

## CHOOSING A COLLEGE

Consider the various characteristics that can distinguish one college from another:

- Size
- Location (geographic as well as urban, suburban, or rural)
- Public or private
- Majors offered and flexibility of degree programs
- Type of institution (two-year, four-year, conservatory, etc.)
- Types of degrees offered (associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral)
- Faculty accessibility
- Cost of attendance
- Support services
- Campus activities

When you think about your own goals for college, determine the type of institution that would best meet your needs. Make an informed choice by comparing the features offered by the colleges that interest you.

## FINANCING YOUR EDUCATION

You can't afford NOT to go to college! A college education is the single best investment you can make for your future and your career. Don't miss out because of the expected costs. Financial aid is available in many forms for families who need assistance, and merit scholarships are available for deserving students. The following websites, your high school guidance staff, and financial aid staff at any college or university can help you and your family realize your college dreams.

[finaid.com](http://finaid.com)  
[fastweb.com](http://fastweb.com)  
[fafsa.ed.gov](http://fafsa.ed.gov)  
[collegeanswer.com](http://collegeanswer.com)  
[scholarships.com](http://scholarships.com)

## ADDITIONAL ONLINE COLLEGE SEARCH AND PLANNING RESOURCES

College Board  
[collegeboard.com](http://collegeboard.com)  
SAT information, test questions, and planning and financial tools

ACT  
[act.org](http://act.org)  
ACT information, test questions, and planning tools

Peterson's  
[petersons.com](http://petersons.com)

U.S. News & World Report rankings  
[usnews.com](http://usnews.com)

The Princeton Review  
[princetonreview.com](http://princetonreview.com)

HOW SHOULD I PLAN FOR COLLEGE?

WHAT CLASSES SHOULD I TAKE?

WHEN SHOULD I START PLANNING FOR COLLEGE?

HOW MUCH MATH SHOULD I TAKE?

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFO?

# College Planning Guide

MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY

# HOW SHOULD I PLAN FOR COLLEGE?

You've probably heard that a college degree can open many doors for you. It's true. Has anyone ever described the advantages that going to college can provide? Many careers require a college degree, so attending college will provide you with more career choices. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, a college graduate will earn \$1 million more in a lifetime than someone who doesn't attend college. Most important, the people you meet, the experiences you have, and the knowledge you gain from college will impact you for the rest of your life.

One of the most important aspects in preparing to go to college involves effective planning and preparation. Even if you're not sure about attending college, making the right choices now will keep college success available as an option for you. This planning guide is designed to provide direction and resources to students interested in attending college and is just one tool that you can use in this process. Please refer to the list on the back page for additional sources of information.

## RECOMMENDED PREPARATION FOR SUCCESS

### ENGLISH

4 years strongly recommended

### MATHEMATICS

4 years strongly recommended

### BIOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES

4 years strongly recommended

### HISTORY AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

4 years strongly recommended

### FOREIGN LANGUAGE

2 years strongly recommended

## 8TH GRADE GUIDELINES

- **Consider taking algebra I** so that you can take precalculus or calculus during your senior year in high school.
- Consider taking a **foreign language course** this year.
- **Develop good study habits.** This will assist you in high school as well as in college.
- **Visit the websites of colleges** you are interested in and note their high school curriculum requirements.
- When planning your high school class schedule, let your guidance counselor know that you want to follow a **college preparatory program.**

## 9TH AND 10TH GRADE GUIDELINES

- **Work hard** to get good grades. Most colleges will be reviewing your academic performance in 9th, 10th, and 11th grades when making an admission decision.
- **Start compiling a notebook** as you research and visit colleges you're interested in. Keep track of web addresses, high school curriculum requirements, and important dates and deadlines. Make note of what you like, what you didn't like, and what information you still need while researching colleges.
- **Visit the colleges** that most interest you, perhaps as part of a family vacation or other activity. Talk to current students or alumni of these colleges to get a real idea of what they're like.
- Keep developing **good study habits.** As a 9th grader, you should aim for at least an hour of study each weeknight. As a 10th grader, you should aim for two hours of study each weeknight.
- Ask your guidance counselor about **scholarships** available from your high school, in your community, or nationally.
- Begin to identify **your areas of academic strength** as well as areas of particular interest or passion.
- During the summer months, **participate in meaningful activities**—such as workshops, community programs, and enrichment programs—both for personal fulfillment and as an achievement you can include on college applications. You also might consider job shadowing to learn more about professions that interest you.
- **Explore college websites** in greater depth.

## 11TH GRADE GUIDELINES

- **Maintain your good grades.** This year is especially important since it will be your grade point average from 9th through 11th grades that college admissions officials will be reviewing.
- **Take a majority of academic courses,** such as English, math, science, social studies, and foreign language.
- **Take the ACT or SAT** between March and June. If you aren't satisfied with your initial score, you can always take the test again in early fall of your senior year. The ACT's writing assessment is required by most colleges, so keep your options open and take it.
- Continue looking at college websites and brochures. **Narrow down your search** to three to five potential colleges or universities.
- **Establish an e-mail account** that you plan to use just for purposes of college admissions and check it often. Most colleges and universities will want to send you periodic updates on your application status, and having a dedicated e-mail account works best if you are applying to several institutions.
- Start a **comparison worksheet** on the colleges and universities that you might want to attend.
- **Visit as many of the colleges and universities that interest you as you can.** It's difficult to judge "the feel" of an institution unless you've been on its campus.
- When enrolling for courses for your senior year, **choose at least three or four academic courses** per semester. Continuing with math, foreign language, and lab sciences your senior year greatly enhances your opportunity for academic success in college.
- **Search for potential scholarships** using free online search services such as **fastweb.com**, **finaid.com**, and **collegeanswer.com**. Many scholarship applications must be completed as early as November of your senior year to apply for funds available the following fall.

## 12TH GRADE GUIDELINES

- **Keep your grades up!** Many schools review final grades and may rescind an offer of admission if senior year grades slip.
- **Take four academic courses,** such as English, math, science, social studies, and foreign language, per semester.
- If you haven't already, **take the ACT or SAT.** The sooner, the better, since most colleges and universities require a test score in order to make an admission decision.
- **Apply for admission** to the three to five colleges or universities that interest you by October of your senior year. Check websites and brochures for specific application deadlines.
- **Revisit the colleges and universities that interest you the most.** Many offer day/overnight visits that enable you to stay with current students and attend class with them.
- **Attend a financial aid workshop** with your parents in your local school district.
- **Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA,** online as soon after January 1 as possible to apply for need-based financial aid for the following academic year.
- When you receive admissions offers, remember to **send in any required deposits.** Deposits are normally refundable until May 1 of your senior year.

WHAT ARE MY GOALS?

