

# TOTAL COLLEGE PLANNING

The College Journal

July



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## July

Seniors : thank teachers and counselors

thank scholarship programs for aid

have final transcript sent to your college

5<sup>th</sup> - SAT I and II

12<sup>th</sup> - ACT

## Summer

Read, Read, Read

Do Something Interesting:

Job

Volunteer Work

Internship

Summer Program

Distance Learning

Explore College Choices:

College Websites

Guidebooks

Visit Campuses

Virtual Tours

Learn About Scholarship

## Seniors

Get Applications

Work on Essays

Narrow College List

Prepare for testing

College Tour

Interview

Juniors & Sophomores

Prepare for PSAT

## Summer Search for Juniors

While summer vacation brings time for relaxing and hanging out with friends, it is also prime time in the college search process for current junior year students. By using some of your vacation time organizing and refining your college search, you'll make the fall of senior year both more fun and less stressful.

Summer is a wonderful time to combine a family trip with college visits. Although you'll get a much truer view of a college when classes are in session, the summer still provides opportunities to narrow your college search. Plan on visiting campuses wherever you go, allowing time for a tour and information session, as well as a meal in the dining hall. Be sure to talk to current students, visit the dorms, and sit in on a class if possible. Make notes on what you like about each campus and how well it seems to fit you. By visiting a variety of colleges, large and small, public and private, liberal arts and specialized, you'll be able to zero in on those factors that are most important to you. Arrange an interview if available,

## Liberal Arts Colleges

Liberal arts colleges generally provide undergraduates with a more personal educational experience than do large universities. Classes tend to be small, and are generally taught by professors rather than the graduate assistants common at larger institutions. Since the goal of a liberal arts education is to teach students to think and to have the ability to solve problems in an ever-changing world, students at these colleges take a broad base of courses in the humanities, sciences, and social sciences. Although liberal arts students "major" in their field of choice, core requirements ensure that these students are also exposed to a wide range of subjects. Interdisciplinary courses also help to point up the connections between different academic subject areas.

With our body of knowledge accumulating at an astonishing rate, individuals who have learned

and be sure to write a note of thanks after your visit.

Once you've narrowed your prospective college list to a manageable number, begin to work on applications. Organize your materials in an accordion file, with one compartment for each college. Although you'll probably want to apply on-line, printing out the application makes sense so you can peruse it at your leisure. Create an overall tracking sheet, listing application and financial aid deadlines and materials required by each college. Also make a master list of essay (or personal statement) topics. You'll quickly realize that the same general essay can often be tweaked to meet the requirements of most of your college choices. Be sure to utilize *The Common Application* if you plan to apply to several schools that offer this option. You can download a copy from [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org). If you use part of your summer to create a winning essay and to finalize your college list, you'll be far ahead of the game come fall.

*how to learn* are often better prepared for the future than those who have specialized in a narrow body of material. The goal of a liberal arts education is to provide students with the tools they need to continue to learn throughout life. Ideally, students discover how to analyze and organize information and to apply what they have learned to new situations. The seminar and small group learning environments common to liberal arts institutions also prepare students well for working in a collaborative team environment in the future.

Although many graduates continue their education at graduate or professional schools, new liberal arts graduates are highly prized by companies who value their ability to be effective members of a team, to be flexible, and to know how to get the information that they need.



## Focusing on Careers: Forensic Science

The popularity of such “true crime” TV shows as *CSI—Crime Scene Investigations*, has spurred an unprecedented interest in careers in forensic science. According to the American Academy of Forensic Scientists, careers in forensic science allow practitioners to “combine science and service in the interests of society, justice and public safety.” In the criminal justice system, it is the forensic scientist who performs a scientific investigation to determine the facts of a case. Forensic scientists also work in the civil justice system, determining issues such as the validity of a signature on a will or determining a corporation’s compliance with environmental regulations. Careers in forensic science are spread out through a number of subspecialties.

*Criminalists* identify, analyze and interpret physical evidence found at a crime scene in an effort to determine the facts of a crime. This evidence is used to link the victim and the crime scene to the suspect. After analyzing and interpreting the evidence, the criminalist provides expert testimony at trial.

*Forensic Engineers* apply the science of engineer-

ing to both criminal and civil cases. These engineers may investigate the cause of product failure, the origin of fires, or why an accident occurred.

*Forensic Dentists* identify human remains from natural disasters, terrorist activity, crimes or missing persons. Bite-mark analysis and injury analysis are often part of the job description of the forensic dentist.

*Forensic Pathologists* apply the principles of pathology and medicine to legal needs. They investigate the causes and circumstances of death.

*Forensic Anthropologists* identify victims of crime or disasters through study of their skeletal remains.

*Forensic Psychologists* and *Psychiatrists* address such issues as competence to stand trial and assessment of mental illness. Some analyze past behavior to predict future behavior.

You can learn more about these and other subspecialties of forensic science at the Academy’s website at [www.aafs.org](http://www.aafs.org).

*Careers in forensic science allow practitioners to “combine science and service in the interests of society, justice and public safety.”*

American Academy of Forensic Scientists

## Education and Training

Forensic scientists are, first and foremost, scientists and all specialties require a minimum of a bachelor’s degree in science. As with all scientists, the forensic scientist needs to be good at analyzing data and seeing connections. Intellectual curiosity and the tenacity to follow a puzzle to its conclusion are vital. Forensic scientists also need to have good verbal skills, be attentive to detail, have the ability to write an understandable scientific report, and be able to work as a member of a team.

*Criminalists* need a bachelor’s degree in chemistry, biology, microbiology or a related science. After further training, many choose to take an exam for certification by the American Board of Criminalistics. A bachelor’s degree in engineering is the basic

requirement for a *forensic engineer*. Advanced engineering degrees and continuing education are recommended for this field.

Advanced degrees are required for many of the other branches of forensic science. *Forensic Dentists* and *Pathologists* have either dental or medical degrees and then undertake further specialized training. *Forensic Anthropologists* usually have a PhD in anthropology with a specialization in human anatomy and the skeletal system. *Forensic Psychiatrists* first need a medical degree, then training in psychiatry, and further study of forensic psychiatry. *Forensic Psychologists* generally have a master’s or PhD in behavioral science.

## Learning More

Although you do not need to major in forensic science in order to train for these positions, colleges are increasingly offering a major in this specialized field. If you are interested in pursuing this type of degree, you can check out the programs available at such schools as Baylor University, Arkansas State, John Jay College, Columbia College (MD),

the University of Central Florida, Loyola New Orleans, the University of New Haven, Oklahoma State, or Seattle University. The American Academy of Forensic Sciences has a wealth of information available at their website, with links to the professional organizations of each of the subspecialties described above. Click on the website at [www.aafs.org](http://www.aafs.org).

## Money Matters: Avoiding the Credit Card Trap



College students, like their parents, find themselves inundated with offers for credit cards. “No interest for six months”, “earn miles for everyday spending”, or “consolidate your debts” may seem attractive to

students faced with the realities of budgeting, but these “too good to be true” offers truly are. Smart students avoid the easy temptation to “put it on plastic”.

While the majority of college students do have at least one credit card, they’d be wise to remember to buy things within their budgets, not within their credit limits. One way to avoid too much credit card debt is to carry only one or two cards that have low limits. Use the cards for emergencies, and try to pay off your balance each month. In a time of very low interest rates, credit card balances are still often assessed at 10–18% or more. Also keep in mind that credit card companies impose high late charges for tardy payments—this considerably increases the stated rate .

As you begin to take on adult roles and responsibilities, it’s important to understand how credit cards fit into your future financial picture. Paying off your balance promptly will help you to establish a good credit history. Making only the minimum payment each month or carrying an excessive number of credit cards can negatively affect your credit rating.

Your credit history will be scrutinized every time you rent an apartment, buy a car, or make a major purchase like a house. Potential employers also commonly check a job applicant’s credit history. Too many cards or too much debt will impact your ability to make those big purchases in the future, or may affect your ability to get your dream job.

Be sure to read the fine print on your credit card application. Choose a card with no annual fee and a 25-day grace period whenever possible. Get one with a low credit limit and keep your charges to a total that you can pay completely. People who carry no balance and who pay off their charges each month can get all of the benefits of using plastic without paying for the privilege. Airline miles or other rewards may be a side benefit.

## Telling The Story That Only You Can Tell

No matter what question you are asked to respond to on your essay, the real underlying topic of your college essay is YOU. This is your opportunity to tell a story that only you can tell. I know, you’ve been told to be sure that you answer the question asked, and you should, but in answering that question, be certain to give the reader a chance to learn who you are, how you think, and what you value. The essay is truly the only part of your college application that you can control. The essay provides you with an opportunity to show the admissions committee the true you behind the statistics of grade point average and test scores. Instead of dreading the task of writing your college essays, look at them as your chance to reveal the unique you.

Although the questions from colleges may be different, all really want to know the same thing: Who are you? If the topic asks about a significant event, person, or experience, describe it briefly, and then use the rest of your essay to explain why it was significant to you. You need to let your reader know how the event shaped you, impacted your thinking, and helped you to grow. Keep your focus on details - sweeping generalizations and descriptions of trips or events don’t reveal much

about you. Think of those things you feel most strongly about, something you love or could talk about forever, and turn this into the subject of your essay.

The rest are technicalities. Try for an original subject that few other students will write about. That means, avoid descriptions of trips, community service activities, or major world events; you don’t want to sound like every other applicant. Working on your essays over the summer is a great idea because now you have time enough to plan and write and rewrite until you’re satisfied that this is your best work. Later, show it to several adults you respect and ask for their feedback. Rewrite again and proofread numerous times before submitting. This is one piece of writing that needs to be grammatically correct. Use active words to describe things, and provide examples whenever possible. Use language that reflects how you speak in formal conversations rather than reflecting your ability to use a thesaurus. Be aware that your readers will compare your essay to your English grades and verbal test scores. A brilliant essay coupled with low grades and scores will raise a red flag. Let your essay reflect both who you are and your unique voice, and it will truly be a “winning” essay.

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### Planning

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## Saying Goodbye and 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.

Instant 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.

## Website of the Month: What Can I Do With a Major In...?

The University of North Carolina at Wilmington maintains a really useful website at [www.uncwil.edu/stuaff/career/Majors/index.htm](http://www.uncwil.edu/stuaff/career/Majors/index.htm) that attempts to answer just that question. Nearly fifty academic disciplines are fully explored ranging from accounting to geography to theater. Career titles that match each major as well as those requiring addi-

tional training or education are listed. The personal qualities and skills needed for these jobs are also described. Links are provided to numerous websites where you can get further information that focuses on each of these job titles. Here's an easy way to discover what you can do with that major in ...

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