



MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

**COLLEGE
PLANNING
GUIDE**

WHY IS COLLEGE IMPORTANT?

You've probably heard that a college degree can open many doors for you. It's true, but what are the advantages that going to college can provide?

For starters, since many careers require a college degree, attending college will increase your opportunities. Also, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, a college graduate will earn \$1 million more over 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.

PREPARING FOR SUCCESS

Effective planning and preparation are both key to college success. Even if you're not yet sure about attending college, making the right choices now will keep college attendance available as an option for you.

It is strongly recommended that college-bound students complete these courses in high school:

- **English:** four years
- **Mathematics:** three years
- **History and social sciences:** three years
- **Biological and physical sciences:** two years
- **Foreign language:** two years of a single language

GUIDELINES FOR EIGHTH GRADE

- Consider taking algebra I in order to take precalculus or calculus as a senior in high school.
- Consider taking a foreign-language course.
- Develop good study habits, which will assist you in high school as well as in college.
- Visit the websites of colleges that interest you, and note their high school curriculum requirements.
- Let your guidance counselor know you want to follow a college preparatory program when planning your high school schedule.

GUIDELINES FOR NINTH AND 10TH GRADES

- Work hard to get good grades. Most colleges will review your academic performance in ninth, 10th and 11th grades when making an admission decision.
- Start compiling a list of colleges that interest you. Keep track of web addresses, admission requirements, and important dates and deadlines.
- 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. Ninth graders should aim for at least an hour of study each weeknight, and 10th graders 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.

GUIDELINES FOR 11TH GRADE

- Maintain good grades. This year is especially important since it will be your grade point average from ninth through 11th grades that college admissions officials will be reviewing.
- Take the ACT or SAT exam between March and June. If you aren't satisfied with your initial score, take the test again in early fall of your senior year. The ACT writing assessment is required by most colleges, so keep your options open and take it.
- Visit as many of the colleges and universities that interest you as you can. It's difficult to judge the "feel" of an institution until you've visited campus.
- When planning your senior year, choose at least three or four academic courses per semester. Continuing with math, a foreign language and lab sciences greatly enhances your opportunity for academic success in college.
- Search for potential scholarships using free online search services such as fastweb.com, salliemae.com and scholarships.com. Many scholarship applications must be completed as early as November of your senior year in order to qualify for funds available the following fall.

GUIDELINES FOR 12TH GRADE

- Keep your grades up. Many schools review final grades and may rescind an offer of admission if grades slip this year.
- If you haven't already done so, take the ACT or SAT exam as soon as possible. Most colleges and universities require a test score in order to make an admission decision.
- Apply for admission to the colleges or universities that most interest you no later than October. Check websites for specific application deadlines.
- 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 October 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.



CHOOSING A COLLEGE

Think about your goals for college and determine the type of institution that best suits you. Make an informed choice by comparing the colleges that interest you.

These characteristics can help you distinguish one college from another:

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

FINANCING YOUR EDUCATION

A college education is the single best investment you can make for your future and your career. Don't miss out because of expected costs. Financial aid is available in many forms for families who need assistance, and merit scholarships are available for deserving students.

Your high school guidance staff and the financial aid staff at any college or university can help you and your family realize your college dreams. Information is also available at these websites:

- fastweb.com
- fafsa.ed.gov
- scholarships.com

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

College Board

collegeboard.com

SAT information, test questions and planning tools

ACT

act.org

ACT information, test questions and planning tools

Peterson's

petersons.com

Test prep, college and scholarship search tools

U.S. News & World Report

usnews.com

Education rankings

Princeton Review

princetonreview.com

Test prep and college search tools

