

COLLEGE BOUND

Helpful tips for getting into college and the smartest ways to pay for it.

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The College Admissions Timeline: What Students (and Parents) Need to Do -- Year by Year

If only the college search were as easy as filling out a couple of applications, writing a few checks and then kicking back and waiting for the responses you're hoping to hear. But it's not.

If you've attended any of our free workshops, you already know that the college search begins early in the high school career, and that there are numerous steps families must take before they make their final choice.

Below is a year by year guide on what you and your student should be doing to make the most of the college hunt. For additional information, check out our Ian's blog on our website, www.CompleteCollegePlanningSolutions.com.

Freshman Year

There's actually a lot to talk about freshman year. Sit down with your high schooler and talk about his high school track (the courses he's taking, etc.) as well as grades and GPA. Colleges want to see challenging courses on a student's transcript, so be sure to discuss any opportunities that exist for honors or advanced courses, even in the freshman year.

Also, while college may seem far off to your student, grades do matter freshman year, and they will impact your child's GPA and class rank. Set goals and help your child achieve them by being supportive and helpful. Be sure you also consider your child's non-academic roles.

Make sure extracurricular activities are a part of his freshman experience.

Making contact with the school guidance counselor at some point during the freshman year isn't a bad idea. A good counselor will help your child develop a track for the next 4 years, and offer up advice on course selection, leadership development or other school opportunities that might not be known to you or your child.

Sophomore Year

Continue with the plan you set in place freshman year, but begin looking beyond the next three. Attend a college planning workshop (see details on our website) and take every opportunity to discuss your

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Spotlight On American University



Location: Washington, D.C.
Undergraduates: 7,070
Male/Female: 40/60
Entrance Difficulty: Very Difficult

Acceptance Rate: 43 percent

SAT Math: 68 percent were over 600
SAT CR: 75 percent were over 600
SAT Writing: 24 percent were over 700
ACT Composite: 41 percent were over 30
International: 7.6 percent of the student body are from other countries

Cost of Attendance: \$51,719 (full time tuition, mandatory fees, and room and board)

Most Popular Majors: Business/Commerce, General International Relations and Affairs, Mass Communication/Media Studies

Fun Facts:

- The school was founded in 1893 and is a private school associated with the Methodist church
- The setting of the school is in the heart of Washington on an 84-acre campus located in the Embassy Row neighborhood of Northwest, D.C.
- Cultural destinations are easily accessible by Metrorail or bus
- The University is known as a politically active campus, and is ranked #10 for Great College Towns.
- American University has more than 230 registered student organizations on campus
- 56 percent of students live on campus
- Degree programs include Biological and Biomedical Sciences, Natural Resources and Conservation, Visual and Performing Arts, and Philosophy and Religious Studies
- Famous alumni include Fox News anchor Alisyn Camerote, film and television producer Barry Josephson, and former Congresswoman, Connie Morella

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child's college goals and wishes.

It's not too soon to begin the college search, either virtually or in person. Long weekends, summer vacation or spring break are ideal times to check out schools nearby, and to begin learning about what they have to offer, and expect from the high school applicant. By talking to admission personnel, you'll better understand the application process, as well as how your student can use his strengths to make his application shine.

FYI -- college visits can also motivate students, should they find that they're lacking in an important area of consideration.

Junior Year

This is going to be a busy year for your child. In addition to college visits, juniors should take the PSAT (in order to get an idea of how they'll perform on the SAT), and prepare for the upcoming SAT and ACT tests.

If your child doesn't test well, consider a prep course. Parents have many options here, from one-on-one tutoring to group classes to virtual classes. With our online prep course, we see around a 200-point average increase on the SAT math and reading scores and a 2-4 point average increase on ACT scores (36-point scale).

Your student should take both tests in the Spring of junior year. That will allow him to retest again in the fall, if his test results

aren't what you'd hoped for.

Before the senior year begins, make a list of teachers, coaches or other mentors that should be considered, and when you've decided, give them plenty of time to work on your letters. And don't procrastinate on those college essays. They're important and should be given special consideration and attention. Strive to have essays finished by the summer before senior year. It helps reduce the workload once school starts, and helps minimize stress and anxiety -- so your student can focus on school and other activities.

Senior Year

Finish those college visits early this year, and be sure you know the application deadline for each school, and that your child's application is in well before that date. Set aside time every weekend to work on applications, and to perfect them. Take time to make sure the applications are filled out properly, and that you've addressed every item on the list.

It's so important that students keep motivated academically during the senior year, because schools have been known to rescind offers if they notice a grade slump.

Don't forget to fill out that financial aid form and look into scholarship opportunities. We can help you with both, and help you find ways to reduce the college bill.

An Interview With Teen Expert Jackie Burrell

Jackie Burrell is an expert on parenting young adults for About.com, a subsidiary of The New York Times (website: youngadults.about.com)



Jackie Burrell

When it comes to writing about parenting the young adult, Jackie Burrell is the go-to source. In addition to blogging and offering up expert advice on her website, she's raised 4 children and speaks from the position of an experienced mom. We interviewed her recently about her experiences regarding those college expenses you may not have saved for.

Q: Parents often save and prepare for the expense of tuition, but are they ready for those add-on expenses they may not have expected.

Jackie: Well, I was stunned by that aspect as my kids have gone through college. The fees and additional costs can be surprisingly expensive. Just wait until you get that first textbook bill.

Q: What should parents expect when it comes to buying textbooks? What should they prepare for?

Jackie: Books can easily cost \$1,000 per year. Some of the books may be used for more than one semester, but some are one-shot deals. Science majors may pay even more, their books are usually at the top of the price range.

Q: Are certain majors more expensive than others, in regards to additional fees?

Jackie: English and history majors have it pretty good. They don't incur a lot of extra fees, but science majors typically have to add in the cost of lab coats or white coats (they protect clothing and skin from chemicals like acid), which typically add another \$10 to \$50 per course, as well as another \$30 per course for critical equipment.

Music majors don't get off the hook, either.

Their additional fees might include the expense of tuning their instruments, paying for accompanists, purchasing recital clothing (such as a gown or tuxedo) and fees to cover the use of the practice room.

Business majors may have to consider purchasing business wear, such as suits, to wear when they mingle with business owners or go to business related functions. Expect to spend another \$200 on clothes for them.

Q: What about expenses associated with campus life? What should parents expect there?

Jackie: If your son or daughter joins the Greek system, you can expect another \$400-800 a year in social dues. In addition, certain clubs and teams tack on fees, for uniforms, membership dues or activity fees.

Q: What about transportation fees?

Jackie: Most of the time, parents and students consider transportation costs when they pick a college. But what they might not account for is homesickness or some other emergency. You may have allocated that your child fly home at Thanksgiving, but what happens when he really wants to come home for a weekend because he's homesick? What about if you miss him, and want to make a weekend trip that you didn't plan for in the budget?

Also, if your child brings a car to school, there could be additional parking fee charges. Those can range from zero upwards to \$500 a semester. And that doesn't include any parking fines your child might rack up.

Q: How does technology play into expenses?

Jackie: Your student will need a laptop, and all that goes with it -- thumbnail drives, etc. But skip the printer. Most schools have them in dorms and in academic buildings so you really don't have to have one. Of course, a cell phone is a must. Check your calling plan, and shop around to see if you can find a plan that might serve you better.

News You Can Use

The first year of college can be quite a transition for both the student and the parents. But there are helpful websites that help make the first year run as smooth as possible. The sites below will help your student with some of the more challenging, and fun aspects of college life.

Dorm Tips

www.dormdelicious.com

This site looks like it was created by college students, and is very inviting to anyone who wonders about what it's like to live in a dorm. The site offers up tips and suggestions on what to bring to college, how to construct bed lofts, and how to save big time on college textbooks.

College Life Made Easy

collegelife.about.com

A site devoted to the issues of the college student. Articles on reducing stress, enjoying your first year, keeping in touch with family and friends, and keeping safe are just a sampling of what this site offers the college freshman.

College Safety - Need to Know

collegesafety.com

It's not easy sending a child off to college, and college safety is at the center of the concerns of many parents. This site is devoted entirely to college safety issues, and offers tips to parents, students and college faculty. Safety tips for women, and identity theft issues are also discussed here.

College Studies 101

collegestudytips.net

A blog offering up advice on how to find a study buddy, why you should study even when you don't need to, and more. Advice from a college insider, with humor here and there.



Ask the Professor

Q: Do I have an advantage if I apply early?

A: Studies show that there can be an admissions advantage at some colleges if you apply for early decision. But there are drawbacks to this strategy -- you limit your negotiating power and will most likely be stuck with whatever financial aid package they offer you. Another drawback: you can't change your mind later, if you decide you'd rather attend another school.

Did You Know?



- ✓ According to the U.S. Census Bureau, education had more impact on an individual's lifetime earnings than any other demographic.
- ✓ A college graduate with a professional degree earns approximately \$72,000 more a year than an individual with an 8th grade education.
- ✓ 37 percent of women (age 25 and older) in the workforce have a bachelor's degree or more as of 2010, compared with 35 percent of men.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

College Match Game



Which college did Jon Stewart attend?

- A.) NYU
- B.) Rutgers
- C.) The College of William & Mary
- D.) Harvard

Answer: C.) Jon Stewart attended and graduated from The College of William & Mary where he majored in psychology.



Upcoming FREE workshops

March 7 - 7:30 p.m.
Summit YMCA

March 27 - 7:30 p.m.
Parsippany Public Library

To reserve a seat:

Online: www.myacfa.com

Call: 1-973-467-0101



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