Advice from the UNCW Admission Committee

The choices you make today will have an impact on your college options in the coming year. Clarify your goals as a student and community member, and engage in behavior that will put you on solid footing during the college application process.

1. Competitive colleges and universities are looking for those students who have planned carefully. Choose your senior year courses wisely. The perception that the junior year of high school is the most critical is a myth that can damage the chances for admission for even the brightest of students. The best practice is to consider taking a full and rigorous senior year program. If advanced placement courses are available, challenge yourself by including some. There is not a specific, magic number of AP’s that will make an applicant more competitive, but some rigorous courses in your senior schedule, within the context of what your school offers, are important. We encourage you to take additional courses in English, math, science, history and foreign language. Even though you may well have completed your high school graduation requirements early, selective institutions want to see additional academic challenge continue through your senior year.

2. Stay involved in extra-curricular activities that are meaningful to you. It is not a long list of activities that is important, but rather a deep level of involvement in a few areas. No one will judge which activities you choose. You may be working to help support your family, playing an instrument in a school band, working on your school’s newspaper or yearbook or be involved in student government, community service and faith-related activities. Just do what you do to the best of your ability and consider taking on some level of leadership if you’re able to. Activities provide balance, dimension and meaning in your life.

3. Take standardized tests at least twice:
   - If you submit all SAT test scores, UNCW will select the highest of each section, possibly from different test dates, to create your highest overall score.
   - An alternative to SAT, is the ACT exam. If you submit all ACT test scores, UNCW will select the highest of each section, possibly from different test dates, to create your highest overall score.
   - Submitting multiple scores allows the Admission Committee to choose the score that will benefit the application the most.

4. Between your junior and senior years of high school, begin to think about and do some drafts of college essays. Take your writing seriously. This is the very last part of your college application over which you have complete control. Grades cannot be changed, your standardized test results are what they are, but a carefully thought-out, well-constructed essay that answers a university’s questions and provides more information about you might have an impact on an admission committee’s decision. Be sure to proofread your writing carefully!

5. Develop positive relationships with your teachers and school counselor. Have a conversation with any teachers you are considering asking to write a recommendation for you. Ask if they could write positively and confidently about you as a student in their classroom.

6. While you may have fulfilled your graduation requirements and be eager to end your high school career, if you are not part of a specific “early college” high school program, we hope you will stay in high school and find ways to challenge yourself rather than graduating early. The Admission Committee is often faced with making distinctions between many highly qualified applicants. Those students who have taken advantage of all that their high schools offer are usually better prepared academically and more mature, appealing candidates.