

TOTAL COLLEGE PLANNING

The College Journal

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May, 2009

**1st – Common
reply date for
college enrollment**

**2nd – SAT
Reasoning and
Subject Tests**

**4th – 15th - AP
exams**

Juniors – work on
resume

Juniors – speak to
advisor about
military colleges or
ROTC programs

Seniors – notify
colleges that you
will not attend

Seniors – check out
loan options if
needed

June 2009

**6^h – SAT
Reasoning and
Subject Tests**

**13th – ACT and
ACT plus Writing**

Seniors – thank
teachers and others
who helped you

Seniors – thank
scholarship
providers for aid

Seniors – have your
final transcript sent
to the college you
will attend

Considering Learning Differences in College Selection

Learning differences need not get in the way of college success but they should be considered when creating your college list. Colleges offer differing levels of support to students with learning disabilities and AD/HD. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, all schools provide a basic level of accommodations to students with physical, psychological or learning disabilities. Academic accommodations, such as extended time or a non-distracting room for exams, are meant to equalize the learning environment and are available at no cost.

Therefore, for students who have developed good learning skills, are able to self-advocate, and don't need individualized support, the basic accommodation model can work well. Students at these schools must take the initiative to secure the appropriate academic accommodations. While most of these colleges offer minimal services, some do provide additional programs such as time management workshops and access to assistive technology.

Schools with structured support go beyond basic accommodations and offer additional support outside the classroom. This can include group or individual sessions to help students with reading comprehension, writing, speaking, listening and time management. Some of these programs also provide summer pre-orientation sessions to prepare students for college courses, familiarize them with campus resources, and introduce them to peers with similar learning issues.

Then there are colleges that provide more comprehensive support. These programs teach learning strategies and skills based on

a student's learning style. One of the most well-known comprehensive programs is the Strategic Alternative Learning Techniques (SALT) Center at the University of Arizona. Students are assigned to learning specialists who provide individualized academic support and help them learn new strategies for success in the university environment. Specially trained tutors and writing support are available, as is a computer lab that provides access to assistive technologies.

Another option is a two-year school like Landmark College in Vermont, exclusively for students with learning disabilities and AD/HD. Students receive extensive support as they develop learning strategies, and most go on to four-year colleges.

Programs that offer support beyond basic accommodations usually charge fees, which can run several thousand dollars a year, depending on the level of service. Students who need support in college for a disability must have proper documentation. Check with each school you're considering for their requirements; generally colleges want test results that are less than three years old.

When visiting colleges, students should stop by the academic support office and find out what services are available. The attitude of the staff is important in determining whether a college offers a good environment for a student. Talking to students who have similar learning issues is also a great way to find out whether the school is supportive.

Students who know their strengths and weaknesses are in the best position to find schools that offer the support they need, and are likely to be successful in college.



Focus on Careers: Sports-Related Careers

Although hordes of young people dream of becoming professional athletes, very few will actually achieve their dreams. Even for the lucky few who do turn pro, playing careers tend to be short and lack job security. No matter how talented you are, having a back-up plan to a professional sports career is advisable. Happily, with so much of our nation's leisure time devoted to both watching and participating in sports, sports-related careers are abundant.

Many athletes make the transition to careers as coaches or instructors. Coaches work with both amateur and professional athletes in individual and team sports. Utilizing their own expertise and personal knowledge of a sport, coaches teach fundamentals such as proper form and technique. They oversee players and help them maximize their individual skills, and train athletes for competition. Coaches also manage sports teams, selecting players and plays, directing team strategy, and choosing equipment.

Coaches are employed at various levels. High school coaches generally teach an academic subject, and may supplement their income with part-time coaching positions. College coaches devote their entire attention to coaching, and their jobs often involve extensive travel both

for competitions and for scouting and recruiting future players. At all levels, coaches must encourage a sense of teamwork and competitive spirit, even while promoting good sportsmanship.

Sports instructors work with both amateur and professional athletes on an individual, rather than team, basis. Through their knowledge of a specific sport, often coupled with a background in physiology, sports instructors teach technique and form, and develop exercise routines and drills to help their clients improve.

Umpires and referees officiate at sports events and competitions. These are stressful jobs requiring quick decisions that may provoke spectators' derision. Referees and umpires are called on to observe play and determine violations of their sports' rules and regulations.

Another sports-related career is that of the professional scout. Scouts seek out top athletes in their sport, locating new talent and encouraging interest in the organization they represent. As with other sports-related careers, working hours are irregular and often require long days during the playing season or throughout the year. Frequent travel and exposure to adverse weather conditions are also downsides to these demanding careers.

Education

All sports-related careers require extensive knowledge of a particular sport, usually acquired through years of playing, studying, and then coaching or officiating at lower levels of the game. Sports instructors and high school coaches often begin as assistants before moving up to the number one position. Since most secondary coaches are teachers first, a bachelor's degree and teacher licensure are generally required for jobs in public schools. College head coaches usually begin as assistant coaches. Most college coaches have bachelors' degree in areas related to sports such as physiology, kinesiology, physical education, nutrition, exercise and sports science, and sports medicine.

The training requirements for sports instructors and sports officials are more varied. Certification, provided by organizations specific to each sport, is often required. Referees and umpires

usually begin by volunteering at the recreational level, and obtaining certification by an officiating school. College-level officials generally first worked at lower levels, while officials for professional sports usually must attend professional training schools and then officiate in the minor leagues before being considered for major league sports positions. Scouts, too, usually have played their sport at the college or professional level, and advance in their career through years of practice in spotting potential talent. All of these careers require good communication skills, and the ability to instruct and motivate.

Competition for sports careers, especially at the professional level, is intense. Learn more by visiting the websites of the National Association of Sports Officials at www.naso.org, the National High School Athletic Coaches Association at www.hscoaches.org, and the National Collegiate Athletic Association at www.ncaa.org.

"Careers for the sports enthusiast include coaching, instructing, scouting, officiating, sports marketing, sports agent, recreation and fitness careers, and broadcasting of sporting events."

Focus on Finances: What's the Worth of that College Degree?



According to College Board estimates, individuals with a bachelor's degree earn nearly a million dollars more over their lifetime than those with a high school diploma. College obviously pays off, but does

the cost of attending an elite private institution, like Duke or Harvard or MIT, currently budgeted at over \$50,000 per year, make economic sense?

The yearly cost of tuition and fees at private four-year colleges average about \$34,300 while similar expenses at public institutions for in-state residents average about \$15,600. What does the extra money for private education buy? Public universities tend to have large classes, and their smaller sections may be taught by graduate student assistants. You can get a fine education at a large public university if you take responsibility for your own learning and make sure that your educational needs are met. Big student bodies also mean greater choice of major, good selection of classes, and lots to do outside of the classroom. One negative aspect, however, is the difficulty many students experience in completing all requirements in four years. Students often need to take classes during summers or may take five or more years to complete their degree. Completing the first two years at a community college will initially save money, but students who take this route generally earn considerably less than their peers from four year

institutions, even if they ultimately go on to complete a masters, Ph.D. or professional degree. One recent study showed average earning differences of \$2,000-\$9,000/year depending upon degree.

How about the cost per year difference at the less well-known private college vs. a "designer label" college? Is the name on the school's diploma really worth the extra money? According to a study by the National Bureau of Economic Research, graduates of colleges whose students have a 100 point higher average SAT score earned 6% more than graduates of less selective colleges. It also found, however, that students who were accepted at the "elite" colleges but who chose to attend less selective institutions did not earn less than their "elite" peers. On the other hand, exciting educational things happen when you get a bunch of very bright kids together. Administrators will often tell you that half of what you learn at college happens outside of the classroom. Peer group does matter.

The reputation of the undergraduate institution you attend also makes a difference in terms of graduate school admissions. A diploma from a prestigious institution may pay off when you first enter the working world. Employers recruit heavily at the most prestigious schools and students may be offered higher initial salaries than their peers at colleges with lesser reputations. But over time, where you went to school matters less and less; eventually experience and performance on the job determine your salary level and career advancement.

Talent and College Admission

Unlike the myth of the "well-rounded" student, colleges continue to reward the applicant with a needed special talent with offers of admission. If you're a sophomore or a junior with a special talent, you should begin thinking *now* how to make that skill known to the colleges that interest you.

Athletes should speak with their coaches and ask for assistance in assessing their skill level. Specialized summer sports camps and showcases can help high school athletes catch the eye of college coaches. You can also begin contacting coaches at target colleges via e-mail and by completing athletic information forms for prospective student athletes that are posted on college websites. Be sure that video is taken of you during competition to use in compiling a DVD for recruiting purposes.

Visual artists should prepare a portfolio to showcase their talents. Bring yours to a National Portfolio Day (<http://portfolioday.net>) to learn ways of improving the portfolio or get help from a local art center. College websites have information on portfolio requirements for visual art applicants.

Musicians need to record audio for a CD that can be sent to colleges in lieu of a live audition. A performance DVD can serve a similar function to enhance the application of theater majors. In a similar fashion, writers should save samples of their best work in a variety of genres.

With these supplements in hand, you'll be ready to showcase your talent for college admissions committees. Check before sending, however, to be sure that Dream U will consider additions to your application.

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Mid-Year Admissions

Good news—bad news? Popular colleges have been making ever-greater use of offers of mid-year admissions to students who are clearly a good match, but for who they just don't have room. If you've received an offer of mid-year admission to one of your top choices for college, you have several decisions to make. Most importantly, decide where that college falls on your own list. If it's truly your first choice, you'll need to decide if waiting a semester to enroll meets your needs. Let's consider the pros and cons of mid-year admissions.

First there's the "friends factor". The first few weeks of college are probably the easiest time of your life to meet new people and form close friendships. If you start one semester later than most other freshmen, you'll need to be more proactive in joining groups and making friends. You'll also have less choice in housing options

since you'll be occupying space of a student who may be studying abroad that term. On the plus side, colleges offering mid-year admissions are aware of these issues; ask what your college is doing to help mid-year admits assimilate to college life.

Then there's the time factor. Will it take you an additional semester to graduate or will your college allow you to take classes for transfer credit at another college during that fall before enrolling so you can be on track for graduation? If so, college may actually end up costing you less if you attend a local community college for a semester.

Another plus is the variety of options open to you during that first semester. In addition to the community college option, you could perform community service (check out americorps.org) or travel; get a job or internship; or study abroad for a semester. You'll find ideas for a "gap semester" at dynamy.org or enrichmentalley.com.

Website of the Month: myfirstpaycheck.com

Created by a teenage girl and her older brother, the site has thousands of job postings directed to high school students. Although you may not find a job of interest near where you live, the site also has useful information for job-seekers, including a resume-builder, and blogs about a host of employment-related issues.

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