

TOTAL COLLEGE PLANNING

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Data, Deadlines, and Details

Sept.

10th and 11th grade students register & prepare for PSAT

Take challenging college-prep courses

See your counselor if you need special testing accommodations

Seniors :

Release "Score choice" - SAT II scores you want on your record

Finalize college list

Work on essays and applications

Review your transcript for accuracy

Request letters of recommendation from teachers, counselor, employers

Meet with college reps visiting your high school

Sept.

13th - ACT - in selected states only

October, 2008

4th - SAT I and II

15th or 18st - PSAT

25th - ACT

As summer draws to a close, seniors must once again find their desks under the volume of college mail. It must seem like every college you've ever heard of, and many that you never heard of, have sent you enticing brochures, viewbooks, and applications. By now, you should be close to finalizing your college list, and hopefully have included reaches, probables, and safety schools. Now comes the tricky part, you need to organize those applications and keep track of all the deadlines, dates, and requested information.

First, set up a special file with a folder for each of your college choices. Clear out unwanted applications and brochures. Keep all materials from a specific college in its own folder. Next, prepare an overall guide sheet to organize the details. Rule vertical lines to divide the page into sections for each of your college choices. Then rule horizontal lines to keep track of specific information. You'll want to include space for the following contact data: college name, mailing address for the office of admission, admission office phone number, website, admission representative assigned to your area, e-mail address.

Next, note technical details: type of application—paper, common, on-line. If on-line, note the

website you'll be using to submit the application. Also note if early decision or early action.

Now you need a section for application requirements. Include information such as essays required, recommendations needed (and who you'll be asking), test scores and transcript requirements. Note if an interview is required or recommended.

Next comes the all-important dates and deadline section. Here, you note the dates all information is due and the dates you actually send the required information. Include application deadline (plan on sending yours at least several weeks ahead of the deadline), dates you requested transcript and test scores sent, dates you ask for recommendations, date of interview if suggested.

Money issues come next. Note if Profile is required and date FAFSA is submitted. Also note dates when housing and admission deposits are due.

Use each college's file to keep copies of all application and financial aid information you send to the college, but your overall data sheet will help make sure you don't miss important deadlines.

Should Sophomores Take the PSAT?

Since the PSAT will change in 2008, many current sophomores may wonder if they should bother taking the PSAT this year. Even though the test will be somewhat different next year, you can still get a lot of valuable information from the current exam. Taking this year's PSAT as a sophomore will give you important diagnostic information about the current state of your verbal, math and writing skills. You'll be able to compare your performance to a national sample of college-bound tenth graders, and gain insight into those areas where your skills need work. Although some of the question formats will be different next year, the three major test areas—Verbal and Critical Reading, Math, and Writing Skills—will remain.

In the Verbal area, the reading comprehension section and the sentence completion section will both be retained on the new exam. The Writing Skills assessment will have the same types of questions as this section on the new PSAT and SAT. The Math section tests most of the same content and includes all of the question types that will be on the new PSAT. Each of these sections provide you with a good preview of how you are likely to score on the new test.

Perhaps more importantly, taking the current PSAT provides some of the needed *practice effect* ; valuable test-taking experience that often leads to higher scores.



Focusing on Careers: Meteorologist

“Everyone’s always talking about the weather, but no one seems to do much about it.” Well, by becoming a meteorologist, you might be able to do more than just talk. Weather forecasting is the best known application of the field of meteorology. Otherwise known as atmospheric science, this is the study of the total earth atmosphere—the blanket of air that covers our planet. The weather forecasters we see on TV and in hurricane centers work in the most glamorous part of the profession. Along with a strong background in meteorology, these specialists also need excellent communication skills and knowledge of speech and journalism.

But there’s more to meteorology than weather forecasting. Meteorological research is used in studies of air pollution, for agriculture (studying and predicting freezes, rainfall and droughts), in planning air and sea transportation, and in our na-

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Course of Study

Atmospheric science is a fairly small field, and relatively few colleges offer degrees in meteorology or atmospheric science. However, a bachelor’s degree in engineering, mathematics, or physics is an excellent preparation for graduate study in meteorology. At the undergraduate level, courses in atmospheric science are taught by university physics, earth science, geography, and geophysics departments. If you’re interested in this field, check that courses required for entry level positions at the National Weather Service are available at the college you are considering. In addition to courses in atmospheric science, you’ll want a strong background in mathematics and physics. Include courses in speech and journalism if broadcast meteorology is your goal, or in chemistry if you want to work in the field of air quality and pollution control.

For an entry-level position, you’ll need at least 24 semester hours of meteorology courses including analysis and prediction of weather systems and a course in instrumentation. You’ll also want to include classes in calculus, differential equations,

tion’s defense. Other meteorologists are engaged in studies of global warming and ozone depletion. Meteorologists use sophisticated equipment such as Doppler radar and satellites along with weather balloons to develop computer models of the world’s atmosphere. These models are used in long and short-term and local forecasts. Through measurements of airflow patterns in violent storms, meteorologists can better predict hurricanes and tornadoes, and monitor a storm’s direction and intensity.

Nearly 40% of all U.S. meteorologists are employed by the federal government in the National Weather Service (NWS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Others work at private firms provide information for customers of weather-sensitive industries, such as farmers, commodity investors, construction firms, utilities and transportation, and radio and television.

physics, statistics, computer science, and physical oceanography or climatology. Some positions (including all research positions) require additional training in the form of a master’s or Ph.D. degree in atmospheric science. Students interested in starting their own business or climbing the corporate ladder might want to also pursue a master of business administration (MBA).

A complete list of colleges that offer degrees in atmospheric science can be found on the website of the American Meteorological Society at www.ametsoc.org. Some of these colleges include the Air Force and Naval Academies, and the Universities of Alabama (Huntsville), Arizona, California (Davis and UCLA), Chicago, Delaware, Denver, Georgia, Hawaii, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada (Reno), Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Utah, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Programs are also available at Cornell, Drexel, Florida and Georgia Tech, Howard, Indiana and Ohio State, Johns Hopkins, Purdue, Rice, Rutgers, Texas A&M, Vanderbilt, Yale, and many of the SUNY colleges.

To Learn More

Lots of good information about careers in meteorology is available on the website of the American Meteorological Society. In addition to curricular requirements and lists of colleges with approved programs, the site provides information about scholarships and job opportunities. The AMS also has a

program with many companies in the private sector to provide summer internships to students—one of the best ways to gain practical experience while still in college. The federal government, too, offers summer internship programs for college-level students. Check out www.ametsoc.org/AMS.

Money Matters: Web Advice on Saving for College



You can get lots of advice on the web on ways to save to meet college expenses. Some of the most well-respected financial information sites include:

- SmartMoney's college-planning site (www.smartmoney.com/college) provides articles about saving for college as well as financial calculators to help you predict future costs and the amount of savings needed. Sample portfolios for parents of different aged children are available.
- Kiplinger's Planning Center (www.kiplinger.com) has reprints of articles from the magazine as well as a calculator to predict the amount of aid a particular family might receive. Another section offers strategies for saving for college based on the age of your child. Other articles address the basics of financial aid.
- Fidelity's site (www.personal.fidelity.com) includes a comparison table that allows you to compare various college savings plans including 529 plans, Edu-

cation IRAs, and UGMA and UTMA plans. Check out the college area of the planning & retirement section.

- Vanguard's website (www.flagship5.vanguard.com) includes a college-planning section that allows you to determine how much money you need to save each year to reach a desired outcome. You'll want to click on the planning & advice section of the website.
- T. Rowe Price's college funding pages (www.troweprice.com) offer a monthly savings target and recommendations for asset allocation to help you figure out how to fund your child's college education. Using investment and planning tools, you can estimate college costs and build an action plan for saving.
- Savingforcollege.com offers extensive information about 529 and Coverdell education savings plans. This site lets you compare your state's plan with those of other states.
- Sensible-investor.com/529_plans.html also provides information about 529 plans as well as lists of web resources.

Discovering a Life-Changing College

Lauren Pope's book, *Colleges That Change Lives*, features a collection of small liberal arts colleges that provide opportunities for students to grow and expand. These colleges focus on the learning process and provide students with an engaging and challenging educational atmosphere. Similar opportunities, however, can be found at scores of other colleges around the United States; you just need to know what qualities to look for when choosing your college. Some factors to watch out for include:

Low student to faculty ratios that encourage all members of the community to actively participate in campus life and that provide opportunities for collaborative activities. (Honors colleges at large state universities offer somewhat comparable opportunities.)

Relatively small student populations that assure individuals the opportunity to participate in activities of interest to them.

Nearly all students residing on campus encourages extension of classroom learning into dinner and leisure hours. (Living at a Residential College at a larger university provides a similar experience.)

Numerous opportunities to take part in internship experiences or laboratory research, or to assume a lead-

ership position in a campus or community organization assures students that they will have a chance to be an integral part of the college community, and also provides valuable experiences both for a resume and for life.

Classes should be taught by professors rather than by graduate student teaching assistants. Look for small discussion-based classes, even in introductory or survey courses.

An active alumni association which provides career networking opportunities for graduates as well as summer internships and professional and graduate school connections for undergraduate students.

Opportunities to provide community service. Often, involvement in a community service activity leads to extraordinary growth experiences for the donor, and may kindle a passion that leads to a rewarding career or avocation.

Colleges change lives by providing active learning experiences, opportunities for growth through participation in meaningful activities, and by encouraging independent thinking. With this type of background, graduates are assured of success.

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The Importance of Passion

Passion always seems to be the driving force behind the story lines of great books and movies. But passion for a subject, a field of study, an idea, a sport, an art, or for service, is characteristic of students who are the most engaged and successful both in high school and in life. With today's hectic schedule, it's easy to get so caught up in the myriad details of life that we miss out on developing an intense interest in a particular area. Try to arrange your time so that you can follow an interest and allow it to bloom.

You're probably wondering how you can find time to do this. First, forget about the idea of joining lots of clubs and activities. After an initial period of exploration in high school, you'll want to concentrate on one or two activities or areas, and hone your com-

petency and leadership skills. For example, an initial interest in writing might lead to joining the school newspaper or yearbook staff. By senior year, you might find yourself the Editor or perhaps try your hand at writing articles for your local newspaper. Improve your skills still further by taking part in summer workshops, or immerse yourself entirely in your favorite subject through a summer college program or internship experience. In this way, you'll change your interest in writing into a passion that can lead to a rewarding career as well as enhancing your resume when you apply to college or for a job.

In selecting students for the most competitive colleges, admissions officers look for a sense of passion—passion for learning, passion for ideas, and a passion for life.

Website of the Month: www.mycoolcareer.com

MyCoolCareer.com is a truly cool site for career exploration. Roughly divided into three areas, the site helps users gain self-knowledge, explore careers, and search out appropriate education and training. The *self-knowledge* section offers a variety of career tests and games to help you identify careers based on your personality, your interests, and your abilities. After identifying a number of good fits, you can

explore to get career information, learn about job trends and hot jobs areas, and listen to interviews with people actively engaged in each of these careers.

The third section, *education & training*, lets you explore opportunities in the military, find colleges that fit you that have the majors you seek, and check out opportunities for vocational education.

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