



## 12TH GRADE COLLEGE PREP CHECKLIST

Congratulations! You are officially a senior in high school, which means graduation is getting closer and closer! With that, comes the extra importance of staying on top of your to-do list and completing the necessary tasks to help make your Dakota Dreams come true.

### AUGUST:

- Start your year off right — Visit with your school representative to make sure you are on track to graduate and fulfill college admission requirements.

### SEPTEMBER:

- Ask for personal references from teachers, school representatives or employers early in the year (or at least two weeks before college and/or scholarship application deadlines).
- Follow your school's procedure for requesting scholarship recommendations.
- Take the ACT, if you haven't already, or take it again to boost your score.
  - If you need to sharpen your skills, take the free **ACT test prep** in SDMyLife.
- Watch **Paying for College SD** video series and invite your parents to do the same.
- If you haven't already, schedule campus visits to explore colleges and universities firsthand.

### OCTOBER:

- Take advantage of the **Free College Application Period** to apply to South Dakota's technical colleges and public universities at no cost.
- Attend a college fair early in the school year.
- Start the financial aid application process — See your representative for help finding financial aid and scholarships
- Prepare to complete the **FAFSA** (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Usually, the FAFSA is available starting October 1st. However, for those students planning to attend postsecondary education in the 2024-25 academic year, the 2024-25 FAFSA will be delayed and is expected to be available in December 2023. This one-time delay is needed for federal financial aid updates. The FAFSA is a major factor in determining the financial aid you may qualify for! Many scholarship applications require that the FAFSA be submitted. If you need to, ask for help.
  - Find out if your school holds an informational event on FAFSA.
  - See upcoming financial aid events.
  - Request help from your school representative or Mapping Your Future by visiting **[SouthDakota.MappingYourFuture.org](https://SouthDakota.MappingYourFuture.org)**.
- Apply to colleges you wish to attend, if you haven't already.
- Begin your college essay(s) if they are required for admission.
- Consider taking the Math for College Readiness course in the spring semester to gain more confidence in your math abilities.

## NOVEMBER/DECEMBER:

- Complete the 2024-25 **FAFSA** (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) when it becomes available in December 2023. This December release of the FAFSA is a one-time occurrence (normally the FAFSA becomes available on Oct. 1 every year) and is only for those students who plan to attend postsecondary education in 2024-25.
- Research and apply for **scholarships** by browsing the **Statewide Scholarship Bulletin Board**, visiting with your high school representative and by calling the Admissions offices, financial aid offices and the program departments at the college(s) you are interested in attending. Search scholarships specific to:
  - College(s) where you have applied
  - Your community
  - Your activities
  - Your planned major
- Use a spreadsheet to **keep track of important scholarship deadlines**.
- Visit with admissions representatives who come to your high school.
- Consider taking **dual credit courses** in the spring semester. (Remember to keep working hard! Dual credit courses show up on your college transcript and affect your GPA.)

## JANUARY:

- Keep working hard all year — Second semester grades can affect scholarship eligibility.
- Ask your school representative office to send first semester transcripts to colleges where you applied.

## FEBRUARY/MARCH:

- Continue applying for **scholarships**, and keep track of important deadlines.

## APRIL:

- Compare financial aid offers from different colleges.
- Decision time! Talk it out with friends, family, teachers and your representative, and decide which college you want to attend.
- Keep track of and observe deadlines for sending in all required fees and paperwork.
- Figure out your housing situation — do you plan on living at home or on campus? What are the residence halls like? Will you have a roommate?
- Register to attend a new student orientation held in the summer.

## MAY:

- Request that your school sends final transcripts to the college you will attend.
- Consider getting a summer job to help pay for some of your college expenses, and prepare a **budget** to manage your money while in college.
- Make plans to attend your college or university's early registration or new student orientation programs.
- Graduate and celebrate!

## JUNE/JULY:

- Make a list of what you will need to take with you to set up your rooming situation.
- Attend a new student orientation at your college.