

Summertime 2015! Enjoy the sun, but also start preparing for college.

- **Make a list of 3-4 colleges you want to apply to.** Make sure you have at least one college that you know you'll get into (like JCTC), at least one college that you think you'll get into, and at least one college that you might be able to get into.
- **Start researching scholarships.** There is a list of scholarships on Americana's website (<http://americanacc.org/youth-services/college-career-readiness/>) that are specifically geared toward immigrant students in Kentucky. Look through the local and state scholarships, the scholarships offered at the colleges on your list, and any of the national scholarships you think you might qualify for. (For example, if you identify as Hispanic, you may want to look at the "Scholarships for Hispanic Students.") Find 8-10 scholarships that you would like to apply for and write down any information you need to know about how to apply for them, as well as their deadlines.
- **Depending on how you scored on your ACT in the spring, you might want to retake it.** Many colleges like to see students with at least an 18 on their ACT, and you will be more competitive for scholarships with a higher ACT score. There are tests available in June, September, and October. Visit <http://www.actstudent.org/> to register and check out the "ACT Prep Information" link on Americana's website for information on free test prep resources. Also, check with your high school counselor to see if you are eligible for an ACT fee waiver. If you are, you can take the ACT for free twice after your junior year.
- **Volunteer or work—or both.** If you have a good GPA and ACT score, that will make you a good candidate for colleges and scholarships, but if you can show community service or work experience, you will be a great candidate. Check out "Volunteering Ideas" and "Websites for Teen Jobs" on Americana's website.
- **Make a list of your activities and accomplishments in high school, or—even better—make a resume.** Many applications will ask for information about extra-curricular, work, and community service activities you have been involved in during high school, as well as any awards you have received. If you have a list of them made up in advance, doing applications will be much easier. If you do not already have resume, you may want to turn your list into a resume. See page 23 of "General Information about College and Career Readiness" on Americana's website for more information.



Fall 2015: School is starting and college applications are open!

- **Start applying to the colleges on your list as early as you can.** The earlier you apply to a college, the more likely you are to get in. Ask your counselor if you can get a fee waiver so you don't have to pay the application fee. Most colleges have online applications available under the "Admissions" tab on their home page. Some applications are really easy; you just put in some information about yourself and you're done. Some are a bit more complicated and may require an application essay or other information.
- **Write your college application essays.** For advice on how to write an application essay, see "How to Write about You—A Guide to Writing Application Essays" on Americana's website.
- **Send your ACT scores to the colleges you applied to.** You get to send your ACT score to 4 colleges for free. You get to choose these 4 colleges when you register to take the ACT, and you can change them any time up until 12:00pm on the Thursday after you take the test. If you apply to more than 4 colleges, you have to pay \$12 to send your scores to the extra schools. If your ACT score is lower than the average score at a college, you can still apply. You may want to use your application essay to talk about the fact that you are an English Language Learner to help explain your ACT score. If you retake the ACT, make sure to send it to your top 4 colleges every time.
- **Send your transcripts to the colleges you applied to.** You can send your high school transcripts to as many colleges as you want for free. JCPS uses a service called Parchment to send transcripts. You should get a registration code at the beginning of the year, but if you don't, you can still register. Once create your account, it is easy to select colleges and/or scholarship committees to send your transcripts to.
- **Start filling out scholarship applications.** Apply to as many scholarships as you can. Apply to some big national scholarships, but also apply to smaller local scholarships because they are less competitive. Also, make sure to look for scholarships at any colleges you apply to, especially diversity/multicultural scholarships. Many scholarship applications will require an essay. That essay will often be about your future academic and career goals and how the scholarship will help you reach them. If you have already written a college application essay, you may be able to use it as a base for your scholarship application essays. Make sure to edit it, though, so that it addresses all parts of the question asked by the scholarship essay.
- **Keep track of usernames and passwords.** When you are applying to colleges and scholarships, you will have to make many different online accounts. Get a small notebook to write down your username and passwords for all of those accounts. You may also get confirmation or ID numbers when you submit an application; keep track of those as well.



Winter 2016: It's cold outside, but financial aid season is heating up.



- **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE in January, do your FAFSA!!** FAFSA stands for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. It is available in the beginning of January, and you should do it as close to the beginning of January as possible. Kentucky gives grants to students of up to \$1,900, but they have a limited amount of grants they can give, and they give it to the first people to complete their FAFSAs. Filling out your FAFSA also makes you eligible for Pell grants, which can be up to \$5,775 depending on how much money your parents make. If you are eligible for free or reduced lunch, you will probably get that entire amount, which is a lot of money for college! Additionally, most colleges require you to fill out a FAFSA to be eligible for their financial aid and scholarships. For more information about how to fill out a FAFSA, see "FAFSA Tips" on Americana's website.
- **Apply to any last colleges you want to apply to.** If there is a college you have not applied to yet that you think you might be interested in, make sure to submit your application.
- **Keep applying for scholarships.** You will probably get sick and tired of applying for scholarships, but remember that the more you apply to, the more chances you are giving yourself to get extra money for college.
- **Keep track of deadlines.** Make sure to get all of your applications in by the deadlines! If there is a scholarship you think you want to apply for, write down the deadline in your planner.
- **Celebrate!** When you get accepted into a college, celebrate your accomplishment! Also, make sure to keep any acceptance letters or papers the college gives you and to pay attention to any deadlines for paying a deposit, applying for housing, applying for scholarships at the school, etc.



Spring 2016: You're almost there, so don't give up!

- **Don't stop applying for scholarships!** You probably hate scholarship applications by this point, but keep doing them to increase your chances of getting money for college.
- **Update your FAFSA.** If you estimated your parents' tax information on your FAFSA, you need to go back and update it after your parents do their taxes. There is a really easy way to do this called the IRS Data Retrieval Tool. Look at the "IRS Data Retrieval Tool Information" on Americana's website to see how to do it.
- **If you are selected for verification on your FAFSA, do it as soon as possible.** About 1 out of 3 students who complete the FAFSA are chosen to have their FAFSA verified, which basically means the government is checking to make sure you didn't lie on it. If you get selected, each college you got accepted to will tell you what extra information they need from you. Make sure to get this information to them as soon as possible because they cannot give you your financial aid until they have it. For more information, see the "FAFSA Tips" document on Americana's website.
- **Choose your college!** Based on what colleges accepted you, what financial aid and scholarships you received, and what colleges you like, decide what college you want to go to! You might need to pay a deposit to reserve your spot, sign up for housing, or register for a placement test or orientation, so make sure you do those things by the deadlines.
- **Sign up for the JCPS and 55,000 Degrees summer texting campaign.** Text Student55 to 96714 or go to www.marlimar.com/student55 to sign up to receive text messages during the summer reminding you when you need to sign up for things like placement tests and orientation or do different activities like buying books.
- **If you are going to JCTC, sign up for the J(U)MP program.** The J(U)MP program pairs incoming freshmen with a second-year mentor to help them navigate the summer before college as well as the first few weeks of the new school year. There are also fun events planned throughout the summer to let you meet other new freshmen. Talk to your high school counselor or someone at Americana to sign up, or email an admissions counselor at JCTC to ask about it.
- **If you are going to a local 4-year university, sign up for Summer Coaching.** The Summer Coaching program is very similar to the J(U)MP program in that you are paired with an older mentor who helps you transition from high school to college. To sign up, talk to the LEEP coordinator or counselor at your high school.
- **At the end of the school year, make sure you have your final high school transcript sent to the college you decide to go to.** Your high school should have you fill out a form to do this, but you can talk to your counselor to make sure. If you switch which college you want to go to during the summer, you will need to contact your high school again to get the transcript sent to the right college before August 1.

