



COLLEGE DECISION DAY

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Letter from Elizabeth A. Manuel, Senior Director of Student Services

College Decision Day Coordinators,

On behalf of the College Foundation of West Virginia (CFWV), thank you for registering to host College Decision Day at your school. Events will take place in West Virginia from April 1 through June 1, but celebrations all across the country will be happening throughout the spring months.

The goal of this initiative is to celebrate seniors who have committed to continuing their learning journey after they graduate from high school by going to college. When we say the word “college,” we mean any form of high-quality education or training after high school. This includes trade and professional certificate programs, career and technical programs, two- and four-year degree programs, formalized apprenticeship programs, and military service.

It is our firm belief that every West Virginian should pursue a college pathway. Less than one-third of West Virginians currently hold an associate degree or higher, yet 60 percent of working-aged West Virginians will need one of these credentials in order to meet future workforce demands. For this reason, we are proud to host a statewide celebration that recognizes these students who have wisely chosen to invest in their futures.

As supplies last, schools that register to participate before the March 15 registration deadline should receive College 101 guides in the mail to help students and families prepare for their next steps. If you do not receive these guides or need to download additional guides, visit cfwvconnect.com/college-decision-day.

Once you host your event, please be sure to take the post-event survey which can be accessed here: surveymonkey.com/r/CollegeDecisionDay21. This survey is mandatory and must be within seven days after the event, for high schools to fulfill the College Decision Day requirements to be recognized as an official CFWV Champion of College Access and Success.

Thank you again for your dedication to helping our students pursue and succeed in postsecondary education!

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Manuel
Senior Director of Student Services

About the College Foundation of West Virginia

The **College Foundation of West Virginia** (CFWV) provides FREE resources to help students and families pursue — and succeed in — education and training beyond high school. CFWV coordinates dozens of college awareness and readiness efforts, including a series of statewide college pathway events that schools can adopt to strengthen a culture of college-readiness within their school buildings and communities. These pathway events include the annual College Application and Exploration Week, FAFSA completion workshops and College Decision Day. CFWV is coordinated by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission working in partnership with the West Virginia Community and Technical College System, and the West Virginia Department of Education.

About College Decision Day

The idea for College Decision Day was inspired by sports events, such as the NCAA national signing day and the NFL draft. College Decision Day events provide schools and communities with an opportunity to showcase the academic excellence of students with the same enthusiasm and pride as are devoted to sports.

West Virginia's College Decision Day initiative is part of a growing national effort to celebrate seniors for their postsecondary plans and assist them and their families in enrolling in and transitioning to college. The event was first piloted in the Mountain State by Summers County High School (SCHS). SCHS showed that College Decision Day events can inspire communities and help strengthen a college-going culture. As a result, this year's College Decision Day will be celebrated in high schools statewide.

The College Decision Day initiative is one of West Virginia's three statewide college-planning milestone events that, along with College Application and Exploration Week and statewide FAFSA completion events, help guide 12th grade students and their families in planning, applying and paying for college.

College Decision Day events recognize students who plan to pursue...

- ✓ a two-year degree
- ✓ a four-year degree
- ✓ a skillset certificate
- ✓ a career or technical program
- ✓ an apprenticeship
- ✓ military service

What's in a name? What we mean by "college"...

College is important — there's no doubt about it. At least 60 percent of all new jobs require a college education,¹ yet only 31 percent of West Virginians hold a college degree.³ On average, four-year college graduates earn more than double the salary of individuals who stopped their education after high school. And students who complete some form of postsecondary education are far less likely to be unemployed than those with just a high school diploma.² But what does that mean for our students?

We use the word "college" to include any type of postsecondary education or education and training beyond high school. That means students have many options when it comes to attending college... and one of the goals of College Decision Day is to help students and their families understand this. Some form of college should be the ultimate path for all West Virginia students.

West Virginia's Climb

Less than one-third of West Virginians currently hold an associate degree or higher, yet 60 percent of working-aged West Virginians will need a certificate or degree in order to meet future workforce demands. Only slightly more than half of West Virginia's high school class of 2017 enrolled in college the following fall.³

CFWV is proud to support West Virginia's attainment goal to equip 60% of West Virginians with a certificate or degree by 2030. To find out more about this initiative, visit wvclimb.com.



Requirements for participation

To be recognized as an official CFWV College Decision Day participant, schools must register at cfwvconnect.com/college-decision-day.

College Decision Day events must include two primary components:

- ✓ a celebration to recognize students who have chosen to pursue postsecondary education, and
- ✓ a workshop or presentation to assist students in enrolling in and transitioning to college.

Additionally, the event must occur sometime between April 1 and June 1 and event coordinators must complete a brief online survey following their local event.

¹ National Organization of State Higher Education Executive Officers
² The College Board, 2010 "Education Pays" report
³ West Virginia's Climb, wvclimb.com

CFWV Champion of College Access and Success

High schools that participate in this year's College Decision Day celebration can strive to become a **CFWV Champion of College Access and Success**! High schools that complete all the required steps will be recognized in the Fall of 2021.

To be recognized, high schools must do the following:

1. Participate in College Decision Day.
2. Complete the post-event survey immediately afterward.
3. Participate in CFWV's two other postsecondary pathway events (College Application & Exploration Week, which occurred last fall, and the statewide FAFSA Completion Campaign).
4. Complete all post-event surveys.
5. Meet the statewide FAFSA completion goal OR improve your school's FAFSA completion rate by 10 percentage points compared to the previous year.

You can check your school's progress toward the goal and learn more about this initiative at cfwvconnect.com/champion.

Post-event survey

NOTE: The required post-event survey can be accessed at surveymonkey.com/r/CollegeDecisionDay21 following College Decision Day. The survey below serves to give site coordinators an idea of what data to collect to be able to complete the online survey.

Information collected and questions

1. Coordinator name/email address/phone number
2. School name
3. How many students are enrolled in the senior class at your high school?
4. How many seniors at your school participated in College Decision Day?
5. How many parent(s) or guardian(s) participated in College Decision Day?
6. Do you plan on participating in College Decision Day next year?
7. Did you participate in the statewide College Application & Exploration Week campaign in November 2020?
8. Rank how much you agree with this statement: I believe College Decision Day has a positive impact in supporting a college-going culture in our school.
9. How helpful was the College Decision Day toolkit in planning and implementing your event?
10. What resources would you like to see added to the toolkit for next year?
11. What other resources can we provide or what improvements can we make in supporting you in College Decision Day?
12. Did any media outlets cover your College Decision Day event? If so, please describe the media coverage and provide links when applicable.
13. What went well for you at this event?
14. What could be improved for next year's event?

Planning checklist

One to three months before your event...

- ✓ Review the College Decision Day guidebook and website at cfwvconnect.com/college-decision-day.
- ✓ Recruit colleagues and volunteers at your school to staff your College Decision Day planning team.
- ✓ Determine the type of event you will host (see best practices section of this guide).
- ✓ Schedule your event with your building principal and arrange for chaperones and custodians as needed.
- ✓ Work with your school counselor to distribute the student questionnaire to gauge students' postsecondary plans.
- ✓ Set up counseling sessions for students who need assistance finalizing their plans or who do not yet have a plan for after high school.
- ✓ Reach out to admissions officers at schools your students plan to attend. Invite them to send materials for display or to attend your event. Please note: although admissions officers may want to attend your event, their schedules may not allow them to participate. It is a good idea to let them know you are inviting them as a courtesy, but that you and your students will understand if they are unable to make it. Hanging college pennants or signs can be a very effective way to demonstrate a college's presence and support, even if a representative is unable to attend the event in person.
- ✓ Work with your planning team to determine what topics you will cover during your college transition workshop (see best practices section of this guide). Prepare materials for your workshop presentations.
- ✓ Schedule any guest speakers or presenters for your college transition workshops. Secure an appropriate space to conduct the workshop and any audio and visual equipment needed.
- ✓ If you plan to provide food or door prizes at your event, work with community members and your committee to make arrangements.

Two to three weeks before your event...

- ✓ Invite students, parents, family members, faculty, staff, and community members to your College Decision Day event.
- ✓ Work with your counselor to confirm that all seniors have returned the postsecondary plans questionnaire and that you have notes on each student in the senior class. Reach out to any students you feel are still struggling to make or follow through on their postsecondary plans.
- ✓ Post information about College Decision Day on your and/or your school's social media channels and websites. Consider

engaging community partners in generating buzz online.

Seven to 10 days before your event...

- ✓ Distribute the press release announcing your College Decision Day event to local media representatives.
- ✓ Print students' certificates and organize college signs, pennants, etc.

One to two days before your event...

- ✓ Distribute the media alert to remind reporters about your event.
- ✓ Make announcements encouraging students to post their college decisions online using the hashtags #CollegeBoundWV and #WVClimb. Students planning to enter the military may want to use variations such as #ArmyBound, #NavyBound, etc.
- ✓ Email Kaci Foster at kaci.foster@wvhepc.edu to let her know about any media coverage you expect for your event.
- ✓ Check in with volunteers and staff and remind them of details.
- ✓ Schedule an "all call" home reminding students and families of your upcoming event.

The day of your event...

- ✓ Post photos of your event online using the hashtags above and encourage students to do the same. Tag @cfwv (and @wvgearup if your school is a West Virginia GEAR UP school) so that we can find and share your photos! Be sure to follow your school's media release and image publication policies before posting, and do NOT post photos without participants' permission.
- ✓ Remind seniors to update their CFWV.com account to indicate the schools at which they've been accepted. Remind them to change their status from "high school" to "college" student and link their accounts to the schools they plan to attend.

After your event...

- ✓ Email photos and links to media stories to Kaci Foster at kaci.foster@wvhepc.edu. Only send photos that are “ok” for publication and distribution, according to your school’s media and image release policies.
- ✓ Complete the required College Decision Day survey for event coordinators. The survey will be posted online at cfwvconnect.com/college-decision-day.
- ✓ Send thank you notes to individuals who helped make your event a success. Consider sending a note to any media representatives who attended.

Sample College Decision Day agendas

We have provided a sample agenda below for each of the two required components (a celebration activity or event and a college transition workshop). These are merely suggestions. School coordinators are welcome to be as creative as they’d like in planning their celebration and workshop activities, and coordinators should build a game plan that will fit the needs and interests of school staff, students, and families.

Celebration event agenda

Welcome and overview

Suggested speakers include the principal, superintendent, or member of the school board.

Guest speaker

Request remarks from an individual highlighting the importance of postsecondary education and/or inspiring students to continue their education. Suggested speakers include motivational speakers, community leaders who have graduated from college, alumni from the school who benefited from postsecondary opportunities and/or overcame obstacles to pursue their dreams...

Recognition of students who are college-bound

Make sure all students are recognized individually... for example, by calling their names and having them walk across stage, sign a letter of intent at a signing booth, etc. It is also a nice touch to set up photo ops allowing each student to pose for pictures with family members and/or admissions staff or college gear.

Group photo

Taking a group photo of your college-bound students with their college gear, signs, and certificates is a great way to highlight your school’s commitment to a college-going culture. Hang these photos with pride around school and send them to CFWV staff members to post online and showcase statewide!

Transition workshop agenda

Opening remarks and congratulations

Congratulate students on their college plans and explain that this summer is not a “break.” There are many steps students must take to transition to college.

Next steps for students to complete this summer

Outline common steps students must follow. Use **College 101** as a reference guide.

Understanding financial aid award packages

Show videos from Federal Student Aid or invite a financial aid representative to present.

Special topics

See best practices and ideas section.

Resources and help... where to turn in the summer months

Provide students and parents with the contact information for CFWV staff (and GEAR UP staff if your school is a West Virginia GEAR UP school or other professionals who can assist them in the summer months.

Senior Questionnaire

FULL NAME (PRINTED): _____

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?

☐ **Attend a college or university**

Which college? _____ Have you been accepted? ☐ yes ☐ no

What is your intended major and/or minor? _____

☐ **Complete a skillset certificate or career and technical training program**

Where will you complete your program? _____

☐ **Enlist in the military**

Which branch? _____ Has your enlistment been confirmed? ☐ yes ☐ no

☐ **Become an apprentice**

Please describe your apprenticeship: _____

☐ **Go directly to the workforce**

Do you have a job lined up? What will you do? _____

☐ Other (Please explain): _____

☐ Not sure or don't know

WOULD YOU LIKE TO THANK ANYONE?

Is there a teacher or other staff member that you would like to recognize for helping you along the way in school?
This could be anyone who helped you, past or present, from pre-K through high school.

Can we share your "thank you" publicly? ☐ yes ☐ no

SENIOR QUESTIONNAIRE, CONTINUED...

HOW CAN WE HELP?

We want to make sure you succeed in the future. What questions do you have about preparing for your next step? Can the counseling office or school staff help you in any way?

CAN WE CONTACT YOU OR YOUR FAMILY NEXT YEAR TO SEE HOW YOU'RE DOING?

☐ yes ☐ no

Contact person: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Mailing address: _____

WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO COME BACK IN THE COMING YEARS TO TALK TO OTHER STUDENTS ABOUT LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL? ☐ yes ☐ no

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOUNGER STUDENTS?

Can we share your advice publicly? ☐ yes ☐ no

COLLEGE-BOUND SENIOR

CONGRATULATIONS TO

FOR COMMITTING TO PURSUE

EDUCATION AND TRAINING BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL

BY



PRINCIPAL

COLLEGE-BOUND SENIOR

CONGRATULATIONS TO

FOR COMMITTING TO PURSUE

EDUCATION AND TRAINING BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL

BY

PRINCIPAL



MILITARY BOUND SENIOR

CONGRATULATIONS TO

FOR COMMITTING TO PURSUE

EDUCATION AND TRAINING BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL

BY



PRINCIPAL

MILITARY BOUND SENIOR

CONGRATULATIONS TO

FOR COMMITTING TO PURSUE
EDUCATION AND TRAINING BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL

BY



PRINCIPAL

Note: This document is available as an editable Word Document at cfwvconnect.com/college-decision-day.

Sample letter of invitation to students and families

To celebrate the senior class of 2021 and students' commitments to pursue some form of education and training beyond high school, our school is hosting a "College Decision Day" on [<insert date/time>](#) at [<insert location>](#).

Seniors that have been accepted to **college, a trade, career or certificate program, an apprenticeship program or the military** are invited to attend College Decision Day to declare their intent to continue their education. Students and family members will have the opportunity to [<insert details here, such as photo ops, recognition ceremonies, transition workshops, financial aid counseling, etc.>](#) Additionally, students may choose to recognize a teacher or staff member — past or present — who helped them along the way.

College Decision Day Program

[<insert agenda here>](#)

All [<school name>](#) students are invited to attend the event to celebrate the successes of their classmates and friends.

If you wish to be recognized at College Decision Day, please fill out the form below and return it to [<insert name>](#) no later than [<insert deadline>](#).

Student name: _____

What college, program or military service branch will you enter after high school?

Will your parents/guardians attend? ☐ yes ☐ no

If so, parent/guardian names:

Estimated number of other family members or friends that will attend: _____

Teacher or staff member you would like to invite and recognize:

Media Outreach Guide

Inviting local reporters to your College Decision Day event is a great way to recognize the successes of your students and increase awareness of your school's work to promote a college-going culture. Here are some tips for working with the media.

Send a news release: Use the news release template in this kit to develop a news story about your school's College Decision Day event. Send the news release to local media outlets seven to ten days in advance of your event. If your local newspaper or outlet publishes once a week, send the release ten days in advance. If they publish or air stories daily, a week is sufficient.

If you or someone on staff at your school has a relationship with a media outlet or a specific reporter, have that person reach out when sending the release. Also try contacting reporters who have covered stories about your school in the past.

When you send the release, make sure you note in the body of your email that media representatives are invited and encouraged to attend! It is also a good idea to copy and paste the release into the body of your email instead of sending it as an attachment. This will help you avoid spam filters and allow the reporter to scan your news story quickly without having to download and open an attachment.

Follow up: A day or so after you've sent your news release, call the media outlet to confirm that they received it and ask if they have any questions. You can ask them if they think they will be able to send someone to cover the event, but avoid pushing for a firm commitment. News rooms are often short staffed, so be understanding of their time constraints.

Send a media alert: Use the template in this guide to write a media alert. Your media alert will serve as a reminder of the key details for your event. Send the media alert one to two days in advance of your event.

Designate a media point-of-contact: Ask a staff member or volunteer to keep an eye out for any reporters who come to your event. The point-of-contact should greet the reporter, provide him or her with a copy of your news release, offer to arrange interviews and direct reporters to key activities.

Prepare your staff and students: Consider in advance staff members, students and family members who might represent your school well in a media interview. Ask their permission to refer reporters to them. Make sure they understand key information about College Decision Day, including its purpose and who is being recognized. You may also want to provide them with information about why education and training beyond high school is important, your school's current college-going rates and the number of students who are participating in College Decision Day.

Send a "thank you": After your event, send a thank you note to reporters who provided media coverage. This will help your school maintain a good relationship with media outlets.

Share your success: Send information about (and links to) any media coverage to Kaci Foster at kaci.foster@wvhepc.edu. We'd love to share your successes on our CFVW and GEAR UP websites and social media channels!

News Release Template

Note: This document is available as an editable Word Document at cfwvconnect.com/college-decision-day.

For Immediate Release: <date>

Contact:

<Name, Title>

<Organization>

<Phone>

<Email address>

NEWS RELEASE

<High School> to celebrate college-bound students during 'College Decision Day'

<CITY>, W.Va. — <High school> will recognize seniors who plan to pursue some form of education or training beyond high school as part of a statewide "College Decision Day" campaign. College Decision Day is organized by the College Foundation of West Virginia (CFWV), an initiative coordinated by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (Commission) to help students go to college and succeed.

The event, which is inspired by sports events such as the NCAA national signing day and the NFL draft, ensures that students who commit to pursuing education or training beyond high school are celebrated and praised for their efforts.

Elizabeth Manuel, Senior Director of Student Services at the Commission, expressed her excitement in watching the class of 2021 transition to the next stage of their lives.

"We're happy to celebrate the accomplishments and goals of the college-bound class of 2021," said Manuel. "These students recognize the necessity of pursuing some form of education or training beyond high school, and we applaud them for striving to continue learning well beyond high school graduation."

<High school's> College Decision Day event will be held <insert date, time and location>. School staff, students and families will recognize and celebrate each senior who plans to pursue some form of postsecondary education, including certificate programs, workforce training and apprenticeship programs, two-year degree programs, four-year degree programs and military service. Additionally, <insert other activities that are occurring, such as transition workshops, financial aid counseling, or specifics regarding how you will honor your students.>

The College Decision Day initiative is one of West Virginia's three statewide college-planning milestone events that, along with College Application and Exploration Week and statewide FAFSA completion events, help guide 12th grade students and their families in planning, applying and paying for college. To learn more about College Decision Day, visit cfwvconnect.com/college-decision-day.

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Related social media hashtags: #WVclimb #CollegeBoundWV

Related Twitter feeds: @CFWV

Media Alert Template

Note: This document is available as an editable Word Document at cfwvconnect.com/college-decision-day.

For Planning Purposes: <Send Date>

Contact:

<Name, Title>

<Organization>

<Phone>

<Email>

<High School> to celebrate college-bound seniors during 'College Decision Day'

When: <Date and time>

What: 'College Decision Day' celebration and college prep workshop

<High school> will recognize seniors who plan to pursue some form of education or training beyond high school as part of a statewide "College Decision Day" campaign. Additionally, students and families will have the opportunity to participate in workshops and counseling sessions to help them make the transition from high school to college.

Who: <High School> students, family and staff

Members of the community and the media also are invited to join us in celebrating the success of our students.

Where: <School Name>, <Room # or Location (e.g. Auditorium)>

<Physical Address>

<City, State, Zip>

Context: High schools across West Virginia are participating in the College Decision Day campaign. The campaign is organized by the College Foundation of West Virginia (CFWV), an initiative coordinated by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission.

College Decision Day events, which will occur between April 1 and June 1, will celebrate seniors who have committed to pursuing an education or training beyond high school in the same way that national signing day events celebrate students who wish to commit to playing sports after graduation. College Decision Day events ensure that students who plan to continue their education or training beyond high school are met with the same enthusiasm that is devoted to sports.

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Social Media Guide

Social media is an excellent way to recognize your students and share your school's work with the community. You can also use social media to engage students and families and build excitement for your event. Here are a few tips for maximizing your social media efforts:

Tag it! Just like an in-person conversation, it's hard to participate if you can't follow what's happening. Hashtags and mentions make it possible to find and follow posts from a wide variety of sources and link together the conversation. For College Decision Day, the following hashtags can be used:

- ✓ **#CollegeBoundWV:** Students across the country are using this hashtag to share their college-going plans.
- ✓ **#WVClimb:** This hashtag is used for students to describe their "climb" to pursue postsecondary education.
- ✓ **#ArmyBound, #NavyBound, #AirforceBound (etc.):** As with #CollegeBound, students across the nation are sharing their pride in enlisting in the military using these hashtags.
- ✓ **@CFWV and @WVGearUP:** Students can mention CFWV and West Virginia GEAR UP on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook to share their stories with us. We'll retweet and share the best ones!

It's important to remember to check your privacy settings on your social media accounts if you want your posts to be seen and shared by others. For us to retweet and share your stories, remember to make your posts public!

Encourage students and parents to share: Students often love to share info about themselves — and parents love talking about their kids! Here are a few ideas to get students and parents talking online:

- ✓ Ask students to post their postsecondary plans.
- ✓ Ask students to post pictures of their college acceptance letters.
- ✓ Ask students to share why they chose the pathway they plan to pursue.
- ✓ Encourage parents to brag a little about their student's successes and future plans.
- ✓ Ask students to share a bit of advice to help younger students prepare for the future.
- ✓ During the event, remind students to share their photos and status updates using the hashtags above.

Sample Social Media Posts

Note: These posts are available as an editable Word Document at cfwvconnect.com/college-decision-day.

Seniors! **<Insert date>** is College Decision Day at **<Insert school>**! Tell us where you're going to college!

Seniors, we want to hear your postsecondary plans! Which form of education or training beyond high school do you plan to pursue? Tell us using #CollegeBoundWV or #WVClimb!

Tomorrow is College Decision Day at **<Insert school>**. Don't forget to wear your favorite college gear or colors!

<Insert number> of seniors at **<Insert school>** are heading on to some form of education or training beyond high school! Congrats, #classof2021!

We couldn't be prouder of our seniors at **<Insert school>** who have committed to pursuing an education or training beyond high school!

Congrats to our #collegeboundwv seniors! @CFWV

CFWV and West Virginia GEAR UP Social Media Channels

CFWV

- ✓ **Facebook:** facebook.com/collegefoundationofwv
- ✓ **Twitter:** twitter.com/cfwv
- ✓ **Instagram:** instagram.com/collegefoundationofwv

West Virginia GEAR UP

- ✓ **Facebook:** facebook.com/wvgearup
- ✓ **Twitter:** twitter.com/wvgearup
- ✓ **Instagram:** instagram.com/wvgearup

Activity and event ideas

We encourage schools to have fun with this event and make it their own. There's no right or wrong way to host College Decision Day — as long as you incorporate a celebration of ALL college-bound students and provide them with resources to transition and succeed!

To get your creative juices flowing, here are a few ideas we've collected from around the country.

Activities:

- ✓ **Photo booth:** Design a backdrop and adopt college-themed props for seniors to use to take photos. Consider asking teachers of art classes for assistance with creating materials for this project.
- ✓ **Senior breakfast/lunch:** Arrange for seniors to have breakfast or lunch with students from the local elementary/middle school. You may consider arranging graduating seniors by their college choice and allow for elementary schools to sit at the table with the school of their choice.
- ✓ **"Real world" preparation:** Plan activities around your College Decision Day event that will help students prepare for life beyond high school. Some examples might be a chance to learn dining etiquette, professional networking, financial literacy, and understanding credit scores.
- ✓ **Door decorating contest:** Have students work together to decorate doors based on the college or university they plan to attend. Have staff and faculty vote for their favorites.
- ✓ **Publicize students' plans:** Use daily PA announcements, slides on a TV, or the school newspaper to publicize students' postsecondary plans.
- ✓ **Display a "where are you going?" map:** Post a map of West Virginia (or the U.S.) and let your students mark where they are going. You can leave the map up next year to inspire younger students!
- ✓ **Ask students to pledge to go:** Hang a "college-bound" banner in a prominent area of the school and have seniors who are planning on furthering their education sign it.
- ✓ **Post college acceptance letters:** Hang copies of your students' college acceptance letters around school or post them on your school's social media pages.
- ✓ **Create a "college wall":** Hang banners or signs for each college that students from your school plan to attend. Put students' names alongside their intended college.
- ✓ **Dress the part:** Encourage students and staff to wear their favorite college gear leading up to College Decision Day.
- ✓ **Invite a panel of past students:** Invite alumni from your school to come back and share their experiences in college.

Event ideas:

- ✓ Plan a senior walk around your College Decision Day event. Have seniors visit their former elementary or middle school so the graduating class can feel nostalgic and the younger class can get excited about graduating one day!
- ✓ Allot time before your event begins for undecided students to speak with college representatives who attend your College Decision Day event.
- ✓ Invite students from younger grades to attend the celebration to get them excited to celebrate postsecondary education.
- ✓ Recognize each student who plans to pursue some form of education and training beyond high school on stage. Present them with a certificate and have them sign a commitment to finish their degree or program.
- ✓ Have each student pose for a photo at a “signing” booth, similar to those used when student athletes sign a letter of intent to play a sport. Decorate the booth with signs and gear from the student’s chosen college and have them sign a letter of commitment to complete their degree or program.
- ✓ At a school pep rally, call students down from the stands by the name of the college or program they plan to attend. Have them sign a banner with the name of their intended college or program. Display the banners around school.
- ✓ Host a pep rally with the band, cheerleaders, etc. Call each student’s name over the microphone and announce his or her college plans. Ask the band to crash cymbals and the cheerleaders to cheer for each student.
- ✓ Host a “red carpet” event for students prior to a senior awards ceremony. Have a backdrop where students can pose for pictures with their family and friends and gear or signs from the college they plan to attend. Instead of asking students “who are you wearing?,” ask them “where are you going?”
- ✓ Host a picnic, breakfast or lunch for students and their families. Seat students according to their intended college or plans after high school so they can get to know other students pursuing the same path.
- ✓ In addition to recognizing the student and his or her family, ask each student to recognize a teacher or staff member — past or present — who inspired them or helped them along the way.
- ✓ In addition to recognizing students, ask them to share a bit of advice for younger students or share why they chose their intended pathway.

Encouraging Community Collaboration

Getting the community involved in the celebration is a great way to make your students feel special. Here are a few ideas for encouraging community collaboration.

- ✓ Work with your local newspaper to include seniors' postsecondary plans alongside published senior photos.
- ✓ Ask local business leaders to post signs congratulating college-bound seniors and wishing them luck.
- ✓ Ask local businesses to post your school's college-going rate or the number of students pursuing some form of education and training beyond high school on their marquees.
- ✓ Ask community leaders to "adopt" a college-bound student for the next year. Ask them to check in with their adopted student to see how they're doing in college and offer to help them with any issues they're having. Ask them to send cards or care packages to their adopted student to encourage them to keep pursuing their dreams!

College Transition Workshop Topics

Many students graduate high school with intentions of pursuing postsecondary education but fail to enroll in a college program the following fall. To help combat this issue, known as “summer melt,” we ask that all College Decision Day sites provide workshops or counseling sessions to assist students and their families in making the transition to college. Here are some ideas for topics you may want to cover:

College 101: Utilize CFVW’s **College 101** guide to walk students and families, step-by-step, through the process of enrolling in and preparing for college. You should have received some of these guides in the mail if you registered to participate in College Decision Day prior to March 15. If you need additional guides, they are available for download at cfwvconnect.com/request-resources.

Financial aid: Applying for financial aid is only the first step. Students often need help understanding financial aid award letters or finding additional money to close gaps in college funding. It can be useful to bring in a financial aid counselor to discuss these issues with students and families.

Study skills and time management: Set expectations that students will need to study more in college and provide them with strategies to study smarter (and harder!)

Self-advocacy and networking: Set expectations that students must take a proactive approach to managing their education, build relationships with professors and administrators on campus, and take responsibility for their own learning. Students arriving on college campuses are often afraid to ask questions or ask for help — talk to them about strategies for navigating this new environment.

Life skills: Paying bills, setting a budget, living with a roommate... doing laundry! Many students will be living on their own for the first time in college. Host workshops to have conversations about these topics.

Individual rights and safety: Students often do not understand the legal and social environments they are entering when they enroll in college. For example, some students are expelled for academic misconduct, and it may not seem like “a big deal” to them. Additionally, students often do not understand their rights to privacy or the judicial procedures available to them if they find themselves in trouble. Finally, students may lack “street smarts” in navigating a new city or area. Remind students of basic safety concepts such as traveling in groups at night. Make sure students are aware of campus safety procedures and resources.

Responsible lifestyles: Many students are overwhelmed by the social aspects of college, and, as a result, fall into negative situations such as engaging in drug or alcohol abuse, developing sedentary habits, entering into abusive or unhealthy personal relationships, or failing to manage their emotional and physical health. Discuss these issues with students and parents and point them toward resources to help them stay on track.

Contact

If you have questions about this toolkit or West Virginia's College Decision Day effort, please contact:

Kaci Foster

Communications Specialist

Division of Student Affairs

West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

(304) 558-0655

kaci.foster@wvhepc.edu