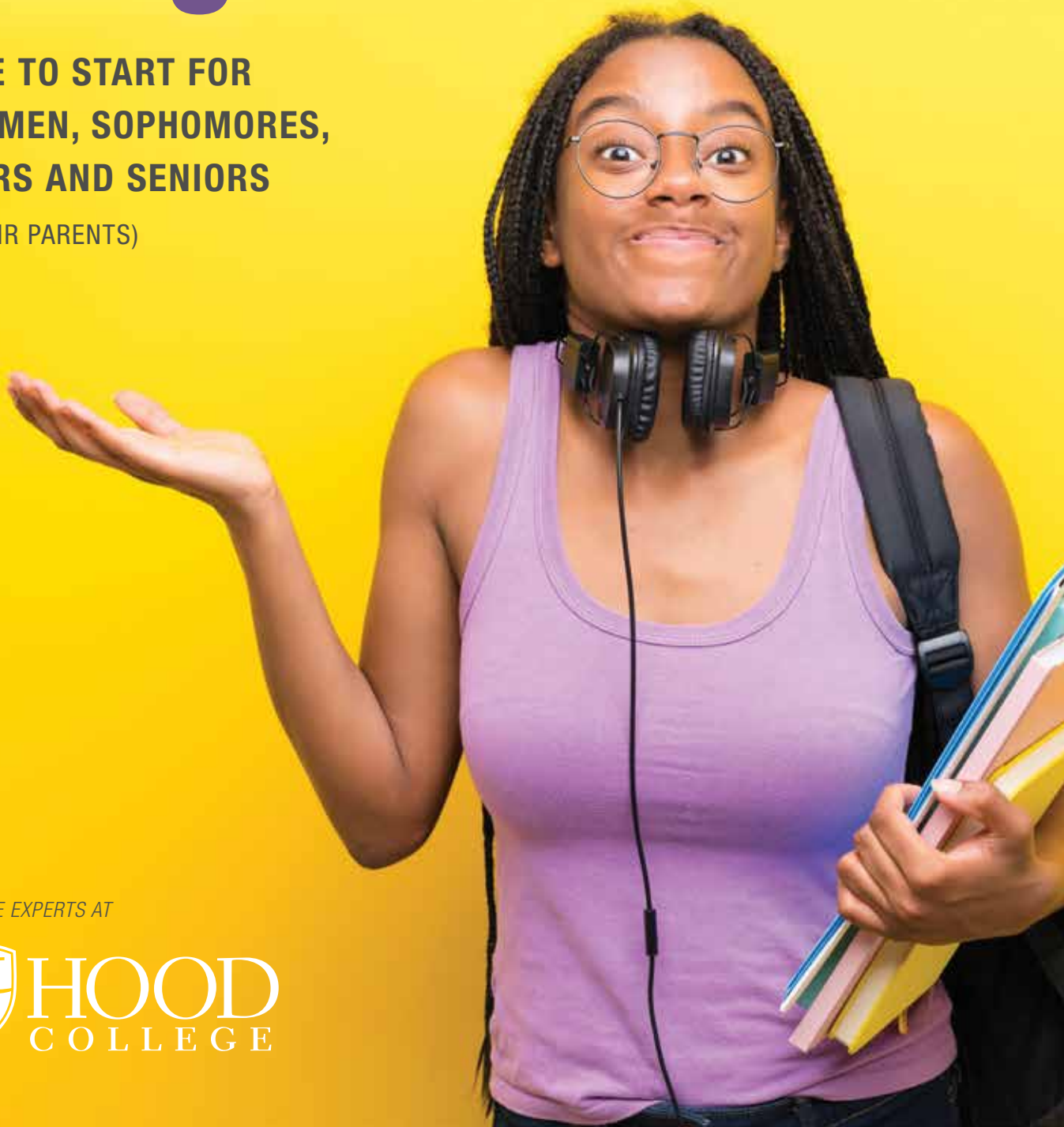


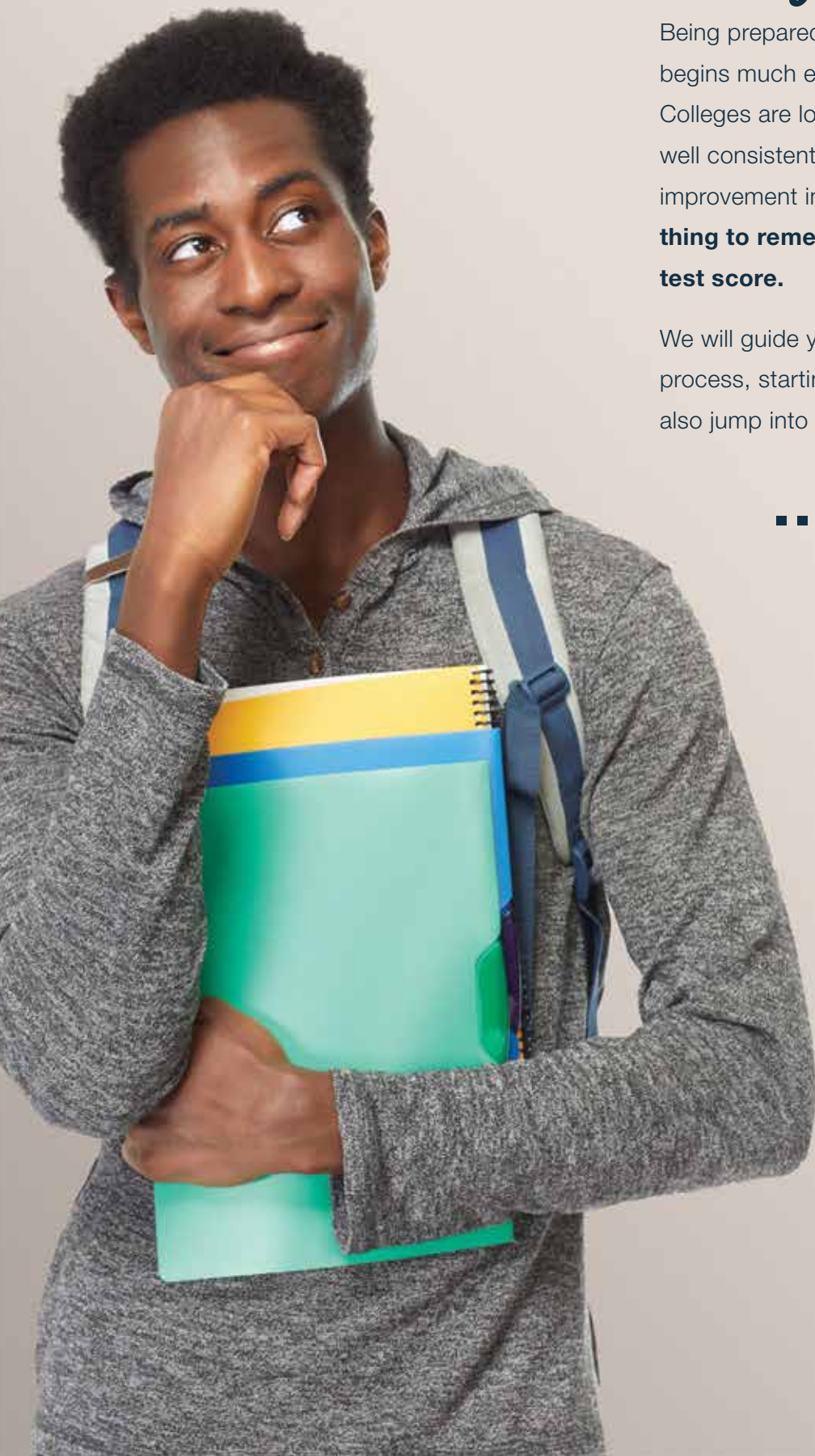
# A Student's Guide to Preparing for College

**WHERE TO START FOR  
FRESHMEN, SOPHOMORES,  
JUNIORS AND SENIORS  
(AND THEIR PARENTS)**



*FROM THE EXPERTS AT*





# *It's never too early to start...*

Being prepared to apply for college admission begins much earlier than the actual application. Colleges are looking for candidates who perform well consistently, or who show a record of steady improvement in courses. **The most important thing to remember—you are more than one test score.**

We will guide you through the college admission process, starting with your freshman year. You can also jump into the process at any level!

# *...or too late to shine!*

## STUDENT GOALS CHECKLIST FOR

# Freshmen

This is the year to plan your classes, including extracurricular and co-curricular activities that will push you academically and personally throughout your high school years.

- Take a full college-prep curriculum:** 4 English, 3 math, 3 science, 3 social studies and 2 language credits over the course of high school.
- Get involved!** Join clubs at your high school and engage in your community.
- Clean up your social media presence**—if you wouldn't want your grandmother to see something you posted, you shouldn't post it!
- Schedule an appointment with your school counselor** to create a high school plan that supports your college goals.
- Take challenging courses.**
- Explore college websites.**
- Start a college savings account** now that will give you expense money when you get to college.

### *Tips for Freshmen:*

Using these online tools, you can research colleges and earn money to put toward your college tuition.

Discover new colleges on **raise.me**, earn micro-scholarships for attending virtual college tours and take actions that will help you build your application towards attending the school of your choice once you graduate high school.

Earn guaranteed scholarships with **tuitionrewards.com**. Receive up to one full year's tuition at colleges and universities through the SAGE Scholars Tuition Rewards® Program.

You should be introduced to **Naviance** this year. Naviance can be a great tool for figuring out what you will do after graduation and the path to get there.



## STUDENT GOALS CHECKLIST FOR

# Sophomores

- **Register for and take the PSAT.**
- **Enroll in SAT or ACT prep classes.** Depending on where you choose to go, you may be required to take one of these tests. *Hundreds of colleges and universities have gone test-optional, meaning SAT or ACT scores are not required for admission. Hood College is test optional.*
- **Challenge yourself!** Enroll in honors, AP or IB classes if you're eligible for and prepared to take them.
- If you struggled with a course last year, **seek out tutoring** to improve in this area.
- **Begin comparing colleges** that you may be interested in.
- **Start to develop a list of your interests,** talk to people who work in fields that you're interested in and find out where they went to college.
- **Check in with your guidance counselor** to ensure you are on track to meet the goals you set.
- Begin an ongoing dialogue with your parents about **how to pay for college.**
- **Build strong relationships with teachers and coaches!** They can write about your abilities and skills in a letter of recommendation to colleges during your senior year.



### *Tips for Sophomores:*

Using the online tools **raise.me** and **tuitionrewards.com**, you can research colleges and earn money to put toward your college tuition. You will also need to be preparing for the SATs and ACTs depending on where you apply.

#### **SAT AND ACT PREP CLASSES**

Go to **collegeboard.org** or **khanacademy.org/SAT**

Study with the Official SAT Practice on Khan Academy or collegeboard.org. Take a full-length practice test and know what to expect on test day. Most students spend about 10 hours on SAT prep over the course of two months.

## STUDENT GOALS CHECKLIST FOR

# Juniors

- ❑ **Register to take the SAT or ACT** (or both). Pay attention to deadlines. Decide whether to sign up for the SAT with essay. See which colleges recommend or require it. See tips below.
- ❑ **Begin researching financial aid and scholarship opportunities**—your school counselor is a great resource. Also, check out more information in the tips below.
- ❑ **Develop a “short list”** of 5 to 10 colleges that you’re considering.
- ❑ **Meet your college admission counselor** they’re the experts on their schools. Find your Hood representative at [hood.edu/counselor](http://hood.edu/counselor).
- ❑ **Attend college fairs and information sessions** near home to learn more about different colleges.
- ❑ **Plan college visits**—register with the college in advance and ask to see the features that interest you most. You will get the best tour that way!
- ❑ **Take note of application deadlines** for the colleges you’re most interested in.

### *Tips for Juniors:*

**Make the college search pay off!** Using the online tools [raise.me](http://raise.me) and [tuitionrewards.com](http://tuitionrewards.com), you can research colleges and earn money to put toward your college tuition.

**Opportunity.collegeboard.org** offers chances to win scholarships from \$500 to \$40,000 while you practice SAT skills and learn about colleges.

**Learn SAT essentials**, from registering to finding out which colleges require an essay: [collegereadiness.collegeboard.org](http://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org)

From test prep to test day, **register for the ACT** at [act.org](http://act.org)

In the next year, the term FAFSA will be used a lot. FAFSA is the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid**. You will use the online platform (<https://studentaid.gov>) to apply for financial aid to pay for college. Some of this money is free, which is great news; some must be earned through work on campus and some repaid after college.

**Tips for writing your college essay.** Start with a brainstorming session. Create an outline. Be genuine yet concise in your writing. Always proofread and get feedback.



## STUDENT GOALS CHECKLIST FOR

# Seniors



### AUGUST-DECEMBER

- Apply for admission to your top 3-6 schools**  
The Common App ([commonapp.org](https://commonapp.org)) opens August 1, so you can apply before you start your senior year of high school!
- Complete the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid** (FAFSA) at <https://studentaid.gov> — it's available beginning October 1.
- Continue to **visit colleges**, and ask if you can meet with professors, coaches and financial aid experts. Schedule a visit to Hood at [hood.edu/visit](https://hood.edu/visit)
- Keep in mind, many college students change their major two or three times. **Don't make a college choice based solely on major.**
- Request letters of recommendation** from teachers, counselors, coaches, employers, etc.
- Submit applications for scholarships** offered by colleges and local, state and national organizations. Visit [hood.edu/scholarships](https://hood.edu/scholarships).

### JANUARY-APRIL

- Compare and evaluate the financial award packages** as you receive them from each college.
- Visit your top choice schools again** this will help you make your decision and allow you to see things you didn't see on your first visit. Many schools will host spring events specifically for students ready to make their college decision. Hood hosts Accepted Students' Day every year—find out more at [hood.edu/asd](https://hood.edu/asd).
- National College Decision Day is May 1.** Decide and commit to a college on or before this date to secure your place in the incoming class.

## *Questions to Ask Yourself*

Am I interested in a small college, large university, community college or technical school? How would my experience be different at each?

Do I want to attend a private college or a public college? What would the differences be?

How far from home am I willing to travel for college?

What kind of geographic setting would I most prefer—rural, urban or suburban?

What majors and fields of study interest me most? (Not all colleges offer all majors.)

How much is my family able to pay for college?

Which aspects of campus life are most important to me—athletics, social activities, academic reputation, campus organizations, quality of facilities, campus rules and policies?

**For a complete list of questions and the answers to them for Hood College go to [hood.edu/admissionFAQ](http://hood.edu/admissionFAQ)**



## *Questions to Ask Colleges and Universities*

What are the most important factors for admission? Deadlines? How can I make my application stronger?

How do I apply for financial aid?

How do I apply for scholarships? What type of scholarships are offered?

What percentage of students graduate in four years?

What is the college's enrollment? How large is the freshman class?

How big is the largest classroom? How big will my class sizes be?

Are standardized tests (like the SAT/ACT) required?

What's the average GPA and SAT/ACT score (if required) for accepted students?

Are professors accessible to students?

What's the campus diversity like?

What are the housing options? How long do most students live on campus?

Can I get a job on campus?





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# *Bright future*

AT HOOD COLLEGE

Hood College is a private, nonprofit institution of higher learning with a diverse, collaborative, student-centered community, offering more than 50 areas of study.

Through an integration of the liberal arts and the professions, we provide an education that empowers students to use their hearts, minds and hands to meet personal, professional and global challenges, and to lead purposeful lives of responsibility, leadership, service and civic engagement.

Located in historic Frederick, near Washington, D.C., Baltimore and the I-270 technology corridor, Hood gives students access to countless internships and research opportunities.

Schedule a virtual or in-person visit today at

[hood.edu/visit](http://hood.edu/visit)



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