

A2Z

College Planning



Climbing the steps to success

October 2011

10th and 11th grade students :

Review test materials & take PSAT either 10/12 or 10/15

1st – SAT Reasoning and Subject Tests

22nd - ACT and ACT plus Writing

Attend area college fairs and meetings

Meet with college reps visiting high school

Seniors - Continue work on college applications; complete Early Decision/Early Action applications; complete CSS Profile if required

Submit "rolling" admissions applications ASAP

November 2011

5th—SAT Reasoning and Subject Exams

(register by 10/7 - late registration 10/21)

Seniors – File Early Decision/Early Action applications

Work on remaining college applications

Register for a PIN at www.fafsa.ed.gov if you'll be applying for financial aid

Answering the Unasked Questions

How will you benefit from attending our college? What will you contribute to our college? Although you may not see these questions on college applications, if you answer them in your applications, you will be setting yourself apart from other applicants and making a persuasive case for your admission.

It may seem obvious, but students sometimes lose sight of the fact that colleges are academic institutions, and they are looking for people who love to learn. Someone whose idea of fun is discussing Kant's moral philosophy will take full advantage of the opportunities for intellectual engagement in college. When admissions officers read an application from a student who has demonstrated this kind of love of learning by pursuing opportunities beyond her high school classroom, they feel confident that she will benefit from attending their school.

Admissions officers make assumptions about what you will contribute to their college based on what you have contributed to your high school and/or community. The more selective the college, the greater the impact your contribution needs to have been in order for an applicant to stand out. While tutoring children who are living in a shelter for homeless families is certainly a valuable contribution, organizing a program to match every child with a mentor, recruiting other students to participate, and expanding that program to other shelters would have a much greater impact.

If the activities you pursue have a theme, you can focus your application on that theme, which helps admissions officers get a clear picture of your values and interests. When an aspiring anthropologist has volunteered every Saturday at a museum

where he's developed a program to introduce children to other cultures, taken anthropology classes at community college, and spent a summer on an archaeological dig, he will be able to put together a cohesive and compelling application.

Of course, not everyone has a defining intellectual or career interest, and students shouldn't feel pressured to choose something to pursue in depth just because it will look good on applications. In fact, balancing a scientific or technical side with an interest in something artistic is another way to stand out. A young woman who loves physics and engineering, but also writes poetry that she reads at a local coffeehouse could be very interesting to admissions officers.

Pursuing a few activities in depth is generally better than minimal involvement in a lot of activities. If you have a range of interests, spend some time during your early years of high school exploring them.

It makes no sense to push yourself into an activity you don't like. Since you want to find something that you can sustain for several years, it should be something you enjoy. Summer is a good time to explore your interests by getting involved in community service or research opportunities. If you can't find an established program or internship, try creating your own.

For example, a student who is on his school's basketball team might combine his love of the sport with community service by organizing a program for children at a recreation center.

Find something you love to do and any impact it may have on your college applications will just be a bonus.

Focus on Careers: Speech Pathology

Strong communication skills coupled with a desire to help others has led many people to a career in speech/language pathology. Ranked among the top thirty fastest-growing occupations in the U.S., speech and language pathologists work with some of the estimated 46 million Americans who have a communication disorder. This is also a profession that allows you to shape your career path depending upon your personal interests, education, and experience.

Speech and language pathologists work with individuals with speech, language, and swallowing problems. They diagnose and evaluate problems, plan and carry out treatment, and may be involved in research aimed at preventing and/or treating communication disorders. About half of all speech and language pathologists work in schools and universities, teaching language impaired students how to be better communicators and helping those who stutter to improve their speaking ability. The other half of the profession works in hospitals, nursing facilities, and rehabilitation centers, helping victims of stroke or brain injuries to regain their communication skills. Others are employed by research labs where they study the cause, diagnosis, and treatment of language problems. Many speech and language pathologists also engage in private practice, and may restrict their work to children, adults, or the elderly. Although speech and language pathologists work closely with other professionals such as audiologists (hearing specialists), physicians, psychologists, and teachers, they are independent professionals and can direct their own careers.

Careers in speech and language pathology require a certificate of clinical competence from the American Speech-

Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) along with a master's degree. Certification is granted after the graduate degree is completed, a passing grade on the national exam is attained, and a post-masters clinical fellowship (about nine months long) successfully completed. Most states require that speech and language pathologists be licensed and may also have additional requirements.

You'll want to consider majoring in communication sciences and disorders to prepare for a career as a speech pathologist. The goal of this major is to provide an understanding of human communication and the factors that can interfere with the normal process. The major generally includes courses in anatomy and physiology, language development, phonetics, and speech disorders. Some speech pathologists, however, choose undergraduate degrees in education, biology, English, or psychology, following these with a graduate degree in speech and language pathology. Many American universities offer degrees in this area, with highly regarded programs found across the nation.

Audiologists are hearing specialists who work with individuals with hearing and balance problems. Another rapidly growing profession, audiologists are needed to treat the estimated 28 million hearing-impaired Americans. Audiologists diagnose and measure hearing loss, and dispense and test hearing aids. Some work in the area of noise pollution. The training and certification process for audiologists is similar to that of speech and language pathologists. For more information about these careers, visit the website of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association at www.asha.org.

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What Does College Really Cost? Net Price Calculators



University of Pennsylvania

According to the Federal Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance “it is essential that students and parents focus on net price, which is the dollar amount that must be paid after subtracting financial assistance from cost of attendance. Throughout the decision making process — from considering whether college is a financial possibility, to choosing which college to attend, to assessing whether to con-

tinue once enrolled — net price, rather than list price, is of singular importance.”

But comparing net prices used to be impossible until students had completed the college application process and had received their student aid awards. That’s now changing. The Higher Education Act of 2008 requires all colleges to install Net Price Calculators on their websites by the end of October. These calculators provide information about the cost of attendance at that college minus likely grant aid from the college. Cost of attendance includes tuition and fees, room and board, and books and personal expenses.

Through the use of Net Price Calculators, families of college-bound students will be better able to compare the actual cost of attendance from one insti-

tution to the next. Since financial aid at different institutions can vary widely, it’s hoped that Net Price Calculators will encourage families to consider colleges that they may have thought they could not afford.

The Net Price Calculators are generally found in the admissions sections of college websites. (If it’s difficult to find on the college site, just type in “net price calculator” in the college’s search box.) The calculators themselves differ, with some calculators asking parents to complete a relatively short questionnaire, while others ask more in-depth questions about family finances and the student’s academic credentials. Not surprisingly, the more data the college requires, the more accurate the Net Price Calculator is likely to be in estimating the cost of education at that institution for that particular family.

Why Take the PSAT/PLAN?

Although no one enjoys taking standardized tests, there are a number of good reasons for 10th and 11th grade students to experience the PSAT or PLAN exams before taking college admissions tests. The reports generated by the PSAT or PLAN give you feedback on your strengths and weaknesses in those skills necessary for college study. By taking these practice tests well in advance of the SAT or ACT, you will be able to focus your preparation on those areas that will most benefit from additional study or practice.

Each report will also compare your skills with a national college-bound peer group, thus permitting you to realistically assess your own performance. This becomes helpful as you begin to consider your college options.

The types of questions and the directions given on the PSAT are very similar to those on the SAT. The PLAN questions and directions mirror that of the ACT. Students gain a practice advantage by taking these preliminary tests before the “real” thing.

The PSAT’s Student Search feature and the PLAN’s Educational Opportunity Service provide students with opportunities to hear from colleges that have the characteristics or programs they seek. The PLAN also incorporates a career inventory that may help you as you look toward possible future fields of employment.

Website Review

www.collegestudentathletes.com is a free tool for students who want to combine academics with playing a sport at a Division 3 school. A “Match Me” service allows students to post their profile at no charge; profiles are visible to subscribing colleges.

There’s also lots of good information about what D3 means, why playing at a D3 college might be perfect for you, and how the recruiting process works for D3 athletes. Another section explains how the college admissions and financial aid process are impacted when you play a D3 sport.

“I’m a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it.” *Thomas Jefferson*

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Tell Them Who You Are

The fall of high school senior year is filled with countless anxieties, not the least of which is the prospect of college. And somewhere between a heavy academic load, sports, Student Council, clubs, a part time job, community service, and a social life, there are the inevitable college applications. Most of the application is biographical information, but the dread begins when you start your essays.

First, you need to know that approximately 90% of all applicants to highly selective colleges are capable of doing the work at that college. Let's take Stanford for example: A typical applicant pool to Stanford has about 32,000 applicants, of whom 90% or 29,000 could succeed at Stanford. But Stanford only has room for about 1,700 new students. So how do they select from all who are qualified? The decision comes down to two evaluations: First, *Quantitative ability*: the strength of the applicant's curriculum, grades, SAT/ACT/A/P scores; those stats that all 29,000 students have. Quantitative ability accounts for over 75% of the

qualifications for admission.

The balance of the application assessment is the *Qualitative* evaluation, which is basically—*who are you, and what can you bring to our campus?* Colleges no longer look for the “well rounded student”; instead they seek a “well rounded student body.” Typically, with each graduating class, a college may lose up to half of the symphony orchestra, many of their theatre students, top math majors, etc. They look to their applicants for students with the potential to fill these spots.

As you fill out your applications and begin your essays, remember, they want to know who are you, what are you most proud of, and how this contributes to the person you are? You may have started your own business in high school, won a national championship, written and published your first novel, worked in a cancer lab cleaning rat cages, or received an Eagle/Gold Scout award. You may have excelled at art, music, photography, theater. You may volunteer for Hospice or build houses with Habitat for Humanity. Perhaps you're multi-lingual, or have had advanced musical training. Tell them who you are!