

College application calendar

FOR SENIORS who intend to be first-year theatre majors a year from now, the next five months will be a busy time. For juniors and even sophomores, it's not too early to begin taking tests, considering schools, and making campus visits. Here's a timeline to help you plan your school selection strategy.

November. Have you taken the SAT and/or the ACT? If you haven't, there are testing dates in December, but you have to register in early November. Go to www.collegeboard.org for more information on the SAT as well as AP exams. Visit www.act.org for details on the ACT. Also, hundreds of schools have early action deadlines in November. Apply in the fall and you'll probably have an answer in January.

December. Use this print directory as well as the online version to help you discover and identify schools that might fit your career plans, academic needs, and financial resources. Contact schools you like to request catalogues, applications, and other admissions information. You can also check the website www.commonapp.org to see if a particular school accepts the common application. Remember, you may have to pay a fee just to apply to a particular school.

Familiarize yourself with the details of the admissions process and the financial aid requirements. Is an audition required, and if so, when and where? Will

the school accept a video audition? (Many do, and some make admission and financial aid decisions on the basis of a video submission. Other schools, especially top B.F.A. programs, use video auditions to screen candidates they want to see in person.) If the school is affiliated with Accepted then you can audition online. Visit getaccepted.com to find out more.

What specific application forms are required for financial aid? Who can help you navigate this entire college application process: a trusted guidance counselor? A parent? An admissions officer at a particular school? Don't hesitate to ask for help.

Keep in mind that the deadlines for admission and financial aid applications you'll find in this directory are the *latest* dates these materials can be submitted. Nothing prevents you from applying earlier—the sooner, the better.

If your plans include applications to B.F.A. programs or conservatories, you should be preparing your audition pieces. Now is also a good time to be getting headshots, tweaking your résumé, and requesting copies of your transcript.

January 1. The *earliest* date you can file the Free Application for Student Aid, or FAFSA, which is an essential step toward eligibility for seventy-five percent of all student financial aid awarded by the federal government. You can use estimated income numbers to complete the FAFSA before you and

your parents have received your W-2 forms for 2013. The FAFSA process can be laborious, so start early. Go to www.fafsa.gov to begin.

January and February. The college theatre program audition season. One way to make this season a success is to schedule an audition in connection with a campus visit. Or you can meet with and audition for several schools during a single road trip at one or more of the off-campus regional auditions scheduled during January and February. See page 124 for a list of regional auditions and participating schools.

February, March. The waiting game. Use this time to research and digest the information you've gathered about each of your highest priority schools. Try to hone your evaluation of prospective schools to prepare for the decision you will soon have to make. Seniors, relax a little and enjoy the final few months of high school. Juniors and sophomores, plan your class schedules for the next year.

April. Your long vigil at the mailbox or your inbox is rewarded. There's still time to make campus visits to your top choices.

May 1. The generally accepted candidate reply date. Schools that have accepted you and offered you a financial aid package expect your answer now. Time to make a decision: say yes to one, and do the others the courtesy of letting them know you'll be going elsewhere so they can offer your slot in the freshman class, and your financial aid, to somebody else. ▼