

Severna Park High School
Counseling Center
College Application Guide
4 Year Colleges & Universities
2025-2026 School Year



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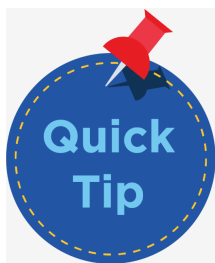
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Welcome to the SPHS Counseling Center 4 Year College/University Application Guide!

We hope that this tool helps you navigate the college admissions process. All topics have hot links to instructions, worksheets, or websites to help you along your way. This guide ‘flows’ in chronicle order of what to focus on next.

Please reach out to your School Counselor or Mrs. Jackson in the College Career Center for any questions or clarifications.



Seniors, **Falcon Block is open EVERY DAY** for you to use to get help with your applications, essays, resume, etc, or just have a quiet space to work on applications before you leave school for the day. Take advantage of all the time and help you have available to you!



- **Naviance Account**

- Login to AACPS Classlinks. Click Naviance ID Icon.
- Click “Continue with Single Sign-On”



Welcome Student!



Login to Naviance

CONTINUE WITH SINGLE SIGN ON

- In Naviance, go to “My Profile” and make sure you have a **current email address (that you check!) listed.**
- You will use your **Naviance Journal** to upload your **resume** and your **“Class of 2026 Letter of Recommendation Worksheet”** -
 - Find your Journal under “About Me”
 - Click the pink + to add a journal entry.
 - Upload your resume and Letter of Recommendation Worksheet
 - Click share with Teachers and Counselors
 - Submit!



You're going to have a lot of accounts and tasks to keep track of.

[Use this tool to help you stay organized!](#)

Make a copy to be able to edit



Common Application - Opens August 1

The Common Application is one central application that over 1,000 colleges and universities accept. It can be a huge time saver when applying to colleges!

- Create an account at www.commonapp.org
- List colleges that you are applying to in the Colleges tab.
- Complete the “Recommenders and FERPA Section”
 - Click on a specific college in your Common App *(left hand column)*
 - **Do NOT list your recommenders here.**
 - Complete the FERPA Section:
[To Waive or Not To Waive?](#)
- Match your Common App & Naviance
 - Login to Naviance, go to “Colleges I’m Applying To”
 - Click Match Accounts → Sign in to Common App → Click “I agree” → Click “Connect”
 - Check that all of your Common App colleges are listed on your “Colleges I’m Applying To” List on Naviance.
- [Check that all application types and deadlines are correct!](#)

Non Common App Colleges

- Add any colleges that do NOT accept Common Application to your “Colleges I’m Applying To” List in Naviance.
- [Check that all application types and deadlines are correct!](#)



Deadlines

- Make sure all college application types & deadlines are correct.
- **Materials will be sent based on what deadlines are listed in Naviance so this information needs to be 100% correct.**

<u>Early Action (EA) / Priority</u>	<u>Early Decision (ED)</u>	Regular Decision	Rolling
Non-Binding	Binding	Non-Binding	See your School Counselor!
Apply to as many EA schools as you want.	Only apply to 1 ED school.	Typically much later in the application season.	
Some schools will accept a majority of students from the EA application pool. <i>UMD accepts over 90% of their freshman class from EA!</i>	There is a required agreement that needs to be signed by you, your parent, and School Counselor. Located in the FERPA section on your Common App.	You may miss out on scholarship money if you wait this long to apply!	

Demonstrated interest is something that *some* colleges track and consider when making admissions decisions.

To display strong demonstrated interest in a college:



- Attend local college fairs and check in with the colleges you are interested in. Make sure to fill out their contact forms!
- Attend College Rep visits at SPHS! Full list and sign up instructions are on Naviance.
- Complete any "optional" items on your application.
- Call or email your assigned Admissions Representative with questions you may have.



Sending Test Scores (SAT, ACT, & AP)

Your test scores are NOT part of your high school transcript/record and is NOT something that your School Counselor is able to send for you.

If you want your SAT/ACT/AP scores to be considered by the schools you are applying to, you must request that these be sent directly from CollegeBoard (SAT and AP) or ACT Student.

	CollegeBoard		ACT Student
	<u>SAT</u>	<u>AP</u>	<u>ACT</u>
How to request	www.collegeboard.com Login your portal to request.	www.myap.collegeboard.org Login your portal to request.	www.act.org Login to your portal to request.
When to request	At least 2 weeks prior to your first college deadline. <u>*CollegeBoard Score Delivery Schedule*</u>	After you have taken ALL AP tests. You only need to send your AP scores to the college you are attending.	At least 2 weeks prior to your first college deadline.
Is there a fee?	\$12 per report Get up to 4 score reports for free if you listed the colleges when you take the test.	\$15 per report Free if you request before June 30th!	\$18 per report



Transcripts: Initial

All transcripts for college applications are requested and sent electronically via Naviance. **All initial transcripts are sent by the deadline a student has listed on their “Colleges I’m Applying To” page so it is imperative that all deadlines are correct so School Counselors can send your materials on time.**

- Your School Counselor will send ALL of your initial transcript requests at once.
 - If you need a Counselor Letter of Recommendation for *at least one college*, your transcripts will be sent to all of your colleges by your earliest deadline once your letter of recommendation has been written.
 - If you do not need a Counselor Letter of Recommendation *for any of your colleges*, your transcripts will be sent within 7 school days of making your request in Naviance.

<h3 style="text-align: center;">Initial Transcript</h3> <p style="text-align: center;">The FIRST transcript that needs to be sent to colleges by your application deadline.</p>	
What does it include?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All final semester grades from 9th, 10th, and 11th grades. ● Final grades from Algebra, Geometry, and/or high school level World Language classes taken in middle school. ● Cumulative weighted and unweighted GPAs. ● “Courses in Progress” for your senior year.
How To Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PARENTS, login to PowerSchool on a laptop (not a phone) and sign your student’s “Senior Transcript Release Form” under the Forms section. We can’t release ANY transcripts without your permission. ● AFTER your “Colleges I’m Applying To” list is complete with 100% correct deadlines ● Go to “Colleges I’m Applying To” and click “Manage Transcripts” ● Add INITIAL Transcript Request for all colleges.
When will it be sent?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If you need a counselor letter of recommendation for at least one college application: No later than your first application due date. ● If you do NOT need a counselor letter of recommendation for ANY college application: Within 7 school days of the official Naviance request.
Is there a fee? How do I pay?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is a \$2 fee for each initial transcript sent per AACPS policy. ● You can bring cash or check to the SPHS Counseling Center OR pay using MyPaymentPlus. ● Pay AFTER you have finished applying to all of your colleges. Make sure to delete any colleges you did NOT apply to before paying your transcript fees. *See Mrs. Jackson or your School Counselor if you need help deleting a college from Naviance.*



Letters of Recommendation (LOR)

Some colleges require letters of recommendation for your application and some do not want any letters of recommendation. Do your research first before requesting any letter of recommendation! If you need a letter of recommendation from a teacher, school counselor, or other person, you must complete the [“Class of 2026 Letter of Recommendation Worksheet”](#)

Teacher Letter:

- Check with the college(s) you are applying to to see if you need *specific* letters (i.e. one English Teacher, one math teacher).
- Ask your teacher IN PERSON first.
- List that teacher on your [“Class of 2026 Letter of Recommendation Worksheet”](#) once they have agreed to write a letter for you.
- Upload your [Class of 2026 Letter of Recommendation Worksheet](#) to your Naviance Journal.
- Electronically assign that teacher to the colleges that need their letter on Naviance. ***This feature is available August 1st***
 - Click “Colleges” in the top navigation bar in Naviance → Letters of Recommendation → Assign Teachers
 - **Remember: DO NOT list your recommenders in your Common Application.**

Counselor Letter:

- Check with the college(s) you are applying to to see if you need a counselor letter of recommendation.
- Ask your School Counselor IN PERSON first.
- List your counselor on your [“Class of 2026 Letter of Recommendation Worksheet”](#) once they have agreed to write a letter for you.
- Upload your [Class of 2026 Letter of Recommendation Worksheet](#) to your Naviance Journal.



- **Different from teacher letters:** You do NOT need to electronically assign your School Counselor to your applications via Naviance. As long as you have (1.) verbally asked your counselor, (2.) they have confirmed they will write you a letter AND (3.) you have all of your [transcript requests](#) made in Naviance with correct deadlines, your letter will automatically be sent when we submit your transcripts.

Other Recommender (outside of school):

- As long as you have met the requirements for any specific letters of recommendation needed, you could elect to add additional recommendation letters to your application. This can be a coach, employer, youth group leader, etc. Please be mindful that some colleges have a maximum number of letters allowed. Do not send outside recommendations if you have already met your max number of letters allowed.
- To send a recommendation from someone OUTSIDE of Severna Park High School, please also ask that person IN PERSON first. Then, give them a list of colleges you are applying to with either the college admission counselor responsible for your application and their email address OR a stamped, addressed envelope for each of your colleges. No recommendation letters from anyone other than SPHS teachers and counselors can/will be sent via Naviance.



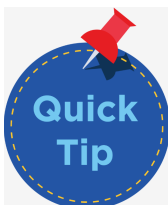
Complete, Review & Submit Application

- Complete Demographic & College Information on Common Application and/or “Direct to Institution” colleges.
- Self-Reporting Academic Record in Common Application
 - This will be listed as a ‘to-do’ in Common Application if at least one college requires it.
 - Use a copy of your unofficial transcript to complete this section.
- **STARS - Self-Reported Transcript and Academic Record System**
 - Some colleges require this and some do not. This is separate from self-reporting in Common Application.
 - Check your colleges’ specific application requirements. This will be included on your college’s specific application portal after your submission.
 - [Link the colleges that require the STARS to your STARS Dashboard.](#)
- **Resume/Activity Record**
 - Upload your resume PDF or complete the Activity Record on Common Application. Make sure you include all of your awesome activities!
 - Upload your resume PDF to your Naviance Journal.
- **Essay**
 - [Check out resources to help you with your essay on the SPHS Counseling Center website.](#)
 - Who can I ask for help?
 - Mrs. Jackson in the College Career Center (CCC)
 - Sign up for a one-on-one virtual essay feedback session with a college admissions representative! Sign up information will be sent via Naviance email. See Mrs. Jackson with questions.
- **Application Supplements**



Auditions, Interviews & Portfolios

- Some colleges require or offer you the opportunity to submit supplemental materials. Check your college's admissions website for details.



Some applications list “optional” items that you can submit with your application. It is strongly encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities to strengthen your application and show your demonstrated interest.

- **Submit your Application & Setup College Portals**

Remember to use the SPHS College Career Center (CCC) to work on your application. Mrs. Jackson can review your applications before hitting submit. Use this resource wisely! CCC is open during EVERY Falcon Block!



- Within 48 hours, you should receive an email confirming receipt of your application and instructions on how to set a college specific application portal. [Keep track of all of your portal logins and passwords.](#)
- **THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT:** If you do not receive a confirmation email, please reach out to your college's admissions office. Check your email! Check your spam!
- This is the only way a college will communicate with you from this point forward. Check your portal and email often. This is where you will see the status of your application, any missing pieces, and admissions decisions. Check these regularly.
- **Remember:** There is a real live person on the other end of your application materials. There may be a delay in your submission and having items marked as received/completed in your portals.



Financial Aid

FAFSA - Free Application for Federal Student Aid → Opens in December, Complete ASAP for best financial aid consideration, even if you don't think your family qualifies for need-based financial aid!

- Go to www.studentaid.gov
- Set up a Student Account/PIN and Parent Account/PIN (you need both!)
 - [Keep track of these.](#) You will complete the FAFSA each year you are in college!
- Check your email with next steps to confirm your account creation.
You will get this within 48 hours. Check your spam!
- Once you have confirmed your account, complete your FAFSA.
 - Use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool for fast, accurate completion.
 - List up to 10 colleges on your FAFSA.
 - It is highly recommended that you list at least one college from the State of Maryland on your FAFSA. This automatically makes you eligible for consideration for any state financial aid funding.
Sometimes plans change and you may choose to stay in state for college and you don't want to miss out on any additional funding!
 - Once a college accepts you, your FAFSA will be reviewed by that college.
 - Each college will use your FAFSA data and create an award letter that details the amount of institutional scholarships, loans, grants, and work study funds *you may be eligible* for.
 - For questions about your award letter, call the Financial Aid office at your colleges.
 - If your dream school is out of reach financially, you can always appeal for more financial aid. Contact the Financial Aid office to ask what their appeal process is and if there are any additional financial aid options available. The answer may be no but it is always worth asking!



CSS Profile - College Scholarship Service Profile

- Only required by about 300 colleges *and is in addition to the FAFSA.*
- Go to www.cssprofile.collegeboard.org
- Each college's financial aid office will have their own deadline for completion.
Check your application portals!

Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) & MDCaps

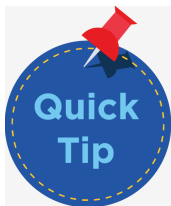
- The State of Maryland has their own pot of money to help students.
[View a list of State Financial Aid Programs and Scholarships..](#)
- To be considered for financial aid from the State of Maryland, **complete your FAFSA by March 1 of your senior year.**
- Create a [MDCaps Account](#) to track application status and accept any awards.
 - Similar to FAFSA, you will need to confirm your account via email. Be sure to check your spam folder for important MDCaps links!

Scholarships

- Scholarships can come from the college you are applying to or an outside source such as a community organization, your work, your State Senators and Delegates, etc.
- Check your colleges' Financial Aid websites for their institutional scholarships.
 - You may be automatically considered for scholarships if you submit your admissions application by a certain date or you may have to complete a specific application.
 - Check the individual schools within your colleges as well (example, check University of Maryland Art/Engineering/Journalism Departments for scholarships available to just those majors).
- Searching for outside scholarships can be a time consuming task. [Check Naviance and outside scholarship databases linked here.](#)
- Scholarship applications and databases should always be FREE. Be mindful about what you sign up for and what information you share.



- You may find a scholarship that requires a transcript and/or letter of recommendation from your counselor or teacher. **Please request these items at least 1 week prior to your scholarship deadline.**



Time it takes to apply for a scholarship = 1 hour

Scholarship Awarded = \$1,000 That equals \$1,000 per hour!

Renewable each year = \$4,000!

You just earned \$4,000 for 1 hour of work.

What job gives you that? Put in the work!



Transcripts: Mid-Year

Some college applications may require a Mid-Year Transcript/Mid-Year Report. This allows colleges to see your progress during the first semester of your senior year (i.e. check in on your senioritis!). If your college requires this, request that this be sent via Naviance. Please note that if you need a Mid-Year Report sent to at least one Common Application college, it will automatically be sent to all Common Application colleges that require it.

Mid-Year Transcript Transcript issued after fall semester of senior year.	
What does it include?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the initial transcript information as well as: • Fall Semester Senior Year Final Semester Grades • Updated Weighted & Unweighted GPAs.
How To Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to “Colleges I’m Applying To” and click “Manage Transcripts” • Add Mid-Year Transcript Request for all required colleges.
When will it be sent?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As long as your request has been made correctly in Naviance, your Mid-Year Transcript will be available to send once 1st semester report cards are available. • Once you initiate a Mid-Year Transcript Request to ONE Common Application college, it will be sent to ALL Common Application colleges automatically.
Is there a fee? How do I pay?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no additional fee for a Mid-Year Transcript.



Transcript: Final / Senior Survey

Your final transcript only needs to be sent to the college you will be attending and NCAA if you are a college athlete.

Final Transcript Transcript issued after spring semester of senior year.	
What does it include?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the initial & Mid-Year Transcript information as well as: • Spring Semester Senior Year Final Semester Grades • Updated Weighted & Unweighted GPAs. • Degree Conferral Date (Date will be the last day of school for ALL students)
How To Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In your Senior Graduation Survey on Naviance • Seniors will complete the Graduation Survey in Naviance in late April/early May • One of the last questions in the survey will ask seniors to update the admissions decisions they have received for each of their applications. • Seniors need to check “Attending” and “Send Final Transcript” • This is the ONLY location we will pull final transcript requests from.
When will it be sent?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As long as you have set your attending college and checked “Send Final Transcript” in your senior survey, your transcript will be sent in late June. • Final transcripts are not ready until grades for ALL students in AACPS and the final data reconciliation process is complete. • Transcripts that have been requested properly will be sent in the last week of June.
Is there a fee? How do I pay?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no additional fee for your Final Transcript.



NCAA

In order to compete as a collegiate athlete in a Division 1 or 2 college and/or receive any type of athletic scholarship, you must register with the [NCAA Eligibility Center](#).

- You will need to send your high school transcript to NCAA.
- Once your profile is 100% complete on your NCAA Eligibility Portal, add your initial transcript request to Naviance.
- Follow the steps for requesting your [initial transcript](#) and list NCAA in your “Colleges I’m Applying To” list.
- You will also need to send your final high school transcript to NCAA through Naviance at the end of your senior year.



Service Academies & ROTC

Applying to a United States Service Academy requires extra steps for you, your teachers, and your School Counselor. If you are applying to a service academy, make sure your School Counselor is aware in the spring of your junior year or ASAP when you return for senior year.

All **Service Academy Application Materials** are sent via Naviance. Follow the steps required in the rest of this guide.

Nomination Application Materials are processed a bit differently than your college applications. **Meet with your School Counselor 4 weeks prior to your first nomination application deadline to review your progress with those applications.** Each nomination application will require you to use a different portal that requires you to input your recommenders' and School Counselor's contact information. **The first nomination deadline for the Class of 2026 is early in September 2025. You MUST see your School Counselor before the end of your junior year to discuss your application timeline.**

ROTC - Reserve Officers' Training Corps

ROTC programs are offered by three branches of the United States Military: Navy, Army, and Air Force. Students who are accepted to an ROTC program and offered a ROTC scholarship can have up to 100% of tuition & fees covered at their attending college. ROTC scholarships do require recipients to 'pay back' their scholarship by serving in that particular branch of the military upon graduation from their undergraduate college.

If you are applying to a ROTC program along with your college applications, please make an appointment to meet with your School Counselor. There are some extra steps that you need to complete together with your School Counselor that are not completed on Naviance. Similar to applying to service academies, a ROTC application will require using a separate portal. [Don't forget to keep track of your emails once you set up your ROTC application portal!](#)



Application Wrap Up

After you have submitted your applications and applied for Financial Aid:

- Delete any applications in Naviance for schools you did not apply to.
See Mrs. Jackson or your School Counselor for help with this if needed.
- Let your School Counselor, Mrs. Jackson, and Teacher Recommenders know where you get into school!
- Write your recommenders a Thank You note for taking the time to write a letter of recommendation for you.
- Update your admissions decisions you receive in your Colleges I'm Applying To List.



Navigating College Admissions Decisions

Update any and all decisions in your Colleges I'm Applying To list on Naviance.

- **Accepted**

- Congratulations! Some colleges give priority housing if you submit your deposit early. Get your deposit in as soon as you are 100% certain you want to attend.
- Keep checking your application portal for next steps and to-dos!

- **Deferred from Early Action (Moves to Regular Decision)**

- Let the college know you are still interested! Update your admissions representative with anything new that could strengthen your application.
- Send your Mid-Year transcript if you did well in the fall semester.
- Send any new test scores that could boost your application.
- Send any new awards/acknowledgements/achievements you have received.

- **Waitlisted**

- Most colleges will require you to accept your spot on their waitlist.
- Check your application portal for instructions and links!
- Follow the same steps listed in the deferred section above.

- **Denied**

- We know this is a disappointment. Perhaps this isn't the best fit school for you.
- Some colleges do let you appeal your admissions decision. Write a well crafted letter to your admissions representative and include the information in the deferred section above as well.



National Decision Day & Beyond

- May 1st is National College Decision Day!
 - Set your attending college in Naviance in your Senior Survey.
 - Come by the College Career Center for a fun photo opp!
 - Wear your college swag to celebrate!
- Keep checking your college's portal for important to-dos! You still will need to:
 - Select your housing
 - Find a roommate
 - Schedule orientation
 - Take any placement tests
 - Submit important demographic and medical history
 - Etc, etc, etc!
 - Best of luck on all your future endeavors and adventures!

