



# SITE COORDINATOR MANUAL

## Part 1: Pre-Event Planning

2017 Edition

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*All items found in the Site Coordinator Manual are available on the American College Application Campaign website for you to download and print. Visit [www.acenet.edu/acac](http://www.acenet.edu/acac) and select "Resources."*



## Welcome to the American College Application Campaign

The American Council on Education is pleased to provide a home to the American College Application Campaign (ACAC), a national effort to increase college access through dissemination of ideas, development of practices, and technical assistance for implementation of a College Application event.

The ACAC initiative began in 2005, in a single GEAR UP North Carolina high school in Chatham County. Since that time, the initiative has expanded statewide in North Carolina with every district and over 470 high schools participating annually. Shortly after, the number of states implementing a College Application event began to grow. Beginning in 2014, ACAC took place in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. This past fall an estimated 5,700 schools hosted programs, helping 460,000 seniors completed more than 774,000 college applications.

In 2016, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) made a significant change by moving the date it is available from January 1 to October 1. This early release is beneficial for students as it allows them to learn their federal aid eligibility earlier, giving them more time to research and apply to colleges before admissions deadlines. This also allowed many of the ACAC states to better align their College Application Campaigns with FAFSA completion efforts. ACAC encourages states to continue bringing college application and FAFSA completion efforts together to better support students.

For any questions regarding the information included in this document, please contact the College Countdown State Coordinator. We hope you find this guide useful as you implement strategies to achieve increased college access in your school.

Want to stay connected with and informed about the American College Application Campaign? Subscribe to our newsletter at [www.acenet.edu/acac](http://www.acenet.edu/acac), follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/american\\_cac](https://www.twitter.com/american_cac) and like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/americanacac](https://www.facebook.com/americanacac). To connect with College Countdown follow us at [Include social media account links].

## Preparing and Implementing a College Application Event

There are a variety of activities that high school site coordinators can do prior to, during, and after the school's College Application event to ensure it is successful and meaningful for participating students. These activities are outlined in three Site Coordinator Manuals and samples are included in corresponding sections of each manual. Each manual has been updated by your state's designated State Coordinator to reflect the implementation of the College Application Campaign in your state. Additionally, there is a **site coordinator checklist** to assist you with tracking the implementation of each activity. All materials are available on ACAC's website, [www.acenet.edu/acac](http://www.acenet.edu/acac), under Resources.

### Site Coordinator Manual Part 1: Pre-Event Planning: Creating a College-Going Culture and Getting Students Prepared

There are several activities that schools participating in the College Application Campaign program can do prior to the event in order to prepare students and to generate enthusiasm and support for the program. Part 1: Pre-Event Planning Site Coordinator Manual focuses on pre-event activities that high school site coordinators can utilize as they plan for the program.

- Brand Standards
- Planning Committee Audit and Agenda
- College Research Worksheet
- College Application Worksheet
- Application Fee Waivers
- "Ask Me!" About It Signs
- Information Letters
- Phone Blasts
- Sample Newsletter Article
- Mayoral Proclamation
- Social Media Engagement
- Website Content Recommendations
- Sample Press Releases and Media Advisory
- Volunteer Outreach Resources
- Other Pre-Event Activities

### Site Coordinator Manual Part 2: During your College Application Program

You have completed all of the planning for your College Application Campaign program and due to the pre-event activities, your students are prepared and the community is engaged in this exciting initiative. Use these activities and resources to help make your event a success!

- Ask Me! Button, Badges, Stickers
- Student Instructions for Day of Event
- College Application Sign-Out Sheet/Student Sign Out Form
- Reminders and Recognition
- Next Steps Handout
- Reminders for FAFSA Completion Event
- Social Media Engagement

### Site Coordinator Manual Part 3: After your College Application Program

Congratulations! You have successfully implemented a College Application Campaign program for your students and started them on the pathway to enrolling in college next fall. The following templates and suggestions are provided to assist you with post-event activities.

- Volunteer Thank You Letters
- Post-Event Press Releases
- Understanding Financial Aid Award Letters
- FAFSA Completion Campaign
- College Signing Day



## **Pre-Event Resources and Activities Overview**

The following items are included in this manual. Common uses for each are detailed below. The materials have been updated by your College Application Campaign State Coordinator to reflect your state's implementation.

### **Joining ACAC/State Responsibilities One-Pager**

This one-pager reviews the goal of the national campaign and expectations of states.

### **Brand Standards**

Description of the American College Application Campaign brand standards.

### **Planning Committee Audit and Agenda Items**

Recommendations on who to engage on a college application campaign planning committee and how to engage the committee.

### **College Research Worksheet**

Understanding match, fit, and cost is critical to researching colleges. Have students use this worksheet to help them research and identify the colleges to which they want to apply.

### **College Application Worksheet**

This worksheet is an opportunity for students to identify some of the most common information asked on college applications prior to the event. Ensure students have this well in advance of the College Application event so they can ask any questions they may have before they apply.

### **Application Fee Waivers**

Students who are eligible for fee waivers associated with college entrance exams (SAT or ACT) are also usually eligible for college application fee waivers. It is important to begin talking with students about this payment option early in the school year. This section provides additional details on the fee waiver process and resources to learn more.

### **"Ask Me!" About It Signs**

This is a quick and low-cost way to create awareness and excitement for your school's College Application event. Send the "Ask Me!" sign to all staff members in the school – ask them to customize it to their school(s) and display it outside their classroom or office.

### **Information Letters**

To assist getting the word out, sample letters are included that can be sent to families and community partners about your school's College Application event. These should be sent about two months prior to your College Application event on school letterhead.

### **Phone Blast**

To remind families that the College Application opportunity is available to their child, a sample phone blast is included. To ensure students still have time to prepare for the event, it is recommended that this be implemented at least three weeks prior to the program.

### **Sample Newsletter Article**

Utilize the newsletter article template in school newsletters, planning committee member organization newsletters, and other community newsletters.



### **Mayoral Proclamation**

Your state's College Application program State Coordinator is likely seeking a gubernatorial proclamation for the state's initiative. A mayoral proclamation for your school's event is a wonderful complement. If there are multiple schools in your area implementing an event, be sure to coordinate with them so the proclamation is accurate and reflects all participating schools.

### **Engaging With Social Media**

The purpose of this one-pager is to share the national social media efforts and encourage schools, community members, and students to connect and share on social media.

### **Website Content**

Recommendations on what information to post on the school or district website(s).

### **Sample Press Releases and Media Advisory**

Contact your local media to inform them of your College Application event. If school policy allows, invite them to be a part of your program. Media coverage will help students, families, and the community recognize the importance of this program for your school and students.

### **Volunteer Recruitment Letter**

A template letter for host high schools to utilize when conducting outreach to potential volunteers.

### **Volunteer Support Tips**

Guidelines on how volunteers can support college application events.

### **Volunteer Training Agenda**

A sample template with recommendations of topics to cover during a volunteer training.

### **Volunteer Reference Guide**

Volunteer handout reviewing specifics of their assigned task and how to navigate the event.

### **Volunteer Social Media One-Pager**

The purpose of this one-pager is to share the national, state, and host site social media channels and encourage volunteers to connect and share on social media.

### **Other Pre-event Activities**

Other ideas for enhancing a college-going culture prior to the College Application event are included here.



## Joining the American College Application Campaign

### About the Campaign

The American College Application Campaign (ACAC), an effort of the American Council on Education (ACE), is a national initiative to increase the number of first-generation and low-income students who pursue a postsecondary education. The purpose is to help high school seniors navigate the college admissions process and ensure each participating student submits at least one admissions application.

The Campaign is conducted state by state and is typically held annually in the fall. There are variations to the scheduled week or month in order to accommodate state-specific needs. After submitting the admissions application in the fall, students are encouraged to register for their FSA ID and are provided with the date of their state's FAFSA Day or College Goal event to ensure they apply for financial aid as part of the college admissions process.

### High School Responsibilities

High schools implementing a successful College Application Campaign event at their school will include the following as part of their initiative:

- Hosting a program during the school day that is open to any student interested in applying with a focus on engaging first-generation students, students from low-income families, and students who may otherwise not apply to college. Your state's initiative may be a week or longer, but most schools host events on only one or two days, depending on the size of the senior class.
- Identifying and convening a school team comprised of staff and community members.
- Leveraging support of the school team to ensure that students are prepared to participate in the event (essays are completed prior to the program, students have researched the institutions to which they want to apply, etc.).
- Engaging the local community, families, and others through volunteer opportunities, information letters, and advertising the program.
- Creating a college-going culture within the school through a variety of approaches – some suggestions are included in this guide.
- Collecting data as requested by the State Coordinator including, but not limited to, the number of students participating and the number of applications submitted.
- Following-up with students after the event to ensure applications submitted are complete (transcripts, college entrance exam scores, letters of recommendation, submitting a complete FAFSA, etc.).

### Campaign Resources for your High School

For questions about College Countdown, contact State Coordinator, Heather Morrison:

MS College Access and College Application Days  
Heather Morrison  
P20 Projects Coordinator  
Government Relations and Strategic Initiatives  
Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning  
3825 Ridgewood Road  
Jackson, Mississippi 39211  
[hmorrison@mississippi.edu](mailto:hmorrison@mississippi.edu)  
601-432-6626  
[www.mississippi.edu](http://www.mississippi.edu)





## Brand Standards

The more unified the individual state campaigns and host site events appear, the more recognizable our efforts will be nationally. Though many states have created their own logos and websites to fit the needs of your state, we encourage host sites to utilize the ACAC name and logo as much as possible. Please keep this in mind as you utilize the available templates.

If your state already has a college access campaign marketing or branding strategy, be sure to follow their brand standards and guidelines.

### National ACAC Color Palette

ACAC Red  
RGB: 172 51 60  
CMYK: 27 93 79 11  
HEX#: ac333c

ACAC Blue  
RGB: 0 82 136  
CMYK: 100 45 0 37  
HEX#: 005288

**Recommended font:** Archer and Frutiger for designed materials. Arial is acceptable for body copy font.

Access to ACAC's logo and the recommended font can be made available upon request. Contact Lisa King at [Liking@acenet.edu](mailto:Liking@acenet.edu).



## Planning Committee Audit

### Identifying Stakeholders and Convening a School Team

Schools that have successfully implemented a College Application Campaign event have done so through the collaboration of multiple stakeholders. A key approach to engaging stakeholders is the creation of a school team that will provide input on and support for the various logistics necessary to implement a successful College Application Campaign event at the school level.

Below, you will find a list of recommended local resources that you can use to identify the key stakeholders in your community. Keep in mind that this list is not exhaustive and you should engage any other community partners that have a vested interest in college access and student success. When planning and implementing your school's College Application Campaign initiative, you should follow all district and school policies regarding non-school personnel visiting, volunteering, or otherwise assisting with your school's program.

Potential community partners include:

- Admissions representatives from local colleges (two-year and four-year)
- Local business leaders
- Local Chamber of Commerce
- College access initiatives (federally-funded, state-funded, or community-based)
- Faith-based community
- Non-profit organizations such as the YMCA, 4H, Boys and Girls Club, etc.
- PTA and other parents/family members who want to be engaged in the process
- Student leaders in your high school
- Retired school personnel
- Local government officials or elected representatives

## Planning Committee Audit cont.

### School Partners

Use the following table to identify potential education partners in your community for your College Application Campaign event. Remember, planning committee members don't have to be individuals already working on college access initiatives, though it is helpful. They also don't need to be experts on the college application process. Space has been provided at the bottom of the table for you to add additional partners, if needed.

Potential Partners	Name of Contact	Email Address	Phone Number
Parent Teacher Association			
Faculty and Staff			
Teachers			
Chamber of Commerce			
Nonprofit representative			
Student representative			
Faith-based community representative			
Junior League Associations			
Local corporation representative			
Local college or university representative			

## Planning Committee: Agenda Items for your Convening

As outlined above, a school team comprised of a variety of stakeholders is extremely effective in creating support and buy-in for your school's College Application event. There are a variety of topics that can be and should be discussed with your school team.

Some of the key topics the school team should discuss are:

- What is the College Application Campaign event?
- Outlining the role of school team
- Identifying date(s) for the event (note your state's designated dates during your discussion!)
- Developing a communication strategy: student, parents, school staff, community
- Ensuring students are prepared well before the event (researching schools, learning how to pay for the application, understanding additional admission requirements)
- Creating or enhancing a college-going culture that is visible in the school in the weeks leading up to the event
- Requesting a Mayoral Proclamation
- Encouraging and recruiting students to participate in the initiative
- Including underclassmen in the effort
- Engaging volunteers
- Ensuring a process for evaluation and data collection
- Following-up with applications – ensuring the college and financial aid processes are completed

After your College Application event, your school team should meet to debrief on the successes and challenges of the current year's initiative – feel free to use the topics above to guide the discussion. The debrief meeting should occur as close to the conclusion of your school's College Application event as possible. By quickly assessing what worked and what areas need improvement, your school team can get a jump-start on planning for next year's program and create an action plan to follow-up with participating students who need to complete the college application and begin the financial aid application processes.

## College Research Worksheet

Prior to submitting a college application, you need to research the various college options you have available. During your research, there are three important things for you to consider: fit, match, and cost. This worksheet will help you think through each of them.

Does the college **fit** with your preferences? There are several factors to consider in regard to fit such as the size of the school, the location of the school, and services available on campus. Also, it is important to consider the college's graduation rates and retention rates (the number of students who return to school for their second year) when researching what a college has to offer you. Finally, does the school offer your major? If you're not sure what you'd like to major in, visit ACT Profile ([www.act.org/profile](http://www.act.org/profile)) to explore and learn more about careers and majors that align with your interests and talents.

Does the college **match** with your academic record? For this, you'll need to understand how your high school grade point average (GPA), your college entrance exam scores (SAT and/or ACT), and the courses you've taken in high school match to the college's entrance requirements AND to the average GPAs and scores of students admitted. Keep in mind that what a school requires could be different from the averages of who they admit. You should plan to apply to multiple schools and should include at least one of each of the following types of schools:

- Reach School – this does not mean out of reach, it just means that the school may be more selective (look at the percent of applicants admitted) and your academic record may be on the lower end of what the college typically accepts. In other words, you *may* be admitted to this school
- Match School – typically, at a match school, your academic record will be similar to the “average” student admitted to this school. In other words, you are *likely* to be admitted.
- Safety School – a safety school will usually have either open enrollment (meaning anyone who submits a completed application is admitted) or will be considered a “less selective” institution. Your academic record will exceed the institution's requirements and averages for students admitted. In other words, you will almost *definitely* be admitted.

Finally, it is important for you to understand the **cost** of the institutions to which you would like to apply. Keep in mind that the “sticker” price of a college may be very different from the “net” price of a college after you consider the amount of aid that is typically available to students.

Use the worksheet, Identifying Your College Fit, to think through what type of college you would like to attend. The worksheet will also ask you to detail your academic record by providing information on the various academic indicators that many colleges consider during the application review process. If you are unsure of any of the information requested, be sure to work with your school counselor so you have the most accurate information possible.

After the worksheet, you will find a table that you can complete with information specific to the colleges you are researching. Remember, you should plan to apply to at least one reach, one match, and one safety college. Go to [College Planning Tool and Website] to conduct your research.

Use the completed tables to help you identify what colleges you would like to apply to!

### Identifying Your College Fit



**LOCATION**

**Where would your ideal college be located (circle one)?**

In-state                                      Out-of-state                                      Either

**How important is location to you (circle one)?**

Very Important                                      Important                                      Not Important

**TYPE OF SCHOOL**

**In what kind of setting would your ideal college be (circle one)?**

Rural                                      Suburban                                      Urban

**How important is setting to you (circle one)?**

Very Important                                      Important                                      Not Important

**How big would your ideal college be (circle one)?**

Large >10,000                                      Medium 5,000-10,000                                      Small < 5,000

**How important is size to you (circle one)?**

Very Important                                      Important                                      Not Important

**SUPPORT SERVICES**

**What services would be available on your ideal campus (circle all that apply)?**

Tutoring                                      Employment Services  
Career Counseling                                      Academic Support Services  
Minority Student Services                                      Disability Services

**What other things are important to you at your ideal college?** Things to consider are what you want to major in; whether the campus is co-ed or single gender; the diversity of the campus; whether students live on-campus or if a majority of students are commuters; etc. Use the space below to identify any other characteristics your ideal college would have.

ACAC recommends you create a free profile at ACT Profile ([www.actprofile.org](http://www.actprofile.org)) or chat with your school counselor for additional resources.

**Your Academic Record**

If you don't know some of this information, check with your school counselor!

My grade point average is: \_\_\_\_\_

By graduation, how many years of the following classes will you have taken?

My SAT Reading score is: \_\_\_\_\_

English \_\_\_\_\_                                      Science \_\_\_\_\_

My SAT Math score is: \_\_\_\_\_

Math \_\_\_\_\_                                      Art \_\_\_\_\_

My SAT Writing score is: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Studies \_\_\_\_\_                                      History \_\_\_\_\_

My ACT Composite score is: \_\_\_\_\_

Foreign Language \_\_\_\_\_                                      Electives \_\_\_\_\_

**College Match and Fit Table**

**Instructions:** Go to [College Planning Tool and Website]. There, you can search for colleges that “fit” and “match” the information you completed on the previous page. Be sure you keep in mind what characteristics are important to you in regard to fit! Or, search for a specific college to which you think you would like to apply to learn more about them. For each college, complete this table to determine if the college is a good fit and match for you and whether the costs seem reasonable based on your anticipated resources.

**Name of College:**

---

Location of college (City, State)		4-year or 2-year?	
Size of college		Public or Private?	
Number of undergraduate students		Co-ed? Women only? Men only?	
Setting of college		Students live on campus or commute?	
Do they offer my major?	Yes          No	Diversity of campus	
Percent of students that return sophomore year		Graduation Rate	
What services are available on campus that are important to me?			

How well do you think this college **fits** your preferences?  
 Excellent Fit    Good Fit    Okay Fit    Somewhat of a Fit    Does not Fit

How selective is this college?		Have I taken the required high school courses?	Yes    No
Percent of applicants admitted?	%	Percent of students with my SAT score	%
Percent of students with my GPA	%	Percent of students with my ACT score	%

Comparing my academic record to this college, this would be a **Reach, Match, or Safety** college for me (see definitions above)? \_\_\_\_\_

Total estimated cost to attend	\$	Percent of need met	%
My calculated net price	\$	Percent of need met through scholarships/grants	%
Percent of freshmen with need who received aid	%	Percent of need met through loans	%

**I plan to apply to this college:**      Yes                  No

**If Yes, Application Deadline:**

## College Application Worksheet

**Instructions:** Students, complete this College Application Worksheet and bring it with you on the day of your school’s College Application event. You may need to ask your family,

school counselor, or another adult you trust to assist you in answering all of the questions. **Be sure to keep this information in a safe place given the personal information included.**

## Top Three Colleges and Universities you Plan to Submit an Application

Prior to participating in your school's College Application program, you should do some research on the schools to which you plan to apply. Use the worksheet below to keep track of the information you learn during your research on your top three colleges and universities.

### 1. Name of College:

Is an essay or personal statement required to apply? If so, note the prompt so you can draft a response:

Deadline for application:

Cost to apply:

Payment option:

SAT and/or ACT required?

Recommendation letter required?

Deadline for scholarship or institutional financial assistance:

### 2. Name of College:

Is an essay or personal statement required to apply? If so, note the prompt so you can draft a response:

Deadline for application:

Cost to apply:

Payment option:

SAT and/or ACT required?

Recommendation letter required?

Deadline for scholarship or institutional financial assistance:

### 3. Name of College:

Is an essay or personal statement required to apply? If so, note the prompt so you can draft a response!:

Deadline for application:

Cost to apply:

Payment option:

SAT and/or ACT required?

Recommendation letter required?

Deadline for scholarship or institutional financial assistance:

It is **strongly recommended** that you write your essays and personal statements well in advance of your school's College Application event. Your English teacher, school counselor, and other adults you trust are good resources to assist you in getting your essays to a final version. You should bring a final, proofed, electronic copy of your essays and/or personal statements on a flash drive to the event. If flash drives are not allowed on your school computers, talk to your school counselor before the College Application event about how you can access these documents while applying.



## Test Scores

Many applications for college admission will request information related to tests that you have taken. Use the worksheet below to list the scores for tests you have already taken. If you have not yet taken the SAT or ACT and the school(s) you are applying to require them, speak with your school counselor about upcoming test dates – you will need to take at least one of these college entrance exams soon! Most colleges will also require an “official” score that is sent by College Board (SAT scores) or ACT (ACT scores). Talk with your school counselor about how to do this.

### SAT

Test #1:

Date Taken:

Total Score:

Critical Reading Score:

Mathematics Score:

Writing Score:

Test #2:

Date Taken:

Total Score:

Critical Reading Score:

Mathematics Score:

Writing Score:

### ACT

Test #1:

Date Taken:

Total Score:

Critical Reading Score:

Mathematics Score:

Science Score:

Writing Score:

Test #2:

Date Taken:

Total Score:

Critical Reading Score:

Mathematics Score:

Science Score:

Writing Score:

## Extra-Curricular Activities

Some applications request information related to the activities that you participate in outside of your high school classes. This could include clubs, organizations or any other activity that you want to share with the college. List your activities below, including the year(s) you participated and if you held a position or received an award related to the activity.

Activity 1:

Years Participated:

Leadership position held:

Awards:

Activity 2:

Years Participated:

Leadership position held:

Awards:

Activity 3:

Years Participated:

Leadership position held:

Awards:

Activity 4:

Years Participated:

Leadership position held:

Awards:

Activity 5:

Years Participated:

Leadership position held:

Awards:



### Who is eligible?

Typically, fee waivers are available to students for whom the college application fees would create a financial burden or hardship. Students who were eligible for fee waivers to college entrance exams, such as the SAT or ACT, are usually also eligible for college application fee waivers. There may be different expectations by both of these organizations about how to access fee waivers.

### Who accepts fee waivers?

[State Coordinators, this is the section where you should list the colleges and universities in your state who accept fee waivers. In addition, if any colleges or universities are also free to apply to (for instance, your state's two-year public institutions may not charge a fee), this would be a great place to include that information. Finally, if colleges and universities accept waivers other than those listed below such as a letter from a school counselor on school letterhead, that information should also be communicated here.]

### What fee waivers are available?

There are three types of fee waivers typically accepted by colleges and universities, but it is important to note that not all colleges and universities will accept fee waivers. Students or school counselors should confirm with the admissions office at specific institutions to ensure fee waivers are accepted.

#### ACT Fee Waiver

ACT provides a fee waiver application in their *ACT User Handbook for Educators* publication, link below. Students who are eligible for a fee waiver to the ACT college entrance exam are also eligible for a college application fee waiver. School counselors need only print out the number of fee waivers needed and sign-off on student eligibility. Students must also sign the form. The fee waiver may be found on pages 23 and 24 here: [www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/ACT-UserHandbook.pdf](http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/ACT-UserHandbook.pdf)

#### College Board Fee Waiver

The College Board states that students who have received a College Board fee waiver for the SAT or the SAT subject tests may also be eligible for up to four college application fee waivers. Students should receive their college application fee waivers at the beginning of their senior year through their SAT accounts. College Board fee waivers will no longer require school counselor approval. More information on the College Board fee waiver can be found here:

<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/about/benefits/college-application-fee-waivers>

The College Board also provides additional information including a link to which colleges accept the College Board application fee waiver here:

[www.sat.org/fee-waivers](http://www.sat.org/fee-waivers)

#### National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) Fee Waiver

This fee waiver can be downloaded from NACAC's website, provided below. Students must complete their portion of the fee waiver request and a school counselor or TRIO representative must verify that a student is eligible to use the form (a list of eligibility requirements are provided on the NACAC website and on the fee waiver request – students must meet only one of the requirements to be eligible). NACAC recommends that students receive no more than four fee waivers for the college application process. Additional information on the NACAC fee waiver can be found on their website here:

[www.nacacnet.org/studentinfo/feewaiver/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.nacacnet.org/studentinfo/feewaiver/Pages/default.aspx)

[ACAC logo

State's ACAC Logo]



I graduated from  
**(SCHOOL NAME)**.

**Ask me about it!**

(Staff Member's Name)

**Student/Family Information Letter**

(School Logo)  
(School Address)

September 2017



Dear Students and Families,

During the week of [Dates of ACAC State Campaign], [Names of State Campaign Sponsoring Organizations] will be sponsoring [Name of State Campaign]. On (Date(s) of event), all seniors expected to graduate at the end of this academic year will be encouraged to apply for admission to at least one college or university, if they have not already done so. This event is possible due to the collaborative efforts of the administration, faculty, and staff at [Name of your high school], as well as students, their families, and volunteers across the community.

The purpose of this [day/week/month] is to acquaint students with the college application process and to communicate the importance of applying to college. Information about completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) will also be made available during the event. There is a College Application Worksheet which we encourage students to complete prior to the event that is available on [provide state's College Application website or ask schools to post it to their website and include the link here]. Having this Worksheet completed and available at the College Application event will allow students to quickly and easily complete college applications.

We anticipate that students and their families will need to work together in gathering the information listed in the College Application Worksheet. Families are welcome to visit [Name of your high school] on [Date(s) of event] to assist their student during the application process. In addition, if family members are interested in volunteering or guest speaking during the event, please let me know. Volunteers can greet and sign-in students, assist students with the completion of college applications, or distribute information about financial aid opportunities.

Additionally, we encourage you to join us in celebrating the college application process on social media. September 22 will kick off the American College Application Campaign with a #WhyApply Day. We encourage you to use the hashtag #WhyApply to share with students the importance of applying for college. You can also join the conversation throughout October and November using #IApplied.

If you have any questions please call [Site Coordinator's Name, Site Coordinator's Title], at [Site Coordinator's phone number]. Thank you in advance for your support of this exciting initiative to encourage all [State's Name] students to make college a part of their future.

Sincerely,  
[Name of Site Coordinator]  
[Title]



## Parent/Guardian Phone Blast Message

This is a friendly reminder that (Name of High School) will be hosting a College Application event on (Date(s) of event) to encourage all seniors to apply to at least one college if they haven't already done so. Students should come prepared to apply by completing the College Application Worksheet available [State ACAC website or ask schools to post to their website and provide link here]. If you have any questions please call (NAME, TITLE), at (PHONE NUMBER). Thank you in advance for your support of this exciting initiative to encourage all (Name of High School) students to make college a part of their future.



## Community Information Letter

(School Logo)  
(School Address)

September 2017

Dear Community Member,

[Name of Your High School] is pleased to announce its participation in [Name of State Campaign]! In an effort to further expand college access across the state, the [Names of State Campaign Sponsoring Organizations] are sponsoring [Name of State Campaign] from [Campaign date(s)]. The goal of [Name of State Campaign] is to provide every graduating high school senior the opportunity to apply to college [Insert additional goals, if necessary]. This event is possible due to the collaborative efforts of the administration, faculty, and staff at [Name of your high school], as well as students, their families, and volunteers across the community.

The purpose of this [day/week/month] is to acquaint students with the college application process and to communicate the importance of applying to college. Information about completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) will also be made available during the event.

[Name of your high school] will be hosting our College Application event on [Date(s) of event] to assist their student during the application process. We welcome the community to be a part of the program. If you are interested in volunteering or guest speaking during the event, please let me know. Volunteers can greet and sign-in students, assist students with the completion of college applications, or distribute information about financial aid opportunities.

Additionally, we encourage you to join us in celebrating the college application process on social media. September 22 will kick off the American College Application Campaign with a #WhyApply Day. We encourage you to use the hashtag #WhyApply to share with students the importance of applying for college. You can also join the conversation throughout October and November using #IApplied.

If you have any questions please call [Site Coordinator's Name, Site Coordinator's Title], at [Site Coordinator's phone number]. Thank you in advance for your support of this exciting initiative to encourage all [State's Name] students to make college a part of their future.

Sincerely,  
[Name of Site Coordinator]  
[Title]





## Sample Newsletter Article

The following newsletter article template can be utilized within school, district and/or parent newsletters. Additionally, external planning committee members can consider modifying the article for their organization newsletters.

### Local - Student/Parent Newsletter

Between football games, part-time jobs and writing papers, [High School] seniors are also thinking of where they hope to be next fall. [High School] hopes every senior is currently making plans to attend a university, community college, or credential-bearing program after graduation next spring.

It is important to note that most colleges have strict application deadlines. For early acceptance, this date is usually by November of your senior year. Other admissions deadlines vary by school but applications should be completed as soon as possible.

To apply for colleges, students will need their high school transcript, their GPA, and their standardized test scores along with other information. Many universities and colleges also require an essay or interview, so it is wise to start to prepare for this in advance. Most community colleges in [state] offer open enrollment with semester-based deadlines. Contact the school you are planning to attend for specific guidelines.

[If applicable] This [campaign day/week/month], [High School] is hosting [State campaign name]. Dedicated time and space will be set aside for volunteers and students to complete the application process together. For more information, [PROVIDE RESOURCES].

Why is attending college important for our seniors? According to projected job growth statistics, [percentage] percent of jobs by 2020 will require at least some college education. Currently, only [number] percent of [state] residents over 25 have a college degree. In [community], the number of residents with a college degree is [percentage].

[High School] is committed to making sure every student has the opportunity and resources to pursue a postsecondary education, especially during the application process. Resources are available to students and parents at [website/contact information].



## Sample Mayoral Proclamation

WHEREAS the college application process may be a barrier to some high school students pursuing postsecondary education due to an absence of information or support

WHEREAS obtaining a postsecondary degree has been linked to higher income, better health, and increased community involvement

WHEREAS only [percent]% of [State's Name]'s working population, aged 25-64, has an Associate's degree [*Pull data from Lumina's A Stronger Nation Report: [http://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger\\_nation](http://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger_nation)*]

WHEREAS [State's Name] and [participating high school(s) name] are working to prepare students for the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century

WHEREAS [high school(s) name] is/are part of a statewide initiative, College Countdown MS, designed to increase the number of students who apply to and enroll in college with a particular focus on first-generation and low-income students

I, [Mayor's Name] do hereby declare [Dates of School's College Application Program(s)] College Countdown MS in [city] and encourage all seniors to take advantage of the assistance provided through this initiative.

## Engaging with Social Media

Use social media tools and networks to engage students about where they want to go to school, what they are doing to get there and questions or concerns they have. The top utilized social media sites for young adults are currently Instagram, Twitter and Facebook, but other social media sites and apps like YouTube and Snapchat should not be ignored.

Your school's planning committee should discuss which social media accounts currently exist among the high school and partners and review the audiences each reaches. Some high schools and states have coordinated social media contests to encourage engagement.

### ACAC Recommended Hashtags

Hashtags are mainly used to indicate specific topics of conversation. For example, Twitter has a sidebar of trends and a list of hashtags you might be interested in based on the hashtags and content of your tweets. For your College Application Campaign, we encourage states and schools to use the same hashtags to increase visibility of our collective efforts. Simply note on any college application campaign materials, communication and social media content the chosen hashtag(s) by ACAC and your state.

#### #WhyApply

Use #WhyApply during the months of August and September to remind and encourage students about the reasons to apply to college. New this year, ACAC has marked Friday, September 22 as #WhyApply Day and the official kickoff to the college application season.

#### #IApplied

Use #IApplied during October and November to celebrate students as they complete their college applications.

#### #TransformationTuesday

ACAC is reinventing #TransformationTuesday as a way to celebrate the college-going process and for college access leaders and professionals to share their college journey. Encourage planning committee members, teachers, staff and volunteers to share pictures from their past and today to show their college transformation. Posts are encouraged every Tuesday in September – November and April – May. Students can also use #TransformationTuesday in September-November to show their transformation from #WhyApply to #IApplied and in April-May to show their transformation from #IApplied to #IDecided

### ACAC Social Media Accounts

We're on Facebook and Twitter! ACAC will highlight every state's initiative this fall. Like our page and/or follow us to see how colleagues across the country are accomplishing the ACAC goal. Post photos, media stories and other items from past and future events. We look forward to featuring your great work!

ACAC Facebook: [www.facebook.com/americancac/](http://www.facebook.com/americancac/)

ACAC Twitter: @American\_CAC [https://twitter.com/American\\_cac](https://twitter.com/American_cac)

[Insert social media]

state campaign

*Sample social media copy can be found in the Site Coordinator Manual Part 2: During Your College Application Program.*



## Website Content Recommendations

The high school and/or district website(s) are quick and easy ways to share information about your College Application Campaign. As soon as the date(s) are selected, be sure to request the dates be added to the school website calendar.

As the event date approaches, post the resources you are providing to students or sending home to parents/guardians. Post the information letter, college research worksheet and college application worksheet to the website so that the students and their supportive adults can download it.

In addition to the necessary resources to help a student complete a college application, use the website to share photos and videos of the College Application Campaign. Often, schools may leave the video on their website for the full academic year as a way to excite younger students for the college-going process.

### Suggested Content

- Save the Date
- Request for Volunteers
- Family information letter
- College Research Worksheet
- College Application Worksheet
- How to connect on social media
- Link to college access portal (if applicable) and/or The Common Application
- Celebratory items
  - List of colleges seniors have applied to
  - Photos of students wearing college shirts
  - Photo slideshow

## Media Outreach Overview

The purpose of a press release is to inform the media of the school's college application campaign efforts and impact. Traditionally, a press release is distributed the morning of or day following the specific announcement.

A media advisory template is also provided to use when informing the media about specific event details. Traditionally, a media advisory is distributed a couple days or a week before an event or activity. The purpose is to advise the media of the event for consideration.

Local promotion of the program is important, but it is also critical that press releases connects your local efforts to the state's campaign and the national American College Application Campaign. Information that your school should highlight in a press release includes:

- What is ACAC and [State's ACAC Program Name]? Why has your high school joined the Campaign? What are the goals of the program?
- When will the Campaign be held in your state? How many additional high schools are participating?
- Are there special guests or VIPs participating in your event?
- Who can be contacted for additional questions about the initiative?

### Distribution Tips

Press releases can be distributed at different times throughout the year. It is encouraged that you utilize press releases to help build a relationship with the media and to stay on the media's radar for college-going stories. We also encourage you to work with other high schools in your region to issue joint press releases if the schools are in the same media market.

Potential press release topics and timing include:

- Late summer/early fall: Announcement of the school's commitment to join the state and national campaigns, and date of the state campaign
- Fall: Excitement for the seniors preparing to take the next step completing applications; Encouraging #WhyApply day participation
- Winter: Celebrating application data – include growth from previous year(s)
- Spring: Excitement for seniors to turn #IApplied to #IDecided for College Signing Day/Decision Day events



## Host Site Media Advisory

[High School logo] [State ACAC logo] [National ACAC logo]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: [Name of site coordinator]

[Position title]

[Phone number]

[Email of contact person]

### September 22 is #WhyApply Day in [state/city]

**[Date], [City]** – [Your High School Name] will participate in the American College Application Campaign’s #WhyApply Day on Friday, September 22, 2017, as the official kickoff to the college application season leading up to [Name of State’s ACAC initiative].

**What:** #WhyApply Day is the official kickoff to the college application season. [High School Name] will be hosting its [Name of State’s ACAC initiative] on [Dates]. To celebrate this important step and provide encouragement to seniors across the state as they prepare for the college application process, wear college gear on September 22 and use the hashtag #WhyApply to tell seniors why they should apply to college.

**When:** Friday, September 22, 2017

**Where:** Any social media accounts and applications of your choosing. *[Insert any in-person kickoff activities]*

**Social Media:** Follow the conversation using #WhyApply. Stay connected by liking [State campaign name] on Facebook (link) and follow us on Twitter [link]. Find the American College Application Campaign on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/americancac/](http://www.facebook.com/americancac/)) and Twitter ([@American\\_CAC](https://twitter.com/American_CAC))

###



## Sample Press Release

[School Logo or Letterhead] [State Campaign Logo] [ACAC logo]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: [Name of site coordinator]

[Position title and/or college access program affiliation of site coordinator]

[School name]

[School address]

[Phone number]

[Email of contact person]

[High school website]

### **College Countdown MS to be held (Dates) at (Name of High School)**

[Name of Your High School] will participate in College Countdown MS sponsored by [Names of ACAC Sponsoring Organizations] during [Dates of ACAC Program].

As part of [State's Name] college access initiative, [Name of Your High School] will work with its seniors on [Your School's Event Dates] to complete and submit at least one college application.

The goal of the program is to get more students applying to colleges early in their senior year. During this event, students may apply to any of [State's Name] [Number] community colleges, [Number] independent colleges, and [Number] public universities in which they are interested.

This is the [number] year that [high school] has participated in [state campaign name]. [Name of Site Coordinator], College Countdown MS event Site Coordinator for [Name of Your High School], expects more than [Number] seniors to participate with the help of [Number] volunteers from [Insert school staff, administration, college and community resources, and others who are assisting].

[If you have data from participation the previous year, share it here. Consider including a quote from a student].

[State's Campaign name] is coordinated by [State Coordinator Agency] in partnership with [list Steering Committee agencies]. [State] also partners with the American College Application Campaign, which includes all 50 states and the District of Columbia. During fall 2016, over 5,700 high schools nationally hosted college application events resulting in around 460,000 students submitting over 774,000 college applications.

**For more information: (Insert website link or an email address) or**

**Contact: (Name of Site Coordinator)**

**Phone: (Site Coordinator's phone number)**

###

## High School Volunteer Recruitment Letter - Template



SCHOOL LOGO  
SCHOOL ADDRESS



September 2017

Dear [NAME OF ORGANIZATION],

[NAME OF YOUR HIGH SCHOOL] is pleased to announce its participation in [NAME OF STATE CAMPAIGN]! In an effort to further expand college access initiatives, the [NAME OF LEAD ORGANIZATION] is sponsoring [NAME OF STATE CAMPAIGN] from [CAMPAIGN DATE(S)]. The goal of [NAME OF STATE CAMPAIGN] is to provide every graduating high school senior the opportunity to apply to college [INSERT ADDITIONAL GOALS, IF NECESSARY].

[NAME OF STATE CAMPAIGN] can open the door for students by encouraging them to take significant steps toward college in their senior year. What began in 2005 as a single day at one high school in North Carolina has evolved into 50 state campaigns to help students. This year, [STATE] expects over [NUMBER] high schools to participate in our statewide campaign. A critical component of [NAME OF STATE CAMPAIGN] is the one-on-one support provided by volunteers who help students fill out applications at school. Volunteers may include high school staff, registrars and admissions officers, and financial aid advisers from nearby postsecondary institutions, and representatives from the community.

We will be hosting our event on [DATE(S) AND TIME] and would welcome representatives from [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] to visit our school during this exciting and important time. Volunteers can greet and sign-in students, assist students with the completion of online college applications, or distribute additional information about financial aid opportunities. Our students would really appreciate your help and support as they take a big step toward going to college.

If you or any of your colleagues at [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] are interested in working with [NAME OF YOUR HIGH SCHOOL] in any capacity, **please contact me at** [SITE COORDINATOR INFO].

Thank you!

Volunteer resources and webinar information are available at

[SITE COORDINATOR NAME]  
[YOUR TITLE]  
[CONTACT INFO]



## How Volunteers can Support the College Application Campaign

Although familiarity with the college application process is a plus, it is not required for someone to fulfill a useful task and have a meaningful volunteer experience at a participating Campaign high school. Here are a few tasks that volunteers could contribute to the initiative at any Campaign high school:

- Greet students as they arrive to the computer lab.
- Manage sign-in and/or sign-out sheets.
- Help students log-on to the website portal (if available) or application site and begin an application. If the state does not have a portal or the school does not have enough computers or stable online service, the counselor office should be prepared with paper applications. Volunteers, in that case, can hand out applications.
- Guide students through the college application process and help answer any questions students may have, regardless of where the student wishes to apply.
- Monitor printers to ensure that any applications or confirmation pages that need to be printed remain in order and replenish the paper supply as needed.
- Help ensure students register for the FSA ID after they submit their college application(s).
- Share personal college experiences with students, as requested.
- Instruct each student to complete an evaluation of his or her College Application Campaign event experience, if applicable.
- Handout materials to students after they complete their college application(s) such as an "I Applied!" button or sticker, a "What Next?" handout, and a reminder to attend the Financial Aid Day (FAFSA Day or College Goal event) held in your state.
- Congratulate each student on applying to college and encourage them to complete their admission file by sending in their high school transcript, test scores, or any other documentation that the college may require.
- Encourage students to share their experience with other classmates.
- Wear college gear with the name of your alma mater so students know they can ask you about your experiences at that particular college or university.
- Participate in national ACAC #WhyApply Day on Friday, September 22 to kick off college application season.
- Join the conversation on social media using #WhyApply and #IApplied. Encourage volunteers to follow ACAC on Facebook and Twitter as well as any social media channels for the state campaign and high school(s).  
([https://twitter.com/american\\_cac](https://twitter.com/american_cac) and <https://www.facebook.com/americancac/>)  
[insert state and/or high school social media channels]

## Volunteer Training

Training volunteers for your College Application Campaign is not a complex task. You want to provide volunteers with enough information to be useful to you and the students but not so much as to overwhelm them. In addition to the very real assistance, they can provide to ensure that your College Application Campaign event is successful; they also are likely to become college access advocates in the community.

Ideally, training should occur about one month prior to the state's Campaign to ensure information is fresh in the minds of volunteers. These trainings can be done virtually through a webinar or through a face-to-face gathering. Some states have also done a short video tutorial available on their College Application Campaign's website. If a school requires a background check for non-school personnel to work with students on campus, be sure to handle this requirement prior to the training or encourage potential volunteers to contact the school to complete any necessary procedures prior to the school's event.

Below is a recommended list of topics to cover during a volunteer training. The list is not exhaustive and any items your state believes are necessary to implementing a successful volunteer initiative should be added.

Topics to discuss during a volunteer training session:

- What is the American College Application Campaign? Provide details on the national initiative and specifics on your state's Campaign initiative. What is the goal?
- What does a College Application event look like at a high school?
- What is the role of a College Application Campaign volunteer?
- How do volunteers determine what schools need volunteers and how do volunteers sign up for a volunteer opportunity?
- Volunteers need to leave college and university preferences at the door!
- Engaging in Campaign efforts outside of volunteer tasks such as social media, pep rallies, spirit weeks, and national ACAC #WhyApply Day on September 22, 2017.
- Questions and answers

## Volunteer Training – Agenda Template

Training volunteers for your College Application Campaign is not a complex task. You want to provide volunteers with enough information to be useful to you and the students but not so much as to overwhelm them. In addition to the very real assistance, they can provide to ensure that your College Application Campaign event is successful; they also are likely to become college access advocates in the community.

State coordinators and host sites are not required to provide a volunteer training. It is up to each state and host site based on whom you have selected as volunteers and if they feel comfortable with the tasks you are expecting them to complete. You can provide training as a short face-to-face gathering up to a month before the event or as soon as a week before the event or the day of the event. If a school requires a background check for non-school personnel to work with students on campus, be sure to handle this requirement prior to the training.

- I. Welcome and Thank You!
  - Have all volunteers sign in and provide you with name, phone number(s), and address (you will need the address later when you send a follow-up thank you note)
- II. Purpose of American College Application Campaign and College Countdown MS
  - To encourage and assist all students to apply to college, especially those who are from low-income and first generation college families, because applying to college will increase their options as they decide what to do after high school.
  - To provide additional information to students about the college-going process.
  - To reinforce a college-going culture in the community.
  - This is not a recruitment activity for a specific school. If a volunteer has a strong relationship (or love) for a particular school, it is important to leave it at the door.
  - [insert additional state goals]
- III. College Application Campaign Event Logistics
  - Provide a short tour of the school highlighting where the event will be held, principal's office, facilities they may use or go into and those that they should not
  - Dates and times College Application Campaign events will be held at the school
  - Times that volunteers are expected to be available (it is strongly recommended that they are asked to arrive 15-30 minutes prior to the start of the event)
  - Assign tasks to be done by volunteers
  - Review FAQs
- IV. Engagement Before/After Event
  - Remind volunteers of pre- and post-event opportunities like pep rallies and FAFSA complete events.
  - Share social media strategy and encourage their use of hashtags and participation.
  - Participate in national ACAC #WhyApply Day on Friday, September 22 to kick off college application season.
- V. Questions?
- VI. Thank you!



## Volunteer Reference Guide

[High School Name]

Thank you for volunteering your time and enthusiasm for College Countdown MS at **[High School Name]**! On **[Date(s)]**, all graduating seniors will be encouraged to apply to college, if they have not already done so. College Countdown MS is possible due to the collaborative efforts of the administration, faculty, and staff at **[High School Name]**, as well as our students, their families, and volunteers like you from across the community. We appreciate your commitment to making college a reality for our students. Please use this reference guide to familiarize yourself with the logistical information for [High School Name]'s College Countdown MS.

Logistical Information for **[High School Name]**:  
**[High School Name] Site Coordinator**  
[Name], [Title], [Email and/or Phone Number]

### **Parking**

[Provide information here regarding where volunteers can park (usually visitor parking) and where it is located. What should volunteers do if that parking is full?] Upon entering the school, please go to [location] to check-in.

### **Event times/Shift times**

[What time and date will the volunteer be working at your school?] Please plan to arrive 15-30 minutes prior to the start of your volunteer shift.

### **Assignment Location**

Students will be filling out applications in the [location].

### **Appropriate Attire**

We ask that volunteers please come dressed in [type of attire] attire.

### **Breaks**

[If needed, when will breaks be given?]

### **Options for Lunch**

[If hosting near lunch, what are lunch options for your volunteers?]

### **Contingency Plans**

[What should volunteers do if school is delayed and/or cancelled?]

### **Location of Restrooms**

[Where are the restrooms that volunteers should use on the day of the event?]

### **Contact information for volunteer questions on day of event**

For questions on the day of event, please call [contact] at [phone number].

### **Directions**

[Name of High School] is located at [Address]



## Volunteers: Leveraging Social Media

The American College Application Campaign is on Facebook and Twitter. ACAC plans to highlight every state's initiative. States and host sites are encouraged to like and follow ACAC as well as tag us in your social media posts. Share photos, media stories, and other items from past and future events.

### Volunteer Recruitment

Example posts can be tweaked for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. Remember Twitter has a 140 character count limit.

- [DATE] is College Countdown MS Application Day and we need volunteers! Can you help? [URL] #IApplied
- Seniors across Mississippi will be completing college applications [DATE] for the @AmericanCAC. Many high schools need volunteers. Please consider helping. [URL] #IApplied
- It's not too late! A few high schools still need volunteers for College Countdown MS. Do you have 4 hours to spare? [URL] #IApplied

### Volunteer Engagement

Volunteers are encouraged to share their experience on social media. Consider posting:

- Answer why students should apply to college using #WhyApplied
- Photos of students completing applications (make sure they have given permission!)
- Thank your place of employment for letting you volunteer
- Photos of you helping a student
- A short video of students working on applications
- Share your college story with #IApplied

### Don't forget to tag us and use the campaign hashtags.

- Facebook: [American CAC](#)
- Twitter: [American\\_CAC](#)
- #IApplied
- #WhyApply

See Facebook, Twitter, & Instagram posts from across the country at [http://bit.ly/acac\\_whyapply](http://bit.ly/acac_whyapply) and [http://bit.ly/acac\\_iapplied](http://bit.ly/acac_iapplied)

## Other Pre-Event Activities

There are a variety of other activities your school can implement before your College Application event to help enhance the college-going culture and spread the word and excitement about the upcoming event.

### **Incorporate College Application Activities into the Classroom**

Ask English teachers if they would be willing to assign a college application essay, personal statement, or a scholarship essay as homework prior to the event. Students should be able to research the prompts on the college applications or scholarship applications to which they are interested in applying.

See if Civics or Social Studies teachers will lead a college match lesson where students research and identify schools that are a good fit to their academic records and goals. Educated citizens are more likely to vote and be engaged in their communities.

Ask Math teachers if they would be willing to do a lesson on calculating financial need, using the Net Cost Calculator, and repayment options. A critical component to a student being an informed consumer is having an understanding about the cost of attending college, the financial aid that is available, and what, if any, repayment students will need to do. Investigating average salaries of students who graduate with their major is an important piece of the research.

The Federal Student Aid Office at the US Department of Education has grade-level checklists and research tools to help students become academically and financially prepared for postsecondary education here. These checklists and resources can be utilized in classroom preparation activities: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/prepare-for-college/checklists>.

### **Marquee**

Use your school's marquee to inform and remind students, families, staff, and the community about your upcoming College Application event.

Post this information the week of September 18:

College Countdown MS  
Sept. 22: Celebrate #WhyApply to college day

Post this information about two weeks prior to your school's event:

College Countdown MS  
Class of 2018 Applying to College on (Dates)!"  
#IApplied

### **College T-Shirt/Sweatshirt Day**

An easy and fun way to generate some excitement in your school is to host college t-shirt or sweatshirt days. Get everyone involved – students, staff, and administrators! Many schools will host these types of college spirit days on Fridays for a few weeks prior to the school's College Application program. The American College Application Campaign is encouraging all participating states and high schools to wear college gear on Friday, **September 22** to kick-off the application season.



### **Door Decorating Contest**

Taking the “Ask Me!” signs one step farther, have staff and administrators participate in a door decorating contest focused on the college they graduated from or what college means to them. Students can then vote on which door wins and the winner can be announced the week prior to your College Application program. See if a local store is willing to donate a gift card to the winning educator as a prize.

### **College Wall**

Use a bulletin board in the school to celebrate the applications submitted by your seniors. Have students write their name and the names of the colleges they applied to on construction paper and post it to the college wall. Students who apply prior to your College Application event can participate and get the wall started. Students who apply during your event can join the fun and add their notes after they submit their applications.

### **Morning Announcements**

Generate excitement by highlighting different colleges and universities during morning announcements on the weeks leading up to your event. Students, staff who are alums, community alums, or representatives from the colleges themselves can do the announcements. Make the announcements exciting by having speakers provide a unique fact about the school; sing the school’s spirit song, or other creative approaches.

### **Guest Speaker**

Engage a local community leader or a recent graduate of your high school who is attending college to speak with your senior class about the importance of attending college and applying early. Ask the speaker to encourage your students to take advantage of the College Application event that will be hosted at your high school.

### **School Website**

Use your school’s website to communicate the opportunity to participate in your school’s College Application event to students, their families, and the community. In addition to adding your College Application event to your school calendar, be sure to include pre-event activities as well. Use your website to post any materials that you want students and their families to have access to prior to your event.

### **Parent/Student Information Nights**

Invite students and their families to an information night on your College Application event. Provide details on why your school is hosting this event, the importance of students applying to college early in their senior year, and the resources that are available for their student to plan and prepare for participation in the program. This is also a great opportunity to encourage family members to participate in your school’s event.

The Federal Student Aid office at the US Department of Education has checklists for parents to use to track the steps their students need to take to prepare financially and academically for college: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/prepare-for-college/checklists>

### **Friday Night Lights**

Set up an information table at your high school’s football games to make students and families aware of your school’s upcoming event. Make an information sheet available and a volunteer sign-up sheet for parents or community members who would like to volunteer at your program. During the game, have your College Application event dates flash on the scoreboard.

## Engaging Underclassmen in the Program

The earlier students begin thinking about college, the better. Many schools have started engaging underclassmen in their College Application event activities to create awareness and excitement for the school's event. This is a great way to ensure students are prepared when it's their time to apply to college! Here are some information sessions and activities you can implement with your underclassmen prior to or during your College Application event:

- **9<sup>th</sup> grade:** Decision making, learning styles, study habits, HS transcript and academic planning, connection between school and careers, how to qualify for a scholarship, colleges and the degrees offered, and college admission criteria
- **10<sup>th</sup> grade:** Progress check, extracurricular activities, earning college credit during HS, world of work, college costs and ways to pay, college visits (online), PSAT, PLAN, etc.
- **11<sup>th</sup> grade:** Money management, finding scholarships, admission process, college entrance tests, preparing to apply, writing personal statements and essays, etc.

Use the grade-level checklists available on the US Department of Education's Federal Student Aid Office website to ensure students understand the steps they need to take to become academically and financially prepared for college: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/prepare-for-college/checklists>

Early Awareness resources are available on the National College Access Network website to support college access professionals in helping students of all ages: [www.collegeaccess.org/Early\\_Awareness](http://www.collegeaccess.org/Early_Awareness) and [www.collegeaccess.org/EarlyAwarenessMiddle](http://www.collegeaccess.org/EarlyAwarenessMiddle)