



College Planning for Students with Learning Differences

April 2014

12th - ACT and ACT plus Writing

Seniors should have their final letters of acceptance by April 1st

Juniors – Visit colleges

Prepare for AP Exams

Seniors – Compare offers of admission; revisit top choices

Evaluate financial aid packages and explore funding options

May 2014

1st – Common reply date for college enrollment

3th – SAT Reasoning and Subject Tests

(register by 4/4 - late registration 4/18)

5th-16th - AP exams

Juniors – work on resume

Juniors – speak to advisor about military colleges or ROTC programs

Seniors – notify the colleges that you will not attend and take some time to thank those who wrote your letters of recommendation for college

Making Final College Choices

For some students, the final decision regarding which college to attend is the toughest part of the admissions process. They find themselves riddled with doubt and unable to choose. If you're struggling to make your final college choice, here are some tips to help you sort out your options.

Stay as calm as possible. While this is an important decision, allowing yourself to be overwhelmed with anxiety will not help you make a better choice. Give yourself some breathing room; you don't have to decide today, or even tomorrow. You have until May 1 to make your choice. Sometimes taking a break from worrying about choosing a college to do something fun and relaxing can make it easier to decide. If you feel pressured by parents or friends to make a choice, ask them to respect that you're still deciding.

Start with you, not the colleges. Being honest with yourself about your needs, preferences and goals for college is just as important now as it was when you were deciding where to apply. You may find it helpful to make a list of the top eight or ten characteristics you hope to find in your future college home. Be as specific as possible, and try to focus on both quantifiable factors (cost, size, location, academics) as well as intangibles (social fit, reputation, campus "feel"). Remember, this list is about what *you* think is important, not the factors your parents, neighbor, or best friend think matter most. After you've made your list, rank each characteristic by its importance to you. Don't worry about which colleges match up best just yet. The point of this exercise is to spend time listening to your head *and* heart about how you visualize your college experience.

Evaluate each college separately. Our natural tendency is to want to jump in and start comparing colleges to each other, but

try to resist. Before you compare colleges, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each school individually based on the characteristics that matter most to you. If you feel you don't have enough information to assess a college's strengths and weaknesses, do some more research. Try to visit campus, review the school's website again, and ask questions of admissions, faculty, and current students. Don't just gather external information; also look for *internal* information. Your gut instinct about each college is important to weigh as well.

Narrow your options. After mulling over what matters most to you and weighing each college's strengths and weaknesses, you'll likely find that at least a few of your options don't resonate as strongly with you. It's OK to let those colleges go. You can only attend one college in the end. While it may be hard to "let go" of options, it is a necessary step.

This is also the time to let go of the colleges that didn't work out. Logically, you know that there are very good reasons why attending a certain college isn't possible. You weren't admitted, were placed on a waitlist with a cast of thousands, didn't receive enough financial aid, or your family has had an unexpected change in circumstances that's affected what is and isn't possible. But, often, when we discover that a particular choice is no longer available, it's hard to move on. The colleges that are possible may seem to pale in comparison to the one we can't have. It's always bittersweet to say good-bye to a college that you've dreamed about but now won't be able to attend. Let yourself mourn a bit, but then try to quickly refocus on the great options you *do* have.

Compare your remaining choices in pairs. Still can't decide? Here's a good way to clarify your preferences. Compare your top choices in groups of two, rather than

Careers for Health Care Administration/Management Majors

- Clinical Manager—runs the business side of a health-care services facility
- Health Information Manager—utilizes IT training to manage the databases that are required for a healthcare facility to run smoothly
- Nursing Home Administrator— is responsible for the day-to-day operation of a nursing home
- Community Health Coordinator—identifies and addresses health needs of a community
- Chief Nursing Officer—oversees the health facility's nursing department
- Clinical Administrator—manages a clinic or outpatient surgery or serves as a department head in a hospital
- Practice Manager—is part of the management team for a large medical practice

The Association of University Programs in Health Administration maintains a searchable database of certified undergraduate and graduate programs at: <http://bit.ly/1eOGR2>

Majors: Health Care Administration

Do you love the idea of a health care career, but hate the thought of all of the science classes required for a medical or nursing degree? If so, consider a major in health care administration, one of the fastest growing career paths in the health care industry.

When most people think of hospitals, they picture doctors, nurses and other medical caregivers. However, behind the scenes, health care executives play a vital role in health care delivery by making sure that the systems and services are in place to support the work of medical personnel at hospitals, nursing facilities, managed care companies, and other health care organizations.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics, virtually all new private sector jobs created in the last five years were in the health care industry. Health care is the second largest employer in the U.S., employing over 11 million people, and health care administration/management jobs are expected to grow 22% over the next ten years. Health care managers and executives are also well compensated, with the top ten percent of executives earning well over \$144,000 a year. Top executives at large hospitals can make \$800,000 or more.

Health care managers, administrators and executives work in a variety of positions including patient care coordination, health communications and marketing, human resources and staffing, healthcare planning, finance, and information technology. They don't just work in hospitals, either. Health care executives can be found working in physician offices, managed care and insurance companies, and even in consulting firms and government agencies. It's an exciting and diverse field, offering lots of room for career growth and the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping to make a difference in people's lives.

A career in health care administration might be right for you if you are:

- Concerned with the health and well-being of people from all walks of life
- A problem-solver who can keep up with ever-changing situations and new laws and regulations
- A good communicator with excellent interpersonal skills
- Analytical, detail-oriented, and organized

A bachelor's degree in health care administration is usually a prerequisite for entry level jobs in health care management. At present, 49 colleges and universities offer undergraduate majors in health care administration, certified by the Association of University Programs in Health Administration (AUPHA). As a health care administration/management major in college, you'll combine classes in business subjects such as accounting, marketing, human resources and information technology with healthcare-specific courses such as hospital management, health care policy, medical economics, and health delivery systems. In many programs, you'll also take classes in epidemiology (the study of disease causes and effects), health psychology, sociology and anthropology. A healthcare administration major is flexible enough so that students considering medical school can also fit in the required science and math pre-requisite courses.

Most health care administration programs require majors to complete a semester-long internship in a health care organization; a few programs alternate classroom time with a full-time on-the-job learning program called cooperative education. Some programs also allow students to specialize in specific areas of health care administration, such as health informatics.

Another pathway into this field is to complete an undergraduate degree in a relevant academic area, such as business or public health, and then pursue a Masters degree in health care administration/management.

Financial Matters: Comparing Financial Aid Packages



If you've applied for financial aid and filed all the paperwork by the appropriate deadline, an award letter outlining the college's offer of financial assistance should arrive close on the heels of your notification of acceptance. The following should help you to understand what that package really means.

When comparing financial aid packages, the bottom line is the final cost of your education to you and your family. Since the total cost of education varies for each college, you'll need to compare your packages in terms of several factors. First, compare the ratio of grants and scholarships (gift money) to loans for each school. Packages with larger grants than loans are obviously most desirable. Next, consider how much you and your family are expected to contribute and compare this amount to your total grant award. Are you and your family comfortable with your EFC—*Expected Family Contribution*? Will your earnings during college

help toward meeting the expected amount?

Now, compare loan types offered and their terms. Student loans, in and of themselves, are not evil. Borrowing a *manageable* amount to cover college expenses can be a good plan. However, the key word is "manageable." All loans are not created equal. The most desirable loans are subsidized student loans with low, deferred interest; these loans do not have to be repaid until after you have completed your education. Federal student loans tend to have the lowest interest rates and, for some types of Federal Student Loans, interest does not begin to accrue until six months after you graduate from college. Some colleges include private loans in their financial aid offers. The interest rates on private student loans are significantly higher than Federal student loans. Use caution when thinking about taking expensive private student loans, even for a "dream" college. You don't want your future imperiled by large amounts of debt.

Most financial aid packages also include Work Study. Keep in mind that you are free to decline this type of aid; although there may be significant benefits to Work Study employment, some students prefer to find their own

jobs on or off-campus. Earnings from Work Study, however, are not counted as income when you apply for financial aid for the following year, making Work Study a desirable form of employment.

For each college, add up the total for your EFC, loans, and Work Study in your financial aid offer and then subtract the total from your cost of attendance for the school. The result is your family's total "out of pocket" cost for the college.

Call the college's financial aid office to learn how outside scholarships may affect your financial aid package. While some colleges allow students to use these in place of loans, other colleges subtract this amount from any grant aid that you've been awarded. Ask, too, if you are likely to be awarded a similar package in succeeding years, assuming family finances remain at the same level. Some parts of your package may not be renewable, and this could affect your future cost of attendance.

The final decision about college choice needs to be a family decision, made by weighing numerous factors to determine the best choice for both you and your family. With skyrocketing college costs, finances may count heavily in your ultimate college selection.

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trying to compare multiple colleges all at once. Make a chart with the colleges' names along the top and the qualities you seek along the side. For each paired comparison, write the name of the college that seems to best match the characteristic you're looking for. Don't forget to use both your head (logic) and heart (instinct) as you consider each pair of choices. When you're done, add up which colleges received the most "votes" as you compared them to the others. Narrow your

list further by eliminating any colleges that clearly don't stand up to the other options.

There are no perfect college choices; there are only *different ones*. Deciding where to attend college is the last step in the long and tiring college application journey. It's easy to fall into the trap of believing that you must be absolutely 100% certain that you've chosen the *perfect* college to guarantee your future happiness and

success. In truth, there is no perfect college, nor are there any guarantees of your success. In the end, your college experience will be defined more by the attitude with which you approach it than by the actual college you attend. After you've made your decision about where you're heading next fall, go forward with confidence that you've made a *great* choice and that all will be well as you start this exciting new journey.

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Navigating the Wait List

Colleges have been increasing their use of the wait list over the last few admission cycles. Formerly, the wait list served as a safety net for colleges, assuring them of extra candidates if the number of students who accepted their offer of admission fell below their expectations. Now, however, colleges appear to be using the wait list as a way of increasing their yields and thus their rankings.

It has become pretty typical for a selective college that accepts 2,000 applicants in hopes of enrolling 500 students to offer another 2,000 well-qualified students places on the wait list. Of these, a quarter are likely to accept a spot. What should you do now if you are one of the hopeful applicants who has been wait-listed at your dream school?

First, you need to understand that this is not a denial of admission; instead, the college is letting you know that they consider you a good candidate and would like to accept you if room allows. Since students on the wait list are generally not ranked, you need to get the attention of admissions in order to be admitted. How do you do that?

First, respond quickly affirming your continued interest in the college and your desire to remain on the wait list. Follow up with a call or letter to the ad-

missions officer who was your primary reader. This is generally the individual who has been assigned to your school or region. Check the website or call admissions if you are not sure who this is. Your contact with the regional representative should reaffirm your interest in attending and restate the qualities that you bring to campus. If this is your top choice for college, let the rep know.

Next, update your file with any additional awards, honors, new grades or experiences. A visit to campus can help too. Be sure to make an appointment to speak with your admissions rep during that visit.

If you will not need much (or ideally any) financial aid to attend that college, let the college know in writing that your family is able to handle your college expenses.

Be prepared to make a quick decision on attending if you get a phone call offering you a place in the class. Generally, colleges will expect a verbal yes within 24-48 hours after offering you a place. Only then will the offer become official. If you do choose to attend Wait List U, you'll need to withdraw your previous enrollment at your second choice college. Be aware that you will probably forfeit any deposits you've paid to that institution.

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