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College Advisor

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January 2011

Seniors – apply for a pin and then complete and send the FAFSA any time after Jan. 1st. Apply online at www.fafsa.ed.gov

Seniors – search and apply for scholarships that match your qualifications

Seniors – File any additional college applications

22nd – SAT Reasoning and Subject Tests

February 2011

Juniors – Begin your college search

Juniors—Map out dates and prepare for spring SAT and/or ACT exams

Seniors – Contact colleges to be sure your applications are complete. Send mid-year grades if required. Update colleges with any new information that might affect admission

12th – ACT and ACT plus Writing (may not be available in NY)

(register by 1/7 - late registration 1/21)

Does It Really Matter *Where* You Go To College?

A running debate has been going on at the New York Times website focusing on just this question. The advantages gained by attending college and by obtaining a bachelor's degree have been well established. College graduates earn far more over their working years than those who only have a high school diploma (upwards of a million dollars more over a lifetime). Graduates have more flexibility in their career paths, and even tend to live longer and healthier lives than those without a college degree. So while all will agree that it makes sense to go to college, does it really matter *which* college you attend?

According to Anthony Carnevale, the Director of the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, students who attend selective colleges are the most likely to succeed. He notes that even among equally qualified students (those who score between 1200-1300 out of a possible 1600 on the SAT), 96% of those attending a selective college will graduate, while those who attend the least selective universities have only a 78% graduation rate. These same students also have a higher rate of graduate school attendance (40% for selective vs. 25% for less selective), and enjoy much higher average starting salaries in their first job (\$54,000 vs. \$37,000).

Interestingly, while the most selective colleges spend far more per pupil on education (\$92,000 per year for the most selective vs. \$12,000 per year at the least selective), the students themselves actually pay for a much smaller part of their schooling at the most selective schools (just 20% at the most selective, while students at the least selective bear 78% of their costs). The most selective schools

tend to be the richest schools and have the endowments needed to support their current students' educations.

Your peers also contribute to the value of your college experience. According to a Florida State University study, 54% of America's corporate leaders and 42% of government leaders are graduates of just 12 selective institutions. Being surrounded by talented, high achieving peers certainly makes a difference in future access to the country's leaders.

But "selective" colleges are selective simply because more people want to attend than they have room to accommodate. A long-term study by the National Bureau of Economic Research of over 6,000 college graduates found that graduating from a more selective college (those at which entering students have higher average SAT scores) did not pay off in higher post-graduate income. In this study, students who were accepted at an elite institution but then chose to attend a less selective college actually earned higher incomes than those who graduated from the more selective school. The study concluded that the personal qualities that led to these students being accepted at the prestigious school were the same qualities that made them successful in the world of work. *What* students do while at college appears to be more important than *where* they do it.

And finally, you'll want to consider the quality of teaching when making your final college choice. According to the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, "the best community colleges do a better job than the average elite research university at teaching freshmen and sophomores." You can check out these results at www.ccsse.org. Choosing a college is complicated and many factors go into determining the best path for you.

Engineering Your Future

At a time when lawyers are applying for unemployment benefits and hedge fund manager may not be a smart career goal, the projected demand for engineers offers a more secure future. The economy and our growing need for advanced technology may be two of the reasons that enrollment and interest in engineering programs is increasing.

If you care about saving the environment or alleviating human suffering, engineering could be a rewarding career choice. These are the people who create safer cars, and develop new imaging systems that enable doctors to provide earlier and more accurate diagnoses. Engineers find ways to utilize alternative energy sources and help provide access to clean drinking water, improving the quality of life for everyone.

You don't have to be a technical genius, but you do need to have some aptitude for math and science. If you're thinking about studying engineering in college, you should take math and science every year in high school. Ideally, students will have taken calculus and physics in high school, but these are not required by every engineering school. Taking AP and honors classes also helps you prepare for the demands of a college engineering program.

The engineering curriculum is rigorous, and coursework usually starts during freshman year. Engineering programs often include hands-on learning and internships. It is important to know that you want to study engineering when you are applying to college, because not every school offers engineering. Also, if you decide after freshman year that you want to study engineering, it will be difficult to complete the degree in four years. That's why a number of colleges offer summer programs that give high school students an overview of engineering careers.

There are more than 25 specialties in engineering, and at a big university that has a school of engineering, you can major in mechanical, chemical, civil, electrical or some other engineering specialty. Some smaller liberal arts colleges offer a more general engineering major.

Another option for students who want both a liberal arts college experience and an engineering degree is a 3/2 program. You spend three years at a liberal arts college, where you complete your general education courses, the math and science prerequisites for engineering, and the requirements for a liberal arts major. If you have maintained the required grade point average, you go on to an engineering program at a university for two years. You end up with two degrees, a B.S. or B.A. from the liberal arts college and a B.S. in engineering from the university.

More women are studying engineering, and there are organizations that support women entering the profession, including the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) and Women in Science and Engineering (WISE). There

are also summer programs for girls who want to explore engineering.

Even if you don't ultimately want to work as an engineer, the curriculum provides great training for many other fields. You'll develop analytical, problem-solving, and communication skills as you work with teammates on projects. Graduates of engineering programs often go on to medical, law and business schools, and find that their analytical and problem-solving skills are valuable in any career.

Intrigued? You can learn more about engineering programs and careers at www.EngineerYourLife.org (a site focusing on women in engineering), <http://egfi-k12.org> (an educational website of the American Society for Engineering Education) and www.TryEngineering.org.



Lafayette College (PA) has long been known for the quality of its' engineering programs

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Focus on Finances: Beware Scholarship Scams



Have you ever been invited to a “free scholarship seminar” or received an official-looking letter from a company that “guarantees to find you financial aid or your money back”? If

so, you may have been the target of a scholarship scam. Each year, families trying to find money to pay for college expenses fall victim to such scams; estimates of losses each year are in excess of a hundred million dollars.

Scholarship search firms attempt to attract clients by proclaiming that millions of dollars in college aid goes unclaimed each year. The “unclaimed” scholarships, however, are often tied up in trusts or through a company’s program for children of employees. Some scholarship money is earmarked for members of a union or organization. This “unclaimed” scholarship money is not available to the general public. Although scholarship search services offer, for a fee, to provide you with lists of sources of financial aid, you

can do your own scholarship search on the web for free. Begin your search with sites like fastweb.com, scholarships.com or collegeboard.com.

Other scholarship services invite prospective clients to a free seminar. After a general talk, they use high-pressure tactics in a one-on-one meeting to convince families to use their services.

Still other scams claim that you’ve won a scholarship (that you never applied for) and now need to pay a fee for processing. Beware any scholarship offers that come with a fee attached—you should not need to pay money to be awarded a scholarship. Be especially careful if asked for a credit card or bank account number.

Legitimate companies never guarantee or promise scholarships or grants. If you are not sure if an offer of aid is genuine, check with your college advisor or call the Federal Trade Commission at 877-FTC-HELP. More information is available at their website at www.ftc.gov/scholarshipscams.

It’s Time to Plan for a Memorable Summer

As strange as it may seem, the middle of the winter is the perfect time to begin planning your summer vacation. While it may be tempting to just veg out on a beach, or perhaps look for a minimum wage job, there really are many other appealing ways to spend your summer.

For students, summer is the perfect time to immerse yourself in a subject you love, or try on a possible future career. If science is your passion, you can work as part of a research team investigating a real-world problem, or take a college course in an advanced area of science that’s not available at your home school. Love art? Immerse yourself in drawing, or painting, or sculpture as you discover what its like to attend an art institute. Spend your summer abroad, perhaps living with a host family, or studying at a foreign university as you work on your skills in international relations and become more fluent in your chosen foreign language.

Perhaps you just want to get an early start at college. Try on the life of a college student at a residential program for high school students held on college campuses throughout the United States. Many of these summer programs are pretty pricey, but some

offer financial aid for qualified students. You might also look into less costly options such as the local internship programs that pair students with mentors in their field of interest. Students interested in the health sciences may want to shadow a health professional. If you feel a calling to the law, contact your local State Attorney’s Office and inquire about possible unpaid internships. Start early and you may be able to create your own internship opportunity with a local professional if no formal program exists in your area.

Volunteering can also pay big benefits in experience rather than money. Budding educators might want to teach in a literacy program, while future health care providers could volunteer at local hospitals, clinics, or homes for the aged.

Your educational advisor can help with more ideas or you can look to the web for additional options. The free search engine, www.EnrichmentAlley.com, has descriptions of about 500 summer and gap year opportunities and is searchable by location and subject. For volunteer options, check out those listed on www.volunteermatch.org.

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Do Senior Grades Really Count?

As first semester winds to a close, seniors may find themselves fighting the onslaught of senioritis. It's easy to become infected; you've just completed the grueling college admissions process and your resistance level may well be low. Be careful, though, colleges do take senior year grades seriously.

What if you've heard that "senior year doesn't count" and decide to kick back and take it easy? You may be in for a rude shock – or even several. Many colleges will ask for a mid-year report as well as a transcript showing your first semester grades. This grade report will definitely play a role in the admissions process. The higher your senior grades, the more likely a positive outcome. But what if you've already been accepted—do grades count then? Worst case scenario: those colleges that accepted you based on your activities and your strong academics from sophomore and junior year may not

be too excited to see a drop-off in grades and participation. In fact, they may even take back their offer of admission, or place you on academic probation, if things have gone too far off the deep end grade-wise. It hardly seems like a risk you want to take if you can avoid it. Prevent senioritis by:

- Staying active in the things you have enjoyed doing in high school all along: sports, drama, volunteer work, community service, music, etc.
- Challenging yourself with interesting classes, maybe even taking classes at your community college.
- Taking your work to the next level: do outside reading, hone your writing skills on papers and pay attention to details you might have overlooked.
- And most of all, keep your grades up to their usual high level.

Website of the Month: CollegePortraits.org

For students looking at continuing their education at a public college or university, CollegePortraits provides comparable data on over 300 public institutions. Their goal is provide "no rankings, no spin...just facts" and they do. Search for a public college by state and you'll access a wealth of information. You can compare graduation and retention rates at each school, learn about admissions, costs, and special programs. *Student characteristics* provide information about diversity, while *campus life* offers insight into housing, faculty/student ratios, and class sizes.

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