

# Mark up your calendar, college checklist



**CANYON VIEWS**  
MEGAN KOHL

The turn of the calendar year marks a great opportunity to set new goals and make new plans. For families with college-bound high school students, this is a good time to prepare for life after graduation and come up with a checklist.

There are many issues to consider—from how far away from home is your child going to go to college, to how much higher education is going to cost. There isn't space to cover everything, but there are a few main categories to consider.

Applying these suggestions varies depending on the whether your teen is a high school freshman exploring career options or a procrastinating senior scrambling to get their admissions paperwork finished.

**College counseling:** High school counselors can assist your student to keep graduation requirements on track, look at different career fields, go through the application process, and provide other college prep support.

A good resource for families with basic college readiness questions is the College Board, ([bigfuture.collegeboard.org](http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org)) a national not-for-profit organization.

**Making major decisions:** A great first step for your teen on the road to college is identifying a major course of study, and a career path. Students often choose a major based on personal interests and values, or classes they enjoy.

Although it's recommended for students to have an idea of their proposed area of study, it's okay to take time their freshman year of college to explore different options. Please be mindful that this can further the graduation timeline for your student, in turn, incurring more money in tuition and other expenses. According to the US Department of Education, nearly 60% of today's college students are taking six years to finish their bachelor's degree.

Teens should do their homework before picking a major.

A recent survey of college graduates indicates 83% valued advice from employers most in selecting a major but only 20 percent of them received such guidance beforehand. Job shadowing and internship opportunities are beneficial for students to get first-hand experience before choosing a major. There is also this handy website [mymajors.com](http://mymajors.com).

**Paying for college:** In addition to any funds your student or family has saved up, other ways to pay for college include financial aid, loans and scholarships.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is among many helpful items on the Federal Student Aid website [studentaid.ed.gov/sa](http://studentaid.ed.gov/sa). Oregon also has a state agency website with options for financial assistance [oregonstudentaid.gov](http://oregonstudentaid.gov).

Help your student research different student loans from the federal government versus private banks, interest rates, terms and conditions. Make sure they understand these loans come with long-term financial responsibility.

Encourage your student to seek out scholarship opportunities. Specific colleges award merit scholarships

**Your Turn**  
Have a topic, issue or viewpoint pertinent to Silverton or the east Willamette Valley you would like to share? The Silverton Appeal Tribune welcomes letters to the editor up to 250 words, or submissions to the Your Turn section, from 600 to 750 words, on topics of broader interest.  
Contact Justin Much at 503-508-8157 or [jmuch@salem.gannett.com](mailto:jmuch@salem.gannett.com).

for academic achievement or sports. Community organizations often offer scholarships based on need or field of study.

**Passing the test:** Many colleges will evaluate your high school student's application for admission based on their standardized test scores, meaning the SAT and ACT. Depending on their grade level, your student can plan ahead to start practicing for the exams and there are pretests in both categories.

**Applications and admissions:** Good college applications are time consuming and comprehensive. In addition to submitting their high school transcript, your student may have to produce letters of recommendation, take an entrance exam, or write a college essay. There's a non-profit organization ([commonapp.org](http://commonapp.org)) which allows students to send a free common application to 700 colleges and universities across the world.

**Checking out campuses:** It's never too early for your students to start researching and making a list of colleges they're interested in attending. As they narrow down the list perhaps your family can plan an in-person visit over spring break? There is a virtual college fair [collegeweeklive.com](http://collegeweeklive.com) to help your student explore different campuses.

When you sit down to have the college prep chat with your high schooler, remember while this is important, it's one part of their journey and there are lots of other things going on in their lives. In the end, you may find this process to be a valuable bonding experience before your soon-to-be college student leaves the nest.

Megan Kohl of Tualatin is an Oregon Connections Academy high school counselor and can be reached at [www.OregonConnectionsAcademy.com](http://www.OregonConnectionsAcademy.com), (800) 382-6010.

**Merry Christmas**  
During this holiday season, we wish you all the best.



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## All things higher education

All things higher education: A selection of website tools that can be helpful for college-bound students. [www.CollegeBoard.org](http://www.CollegeBoard.org)  
This a nation organization made up of thousands of educational institutions to help families with basic college readiness support.

**Students exploring a career path or major area of study?**  
[www.MyMajors.com](http://www.MyMajors.com) An online assessment is used to match students to a suggested major, college and career.  
<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/majors-careers> The College Board has a searchable database to investigate majors and career options.  
[www.PayScale.com/college-salary-report](http://www.PayScale.com/college-salary-report) Students get an advanced look at their career earning potential after college, given their choice of major.

**Questions about financial decisions?**  
[www.StudentAid.gov](http://www.StudentAid.gov) The US Department of Education's Student Aid division is the largest provider of student financial assistance in the country.  
[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) Filling out the Free Application

for Federal Student Aid (FASA) links incoming college students to many sources of financial help.  
[www.OregonStudentAid.gov](http://www.OregonStudentAid.gov) The Office of Student Access and Completion is Oregon's state agency to assist students needing financial support.

**Standardized achievement tests?**  
[www.CollegeReadiness.collegeboard.org](http://www.CollegeReadiness.collegeboard.org) This is the virtual home for information on the SAT college admissions test and the PSAT pre-test.  
[www.Act.org](http://www.Act.org) This is the other major academic aptitude test accepted by US colleges.

**General college exploration needs?**  
[www.CommonApp.org](http://www.CommonApp.org) Just one application for students to send to hundreds of higher education institutions in the US and abroad.  
[www.CollegeWeekLive.com](http://www.CollegeWeekLive.com) Virtual booths and live chats are available to access representatives from hundreds of colleges across the country.

Oregon Connections Academy enrollment is underway for second semester of the 2017-18 school year. For information, visit [www.OregonConnectionsAcademy.com](http://www.OregonConnectionsAcademy.com) or call (800) 382-6010.

**Public Notice**

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING**  
Review Body: Planning Commission Hearing  
Date & Time: January 9, 2018, 7:00 p.m.

Hearing Location: Council Chambers, Silverton Community Center; 421 South Water Street.

Agenda Item #1: File Number AN-17-02 & VA 17-01. Annexation application to annex 535 Short Street into the City Limits and zone the property R-1, Single Family Residential with a concurrent Vacation request to vacate the Wilson Street Right-of-Way south of Short Street. The property is 5,000 square feet in area and is requesting annexation due to a failing septic system. Located on the southwest corner of the intersection of Short Street and Wilson Street at 535 Short Street, Marion County Assessor's Map 061W34BD, Tax Lot 02200. The application will be reviewed following the criteria found in Silverton Development Code section 4.10.140 & 4.13.400.

All interested persons and the general public will be given an opportunity to be heard relative to the application either by submitting material in writing to City Hall or providing oral testimony at the Public Hearing. Failure of an issue to be raised in a hearing, in person or by letter, or failure to provide enough detail to afford the decision maker an opportunity to respond precludes appeal to LUBA based on that issue. Additional information and/or review of this application, including all documents and evidence submitted, may be obtained at Silverton City Hall, 306 South Water Street, or by telephoning Jason Gottgetreu at (503) 874-2212. Copies of the staff report will be available seven (7) days prior to the public hearing and are available for review at no cost at City Hall, a copy can be provided on request at a reasonable cost.  
Silverton Appeal Dec. 27, 2017

## Secretary of State audit: Oregon can do more to boost grad rates

NATALIE PATE SALEM STATESMAN JOURNAL  
USA TODAY NETWORK

With one in four students in Oregon not graduating high school on time, state auditors are calling on the Oregon Department of Education to take additional steps to increase the state's graduation rate.

An audit released Tuesday, Dec. 19 by the Secretary of State's audits division found the department has prioritized improving four-year graduation rates, leading to a five percent increase in the last five years.

But Oregon's 75 percent graduation rate is still the third lowest in the country. The national average rate is 84 percent.

Not only does this impact individual student's success, but the success of the communities where they live.

Research shows as long as graduation rates are below 100 percent, non-graduates earn less and require more social services, costing Oregonians hundreds of millions of dollars in Medicare, lost tax revenue and incarceration expenses every year.

The department of education has been given the state goal of graduating 100 percent of high school seniors by 2025.

Auditors recommended the agency works with schools to show them how to use data to identify students in danger of not graduating, ease the transition from middle to high school and communicate the importance of graduation to parents and the community.

Colt Gill, acting deputy superintendent for the state, told the Statesman Journal the department agrees with the recommendations overall and that some of the program recommendations had already been implemented.

But he said there is more work to be done, especially concerning students of color, tribal students and English language learners.

"Oregon's high school graduation rate is absolutely unacceptable," Gov. Kate Brown said Tuesday. "The audit's findings confirm the needs and opportunities that (Gill) and his team are pushing forward through their strategic plan."

"We know that schools and districts cannot do this alone," she said, "which is why the Oregon Department of Education is partnering with them and providing guidance that enables students to thrive instead of just survive."

Gill wrote a letter, included in the audit, which addresses the recommendations. The projects listed in it are expected to be complete by June 2019, with most coming to fruition in 2018.

### Support transfer students

Students who transfer between districts are among the highest at risk to not graduate on time.

Students who changed districts during high school, according to the audit, had graduation rates roughly 30 percent lower than students who did not. These students account for more than a quarter of all high school

students.

And auditors found Oregon does not analyze or report graduation performance for these students. Gill said the department tracks a "mobility rate," but will be providing a framework for districts across Oregon to use. This is meant to provide more consistency when students change schools or districts.

He said tracking these students is important so schools can provide better support and counseling services knowing the students' backgrounds.

This is especially tricky since Oregon has one of the highest student-to-counselor ratios in the nation, with one counselor for every 600 students.

The department plans to gather examples of schools with high rates of success for mobile students and publish case studies to share best practices. Included in the case studies should be effective practices for transferring credit, partial credit and proficiency credit.

### More services for low-income students

More than 70 percent of students who do not graduate on time come from low-income families.

Auditors concluded the department should "assess the need for services to help those students succeed." Reducing food insecurity, increasing access to medical services and increasing access to school counselors are examples given to help these students.

Gill highlighted three ways the department is addressing this need.

The first is working with the Chief Education Office for the state, which recently released a report on best practices for helping students navigating poverty.

Additionally, the department is working with the Legislature to fund the state's chronic absenteeism plan, he said. This includes expanding the Tribal Attendance Pilot Projects that help Native American students.

Addressing absenteeism, Gill said, overlaps frequently with poverty and has a significant impact.

Nationwide, 83 percent of kindergarteners and first graders who are chronically absent — meaning they miss 10 percent or more school days a year — do not read on grade level by third grade. This makes them four times more likely to not graduate on time.

Gill said the state is also working on programs under

See **AUDIT, Page 3B**

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Baristas doing a great job

I would like to recognize the baristas of the Silverton Dutch Bros. They have showed exemplary customer service throughout the new change in the drive through line for customers.

**Norma Perez**  
Silverton