

Page 1: Welcome to the NSRA Prep Booklet

This booklet helps students arrive at a college readiness seminar with useful questions, organized notes, and a clearer sense of their next steps. Bring this booklet, your transcript if available, a list of activities, and questions about college fit, cost, essays, and deadlines.

Seminar preparation notes:

Page 2: What College Readiness Means

College readiness is more than grades. It means knowing your academic strengths, understanding your options, communicating your story, and building a plan that fits your goals, timeline, and family context.

Seminar preparation notes:

Page 3: Your Academic Snapshot

Start with a current transcript, GPA, course list, and graduation requirements. Note strong subjects, challenging subjects, and trends over time. A clear academic snapshot helps students make better decisions about course planning and applications.

Seminar preparation notes:

Page 4: Course Planning and Rigor

Course rigor should be intentional. Students should consider available honors, AP, IB, dual enrollment, or career pathway courses while balancing workload, wellness, and extracurricular commitments.

Seminar preparation notes:

Page 5: GPA, Trends, and Context

Grades matter, but colleges also look for patterns. Upward trends, context around difficult terms, and strong performance in major-related courses can help explain academic readiness.

Seminar preparation notes:

Page 6: Testing Strategy

Testing plans should be practical. Students should confirm whether target colleges are test-required, test-optional, or test-free, then choose preparation steps based on timeline, strengths, and application goals.

Seminar preparation notes:

Page 7: College Research

College research should go beyond rankings. Students should compare majors, campus environment, class size, support services, location, outcomes, cost, and admissions requirements.

Seminar preparation notes:

Page 8: Building a Balanced List

A balanced college list usually includes likely, target, and reach options. The list should also include financial fit and personal fit, not just admissions selectivity.

Seminar preparation notes:

Page 9: Campus Fit Questions

Consider where you learn best. Think about distance from home, campus size, academic culture, student life, advising, housing, safety, transportation, and available support programs.

Seminar preparation notes:

Page 10: Activities and Leadership

Activities help show how students spend time and what they value. Strong activity descriptions emphasize commitment, responsibility, initiative, leadership, creativity, service, or work experience.

Seminar preparation notes:

Page 11: Recommendation Planning

Recommendation letters work best when students give teachers and counselors enough time. Students should prepare a short summary of goals, accomplishments, class contributions, and qualities they hope the letter can highlight.

Seminar preparation notes:

Page 12: Essay Foundations

Good essays are specific, reflective, and student-centered. Students should brainstorm moments that show growth, curiosity, responsibility, challenge, family context, or meaningful interests.

Seminar preparation notes:

Page 13: Application Timeline

Students should track application platforms, deadlines, required documents, recommendation requests, test score policies, portfolio needs, and financial aid deadlines in one shared calendar.

Seminar preparation notes:

Page 14: Financial Aid Basics

College cost includes tuition, fees, housing, meals, books, travel, and personal expenses. Students should learn the difference between sticker price, net price, grants, scholarships, loans, and work-study.

Seminar preparation notes:

Page 15: Scholarship Readiness

Scholarship applications often ask for essays, activity lists, recommendations, and eligibility details. Reusing organized materials can make scholarship work less stressful.

Seminar preparation notes:

Page 16: Family Planning Conversation

Students and families should discuss budget expectations, commute or housing preferences, travel limits, work plans, and decision priorities before application deadlines arrive.

Seminar preparation notes:

Page 17: Preparing for the Seminar

Before attending, students should list three colleges they want to understand better, three questions about admissions, and three questions about cost or financial aid.

Seminar preparation notes:

Page 18: Seminar Working Notes

During the seminar, capture action items clearly. Mark each item as student, family, counselor, or school follow-up so responsibilities are easy to remember.

Seminar preparation notes:

Page 19: After the Seminar

Within one week, students should update their college list, revise their timeline, request missing documents, and schedule follow-up conversations with family or school support staff.

Seminar preparation notes:

Page 20: Personal Readiness Plan

Use this final page to write your next three steps, the person responsible, and the date each step should be completed. A strong plan is specific, realistic, and easy to revisit.

Seminar preparation notes:
