

HIGH SCHOOL Academic Bulletin

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Inside This Issue:

- Community College: Myth Vs. Reality.....2
- Test Dates.....2
- College Prep: Action Plan for Winter.....3
- Tools To Make Your High School Years A Success3
- 10 Tips for Winning Scholarships4
- Coastline Regional Occupational Program (ROP)4
- There is still time to sign up for spring semester ROP classes!5
- Applying for Financial Aid5
- FREE Application for Federal Student Aid... or FAFSA5
- Scholarships6
- The College Sleepover: Overnight Visits7
- Reduce Text-Taking Anxiety8
- What is the Status of My College Application?9

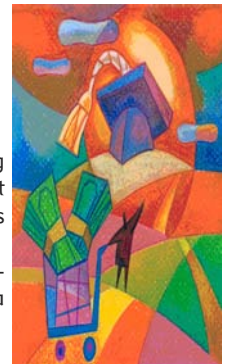


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College Prices: Keep Increases in Perspective

There's no escaping the fact that college prices are rising. According to recently released reports, most students and their families can expect to pay, on average, from \$108 to \$1,398 more than last year for this year's tuition and fees, depending on the type of college.

But there is good news. There is more than \$143 billion in financial aid available. And, despite all of these college price increases, a college education remains an affordable choice for most families.



Sticker Price vs. Affordability

Although some of the college price tags you hear about can be quite daunting — \$35,000 or more for yearly tuition and fees — most colleges are more affordable than you might think. For example, did you know that about 56 percent of students attend four-year schools with annual tuition and fees below \$9,000? After grants are taken into consideration, the net price the average undergraduate pays for a college education is significantly lower than the published tuition and fees. And remember, other forms of financial aid will further reduce the amount your family will actually pay.

Consider College an Investment

Did you know that, according to a 2007 College Board Study, Education Pays, people with a bachelor's degree earn over 60 percent more than those with only a high school diploma? Over a lifetime, the gap in earning potential between a high school diploma and a B.A. is more than \$800,000. In other words, whatever sacrifices you make for your college education in the short term are more than repaid in the long term.

Source: www.collegeboard.com

Average College Prices 2008-09

Private four-year: \$25,143
(up 5.9 percent from last year)

Public four-year: \$6,585
(up 6.4 percent from last year)

Public two-year: \$2,402
(up 4.7 percent from last year)

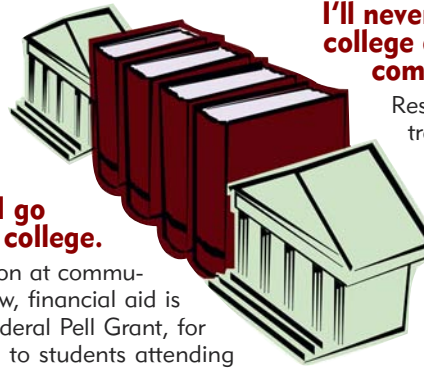
Students will pay, on average, from \$381 to \$408 more than last year for this year's room and board, depending on the type of college.

The average surcharge for full-time out-of-state students at public four-year institutions is \$10,867.

But Did You Know That...

- About 56 percent of students enrolled at four-year colleges or universities attend institutions that charge tuition and fees of less than \$9,000 per year.
- 38 percent of full-time students enrolled in public four-year colleges and universities attend institutions that charge tuition and fees between \$3,000 and \$6,000.
- While private four-year institutions have a much wider range of tuition and fee charges, only about 9 percent of all students attend colleges with tuition and fees totaling \$33,000 or higher per year
- 32 percent of all full-time students attend public two-year colleges.
- More than \$143 billion in financial aid is available to students and their families.
- About two-thirds of all full-time undergraduate students receive grant aid. In 2008-09, estimated aid in the form of grants and tax benefits averaged about \$2,300 per student at public two-year colleges, about \$3,700 at public four-year colleges, and about \$10,200 per student at private four-year colleges.

Community College: *Myth Vs. Reality*



Myths abound when it comes to community college, but you can't know if it's right for you unless you have the facts. Do these misconceptions sound familiar?

I shouldn't go to community college unless I want a vocational-tech career.

You can start out at a community college and end up in any career if, like many community college students, you transfer to a four-year college after graduation. In fact, one of the reasons community colleges were set up was to offer students an affordable way to earn a degree from a four-year college or university.

Nobody who is anybody goes to community college.

Plenty of famous people and high-achievers started out at community college. Here's a short list of stellar alum:

Gwendolyn Brooks, Pulitzer prize-winning poet
Eileen Collins, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) astronaut
Joyce Luther Kennard, California Supreme Court justice
Jeanne Kirkpatrick, former United Nations (UN) ambassador
Jim Lehrer, news anchor
Robert Moses, choreographer and dance company founder
Sam Shepard, Pulitzer prize-winning playwright
James Sinegal, CEO of Costco
Maxwell Taylor, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Community college is just high school with ashtrays.

Don't let the open-admissions policies of community colleges fool you. Community college is college. You'll be expected to perform at a high level, just as you would at any other college. The fact that anyone can attend doesn't mean that you won't find your studies challenging and enriching.

Community college is for older students and students who work full time.

Students 18 to 24 make up one of the largest groups on community college campuses. Sure, community colleges are flexible, making them attractive to older and working students, but this flexibility benefits younger students as well. You'll be able to take classes at night or during the day, and you can attend part time or full.

I can't get financial aid if I go to community college.

Even though tuition at community colleges is low, financial aid is available. The Federal Pell Grant, for example, is open to students attending any accredited post-secondary school. You can even qualify—for a smaller amount—if you go to school part time.

Transferring from community college to a four-year college is too tough.

Transferring does require careful planning, but community colleges are set up to help you achieve your goal. You'll meet regularly with an academic advisor who will help you stay on track, making sure you take the right courses to prepare for a major at a four-year school. Earning the grades you need to get into the school of your choice is ultimately up to you, but you'll also find plenty of on-campus support, such as tutors and writing centers.

Four-year colleges don't accept community college credits.

Students who transfer often benefit from articulation agreements between their community colleges and local four-year schools. Articulation agreements smooth the way because they list, in writing, which courses at the two-year college correspond to courses at the four-year college. With careful planning, most or all of your credits will transfer.

I'll never survive a four-year college after attending a community college.

Research shows that students who transfer from a community college earn grades equal to, if not better than, students who begin their college careers at a four-year college or university. You may have to weather "transfer shock," the roughly half-point drop in Grade Point Average (GPA) often experienced by students after their first semester at a four-year college. However, high school students face a similar transition when they start college and also experience a drop in their GPA. If you're like most students, your GPA will perk up soon after your first semester.

Community college students drop out.

You might have heard that 40 to 50 percent of community college students drop out within a year after starting. The research behind this statistic is flawed, however, because it does not account for students who leave one school in order to attend another. Plus, a recent government study has found that community college students are far more likely to stick it out than previously thought.

Community colleges are all the same.

There are over 1,200 diverse community colleges across the country. They differ in size, course offerings, support services, campus life, student bodies, and faculty. In fact, you can shop around for the right fit, just as you would shop for a four-year college or university.

Source: www.collegeboard.com

Important Test Dates and Registration Deadlines for the 2008-09 School Year

SAT & Subject Tests Dates

2008-09 TEST DATES

Jan. 24, 2009
March 14, 2009 (SAT only)
May 2, 2009
June 6, 2009

REG. DEADLINE

Dec. 26, 2008
Feb. 10, 2009
Mar. 31, 2009
May 5, 2009

LATE REG. (Late Fee Req.)

Jan. 6, 2009
Feb. 24, 2009
April 9, 2009
May 15, 2009

Register online at www.collegeboard.com to sign up for tests.

ACT Test Dates

2008-09 TEST DATES

Feb. 7, 2009**
April 4, 2009
June 13, 2009

REG. DEADLINE

Jan. 6, 2009
Feb. 27, 2009
May 8, 2009

LATE REG. (Late Fee Req.)

Jan. 7 – 16, 2009
Feb. 28 – Mar. 13, 2009
May 9 – 22, 2009

Register online at www.act.org to sign up for tests.

COLLEGE PREP: ACTION PLAN FOR WINTER

SENIORS

Application Details

- Most regular applications are due between January 1 and February 15. Keep copies of everything you send to colleges.
- Order your high school transcript through Docufide.com to be sent to each college (private).
- Contact colleges to make sure they've received all application materials.

Financial Aid: Apply Early. Apply Right.

- You and your family should save this year's pay stubs to estimate income on aid forms that you'll file early next year.
- Submit your FAFSA as soon after January 1 as possible. Men 18 or older must register for the selective service to receive federal financial aid.
- Many priority financial aid deadlines fall in February. To get the most attractive award package, apply by the priority date. Keep copies of everything you send.



JUNIORS

Plan Your Spring Testing Schedule

- You can take either the SAT Reasoning Test™ or up to three SAT Subject Tests™ on one test day. Plan your testing schedule carefully if you want to take both types of SAT. Register online for the SAT at www.collegeboard.com.
- Use the access code on your PSAT/NMSQT score report to sign in to My College QuickStart™. With this personalized planning kit, you can prepare for the SAT using a study plan based on your PSAT/NMSQT results and explore lists of suggested colleges, majors, and careers.



SOPHMORES

Prepare for Tests

- ◆ On www.collegeboard.com, use the access code on your PSAT/NMSQT score report to sign in to My College QuickStart™. With this personalized planning kit, you can prepare for the SAT using a study plan based on your PSAT/NMSQT results and explore lists of suggested colleges, majors, and careers.
- ◆ Talk to your counselor and teachers about taking SAT Subject Tests in your strong subjects this spring. Take Subject Tests such as World History, US History, Math 2C (based on Pre-calculus) while the material is still fresh in your mind.

Learn about Colleges

- ◆ Learn about college costs and how financial aid works.
- ◆ Research how much money you'll need for college, whether you're on track to save enough, and what you need to do to reach your goal. Talk to your parents about financing college.
- ◆ Visit colleges while they're in session.
- ◆ Find out about college firsthand from college friends who are home for the holidays.

FRESHMEN

Learn about Colleges

- Learn about college costs and how financial aid works.
- Research to see how much money you'll need for college, whether you're on track to save enough, and what you need to do to reach your goal. Talk to your parents about financing college.
- Visit colleges while they're in session.
- Find out about college firsthand from college friends who are home for the holidays.

Tools To Make Your High School Years A Success

The end of the first semester of high school for this year is coming soon, and with that, final exams (January 27-29, 2009). Though preparing for these exams is important, the real preparation should have been taking place all semester. Work on the following study skills:

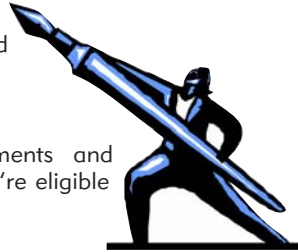
Ten Steps to Student Success:

1. Be on time and attend class daily.
2. Be prepared — book, binder, pencil, paper, and calculator.
3. Do work in class every day. It is "class work." What you do not finish is "homework."
4. Take good notes and listen to the instructions.
5. Take pride in your work and do it to the best of your ability. Give it some effort!
6. Be courteous to your classmates and respect their right to an education.
7. Seek help when you need it. Ask questions.
8. STUDY daily, not just before tests. This five-letter word is the key to success in the classroom.
9. Bring a positive attitude to class.
10. Get involved at the high school.

10 Tips for Winning Scholarships

Kay Peterson, Ph.D.

Before you submit your scholarship application, check out these tips, provided by scholarship sponsors nationwide.



1 **APPLY ONLY IF YOU ARE ELIGIBLE.**

Read all the scholarship requirements and directions carefully to make sure you're eligible before you send in your application.

2 **COMPLETE THE APPLICATION IN FULL.**

If a question doesn't apply, note that on the application. Don't just leave a blank. Supply all additional supporting material, such as transcripts, letters of recommendation and essays.

3 **FOLLOW DIRECTIONS.**

Provide everything that's required, but don't supply things that aren't requested—you could be disqualified.

4 **NEATNESS COUNTS.**

Always type your application, or, if you must print, do so neatly and legibly. Make a couple of photocopies of all the forms before you fill them out. Use the copies as working drafts as you develop your application packet.

5 **WRITE AN ESSAY THAT MAKES A STRONG IMPRESSION.**

The key to writing a strong essay is to be personal and specific. Include concrete details to make your experience come alive — the who, what, where, and when of your topic. The simplest experience can be monumental if you present honestly how you were affected.

6 **WATCH ALL DEADLINES.**

To help keep yourself on track, impose your own deadline that is at least two weeks prior to the official deadline. Use the buffer time to make sure everything is ready on time. Don't rely on extensions — very few scholarship providers allow them at all.

7 **MAKE SURE YOUR APPLICATION GETS WHERE IT NEEDS TO GO.**

Put your name (and Social Security number, if applicable) on all pages of the application. Pieces of your application may get lost unless they are clearly identified.

8 **KEEP A BACK-UP FILE IN CASE ANYTHING GOES WRONG.**

Before sending the application, make a copy of the entire packet. If your application goes astray, you'll be able to reproduce it quickly.

9 **GIVE IT A FINAL "ONCE-OVER."**

Proofread the entire application carefully. Be on the lookout for misspelled words or grammatical errors. Ask a friend, teacher or parent to proofread it as well.

10 **ASK FOR HELP IF YOU NEED IT.**

If you have problems with the application, don't hesitate to call the funding organization.

Coastline Regional Occupational Program (ROP)

Whether a student plans to go to college directly after high school graduation and/or go to work, job skills provide the qualifications needed for getting a job. ROP courses are designed to acquaint students with the skills needed in various career pathways, thus assisting them in choosing college majors and future careers.

Through ROP classes and internships, students are able to get a valuable "hands-on" experience enabling them to evaluate exactly what they do and do not like about certain jobs. This type of career exploration also shows college admissions officers a sense of commitment or depth of interest in a subject area which might help identify the student as the correct match for a particular program of study or for a particular institution.

ROP courses are offered in addition to a regular or minimum school day and offer 5-10 credits per semester. They are open to students who are 11th graders or 16 years of age or older. (15-year-olds require special circumstances for enrollment). Priority is given to seniors, juniors, then sophomores. ROP classes may be used as elective credits for graduation; some courses do fulfill graduation subject area requirements. See your school's ROP representative to determine which classes may satisfy requirements.

COURSES ARE OFFERED IN 5 CAREER PATHWAY AREAS:

- Arts & Communication
- Business & Marketing
- Health Sciences
- Public Services
- Science & Technology

The classes are free and offered three times a year: fall, spring, and summer. Please see your Career Specialist in the Career Center to register for spring classes before Dec. 10, which is the priority registration deadline. For additional information and details on course offerings, see the Coastline ROP web site: www.coastlinerop.net.

It's not too late...

There is still time to sign up for spring semester ROP classes!

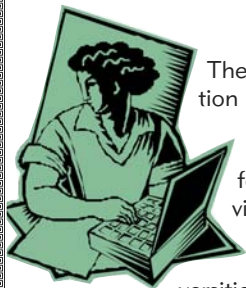


Many classes still have space available. Now is your chance to discover how to uncover clues to solve a crime, learn the joy of being a chef, or train for a career in the healthcare field. Classes offered include:

- Computer Graphics
- Multimedia Communications Design
- Music Technology
- Professional Dance
- Theater Technology
- Nursing Assistant Pre-Certification
- Crime Scene Investigation
- Culinary Arts
- Computer Aided Drafting
- Video & Film Production
- Visual Imagery
- Automotive Technology
- First Responder
- Fire Technology

There are many other classes offered after school and in the evening at local high schools in Orange County. Check with your career specialist in your school's Career Center TODAY to sign up. Check online for the complete class list and schedule at www.coastlinerop.net.

Applying for Financial Aid



The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the form used by virtually all two and four-year colleges, universities and career schools for the awarding of federal student aid and most state and college aid. To assist in completing the FAFSA, visit www.FAFSA.ed.gov.

Tell your friends! The official FAFSA is at www.FAFSA.ed.gov – not at a .com Web site. If you go to a .com site, you will probably be asked to pay to submit the FAFSA. Remember, the first F in "FAFSA" stands for "free" – so use the official government site to submit your application.

FREE Application for Federal Student Aid... or FAFSA



The FREE Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA for short, is a form that you must fill out to be eligible to receive federal financial aid. The easiest and quickest way to apply is online. You can find the application online at the FAFSA Web site, www.FAFSA.ed.gov. You can also get a paper copy from your high school counselor, any college financial aid office or your public library. You will find numerous tips and frequently asked questions at the FAFSA Web site. Below are a few to get you started.

1. I probably don't qualify for aid. Should I apply for aid anyway?

Yes. Many families mistakenly think they don't qualify for aid and prevent themselves from receiving financial aid by failing to apply for it. You should apply for financial aid every year, even if you think you won't get any. More than two-thirds of families qualify for some financial aid. In addition, there are a few sources of aid such as unsubsidized Stafford and PLUS loans that are available regardless of need. The FAFSA form is free. There is no good excuse for not applying.

2. How do I apply for a Pell Grant and other types of need-based aid?

Submit a FAFSA. To indicate interest in student employment, student loans and parent loans, you should check the appropriate boxes. Checking these boxes does not commit you to accepting these types of aid. You will have the opportunity to accept or decline each part of your aid package later. Leaving these boxes unchecked will not increase the number of grants you receive.

3. Where can I get information about Federal student financial aid?

On the Web at www.studentaid.ed.gov, by calling the Federal Student Aid Information Center (FSAIC) at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800- 433-3243) or 1-800-730-8913 (if hearing impaired) and ask for a free copy of *The Student Guide: Financial Aid from the US Department of Education*. This toll-free hotline is run by the US Department of Education and can answer questions about federal and state student aid programs and applications. You can also write to the Federal Student Aid Information Center, PO Box 84, Washington, DC 20044.

4. How soon after January 1 should the FAFSA form be sent in? Is it better to wait until the income tax forms have been completed?

Send in the form as soon as possible after January 1. Do not wait until your taxes are done. Although it is better to do your taxes early, it is okay to use estimates of your income, so long as they aren't very far off from the actual values. You will have an opportunity to correct any errors later. If you wait too long, you might miss the deadline for state aid. Most states require the FAFSA to be submitted by March 1, and some even as early as early or mid-February. Before you and your parents fill out the FAFSA, make sure you have all your materials together. You'll need the following:

- Your and/or your parents' previous-year tax returns. If you haven't done your taxes yet (when you fill out the FAFSA), use year-end W-2 forms.
- Your driver's license and Social Security card.
- W-2 forms and other records of money earned.
- Records of untaxed income, such as welfare, Social Security, AFDC or ADC, or veterans' benefits.
- Current bank statements.
- Current mortgage information.
- Business and farm records.
- Records of stocks, bonds, and other investments.

These figures will be used to determine your Expected Family Contribution (EFC), the amount of money the federal government believes that you and your family should be able to pay toward your education for one year. Be sure to allow yourself plenty of time to fill out the FAFSA. It's a good idea to photocopy it and practice filling it out first in pencil.

Keep in mind that schools may have their own deadlines and additional applications for awarding student aid. Check with the school's financial aid department.

Make a photocopy of the completed FAFSA to keep for your records and mail it to the processor as soon as possible, after January 1 of the year you plan to start college. Be sure to mail it by mid-February to meet most colleges' deadlines.

Source: www.FAFSA.ed.gov



SCHOLARSHIPS

Below are just a few scholarships currently available. Visit Web sites for complete details and eligibility. For additional opportunities, search online for scholarships that best suit your personal criteria.

YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING USA SCHOLARSHIP

Provided by: Youth For Understanding USA

Deadline: January 6, 2009 and February 10, 2009

Amount varies: More than 20 available with varying awards

Web site: www.youthforunderstanding.org

Description: There are several scholarships available for students interested in traveling overseas for summer, semester or year cultural program.

MOST VALUABLE STUDENT COMPETITION

Provided by: The Elks National Foundation

Deadline: January 9, 2009

Amount varies: \$1,000 - \$15,000

Web site: www.elks.org/enf/scholars/mvs.cfm

Description: 500 four-year scholarships are awarded to the highest-rated applicants in the competition. Any high school senior who is a citizen of the United States is eligible to apply. Applicants need not be related to a member of the Elks. Applicants will be judged on scholarship, leadership, and financial need. Check your local Elks Lodge for additional local scholarship opportunities.

AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION'S ESSAY CONTEST

Provided by: American Planning Association

Deadline: January 15, 2009

Amount: 2 awards of \$5,000

Web site: www.planning.org/essay

Description: High school juniors and seniors are invited to enter the American Planning Association's annual high school essay contest. Students are asked to create a historic preservation plan for their community. The plan should focus on preserving the community's significant historic areas, buildings, elements or features.

2ND ANNUAL CREATE-A-GREETING-CARD \$10,000 SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST

Provided by: The Gallery Collection

Deadline: January 15, 2009

Amount: 1 award of \$10,000

Web site: www.gallerycollection.com/scholarship.htm

Description: Open to high school, college, and graduate students. Applicants are asked to design the front of a greeting card that could be sold as an actual card in our line. Designs may consist of original photographs, artwork, and/or computer graphics. The student with the winning design will be awarded a \$10,000 scholarship and his or her design will be made into a greeting card to be sold on our Web site.

DISCOVER SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Provided by: Discover Financial Services

Deadline: January 31, 2009

Amount: up to 10 awards of \$30,000 each

Web site: www.discoverfinancial.com/community

Description: Applicants must be a current high school junior with a cumulative grade point average for the 9th and 10th grade years only of at least 2.75 on a 4.0 scale. Student must demonstrate accomplishments in community service and leadership and have faced a significant roadblock or challenge.

CALIFORNIA ASSN. OF COLLECTORS EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP

Provided by: California Association of Collectors

Deadline: February 2, 2009

Amounts vary: 3 awards up to \$2,500

Web site: www.cacesf.org

Description: Our scholarship is based upon a simple one-page application and a three- to four-page essay on "Importance of Establishing and Maintaining Good Credit During Your College Years."

BURGER KING SCHOLARS

Provided by: Burger King

Deadline: February 2, 2009

Amounts: \$1,000 each

Web site: www.bk.com/scholars

Description: Applicants must be high school seniors who maintain a GPA of 2.5 or higher, work part-time, an average of 15 hours per week, 40 weeks per year, demonstrate participation in community service and/or co-curricular activities, demonstrate financial need, plan to enroll in an accredited two- or four-year college, university, or vocational/technical school by the fall term of the graduating year.

AFA TEENS FOR ALZHEIMER'S AWARENESS COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP

Provided by: Alzheimer's Foundation of America

Deadline: February 15, 2009

Amount: One award \$5,000

Web site: www.afateens.org

Description: In an effort to provide an outlet for high school juniors and seniors to express their thoughts about Alzheimer's disease and to engage the younger generation in this important cause, the Alzheimer's Foundation of America is pleased to offer this scholarship to one deserving college-bound student. This scholarship provides students an opportunity to give thoughtful consideration to the impact Alzheimer's disease has on their own lives and others in their family and community.

HISPANIC SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Provided by: HSF/ General College Scholarships

Deadline: February 18, 2009

Amount varies: \$1,000 to \$5,000

Web site: www.hsf.net

Description: Designed to assist students of Hispanic heritage obtain a college degree, these scholarships are available on a competitive basis to graduating high school seniors with a minimum 3.0 GPA. There are several scholarships available — please check Web site.

COURAGEOUS PERSUADERS

Provided by: Detroit Auto Dealers Association Education Foundation

Deadline: February 15, 2009

Amount varies: up to \$3,000, 10 awards

Web site: www.courageouspersuaders.com

Description: Open to high school students — create a television commercial targeted to middle school students to warn them about the dangers of alcohol use. Students compete for scholarship money and trophies. The grand prize-winning commercial actually airs on TV as a public service announcement. Emphasis is placed on concept and the message, not on production values.

YOUNG CANCER SURVIVORS PROGRAM

Provided by: The American Cancer Society

Deadline: April 24, 2009

Amount varies: up to \$7,500

Web site: www.cancer.org/scholar

Description: Eligible applicants must be California residents, able to demonstrate financial need, plan on attending a 4-year college, diagnosed with cancer at 18 years of age or younger, able to volunteer 25 hours of community service.

UNION PLUS SCHOLARSHIP

Provided by: Union Privilege

Deadline: January 31, 2009

Amount varies: \$500 - \$4,000

Web site: www.unionplus.org

The Union Plus Scholarship is available to students who are members of an AFL-CIO union participating in any Union Plus program. Dependent children of union members are also eligible for this award

NATIONAL PEACE ESSAY CONTEST

Provided by: United States Institute of Peace

Deadline: February 1, 2009

Amount varies: \$1,000 - \$10,000

Web site: www.usip.org/ed/npec/topic.html

Description: The National Peace Essay Contest is open to students who are in grades nine through twelve. This essay contest is intended to promote serious discussion among high school students, teachers and national leaders about international peace and conflict resolution today and in the future. You must submit an essay of no more than 1,500 words on the following topic: "Confronting Crimes Against Humanity".

DAVIDSON FELLOWS SCHOLARSHIP

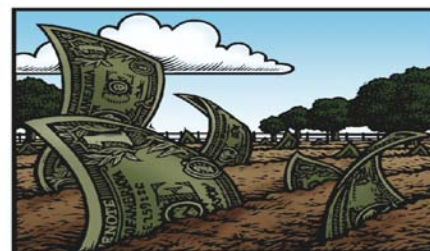
Provided by: Davidson Institute for Talent Development

Deadline: March 4, 2009

Amount varies: \$10,000 - \$50,000

Web site: www.davidsongifted.org/Fellows/

Description: The Davidson Fellows Scholarship is open to students who can demonstrate noteworthy achievements through the creation of a "significant piece of work" aimed at improving the lives of others in the areas of science, technology, mathematics, music, literature, philosophy and outside the box. A "significant piece of work" is defined as an exceptionally creative application of existing knowledge; a new idea with high impact; an innovative solution with broad-range implications; an important advancement that can be replicated and built upon; an interdisciplinary discovery; an exemplary performance; and/or another demonstration of extraordinary accomplishment. You must also be under the age of 18 as of October 1, 2009.



The College Sleepover: Overnight Visits

by Jennifer Gross

Many colleges offer prospective students the chance to spend the night in a dorm room. Some colleges set aside specific weekends (usually in the spring) for prospective students, but many others will work with you to schedule an overnight that fits into your timetable. If you're already planning a visit during the day, why spend the extra time on an overnight?

"Day visits are pretty much 'canned,'" says George P. Lynes, II, a college admission consultant. "The admission office has set up tours to the best campus spots, the nicest dorm rooms, etc., and the tour guides have been programmed to say all the right things."

Of course, there's nothing wrong with a college showing you its best side. You're not going to show up at a college in your most raggedy clothes and uncombed hair, either. But to get the real scoop on a college, you need to spend some time on campus without a tour guide at your side. And overnight visits are a fun way to get an inside view.

Perfect timing

The two best times to plan overnight visits are before applications are due and after you have been accepted.

Most students don't have time to spend the night at ten different colleges, so try to wait until you have your list narrowed down. One strategy is to spend a night at the two colleges on your "possible" list that are the most different (for example, the big urban university and the small rural college). That way, you get an idea of what environment appeals to you more.

If you're thinking about applying early decision (ED), an overnight visit is a must (if the college offers it). You're making a commitment to attend your ED college if accepted, so spend as much time as possible on campus to make sure this is your clear first choice.

Looking forward to spring, overnight visits can be helpful in making that final decision between two or more colleges that have accepted you. (Just something to keep in mind as you plan your spring schedule.)

Planning Ahead

First, do some research. Read the college's catalog, Web site, and any other information

you have. Think about what you want to do while you're on campus. If you want to sit in on a particular class or meet with a faculty member or coach, make sure to ask the admission office about it when you schedule the trip.

As with all college visits, call the admission office a few weeks (or even months) ahead of time. Ask whether overnight visits are an option. If family members will be traveling with you, make sure to find a place for them to stay (the admission office can help with that, too).

While you're packing for the trip, throw in a notebook and pen, a book, and some homework. You may have some time on your own while your host studies or goes to class. You can use that time to jot down your impressions of the college or get some of your own homework done.

On Campus

When you arrive on campus, take a tour, attend an interview or information session at the admission office, and participate in any other activities that are part of a day visit.

At some point, the admission office will introduce you to your student host, and the "overnight" part will begin. You'll have a different experience depending on the college and the particular student you're paired with. But think of this as your chance to get a feel for what life at this college is like. Make an effort to be friendly and meet as many college students as you can.

Some things to do while you're on campus:

- Eat at the cafeteria.
- Check out a favorite hangout on campus.
- Read the student newspaper (or stuff it in your backpack for later reading).
- Visit the library.
- Sit in on a class.
- Hang out in the dorm with your host and his/her floormates.
- If it's the weekend, check out the social scene.
- Attend a lecture, play, or other campus-wide event.
- Ask a lot of questions.

The Most Important Question

Try to find out as much as you can about a college while you're on campus. After all, the students you meet are the source for inside information. They are doing what you are



now planning for and dreaming about. Here are a few questions to get you started:

- Why did you choose this college?
- What is your favorite part of being at college?
- What do you do on the weekends?
- How many hours do you study per week?
- What are the toughest/most popular/least popular majors?
- How many times do you go back home during the school year? (for residential colleges)
- What student groups are the most active?
- What do you do on a typical weekday?
- How many hours of sleep do you get per night?

But the most important question is one that only students — not the admission office — can answer: What's wrong with this place?

"Aside from the usual comments on the food — it ain't Mom's cooking at any college — the answers from honest students can be helpful, but not necessarily devastating," says Lynes. "After all, they're still there, so it can't be all that bad."

But don't go with just one answer. Ask several different students. You'll probably get several different answers, but each one will give you a clearer picture of campus life.

Taking a Test Drive

In short, an overnight visit is the closest thing high school students have to a college test drive. Go ahead — kick the tires, check the transmission, drive it around the block. Collect as many impressions as you can about the college. After all, you're thinking about spending four years of your life here. Make sure you'll still love it when that "new-college" excitement has worn off!

REDUCE TEST TAKING ANXIETY



Many students experience some nervousness or apprehension before, during, or after an exam. This kind of anxiety can be a powerful motivator. However, some students experience test-related anxiety to such a degree that it can lead to poor performance and interfere with their learning.

Tips for reducing test anxiety

Fortunately, there are several things that can be done to make test anxiety more manageable:

Preparation — develop good study habits, spreading studying over several days; ask for additional help when needed; eat healthy foods, get adequate rest, and exercise to build energy; attend class regularly and complete all assignments in a timely manner; make and take practice tests

Keep a positive attitude — develop reasonable expectations; do not allow your grades to become dependent on the outcome of one exam; avoid negative and irrational thoughts about catastrophic results; set up a system of rewards for dedicated studying and good test performance; encourage yourself

Relaxation techniques — deep breathing exercises, imagery and visualization, and muscle relaxation techniques can help to increase focus and concentration; don't arrive too early or get distracted by others preparing for the test; check to make sure you have everything you will need.

Learn good test-taking skills — do not panic if you can't remember something right away; answer questions you know well first, and then go back to other ones; read questions and directions carefully before you begin; outline essays before you begin to write; keep short-answers short; don't spend a lot of time reviewing answers

Additional coping strategies

The techniques for dealing with test or performance anxiety can be divided into 5 basic principles:

1. Be healthy: If you are physically and emotionally exhausted, your body and mind are less able to tolerate stress and anxiety. You can improve your resistance to anxiety by getting adequate rest, eating appropriately, and taking care of your physical health. If you find you don't have time to be healthy, consider seeking assistance with time management.

2. Be prepared: Practice... practice... practice... study... study... study. Sounds a bit repetitive, but nothing can help reduce anxiety like confidence. In fact, if you over-prepare a bit, your responses become more automatic, and your performance will be less affected by anxiety. Preparation for an exam

may include improving your study and test-taking skills. Be on time and have all the "tools" you may need for an exam (e.g., #2 pencils, calculator, pen). Finally, learn and practice the anxiety management techniques in the following points 3-5.

3. Practice the performance: The time limits of an exam, the tied score of a game, or the audience at your performance—all are stimuli that increase your level of arousal and add to your experience of anxiety. If you practice under similar conditions, you'll become less sensitive to these stimuli. For an exam, work through a practice exam (or two!) under the same time constraints that will exist when you take the exam (don't look at your notes, create as many conditions of the actual exam as possible). For an athletic or artistic performance, practice with distractions or with an audience. For conditions that you cannot actually reproduce, create them in your mind—close your eyes and "see" the audience in the seats, give the play-by-play of the last seconds of a tied game. Imagination is a powerful tool—it can help you be less anxious when reality hits!

4. Practice relaxation methods: In cases of anxiety, the goal is to lower your level of arousal. Some of the most effective ways involve altering your physical responses like breathing and muscle tension.

— **Deep breathing:** When anxious, we often take shallow breaths. We feel like we aren't getting enough air, and get more anxious. If you focus on breathing deeply and slowly, this cycle is interrupted and the body and mind begin to relax. To learn to breathe deeply, place your hand on your stomach and inhale in a way that makes your abdomen expand. As you exhale, your abdomen should move inward. Practice taking 10-15 slow deep breaths in a row, 2-3 times per day—training your body to breathe deeply and relax. Then, during a stressful situation, focus on taking 2-3 deep breaths, and your body will relax.

— **Progressive muscle relaxation:** We also tense our muscles when anxious. Consciously relaxing your muscles will help your body and mind relax. Practice muscle relaxation during deep breathing by focusing on a particular muscle group (e.g., shoulders) and alternatively tensing and relaxing the muscle. Then, focus on releasing all of the tension in the muscle, repeating "relax" in your mind. Add muscle relaxation to deep breathing in a stressful situation.

— **Reduce distractions:** Distractions are additional stimuli that increase arousal. Explore ways to reduce the distractions in your immediate environment, e.g. sit in a back corner of the room, take a sweater so you aren't distracted by being cold, change seats if you are dis-

tracted by the person sitting next to you.

— **Rituals:** Rituals are repetitive behaviors that give us a sense of familiarity, help us focus, and reduce anxiety. The basketball player who bounces the ball three times before shooting a free-throw has a ritual. You may already have some rituals—getting a drink of water just before an exam or using a particular pencil or pen. Just a note of caution—make sure your rituals are not harmful or distracting to yourself or others (tapping your pencil 10 times before each question may annoy your classmates!).

5. Control the fear: The underlying source of test or performance anxiety is the fear of failure. Pay attention to what you are thinking and saying to yourself in anxious situations. This self help will likely reflect an expectation or fear of failure. You can begin to control this fear or change the expectation by changing your self-talk.

— **Positive self-talk:** Purposefully filling your mind with positive statements about yourself and your abilities can offset or crowd-out the negative self-talk. Even if you don't believe the positives, say them anyway—"I'm ready...I can do this...Do it!" Determine the most important positive messages for yourself by writing down your 3-4 most common negative thoughts (e.g., "I can't do this"). Next, write down the opposite for each statement ("I can do this"). Repeat the positives to yourself daily for at least two weeks, and again just before and during the test or performance.

— **On-task self-talk:** Counter distractions and help yourself focus on the task at hand by telling yourself what to do—talk yourself through the task step-by-step, and tell yourself you're succeeding! Thinking about past mistakes or future consequences is not helpful. Keep your mind focused on the present—one thing at a time!

— **Gaining perspective:** Sometimes the negative thoughts people have in stressful situations focus on potentially drastic consequences of failure. In most cases, these drastic consequences are much more severe than the reality of the situation—this is called catastrophizing. Focusing on such catastrophic consequences increases anxiety and interferes with performance. It is important to recognize that one mistake does not equal failure and that one bad performance does not mean you're worthless. Take some time to evaluate the most likely consequences of your performance. If you find that you tend to catastrophize, develop some phrases that are more realistic and repeat these phrases to yourself prior to and during the exam or performance. An example might be "This is just one exam."

What is the Status of My College Application?

Barbara Schultz, Beckman Counselor

Those of you who have sent applications may already be receiving letters, postcards or e-notifications that something is missing. Actually, it usually isn't — but just isn't filed yet.

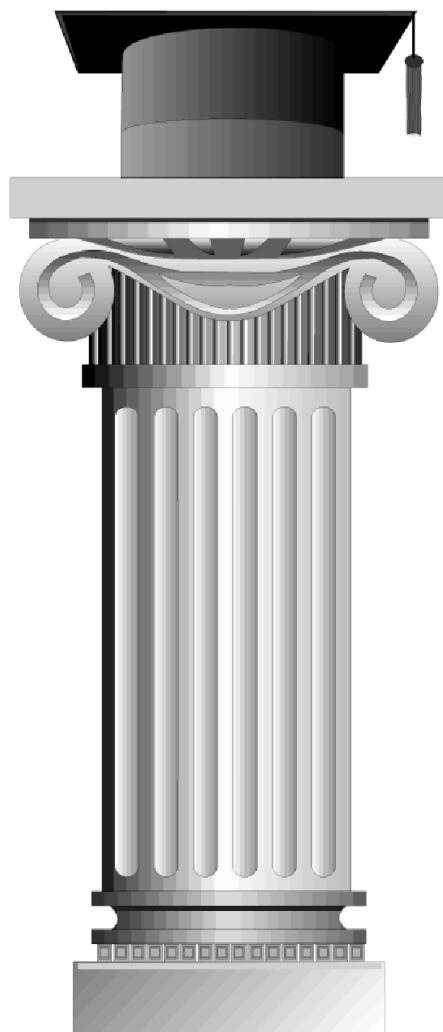
It's college application time, and the Class of 2009 is thoroughly involved in the very serious business of applying to colleges. The first of the early applications have already been mailed, and soon regular deadline applications will be sent off. The process of application, with its possibility of rejection as well as for acceptance, is stressful for everyone involved.

Some of the stress can be reduced. Most seniors have the process well in hand and there should be little or no last minute panic. Essays are being written, auditions prepared, portfolios assembled. Students have contacted their recommenders. Students who are still selecting colleges to which they will apply have taken the standardized testing, determined their priorities, and organized the task at hand.

At every national conference of college and admissions counselors, several sessions address various tension points in the process of communication between applicant and college. One of them is this: as deadlines are met, the college admissions offices fill up with mail: applications, recommendations, transcripts, and so forth — all of this needs to be filed before folders are read and often, during the filing period, colleges send letters to applicants noting that some materials are not yet in the files.

It might help to know that colleges face a MOUNTAIN of admissions mail every day — mail that requires very systematic and careful handling. As a result, there will be a very reasonable delay between the moment your application arrives at the admissions office and the time it is processed and placed into your file. A colleague sent me descriptions of the process from a number of admissions officers — among them the following:

From a large public university: "I wish I had a photo that I could send you of thousands of pieces of mail sitting in the mail bins waiting to be processed. Maybe this bit of information will help... we employ an "army" of students to help us process the mail. We receive so much mail that all some of the students do is simply slit open envelopes, other students will date stamp the materials, and another student places the information in the proper bin (Part I- Early Decision,



Part I- Regular Decision, High School Transcript- Early Decision, etc.) From the bins, our processing staff enters the information into the computer. We estimated that we received over 100,000 pieces of information for our freshman applicants alone last year (each application requires Part I & Part II, or the Common App and our Supplement, the Secondary School Report, the HS transcript, test scores, and at least one letter of recommendation.)

From a mid-sized private university: "We track mail received per day by application type. Last year in November (alone), we received 900 frosh applications. It took us four days to get this mail open, let alone counted, stamped and sorted. From a private college: "Typically we receive more than half of our applications right at the deadline. They are processed in the order in which they arrive, and it takes us about three weeks to get all of the applications processed and in files. We do enter quite a bit of data on each applicant into our student database, so for most of our data

entry people it is physically impossible to process more than a certain number of applications in one day."

From a large public university: "We never receive a complete application all in one envelope since we require that ACT/SAT scores be sent to us directly from the testing agency. There always are sorting and matching processes that must take place daily since we receive hundreds (sometimes thousands) of applications, transcripts, letters of recommendation, etc. each and every business day!"

From another large public university: "This morning the U.S. mail delivered 30 tubs full of applications, counselor statements, and teacher recommendations to our office; two staff members spent all day just opening the envelopes, another fifteen concentrated on logging everything in, and yet our mail room still looks as though a paper bomb went off in it."

In other words: if a student gets a note from a college saying that a piece of your application is missing, DON'T PANIC! The material in question is usually in the admissions office itself, somewhere in those sacks of mail and has not been filed yet. The letters go out as a sort of insurance. Admissions offices, too, are under pressure to get all the folders complete for timely and considered reading. Harvard, for example, is very careful when asking for a second copy of any material to note that this sort of difficulty would in no way jeopardize an applicant's chance of admission. This assurance was reiterated at this year's conference by spokespeople for the college admissions offices, but many recognized that their procedures and budgets might not give them the latitude to write and mail a gracious letter.

The appropriate response to a postcard or a letter like this is merely for the student, parent or counselor to call and verify the file. Usually by the time you call the Admissions Office with a request to check the file, it is usually complete. Keep copies of everything that is mailed. We counselors do the same. If applying online, the application should be printed out before being sent off — the application programs support making hard copies. So, should any document be missing from an admissions file, there's plenty of time to fax a duplicate.

As students complete and send their applications, the pressure is reduced. The anxiety of waiting for the colleges' responses, however, remains. ■■■