



### **About NiswongerCARE:**

The **NiswongerCARE** program serves 24 high schools and 30,000 students in Northeast Tennessee, helping build a strong college-going and career-ready culture. Founded in 2015, CARE provides college and career advising through a near-peer model. Our team not only supports students and families but also develops the next generation of professionals to serve the region.

# ABOUT ME:

My name is Makayla Davis. I received the Niswonger Scholarship upon graduating high school in 2019 and attended ETSU. In 2023, I received my bachelors degree in English and Secondary Education. I began working as a NiswongerCARE Advisor in 2024. As someone who grew up in a low-income household in a rural community, I feel passionate about helping students like me explore their post-secondary options see that higher education and career success are possible, no matter their circumstances.





# **TN COLLEGE APPLICATION & EXPLORATION MONTH**

Best Practices

# KEY GOALS

Encourage seniors to complete college applications

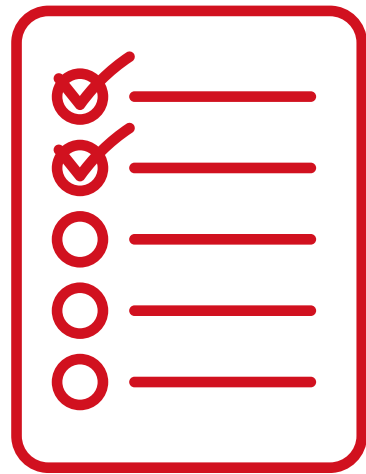
**Expose students to different college and career pathways**

Build partnerships with local colleges & community organizations

**Foster a college-going culture within the school**

Ensure equity (all students participate, not just the “college-bound”)

# TN COLLEGE APPLICATION & EXPLORATION MONTH EVENT GUIDE



**Initial Planning**



**1-2 Weeks  
Prior**



**Week/Day of  
Event**



**After Event**

# INITIAL PLANNING

- Form **planning committee** (counselors, teachers, administrators, etc).
- Meet with committee - set **timeline**, assign **tasks**, send **follow-up notes**.
- Create **event agenda** with timeline & locations; **share** with staff/admin.
- **Assign roles:** greeting reps, welcoming seniors, photo/video coverage.
- Select **event date & reserve location** (ensure internet/computers available).
- **Invite college reps/partners;** confirm details (date, time, format).



# INITIAL PLANNING CONT.

- **Inform** staff/admin of event plan & student participation.
- Develop **marketing strategy** (flyers, social media, announcements, messages on student-advisor platform).
- Print **Quick Guide** for seniors (school details, fee waiver codes, URLs).
- **Review** college websites/applications to answer student questions.
- Plan to **track participation** (can use paper sign-in sheets or Google Forms).
- Review event **resources** on **CollegeforTN**.



# 1-2 WEEKS PRIOR

- Confirm event **reservation & setup needs** (tables, equipment).
- **Test** presentation/projector **equipment**.
- Keep **promoting** (reminders, emails, social media, announcements).
- **Confirm attendance** of college reps; **share logistics** (parking, requirements).
- Send **parent reminders** about the event.
- Provide staff with **“I Went to College” door signs**.
- Encourage **staff** to **wear college shirts** on scheduled day.
- Give students **Bingo Cards** to spark college conversations.



# WEEK/DAY OF EVENT

- Arrive **early**; share details in **morning announcements**.
- **Set up space**; make sure it's organized, decorated, inviting.
- Provide seniors with **Quick Guides & app resources** (URLs, fee waivers).
- **Greet/welcome reps & students**; explain process & how to ask for help.
- **Track participation & applications (sign-in sheets)**.
- Remind seniors to **record usernames/passwords** (can provide sheets).
- **Take photos/videos** to document event impact.
- **Celebrate students** by giving college swag, stickers, or other prizes/recognition for completing applications.



# AFTER EVENT

- Send **thank-you messages** to reps, staff, and helpers.
- Complete the **P2C Survey** for event.
- **Post highlights** on social media, newsletters, and announcements.  
Celebrate students' achievements!
- Meet with your committee to **reflect** on what worked well and what can be **improved** for next year.
- **Follow up with seniors** and encourage them to **track application status**, submit transcripts, and complete FAFSA/TN Promise steps.



# DIFFERENCES IN EVENTS: SMALL VS. LARGE SCHOOLS

## SMALL SCHOOLS

- Easier one-on-one support
  - Flexible spaces  
(library/classroom)
  - Fewer college reps attend
  - Staff know students personally
  - Strong community feel
- 

## LARGE SCHOOLS

- Need larger spaces & multiple sessions
- Structured scheduling needed
- More college reps attend
- Extra staff/volunteers required
- Less individual support per student

# HELPFUL TIPS:

**PROVIDE LOGIN ORGANIZERS:** HAVE A SHEET FOR STUDENTS TO RECORD THEIR USERNAMES AND PASSWORDS FOR EACH COLLEGE APPLICATION (TO AVOID LOGIN ISSUES LATER)

**CREATE AN INVITING ATMOSPHERE:** INCLUDE MUSIC AND/OR COLLEGE BANNERS. GREET STUDENTS AND HAVE CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS AT THE ENTRANCE SO THEY KNOW WHERE TO GO AND WHAT TO DO.

**TRACK PARTICIPATION:** MAKE SURE STUDENTS SIGN IN WHEN THEY ARRIVE OR USE GOOGLE FORM AS "EXIT TICKET," ASK THEIR NAME AND WHAT SCHOOLS THEY APPLIED TO (SO COUNSELORS KNOW WHERE TO SEND TRANSCRIPTS)

**PROVIDE INCENTIVES (IF POSSIBLE):** INCENTIVES ENCOURAGE AND MOTIVATE STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN AN EVENT. SEE NEXT SLIDE FOR INCENTIVE IDEAS!

**LUNCH BREAKS:** PLAN TO GIVE COLLEGE REPS/VOLUNTEERS LUNCH BREAKS IF THEY WILL BE THERE ALL DAY

**PLAN HOW YOU WILL GET STUDENTS TO EVENT:** INTERCOM, ANNOUNCEMENTS, TEACHER EMAIL, STUDENT TEXT/EMAIL, ETC.

**PLAN FOR UTK STUDENTS:** DO SURVEY AHEAD OF TIME TO ASK ABOUT WHAT SCHOOLS ARE THEIR TOP CHOICE - REACH OUT TO UTK STUDENTS AHEAD OF TIME

**DECIDE HOW MANY DAYS YOU WILL HAVE THE EVENT:** SOME SCHOOLS DO EVERYDAY FOR STUDENTS & ADD A NIGHT OR TWO FOR COLLEGE REPS, PARENTS, ETC.

# INCENTIVE IDEAS:

- **Prizes & Giveaways:** Offer gift cards, college swag, or school gear as rewards for participation.
- **Raffles & Drawings:** Give raffle tickets for each application or task completed, with chances to win prizes in daily or end-of-month drawings.
- **Food Incentives:** Provide snacks, pizza, donuts, or “Apply & Snack” bars to reward students who complete applications or attend events.
- **Recognition & Celebrations:** Celebrate with photo walls, social media shoutouts, announcements, or “I Applied” stickers.
- **Social Media Engagement:** Run hashtag challenges, video contests, or giveaways for students who post about applying or wear college gear.
- **Freebies & Perks:** Hand out homework passes, or early dismissal tokens as easy motivators.

# FLYER EXAMPLE:

WEST GREENE SENIORS, GET READY FOR:  
**COLLEGE APP DAY!**

**WHEN:** MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16TH

**WHERE:** THE LIBRARY

**YOU'LL NEED:** YOUR CELL PHONE & LAPTOP

**MAKEUP DAYS:** TUES & FRI  
SEP 17 & 20

**P.S.:**  
STUDENTS WHO ATTEND WILL BE ENTERED INTO A DRAWING FOR A \$5 CHICKFILA OR DUNKIN GIFT CARD!!!

**FREE COLLEGE APPLICATION EVENT**

**SENIORS**

<b>WHERE:</b> WEST GREENE, IN THE LIBRARY	<b>2025 SEPT 18 8 AM - 3 PM</b>	<b>YOU WILL NEED: LAPTOP &amp; CELLPHONE</b>
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**COME APPLY!**

TO SEVERAL COLLEGES, FOR FREE!

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, CONTACT US!

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# QUICK GUIDE EXAMPLES:



Apply to College for FREE in Tennessee  
September 2025

## ADVISETN

- All 24 TCATs
- All 13 Community Colleges
- American Baptist College
- Carson Newman
- Johnson University
- King University
- Lincoln Memorial
- Lane College
- Bryan College
- Maryville College
- Rhodes
- Sewanee
- Trevecca Nazarene
- Tusculum
- UT Southern
- Tennessee Wesleyan
- Bethel University
- LeMoyné-Owen College

### Always Free

### Free with Code

- AP** Austin Peay State University
  - Sept. 1-30, CODE: APAPPLY
- Belmont
  - Sept. 15th-19th, CODE: TNWEEK26
- E** East Tennessee State University
  - Sept. 1-30th, CODE: TNFreeApp26
- L** Lee University
  - Sept. 1-30th, CODE: APPLY2026
- Lipscomb University
  - Sept. 16th-30th, CODE: THEC25
- M** Milligan University
  - All Year, CODE: BUFFALO26
- Union University
  - Sept. 1-30th, CODE: TN2526
- C** UT Chattanooga
  - Sept. 16th-20th, CODE: FREEAPP26
- U** Cumberland University
  - Sept 1-30th, CODE: CUAPPLY

### Free - No Code

- F** Fisk University
  - Sept. 1-30th
- TN** TN Tech University
  - Sept. 15th-19th
- UT** UT Knoxville
  - Sept. 17th
- UT** UT Martin
  - Sept. 15th-19th
- V** Vanderbilt University
  - Sept. 15th-19th
- MT** Middle TN State
  - Sept. 15th-21st
- TN** TN State University
  - Sept. 1st-30th
- U** University of Memphis
  - Sept. 1st-30th

## COLLEGE APP MONTH 25.26

APPLY FOR FREE DURING SEPTEMBER!

### ALWAYS FREE

- B** BRYAN COLLEGE
- CN** CARSON-NEWMAN UNIVERSITY
- CS** CHATTANOOGA STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
- CS** CLEVELAND STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
- CS** COLUMBIA STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
- DS** DYERSBURG STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
- E** EMORY & HENRY
- K** KING UNIVERSITY
- LM** LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY
- M** MARYVILLE COLLEGE
- NS** NASHVILLE STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
- NS** NORTHEAST STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
- PS** PELLISSIPPI STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
- S** SEWANEE
- TCAT** TCAT SCHOOLS
- T** TUSCULUM UNIVERSITY
- UTS** THE UNIVERSITY OF TN SOUTHERN
- W** WALTERS STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

### SEPTEMBER 1-30

- AP** AUSTIN PEAY CODE: APAPPLY
- CU** CUMBERLAND UNIVERSITY CODE: CUAPPLY
- E** EAST TN STATE UNIVERSITY CODE: TNFreeApp26
- F** FISK UNIVERSITY
- L** LEE UNIVERSITY CODE: APPLY2026
- TSU** TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
- U** UNION UNIVERSITY CODE: TN2526
- U** UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

### OTHER

- B** BELMONT UNIVERSITY SEPT. 15-19 CODE: TNWEEK26
- L** LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY SEPT. 15-30 CODE: THEC25
- MT** MIDDLE TN STATE UNIVERSITY SEPT. 15-21
- M** MILLIGAN UNIVERSITY YEAR-ROUND CODE: BUFFALO26
- TN** TN TECH UNIVERSITY SEPT. 15-19
- CS** UT CHATTANOOGA SEPT. 15-19 CODE: FREEAPP26
- UT** UT KNOXVILLE SEPT. 17 ONLY
- UT** UT MARTIN SEPT. 15-19
- V** VANDERBILT SEPT. 15-19

## TN Free College Exploration & Application Month List

College Name	Application Link	Is this institution offering an application fee waiver?
Austin Peay State University	<a href="https://apply.apsu.edu/portal/applytoday">Apply.apsu.edu/portal/applytoday</a>	Yes, Sept. 1 – 30, use code "PeaywithJandro"
Belmont University	<a href="https://belmont.edu/admissions/apply.html">belmont.edu/admissions/apply.html</a>	Yes, Sept. 15 – 21, use code "TNWEEK"
Cumberland University	<a href="https://cumberland.edu/apply-now/">cumberland.edu/apply-now/</a>	Yes, Sept. 1 – 30, use code "CUAPPLY"
East Tennessee State University	<a href="https://etsu.edu/admissions/">etsu.edu/admissions/</a>	Yes, Sept. 1 – 30, use code "TNFreeApp25"
Lee University	<a href="https://leeuniversity.edu/apply/">leeuniversity.edu/apply/</a>	Yes, Sept. 1 – 30, use code "APPLYTN"
Lipscomb University	<a href="https://lipscomb.edu/admissions/reshmen-admissions">lipscomb.edu/admissions/reshmen-admissions</a>	Yes, Sept. 16 – 30, use code "THEC24"
Middle Tennessee State University	<a href="https://apply.mtsu.edu/portal/app_management">apply.mtsu.edu/portal/app_management</a>	Yes, Sept. 16 – 22, MTSU App only, no code needed
Milligan University	<a href="https://milligan.edu/admissions/apply/">milligan.edu/admissions/apply/</a>	Yes, Year-round, use code "BUFFALO25"
South College in Knoxville	<a href="https://enroll.south.edu">enroll.south.edu</a>	Yes, Sept. 1-30, Ask me how!
Tennessee Tech University	<a href="https://tntech.edu/admissions/apply/">tntech.edu/admissions/apply/</a>	Yes, Sept. 1 – 30, no code needed
Union University	<a href="https://uu.edu/applications/undergrad/">uu.edu/applications/undergrad/</a>	Yes, Sept. 1 – 30, use code "TN2025"
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga	<a href="https://utc.edu/apply">utc.edu/apply</a>	Yes, Sept. 16 – 20, UTC App only, use code "freeapp25"
University of Tennessee, Knoxville	<a href="https://admissions.utk.edu/undergraduate-application/">admissions.utk.edu/undergraduate-application/</a>	Yes, Sept. 16 – 20, no code needed
University of Tennessee at Martin	<a href="https://utm.edu/admissions-and-aid/apply/">utm.edu/admissions-and-aid/apply/</a>	Yes, Sept. 16 – 20, no code needed
Vanderbilt University	<a href="https://admissions.vanderbilt.edu/apply/">https://admissions.vanderbilt.edu/apply/</a>	Yes, Sept. 16 – 20, no code needed

# SIGN-IN SHEET/LOGIN ORGANIZER EXAMPLES:

## Free College App Day Sign-in Sheet

Student Name:	Applications Completed:
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	
12.	
13.	
14.	
15.	
16.	
17.	
18.	
19.	

## Senior Year Login Organizer:

### TN Promise (TSAC Student Portal):

Username:
Password:

### FAFSA (studentaid.gov):

Username:
Password:

### College #1:

Username:
Password:

### College #2:

Username:
Password:

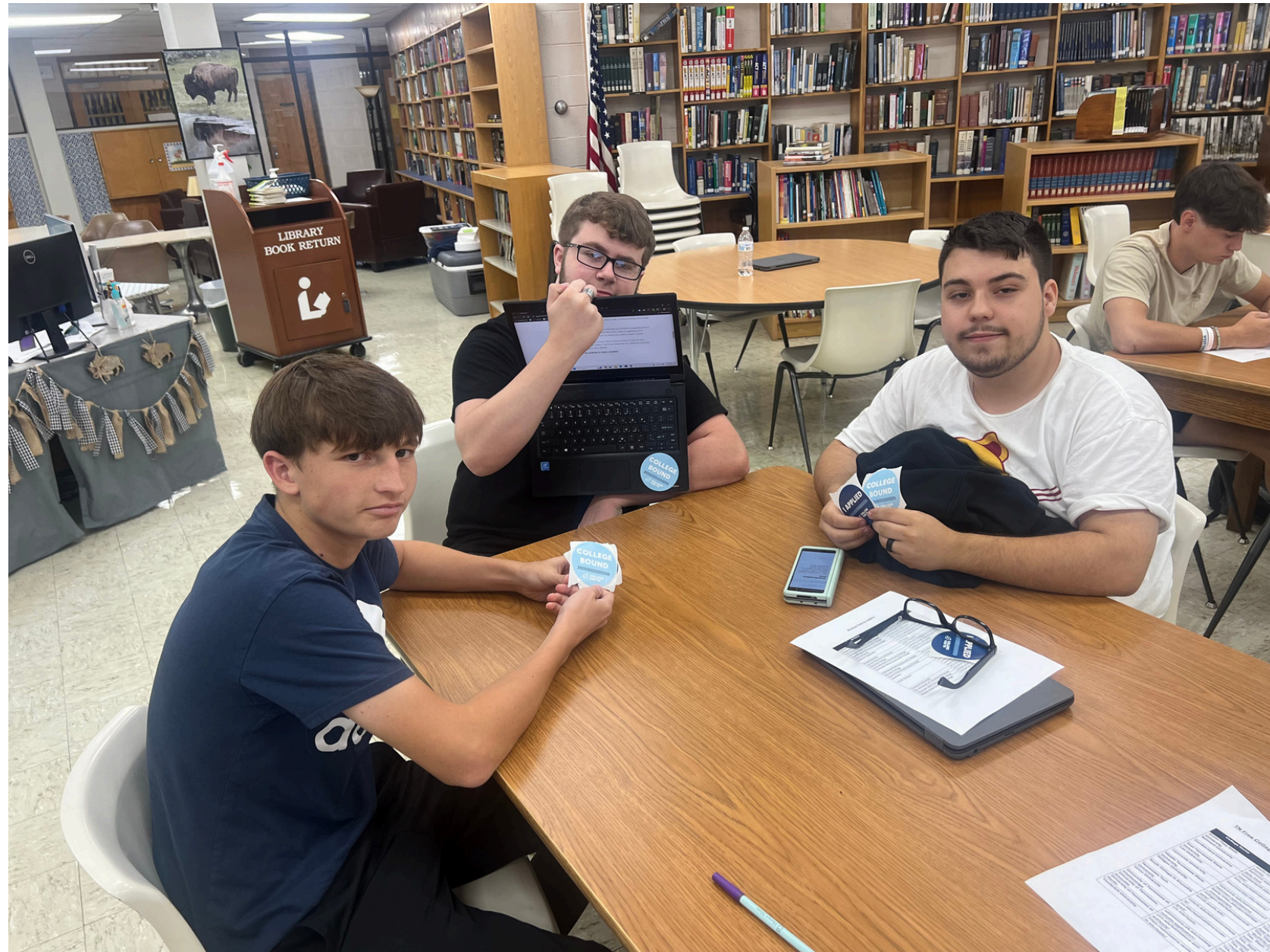
### College #3:

Username:
Password:

### College #4:

Username:
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# PICTURES FROM PRIOR EVENTS



# THANK YOU!

## NiswongerCARE Contact Info:

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