

# TOTAL COLLEGE PLANNING

The College Journal

June 2010



[www.totalcollegeplanning.com](http://www.totalcollegeplanning.com)

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## June 2010

### 5<sup>th</sup> – SAT Reasoning and Subject Tests

### 12<sup>th</sup> – 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

## Summer 2010

### Do Something Interesting:

Job, internship, or community service; summer program

### Explore Colleges:

Through websites, guidebooks, virtual and real visits

### Rising Seniors

Begin to work on Common Application

Work on Essays

Narrow College List

Prepare for SATs and/or ACTs

College Tours & interviews

### Underclassmen:

Prepare for fall PSAT or PLAN

## Getting Off to a Great Start at College

Arriving at college for the start of freshman year can be both exciting and scary. Your first task is making friends, and there will be many opportunities. In freshman residence halls, the first few weeks are nonstop socializing. Resident Advisors will host pizza parties to help you get to know your hall-mates. Students leave their doors open and everyone visits at all hours.

If you aren't sure about a major, take courses in a variety of subjects and, when possible, choose classes based on the professor's reputation. A great teacher makes any subject fascinating. If a class you really want is full, talk to the professor. Teachers love enthusiastic students, and you may find that a space opens up. You'll also have made a great first impression.

Students who are successful and happy in college are engaged, meaning they interact with professors and students, and they participate in campus life. Most colleges have activity fairs at the start of the school year at which you can learn about all the clubs on campus. Whether you love singing, hiking, or community service, you'll find people who share your passion. Joining a club is a great way to create a feeling of community, which is especially important at a big university.

Everyone feels homesick at some point. You realize how much you miss your family, friends, dog, even your house. Add the stress of midterms and sleep deprivation, and it's easy to feel overwhelmed. The counseling center is a great resource. They see many students who are having trouble adjusting to college, and talking to some-

one can really help.

There are ways to minimize stress. Even seemingly small things, like keeping your room clean, can impact mood. Exercise helps you stay mentally as well as physically healthy, and many colleges have well-equipped athletic facilities that rival any health club.

Creating a structure that provides time to study and sleep is another way to take care of yourself. You'll probably have about 15 hours a week in class. That leaves plenty of time, and if you set up a schedule for studying, you can get your work done during the day and have evenings for fun. When it comes to studying, it's much easier to keep up than to catch up.

It is important to go to class, even though in large lectures, nobody will care if you show up. Sit up front and you're less likely to doze off. After each class, read your notes and clarify anything you didn't understand. Good notes are very helpful at exam time.

If you're struggling in a class, ask for help. Professors have office hours, and most of them are delighted when students show an interest in their subject. Even if you don't have a question about the class, stop by and introduce yourself. Knowing and being known by your professors will help you feel part of the campus community.

College is a fresh start. Nobody knows if you were the most popular student in your high school or the class nerd. This is your chance to become the person you want to be. Sure, it can be scary, but the payoff can also be wonderful!

## The Case for Women's Colleges

While most colleges went co-ed in the 1960s, a number of excellent women's colleges continue to thrive as single sex institutions. Applying to women's colleges can increase your options, especially if you want to attend a selective school. Some co-ed colleges get more applications from well-qualified women than men, and men with less impressive academic records may be admitted over stronger female applicants just to maintain gender balance. Accomplished young women who want full consideration based on their merit can look to elite women's colleges, where strong female applicants are in demand.

Students who are considering a women's college may be worried about the lack of dating prospects, but women who attend a single sex school find ways to meet men. Some students also say they don't want to be around only women because they have had unpleasant experiences with cliques of girls in high schools. But they are as likely to find that kind of social stigmatizing at co-ed schools where fraternities and sororities dominate social life. Women on more traditional campuses where fraternities rule may feel more pressure to be thin, get "A" grades, wear the right clothes and be popular. It can be very liberating to focus on academics and feel comfortable expressing your opinions in and out of class, without worrying about what male classmates will think.

Some students are reluctant to apply to a women's college because they are afraid there won't be many heterosexual woman in the school. While a women's college may be a more comfortable environment for lesbians, that doesn't mean everyone is gay. Some straight women value the opportunity to live in a community where they are not competing with or for men. They like not having to worry

about whether their hair and makeup look perfect every day.

Parents sometimes wonder if their daughters will be prepared for the real world after spending four years in an all female environment. But being on a campus where women serve as club presidents, edit the school newspaper and run student government means these students develop leadership skills that will serve them well in any profession. Professors and staff are there to help women succeed, and having that kind of

nurturing environment for four years helps these students build the confidence they need to take on the world.

Many women's colleges are part of a consortium, offering interaction with male students at nearby colleges. Bryn Mawr and co-ed Haverford pool their resources so that some majors are offered on one campus and not the other. Wellesley students can take classes at MIT. The Five College Consortium in western Massachusetts offers

Smith and Mt. Holyoke students the option to take classes at Amherst, Hampshire and University of Massachusetts. Barnard students can walk across the street, where they have access to classes and all the facilities of Columbia University. At Scripps, which is part of the Claremont Colleges, students have access to classes and social events at Pomona, Pitzer, Claremont McKenna or Harvey Mudd.

Women's colleges attract students who have been successful in high school and are motivated to prepare for challenging careers. They have excellent acceptance rates at law, medical and graduate schools. The benefits of attending a women's college don't end at graduation as loyal alumnae offer internships, job leads and mentoring. Graduates of these colleges have a network of women who provide lifelong career support, and many of them have achieved leadership positions in business, politics and the arts.



Wellesley College in MA offers women superb education on-campus as well as the option of taking classes at MIT.

*"Being on a campus where women serve as club presidents, edit the school newspaper and run the student government means these students develop leadership skills that will serve them well in any profession."*

## Focus on Finances: Managing College Costs



College is full of hidden costs. That extra pizza delivery, a special concert, the newest tech toy, a necessary college sweatshirt, or a much-needed trip home or to visit friends.

The easy access to plastic makes it easy to put off paying these costs until later, but ultimately, pay up you must.

When considering college costs, it's important to include these unforeseen costs in your college budget, and also to consider how they'll be paid. The new college-issued student cards which allow students to charge not only meals and books, but also tech toys, groceries, and college supplies at both the university bookstore and neighboring shops, may actually increase these extra expenses by making it so simple to put them on the family's tab. It's also really easy to run up big cell phone bills talking to friends on other campuses. Before your child leaves for college, a heart to heart talk about finances is in order.

One place to save at college is on the college meal plans. Often, colleges require students to subscribe to a minimal number of meals. Choose a plan that fits your child—there's no point in paying for meals

that your child will not eat. Many students prefer the opportunity to cook some of their own meals. Place some additional money in a flexible spending account or consider a low limit credit card to help your child manage extra expenses. A prepaid calling card is a good way to avoid those high cellular bills or consider a plan with unlimited minutes.

Ask your child to look for opportunities to save or earn money while at school. Textbooks can be bought used and resold at the end of the semester. Students can consider a co-op program and get paid while exploring a future career. Part-time jobs are a good idea. Many students benefit from the additional structure a job adds to their week as well as from the extra spending money. Even without Federal Work/Study programs, many jobs are available on or near campus. Most students can work 10-15 hours a week during the academic year and full-time during the summer.

If money is really tight, consider earning some credits at a lower-priced institution, or by meeting some degree requirements through CLEP (College Level Placement) exams. Attending college pays handsome dividends, but students and families should not take on so much college debt that their future options are limited by the need to repay loans.

## Saying Goodbye; Keeping in Touch

The end of high school is a bittersweet time. While many students eagerly embrace the new adventures awaiting them, there's still a feeling of sadness and nostalgia for the friends and family left behind. Saying goodbye to your high school friends is easier if you make adequate plans to keep in touch.

Text messaging and e-mail have greatly simplified the problem of staying connected to friends and family. Free Internet access is the norm at nearly all colleges, so use your account to keep those long-distance friendships going. Phone calls and letters as well as occasional visits to each other's colleges can help you to stay connected. Be aware, however, that your friendships may change.

For perhaps the first time, you and your closest friends will be having different experiences and

meeting new people. The classes you take and the books you read will also influence your thinking on a variety of subjects. In time, you might find that you have less in common with some of your old friends than with your fellow students. Although you might have had a wide circle of friends in high school, it's common to maintain closeness with only a few high school friends once you have moved on in life.

Your college environment will provide instant access to a new group of potential friends, and you'll want to leave yourself open to new relationships. The trick is to balance these developing friendships with older relationships. Maintaining the connections with people who are most important to you is worth the effort it takes. To do this successfully, you need to be supportive of both your own and their right to grow and change.

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## Summer Tasks for Rising Seniors

Senior year can be very stressful, with many college-bound students juggling AP and honors classes with sports and extra-curricular activities. To top off the workload, college applications and admissions testing vie for time. Make your senior year easier by taking care of some of the details this summer.

- Finalize your college list. After researching and visiting prospective colleges, you should tweak your final application list to include a good mix of target colleges. Be sure your list includes some schools that are both academic and financial safeties, and which you'd be happy to attend.
- Complete the Common Application—the Common Application will be available at [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org) after Aug. 1st. The Common Application is

now used by over 400 colleges—you submit the same application and essay to each college you choose. Some Common App colleges also have a school-specific supplement that you will need to complete.

- Brainstorm ideas for application essays and personal statements, and begin to craft an essay that will enhance your chances of admission.
- Visit as many campuses as you can. The more you know about a school, the better case you can make for admission. Know why each college you choose is a good fit for you.
- Prepare for any additional admissions tests to be taken in early fall.
- Work on supplementary materials such as portfolios or audition pieces if needed.

## Website of the Month: [www.CollegeResults.org](http://www.CollegeResults.org)

Discover which universities do the best job of graduating their students in a timely manner. [CollegeResults.org](http://CollegeResults.org) allows users to compare graduation and retention rates at most of the U.S. colleges. You can search for a specific school and then compare the results for that institution to the rates found at a group of similar colleges. Additional data provides information on diversity of the student body, transfer rate, and test scores of entering students. The data base even tracks results for hundreds of for-profit colleges, important information for students thinking of enrolling at a proprietary institution. A similar database can be found at <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator>.

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