

Recognizing and combating senioritis

Do your seniors know that slacking off during the spring semester or after being accepted to college may jeopardize their future plans? **Every year, colleges rescind offers of admission, put students on academic probation, or alter financial aid packages as a result of "senioritis."** How can you help prevent this common syndrome?

Colleges may reserve the right to deny admission to an accepted applicant should the student's senior-year grades drop. (Many college acceptance letters now explicitly state this.) Admissions officers can ask a student to explain a drop in grades and can revoke an offer of admission if not satisfied with the response.

And because the colleges do not receive final grades until June or July, students may not learn of a revoked admission until July or August, after they've given up spots at other colleges and have few options left.

- Colleges see both a midyear grade report and a final (year-end) transcript and they expect students to maintain previous levels of academic success.
- Colleges expect seniors to complete courses they enrolled in, including high-level courses. Many college applications ask applicants to list senior-year courses, with information about course levels and credit hours. College admission officers are interested in academic commitment and course completion.

According to a 2007 *New York Times* article*:

- The University of Colorado at Boulder rescinded admission in 2006 for 45 of its accepted students, 10 of whom had already attended freshman orientation, selected classes, or met roommates.
- The University of Michigan sent out three different letters to its incoming freshmen with poor final grades: 62 issuing gentle warnings, 180 requesting an explanation, and 9 revoking admission.
- Twenty-three would-be freshmen found themselves without a college when the University of Washington revoked their acceptances during the summer because of poor final grades.

Tips for keeping seniors on track

One way to prevent senioritis is to ensure that students remain **excited, active, and focused** throughout their senior year.

Challenge your seniors to:

- **Maintain a challenging course load.** Urge them to take the most rigorous courses available, including AP courses (for which they can earn credit at many colleges).
- **Enjoy their senior experience—responsibly.** Encourage them to celebrate the last year of school: they may enjoy attending football games; going to the prom; and participating in graduation festivities, clubs, sports, and volunteer work.
- **Commit to an internship or career-focused job**, which can help them make informed decisions about their education and career goals; or try out college early by **taking a class at a local college** in a subject that interests them or in which they excel.
- **Keep a calendar of their activities and deadlines** (tests, college applications, senior-year events, extracurriculars, and so on). Caution them not to overextend themselves.
- **Not obsess over the admissions process** to the point that everything else, including grades, suffers. It's all about balance and making the right choices.

Challenging your students in these ways will not only inoculate them against senioritis, but will leave them in a stronger position to transition from high school and face the rigors of college.

*(Laura Pappano, "Slackers, Beware," *New York Times*, April 22, 2007.)