

# University and College Prep Catalog

Spring 2006



# Knights



Spring 2006

Dear Academy for Academic Excellence Students and Parents:

The Academy for Academic Excellence Student Services Department has compiled this University and College Prep Catalog as an aide to you in preparing for your high school years and future college endeavors. The emphasis is on our two major systems in California, the U.C. (University of California) and the C.S.U. (California State University) systems. Acceptance into either system often times qualifies students for entry into other universities and colleges throughout the state and nation.

We sincerely hope that this guide will be of great benefit to you in making important decisions' concerning your future plans. Please ask questions regarding information that may be unclear to you.

On behalf of the Student Services Team,

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**Comparison of The Lewis Center for Educational Research /  
Academy for Academic Excellence Graduation Requirements with  
a-g Entrance Requirements for the UC and CSU Systems**

SUBJECT AREA	AAE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS	ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA (UC) AND CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY (CSU)
a	<b>3 Years:</b> World History 1 year US History 1 year Amer. Government ½ year Economics ½ year	<b>2 years:</b> World History 1 year US History 1 year or World History 1 year US History ½ year Amer. Government ½ year
b	<b>4 years:</b> Intro to Lit World Lit American Lit British Lit or Contemporary Lit	<b>4 years:</b> Intro to Lit or Honors World Lit or Honors American Lit or English Language AP British Lit or English Literature AP
c	<b>3 years:</b> <b>Including</b> Algebra I and Geometry	Must include Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II or higher levels of math  <i>4 years recommended</i>
d	<b>3 years:</b> <b>Including</b> Physical Science 1 year Biological Science 1 year	<b>2 years:</b> Lab Science in 2 of 3 areas: Biology, Chemistry, Physics  <i>3 years recommended</i>
e	<b>See Fine Arts</b>	<b>2 years:</b> Needs to be same foreign language  <i>3 years recommended</i>
f	<b>1 year:</b> May be met with 1 year of Foreign Language or 1 year of Visual or Performing Art	<b>1 year:</b> Visual and Performing Arts: Art, Drama/Theater, Music or Dance Class
g	<b>6 years:</b> <b>(60 credits in 4 years)</b>	<b>1 year:</b> Any additional courses on the current UC Approved Course list
<b>PHYSICAL EDUCATION</b>	<b>2 years</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>HEALTH/ FRESHMAN STUDIES</b>	<b>½ year ½ year</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>OTHER</b>	<b>Above total = 23 year long courses</b>	<b>Minimum 15 year courses 18 year courses recommended</b>

COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS
<b>CSU:</b> SAT I or ACT
<b>UC</b> *ACT with Writing or SAT I (Reading, Writing & Math – taken after March 2005) and * Two SAT II Subject tests in two different areas: History/Social Science, English Literature, Mathematics, Lab Science, and Foreign Language
<p>It is strongly recommended that college entrance (SAT I and ACT) exams be taken by the end of the student's junior year. UC and CSU typically will not take test scores, if dated later than December of their senior year. Subject area tests (SAT II) should be taken at the end of the course that corresponds to the test taken.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Please refer to the most recent copy of AAE UC Approved Course list</li> <li>◆ UC and CSU require a "C" or better in all required subjects</li> <li>◆ Always check for additional information. Please ask your counselor for details</li> </ul>
Jan '06

Academy for Academic Excellence  
**UC “a-g” APPROVED COURSE LIST**

ATP/CEEB code: 050126

Apple Valley Unified CDS code: 36 75077 3631207

Gordon Soholt, Principal

School Governance: Charter: Apple Valley Unified SD

Mailing Address: 17500 Mana Rd., Apple Valley, CA 92307

Primary School Type: Comprehensive HS

Secondary School Type(s): K-12

Web site: <http://www.lewiscenter.org>

WASC Accreditation Status: Accredited

List Last Updated: 11/06/05 1:46 PM

**Course List for 2005-06**

**Term Type: Semester**

The following courses meet requirements for admission to the University of California.

✪denotes courses that have been approved for extra honors credit:a=5, b=4, c=3.

◆ denotes courses that cannot be used to fulfill the "g" elective requirement.

The 'category' column represents the specific subject requirement fulfilled by the course.

**a-History / Social Science - 2 years required**

Two years of history/social science, including one year of World History, Cultures or Geography; and one year of US History or one-half year of US History and one-half year of American Government/Civics

Course Title	Transcript Abbreviation(s)	Category	Honors Type	Course Notes
American Government: Birth of Democracy	American Govt	American Government / Civics		Semester
U.S. History	US History	U.S. History		
United States History AP ✪	US History AP	U.S. History	AP	
World History and Geography	World History	World History / Geography / Cultures		

### **b-English - 4 years required**

Four years of college preparatory English. Students may only use 1 year of ESL/ELD, SDAIE, or Sheltered English.

<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Transcript Abbreviation(s)</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Honors Type</b>	<b>Course Notes</b>
American Literature	American Lit	English		
British Literature	British Lit	English		
English Language & Composition AP ★	Eng Lang AP	English	AP	
English Literature & Composition AP ★	Eng Lit AP	English	AP	
Introduction to Literature and Composition	Intro to Lit	English		
Introduction to Literature Honors	Intro to Lit (H)	English		
World Literature and Composition	World Lit	English		
World Literature Honors	World Lit (H)	English		

### **c-Mathematics - 3 years required, 4 years recommended**

Three years of college preparatory mathematics that includes the topics covered in Elementary Algebra/Algebra 1, Geometry and Advanced Algebra/Algebra 2. Approved Integrated Math courses may be used to fulfill part or all of this requirement.

<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Transcript Abbreviation(s)</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Honors Type</b>	<b>Course Notes</b>
Algebra I ♦	Algebra I	Algebra 1		
Algebra II ♦	Algebra II	Algebra 2		
Calculus AB AP ★	Calculus AB AP	Advanced Mathematics	AP	
Geometry ♦	Geometry	Geometry		
Trigonometry	Trigonometry	Advanced Mathematics		

**d-Laboratory Science - 2 years required,  
3 years recommended**

Two years of laboratory science, including two of the three fundamental disciplines of Biology, Chemistry and Physics. This requirement can also be met by completing the latter two years of a 3-year Integrated Science program.

Course Title	Transcript Abbreviation(s)	Category	Honors Type	Course Notes
Chemistry	Chemistry	Chemistry		
Human Anatomy and Physiology	Anat & Phys	Biological Science		
Physics	Physics	Physics		
Physics B AP ✨	Physics B AP	Physics	AP	
Principles of Biology	Biology	Biological Science		

**e-Language Other than English - 2 years required,  
3 years recommended**

Two years of the same language other than English.

Course Title	Transcript Abbreviation(s)	Category	Honors Type	Course Notes
Spanish I ✨	Spanish I	LOTE Year 1		
Spanish II	Spanish II	LOTE Year 2		
Spanish III	Spanish III	LOTE Year 3		
Spanish IV	Spanish IV	LOTE Year 4+		

**f-Visual & Performing Arts - 1 year required**

Course Title	Transcript Abbreviation(s)	Category	Honors Type	Course Notes
Concert Band	Concert Band	Music (Advanced)		
Concert Choir ✨	Concert Choir	Music (Intro)		
Digital Moviemaking I	Dig Mov Making I	Theater Arts (Advanced)		
Drama ✨	Drama	Theater Arts (Intro)		
Drawing I	Drawing I	Visual Arts (Advanced)		
Drawing II	Drawing II	Visual Arts		

		(Advanced)		
Fiber Art	Fiber Art	Visual Arts (Advanced)		
Jazz Dance II	Jazz Dance II	Dance (Advanced)		
Painting	Painting I, Painting II	Visual Arts (Advanced)		
Piano I ♦	Piano I	Music (Intro)		
Piano Lab	Piano Lab	Music (Advanced)		
Printmaking	Printmaking	Visual Arts (Advanced)		
Sculpture ♦	Sculpture	Visual Arts (Intro)		
Video I ♦	Video I	Theater Arts (Intro)		
Video II	Video II	Theater Arts (Advanced)		

### **g-Elective - 1 year required**

One year (two semesters), in addition to those required in "a-f" above. All courses must be listed under "a-f" above with the exception of courses marked with a blue diamond (♦) in Mathematics, Language Other than English, and VPA; plus the following:

<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Transcript Abbreviation(s)</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Honors Type</b>	<b>Course Notes</b>
Earth Science	Earth Science	Science-Physical		
Principles of Economics	Economics	History / Social Science		Semester
Psychology	Psychology	History / Social Science		

**For the new eligibility index for the University of California, please visit the online calculator available at:**

[www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions/scholarshipreq](http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions/scholarshipreq)

**The following page will help you understand how the UC system compares students and will give a preliminary assessment of their progress toward eligibility for UC. It is not the sole factor as the UC system will continue to use a comprehensive review process to evaluate students if they have more applicants than they can admit.**

**This page left blank intentionally. The website on the previous page leads you to the contents of this page as presented in hard copy form.**

## FRESHMAN COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDE/CHECKLIST

- Develop a four-year high school plan with the assistance of student services staff.
  - Review the U.C. Approved Course List to insure a college prep curriculum.
  - Inform your counselor that you are college bound.
- Start thinking about careers and setting career goals.
  - Use the Discover program for career information. See student services for website, user id and password
  - Talk with parents, school staff and others to investigate career fields.
- Discover and participate in sports and extracurricular clubs/activities.
  - Colleges would rather see real involvement in one activity rather than a loose connection to several activities.
- Discuss taking the PSAT in October.
- Strive for an “A” or “B” GPA.
  - Form a study group with other college bound friends. Develop good study habits and test taking strategies.
  - Select and participate in academic enrichment programs.
- Visit community, state universities, UC’s and private colleges.
- Create a personal file (portfolio) and update each semester through high school.
  - A copy of your report cards
  - A list of awards, honors, certificates
  - A list of school, sports and community clubs
  - A list of offices and leadership positions
  - A list of jobs (paid or volunteer) and hours spent volunteering with different organizations
- Prepare for the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) given in Spring of 10<sup>th</sup> grade by using the Math and English Language Arts Study Guides:  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/mathguide.asp>  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/elaguide.asp>
- Discuss a savings plan for college. Investigate state financial aid programs and 529 plans.

## SOPHOMORE COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDE/CHECKLIST

- Review your class schedule for college prep courses. Refer to the UC Approved Course List.
- Maintain an “A” or “B” GPA; 10<sup>th</sup> grade GPA is especially important.
- Continue to work on developing good study habits and test taking strategies.
- Sign up and take the PSAT in October.
- Participate in clubs, sports and extra curricular activities.
- Participate in academic enrichment programs.
- Continue career exploration.
- Visit colleges on vacation or other family travel opportunities.
- Update your personal file (portfolio) at the end of each semester (see Freshman Planning Guide).
- Attend college fairs, talk to college representatives and any guest speakers.
- Read the AAE Catalog of Classes thoroughly to make wise decisions for your 11<sup>th</sup> grade class schedule.
- Consider summer school (VVC or elsewhere) for enrichment or advancement.
- Prepare for the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) given in the second semester by using the Math and English Language Arts Study Guides:  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/mathguide.asp>  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/elaguide.asp>
- Take SAT II Subject Tests for appropriate courses.
- Continue saving for college.

## JUNIOR COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDE/CHECKLIST

- Begin the search for colleges and universities school.
  - Read all college information thoroughly.
  - Attend college fairs and career or college speakers when available.
  - Create a college file to manage college search, testing and application data.
  - Watch for college preview days.
  - Develop a list of 10-15 schools that interest you.
  - Request applications from colleges or research the online application process
- Sign up and take PSAT in October (11<sup>th</sup> grade PSAT is the entry to the National Merit Scholarship competition).
- Review your previous and current classes to ensure meeting university entrance requirements. Maintain an “A” or “B” GPA. 11<sup>th</sup> grade GPA is especially important.
- Use the Discover computer program. See the Student Services staff for information.
- Review your PSAT scores with your counselor.
- Register for the SAT I, II and/or the ACT in the spring. Fee waivers are available for students with financial need. Attend an SAT prep class. Use a college sponsored prep course – there are free online courses available.
- Sign up for AP exams in March for May exams if you are taking AP classes.
- Update your personal file (portfolio) at the end of each semester (see Freshman Planning Guide).
- Consider enrolling at VVC to enhance your course of study and earn college credit.
- Read the AAE Catalog of Classes thoroughly to make wise decisions for your 12<sup>th</sup> grade class schedule.
- Consider summer school (VVC or elsewhere) for enrichment or advancement.
- Continue to save for college and investigate financial aid opportunities.

## **SENIOR COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDE/CHECKLIST**

### **August / September**

- Review and compare your course schedule with the UC Approved Course List to ensure a college prep program. Maintain an “A” or “B” GPA (colleges may deny admission, if your grades drop below a “C”).
- Narrow the list of potential colleges to 5-7 choices. Think broadly when it comes to applying. Have some easy, medium & difficult to get into colleges.
  - Read all college information thoroughly. Request application and financial aid information.
- Create a master calendar that includes:
  - Tests, fees, and registration deadlines for any tests (ACT, SAT or SAT Subject Tests) you may still need. The UC system requires testing to be done by December.
  - College application due dates
  - Financial aid forms required and deadlines.
  - Recommendation letters needed and from whom. Give plenty of notice.

### **October**

- Continue college visits and look for career/college representatives.
- See Counseling Department bi-weekly for new scholarship and financial aid information. Polish your college/scholarship essay.
- Attend College Fairs.
- Submit CSU applications between October 1 and November 30.

### **November**

- Submit UC applications between November 1 and November 30.
- Be aware of early deadlines to impacted programs. Investigate Early Decision admissions.
- Attend college application workshops; practice on a photocopy of the application.
- Have college applications done prior to Thanksgiving as much as possible. Mail college applications before their deadlines.

### **December / January**

- Continue to update personal file (see Freshman Planning Guide).
- Keep a copy in your college file of all college, scholarship and financial aid applications that you mail.
- Refer to financial aid/scholarship planning checklists.
- Request copy from school registrar of seventh semester transcript if needed by college.
- Prepare to file FAFSA in January.

### **February / March / April**

- No senioritis please! Colleges look at second semester grades.
- Submit Cal Grant GPA verification by end of February. See school registrar.
- Compare schools to which you have been admitted; notify each school of your acceptance or regret/decline to enroll.
- Investigate housing options and financial aid packages more thoroughly at each school to which you've been accepted.
- Notify all colleges to which you have applied, if you make a schedule change.
- Apply for EOP at CSU campuses by April 1.
- Participate in preview days and incoming freshman orientation days at your selected colleges.

### **May / June**

- Continue thorough communication with college of choice regarding necessary paperwork, fees etc.
- Request final transcripts for the college of choice from the school registrar.
- All seniors will need to pass both portions of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) in order to receive a diploma.

# College Entrance Exams

## (PSAT / SAT / ACT / SAT Subject Tests)

### PSAT- (Preliminary SAT)

The PSAT is given to most college bound juniors. College bound eighth through tenth grade students are also encouraged to take the exam. The PSAT has three parts: Critical Reading, Math, and Writing Skills. Taking the test gives you an opportunity to:

- Practice for the SAT.
- Enter scholarship competitions in 11<sup>th</sup> grade (National Merit Scholarship).
- Receive information from colleges.
- Receive valuable information about current academic skills for student/counselor.

### SAT

Used by the University of California, California State University system and many private colleges as an entrance requirement. **As of March 2005 the SAT has added a writing portion to the test.**

- The SAT is a three-hour plus test that measures
- Critical Reading
    - Sentence completion
    - Passage-based reading
    - 70 minutes (two 25 minute section and one 20 minute section)
    - Score between 200 - 800
  - Mathematics
    - Numbers and operations
    - Algebra I & II and functions
    - Geometry and measurement
    - Data analysis, statistics, and probability
    - 70 minutes (two 25 minute section and one 20 minute section)
    - Score between 200 - 800
  - Writing
    - Multiple choice – identifying errors, improving sentences and paragraphs
    - Student written essay effectively communicating viewpoint, defining and supporting a position
    - 60 minutes (Multiple choice is 35 minutes in one 25 minute and one 10 minute section, Essay 25 minutes)
    - Score between 200 – 800
      - Multiple choice subscore: 20-80
      - Essay subscore: 2-12

### SAT Subject Tests

The SAT Subject Test are one-hour, multiple-choice tests in specific subject areas. The University of California admission policy requires two SAT Subject Tests in two different subject area of the student's choice.

- SAT has *double weight* in the admissions formula for UC campuses
- It is recommended to take end of course exams
- Some colleges specify the Subject Tests they require for admission or placement; others allow applicants to choose which tests to take. *Subject Tests fall into five general subject areas: English, History and Social Studies, Mathematics, Science and Languages*
- SAT and SAT Subject test cannot be taken on the same day

## ACT- (American College Test)

The University of California system and the California State Universities in place of the SAT towards meeting admission requirements accept the ACT. The ACT assesses high school students' general educational development and their ability to complete college-level work.

- The three hour plus multiple-choice test covers four skill areas:
  - English
    - 45 minutes
    - Punctuation, grammar and usage, sentence structure, rhetorical skills
  - Mathematics
    - 60 minutes
    - Pre-Algebra, Algebra I & II, Geometry, Trigonometry
  - Reading
    - 35 minutes
    - Reading selections from four areas: social studies, natural sciences, prose fiction and humanities
  - Science.
    - 35 minutes
    - Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Earth / Space sciences
- Each area is scored on a 1-36 scale with a composite score given on the same scale based on all four sections.
- The Writing Test, *which is optional*,
  - Measures skill in planning and writing a short essay.
    - 30 minutes
    - Ability to make judgments, develop a position, maintain a focus, organize ideas, communicate clearly
    - Subscore: 2-12 scale

PLEASE NOTE: We have made every effort to represent the ACT and SAT information as accurately based on material received from the SAT and ACT organizations. For more information, please visit the following websites:

**PSAT or SAT:** [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

**ACT:** [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

## Which one should I take???

**Should I take one test or both?** Most college-bound students know that a necessary component of an admission application is a college admission test score. Most colleges and universities will not process an application without one. The two national tests are the ACT and SAT – and almost all four-year colleges and universities in the nation accept either the ACT or SAT scores equally. Research indicates that many students perform quite differently on the ACT and SAT, it may benefit you to take both tests. The option is yours! Take one or both, since colleges typically use the higher of the two scores for admission, scholarship and athletic ability. Listed below are some basic differences between the ACT and SAT that can be used as a guide in deciding which test you should take for college admissions.

<b>SAT</b>	<b>ACT</b>
Aptitude test- testing verbal and reasoning abilities	Achievement test- measuring what a student has learned in school
3 components- Verbal, Math, Written Essay	4 components- English, Mathematics, Science and Reading. Optional Writing
Correction for guessing- points taken off for guessing	Score based on the number correct with no correction for guessing
Score report will be sent to specific colleges, the report will include the scores the student received on every SAT taken	Students can choose which schools will receive their scores and which scores the schools will see
Critical thinking and problem solving	Content based

## Important Websites

1. Academy for Academic Excellence: <http://www.lewiscenter.org/>

### Colleges and Universities

2. University of California Pathways: [www.ucop.edu/pathways/](http://www.ucop.edu/pathways/)
3. California State University Mentor: [www.csummentor.edu](http://www.csummentor.edu)
4. California Colleges: [www.californiacolleges.edu](http://www.californiacolleges.edu)
5. National Association of Colleges Admissions Counseling: [www.nacacnet.org](http://www.nacacnet.org)
6. California Community Colleges: <http://www.cccco.edu/find/alphabetical.htm>
7. California Independent Colleges & Universities: [www.aiccu.edu](http://www.aiccu.edu)
8. Colleges/Universities in U.S.A.: <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/CLAS/american-universities.html>
9. International Universities: [www.findaschool.org](http://www.findaschool.org)
10. University of California / Cal State University a-g Course approved list for AAE: [www.ucop.edu/doorways/list](http://www.ucop.edu/doorways/list)

### Financial Aid/Scholarships

11. California Student Aid Commission: [www.csac.ca.gov](http://www.csac.ca.gov)
12. Cal Grant information: [www.calgrants.org](http://www.calgrants.org)
13. Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)
14. Federal PIN registration: [www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov)
15. Federal Student Aid on the Web: [www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov)
16. EdFund: [www.edfund.org](http://www.edfund.org)
17. FINAID: [www.finaid.org/fafsa](http://www.finaid.org/fafsa)
18. FASTWEB: [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)
19. Scholarshare: [www.scholarshare.com](http://www.scholarshare.com)
20. Project Scholarship Scam: <http://www.ftc.gov/ftc/consumer.htm>

### Testing Information

21. Collegeboard: (PSAT.SAT I.SAT II): [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)
22. ACT: [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)
23. Princeton Review: [www.princetonreview.com/testprep](http://www.princetonreview.com/testprep)
24. AP Central: <http://apcentral.collegeboard.com>

### Career Information

25. Discover: [www.act.org/discover](http://www.act.org/discover)
26. College View: [www.collegeview.com](http://www.collegeview.com)
27. Occupational Outlook Handbook: [www.bls.gov/oco](http://www.bls.gov/oco)
28. Bureau of Labor Statistics: [www.stats.bls.gov](http://www.stats.bls.gov)
29. Monster (Job Search): [www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com)

**These websites are current and appropriate to the best of our knowledge. As always, use discernment when gathering information.**

# Assessing your list of colleges

As you develop a list (mental or otherwise) of colleges that interest you, be sure you can answer these questions about them.

## The basics

- Where is the college? Can you locate it on a map? Is it too close to home? Is it too far? Is it too cold or too hot there?
- Have you taken the course work the college requires for admission?
- What size is the college? How many students are undergraduates?
- What is the college's selectivity ratio (what proportion of applications was admitted last year)?
- Does the college offer majors that interest you?
- Is the college coed or single sex?
- What percentage of students lives off campus?
- How many of the students graduate in four years? Five years? Six years?
- How many first-year students return for their sophomore year?
- How much does the program cost? What is the total per-year expense?
- What type of financial aid is available?

## Where would you fit in?

- What are the middle 50 percent scores for SAT® verbal and math or for ACT? Where does that place you?
- What was the high school GPA of most of the freshmen last year?
- Are freshmen guaranteed on-campus housing? If not, where do they live?
- Are there extracurricular activities that interest you?

## Visit the colleges' web sites, read the guidebooks, and look at their literature

- What are their strong academic programs? (Ask a college representative, students, graduates, and teachers.)
- What courses are required for graduation?
- Are the courses you need/want available each semester? At convenient times?
- Are there special programs that interest you (study abroad, internships, etc.)?
- What is the social life like? What percentages of students join fraternities or sororities?
- Do the pictures and the language the college uses to describe itself attract you?
- What is your general impression of the college?
- Is the school accredited?
- If professional certification is required for employment in the field that interests you, how many students enrolled in the school's program pass the certification exam?

## Admissions process

- When are applications due?
- Does the college accept the Common Application? If so, does it require supplemental forms?
- What does the application contain? Are essays required?
- Is an interview suggested or required? Is an interview available from staff or alumni?
- When may you visit the college? What is its policy regarding campus visits?
- What are the financial aid deadlines? What financial aid forms are required?

## Now answer these questions

- Am I a strong candidate for admission to this college?
- If I am not a strong candidate, what are my chances?
- Do I want to visit this college?
- What additional information do I need?

## Tips for parents on finding a college match

How can your child find colleges that match his or her needs? First, identify priorities. Next, carefully research the characteristics of a range of schools. Finally, match the two. Here are some college characteristics to consider.

### Size of student body

Size will affect many of your child's opportunities and experiences:

- Range of academic majors offered
- Extracurricular possibilities
- Amount of personal attention your child will receive
- Number of academic resources (e.g., books in the library)

In considering size, your child should look beyond the raw number of students attending. For example, perhaps she's considering a small department within a large school. She should investigate not just the number of faculty members, but also their accessibility to students.

### Location

Does your child want to visit home frequently, or is this a time to experience a new part of the country? Perhaps he would like an urban environment with access to museums, ethnic food or major league ball games. Or maybe he hopes for easy access to the outdoors or the serenity of a small town.

### Academic programs

If your child knows what she wants to study, she can research the reputations of academic departments by talking to people in the fields that interest her. If your child is undecided, as many students are, she may want to choose an academically balanced institution that offers a range of majors and programs. Students normally don't pick a major until their sophomore year, and those students who know their major before they go to college are very likely to change their minds. Most colleges offer counseling to help students find a focus. In considering academic programs, your child should look for special opportunities and pick a school that offers a number of possibilities.

### Campus life

Your child should consider what college life will be like beyond the classroom. Students have to maintain a balance between academics, activities, and social life. Before choosing a college, your child should learn the answers to these questions.

- What extracurricular activities, athletics, clubs, and organizations are available?
- Does the community around the college offer interesting outlets for students?
- Are students welcomed by the community?
- Is there an ethnic or religious group in which to take part?
- How do fraternities and sororities influence campus life?
- Is housing guaranteed?
- How are dorms assigned?

### Cost

In considering cost, look beyond the price tag. For most students, today's college costs make finances an important consideration. At the same time, most colleges work to ensure that academically qualified students from every economic circumstance can find financial aid that allows them to attend.

### Diversity

Your child should explore what she might gain from a diverse student body. The geographic, ethnic, racial, and religious diversity of the students can help students learn more about the world. Investigate which student organizations or other groups with ethnic or religious foundations are active and visible on campus.

### Retention and graduation rates

One of the best ways to measure a school's quality and the satisfaction of its students is to learn the percentage of students who return after the first year and the percentage of entering students who go on to graduate. Comparatively good retention and graduation rates indicate that responsible academic, social, and financial support systems exist for most students.

## COLLEGE COMPARISON WORKSHEET

<b>COLLEGE NAME</b>			
<b>LOCATION</b> ▶ Distance from home			
<b>SIZE</b> ▶ Enrollment ▶ Physical size of campus			
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b> ▶ Type of school (2yr, 4yr) ▶ School setting (urban, rural) ▶ Location & size of nearest city ▶ Co-ed, male, female ▶ Religious affiliation			
<b>ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS</b> ▶ Deadline ▶ Tests required ▶ Average test scores, GPA, rank ▶ Notification			
<b>ACADEMICS</b> ▶ Your major offered ▶ Special requirements ▶ Accreditation ▶ Student-facility ratio ▶ Typical class size			
<b>COLLEGE EXPENSES</b> ▶ Tuition, room & board ▶ Estimated total budget ▶ Application fee, deposits			
<b>FINANCIAL AID</b> ▶ Deadline ▶ Required forms ▶ % Receiving ▶ Scholarships			
<b>HOUSING</b> ▶ Residence hall requirement ▶ Food plan			
<b>FACILITIES</b> ▶ Academic ▶ Recreational ▶ Other			
<b>ACTIVITIES</b> ▶ Clubs, organizations ▶ Athletics, intramurals ▶ Other			
<b>CAMPUS VISITS</b> ▶ When ▶ Special opportunities			

**NOTE: About College Majors**

**It is okay to be undecided about a major – most colleges provide services to help students select a major during the first and/or second year.**

This sample letter includes requests for:

- General Information
- Application Forms
- A Campus Visit

You can modify this letter to accommodate your unique needs.

*Many colleges encourage telephone inquiries and requests.*

**sample letter**

Your Street Address  
City, State Zip Code  
Date

Office of Admissions  
Name of College  
Street Address  
City, State Zip Code

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a student at the Academy for Academic Excellence High School and will graduate in \_\_\_\_\_, 200\_.

Please send me an application for admission and information about your college—a general information bulletin, college costs, and program descriptions. I am considering \_\_\_\_\_ (see note above) as my major field of study.

My parents and I also want to investigate all possible sources of financial aid. Please send us an application form, instructions about application procedures (how and when to apply), and any other information that might be helpful.

I am interested in visiting your campus, taking a campus tour, and meeting with an Admission Counselor. I would like to meet with an advisor in the \_\_\_\_\_ (Major – see note) department, if possible. Please advise me of a time on \_\_\_\_\_ (month/date) that would be convenient.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

(Your signature)

Name

## HINTS FOR A CAMPUS VISIT

A campus visit is highly recommended. Before you visit the campus, consider some of the options below. It is also important to develop a list of questions and plan specific activities in order to accomplish your goals.

- ▶ Meet with an admission officer.
- ▶ Verify admission requirements (tests and high school preparation).
- ▶ Discuss your chances for success.
- ▶ Obtain a school calendar and a catalog; if you don't already have them.
- ▶ Determine college costs.
- ▶ Ask about financial aid opportunities, as well as deadlines, forms required, etc.
- ▶ Meet with faculty in the academic area of interest to you.
- ▶ Ask questions about academic requirements/offerings.
- ▶ Attend a class to get an idea of typical size, teaching style, academic atmosphere.
- ▶ Ask about the placement records for graduates in the field you might study.
- ▶ Identify career-planning services for undergraduates.
- ▶ Tour the campus. (Be sure to check out the dorms, dining hall, library, etc.)
- ▶ Talk to students about the general academic environment and the study commitment necessary for success.
- ▶ Find out what student activities (clubs, organizations, intramurals, etc.) are available.
- ▶ Inquire about campus life and social activities.
- ▶ Investigate transportation options.

## Financial aid checklist for students and parents/guardians

Use this sheet as a personal record and as a reminder of the steps to take to obtain financial aid. Check off each step as you complete it.

### For you and your parents or guardian

- If you are in doubt as to whether or not to apply for aid, apply!
- Obtain a social security number if you do not have one.
- Do not wait for college acceptance letters before filing for aid. File in January or February—the earlier the better. You do not have to have completed your tax returns prior to filling out the FAFSA or the PROFILE. An estimate of income is adequate. You cannot file the FAFSA until after January 1, but complete it before February 1 if at all possible.
- Consider completing the FAFSA outline at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). You will need a PIN, or electronic password before completing the form—available at [www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov). Get your PIN well in advance of your deadline because it must be assigned and e-mailed back to you before you can begin. Filing online is much faster than by mail and the Web site has prompts that help you avoid making mistakes.
- If you are applying to colleges that require PROFILE, try to file the form in late November or early December—as soon as you know the colleges to which you plan to apply. If you are applying under an Early Decision plan, complete your PROFILE in October or early November.
- Income tax forms should be filed as soon as possible (preferably in January), in order to provide accurate data on financial aid forms. Some colleges have early February deadlines.
- Inform each college about your interest in applying for aid. Make a list of the financial aid priority dates and deadlines at the colleges to which you are applying. Ask each college if it requires supplemental forms, and obtain them as needed.
- If mailing in the FAFSA, do not enclose any supplementary letters or information in the envelope with the form. These materials will be discarded. If you have information about special financial need in your family, write a letter and send it directly to the financial aid office of each college to which you are applying for aid.
- Apply for federal and state funds by completing the appropriate questions of the FAFSA.
- Check for scholarships for which you might be eligible:
  - Each college/postsecondary institution (your best source)
  - Those posted in the counseling office
  - Local and state scholarships
- Begin your Stafford student loan application by checking appropriate boxes on the FAFSA.
- File the Cal Grant GPA verification form by March 2<sup>nd</sup>. See school registrar.

### Details to remember

- In all written communications to financial aid offices, put your name and social security number on every page.
- Keep your financial aid worksheets. Always make photocopies for your records.
- If you have questions about an item, do not guess. See your counselor or an accountant, or speak with the college financial aid officer directly.
- Do not leave blank spaces on the forms. Use zeros instead.
- Proofread! And again, make copies of everything.

### After you've filed the forms

- If you properly complete the financial aid forms, you will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR) in approximately four to six weeks (online applications are processed in two weeks). It will give you your eligibility index for federal and state aid.
- If there are errors or incorrect information on the SAR, you can make corrections online (if you filed online). Or check with the financial aid office of the college you plan to attend, it may be able to submit all necessary corrections for you.
- Financial aid offers are sent by colleges either with, or shortly after you receive, a letter of acceptance. You will be asked to sign an acceptance of the amount received, and the money will be sent to the college/postsecondary institution.
- Ask your counselor for assistance if you have general questions. Specific questions should be directed to the college financial aid officers.

**Sources:** *Glenbrook High School, Illinois, and Amherst Regional High School, Massachusetts.*

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Handout 8D

## FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS

**Federal Direct Loans:** Loans made by the federal government directly to qualifying students and parents through participating colleges.

**Federal Pell Grant:** Financial assistance awarded by the federal government on the basis of need and designed to provide the “floor” of an aid package for post-secondary education. The grant may be used for tuition, room and board, books, or other educational costs, and requires no repayment.

**Federal PLUS (Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students) Program:** Provides low-interest federal loans to credit-approved parents of eligible undergraduate students. Repayment begins 60 days after loan funds are disbursed. Loans are available from participating banks, lending institutions, and participating Direct Lending schools.

**Federal Perkins Loan Program:** Loans funded by the federal government and awarded by the institution. The loans feature low interest rates and are repayable over an extended period of time.

**Federal Stafford Loan Program:** Provides low-interest, federal loans to eligible students through banks and lending institutions. The interest is paid by the federal government for qualifying students while they are enrolled at least half-time. Students who do not qualify for these interest subsidies are responsible for the interest while they are enrolled. Repayment begins after the student leaves school.

**Federal Work-Study:** A government-supported financial aid program coordinated through financial aid offices whereby an eligible student (based on need) may work part time while attending class at least half time, generally in career-related jobs.

**Information is subject to change without notice.**