



College Planning Guide – Get a Head Start!

OFFICE OF FINANCIAL AID

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FRESHMEN

CREATE > Make a four year high school course plan. Make sure you are completing necessary courses to stay on track. Challenge yourself by taking difficult courses.

RECORD > List all extracurricular, clubs, leadership, church, etc. activities you are involved in. You can use this journal as a reference later 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 Counselors 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 to a perspective college, try looking for online virtual tours.

RESEARCH > All colleges you are considering. Be sure to look into financial aid offered, majors, clubs, faculty to student ratio, cost of attendance, 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 Spring of your Junior year. This score is necessary for early admission decisions.

BRAINSTORM > Plan ideas for college entrance essays. Review your record of extracurriculars from the past 4 years.

VISIT > Go on any final college campus visits; really focus on the feel of each campus.

IMPORTANT > Create your FSA ID username and password at fsaid.ed.gov. In October of your Senior year, file your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).



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 recommendations 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 October 1. This determines the amount of aid you are eligible to receive. Complete it as soon as you can.

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! CHECK! 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 up your grades in your final year! Schools DO check!

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

ADMISSIONS

- What is 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 dorm, 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**? 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 freshmen 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 fees? Housing? Books and supplies, personal expenses?*)
- What is your school's **priority deadline date** for applying for financial aid?
- 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 Financial Aid 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 awards** 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 freshmen **permitted** to **live off campus** or to have **cars**?
- What is the **average size of the freshman 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
- **Financial Aid PROFILE Application:**
student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile
- **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA):**
fafsa.gov

Free Private Scholarship Searches/Sources of Information

- **Chegg**
<http://www.chegg.com/scholarships>
- **College Board's Scholarship Search**
<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search>
- **College Greenlight**
<https://www.collegegreenlight.com>
- **College NET MACH25**
<https://www.collegenet.com/mach25/app>
- **CollegeScholarships.com**
<http://collegescholarships.com>
- **Fastweb!**
<http://www.fastweb.com>
- **Scholarships.com**
<https://www.scholarships.com/scholarship-search>
- **Scholarship America**
<https://scholarshipamerica.org>

General Financial Aid Information

- **U.S. Dept. of Education:**
studentaid.ed.gov
- **State of Michigan:**
www.michigan.gov/mistudentaid