

News You Can Use



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ACT provides this monthly newsletter to inform students and their parents about college and career planning. ACT is a not-for-profit organization that serves millions of people in schools, colleges, professional associations, businesses and government agencies with programs and services that help people achieve their education and career goals. **Visit www.actstudent.org for more information and services.**



College Planning

More than one road to college success

Diane hasn't taken the route to college that her family and others expected her to. They all wanted her to attend a "prestigious" college and land a high-paying career. She graduated from high school, shy and quiet among strangers, with a "less than average" academic record and no plans for the future. She is, she says, "a late bloomer."

Now Diane is writing for ACT's student blog and her story shows students that the best path to take is their own. She has completed community college, found an interest in journalism and has transferred to Bradley University to complete her bachelor's degree.

Many students, and even their parents, believe that to be successful, they have to go to a "Big Name" university. If that's the best choice for you, fine. But don't select the college on name only. Remember that the things you expect from a big name university such as a great education and important connections with students, staff and alumni are possible if you go to a smaller, less-selective college or university. You just have a different seal on your diploma.

And maybe like Diane, your path should be to community college and then to a four-year college. She writes, "Had I chosen to attend another school, I never would have met the teachers who I respect and admire, nor forged friendships with the classmates, co-workers and [interview] subjects that I did."

So as you investigate colleges and their offerings, realize that with more than 3,500 two-year and four-year colleges and universities, it's pretty hard to believe that you could only be happy at one, single school. Or that you have to do exactly what others are doing. Pick the best path for yourself. And if you want to check out the rest of Diane's blog, visit www.actblog.org.

Make your own top 10 list

It's hard to believe that when you choose a college, you have the possibility of 3,500 two- and four-year colleges and you will select one to attend. Here are some tips on narrowing down your choices and making your own top 10 list to work with.

- Start early and do a broad college search. You can search for free at www.actstudent.org. Start thinking about what you would like and wouldn't like in a college.
- Think about how colleges differ: four-year, two-year, number of students, location, tuition, majors offered, type of school, student activities, and student support services. What's important to you?
- Narrow down colleges by how close or how far away they are to home, by average GPA, even by major. If you know what you want to study, finding a school that offers a strong program in that major can be more important to you than the prestige of a certain school.
- Visit different types of schools so you understand what it's like to be on a campus with 5,000 other students or 25,000 other students, or what it's like to be in the middle of a city or in a small town.
- Make your college visits when school is in session. Visit a classroom, talk to professors and students, eat in the cafeteria, stay in a dorm room—experience the college.
- Take charge of the search. Work with your parents as a team, but lead the effort, take responsibility, and determine what you would be happy doing.
- Be realistic. Use your time wisely and look only at colleges you think you would really attend.
- Ask someone working in the field that interests you which schools offer a good foot in the door when starting that career. It's a great way to find out about some colleges you may never have considered.

Questions to ask during a campus visit

1. What activities and services are available to help students get settled (academically and socially) during their first year?
2. How big are the classes?
3. (Ask students) How easy is it to meet with faculty?
4. (Ask students) Are you able to register for the classes you want?
5. What is the total cost of attending the college?
6. What types of financial aid does the college offer and how do I apply?
7. Are all freshmen assigned to an academic advisor?
8. Where do most freshmen live?
9. Can I take a tour?
10. What activities are available for students?
11. Who teaches the courses for first-year students?
12. How successful are the college's graduates in finding jobs?
13. What services (such as transportation and shopping) are available locally?
14. What is there to do on weekends? Do most students stay on campus or leave on weekends?

College search checklist

Use the following checklist to track your progress as you gather information.

LOCATION/SIZE

Distance from home
Enrollment
Physical size of campus

ADMISSIONS

Tests required/accepted
High school credits required
Essays
Resumes
Interviews
Letters of recommendation
Deadlines
Early action/early decision
College credit for exam scores or high school courses
Orientation program

ACADEMICS

Degrees/programs offered
Majors
Academic clubs/associations
Academic advising services
Academic tutoring services
Career placement services
Internship opportunities
Opportunities to study abroad
Other special programs and services

FINANCIAL AID

Costs of attending college
Grants
Loans
Employment
Academic and need-based scholarships
Deadlines

CAMPUS LIFE

Who attends the college?
Sports
Music
Theater
Art
Publications
Extracurricular activities
Housing
Health services
Counseling services
Safety information
Community information

Why go to college?

If you are uncertain about going to college, or you just need some reassurance that you're on the right track, here are a few reasons to go to college:

- Every bit of education you get after high school increases the chances you'll earn good pay. Most college graduates earn a lot more money during their working years than people who stop their education at high school.
- Besides good pay, the more education you get the more likely it is you will always have a job. According to one estimate, by the year 2028 there will be 19 million more jobs for educated workers than there are qualified people to fill them.
- Continuing education after high school is much more important for your generation than it was for your parents' generation. Today most good jobs require more than a high school diploma. Businesses want to hire people who know how to think and solve problems.
- Education beyond high school gives you a lot of other benefits, including meeting new people, taking part in new opportunities to discover and explore your interests, and experiencing success.

College planning terms

Following are some key terms used in college admissions.

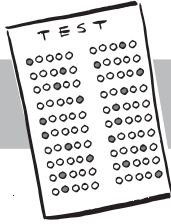
Credit hour – A unit of academic credit that often represents one hour of class time per week for a period of study (semester, quarter, etc.)

Open admissions – The policy of some colleges of admitting virtually all high school graduates, regardless of their high school grades and admission test scores.

Selective admissions – The policy of admitting only well-qualified applicants, based on high school grades, admission test scores, and additional personal information often provided through essays, resumes, interviews, and letters of recommendation.

Transcript – The official record of high school or college courses and grades, generally required as part of the college application.

Wait list – By placing a student on a wait list, a college does not offer or deny admission, but extends the possibility in the future, before the admission cycle is completed.



Testing

ACT[®]

Test date reminder

The next national ACT test date is Dec. 9, 2006. The regular registration deadline is Nov. 3 and the late registration deadline is Nov. 16. The ACT also will be offered on Oct. 28. Registration deadlines are past for this test date. Online registration and test date information is available at www.actstudent.org/regist/index.html. If you choose to register online, register early to avoid heavy Web traffic and delays.

ACT offers an optional Writing Test in addition to the multiple-choice achievement test. Go to www.actstudent.org/writing/index.html to find out about the Writing Test, including what the colleges you're interested in have decided about requiring it.

While you're at the website, don't forget to take advantage of test prep aids, including free sample test questions at www.actstudent.org/testprep/.

ACT Online Prep™, the only test prep program developed exclusively by ACT test development professionals, is also available for \$19.95 for a year's use. You also can find test day tips, a list of items to bring to the test, and details on what type of calculator you can use on the Math Test.

"Preparing for the ACT," a booklet with a complete practice test, scoring key, writing prompt and sample essays, is available to download on the Test Prep section at actstudent.org. Your ACT registration packet, available from the counseling office, also includes the booklet. Try taking the sample test and timing yourself to prepare for test day.

For all your questions about the ACT test, visit www.actstudent.org.