



## Winter Quarterly Update

For 2020-2021 Seniors

**College Admission Updates.** College admissions are in the final phase, with just a few college deadlines still ahead and regular application admissions decisions expected beginning in March. Given changes in the admissions process, many colleges are reporting that their decisions may be delayed by several weeks this year and the deadlines for declaring your intent to attend a specific college (usually May 1) may also be delayed and vary across colleges. It will be important to pay attention to the specific instructions you receive from each college you applied to regarding the deadline for your decision, questions about financial aid, and what to do in case you are wait listed. Read on!

### Making School Count

- **Check that you are on track to graduate.** Even diligent students may find they are missing a core requirement as they approach graduation. Now is a good time to check with your counselor to make sure you are on track to graduate!
- **Athletes who intend to play college sports.** NCAA requires [core high school courses for college athletes](#) – check out the requirements and talk to your counselor if you have any questions about your projected eligibility. There may still be opportunity to fill requirements through spring semester or online courses.

### Careers and Majors

- **Managing your college major.** You don't have to know what you want to study now, but it's not too soon to understand how majors work and explore your options. This College Board article provides a great introduction to [The College Major: what it is and how to choose one](#). U.S. News offers a [Guide to College Majors](#), including rankings of majors based on demand and expected pay. Learn more about [managing your college major](#), including how and when to choose a major, whether to add a minor or double major, and how to change your major.
- **When you should consider a college minor.** College minors offer students an opportunity to train in a second discipline that can complement or balance a major, and/or offer an alternative career path. However, minors also have prerequisites and may require early academic planning to avoid extra time in college. Read more about [what a college minor is and why it matters](#).

### Applying to College

- **Complete your applications.** Most colleges count your first semester senior year GPA in their admissions and financial aid decisions; make sure to complete your applications with your [midyear report](#), using the Common Application School Mid-Year Report Form or school-specific application form - check in with your counselor if you are unsure how to send your mid-year update to schools.

### Finding Colleges for You

- **Plan college visits.** Many students apply to colleges without first making a campus visit. If you are among them, make sure you've set aside time during your spring semester or spring break

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to visit colleges that admit you but that you haven't yet seen. [The college campus visit](#) is important to your final decision, even during COVID, so find ways to do this safely!

- **Making your college decision.** Although admission decision schedules are shifting to accommodate COVID-related changes in the admissions process, colleges will generally communicate their admissions decisions for regular decision applications beginning in March, and will be asking students for decisions starting May 1 (traditionally College Decision Day). While creating your short list and completing your applications was challenging, making your final decision can also be stressful. This article offers some [college decision day strategies](#).
- **Managing the college waitlist.** What do you do if you are neither accepted nor rejected from a preferred college? Here are some [steps for getting off a college waitlist](#).

### Paying for College

- **Complete the FAFSA!** If you have not already done so, be sure to complete your FAFSA application ASAP. Many colleges use the FAFSA as their sole application for need-based financial aid, and even private colleges generally require a completed FAFSA before they will award merit-based scholarships. Click here for more [information on deadlines and how to apply](#).
- **College Scholarship Services (CSS).** Some colleges require the CSS in addition to the FAFSA. Make sure you know whether any of the colleges on your list require the CSS (WA state public universities do not). If you need to complete the CSS, you can read this article to learn [everything you need to know about the CSS](#) and access the College Board's website for [assistance in completing the CSS](#).
- **Financial award letter.** College acceptance letters will include a financial award statement describing what level of scholarship, work study, grants and loans you are approved for at the college to which you've been admitted. But award letters can take different forms and may omit important information. The FAFSA website includes a [guide to financial award letters](#) and you can review examples here with tips on [how to read a financial award letter](#).
- **Understanding and negotiating financial aid decisions.** How do you determine if the financial aid award that a college offers is as high as it could or should be? This article tells you [how colleges award financial aid](#) and the College Board offers this advice for [selecting a financial aid package](#). Don't be afraid to ask colleges to explain their financial aid decisions and to explore options for increasing the offer at a preferred school if it clearly doesn't meet your need or is not competitive with what other schools are offering. From CNBC, here's [how to negotiate for more college financial aid](#).
- **Building a college budget.** Creating a budget with your student before he or she leaves for college helps reduce surprises and uncertainty that can undermine your student's college experience. This article describes [5 categories of expenses](#) you can use to estimate what college may cost, suggest what costs you can control, and provide an outline for building a college budget.
- **Continue your scholarship search.** Get familiar with one or two scholarship search tools and give yourself an hour or two each week to exercise them in the interest of [finding scholarship dollars](#) that may help make your preferred college more affordable. Even a few small scholarships can help make college life less stressful and more productive.

### Mark Your Calendar!

- **Updated 2021 AP Testing Schedule.** The College Board has updated its [2021 AP testing schedule](#) to allow more options for its administration, including more test dates (May 3-17, May 18-28 and June 1-11). Check with your AP teacher(s) to learn what schedule your high school is following.

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