



College Direction

November 2009

www.collegedirection.org

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November 2009

7th – SAT

Reasoning and Subject Exams

Seniors – File Early Decision/Early Action applications

Work on remaining college applications

Register for a PIN at www.fafsa.ed.gov if you'll be applying for financial aid

30th – Applications due for University of California colleges

December 2009

Underclassmen—Review your PSAT report with your advisor and map out a plan for test preparation

Schedule SAT/ACT testing dates

Seniors—File any additional college applications before deadline dates.

5th—SAT

Reasoning and Subject Exams

12th - ACT and ACT With Writing

College Interviews

It's not unusual to get nervous before an interview with a college admissions officer or alumni representative. Students are afraid that if they are not brilliant, witty and charming, their chances of getting into the college are next to nothing. But the truth is that interviews have little impact on admissions decisions. Admissions directors understand that well-qualified students can be extremely anxious and may not come across well in an interview, and sometimes the chemistry just isn't right between a student and interviewer. Recommendations from teachers who know you well and well-written essays can have a much bigger impact on admission decisions.

Knowing that it won't make or break your application should help students feel more relaxed about interviews. Schools that do offer evaluative interviews generally use them to confirm the information in other parts of the application. Sure, there are things you can do in an interview that will tank your application, like spouting racist views. Admissions officers think about how you'll interact with roommates, so likeability certainly is a plus, but you aren't likely to ruin a strong application if you're nervous and not at your best.

Of course, the fact that interviews aren't a major factor in admissions decisions means that having a great interview won't get you into a school. But it's possible that if it came down to two similarly well-qualified students, and one had formed a bond with an admissions officer during an interview, that admissions officer might be more in-

clined to advocate for that student in an admissions committee meeting. So you do want to make the most of the opportunity.

Being prepared will lower your anxiety level and help you create a better interview experience. Have some clear ideas about your strengths, interests and goals that you can communicate during the meeting.

Interviews are usually optional, and only worth having if you've done your research. Have several questions prepared so that when the interviewer asks if you have any questions, you're ready to communicate a real interest in the school. You should be seeking information that isn't obvious from the website. If you ask an interviewer about the school's business major and they don't offer business, you don't come across as a serious, well-informed candidate. It's fine to ask what students do on weekends, but it's also a good idea to ask about specific academic programs, especially those that are unique to that school.

If you approach the interview as a conversation, where you and the interviewer are exchanging information, it can actually be enjoyable. By engaging the interviewer in a dialogue, you're more in control of the interview. The more you initiate conversation, the less time the interviewer will have to ask you questions. If the interviewer is an alumna of the school, ask about her experiences. Not only will you get valuable information about the school, but when you show an interest in other people, they're likely to find you very interesting and likable, and that makes for a successful interview.

Colleges for Business Students

Business continues to be the most popular major on U.S. college campuses, but you don't have to go to a "College of Business" to major in this area. If you're planning on majoring in business, you might be interested in exploring the various ways you can pursue your dreams.

Future businesspeople have college options that include liberal arts colleges, the college of business within a larger university (think the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania or the Kelly School of Business at Indiana University, Bloomington), or a specialized business college like Babson or Bentley. As you research your college choices, think first about how well the college fits you. Once you've determined the right type of college, you can investigate the quality of the business program at each of your target schools.

Let's look first at the advantages of different types of programs.

For students unsure of their career path, larger universities present a greater depth and breadth of programs, presenting students with more options if they were to discover that business is not what they want. Larger schools also offer more extracurricular activities and more extensive sports programs. Because of the selective nature of many business programs, the standards for admission to these programs may be higher than requirements for the rest of the university. In some cases, such as at the University of Michigan, students are first admitted to the College of Arts and Sciences, and apply to the School of Business before their second or third year. When looking at these types of programs, be sure to ask about the policies for transferring into the business program.

Specialized business schools like Babson and Bentley offer students an environment in which there is an underlying focus on business-related subjects. Since these schools are

relatively small, they can't offer the variety of academic options of larger institutions, but partnerships with neighboring colleges are common. For example, Babson students can cross-register at Wellesley and/or Olin College of Engineering.

Students can also prepare for business careers at liberal arts colleges, generally by majoring in economics. ("Business is economics in action.") Those envisioning a career in corporate life may find that companies recruit from undergraduate majors other than business, preferring to train new employees themselves, and then encourage them to return to school for a Masters degree in Business Administration (MBA). A liberal arts degree and experiences such as study abroad encourage global thinking—an attribute valued in today's business climate.

No matter what type of college program you choose, keep in mind that no more than 45% of your coursework will be made up of business-related classes. It is possible to dou-

ble major at many schools, and students with double majors in areas like business and English or business and philosophy have traditionally done better when searching for their first job. Even combining a solid business major like accounting with English and humanities courses helps—the number one reason accountants lose their jobs is because of poor communication skills.

You'll be better prepared for business school if your high school program includes four years of challenging math classes, preferably through calculus as well as four years of most core subjects. A class in economics at the high school level also provides a good foundation for your future studies. Consider taking part in an FBLA (Future Business leaders of America) or Junior Achievement program if possible; seek out a business internship or get a job while still in high school. All of these experiences will help you to explain why business is the right area of study for you.



School of Business
University of Texas at Austin

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Focus on Finances: Out-of-State Colleges; In-State Prices



Through agreements with neighboring states, many out-of-state college students pay tuition at the same or only slightly higher rate than in-state residents. For example, students from Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota and Wisconsin may be eligible for tuition reductions at certain mid-western institutions through the *Midwest Student Exchange Program*.

The *Western Undergraduate Exchange* (WUE) program allows residents of member states to enroll in participating institutions at a reduced tuition. The states served by WUE include Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington & Wyoming. The *Academic Common Market* provides reduced tuition (often at

in-state fees) for students in 16 southern states who want to pursue degrees not available at their own in-state public university. Undergraduate reciprocity programs are available for students in Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Some state universities, such as the University of Texas at Austin, attract highly qualified students to their state by offering them scholarships that will also allow them to pay tuition at in-state prices. Other state systems, such as that of Virginia public colleges, have a tuition structure that may be no more than the students would pay for a similar education in their home state.

The bottom line to all this is to check out costs at all programs of interest to you rather than ruling out out-of-state institutions because of their perceived higher fees. You just may be surprised!

Test-Optional Colleges

Test anxiety over high-stakes exams has defeated many a student. If you're one of those students with high grades in demanding classes and disappointing test scores, you might want to consider other factors that colleges can use to make application decisions. Hundreds of colleges, including some of the most selective ones, choose a sizable portion of their freshman class based on grades, activities, essays and recommendations, and leave the decision of whether or not to submit test scores entirely to the applicant.

Many state-supported universities waive the testing requirement for in-state residents who meet a minimum GPA. For example, California residents who exceed a 3.0 GPA in specified college prep classes are eligible for admittance to at least some of the Cal State colleges. Other state universities including Arizona State, Michigan Tech, Ohio State, Oklahoma State and Texas Tech also offer admission to students without regard to test scores. Some state colleges even offer admission to out-of-state residents who exceed a minimum GPA; for example, you can gain admittance to the University of Oregon entirely on the basis of your 3.25 or better GPA—no test scores required.

Private colleges often have fewer applicants and more admission office resources than large public institutions. These schools can afford to spend more time considering everything that an applicant can bring to their community rather than concentrating only on grades, GPA, and test scores. They have set up admissions policies that allow them to admit all or a part of their class on a test-optional basis. Some of these colleges include Bennington College, Bowdoin, Connecticut College, Drew University, Franklin & Marshall, Hampshire College, Hobart & William Smith Colleges, Lewis & Clark, Loyola Maryland, Providence College, Rollins, St. Lawrence University, Susquehanna, Union College, Wake Forest University, Wheaton and Worcester Polytechnic Institute. In many cases, applicants may be asked to submit a graded paper in lieu of test results.

Specialized institutions may also waive standardized test requirements. You'll find test-option policies in place at schools such as Julliard, Johnson & Wales, the Ringling School of Art & Design, Berklee College of Music, DeVry University, and the Culinary Institute of America. For a list of all test-optional colleges, check out www.FairTest.org. Be sure to contact each of the colleges listed for a complete description of their individual criteria for admission.



The State of College Admission

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Each year, the National Association for College Admission Counseling publishes a summary of findings about the recently completed cycle of college admissions. Some of their findings:

- The number of high school graduates peaked last year at 3.3 million, with the numbers expected to show a slight decline yearly over the next few years.
- College enrollment is expected to continue increasing yearly until at least 2017.
- Although the most selective colleges have become even more selective over time, four-year colleges nationwide actually accepted an average of about 2/3 of all students who applied.
- The top factors in the admission decision were (in order) grades in college prep classes, strength of curriculum, standardized test scores, overall high school GPA. The next most important factors were ranked equally: the essay, teacher and counselor recommendations, class rank, and student's demonstrated interest.
- As the number of applications submitted by individual students continued to increase, colleges reported a rise in the number of applications, and a slight decline in their overall acceptance rate.
- Colleges continue to offer qualified students places on the wait list, but the chance of acceptance from the wait list of highly selective colleges remains slim.

Website of the Month: College Navigator

Tired of college-related search sites that bombard you with spam or sell your name and contact information to advertisers? For hard data, try the "just the facts" website of the National Center for Education Statistics at <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator>. College Navigator data includes the all-important freshman retention and

four and six-year graduation rate data so often missing from other publications. Freshman retention rates are a measure of student satisfaction with programs available at an institution, while graduation rate data provides an accurate way of judging how long it takes to complete a degree at your college choice.

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