



PATHFINDER

C O U N S E L I N G SM

college bound direction

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May 2011

1st – Common reply date for college enrollment

5th – SAT Reasoning and Subject Tests

7th–19th - AP exams

Juniors – work on resume

Juniors – speak to advisor about military colleges or ROTC programs

Seniors – notify the colleges that you will not attend

June 2012

2nd – SAT Reasoning and Subject Tests

(register by 5/8 - late registration 5/22)

9th – ACT and ACT plus Writing

(register by 5/4 - late registration 5/18)

Seniors – thank teachers and others who helped you

Seniors – thank scholarship providers for aid

Seniors – have your final transcript sent to your college

Merit Scholarships Make College Affordable

In the last few years, with the economy either in recession or struggling to recover from it, public colleges have experienced increases in applications from residents seeking a quality education at a reasonable cost. But budget crises in many states have meant funding cuts at most public universities, making it more difficult for students to get into popular state schools and resulting in larger classes and reduced services at many public institutions. Tuition at public schools is increasing more quickly than at private colleges. While some public universities offer scholarships, often using them to attract non-resident students who will still pay higher tuition than residents, some students are finding that private colleges are a financially viable option with many benefits.

In an effort to avoid losing students to lower-cost public schools, private colleges have been increasing merit-based aid in recent years, with 36 percent of private colleges awarding scholarships or grants based on merit. In 2010, the average tuition discount rate reached a record high of 42 percent among private colleges, meaning families, on average, are paying 58 percent of the regular tuition rate.

While the Ivies and other elite schools put their resources into need-based rather than merit aid, many highly selective colleges that are trying to compete for top students do offer scholarships. Merit scholarships are especially helpful in attracting students whose families don't qualify for need-based financial aid but are unable or unwilling to pay more than \$50,000 a year for college.

Highly selective colleges that offer merit scholarships include Davidson College,

Emory University, Washington University, and the University of Southern California. These scholarships are very competitive, and students need to have outstanding academic records and test scores. They may be required to write additional scholarship essays and interview on campus. Some scholarships also consider demonstrated leadership and community service.

Other colleges offer guaranteed scholarships, so if you have a specified grade point average and test score, you will get a scholarship. Students who are National Merit Scholarship finalists are guaranteed scholarships at some schools. If you have reasonably good grades and test scores, and are willing to consider colleges that are not as well-known, you are likely to end up with some scholarship offers. Scholarships are generally renewable for three additional years, as long as you maintain the required grade point average.

Students who can afford to attend a private college without taking on huge debt may find that the educational experience is much more personal and engaging, and well worth the extra cost. You are more likely to find a student-centered environment, more meaningful interactions with professors and more access to support services at a smaller private college than at a large public institution.

At a time when many public universities are cutting classes and student services, having strong academic advising and support can enable students to successfully complete their degree requirements in four years. In addition to saving the cost of a fifth (or sixth) year in college, graduating in four years means that students start working and earning money earlier.

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Majoring in Accounting

Among U.S. students, the most popular undergraduate concentration by far is business; more than 20% of all bachelor's degrees are awarded in this area. Business majors can be loosely divided into areas such as marketing, finance, and accounting, although some business majors, such as entrepreneurship and business management, incorporate all of these areas. Accounting, which deals with the language of business, may be offered as part of a university's School of Business, or may be one of the majors available through the liberal arts program.

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, accounting is now the number one major on college campuses. So what is it about accounting that attracts so much interest? Accountants work with finance-related documents. By preparing, analyzing, and verifying data, accountants provide their clients with the information they need to make sound business decisions. It is through the work of accountants that public records are accurately kept, businesses and corporations are more efficiently run, and appropriate taxes are paid on time. Accountants fill a vital role by providing the information needed by business managers and investors, and by serving as advisors to these individuals. Upper level management positions such as chief executive officer (CEO), chief financial officer (CFO) or controller are often filled by people with a background in accounting.

Coursework in Accounting

Introductory courses in accounting provide a background in economics and finance, marketing, business law, computer information sciences, and business organization and management. More advanced classes look at more specialized topics such as the analysis and preparation of financial statements, tax preparation and planning, internal auditing and fraud investigation, risk assessment, e-commerce, and ethics.

Critical thinking and communication skills are essential for success in accounting, therefore, accounting majors must also take a range of courses in the liberal arts and sciences. With the rise of multinational corporations, a solid grounding in both history and foreign languages has become important. You'll want to include classes that enhance your writing, speaking, and problem-solving skills in your undergraduate program.

Some accounting programs focus on theory, while others take an applications approach that focuses on the skills needed by the practicing accountant. As licensing requirements for becoming a certified public accountant (CPA) have become more stringent, colleges have been moving to offering unified five-year programs in accounting. At the conclusion of this type of program, students are awarded both a bachelor's and master's degree in accounting, and are then eligible to take the CPA licensing exam.

When considering colleges, ask about the focus of the program, find out if a five-year program leading to a dual degree is offered, and check on the availability of internships in this area.

Careers for the Accounting Major

In addition to working as an accountant or CPA, accounting majors often find jobs as credit managers, computer system analysts, economists, controllers, IRS agents, FBI agents, purchasing managers, insurance agents, real estate professionals, marketing managers, statisticians, auditors, or may work in public administration. Some go on to law school to become tax attorneys or may specialize as tax accountants.

Learn more about the field by visiting the website of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants at www.aicpa.org, or by clicking on the American Accounting Association website at www.aaahq.org.

Financial Matters: Providing Pre-College Financial Education



Parents of seniors have spent much of this year supporting their teens through the college search and application process. Still more hours may have been consumed with financial aid forms and making plans to meet college expenses. No rest for the weary yet—you still need to address the money management issues that will affect your child as he or she gets ready for this next phase of life.

- Set up a bank account. Since your child will have an ongoing need for money at college, you'll want to be able to easily transfer money to his

account. An online bank account may be the most useful, especially if they have special student accounts available that will give parents access to bank information. Find out which banks have ATMs close to campus—college kids usually don't write many checks. Be sure to check on fees for using an ATM that's not part of your bank's network. Those fees add up!

- Make plans to protect student property. College kids tend to have a lot of valuable electronics and computer equipment. Renter's insurance can protect your investment if these items were to disappear. Your homeowner's policy may also cover dorm room possessions—check with your agent. A special laptop lock will keep this equipment safe—college kids often don't lock their dorm doors.

- Health insurance—check out options provided by the college and compare these policies with your family medical coverage.
- Car insurance—once again, check with your agent. If your child will not have a car at college, you may be eligible for a discount on your auto rate.
- Discuss credit card dangers—college students are besieged with credit card offers—discuss how the misuse of credit cards can affect their ability to get credit in the future. Look into debit card options or provide your offspring with a card in your name.
- Decide how much to budget for incidentals. College Board estimates personal expenses at about \$3,700/ year. That's a lot of pizza!

Test Requirements for College Admission

SAT, ACT, Subject Tests, or no testing at all? Colleges differ in their requirements for admission. Underclassmen would be wise to check out what testing will be needed as they begin to research possible college choices.

Although all U.S. colleges now accept the ACT in lieu of the SAT, not all require the optional writing test offered by the ACT. However, for most students taking the ACT, completing the writing section will provide more opportunities to use this test for any of the colleges to which they'll apply. Some students seem to do much better on the SAT while others perform at a higher level on the ACT. If you can, try both exams and then retake the test on which you get the higher score.

Subject test requirements also vary from college to college. Most colleges

that do require these exams ask that students take two in different subject areas. Ideally, you should take the exam soon after you complete your coursework in that subject area. Thus you'd take the U.S. History exam at the end of the year in which you had this class. Students applying to science and engineering programs are often required to submit scores from the Math II and a chemistry or physics exam. When researching colleges, note the tests that are required as well as any subject exams needed.

A growing number of colleges have moved to a "test optional" status. For

these colleges, grades take on more significance, and students may be asked to submit a graded paper in lieu of admissions test results. Many state schools are test optional for residents with high GPAs, and some highly selective colleges such as Pitzer, Hamilton, and Muhlenberg offer applicants the choice of applying without test scores. Talent-based and specialized schools such as Julliard, Johnson & Wales, and the Ringling School of Art & Design do not require test scores. A full list of colleges that are test optional in admissions will be found on the website of Fair Test at www.fairtest.org.

"The only place success comes before work is in the dictionary." Vince Lombardi



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Advice for Prospective College Athletes

Underclassmen—are you thinking about playing your chosen sport in college? Are you wondering how to make your involvement in athletics enhance your chances of admission? Here are some guidelines for prospective college athletes.

- Choose a college by following the “broken leg” rule. It’s simple—if you were unable to compete there, would you still want to attend that college?
- Earn the best grades that you can. Although you may receive letters of interest from very selective colleges, they will not continue in the recruiting process unless they feel you can be competitive academically as well as on the playing field. SAT and/or ACT scores are also critical for these institutions. Required GPA and scores will be far above the NCAA eligibility requirements.
- Be realistic. Ask your coach for his/her honest assessment of your ability to play at Division I, II, or III.
- Be proactive. Start the process early. Research colleges that meet your criteria both for athletics and academics. Include schools with sports teams from at least two different divisions. Complete prospective athlete forms on the athletics area of college websites. E-mail appropriate coaches expressing your interest in their program.
- Market yourself. Don’t count on colleges finding you. Make yourself visible by playing at regional events and showcases. Make unofficial visits to campuses that interest you. Contact the coaches ahead of time and ask if you could meet with them when you’re on campus.
- Athletes in many sports should be collecting video-clips of athletic performance to be compiled and sent to interested coaches.
- Register on the NCAA Eligibility Center website (www.ncaa.org) by the end of junior year.