



Washington Street Foundation

GOING TO COLLEGE

The Washington Street Foundation mentor and student should be talking about the advantages of further education from the time you are first connected. Suggestions for questions to pursue:

1. What do you like to do that makes you happiest and gives you satisfaction for having done it?
2. What are your best and strongest personality traits? (You, the mentor can play a role in suggesting those you've observed – friendly, inquisitive, cheerful, motivated.)
3. What are your best developed skills and abilities so far - a good cook, musician, athlete?
4. What subjects in school do you like best – worst?
5. What career(s) might interest you? Find out what kind of career position lets you use your skills: doctor, musician, banker, athlete, dancer, computer expert, printer, reporter, lawyer. Visit places where you might like to work and talk to people who have careers that look interesting.

Your parents should also be asked about their perceptions of your interests and abilities.

Since high school has so many demands it's helpful for you to set up a yearly schedule for yourself so as to arrive at the college goal.

Freshman Year

Arrange to meet with your college guidance counselor (your mentor and/or parent should accompany you whenever possible).

Discuss your plan for further education beyond high school. It's important that your counselor knows that you will be going on for advanced education. Ask for recommendations on coursework for the four years that will put you on the path to college. Explain your involvement with the Washington Street Scholars Foundation. Tell your counselor that you are interested in pursuing all other scholarships as well. Ask her/him to explain what it takes to qualify for bigger scholarships since you'd like to plan ahead to qualify for them.

Ask your guidance counselor to keep you informed about suggestions for coursework that will be helpful. Also tell the counselor that you plan on meeting with her/him at least once a year to check on your progress.

Get involved in one or two activities you like best and work toward leadership positions in later years. (Don't sign up for everything, though, you'll wear yourself out.)

You and your mentor should discuss good study skills necessary for high school. Do you have a quiet spot at home where you can study uninterruptedly?

Sophomore Year

Meet once again with guidance counselor (mentor included) to discuss your progress and make any necessary corrections in your coursework.

Pursue some extracurricular activity and, if possible, some community work.

Junior Year

Meet with your guidance counselor to go over coursework adjustments.

Also discuss other grant and scholarships that are available through your school, your city, the state of Arizona and national scholarships. Your high school should have a list of such awards. Since the WSF will pay for your college tuition you do not want to look at any loans that require re-payment. Instead look for grants and scholarships that will give your additional monies for books, room and board, etc.

Sign up for the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT), which will allow you to practice for the SAT to be taken next year. Besides, if you do very well you may qualify for a National Merit Scholarship, determined by the PSAT score. You will also be sent information about college majors, schools, etc. This test may also help you find out if you have the reading and math skills you'll need to succeed in college. Get a study guide from your guidance counselor ahead of time so that you are prepared to take the test. There is software available to learn how to take the test, as well as many books on the subject.

Find out what college is like. Visit the campuses of several colleges in Arizona with your mentor, making sure you make an appointment to visit with admission folks and get a guided tour. Walk around the grounds to get a feel of the place, or attend an event such as a football game. Talk to students about how they like their college.

Senior Year

It's a good idea to have a monthly planning calendar for your senior year with so many dates to be met for test taking and applications.

Meet with your guidance counselor once again.

Pick up a registration bulletin and sign up to take the SAT and/or the ACT (American College Test) in the fall. The fees can be reimbursed by the Washington Street Foundation. You will likely do better on this test one year later and one or the other of these tests is almost mandatory in applying to a college these days.

Discuss taking achievement tests (AT) with your guidance counselor.

Select colleges to which you'll apply and write for application forms and financial aid papers.

Solicit written recommendation letters from academic teachers who like you, and your guidance counselor. You should also consider a letter of recommendation from someone in the community who knows you or someone for whom you worked. Be sure and thank them later, in writing.

Ask for help in writing your essay(s) and make sure someone proof reads them before sending them in. Every college expects you to have checked and double-checked for spelling errors, etc.

By December you should have your applications filled out and sent. The earlier sent the better because earlier applications are often read more carefully. If necessary ask for help in filling out the Financial Aid form.

Call Admissions at the colleges to whom you've applied to ask if you've forgotten anything. This will confirm for you that the application has been received.

Ask your guidance counselor, and search out for yourself, all scholarships where you may qualify. Grants are Check out Federal Pell Grants, Rotary, Kiwanis, your own high school, etc. and then apply. (I have heard teachers quietly say that the reason a student won the scholarship was because she was the only one who applied.)

The earlier you apply after January 1, for a Pell grant the better because this national grant's monies run out each year. The Pell is available to students whose family income is under \$50,000, but most go to families with incomes under \$20,000. The Pell requires a FAFSA, a Free Application for Federal Student Aid form, to be submitted by parents. Your counselor and mentor can be helpful to your parents in filling this form out which can now be done and submitted on-line. There are many helpful articles on the subject of new grants available if you go to "Federal Student Aid Programs" on line.

Many scholarships require a personal interview so practice your interview skills with your mentor. How to shake hands firmly, make eye contact, smile, greet, sit with your hands on the table – all techniques well worth practicing.

THE MOST IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER ARE TO:

PLAN AHEAD

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

- Barbra Barnes