YOUR NEXT STEPS–US · MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

October 2026

Application season is in full swing. Here is where our students stand, what we covered at the October 28 meeting, and what comes next.

THIS SEASON'S WINS

65%
of our students have applied to 5 or more colleges

50%+
have already received scholarships

25%
already hold an acceptance, and decisions are just starting to arrive

1,600+ students mentored across 43 states and 30 countries. Every service is 100% free to students and families.

Where our students are getting in

Xavier University of Louisiana · Howard · Harold Washington College (Chicago) · Stanford · Princeton · Southern University · Hampton · Fisk · SMU · University of Texas · Indiana University · Colorado School of Mines · Alabama · Auburn · University of Georgia · UC Santa Barbara · UC San Diego · Community College of Denver · + more than 20 others

Community colleges belong on this list too. Starting close to home is a smart, affordable path to a four-year degree.



Celebrating our graduates



From mentoring to commencement

FROM THE OCTOBER 28 MEETING

Six things to do before Thanksgiving

1 · Early Decision & Early Action

ED is binding; EA is not. Proofread, confirm transcripts and scores were sent, and submit a day early.

2 · Essays

One real moment in your own words. Tailor every supplement by school name. AI can review it, never write it.

3 · Recommendation letters

Give teachers four weeks and a brag sheet, invite them in each portal, and send a thank-you note.

4 · Narrow your list

About ten schools: 2–3 reach, 4–5 target, 2–3 likely. Run each school's Net Price Calculator.

5 · FAFSA & CSS Profile

The 2027–28 FAFSA is open now and uses 2025 tax information. Check which schools also require the CSS Profile.

6 · Scholarships

Aim for 10–15 applications this fall. Small $500 and $1,000 awards have less competition and they stack.

WORDS OF THE MONTH

tenacious

(adjective)

Holding firmly to a goal; refusing to give up when things get hard.

"She stayed tenacious, applying for scholarships long after her friends had stopped."

meticulous

(adjective)

Showing great attention to detail; very careful and precise.

"Be meticulous when you proofread your application before you hit submit."



NEXT MONTHLY MEETING

Sunday, November 22 · on Zoom

7:30 PM Central | 8:30 PM Eastern | 6:30 PM Mountain | 5:30 PM Pacific

- Finishing every application before December 31
- Retaking the SAT or ACT to reach scholarship and honors-program score cutoffs
- Housing fees and the real cost of attendance
- Scholarships: where to find them and how to win them
- Best practices for choosing your college
- Your questions

New to Your Next Steps? **Register free** and the Zoom link comes to your inbox.

yournextsteps-us.org

NOT A SENIOR YET?

Grades 9–11: build your advantage now

Seniors are running a sprint. Younger students are building an advantage, and this is where the biggest gains are made.

9th grade

- Register and start attending monthly sessions
- Take the career and personality assessments
- Protect your GPA: freshman year counts
- Join something you would do even if nobody was watching

10th grade

- Run your 360 Feedback Survey (page 4)
- Start the free AI ACT/SAT training app
- Take the hardest classes you can carry well
- Ask a Champion what their field is really like

11th grade

- Build a first college list of 5–10 schools
- Take a diagnostic ACT or SAT, then the official test
- Pick the two teachers you will ask for letters
- Start the scholarship search now

YOUR FREE TOOLKIT

Scan any of these



Main site
Everything starts here



AI ACT/SAT training
20-minute adaptive sessions



Scholarship search
Matched awards plus a tracker



Assessments
College, career, personality



Application checklist
The full senior roadmap



Jobs & internships
Roles built for students

Do these three things this week

1 · Register with us
Two minutes, free, and it is how session links, testing slots and fee waivers reach you.

2 · Send the 360 question
Text six people tonight and write their answers down. Details on page 4.

3 · Open the training app
Do one 20-minute block. You will have a score projection before bed.

Parents: put every deadline on a shared family calendar, finish the FAFSA with your student, and ask the counselor about fee waivers.

PROOF IT WORKS

What our students have earned

A Rhodes Scholarship

One of our students is now studying at Oxford.

Full-ride scholarships

To Howard, Xavier, Stanford, MIT and Columbia.

Internships

At Google, JP Morgan, Disney, Raytheon, IBM, AT&T, Uber and ESPN.

50%+ of our college graduates start graduate school within 12 months

THIS MONTH'S CHALLENGE

The 360 Feedback Survey

Our most revealing assessment costs nothing and takes a week. Students tell us it changed how they see themselves, and it makes outstanding essay material.

1 · Identify

Pick 6–10 people who know you: family, teachers, coaches, friends.

2 · Ask

"What career do you think I would be good at doing? Why?"

3 · Document

Put every answer in one sheet, unedited, before you read for patterns.

4 · Find the pattern

The answer that repeats is your strongest evidence about your strengths.

85+ Advisory Champions

Working professionals who volunteer for resume reviews, mock interviews and honest answers about their field. Tell us the career you are curious about and we will connect you.

Get involved

Become a mentor or Champion, or support our work with a donation. Every service we offer stays 100% free to students and families.

Talk with Dr. Smith

"Don't worry about what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive."

Howard Thurman