Planning for college is a process that begins in the 9th grade, not an event that occurs in the 12th grade. It requires hard work, dedication, and staying informed. The earlier you start thinking about college, the easier it will be when the time comes to apply.

**FRESHMAN YEAR**

- Grades DO count! Be sure to do your very best in all of your classes.
- Attend the College Fair in October.
- Get involved. Check out clubs, activities, and sports that you may be interested in participating in.
- Begin making a college planning file where you keep all SMCHS and college information.
- Visit the college representatives at lunch time on campus.
- Get to know your teachers. This will become very important once you are applying to college and need letters of recommendation.
- Get to know your counselor. He or she can provide you with a lot of information about preparing for college. Colleges often require a letter of recommendation from a counselor.
- Visit a college campus to get a feel of what it is like. Vacations are a great time!
- Research colleges on the Internet.
- Take the Practice SAT or ACT in March at SMCHS sponsored by Princeton Review.

**SOPHOMORE YEAR**

- Continue to keep up your grades.
- Focus on a few activities and become more involved.
- Attend the College Fair in October.
- You will take the PSAT test in October during school. Be sure to take it seriously.
- Continue researching majors and careers. Find individuals in the community who may let you shadow them on the job for a day.
- Gather information about schools you may want to attend.
- Visit the college representatives at lunch time on campus.
- Take the Practice SAT or ACT in March at SMCHS sponsored by Princeton Review.
- Attend the PSAT results night in January. You will receive an explanation of your PSAT scores and valuable information about college planning.
- Attend the mandatory individual meeting with your Counselor to:

  1. Review progress toward graduation
  2. If necessary, revise your Academic Plan
  3. Review course placement levels
  4. Discuss education goals post high school
  5. Determine a college entrance testing timeline

- If you are enrolled in an AP class, you will take exams in May.
- Consider applying for a summer job.

**JUNIOR YEAR**

- Listen closely to announcements regarding college representative visits.
- Attend the College Fair in October.
- You will take the PSAT in October during school. Be sure to take it seriously. This exam may qualify you for the National Merit Scholarship.
- Attend the mandatory individual meeting with your Counselor to:

  1. Review progress toward graduation
  2. Revise your Academic Plan to meet college goals
  3. Receive advisement on how and when to sign up for college entrance tests and preparation
  4. Discuss education goal post high school

- Make an impact in your community. Run for office or organize a new club or activity. Leadership skills are important for college admissions, scholarships, and jobs.
- Begin preparing for college entrance exams.
- Start visiting college campuses and evaluating the schools you plan to apply to.
- Attend the PSAT results night in January. You will receive an explanation of your PSAT scores and valuable information about college planning.
- Take the Practice SAT or ACT in March at SMCHS sponsored by Princeton Review.
- Attend a College Planning Workshop in early Spring.
- You should take your first official SAT in the Spring of your Junior year. We recommend that you take it in March. Take your first official ACT in April.
- You can take/retake your SAT in May and June. You can also take/retake your ACT in June.
- If you are enrolled in AP/IB courses, you will take the exams in May.
- Begin to contact colleges for information.
- Make visits to the campuses you plan to apply to.
- Ask your teachers early if they will write a letter of recommendation for you.
- Make a college planning appointment with your counselor in late Spring.
- Start requesting applications and/or reviewing applications on-line at the end of August before your Senior year starts. You will have enough to worry about once classes begin!
- Consider obtaining a summer job.
- Begin seriously researching scholarship opportunities.
- If you are planning on playing sports at the university level, be sure to register with the NCAA Clearinghouse.

**SENIOR YEAR**

- If necessary, take the SAT again in October/November/December. Retake ACT in September/October/December. Check with colleges to make sure they accept December test dates.
- You're almost outta here! Be sure to not catch "Senioritis". Continue taking challenging courses and do your best. Senior year grades and your course load DO count.
- Attend the College Fair in October and meet with college representatives during lunchtime visits. Many of the Admissions Representatives who visit will eventually be evaluating your application. So, introduce yourself and make a good impression!
- Work closely with the Counseling Office for assistance with the college application process. Take advantage of the online resources available in the Counseling Office and get your questions answered quickly!
- Make final visits to schools.
- Remember the application deadline is November 30th for the UC's and Cal State's.
- Make sure you are meeting all of the application processing deadlines set by Santa Margarita.
- Apply for scholarships/nominations/awards.
- See about Financial Aid. Attend the Financial Aid Night in January that will help you fill out the FAFSA.
- Make a final decision on your college!