

Visit www.ICANSucceed.org or call (877) CPC-IOWA to schedule a free appointment for assistance with college planning or financial aid applications.

August

- Start off on the right foot with your grades. Freshman grades matter. Colleges look at your overall GPA through all four years of high school.
- Participate in extracurricular activities. They're a great way to meet new people! Many scholarship organizations consider a student's involvement in school and community activities.
- Stay organized by using a student planner or an electronic organizer.
- Get to know your teachers, counselors and administrators and take advantage of all the resources that are available in your school.

September

- Ask your parents and other adults what they like and dislike about their careers. Find out what type of training or education is required for each job.
- Many colleges require four years of English; three to four years of math, science and social studies; two years of electives; and two to four years of foreign language to be considered for admission. Work with your school counselor to stay on track.
- Get to know the different types of postsecondary institutions. Colleges and universities offer four-year degrees and beyond, while community colleges and technical institutes offer many different programs nine months to two years in length.

October

- Develop an activities portfolio to keep track of your participation in extracurriculars. This will be a great resource when it's time to fill out scholarship and college admission applications.
- Saving money is the best way to prepare for the cost of a college education. Check out www.ICANSucceed.org for information on paying for college.
- Think about what you like to do, what you're good at and what you value most. Talk to your counselor about assessments to help you identify a potential career.

November

- Compare college costs throughout the country at www.ihaveaplaniowa.gov.*
- Talk to your parents about your plans for the future. Discuss your personal and academic strengths and your plan to reach your goals.
- Read in your free time to develop a strong vocabulary, which is an important component in college entrance exams.

December

- Volunteer in your community. Some scholarships are awarded based on community service.
- How are your computer skills? Become proficient in common computer applications such as Word, Excel[®] and PowerPoint[®] and learn how to use the Internet as a research tool.
- Do you have a favorite college sports team? Is there a college you've always dreamed of attending? Research colleges online and create a list of what you like most and least about each school.

January

- Become familiar with the types of financial aid available for college. Financial aid includes grants, scholarships, work-study and loans. Grants and scholarships don't have to be paid back. Work-study enables students to earn money by working. Loans must be repaid.
- What subjects do you like in school? iHaveaPlanIowa is an online program that can help you search for careers related to those subjects. Go to www.ihaveaplaniowa.gov.

February

- A majority of the fastest-growing jobs require some type of postsecondary education. Research careers to learn more about your options. Which jobs are in demand? What type of education or training is required?
- If you're an athlete hoping to play sports in college, plan ahead. Find the academic requirements at www.ncaaclearinghouse.net.
- Your grades are important, but most colleges prefer students who challenge themselves with tougher courses and earn average grades over students who take easier courses to boost GPAs.

March

- Meet with your school counselor to select your classes for 10th grade. Choose your courses wisely to stay on track to meet college admission requirements.
- Continue to research jobs related to your interests. Visit www.ICANSucceed.org for links to helpful Web sites.
- Make the most of your summer. Search for summer camps in your area of interest (e.g., sports, band, drama or academics). Check with teachers, counselors and coaches for recommendations.

April

- Work hard to keep your grades high. Final exams will be coming soon. Remember that freshman year grades are important for college admission.
- Do you have friends or family members who are high school seniors? Talk to them about their plans for next year. Ask them how they made their decisions and what was involved in the college selection process.
- Attend a game, play, concert or other cultural experience on a local college campus to get exposure to the campus environment.

May

- Check with your school counselor to see if you could attend a summer camp program to catch up or to get ahead academically.
- Learn about the world of work through job shadowing, volunteering or interning this summer.
- Cultivate relationships with teachers, school counselors, coaches and community members. Some could write letters of recommendation when it's time to submit scholarship and/or college applications.

June

- Start a summer reading list.
- Will you be attending summer camp on a college campus? If so, while you're there, think about whether you'd like to attend the school.
- Talk to your family members, friends, teachers, school counselors and coaches about their college experiences.

July

- Make a list of colleges you're interested in researching. Visit www.ICANSucceed.org for information on how to get started.
- This summer, participate in hobbies and activities related to your career interests.
- Don't be afraid to alter your career goals as you learn more about yourself and the world of work, but remember to keep your goals attainable.