

The Scholarship Advisement Program's College Planning Road Map

9TH GRADE

Fall

- Apply for Choctaw Nation's Scholarship Advisement Program (SAP).
- Get to know your counselors—the ones at your high school *and* at SAP. They will have the inside information on college prep that you will need in the next four years.
- Sign up for Oklahoma's Promise, a tuition aid program.
- Choose a course load that will challenge you—but not overwhelm you. Pick things that suit your personal interests and develop your skills. If you are in a program like Oklahoma's Promise, register for the required courses.
- Find out about the Advanced Placement (AP) and other honors courses at your school. If you are eligible to enroll, do it!
- Start exploring your college options. What schools are out there? Which ones are right for you? Learn about the courses and grade averages that these colleges require for admission.
- Explore college preparation programs for low income or first generation students, such as Upward Bound or Talent Search.
- Start building your student resume. Include details on your education, honors and awards, extracurricular activities, community and tribal involvement, volunteer work, internships, or summer jobs.
- Be involved in your community and your tribe.
- Join the Choctaw Nation Youth Advisory Board for opportunities to serve your community and develop your leadership potential.
- Educate yourself about the SAT and ACT exams. Most colleges require you to take one of these as part of the application process. SAP has great resources to help you, including in-person workshops, online study courses, and textbooks you can borrow.

Spring

- Meet with your guidance counselor and make an academic plan for your 10th grade classes. Also, discuss a plan of course work for future years.
- Keep your grades up! The Choctaw Nation STAR Program provides incentives to students who maintain good grades and attendance.
- Register for a practice SAT or ACT. If you use a SAP study option, you are eligible to have your exam fees paid by SAP.

- Start a list of colleges that interest you. Begin scheduling campus visits.
- Research and apply to summer activities that can help boost your college readiness, such as SAP's College Prep Camp.

Summer

- Participate in summer activities that will help boost your college readiness and enrich your education, such as the SAP College Prep Camp.
- Start saving money for college. Sign up for a savings account (a parent or guardian can co-register for one with you) and look for programs that will match your savings, such as the Choctaw Nation Career Development Program's Choctaw Asset Building (CAB) program.
- Find a summer job and start building that new savings account! Ideally, find a job in a field that interests you and will prepare you for the future. (Leadership experience is a big plus, too!) Remember to check with the Choctaw Nation Summer Youth Program to see what positions they have available.
- Balance relaxation with productive activity—study for the ACT/SAT, read, or volunteer at local events.
- Have some fun!

10TH GRADE

Fall

- If you have not done so, sign up for Oklahoma's Promise. (This is the last opportunity!)
- Pay attention to your graduation plan. Make sure you are signing up for the courses you need to graduate. If you are in a program like Oklahoma's promise, make sure you are taking the required courses.
- Sign up for the Advanced Placement (AP) courses that your school offers.
- Prepare for the SAT and ACT by taking the PSAT and PLAN exams.
- Study for the ACT or SAT. SAP has great study resources including: in-person workshops, online study courses, and textbooks you can check out.
- Continue researching potential colleges. Visit websites and campuses. Begin making a list of resources, programs, and other attributes that your "dream college" should offer.
- Build your student resume with extracurricular activities, community volunteering, and tribal involvement.

Spring

- Meet with your guidance counselor and make an academic plan for your 11th grade classes. Also, discuss a plan of course work for future years.
- Keep your grades up and your attendance strong!
- Register for the SAT or ACT. Plan to take both eventually. Remember that if you used SAP study options, you are eligible to have your exam fee paid by SAP.
- Learn about and apply for summer programs that will prepare you for college, such as College Horizons. Enrichment programs with specialty focuses such as music, arts, science, etc. are great, too.
- Plan a college campus visit or two. Spring is a great time to visit colleges, because the campus is buzzing with activity. You will get the most accurate picture of what life is like there.
- Ask about concurrent enrollment for your junior year, which allows juniors and seniors to enroll in select college courses and gain college credit.

Summer

- Attend College Horizons or another summer enrichment program.
- Participate in summer activities hosted by colleges in your area to build your resume and your familiarity with college campuses.
- Work a summer job to save money for college.
- Relax, read, volunteer. Challenge yourself with a new sport or activity.

11TH GRADE

Fall

- Meet with your guidance counselor. Ask for a preview of your academic record and profile (class rank, GPA, etc.) from your school. Discuss how you can improve your profile.
- Review the courses to take and grades to make to gain admission to the colleges of your choice. If you are in a state program like Oklahoma's Promise, be sure you are taking the required courses.
- Take AP classes.
- Consider taking concurrent classes at a local college to earn college credit.
- Take the PSAT. Junior year scores go into consideration for the National Merit Scholarship Program, which awards college scholarships to over 8000 students per year.

- Continue to study for the SAT and ACT.
- Narrow your list of colleges to include a few schools with requirements at your current student profile (GPA, ACT/SAT scores, etc.), a few with requirements a little above your current profile (dream schools), and at least one with requirements below your profile (safety schools). You want a combination of dream, realistic, and safety schools.
- Continue to build your student resume with extracurricular activities, community volunteering, and tribal involvement.
- Register for the SAT or ACT.
- Schedule interviews with college admissions counselors. If possible tour the campus on the same day. Ask your guidance counselor if a campus visit qualifies as an excused absence.

Spring

- Meet with your guidance counselor and make an academic plan for your 12th grade classes.
- Consider taking concurrent classes next year to earn college credit.
- Keep your grades up and your attendance strong!
- Discuss college plans with your parents or guardians.
- Attend a college fair.
- Register for the SAT or ACT. It is a good idea to take the ACT/SAT in your junior year, so you can review your results and retest in the fall of your senior year, if necessary.
- Learn about and apply for summer programs that will prepare you for college, such as College Horizons. Consider programs that focus on business or engineering, global issues, or other topics that relate to your potential college majors.
- Find out from each college on your list their admission deadlines and test requirements. Plan to have these materials prepared by the end of your Senior fall term.
- Plan campus visits. Have questions prepared in advance and take notes. Call ahead for appointments with the financial aid, admissions, and academic advisors at the colleges in which you are most interested. If these schools offer immersion experiences for perspective students, take advantage. These programs allow you to talk to professors, sit in on classes, spend a night in the dorms, and speak to current students. Doing these things will allow you to gather the most information about the colleges and the atmosphere in which you would be living, should you choose to attend.
- Send thank you notes to colleges that you visit.
- Talk to your teachers, counselors, and others about writing letters of recommendation for you. Ask for their advice.

Summer

- List the colleges where you plan to apply. Create a calendar with all application, financial aid, and scholarship deadlines for each school so you do not miss any important deadlines.
- If you have a clear first choice college, decide whether to apply for early decision/early action. Understand that if you are accepted, you are likely committing yourself to attend that school.
- Begin working on the Common Application (commonapp.org).
- Research scholarships. Contact SAP for access to our Native American Scholarship Database, which holds over 40,000 scholarship applications.
- Research financial aid options. Financial aid applications will be due next January, and it is best to start early.
- Update your student resume with education, honors and awards, extracurricular activities, community and tribal involvement, volunteer work, internships, or summer jobs.
- Work on portfolios or auditions, if you are applying to degree programs (like art or dance) that require them.
- If you plan to retake the SAT or ACT, study prep materials.
- Attend College Horizons or other summer camps that enrich your academic and leadership skills, such as free summer academies with the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.
- If you're interested in a summer program that isn't free, contact your SAP counselor to inquire about financial assistance. You may be able to use your \$100 student activity fund or apply to the donations committee.
- Look for summer jobs or internships in your fields of interest.
- Continue saving money for college.

12TH GRADE

Fall

- Meet with your guidance counselor. Update them on your summer activities. Make sure you are meeting high school graduation and college admission requirements. If you are in a state program like Oklahoma's Promise, be sure you are taking the required courses.
- Keep your grades up and your attendance strong!
- Consider taking concurrent classes next semester to earn college credit.

- Continue researching scholarships. Contact SAP for access to our Native American Scholarship Database, which holds over 40,000 scholarship applications. Ask your counselor about local scholarship opportunities.
- Attend college fairs and information events like SAP's Ivy League & Friends Event. Meet with recruiters from colleges that interest you.
- Visit any remaining colleges on your list of possibilities.
- If necessary, take the SAT and ACT again. Do this in early fall so you will meet all submission deadlines. Have all scores sent to the colleges where you are applying.
- Draft a final list of colleges to which you will apply. Many students select three to five schools: their dream school, a safety school, and two to three good matches for their grades and achievements.
- Check application deadlines. Early decision is often November 15.
- Begin college interviews. Consider fly-in visitation programs for your top choices. Some universities will provide funds for Native American students to visit their campuses.
- Work on college applications. Finish admissions essays, resumes, portfolios, and audition pieces and ask counselors and mentors for feedback.
- Give recommendation forms to the appropriate counselors or teachers. If hard copies are required, give them a stamped and addressed envelope. If electronic forms are required, send them the links. Make sure your portions of the forms are filled out correctly and completely, and confirm the deadlines with them verbally and in writing.
- Ask your counselor about fee waivers for colleges on your list.
- In October, apply to the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation. They provide scholarships to over 1400 students each year, totaling over \$3.4 million.
- Begin working on the Gates Millennium Scholars Program application. They select 1,000 minority students to receive full scholarships to the college of their choice. If appropriate, funding may continue through graduate school.
- Explore regional scholarship opportunities such as Southeastern Oklahoma State University President's Leadership Class (PLC) or Honors Program. Programs like these provide scholarships and support for selected students. Most have deadlines in January so start early.
- Schedule a pre-winter break appointment with your guidance counselor to review all application materials.

Spring

- Submit all college applications before their deadlines—the earlier, the better!
- Request that your high school send transcripts to all colleges where you applied.
- Verify that official ACT/SAT scores have been received by all colleges where you applied.
- Submit a Gates Millennium Scholars Application in the first week of January.
- Ask your parents or guardians to complete their income tax forms as soon as possible so you can begin filling out financial aid paperwork.
- Complete and submit a financial aid application for the colleges where you have applied, even if you have not yet received an acceptance letter.
- Complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) between January 1 and February 15. You must fill this out to receive grants, loans, or work study.
- Once you complete a FAFSA, you should receive a Student Aid Report (SAR) within four weeks. Make any necessary corrections and return it the FAFSA processor as soon as possible. If you wait, your financial aid may be delayed.
- Confirm with the financial aid office of each college that they have received your financial aid materials. Ask if they need any other documentation.
- Continue researching scholarships using the Native American Scholarship Database. Ask your counselor about local scholarship opportunities.
- If you plan to explore a degree in a specialized field, look for scholarship opportunities within the field. For example, the Indian Health Services Scholarship application is due in March.
- Take the college placement exams for any AP and honors classes you have taken. These may allow you to qualify for college credit.
- Begin watching for communication from your selected colleges in March. Most will notify you by April 15 whether or not you have been accepted for admission. Compare acceptance letters and scholarship/financial aid packages for each place you have gained admission. Seek support from your counselors and mentors when weighing your options.
- Choose a college and notify them of your decision by May 1. Respond promptly, in writing, to secure admissions, scholarship, and financial aid offers.
- Notify any colleges where you received acceptance, but do not plan to attend, of your decision by June 1 (or their stated deadline).
- Graduate high school!

Summer

- Have your high school send all final transcripts to your chosen college.
- Contact your chosen college to verify the total costs and due dates of all tuition, fee, room and board payments.
- Notify SAP of your college choice. We will put you in touch with the Peer Advisor for your campus. Peer Advisors can assist you with the paperwork and transition to college life.
- Contact your SAP counselor to learn about additional services for college students from Choctaw Nation, including laptop and clothing allowances, plus classroom training programs.
- Make plans for transportation to campus in August and for freshman year housing.
- Write thank you letters to organizations that have offered you scholarships, grants, and other financial aid.
- Look for summer jobs or internships in your fields of interest.
- Continue saving money for college.
- Continue researching scholarships. There are many opportunities for students who have already started college. Contact SAP for access to our Native American Scholarship Database, which holds over 40,000 scholarship applications.
- Participate in your college's summer orientation for incoming freshmen.

For more college planning and funding resources and information, please visit www.choctawnation-sap.com!

This guide brought to you by the Choctaw Nation's

