

a step-by-step guide for
college success

Attending college is a
full-time job

What happens next?
How do we afford it?

College Planning: A Family Tool Kit

FIVE STEPS to ready you & your student
for the college experience

**When Should Your Family
Begin Thinking About College?**

NOW!

It's never too early to begin thinking about college! This toolkit, provided by Meredith College, is presented in Five Steps. These steps will help you plan for college, guide you through college and prepare you for life after college.

LEARN HOW TO

RESEARCH, PLAN & APPLY

PAY FOR COLLEGE

GET INTO COLLEGE

NAVIGATE AND THRIVE

PREPARE FOR LIFE AFTER COLLEGE



INFORMATION PROVIDED BY

MEREDITH
COLLEGE

MEREDITH COLLEGE FAMILY TOOLKIT

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1 Research, Preparing to Apply and Applying

Plus Tips & Tricks

RESEARCHING:

Selecting the right college takes time, and it's important that parents and students discuss their preferences as a family. Dialogue and active listening about these decisions is important. Students should take ownership of the college search process; however, it's important for parents/guardians to play a supportive role.

Here's how to begin:

STUDENTS: WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

Prioritize in importance to help target your research and applications

- Location? Near home or far away?
- Major?
- Financial aid options?
- Athletics?
- Social activities?

RESEARCH POSSIBLE COLLEGES

There are many sites that allow students to search for colleges based on the factors they determined were most important. Start by checking out www.CollegeBoard.org and www.CFNC.org.

CONTACT THE COLLEGE

Found a college that might be a match? Go online and subscribe to their mailing list or email the admissions office with specific questions.

COLLEGE FAIRS

College Fairs are held at high schools, in the community, or online. They provide the opportunity to speak with an admissions officer and pick up materials from many different schools. Attend as many college fairs as possible.

VISIT

Visiting the college (either on a visitation day/open house or for a campus tour) provides opportunities for students and families to speak directly with admissions and financial aid officers, and current students. Many colleges also offer summer programs for high school students that may be tied to an academic interest or leadership program. Some programs allow students to stay overnight on campus, which helps them get a feel for the college.

PARENTS:

WHAT IS YOUR STUDENT LOOKING FOR IN A COLLEGE?

- Academics – Does the college have their major or area of interest? If they are undecided on a major, does it have a variety of programs?
- Location – Is it close to you or far away? Is it urban, suburban or rural?
- Programs – Do they want to study abroad? Interested in student government, Greek life or athletics? Is community service important, or participating in the arts, or both?
- Size – Large university vs. small liberal arts college?

WHAT ARE COLLEGES LOOKING FOR IN YOUR STUDENT?

- Have they met the general admission requirements?
- What extracurricular activities are they involved in?
- How have they demonstrated they are ready to attend a 4-year college?
- Keep in mind that when considering activities and involvement colleges want to see quality not quantity.
- Students should consider involvement in two or three activities that would be considered quality in the eyes of an admissions office.

PREPARING TO APPLY: APPLICATION & DECISION DEADLINES GLOSSARY

Early Decision (ED) – Colleges offer an early deadline (usually in the fall or early winter) that allows students to receive the school’s admission decision earlier than applicants who apply as Regular Decision. ED is “binding,” which means if accepted, the applicant is required to withdraw applications from other colleges and sign a contract that states they will attend in the fall.

Early Action (EA) – Early Action is similar to ED, but is “non-binding.” This means a student is not required to withdraw other college applications or sign a contract, but they do receive the school’s admission decision earlier than applicants who apply as Regular Decision.

Regular Decision – Decision deadlines will vary by college, but students have until May 1st to decide which college they will attend. Colleges with “Rolling Admissions” will send out admissions decisions within a few weeks to a month of receiving the completed application.

MINIMUM COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLICATION

As a rule of thumb, always check the individual requirements of each college. The private and public colleges, for the most part, have similar minimum requirements for core classes considered for admission.

Minimum Course Requirements for the UNC System and several NCICU colleges

- English – 4 units
- Foreign Language – 2 units of the same language
- Math – 4 units (Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and one course where Algebra II is a pre-requisite)
- Science – 3 units (1 biological science, 1 physical science, 1 laboratory science)
- Social Science/History – 3 units (1 must be US History)

With careful planning, students may meet these qualifications before their senior year. To be competitive, take a full course load senior year – making sure to take both English and Math.

HONORS/AP/IB

If your school offers these classes, ask your guidance counselor which of these courses would be right for you! Taking AP and IB exams can help you earn college credit and save money on college courses in the long run.

DUAL ENROLLMENT

If your school offers Dual Enrollment courses at the local community college, take advantage of these. These courses may be transferable to the college of your choice, giving you a head start!

ACADEMIC CLASSES AND GPA

- Classes in core subject areas: English, Math, Science, History/Social Sciences, and Foreign Language.
- Weighted GPA – Grades are averaged with the additional weights from Honors, AP and IB courses.
- Unweighted GPA – Grades are averaged without the additional weights from Honors, AP and IB courses.
- Academic GPA – GPA based only on your grades from the “Academic Classes” listed above. This GPA can be weighted or unweighted.

APPLYING: THE APPLICATION PACKET

Now that you've decided as a family where to apply, it's time to get the application in order! An application for admission is broken into two general parts: the application itself and the additional information. The Application consists of information that most colleges require, and the additional materials vary from college to college.

1. APPLICATION

The Application is where colleges seek personal information, extracurricular activities, and a character statement if the college requires one.

Paper Applications vs. Online Applications

If applying on a paper application, make sure that it is the current and correct application. Many colleges will not accept an old application. New applications will typically be available in late summer before the senior year.

To apply online, visit the college's website. For colleges in North Carolina, visit College Foundation of North Carolina, www.cfnc.org, where you can fill out one basic application and submit it to many North Carolina colleges at once. Saves time and money!

For colleges both inside and outside of North Carolina, visit the college's website or visit the Common Application, www.commonapp.org, which allows you to submit one application to many member colleges. Remember: when applying online, make sure to send in any additional materials by mail (called "supplements" on the Common Application, additional files or materials on CFNC applications). Your application for admission will not be considered complete without these additional materials.

QUICK LINKS: ONLINE FEE WAIVERS

- **College Board:** www.collegeboard.org
- **NACAC:** www.nacacnet.org
- **College Foundation of NC:** www.cfnc.org

2. APPLICATION FEE OR WAIVERS

College application fees are usually non-refundable and can range from \$0 - \$100, and sometimes more. But don't panic! There are a few ways that application fees are waived...

- **SAT Fee Waivers** – If you qualified for an SAT Fee Waiver, you can send in an Application fee waiver with your application. You can get the Application fee waiver from your high school guidance counselor.
- **NACAC Fee Waivers** – A form is available from the National Association for College Admissions Counseling. The form can be downloaded from their website (www.nacacnet.org) and must be signed by a guidance counselor.
- **Alumni Vouchers** – Some colleges offer alumni and college employees the chance to send in a voucher to waive the application fee of an interested student. Contact the college for details.
- **CFNC Week** – The College Foundation of North Carolina sponsors a college application week in November. Many North Carolina schools will waive the application fee for students who apply online during this week. Check with your guidance counselor for details.
- **Campus Visits** – Some colleges waive the application fee if you have visited the college. Ask the Admissions Office for details.

3. TRANSCRIPTS, TEST RESULTS AND CHARACTER STATEMENT

Official Transcripts/Test Results

Colleges will only accept transcripts and test results that are “official.” Transcripts should be sent in sealed envelopes directly from the high school office. Transcripts that have been opened are no longer considered “official” and will not be accepted by colleges for your application. Test scores should be sent directly from the testing agency (ex. College Board or ACT) unless otherwise stated by the college.

Standardized Tests

Most colleges and universities require standardized test scores as part of the application package. You will need to take one of two tests before you apply to college. Be sure to sign up early!

- **SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test) - www.sat.org**

The SAT involves three sections (Critical Reading, Math, and Writing) and is scored out of 2400 total points. Many colleges base their SAT averages on only two sections (Critical Reading and Math), so be aware of which sections colleges count when looking at their averages.

- **ACT (American College Testing) - www.act.org**

The ACT involves four sections (English, Math, Reading, Science) and is scored out of a possible 36. Most colleges require you to take the optional writing test for your ACT scores to count, so make sure to sign up for “ACT plus Writing.”

Test Fee Waivers

Standardized tests can be expensive – between \$40 to \$50 each time you take the test – and it’s not uncommon for students to take these tests more than once. The good news is test fee waivers are available for eligible students for both the SAT and ACT. All test fee waivers are available through your high school guidance counselor. They do not cover late registration fees, so be proactive: ask for the waiver and sign up for the test early!

Test scores can be automatically sent to colleges students are applying to by filling out the School Code (a four digit code unique to each College/University) in the appropriate box on the test. School codes are entered at the end of each test. If the college of choice is unknown, scores can be sent after testing, but additional fees may apply.

Example: Meredith College SAT Code: 5410
Meredith College ACT Code: 3126

Studying for the Tests

There are many free ways to study and take practice tests to get familiar with the SAT and ACT. High school guidance offices and local libraries have guidebooks available that offer practice tests free of charge. For free online practice tests, check out www.number2.com and the College Board website.

Character Statement

The character statement is the student’s promise that there is no false information on the application. Make sure it is signed and know that colleges with character statements look at lying on your application like classes look at plagiarism. Honesty is important.

4. SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT

Also known as the “Guidance Counselor Recommendation.” This informs colleges of the high school’s grading scale, the student’s class rank, and lets the Admissions Staff know the applicant is in good standing and intends to graduate on time. Many colleges require materials in addition to the application. Each college has different requirements, so make sure to send exactly what that college asks for.

Possible Additional Materials/Supplements Colleges May Ask For:

Teacher Recommendations – Many colleges ask for 1-2 teacher recommendations. These recommendations should be from teachers who taught the student in 11th or 12th grade, and taught an academic core subject.

Essay/Personal Statement – An Essay is a writing sample on a specified topic. A Personal Statement is usually on any topic chosen by the applicant. For example, applicants will use it to explain a challenge they faced in a subject area and how they overcame it. At some colleges, these are required; at others they are “highly encouraged.”

Interview – Some colleges require an interview with either an Admissions Officer or Alumni as part of the application review process. If required, schedule this interview as soon as possible because interview timeslots can fill up quickly. This can be taken care of by a simple call to the Admissions Office.

SAT/ACT Scores

SAT Subject Tests – Required by some highly selective colleges. They are administered by the College Board, just like the SAT. Speak with your guidance counselor to sign up for these tests early – they are not administered as often as the SAT.

Portfolio/Audition – If you are applying for an arts, theatre, or music program, some colleges require a portfolio or an audition submission at the time of application. Contact the college to inquire about setting up an audition time, or for specifics on portfolio submissions.

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Tips & Tricks

for students

TEACHER RECOMMENDATION

When asking a teacher to write a recommendation, ask them early in the fall semester of your senior year so they have time to write a thoughtful letter and are not swamped with other requests. You want the teacher to be able to shine the best possible light on your application!

If English is not your first language, and you took ESL classes in 9th or 10th grade, have one of your teacher recommendations be from your 11th or 12th grade English teacher – this proves to the college that you’ve worked hard at mastering the language and succeeded.

ESSAY/PERSONAL STATEMENT

When writing an essay on an assigned topic, make sure that you answer the question that is asked! If time allows, ask your English teacher to look over your essay for grammar and punctuation. Make sure to give them enough time in advance, just as you would a teacher recommendation.

When choosing a topic for a Personal Statement, don’t write about information you already listed in the application (such as a list of activities you’re involved in). Colleges already have a handle on your day-to-day activities from the application. Instead, write about something that they wouldn’t know about you by just reading the transcript. Were you sick with pneumonia and your grades suffered one semester? Why do you want to attend this college or major in a certain field? What is an interesting fact about you or an experience that you’ve had that the admissions office would find interesting or unique?

2 ■ Paying for College

One of the first questions families often ask, and should ask about college is,

“How are we going to afford it?”

There are typically charges for tuition, housing and meals (if a student is living on campus), and there may also be a cost for books, supplies, and course fees. The cost of these items varies depending on the school. If a student is comparing private and public colleges or considering studying in a different state, the expenses will vary. As a matter of fact, the goal of most private colleges is to support your graduation in four years, which in the long run, saves money compared to those schools that require five years or more but have lower initial costs.

MANY WAYS TO PAY

Fortunately, there are many ways to make a college education affordable. Depending on the college, financial assistance may be available to reduce the cost of attending. In order to receive financial assistance, students and families will need to work together to complete the necessary applications. The application process is different for U.S. citizens than for non-U.S. citizens, and it may vary depending on the college.

TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID

Once the application for Financial Assistance is complete, the college will contact the student regarding the types and amounts of aid for which they qualify. Generally, there are three types of financial aid. These types are scholarships, grants and loans.

Scholarships

Scholarships are funds offered to students that do not have to be repaid and are typically offered based on a student's academic performance, major of study, talent, or leadership potential. Some scholarships may consider a student's financial need based on the results of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), but many are awarded without consideration for financial need. Scholarship eligibility requirements and application processes vary depending on the donor source and the type of the award.

Grants

Similar to scholarships, grants refer to aid given to students that does not have to be repaid, provided that the student meets the eligibility criteria. While the terms "grants" and "scholarships" are often used interchangeably, grants typically refer to aid that is given based on a student's financial need according to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Grants usually cannot be applied for separately and are often awarded automatically when a student applies for financial assistance.

Loans

Loans are funds that may be used to fund a student's academic expenses that must be paid back to a lending institution. All students who file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) are automatically eligible to receive a limited amount of Federal Direct Stafford Loans from the Department of Education, regardless of financial need or credit history. All Federal Direct Stafford Loans offer a fixed rate of interest and no payments are due on the loans until after the student finishes school or ceases to be enrolled at least half time.

In addition to the Federal Direct Stafford Loan, parents should consider applying for a Federal Parent PLUS Loan, which also offers a fixed rate of interest and the option to defer payments until after the student finishes college or ceases to be enrolled at least half time. Parents may apply for any amount up to the cost of attendance, but approval is subject to a credit evaluation. Students whose parents are not approved to receive a PLUS loan may receive an additional amount of Direct Stafford Loan funding with proof of a Parent PLUS Loan denial.

Students wishing to borrow funds in addition to the Federal Direct Stafford Loan may apply to private lenders for additional educational loans. These types of loans are referred to as "alternative" loans and often require a student to apply with a credit worthy cosigner. Starting interest rates will vary by lender and are based on the credit evaluation of the cosigner or the primary borrower if a cosigner is not needed. Interest rates for alternative loans are variable and will change over the life of the loan based on market conditions.

HOW TO APPLY FOR FINANCIAL AID: INTERNATIONAL/UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

- Colleges will not typically release aid information until you have been accepted by the Office of Admissions, so you will want to be sure that all of your admissions paperwork has been completed. (See the section in this toolkit titled “Admissions” for more information on general admission application requirements).
- Determine if your college provides a financial assistance application for non-citizens or requests that you complete one online.
 - Some colleges may develop their own forms that students are expected to complete, while others will use a general international student application that is available on the College Board website. Check with your college to make sure you submit the appropriate form.
 - The information requested on internal applications may vary, so you may want to ask your college’s financial assistance office what documentation you will need to complete the form.
- Be prepared to submit additional paperwork regarding your household’s income, assets, and ability to pay college tuition.
- Deadlines for aid applications may vary by college, so you will need to check with your college’s financial aid office to determine when you must submit your information. Priority is usually given to those who apply early.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON FINANCIAL AID

If you are interested in learning more about applying for financial assistance, we recommend the following sites as helpful resources:

- **The College Foundation of North Carolina:** www.cfn.org
- **FinAid:** www.finaid.org
- **Meredith College Financial Assistance:** www.meredith.edu/financial_assistance

HOW TO APPLY FOR FINANCIAL AID: U.S. CITIZENS/ELIGIBLE NON-CITIZENS

1. PIN

2. FILE THE FREE APPLICATION

3. SEND FAFSA

4. CONTACT COLLEGE

1. Obtain a federal PIN (Personal Identification Number) online at www.pin.ed.gov.
2. File the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) online at www.fafsa.gov after January 1st of the year you plan to attend.
 - Be sure to have your taxes with you when you complete the application. You will be asked to enter tax information on the form.
NOTE: Each college may have a different due date for the FAFSA application. Check with your college(s) of interest to find out when you will need to complete the form.
3. Send the FAFSA to the colleges you are interested in attending.
 - At the end of the FAFSA application, you will be asked to enter the code for the college where you would like your application sent. You can contact your college(s) financial aid office to obtain this code, or you may use the FAFSA’s built-in search feature to look up your college(s) code online.
 - Your application will be sent electronically to each college you list on your application. You will not need to contact the college in order for your FAFSA to be received.
4. Contact your college to determine if any additional paperwork is needed.
 - Some colleges use additional applications in order to determine your eligibility for aid. These may be internal applications that are unique to each college, or you may be requested to submit the CSS PROFILE, a national form available on the College Board website.
 - In addition to your FAFSA application, some colleges may also collect your personal tax information in order to verify the data submitted on the online form.
 - Colleges will not typically release aid information until you have been accepted, so you will want to be sure that all of your admissions paperwork has also been completed.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FINANCIAL AID

Q) Is it required that parents submit their income information in order for a student to receive financial aid?

A) Yes. The federal government requires that students under the age of 24 must have their parents complete and sign the parent portion of the FAFSA form, even if parents are not willing or are unable to contribute to a student's education. Parents are an essential part of the application process, and students and families should work together to complete the necessary paperwork. If parents are deceased, a student is over the age of 24, or a student is married or supports dependents, there may be some exceptions to this rule.

Q) Do you have any helpful tips for completing the aid application?

A) Yes. When completing the FAFSA or PROFILE application:

1. Double check the information - Social Security or identifying number, date of birth, and the student's legal name must be correct; incorrect information entered on forms will severely delay the processing of your application at any college.
2. Enter the correct school code(s) - To make sure that the college(s) of your choice receives your application, make sure the correct school code is entered for the application to end up in the right hands.
3. Leave no blanks - Unless instructed to do so, make sure all blanks are filled in on all forms, even if that means entering a "0". Read the online instructions carefully.
4. Don't procrastinate - Complete your application as soon as possible. Remember, you must file your forms by the college's priority deadline(s). These deadlines may be different from college to college, so make sure you keep a calendar with each institution's requirements.

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3 ■ Getting into College (Enrolling)

DECISIONS

Now that the application is complete, what happens next? Colleges begin the work of reviewing the application and making an admissions decision. The admissions decision is communicated to students differently depending on the college (eg. e-mail, snail mail, online portal). Once received, here are a few terms to become familiar with:

Accepted – The student has met the requirements and is accepted for admission.

Accepted for Spring Semester – The student has been accepted to the college, not for the Fall semester, but beginning in the Spring. Some larger universities do this instead of a waitlist.

Waitlist – The student has been placed on the “Waitlist,” which means the student will be accepted if space in the incoming class becomes available after May or June. It is important to understand that a space in the incoming class is not guaranteed so applicants should consider other colleges in the event the space does not become available.

Deferred – The college needs additional materials to evaluate the submitted application (usually new SAT scores, final grades, or an additional teacher recommendation).

Denied – The college is unable to offer admission to the applicant at this time.

**Make sure you know the date the college is notifying students of their decisions. Some have strict deadlines, while others are rolling, which means they review applicants as they become complete on a rolling basis.

Early Decision: When applying as Early Decision, the applicant may receive a letter that says admissions cannot accept the applicant as Early Decision, but will reevaluate the application for Regular Decision. This means a second decision letter will be sent at the Regular Decision notification date.

May 1: For students who applied Regular Decision, May 1 is the universal reply date for accepted students. Students must submit a deposit to the college of choice by May 1 to secure a spot.

IMPORTANT!

Don't deposit at more than one college.
Deposits are non-refundable!

WITHDRAW ACCEPTANCE

Once the student confirms he/she is going to attend the college of his/her choice, the student should also inform the other colleges to which he/she has been accepted that he/she will not attend. This can be done by letter, phone or email, and should be done as soon as the student makes his/her final decision.

SAMPLE REQUEST TO WITHDRAW ACCEPTANCE:

To the Admissions Office:

My name is (Full Name) and I was accepted for the Fall semester. Please withdraw my application - I have decided to attend (Insert College) in the Fall.

*Thank you,
(Full Name)
(Full Address)
(Date of Birth)*

BUT I WAS WAIT LISTED AT THE COLLEGE I WANT TO ATTEND!

You'll have a hard decision to make, but one that many students are also facing. If you are accepted to your second choice college and put on the waitlist at your first choice, there is no guarantee that any students will get off the waitlist of your first choice. If you wait until after May 1 to deposit at your second choice college, you may lose your spot. The truth is that very few students come off the waitlist positively – seek alternatives.

Call the Admissions Office! They can guide and assist you with making this decision.

AFTER THE DECISION

Once a student is enrolled at the college of his or her choice, he or she will receive information about new student Orientation. Orientation is a time for first year students to familiarize themselves with campus before the semester begins. Some colleges host Orientation in the summer, while others hold theirs just before classes start. Activities during Orientation may include:

- Registering for classes
- Meeting with a faculty advisor
- Group Advising sessions
- Residence Hall Meetings
- Special Activities such as socials with classmates or an Honor Code Ceremony
- Technology training sessions

It's important to note that not all colleges operate using the same Orientation schedule, so families should pay careful attention to the information received in the spring and summer before the student's first year. Parents and guardians will also want to check and see which activities (if any) include their participation. At this stage, colleges expect students to act independently because they are first year college students. The Admissions Office can address any questions about the college's schedule, no questions are too small.

TIPS FOR PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

- Attend parent and family orientation programs offered during new student orientation on campus.
- Listen to your student when he/she needs you, and encourage the student to solve problems and seek assistance on campus.
- Encourage your student to get involved on campus by joining a student club or organization or by getting involved in various campus activities and programs.
- If your student lives on campus, encourage him/her to stay on campus, especially on weekends.
- If a student must earn money while in college, encourage the student to limit his/her hours of work so that part-time work does not interfere with success in college. College is the student's occupation.
- Support your student in making his/her own decisions and to seek out professors, advisors, and counselors on campus for support and assistance.
- Keep the lines of communication open - through phone, email, visits home, parent/family member visits to campus, etc.
- Expect change in your student as he/she becomes more independent and grows in maturity.

OTHER SUMMER PROGRAMS

Many colleges offer summer programs or workshops for first year students. Some are referred to as summer bridge programs where first year students can get a taste of what's in store for their freshman year. This program often includes opportunities to take some general education courses. Special programs may also be offered for multi-cultural students. For example, Meredith College hosts two Summer Symposiums for multi-cultural students, where they get to spend the night in the residence halls and participate in team building activities. College campuses are open year round, so there are typically experiences available for new students in the summer months.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF STUDENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS

The college experience is an important time in the lives of students and their families. College is a time when students transition from being dependent on their families to being able to live more independently as adults.

Most colleges and universities view college students as young adults and encourage students to work on life skills and solving problems or challenges on their own. Students are expected to focus on their education and to take on tasks – in and out of the classroom – with increased responsibility. Colleges expect full-time college students to spend most of their time on college courses, homework, involvement in college life and activities, effective communication with others, and learning more about ideas, concepts, the community and the world. Attending college is a full-time job and students are expected to be involved in their own academic, social and personal development.

Having a student in college is exciting and challenging for parents and family members. While the college student is transitioning to life at a college or university, parents and family members are encouraged to transition in supporting the student's new role and environment by allowing the student to make decisions and solve problems on his/her own, to seek and use resources and services on campus, and to ask for help when it is needed.

FERPA (THE LAW)

As students transition from high school to college, student information (such as grades, academic progress, etc.) is protected by a Federal law called FERPA (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act). This law gives the students the right to have some control over the sharing of education records and information.

While parents/guardians may have been able to receive student educational information in elementary, middle and high school, the right to this information shifts from parents to students when a student becomes 18 years of age or attends a school beyond high school. Since student and parent roles change when a student starts college, it is important that the student and parent have a conversation about how education information may be shared or discussed with each other. Many colleges and universities recommend that the student and parent establish a direct communication about the student's progress, grades and other important educational and college experience information. Some colleges offer the opportunity for students to sign a release/waiver for the college to be able to share information with parents/guardians of students – this varies depending upon the college or university in which the student enrolls.

HELPFUL CONVERSATIONS

While the relationship between the college student and family changes, the communication pattern may also change. It is helpful for the family to have some conversations in the few months before the student begins college. These conversations help to increase the expectations and understanding between the student and family members.

CONVERSATION TOPICS FAMILIES AND STUDENTS SHOULD DISCUSS BEFORE COLLEGE BEGINS:

- How will we communicate with each other and how often?
- What is the student most excited about when thinking about the college experience? What is the student most concerned about?
- How often will the student come home?
- How will money be managed (student checking account, parent's account, budget plan)? What amount of spending money will the student have while in college?
- If the student plans to have a car while at college, how will the car be maintained (paying for gas, scheduling oil changes, etc.)?
- If student plans to hold a part-time job while in college, will this be on or off campus? How many hours of work are reasonable when also attending college as a full-time student?
- How will the student communicate with parents/guardians about academic grades, progress, challenges, successes, etc.?
- How will the student be involved on campus?

CAMPUS SAFETY AND SECURITY

It is very important that students have a safe place to study, learn and live. While most colleges have safety measures and plans in place, students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own personal safety and welfare – safety is a shared responsibility between colleges and students.

Most colleges have campus police/security forces, emergency notification systems, campus sirens, and alarms. Students on college campuses are encouraged to lock the doors to their residence hall rooms, apartments and vehicles, and to report any suspicious behavior to campus police/security. Colleges encourage students to be aware of their surroundings and to use common sense when walking on, around and traveling to and from campus. Some campuses offer safety escorts around campus or to parking lots, and students are encouraged to use the “buddy system” or to let a friend know where they are going. Campuses usually have well-equipped and well-lit buildings with fire alarms and sprinkler systems. Students living on campus are often required to attend fire and safety trainings.

For more information about Meredith College, visit www.meredith.edu/admissions or call us at 1-800-MEREDITH.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THE TRANSITION TO COLLEGE

For many students with disabilities, it can be difficult to make the transition from the laws and procedures in high school to those that apply to college students. In high school, special education and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) outline how educational support and accommodations are provided. However, colleges and universities are not subject to those laws and practices. In college, the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 form the legal foundation for protections to individuals with disabilities. These regulations are civil rights protections, not entitlement programs, and ensure that college students with disabilities are provided equal access. This distinction forms the basis for the legal and procedural differences that every college student with disabilities and their families should understand. Families are encouraged to contact the Disabilities Office of the college to determine what support and services may be available while enrolled.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Health Resource Center at the National Youth Transitions Center:
<http://www.health.gwu.edu>

U.S. Department of Education:
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html>

University of Washington:
<http://www.washington.edu/doit/Student/college.html>

4. Success in College: Navigating & Thriving

What is the commitment of a college student?

SUCCESS: GETTING TO THE GOAL

DID YOU KNOW...? For every hour spent in class, college students should spend 1-2 hours studying outside of class. Example: 15 credit hours = 15 hours/week spent in class + 15-30 hours/week spent studying outside of class = up to **45 hours/week!**

Most students spend additional time on academic clubs, honor societies, campus organizations, athletics/intramurals, part-time jobs, internships, and more. Being a college student is more than a full-time job! And, the expectation from families is success!

Families can assist their student's academic success by supporting the time commitment needed to be a successful and well-rounded student. Students may not have as much free time or time to devote to family activities as they have in the past. Take advantage of winter, spring and summer breaks for family time.

STUDENTS: TIPS FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

- Enroll in a First Year Experience course offered at your college/university to help you learn all of the opportunities and services on your campus.
- Work closely with your professors. Utilize office hours to ask questions and discuss material.
- Take classes in a variety of disciplines, including those outside of your major or minor. Use degree requirements to explore new areas and expand your knowledge base. College is a time to expose your mind to new ideas and perspectives.
- Fine-tune your time management skills. Use a planner or calendar system that helps you keep track of meetings, assignments and tests, and schedule regular times for studying, exercise and relaxation. Use gaps between classes to review notes and/or readings.
- Utilize summer school when possible to get ahead.
- Sleep! Getting enough sleep is crucial to your health and ability to focus and learn.
- Be prepared for more independent studying and reading time and dedicating more time to your studies than in the past. Your study habits from high school will not likely translate to success in college.
- Ask for help! If you are struggling to understand material see your professor, find the campus tutoring/learning center, and talk with your academic advisor.

Who you should get to know on campus:

Your Academic Advisor – Meet with the advisor regularly and use the advisor as a resource for questions, advice, troubleshooting.

Tutoring Center/Learning Center/Writing Center – Ask your advisor or academic advising office to help you identify academic success resources on campus.

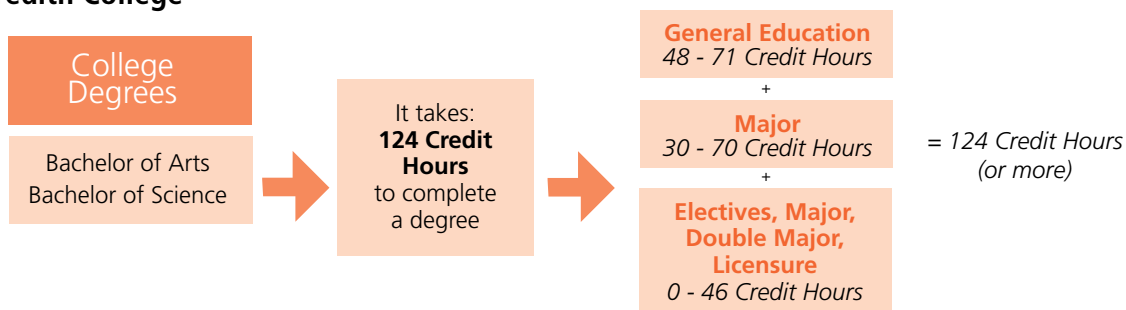
Academic Advising office – Ask for support and questions about your academic pursuits.

Career Services office – Get assistance with choosing a major, planning for graduate or professional school, and identifying internships.

Study Abroad/International Programs – Find out about academic opportunities across the U.S. and world.

GOAL: GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Sample, Meredith College



STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO HELP DECIDE ON A MAJOR:

Pursue classes you enjoyed in high school. When planning your schedule, include classes in these disciplines.

Take career assessments. You are encouraged to make an appointment with a career counselor for assistance.

Enroll in a career-planning course.

Read the Undergraduate Catalogue to learn about majors and minors. The catalog includes course descriptions.

Talk. There are lots of people you can speak with about majors who will be happy to give advice: faculty, department heads, your advisor, upper-division students in the major, and graduates who may be using skills from their major in careers.

Don't panic. There are lots of classes that "count" towards completion. There is not an absolute "right" order to take the classes.

In addition to the above requirements:

- A minimum of 31 hours of credit, including 50% of the major or minor, must be completed at the home institution.
- 24 out of a student's last 30 hours must be in coursework at the home institution (unless she is approved to study abroad, then 15 out of the last 30 hours will suffice).
- A minimum of 60 hours must be completed at a four-year institution.
- A minimum GPA of 2.0 is required in all coursework as well as in the major.

CHOOSING A MAJOR

Although choosing a major is often the biggest decision a college student has ever faced, it does not need to be a permanent one. There are two important points to remember about choosing majors:

- You can change your mind.
- Your major does not have to indicate your career path.

NAVIGATING: FROM FRESHMAN TO SENIOR — THE 4-YEAR PLAN

FRESHMAN: ADJUSTING TO COLLEGE WORK & LIFE

- Make an appointment to meet with a career counselor for individualized career planning.
- Access websites with career information to learn what you can do with particular majors.
- Take a career assessment and explore careers consistent with your interests.
- Take a variety of academic courses and stay open-minded about the selection of a major.
- Get acquainted with your professors, academic advisors and counselors who can help with your career plans.
- Identify your interests, skills and values and learn how they relate to the choice of a major.
- Join a campus organization to gain leadership and communication skills.
- Establish effective study habits, which may differ significantly from high school.
- Attend study skills workshops, or make an individual appointment with the Academic Advising Office to discuss your study skills, time management, and learning style.

Summer After Freshman Year

- Secure a job or internship that relates to your college major or career interest.
- Gain work experience and start developing a strong business and work ethic.

SOPHOMORE: SELECTING A MAJOR

- Explore majors and careers by talking with current students, faculty, alumni, and family.
- Take a career-planning course if one is available on your campus.
- Use the Occupational Outlook Handbook (a resource found in your career center) to research various occupations.
- Develop a resume and apply for internships and summer jobs.
- Join clubs and organizations on your campus and take a leadership role in an organization of your interest.
- Declare major(s) and minor(s), if not already done so, by submitting the appropriate forms to the Office of the Registrar.
- Develop a strong relationship with your academic advisor in your major.

Summer After Sophomore Year

- Get a summer job or internship relating to your field and develop your skills.
- Strengthen your resume by developing references and a good reputation.

JUNIOR: TRANSLATING ACADEMIC & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES INTO ACADEMIC & CAREER PLANNING GOALS

- Attend workshops on writing resumes and interviewing skills. Take advantage of career fairs that are offered at your college.
- Have your resume and cover letter critiqued by a career counselor.
- Secure a co-op or internship in the area of your interest/major. This is crucial junior year.
- Get involved in a professional organization related to your career field to expand your network.
- Seek information about graduate schools, take the appropriate entrance examinations and begin the application process.
- Deepen conversation and relationships with professors, faculty advisor, and college staff, especially in major coursework, research projects, seminars, and student organizations.

Summer after Junior Year

- Excel in your summer internship.
- Further develop job-related skills.
- Compile an inventory of interests and qualifications and how they relate to your objective.
- Attend networking events to meet professionals within your field.
- Gather items for a portfolio, depending on your field of interest

SENIOR: IMPLEMENTING YOUR GOALS

- Use the career center on your campus, interview with companies who visit campus, and apply for jobs.
- Frequently update and refine your resume. When applying to different jobs, you may have to create multiple resumes to tailor each to the specific job description.
- Map out your job search strategies: target and contact potential employers and follow-up with employers you have previously contacted.
- Attend Career Fairs and networking events.
- Evaluate job offers.
- Report job offers and acceptance to your career center
- If planning to attend graduate school, follow up on applications and keep a record of the status of each.
- Review your graduation audit to determine that you will meet degree requirements and complete your application for diploma.

THRIVING: SUPPORTING STUDENT'S EMOTIONAL HEALTH DURING COLLEGE

College should be challenging but not overwhelming...

Common Stressors and the Questions College Students Ask:

Forming new social connections: Will I fit in? Will I like my roommate? How will I make new friends? Will my professors like me?

New levels of academic pressures and demands: Will I be able to keep up with all the work? How will I figure out what I will major in? How will I compare to other students in my classes?

Time management: How will I do all my work and have time for fun?

Family Expectations: Will I live up to my family's' expectations?

Financial worries: What if we don't have enough money? How will I manage to pay for everything I want to do?

Managing emotions: Will I get homesick? What if I get too stressed or feel overwhelmed? Who will I turn to for support or guidance?

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS & PARENTS:

- Jed Foundation: www.jedfoundation.org
- ULifeLine: www.ulifeline.org
- Transition Year: www.transitionyear.org
- National Suicide Hotline: www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- NIMH – National Institute of Mental Health: www.nimh.nih.gov

How Can Families Support Students in College:

- Keep the communication open but don't hover
- Know the signs of stress and ask how your student is doing
- Send care packages from home
- Encourage your student to solve problems without the family solving the problem for the student
- Don't make assumptions
- Listen carefully
- Know the campus resources and encourage the student to use resources

When additional support is needed:

Many campuses have a counseling center available to students. Below are questions students and families can ask to learn more about the campus counseling service:

- What services are provided by the counseling center?
- Are there fees associated with using the counseling center?
- Are there a maximum number of sessions allowed per year?
- Does the counseling center offer off campus referrals?
- Is there a psychiatrist on staff?
- If I need services the counseling center doesn't provide, will my insurance cover services? What if I don't have insurance or money to pay for counseling?
- Is there a counselor available on call 24 hours a day? If not, what happens if there is an emergency after counseling center hours?
- Under what circumstances would the college contact the family about the student's mental health?
- What kinds of workshops or talks are provided to students about mental health and wellness?
- How is a student referred the college counseling center?
- If needed, how would my student make an appointment for counseling?

It is important for families to understand that counseling is a confidential service. Families can support students by encouraging them to use the college counseling center and by understanding that the students will need to ask for counseling independently. Counseling is most effective when the family and the student understand that the information shared in counseling will be kept confidential. Information from counseling, even information regarding whether a student is attending counseling sessions, cannot be shared with anyone except in cases of imminent danger or with written permission from the student.

THRIVING: STAYING HEALTHY IN COLLEGE

During time away from home, it is possible that students will become sick and need the care of a health care provider. There are many things families can help students prepare in order to stay healthy while in college.

A family discussion regarding the information provided here will help both parents and students feel more comfortable.

- A health form including immunization records will need to be completed for your student. Sometimes this will include a current physical exam from the student's health care provider.
- Most colleges have a health center on campus or health care facilities that are close by. Sometimes the cost of the on-campus health center is included in the college's tuition and fees, or the center is available to students for a specific fee.
- Some exams, laboratory services and prescription medications may be free or some may have a cost associated with it.
- All medical records at the college health center are confidential. If the student is 18, they must sign a release before any information can be given to parents about his/her care.
- Many colleges require students to have health insurance. Check with the Admissions Office to see if the college requires health insurance. There is usually a cost associated with the health insurance requirement if purchased through the institution. If you have comparable health insurance to the plan the college offers, you may be able to opt out of the college plan. If a student has a chronic illness, have him/her stop by the health center soon after arriving to check in with the health center staff.

THRIVING: ON CAMPUS LIVING – AN INVALUABLE EXPERIENCE!

Living on campus during college is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity! Students may never have the opportunity again to live among their friends, have easy access to academic buildings and be close to campus resources when they need them.

There are many reasons to live on campus such as living in a secure campus community, not worrying about traffic and a commute to campus. Also, having the opportunity to live among classmates where lasting friendships are made.

Living on campus gives students easier access to class meetings, organization functions, a variety of campus events and the campus information about upcoming events. An added bonus is that room and board (meal plan) or apartment rent is paid at the beginning of each semester so there won't be additional monthly rent or utility bills.

BENEFITS OF LIVING ON CAMPUS INCLUDE:

- Complete social immersion with peers from various cultures
- Peer-to-peer study sessions and class support
- Eating meals together in the dining hall
- Interacting with faculty and staff outside of the classroom
- Having a caring and supportive staff such as student staff on each floor of the residence hall, and a professional staff member who oversees a residence hall or area, to assist with academic, personal, and social concerns

Each college or university housing and residence life office has slightly different requirements. While considering an institution, make it a point to find out the following:

- Is there a residency requirement for students? Are students required to live on campus for one or two years?
- Are there exceptions (living with relative, married student, etc.)?
- What is covered in the room fees?
- What do the board fees (meal plan) cover? Is there more than one meal plan option?
- Can resident students have a car on campus?
- What is the institution's guest policy for friends? For family?
- What can be brought to campus for the room? Are there items that are not allowed?
- How are roommates paired and room assignments made?
- Are there kitchens, laundry rooms, study lounges, etc. in the residence halls?
- What is the room change policy?

THRIVING: TRANSITIONING FROM LIVING AT HOME TO LIVING ON CAMPUS

Sharing & Caring

Students believe that some of the biggest unfounded fears about college relate to having a roommate. It is true that it is rare for roommates to agree on everything, but when roommates take the time to learn about each other and to talk about each other's likes and dislikes, they quickly pave the way for positive living experiences. It helps to begin thinking about how to be a good roommate to someone else.

If concerns do come up about living with someone or if there is a conflict among residents, it is appropriate to seek help from either the student staff on the floor or the professional staff member who supervises the student staff. Other options are to talk with the director of the department or the dean of students. Help is always available.

Other transition issues may come up regarding time management, social habits, choice of friends and study habits. Communicating about these issues up front and at the beginning of the semester can be helpful. Many institutions have first-year students complete a Roommate

TIPS ON BEING A GOOD ROOMMATE:

- Communicate
- Be open and friendly
- Set boundaries
- Be understanding
- Ask before borrowing items
- Resolve conflicts
- Respect privacy

Agreement form which covers topics such as those mentioned and can also include having discussions about guests in the room, sharing common items and study time preferences.

Whatever concerns or questions a student has, they can get the assistance needed through residence hall staff or other staff at the institution. As a family, encourage students to reach out themselves for assistance – it is one step in the right direction of their independence!

THRIVING: THE COMMUTER LIFE

If living on campus is not an option, there are several things a student and his/her family can do to ensure that students remain engaged and successful in college.

- Attend orientation activities for parents at your student's college of choice. This gives you the opportunity to ask questions that you may have. Additionally, it shows your child that you value and are invested in his/her college experience.
- Acknowledge the commute. Recognize the time your student spends waiting for a bus, riding to school, driving through rush hour traffic, or hunting for a parking spot.
- Acknowledge your student's commitment to academics. By talking about changes in family chores and granting more flexibility for household responsibilities, you will let your student know that you understand and respect the fact that college is more demanding than high school, and that you want them to be successful.
- Be alert to stressful times. Midterms and exams are particularly difficult times for students, but quizzes and project deadlines also pile up throughout the semester.
- Encourage your student to stay on campus between classes and to attend athletic events, concerts, and other student activities.
- Be aware of campus news and events. Ask your student to explain the things you don't understand. If you acknowledge the importance of what's happening at the college or university, your student will, too.

FOUR WAYS STUDENTS CAN BE SUCCESSFUL IN COLLEGE AS A COMMUTER STUDENT

1. Get to Class on Time

- Determine the time it takes for you to get to campus (carpooling, driving, or riding the bus) and allow for travel time (in good or inclement weather conditions).
- Have a back up plan to get to campus in case something happens and your usual means of transportation is not an option.
- Faculty really appreciate your readiness for time, but not your tardiness.

2. Figure out what to do between classes

- Schedule time to eat (purchase a meal plan that suits your needs or bring lunch from home).
- Complete homework assignments and/or projects, make appointments with professors or the tutoring center, and participate in study groups in subject areas that you may need additional help or want to stay ahead.
- Attend student organization meetings of interest to you.

3. Staying Connected to Campus

- Join academic or social clubs/ organizations of interest to you and attend their regularly scheduled meetings early on in your academic career.
- Participate in campus events (i.e. guest lectures/speakers, campus traditions, athletics games, concerts, plays and other arts and entertainment programs) whenever your schedule permits.
- Obtain a job on campus whenever possible.

4. Living Off Campus

- If living at home is not an option, choose a place of residence that is not far from campus whenever possible. Keep in mind the things that are important for you (i.e., the type of neighborhood you want to live in).
- Select a residence that is within your means taking into consideration your financial obligations and commitments.
- Consider on-campus apartments and other options.