



COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDE: GET A HEAD START!

First-years

- Create ▶** Make a four-year high school course plan and make sure you are completing necessary courses to stay on track. Challenge yourself by taking difficult courses.
- Record ▶** List all extracurricular activities (e.g., clubs, leadership, religious groups, etc.) you are involved in. Use this journal as a reference when filling out college and scholarship applications.
- Save ▶** College is expensive, and it's never too early to save.
- Search ▶** Scholarships are everywhere, if you look.
- Explore ▶** Summer camps, jobs, and internships all build a good college application. Make your summers count!
- Practice ▶** Get familiar with upcoming PSAT/SAT/ACT testing formats and content.

Sophomores

- Consult ▶** Meet with your high school counselor to discuss college requirements.
- Connect ▶** Attend college and career fairs to begin exploring your options and connect with admissions officers.
- Tour ▶** A college visit is the best way to get a feel for a university you are considering. If you cannot travel, look for online virtual tours.
- Research ▶** Look at colleges you are considering. Be sure to consider financial aid offered, majors, clubs, faculty-to-student ratio, cost of attendance, graduation rates, and employment data, etc.
- Consider ▶** Taking a practice SAT or ACT exam.

Juniors

- Practice ▶** Take the PSAT and review your results to prepare for the SAT.
- Choose ▶** Make a list of final college choices and request more information.
- Investigate ▶** Check out scholarships, grants, and other financial resources you qualify for.
- Test ▶** Take the SAT or ACT in the spring of your junior year.
- Brainstorm ▶** Plan ideas for college entrance essays. Review your record of extracurriculars from the past four years.
- Visit ▶** Go on any final college campus visits and focus on the feel of each campus.
- Important ▶** Create your Federal Student Aid account username and password at studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account. In October of your senior year, you will file your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

STUDENTAID.GOV/FSa-ID/CREATE-ACCOUNT

Seniors

- Register ▶** Retake any standardized testing (if necessary).
- Review ▶** Know application deadlines and specific school requirements. Make sure you haven't missed any important Early Action deadlines or materials you need to submit.
- Request ▶** Ask for letters of recommendation and other documents early to give counselors/teachers/others enough time to write and submit their materials.
- Attend ▶** Watch for Financial Aid Nights hosted in your community.
- Complete your FAFSA ▶** The Free Application For Federal Student Aid opens on Oct. 1. This determines the amount of aid you are eligible to receive. Complete it as soon as you can. (Some colleges also require the CSS Profile, which opens Oct. 1.)
- Finalize ▶** Complete all essays and collect completed application materials.
- Submit ▶** Be on time with all applications according to Early Action, Regular, and Rolling deadlines.
- Check! ▶** Watch your student email for admissions decisions.
- Make a final choice ▶** Once you decide where you will attend college, send your deposit and formally accept (if necessary).
- Graduate ▶** Don't forget the importance of keeping your grades up in your final year! Schools DO check.

QUESTIONS TO ASK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

? ► ADMISSIONS

- ☐ What are your admissions criteria?
- ☐ What types of courses should I take prior to college?
- ☐ Do you have any special visitation days? May I stay overnight in a residence hall, attend a class, or speak with a professor or coach? How do I arrange that?
- ☐ When should I expect to hear about my admission status?
- ☐ Do you prefer the SAT or the ACT or do you have a test-flexible policy? How important are these scores in the admissions decision?
- ☐ I'm not sure of my major. When must I decide?
- ☐ What is your retention rate? How many of your first-year students return for their sophomore year?
- ☐ What's unique about your curriculum?
- ☐ Is an on-campus interview required?

? ► FINANCIAL AID

- ☐ What types of financial aid are offered at your school?
- ☐ Please tell me about your scholarships and grants.
- ☐ What is your Cost of Attendance and what does it include? (Tuition and fees? Housing and food? Books and supplies? Personal expenses?)
- ☐ What is your school's deadline date for applying for financial aid? Are there any advantages to completing my aid application early?
- ☐ Is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) the only financial aid application that must be completed for your school? Does your school have its own, separate financial aid application or is the CSS Profile application required?
- ☐ How will scholarships that I receive on my own (from private sources such as my parents' employers, my church, the community, etc.) affect the financial aid I may receive from your college?

? ► CAMPUS LIFE

- ☐ How big is your campus (number of students, size of campus)?
- ☐ What cultural opportunities are offered?
- ☐ Are first-year students permitted to live off campus or to have cars?
- ☐ What is the average size of the first-year student class?
- ☐ How big will my classes be?
- ☐ Is there a job placement and career development center? What is the percentage of graduates placed successfully in jobs?
- ☐ What three words would you use to describe your college's student body?

HELPFUL FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIP WEBSITES

FINANCIAL AID APPLICATION INFORMATION AND MATERIALS

- **U-M Financial Aid Information**
finaid.umich.edu
- **U-M Net Price Calculator**
npc.collegeboard.org/student/app/umich
- **CSS Profile Application**
cssprofile.collegeboard.org
- **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**
studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa

FREE PRIVATE SCHOLARSHIP SEARCHES/SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- **Chegg**
chegg.com/advice/admissions/scholarships-financial-aid-admissions
- **College Board's Scholarship Search**
bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search
- **Appily**
appily.com/scholarships
- **CollegeScholarships.com**
- **Fastweb**
fastweb.com
- **Scholarships.com**
- **Scholarship America**
scholarshipamerica.org

GENERAL FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION

- **U.S. Department of Education Federal Student Aid**
studentaid.gov
- **State of Michigan**
michigan.gov/mistudentaid