net price—of each college.
- **Encourage your child to get started on applications.** He or she can get the easy stuff out of the way now by filling in as much required information on college applications as possible. Your child should plan to apply to at least 3 colleges or universities. Read about how to get started on applications.
- **Help your child decide about applying early.** If your senior is set on going to a certain college, he or she should think about whether applying early is a good option. Now is the time to decide because early applications are usually due in November. Read about the pros and cons of applying early.
- **Gather financial documents: To apply for most financial aid, your child will need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). You’ll need prior tax returns and an FSA ID to complete the FAFSA, which opens Oct. 1.**
- **Have your child begin requesting letters of recommendation.** They may need the letter for a college application, a job, or for a scholarship. Examples of people they can ask include teachers, club advisors, and any adult leader. The more involved they are, the more options they have of people who could write that letter for them.
- **Get in the habit of checking emails regularly.** This is crucial for students and parents during the college and scholarship application process.

**FALL**

- **Create a calendar with your child.** This should include deadlines for college admissions, financial aid, housing, and other important dates. Your child can find specific colleges’ deadlines in the Step Up Utah College Directory.
- **Set up an appointment for you and your child to meet with their school counselor and GEAR UP advisor.** This year, you and your child will work with them to complete and submit college and scholarship application. Talk about college and career options, academic requirements for college admissions, discuss internships and how to earn college credit in high school, and learn about the most-appropriate classes your child should take. Find out who the GEAR UP advisor at your school is.
- **Encourage your child to meet regularly with their high school counselor and GEAR UP advisor.** This year, he or she will work with them to complete and submit college applications. Find out who the GEAR UP advisor at your school is.
- **Help your child prepare to retake the ACT.** Seniors should make retaking the ACT in October a priority. Encourage your child to prepare for retaking the ACT using their free www.shmoop.com account. Ask a GEAR UP advisor for more details and help registering.
- **Help your child find and apply for scholarships.** He or she can find out about scholarship opportunities from their GEAR UP advisor and schools. Your high school student will need to request and complete scholarship applications and submit them on time. Learn more about scholarships.
- **Offer to look over your senior’s college and scholarship applications.** But remember that this is your child’s work so remain in the role of adviser and proofreader and respect his or her voice.
- **Fill out the FAFSA to apply for aid beginning Oct. 1.** The government and many colleges use the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to award aid. Now it’s easier than ever to fill out this form because you can automatically transfer your tax information online from the IRS to the FAFSA. Read Applying for Financial Aid to learn more. Learn about financial aid options for undocumented student (see below).
WINTER

☐ Work together to apply for financial aid. Have your child contact the financial aid offices at the colleges in which he or she is interested to find out what forms students must submit to apply for aid. Make sure he or she applies for aid by or before any stated deadlines. Funds are limited, so the earlier you apply, the better.

☐ Encourage your child to take AP Exams. If your 12th-grader takes AP or other advanced classes, have him or her talk with teachers now about taking these tests in May. Read more about the AP Program.

☐ Help your child look into housing options including housing scholarships. Be aware of deadlines and apply early.

SPRING

☐ Help your child process college responses. Once your child starts hearing back from colleges about admission and financial aid, he or she will need your support to decide what to do. Meet with your GEAR UP advisor for additional guidance. Read about how to choose a college.

☐ Review financial aid offers together. Your 12th-grader will need your help to read through financial aid award letters and figure out which package works best. Be sure your child pays attention to and meets any deadlines for acceptance. Meet with your GEAR UP advisor for additional guidance. Get more information on financial aid awards.

☐ Help your child complete the paperwork to accept a college's offer of admittance. Once your child has decided which college to attend, he or she will need to review the offer, accept a college's offer, mail a tuition deposit and submit other required paperwork. Meet with your GEAR UP advisor for additional guidance. Learn more about your high school senior's next steps.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

GEAR UP is here to assist Undocumented Students with or without Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) in every way possible, and are committed to their success. You and your student should meet with your GEAR UP advisor regularly to find out how to apply for colleges and what scholarships are available to them, and refer to the guidelines and resources below.

☐ Applying for College. Utah House Bill 144 allows qualifying undocumented students to pay the same tuition as Utah residents do at any Utah college or university. Those who meet the requirements of HB 144 must print and fill out the Non-Resident Tuition Exemption Affidavit and submit it to the admission office of the Utah college they wish to attend. Affidavits and instructions can be found on each college’s website by searching for the term “HB-144 affidavit.”

☐ Encourage your child to take college classes in high school. Students who take and succeed in college classes such as Concurrent Enrollment (CE) or Advanced Placement (AP) can save time and money by earning college credit before graduating from high school.

☐ Paying for College. Dreamers can apply for scholarships to help pay for college. To learn more about what scholarships are available for undocumented, DACA, and non-FAFSA eligible students, talk to your GEAR UP advisor and visit the Undocumented Student Resources office or web pages at the college your student plans to attend. Examples include Weber State University, Salt Lake Community College, University of Utah, and StepUpUtah.

☐ Additional Resources: Dreamers Road Map, Educate Utah, My Undocumented Life

Visit weber.edu/stategearup for more information.

Adapted from The College Board family action plan 2019-2020