

Getting Ready for College & Careers



**A GEAR UP
Handbook for
Juniors and
Seniors**

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Movin' On Up	4
Show Your Smarts	7
Smart Moves	12
Get Ahead	14
Hit the Road	15
Apply Yourself	16
Write On	18
Find the Funds	22
File Your FAFSA	28
Ask for Help	30
Chart Your Course	32
College Prep Timeline	34
Test Yourself	36
Know the Score	38
For Your Consideration	40
Work it Out	44
Finance Your Future	46
Use Your Resources	48

“I ask every American to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training. This can be a community college or a four-year school, vocational training or an apprenticeship. But whatever the training may be, every American will need to get more than a high school diploma.

And dropping out of high school is no longer an option. It’s not just quitting on yourself; it’s quitting on your country. And this country needs and values the talents of every American.”

-President Barack Obama

Introduction

THINK BIG, DREAM BIG.

There are a lot of good reasons to go to college, and you've probably heard most of them before.

You know that college graduates live longer, can change careers more easily, and are more likely to enjoy their work.

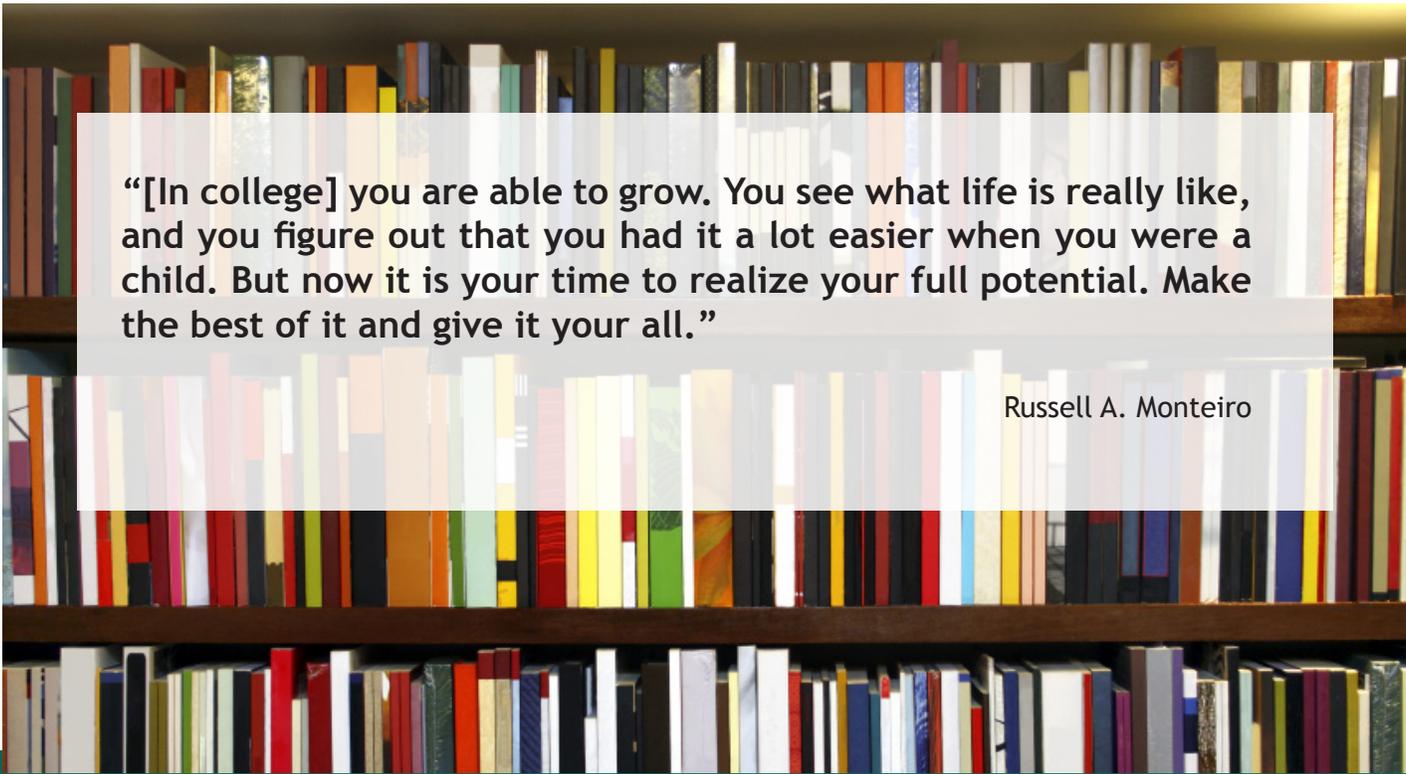
A college education will give you the power to achieve your biggest dreams and aspirations.

You will meet new people, experience different cultures, and learn to think about and understand the world in different ways. **Pretty cool, right?**

But knowing you want to go to college and knowing how to get there are two different things, and often it's the getting there part that can seem tough and intimidating. "Getting Ready for College & Careers" is a tool you can use to create plans, set goals, and focus on you and the path you need to take to become who you want to be.

Graduating high school and planning for your future is definitely a lot of work, but this book will help you break down your planning into manageable chunks with checklists, calendars, and step-by-step guides.

We can't tell you who you should be, but we can help you get there.



"[In college] you are able to grow. You see what life is really like, and you figure out that you had it a lot easier when you were a child. But now it is your time to realize your full potential. Make the best of it and give it your all."

Russell A. Monteiro

Movin' On Up.

SEAL THE DEAL



There are defined steps you need to take to graduate from high school. Some of these steps are established by the state and all students in Washington are required to meet them. Others are additional steps your school or district may require.

THE STATE-REQUIRED STEPS ARE:

EARN HIGH SCHOOL CREDITS

The state requires a minimum of 20 credits to graduate. Most school districts in the state require more than the minimum 20 credits for students to graduate. Do you know what your high school requires?

COMPLETE A HIGH SCHOOL AND BEYOND PLAN

You develop a plan for meeting the high school graduation requirements and planning for the next steps in life. Your plan should include the classes needed in preparation for a 2- or 4-year college, apprenticeship, career or technical school, certificate program or the workforce. Do you know what your high school requires?

COMPLETE A CULMINATING PROJECT

To graduate, all students must complete a culminating project. Each school district determines the guidelines students follow to complete this requirement. Do you know what your high school requires?

PASS TESTS SHOWING ACHIEVEMENT IN BASIC SKILLS

Reading & Writing (Class of 2014 & 2015):

Meet proficiency on reading and writing High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) or state approved alternative.

Math (Class of 2014):

Pass one math end-of-course (EOC) exam or state approved alternative.

Math (Class of 2015):

Pass two math EOC exams or state approved alternative.

Science (Class of 2015):

Pass one science EOC exam in biology or state approved alternative.



The best way to know if you're on track to graduate is to meet with your advisor or counselor. Use the Course Planners on pages 32 & 33 to map out and keep track of the classes, projects, and activities you complete.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS AND MINIMUM COLLEGE ADMISSION STANDARDS ARE NOT THE SAME THING.

It's really important that you make sure you're on track to meet the admission requirements for the type of program or college you want attend. But, since your plans might change over time, it's best if you strive to meet the highest admission standards possible so you'll always have more than one option open to you.

The chart below shows Washington's recommended college-prep courses for high school students.

Subject	Minimum State Graduation Requirements	Minimum Requirements For Public, 4-Yr Colleges And Universities*	Recommended Courses For Selective Colleges And Universities
English	3 credits	4 years	4 years
Math	3 credits	3 years**	3-4 years**
Science	2 credits	2 years	3-4 years
Social Studies	2.5 credits	3 years	3-4 years
World Language (same language)	0 credits	2 years	3-4 years
Visual or Performing Arts	1 credit	1 year	2-3 years
Health and Fitness	2 credits		
Occupational Education	1 credit		
Electives	5.5 credits		

* Students must meet minimum GPA requirements.
 ** Must be Algebra II or higher.

“Choosing my classes was the best thing about college because there are so many choices... In high school I didn't get to choose because there were strict requirements to be met in order for me to graduate and be eligible for any college I would choose. Choosing classes based on my interests was really liberating for me.”

Heidi Anderson
GEAR UP Graduate

Aside from core curriculum requirements, many colleges want you to take a standardized test before they'll let you in. You've probably taken the PLAN, HSPE, or PSAT by now, so you're familiar with how these kinds of tests work. As juniors and seniors you're ready for higher level testing. Let's cover the basics and make sure we're all on the same page.

	WHY?	WHEN?	HOW MUCH?
ACT	<p>The ACT Assessment is one of two tests most colleges use to admit new students. It helps you figure out how much you've learned in school and what you know how to do. ACT sections include math, English, reading, and science reasoning. There is also a built-in interest inventory to help you think about careers.</p>	<p>Most counselors recommend that juniors take ACT in February, April, or June. Seniors should take it in September, October, or December.</p>	<p>ACT tests cost about \$50, but you can probably get a fee waiver. Ask your school counselor for a registration packet or more information.</p>
SAT I	<p>SAT I is the other test colleges often use to admit freshmen. It tests the verbal and math reasoning skills you've learned in and out of school and asks grammar, analogy, reading comprehension, and math questions.</p>	<p>Many students take the SAT in March of their junior year. Taking it in March gives you early feedback on how you're scoring, so if you're unhappy with your score there is plenty of time to take the test again in the spring or following fall.</p>	<p>SAT I tests cost about \$50 each, but you can probably get a fee waiver. Ask your school counselor for a registration packet or more information.</p>
SAT II	<p>SAT II tests are called subject tests. On the SAT II, you'll answer questions about specific school subjects like U.S. history, chemistry, or French. In most cases you'll take the SAT II in addition to the SAT I or ACT. Colleges use the SAT II tests to place students in higher-level classes, especially if it's a subject they're thinking about majoring in.</p>	<p>Most students take SAT Subject Tests toward the end of their junior year or at the beginning of their senior year. Take tests such as World History, Biology, Chemistry, or Physics as soon as possible after completing the course in the subject, while the material is still fresh in your mind.</p>	<p>Prices vary, but fee waivers are available. Ask your counselor for a registration packet.</p>

There are several great free resources on the web that can help you prepare for the ACT and SAT tests. Try www.collegeboard.com for the SAT, www.actstudent.org for the ACT, and www.number2.com for help with both. And check out our sample questions on pages 36 and 37.

Show Your Smarts.



Before you can settle on a specific college or program, you need to think about what kind of career you want to have and what kind of life you want to live.

There are a lot of different ways to be smart. There's a theory called the "Theory of Multiple Intelligences" (MI for short) that says there are eight different kinds of intelligences. You definitely have a little of each already, but check out these quizzes to figure out which one is your strongest.

Knowing where your strengths lie can help you make decisions about what to study in college and what careers to think about for your future.

Look at the statements in each of the following categories and mark a "1" next to each statement that applies to you. At the end of each category, add up your total points.

Word Smart

Do you:

- _____ Love to read?
- _____ Like to tell stories?
- _____ Write stories or poetry?
- _____ Enjoy learning foreign languages?
- _____ Have a good vocabulary?
- _____ Spell well?
- _____ Like to write letters or emails?
- _____ Enjoy talking about ideas with others?
- _____ Have a good memory for names or facts?
- _____ Play word games such as word scrambles, hidden word puzzles, Scrabble, or crossword puzzles?
- _____ Like to do research and read about ideas that interest you?
- _____ Have fun playing with words (puns, tongue twisters, and rhymes)?

_____ **WORD SMART TOTAL**



Do you:

- _____ Enjoy singing?
- _____ Like listening to music?
- _____ Play an instrument?
- _____ Read music?
- _____ Remember melodies or tunes easily?
- _____ Easily recognize many different songs?
- _____ Hear the differences between different instruments being played together?
- _____ Hum or sing while thinking or doing tasks?
- _____ Easily pick up rhythms in the sounds around you?
- _____ Like making musical sounds with your body (humming, clapping your hands, snapping your fingers, or tapping your feet)?
- _____ Make up or write your own songs or raps?
- _____ Remember facts by making up a song for them?

MUSIC SMART TOTAL

Do you:

- _____ Find numbers fascinating?
- _____ Like science?
- _____ Easily do math in your head?
- _____ Like solving mysteries?
- _____ Enjoy counting things?
- _____ Like estimating, or guessing, the amounts of things (like pennies in a jar)?
- _____ Remember numbers and statistics easily (baseball statistics, sports scores, the heights of the tallest buildings in the world)?
- _____ Enjoy strategy games like chess and checkers?
- _____ Notice the links between actions and their results (otherwise known as cause and effect)?
- _____ Spend time doing brainteasers or logic puzzles?
- _____ Enjoy discovering how computers work?
- _____ Love to organize information on charts or graphs?

LOGIC SMART TOTAL

Logic Smart



People Smart

Do you:

Like to people watch?

Make friends easily?

Offer to help when someone needs it?

Enjoy group activities and lively conversations?

Help other people around you get along better?

Feel confident when meeting new people?

Like to organize activities for you and your friends?

Easily guess how people are feeling just by looking at them?

Know how to get people excited about working together or how to get them involved in things you're interested in?

Prefer to work and learn with others rather than alone?

Enjoy getting people to see things your way?

Get concerned about issues of fairness and right and wrong?

Enjoy volunteering for causes that help other people?

PEOPLE SMART TOTAL

Self Smart

Do you:

Prefer to work on your own rather than with others?

Like to set and meet your own goals?

Stand up for your beliefs even if they're not popular?

Worry less about what other people think of you than most kids?

Know how you're feeling and why most of the time?

Spend time thinking deeply about things that matter to you?

Like to organize activities for you and your friends?

Have a strong sense of what you're good at and not so good at?

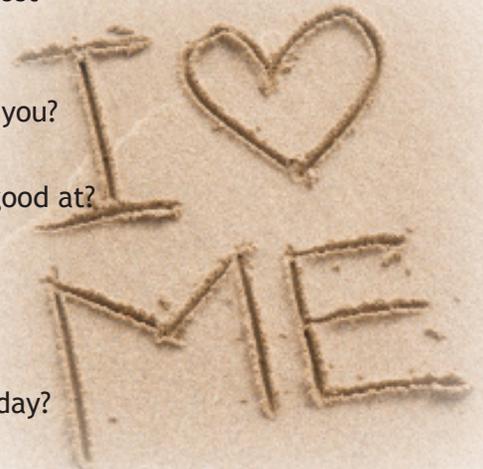
Enjoy keeping a diary or writing in a journal?

Write about your ideas, memories, feelings, or personal history?

Have a good sense of who you are?

Think about the future and what you'd like to be some day?

SELF SMART TOTAL



Nature Smart

Do you:

Like animals?

Have a “green thumb” (are good at growing plants)?

Care about nature and environmental causes?

Like going to parks, zoos, and aquariums?

Enjoy camping or hiking in nature?

Adapt to different places and events well?

Enjoy taking care of pets?

Have a good memory for the details of places where you’ve been and the names of animals, plants, people, and things?

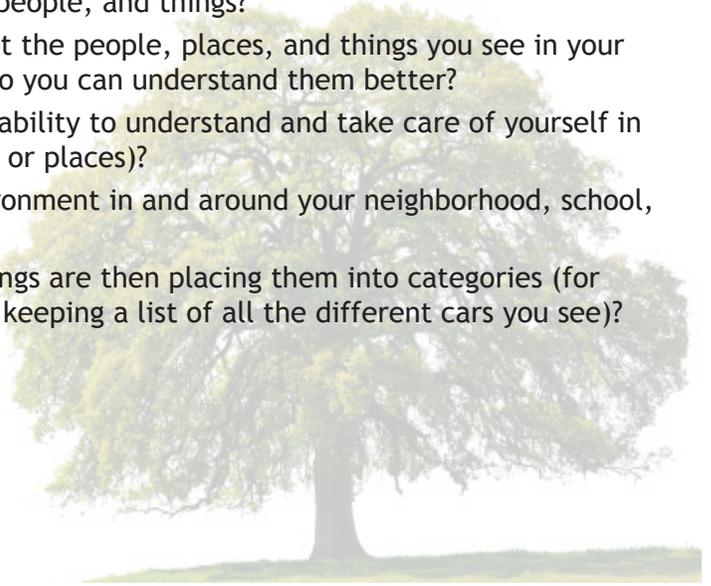
Ask a lot of questions about the people, places, and things you see in your environment or in nature so you can understand them better?

Have “street smarts” (the ability to understand and take care of yourself in new or different situations or places)?

Pay attention to your environment in and around your neighborhood, school, and home?

Enjoy figuring out what things are then placing them into categories (for example, bird watching or keeping a list of all the different cars you see)?

NATURE SMART TOTAL



When you finish all eight Multiple Intelligence categories, the two with your highest totals are the ways that you’re smartest. Check out the grid on the next page to see which careers align best with your brains.



My top two Smart categories are:

and

_____.

Smart Moves.

Using the chart below and on the next page, find the intersection of your top two Multiple Intelligence categories. The careers listed in that box are ones that put your strongest, smartest areas to use!

	Word	Music	Logic	Picture
Word	English teacher, journalist, politician, or speech pathologist.	Music reviewer, lyricist, or music librarian.	Researcher, technical writer, or Web master.	Advertiser, Web designer, or graphic designer.
Music	Music reviewer, lyricist, or music librarian.	Composer, choral director, or musician.	Sound engineer or video/film sound designer.	Instrument maker, or sound effects creator or editor
Logic	Researcher, technical writer, or Web master.	Composer, choral director, or musician.	Air traffic controller, climatologist, insurance agent, or scientist.	Architect, cartographer, or geometry teacher.
Picture	Advertiser, Web designer, or graphic designer.	Instrument maker, or sound effects creator or editor.	Architect, cartographer, or geometry teacher.	Artist, designer, animator, or photographer.
Body	Actor, speaker, or teacher.	Dancer, choreographer, or orchestra conductor.	Surgeon, mechanic, or builder.	Craftsperson, aesthetician, carpenter, or hair stylist.
People	Interviewer, public speaking, or public relations.	Ethnomusicologist, music store owner, or A&R representative.	Business person, criminologist, or lawyer.	Advertising executive, museum guide/curator, or art therapist.
Self	Poet, professor, or writer.	Composer, music video director, or music professor.	Detective/investigator, inventor, or research scientist.	Film maker, performance artist, artist, or art gallery owner.
Nature	Environmental advocate, screenwriter, or natural resource manager.	Sound effects creator.	Archeologist, environmental lawyer, or paleontologist.	Landscape designer, nature photographer, or chef/cook.

And remember, these are just a sampling of the careers that might be right for you. Check out some of the online interest inventories listed in the Resource section of this handbook for more careers and college majors that suit your strengths. And remember, your strengths and skills are still developing. If there is something that interests you, learn more about it!

Body	People	Self	Nature	
Actor, speaker, or teacher.	Interviewer, public speaking, or public relations.	Poet, professor, or writer.	Environmental advocate, screenwriter, or natural resource manager.	Word
Dancer, choreographer, or orchestra conductor.	Ethnomusicologist, music store owner, or A&R representative.	Composer, music video director, or music professor.	Sound effects creator.	Music
Surgeon, mechanic, or builder.	Business person, criminologist, or lawyer.	Detective/investigator, inventor, or research scientist.	Archeologist, environmental lawyer, or paleontologist.	Logic
Craftsperson, aesthetician, carpenter, or hair stylist.	Advertising executive, museum guide/curator, or art therapist.	Film maker, performance artist, artist, or art gallery owner.	Landscape designer, nature photographer, or chef/cook.	Picture
Fitness trainer, acrobat, lifeguard, or welder.	Massage therapist, nurse, physical therapist, or coach.	Accupuncturist, performance artist, or personal trainer.	Forest/park ranger, animal trainer, rancher, or nature guide.	Body
Massage therapist, nurse, physical therapist, or coach.	Abitrator, business leader, police officer, or teacher.	Film director, social worker, psychiatrist, or teacher.	Veterinarian, ecological advocate, or mountain guide.	People
Accupuncturist, performance artist, or personal trainer.	Film director, social worker, psychiatrist, or teacher.	Comedian, entrepreneur, life coach, or philosopher.	Garden nursery owner, farmer, mountaineer, or zoologist.	Self
Forest/park ranger, animal trainer, rancher, or nature guide.	Veterinarian, ecological advocate, or mountain guide.	Garden nursery owner, farmer, mountaineer, or zoologist.	Beekeeper, tree surgeon, fisher, or meteorologist.	Nature

Get Ahead.

THERE ARE OVER 6,500 COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN THE U.S., AND OVER 120 IN WASHINGTON ALONE, INCLUDING TECHNICAL COLLEGES AND CAREER SCHOOLS.

That's a lot of choices. How will you know which one is right for you?

When you're thinking about how and where to continue your education, there are a lot of variables to consider:

- Do you want to stay close to home or live far away?
- Do you want to go to school in a rural area, a suburban town, or in a big city?
- Do you want to go to a school with 400 students, 40,000, or somewhere in between?
- Have you already decided what you'd like to major in, or do you need a school with a broad range of classes and majors?

These are just a few of the questions you'll need to answer to figure out which colleges might be for you.

There are websites that let you answer questions about what you're looking for in a school and give you results based on your responses. Check out:

- <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search>
- <http://www.collegegreenlight.com/>
- <http://www.careerbridge.wa.gov/>

And remember, you can request a packet of information from any college or training program by visiting their website (most have an online information request form), or by calling their admissions office.

Once you've narrowed down your list of choices using college search sites and the information you receive from individual colleges, you can use our College Scorecard to help you sort it all out. A copy of the Scorecard is on pages 38 & 39 of this handbook.

“Remember to prepare for attending college early. It's very important to research the colleges you want to attend. Visit them so you can see if the college fits you (and vice versa).”

Thuy Chung
GEAR UP Graduate

Hit the Road.



Interested in a school? Go visit!

The only way to really know if a school or program is a good fit for you is to visit the campus, sit in on a class, and talk to other students. A college or program may seem great on paper or have an awesome website, but you can learn a lot by really being there.

When you're talking to college staff and faculty, ask as many questions as you need to gain a good understanding of the school and everything it offers. Their job is to give you details about the school and programs and to make sure you have a good experience on your campus

visit. Take advantage of that opportunity by preparing ahead of time. Make a list of all the questions or concerns that you may have before your visit so you're ready to get all the information you need.

“Choose a college that most fits your personality... The best thing about a college experience is being comfortable in your environment and enjoying the people and surroundings.”

Jelssica Fernandez
GEAR UP Graduate

GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR VISIT

Get started with campus visits during the summer before your senior year. Start by checking the tour schedules for the campus(es) you plan to visit. Next, schedule a campus tour with a student guide. To get a true “campus life” experience, do more than the tour. Try:

- Sitting in on a class (preferably one that is of interest to your field of study).
- Eating in the cafeteria.
- Visiting the campus facilities that interest you (libraries, gym, common areas, etc.).
- Meeting with faculty members/teachers in the area you plan to study.
- Scheduling an interview with an admissions counselor.
- Listening and observing the students on campus. Do they seem happy or stressed out? Does it seem like the kind of place you would like or not?
- Staying over in the dorms with a student host. Most schools have a program that lets you do this.
- Asking lots of questions! Everyone on your tour will have the same questions you do, and everyone's in the same boat, so don't be afraid to speak up. You're not the only one who doesn't know it all!

Apply Yourself.

THERE'S NO WAY AROUND IT: TO GET INTO COLLEGE YOU NEED TO APPLY.

Depending on your school of choice, this might mean taking tests, getting ready for an interview, or even writing an essay. High school students usually know all of this. But that doesn't answer the big questions: **What do colleges really want? How do colleges decide who gets in? What criteria do colleges use?**

Let's take it one step at a time. Don't panic, and try not to get too overwhelmed. Focus on one task at a time and stay on track.

ADMISSIONS POLICIES

Open Admission Policies: Community and technical colleges have open admissions policies. Anyone with a high school diploma can apply, enroll, and take classes.

Competitive Admissions: To get into most four-year colleges you have to compete with other students. This is called competitive admissions. When you think about applying to college, usually competitive admissions schools come to mind.

WHAT DO COLLEGES WANT TO KNOW?

Colleges want to know you have the basic skills you'll need to be successful.

At competitive schools (most four-year colleges), they'll try to figure that out by looking at your grades, test scores, and personal background. They also look at your activities and potential for success. Sometimes colleges are very specific about the grades and test scores students should have. Most colleges, however, don't have a fixed "cutoff" for grades, rank in class, or test scores. They want to know about your entire school record and personal history.

Two-year community and technical colleges (schools with open admissions) also want to make sure you've got the basic skills you need. Once you get into the college, you have to show you're ready for college-level classes. You do this by taking placement tests. These don't determine whether or not you get in, but tell the college which level of English, math, or world language you should take. If for some reason you're not ready for college-level classes in some subjects, you can still attend and take the classes you need to prepare, but they probably won't count toward your degree.



COLLEGE APPLICATION CHECKLISTS:

Check out page 43 of this handbook for sample checklists and timelines to help you get organized.

WHAT GOES INTO AN APPLICATION PACKET?

Four-year schools usually want:

- A completed application form.
- Application fee (fee waivers are available).
- Official high school transcripts.
- ACT or SAT score reports.
- A personal statement or writing sample.
- Two or three letters of recommendation.
- Possibly an interview or portfolio.

Community and technical colleges usually ask for:

- A completed application form.
- An application fee (fee waivers are available).
- Official high school transcripts.

“Don’t procrastinate on preparing for college. Get things done as early as possible.”

Synetha Moore
GEAR UP Graduate

USE THE LIST BELOW TO HELP YOU KEEP ON TRACK

- 1.** Create application timelines. Schools have varying admission requirements & due dates.
 - Create a timeline for each school and follow all the deadlines.
- 2.** In your timeline, note any special requirements a school may have, like a portfolio, peer review, or additional essays.
- 3.** Make sure you’ve either taken or are on track to take any necessary tests (SAT, ACT, other placement tests, etc.)
- 4.** Talk to your school counselor and ask that your transcripts be sent to each college on your list. Follow-up to make sure they are sent by the deadline.
- 5.** Create checklists of application requirements for each school so you can be sure you don’t forget anything.

Write On.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Criteria colleges may use in reviewing your application:

- Are your senior year courses challenging?
- Are you taking (or planning to take) honors, Advanced Placement (AP), or International Baccalaureate (IB) classes?
- Are you taking (or planning to take) college classes while you're still in high school, including Running Start or Tech Prep?
- Have your grades and test scores improved over time?
- Have you received any academic awards?
- Do you participate in school or community activities? Have you held a leadership role?
- Have you overcome a disability or other hardship?
- Do you bring diversity or a multicultural awareness?
- Do you have a special athletic or artistic talent?

Some of these criteria colleges will be able to see by reading your transcripts, but some aren't things that will be obvious unless you include them in your personal statement.



MAKE IT PERSONAL

Your personal statement is an important part of most college applications. It's your opportunity to show the admissions committee that you have personality, opinions, and experiences to share. It also demonstrates that you can write at the college level.

Tips on writing a strong personal statement:

Be yourself. Don't tell people what you think they want to hear. If you're serious, write a serious essay. If you're funny, try to express your sense of humor while getting a serious message across. Be honest and true to yourself. Colleges want to know what makes you unique. Your English teachers call this "voice."

Start on the right foot. Take time to write a great opening paragraph. This makes the reader want to keep reading. Some people even write the opening paragraph last, when they know what they want to say. Just don't get too carried away. Your opening paragraph should be brief - no more than four to six sentences.

Talk about issues or problems. Your essay could be a discussion of some issue or problem that interests you. Just make sure you choose an issue people relate to or find interesting. This is also your chance to explain any challenges you faced in school or out.

Write, revise, and revise again. Don't try to write your personal statement at the last minute. You could end up with careless typos or spelling errors. Get someone you trust like a teacher, counselor, parent, or friend to read your essay and provide feedback. Then, put your essay aside for a while and come back to it later with a fresh perspective.

Wonder what schools might ask you to write about for your personal statement? Check out a few of the topics on applications for schools in Washington. These are just samples, and the requirements for any school can change, so check their websites often.



When you write your personal statement, tell us about those aspects of your life that are not apparent from your academic record. Tell us about the experiences that don't show up on your transcript.

Directions: Choose either A or B. Recommended length: 500-650 words.

A) Discuss how your family's experience or cultural history enriched you or presented you with opportunities or challenges in pursuing your educational goals.

-OR-

B) Tell us a story from your life, describing an experience that either demonstrates your character or helped to shape it.



Instructions: Please write and submit two compositions: a Personal Statement and an Essay. Each composition should be written on separate sheets of paper. Each must be 250 to 500 words, double-spaced and typed.

1. Personal Statement

Please describe your prior education and involvement in your art form. Describe the work you do and what influences it. What are your artistic goals, what are your passions and what has led you to pursue a career in the field? How will attending Cornish College of the Arts contribute to your plans and aspirations?

2. Essay

How has a piece of visual art, a performance, a composition, an example of design, a piece of literature or a film affected you? Please describe the work and explain how it affected you as a person and artist. The piece you write about must be the work of someone other than yourself.



CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Your future is Central.

The Comprehensive Review Committee will review the application including the Essay submitted with the application and any other supporting materials. The committee will determine if they feel a student has the potential to succeed at Central Washington University.

Essay Questions.

- How have your past experiences influenced your academic record?
- What are you presently doing to ensure your academic success?
- What are your academic goals and how will CWU help you accomplish these goals?

FINAL ESSAY TIPS

Brainstorm:

- Make a list of your strengths and positive attributes. Try to keep your list to characteristics and not events (like “committed to team-work” rather than “played on the basketball team”).
- If you get stuck, ask family, friends, and teachers to help you think of your strengths. Sometimes others can see your strengths more clearly than you can.

Outline:

- For each of the strengths on your list, note a few examples that demonstrate that specific attribute.
- Look for patterns in your lists: Was writing well key to winning a state essay contest and to getting an A in your favorite creative writing class? Were you captain of the school soccer team and a youth group leader or camp counselor?

Draft:

- Your introduction should describe the content of your essay. Keep it short and sweet.
- In the body of your essay use narrative to show, not tell, your audience your story and answer your essay question.
- Your conclusion can be just a few sentences that bring your essay together and connect the piece to the essay theme.

Edit:

- Make sure you plan ahead so you’ll have some time to let your essay sit. Walk away for a few days and come back to the editing process with fresh eyes and a clean perspective.
- Get feedback from someone you trust, someone who will be honest with you about your writing and what may need to be changed.
- Edit your work to make your sentences tighter and more concise. Instead of saying, “In the current time period” say, “Now.”
- Make sure you proofread at least twice! The computer’s spelling and grammar checks won’t fix everything and you shouldn’t trust them with your future!

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

If you plan to apply to a four-year college or university, you will probably need letters of recommendation. You can get letters from teachers, coaches, counselors, family friends, church leaders, or any other adult who knows you well, but remember, you can't get letters of recommendation from family members.

Start thinking now about people you could ask. Give yourself some time to make a good impression. Don't assume that a few days of good behavior can make up for years of goofing off. These tips won't make people forget the bad stuff. The goal is to help them remember the good.

Be an active participant in class. It helps you learn and shows your teachers that you care about learning.

Take advantage of teacher study hours. If your teacher offers homework help before or after school, go to it! Again, it shows your teacher that you care about learning and work hard to do your best. Regardless of the grade you get, your teacher will still have a good impression of you.

Stop by to visit old teachers, coaches, etc. Whether it's your ninth grade counselor or your junior varsity coach, stop in to visit, talk, and remember old times. This gives you a chance to refresh their memories of your work ethic and personality.

Request letters at least one month in advance. Adults are busy people and they may get lots of recommendation requests. If you get your request in early and beat the rush, you won't be panicked waiting for your letter to be finished. This also shows that you know it will take time and planning to write a good letter. Most people appreciate the extra notice, and appreciate reminders.

Show up on time. Whether for class or an after school job, show up on time. It shows you care enough to be the best student or worker you can be. You might also try volunteering for extra responsibilities.

Get to know people. In order for someone to write you a convincing letter of recommendation, they have to feel they know you well. Talk to people you want to recommend you, and let them get to know the real you.

Give people what they need. Prepare a resume with your special achievements and give it to your recommender. That way, your letter is specifically tailored for you. Don't assume adults will remember all

that you've done. If there is a special project or class you want them to mention, write a note suggesting they include it in your letter.

Follow up with a thank you note. Saying thank you in person is nice, but writing a follow-up note is always better. Take time to deliver a thank you note to each of your references.



Find the Funds.

IF YOU WANT TO CONTINUE YOUR EDUCATION, YOU CAN DO IT. MONEY DOES NOT HAVE TO BE AN OBSTACLE.

First, college may not be as expensive as you think, and there are many ways to reduce the costs.

Second, scholarships are available for students. You don't have to be the smartest, fastest, or most talented student, either. Scholarships are awarded for all sorts of reasons.

Third, financial aid is available to help students and families pay for college. Don't assume that you are or are not eligible for financial aid. The only way to know if you can get financial aid is to apply.



COLLEGE COSTS

When people talk about the cost of college, they generally include tuition, mandatory fees, room, board (food), books, transportation, and other supplies. You have control over some of these costs, like how much you pay for housing and food. Other costs are out of your control, like how much tuition costs.

Community and technical colleges typically cost less than four-year colleges and universities, and four-year state colleges and universities usually cost less than four-year private colleges and universities. Look at the chart below.

ESTIMATED COLLEGE COSTS IN WASHINGTON 2012-2013

	Two-year community & technical colleges	Four-year regional public colleges & universities	Four-year public research universities
Tuition & Fees	\$4,120	\$8,805	\$12,397
Living Expenses	\$12,015	\$13,869	\$14,637
TOTAL	\$16,135	\$22,674	\$27,034

RESIDENT TUITION RATES

People from outside Washington State (non-residents) pay more to go to public colleges than Washington residents. Until recently, so did any student without citizenship or proper documentation from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

State law now allows any student who meets one of the following two conditions to qualify for in-state tuition rates:

1. Lived in Washington State for three years immediately prior to receiving a high school diploma and completed the full senior year at a Washington high school.

OR

2. Completed the equivalent of a high school diploma and lived in Washington State for three years immediately prior to receiving the equivalent of the diploma.

Students that meet one of these conditions, and have continued to live in Washington since they received a high school diploma or its equivalent, can qualify for in-state tuition by completing an affidavit— a pledge in writing – saying that they meet the condition, promising to apply for permanent residency in the United States at the earliest possible opportunity, and indicating a willingness to engage in activities necessary to acquire citizenship.

State law offers residency status to qualified students for tuition purposes only. A student’s legal residency, U.S. citizenship, or financial aid eligibility status does not change with this law. For more information, contact your prospective college or university.

“I don’t believe there is anything difficult about college. I believe if you put in the effort and believe in yourself, it is all possible.”

Lupe Ochoa
GEAR UP Graduate



SAVE MONEY FOR COLLEGE

Every penny you save now can reduce the amount you need later. And the earlier you start saving, the less you will need to save every month to meet your savings goals. In time, small amounts set aside every month can grow into serious money.

To get an idea of how your money can grow and how you can save, talk with a qualified investment advisor or representative at your local credit union or bank. They can tell you about saving for college using:

- Savings accounts
- Federal savings bonds
- Stocks and mutual fund accounts
- College savings plans and more

SAVE MONEY IN COLLEGE

The college costs you see in this book are only estimates. Even if you are unable to save money before you go to college, you can save money in college by spending less. There are many ways to lower your college costs. Here are some examples:

- **Save on tuition.** Earn college credits while you're in high school. Go to a less expensive community and technical college before going to a four-year school. Or choose a less expensive four-year college.
- **Save money on housing and food.** Live at home or with relatives while you're in college.
- **Save on transportation.** Go to a college nearby or take the bus to and from the campus. Avoid buying a car or, if you already have a car, try driving less.
- **Save on books.** Go to the bookstore a couple weeks before classes start to buy used textbooks. You can also talk to older students in your major - they may have old textbooks you can borrow. There are also plenty of websites where you can order used textbooks. Try www.amazon.com, www.half.com, and www.powells.com.



It's also important to make a budget and stick to it. Having realistic expectations about how much money you have and how much you can spend will go a long way in keeping you on financial track. Check out the Financial Roadmap on page 46 for help creating a money management plan for college and beyond.

FINANCIAL AID

When you and your family have done all you can to cover the cost of college, financial aid is available to help. Most financial aid comes from state and federal governments, colleges, and universities. The rest comes from private sources, such as local organizations, foundations, and corporations.

Colleges usually combine or “package” different types of aid to meet your financial need. The award package you receive will depend on your family’s financial situation, the amount of aid available at the college, and the college’s cost of attendance.



Colleges and universities use the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to determine how much you and your family can afford to pay for college. You must complete the FAFSA to be considered for most federal and state financial aid programs.

college

The FAFSA asks you and your parents about household income, assets, stocks, bonds, savings, and more. It also takes into account the size of your family and the number of

students in your family. The FAFSA form is not very hard to complete. The only way to determine your

WASHINGTON OPPORTUNITY PATHWAYS

Financial aid programs managed by the state of Washington are called “Opportunity Pathways.”

Remember, there are four main types of financial aid: scholarships, loans, grants, and work study. Within those categories, there are a lot of different programs and services. Just think how many different scholarships are available! There aren’t quite that many loan or grant programs, but there are quite a few.

The state of Washington spends millions each year to help students and their families pay for college. You may be eligible for one or more of the following state financial aid programs. In order to qualify for and receive any of the financial aid below, you must complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).

PASSPORT TO COLLEGE PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Foster youth may receive financial support and academic guidance to prepare for and succeed in college.

STATE NEED GRANT

Undergraduate resident students with significant financial need may be eligible for this grant. For example, if you are eligible for free/reduced price lunch, or if your family receives Social Security or TANF, you are probably eligible.

STATE WORK STUDY

Undergraduate and graduate students with financial need earn money for college through part-time work while gaining experience. Whenever possible, jobs are related to your academic and career interests. Work study jobs may be on or off campus.

WESTERN INTERSTATE COMMISSION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (WICHE) STUDENT EXCHANGE

If you're a resident of a WICHE state, you can study out-of-state at one of more than 140 participating schools in the West and pay reduced tuition (150% of the resident rate). WICHE states include: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. You can search the WICHE Undergraduate Exchange Online Database to see which institutions and programs are available. The database is on their website at <http://wue.wiche.edu/>.

For more information (including application information and instructions) for any of these Washington Opportunity Pathways, go to www.hecb.wa.gov/Paying.

FEDERAL AID PROGRAMS & SERVICES

The federal government offers a variety of programs and benefits to help students go to college. You must complete the FAFSA to receive any of the following financial aid, and by completing the FAFSA you are automatically applying for these programs.

PELL GRANT

Undergraduate students who have significant financial need and have not earned a bachelor's or professional degree may be eligible for this grant. For example, if you are eligible for free/reduced price lunch, or if your family receives Social Security or TANF, you are probably eligible.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY GRANT

Undergraduate students who have significant financial need and have not earned a bachelor's or professional degree may be eligible for this grant.

FEDERAL WORK STUDY

Undergraduate and graduate students can earn money to pay for education expenses through part-time work. Jobs may be on or off campus.

PERKINS LOAN

Students with significant financial need may be eligible for these low-interest loans.

SUBSIDIZED STAFFORD LOAN

Students may apply for the subsidized Stafford loan, which is based on financial need.

UNSUBSIDIZED STAFFORD LOAN

Students may apply for the unsubsidized Stafford loan, which is not based on financial need.

PARENT LOAN FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS (PLUS)

Parents of dependent undergraduate students may apply for a PLUS loan, which is not based on financial need.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT REPAYING STUDENT LOANS...

Student loans are real loans—just as real as car loans or mortgages. You have to pay back your student loans.

After you graduate, leave school, or drop below half-time enrollment, you have a period of time before you have to begin repayment. This is called a “grace period” and it ranges from six to nine months, depending on the type of loan.

When you graduate or leave school, you’ll receive information about repayment, and your loan provider (usually a bank) will notify you of the date loan repayment begins. It is extremely important that you make your full loan payment on time either monthly (which is usually when you’ll pay) or according to your repayment schedule.

LOAN REPAYMENT OPTIONS

There are also volunteer programs that help you to repay your student loans:

AmeriCorps is a national network of programs that engages more than 70,000 Americans each year in intensive service to meet critical needs in communities throughout the nation. AmeriCorps offers several ways to get involved, from part-time local service programs to full-time residential programs. Members receive guidance and training so they can make a contribution that suits their talents, interests, and availability. Check out www.americorps.gov for more information.

PeaceCorps is a federal agency that provides volunteers to foreign countries. Peace Corps Volunteers work in the following areas: education, youth outreach, and community development; business development; agriculture and environment; health and HIV/AIDS; and information technology. Within these areas, the specific duties and responsibilities of each volunteer can vary widely. Volunteers may apply for deferment of and partial cancellation of certain types of student loans. For more information, visit www.peacecorps.gov.

There are other state and federal programs that help you repay your student loans after college if you agree to meet certain conditions, like teaching in a school district without enough qualified teachers, or become a nurse or doctor in an area without adequate medical services. Information on many of these programs can be found at www.fedmoney.org.

File Your FAFSA.

FAFSA4CASTER

Before it's time to apply for financial aid, you and your parents should complete the FAFSA4caster at www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov. It will help you get an early start on the financial aid process by providing you with an early estimate of your eligibility for federal student aid. The FAFSA4caster will also increase your knowledge of the financial aid process and provide information about other sources of aid.

FINDING SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships are awarded for academic excellence, community service, athletic or artistic talent, even writing and poetry. Whatever your special talent or gift, there is probably a scholarship to match. Scholarships do not have to be repaid, but you do have to apply for them. Each scholarship usually requires a separate application. It's never too early or too late to look for scholarships. Here are some tips to get you started.

1. Check with your school guidance counselor or advisor. Many groups send scholarship notices to high schools.
2. Listen to announcements and check scholarship bulletin boards. High schools often announce scholarships during morning announcements or post them on the counselor or career center bulletin board.
3. Read everything you receive from your college of choice. Colleges usually include information about university scholarships with admissions applications and marketing brochures.
4. Visit free scholarship search sites on the Internet. Many sites allow you to register your ethnic, academic, and interest information and receive regular updates on scholarships that might work for you.
5. Go to your local library. Many libraries have copies of the College Blue Book. This series of books lists thousands of scholarships.
6. Ask your parent or guardian to check with his/her employer. Many companies offer scholarships to the children of current and/or former employees.
7. Contact organizations you or your parents belong to. Many organizations offer scholarships to children or members.
8. Consider community or military service. The government offers many programs for students who want to earn money for college and serve their country.



AVOID SCHOLARSHIP SCAMS. Beware of any service that wants you to pay for a scholarship search. Most scholarships are listed online or in your local library for free. **A great resource to locate scholarships is www.thewashboard.org**

HOW TO APPLY FOR FINANCIAL AID

1. Complete the FAFSA.

The only way to get the financial aid described in this handbook is to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA is available online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Seniors should apply as soon as possible AFTER January 1. The earlier you apply the better financial aid package you're likely to get. **Do not wait until you get into college to apply.**

2. Review your Student Aid Report.

One to four weeks after you submit your FAFSA, you will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR). The report will include your Expected Family Contribution, or the amount you and your family are expected to pay for college. Review it carefully and make corrections, if needed.

3. Contact prospective schools.

Contact the financial aid offices of prospective schools about application rules and deadlines. Remember, some schools have additional financial aid forms you will need to complete. Also, ask about other financial aid opportunities, including tuition waivers and scholarships.

4. Follow instructions and meet all deadlines.

Check financial aid priority deadlines at selected colleges and universities by visiting each colleges' website. The Washington Financial Aid Association website has this information for all Washington schools at www.wfaa.org.

If your FAFSA or other financial aid applications are late or incomplete, you may not receive all of the aid you are eligible for. Financial aid is given to eligible students on a first come, first served basis, and schools can and do run out of some types of aid.

5. Evaluate financial aid award letters.

Schools will send you award letters with details of your financial aid package - usually a combination of grants, loans, and work study programs. Compare the financial aid awards carefully. You may be required to either accept or decline your award by a specific date. **Do not miss this reply deadline or you could lose your financial aid award.**

6. Keep good records.

Make photocopies of your applications and supporting information. **Quickly respond to requests for more information.** You may want to keep a financial aid folder to compare awards and keep track of forms. Keep track of who you talk to, the date and time you contacted them, and the results of your conversation. If you run in to any problems later, having these notes can really help you.

For more information about applying for financial aid check out:

The Smart Guide to Financial Aid

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid Online

www.finaid.org

www.fafsa.ed.gov

Ask for Help.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

Colleges and universities are required to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities.

It's your responsibility to make sure the campus knows about your needs before you get there. Don't assume that every college has adequate facilities and resources. If you face learning and/or physical challenges, talk with your college of choice or school counselor to make sure the college is ready, willing, and able to meet your needs.

When you research colleges, check into student services programs. Colleges offer a wide range of assistance, from Braille texts and books on tape to technologies for quadriplegic students. If you have a diagnosed learning disability, you can sometimes get accommodations like extra time to complete exams, too.

Students with learning and/or physical challenges may also be able to receive extra time on exams like ACT and SAT or compete for special scholarships. The Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) has a list of links on its website, www.ahead.org, with information about disability issues, including links to college centers for students with disabilities. The Post-ITT Web site also has a collection of resources and activities to help students with disabilities transition from high school to college. Visit www.postitt.org for more information.

STUDENT PARENTS



If you're a teen parent, you also face some unique challenges.

You might want to go away to college, but you worry about leaving home and family, finding housing, childcare, and work. Or, you might want to stay close to home and wonder what services are available for you.

Talk to the admissions office at your college of choice before you decide whether to apply. Find out what the school has to offer. Colleges are interested in having a diverse student body. They will do their best to meet your needs.

“All of my teachers made it seem like in college if you didn't understand the lecture the first time there was no help for you, but all of the professors are willing to take extra time to help if you need it. You just have to go into their office and ask.”

Tim Sweet
GEAR UP Graduate

A graphic illustration featuring a basketball hoop and net in the upper left. Below it, a basketball is shown in mid-air. In the foreground, a silhouette of a basketball player is jumping high, reaching for the ball. Behind this player, several other silhouettes of players are shown in various poses, suggesting a game in progress. The entire graphic is set against a white background.

STUDENT ATHLETES

The thought of playing college sports can be intimidating and exciting.

A college recruiter can offer all sorts of promises and perks to get you to come to a particular school. Big-time NCAA Division I sports like football, basketball, and baseball aren't all colleges have to offer. Many students will be recruited for soccer, softball, hockey, cheerleading, gymnastics, and even golf. If you plan to play an NCAA sport, here are some things to keep in mind

Have a backup plan.

Most high school athletes will not receive college scholarships. Of those who do, most will not go on to play in professional leagues. Make sure that you are strong academically as well as athletically. That way, you will still be able to go to college and reach your dreams whether you get a scholarship or not

Ask a lot of questions.

Coaches and recruiters should be open to all of your questions. No question is too big or too small. Talk to current and former athletes, too. See how they feel about their experiences at the school, in the community, and on the team. Sometimes the coach and the athletic program are great, but the academic and social scenes are not so great.

Don't rush yourself.

If there are lots of colleges that want you, take your time. You do not need to declare your school of choice right away (although colleges like it when you declare a choice early). Give yourself time to visit your top schools, take notes, and compare your options.

Watch for dishonest recruitment practices.

If a program is willing to break or bend the rules to recruit you, it might be more likely to break promises to its student athletes or other NCAA rules. If your college ends up on NCAA probation while you're a student athlete, you could miss out on the chance to participate in post-season games or gain national exposure. Character does count.

Meet all NCAA eligibility rules.

Before colleges can recruit you, you must register with the NCAA's Initial Eligibility Clearing house. To register you have to meet minimum GPA and SAT I or ACT standards and pass several core high school courses. Remember, you cannot play or practice in Division I or II unless you meet these requirements. Visit the NCAA's website, www.ncaa.org/eligibility/cbsa for more information.

Chart Your Course.

Name:

11th Grade School Counselor:

Goals for 11th Grade:

Checklist

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Update your high school and beyond plan. | <input type="checkbox"/> Complete the FAFSA Forecaster. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Earn at least a 3.0 GPA. | <input type="checkbox"/> Get involved in activities. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Complete the ACT. | <input type="checkbox"/> Visit colleges or programs. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Update your portfolio. | <input type="checkbox"/> Research college and careers. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare for HSPE. | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass science and math End of Course exams. |

	Course	Grade
1st Quarter		
	Term GPA	

	Course	Grade
2nd Quarter		
	Term GPA	

	Course	Grade
3rd Quarter		
	Term GPA	

	Course	Grade
4th Quarter		
	Term GPA	

Awards & Achievements

Name:

12th Grade School Counselor:

Goals for 12th Grade:

Checklist

- Update your high school and beyond plan.
- Earn at least a 3.0 GPA.
- Complete the ACT.
- Update your portfolio.
- Complete postsecondary applications.
- Complete FAFSA.
- Get involved in activities.
- Visit colleges or programs.
- Research college and careers.
- Pass science and math End of Course exams.

1st Quarter

Course Grade

Term GPA	

2nd Quarter

Course Grade

Term GPA	

3rd Quarter

Course Grade

Term GPA	

4th Quarter

Course Grade

Term GPA	

Awards & Achievements

College Prep Timeline

JUNIOR YEAR

SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER

- Meet with your school counselor and/or mentor to talk about college options.
- Decide what you want in a college.
- Choose 5 - 10 colleges that meet your needs and request information from them.
- Continue to take challenging classes. Take Honors, AP, IB, Running Start, or Tech Prep if possible.
- Stay involved in clubs and extra-curricular activities, and take a leadership role.
- Go to college and financial aid fairs and information nights.

DECEMBER - FEBRUARY

- Sign-up to take the SAT and/or ACT in May or June. Ask your school counselor for details.
- Begin to prepare for the SAT and/or ACT.
- Read all of the information you receive from your preferred colleges.
- Look and apply for scholarship opportunities.
- Consider possible college majors, and make sure your choice schools offer those programs.
- Listen to school announcements and check the guidance office for spring open houses and college tours.

MARCH - MAY

- Sign-up for college campus visits and tours.
- Create a resume. Ask your counselor and/or mentor for help.
- Plan your senior year courses.
- Apply for summer internships or jobs, or look for volunteer opportunities in your career interest area.
- Think about adults you might ask to write letters of recommendation for you (church or community members, teachers, coaches, caseworkers, etc.).
- Sign up to take the June SAT test.
- Complete the FAFSA4Caster with your parents to get an idea of how much financial aid you may receive.

JUNE - AUGUST

- Request applications from your college(s) of choice.
- Work on your college application personal statement/essay.
- Visit college campuses.

SENIOR YEAR

SEPTEMBER

- Start a calendar with all test names, registration dates, college admissions and financial aid deadlines.
- Start a folder to file all of your correspondence with colleges.
- Check with admissions offices for application deadlines.
- Sign up for October or November ACT and/or SAT I and SAT II tests.
- Choose top 5 colleges and request applications.

OCTOBER

- Request letters of recommendation.
- Read all of the information you receive from your preferred colleges.
- Look and apply for scholarship opportunities.
- Consider possible college majors, and make sure your choice schools offer those programs.
- Ask teachers, counselors, and others to help you with your personal essay.
- Apply for scholarships.

NOVEMBER

- Apply for scholarships.
- Send high school transcripts to colleges.
- Take SAT and/or ACT exams. If necessary, register to retake SAT and/or ACT in December or January.

DECEMBER

- Begin gathering the information needed to complete your FAFSA.
- Mail admissions applications, if due.

JANUARY

- Submit FAFSA January 1, or soon after.
- Make sure all admission applications are complete.
- If due, mail admissions applications and/or make sure they've been received. Keep copies of all forms you mail.

FEBRUARY

- Make sure your FAFSA has been received. Call 800-433-3243.
- When you get your Student Aid Report (SAR), make sure your colleges of choice are listed.
- If your SAR asks for additional information, or if you need to make a correction, do so ASAP.

MARCH - MAY

- Contact college financial aid offices to make sure your application is complete.
- Review financial aid awards from colleges.
- Decide which school to attend and notify them by May 1.
- Apply for on- or off-campus housing.
- Pay for any deposits required for housing and admission.

JUNE - AUGUST

- Finalize summer school, job, or volunteer plans.
- Double-check your campus housing arrangements.
- Participate in freshman orientation programs.
- Take any required placement tests.
- Save money for college expenses.
- HAVE FUN!

Test Yourself.

SAT

SENTENCE COMPLETION

When asked to ----- on an important project, staff members decided to ----- John, an account specialist, as the new project manager.

- A. collaborate . . appoint
- B. commiserate . . pick
- C. work . . suspend
- D. deliberate . . rely
- E. vote . . identify

MATH

A piggy bank contains 300 pennies, 45 nickels, and 132 quarters. If the number of pennies is reduced by 50% and the number of quarters is increased by 25%, what is the probability that a randomly drawn coin will be a nickel?

- A. 45 in 477
- B. 1 in 8
- C. 45 in 315
- D. 1 in 4
- E. 45 in 432

IMPROVING SENTENCES

Math, finding it confusing, is a subject avoided by many high school graduates who go on to attend university.

- A. Math, finding it confusing, is a subject avoided by many high school graduates who go on to attend university.
- B. Finding it a confusing subject, math, is avoided by many high school graduates who go on to attend university.
- C. A subject avoided by many high school graduates who go on to attend university is math, finding it confusing.
- D. Because they find it a confusing subject, many high school graduates who go on to attend university avoid math.
- E. Because math is confusing, many high school graduates who go on to attend university find it is a subject avoided.

Find more practice SAT questions at www.collegeboard.com.

ACT

MATH

A car averages 27 miles per gallon. If gas costs \$4.04 per gallon, which of the following is closest to how much the gas would cost for this car to travel 2,727 typical miles?

- A. \$44.44
- B. \$109.08
- C. \$118.80
- D. \$408.04
- E. \$444.40

SAMPLE WRITING PROMPT

Educators debate extending high school to five years because of increasing demands on students from employers and colleges to participate in extracurricular activities and community service in addition to having high grades. Some educators support extending high school to five years because they think students need more time to achieve all that is expected of them. Other educators do not support extending high school to five years because they think students would lose interest in school and attendance would drop in the fifth year. In your opinion, should high school be extended to five years?

In your essay, take a position on this question. You may write about either one of the two points of view given, or you may present a different point of view on this question. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.

ENGLISH

Correct the underlined portion of the passage by choosing the answer that best expresses the idea, makes the statement appropriate for standard written English, or is worded most consistently with the style and tone of the passage as a whole. If you think the original version is best, choose “NO CHANGE.”

A Microscope in the Kitchen

I grew up with buckets, shovels, and nets waiting by the back door; hip-waders hanging in the closet; tide table charts covering the refrigerator; and a microscope was sitting on the kitchen table.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. waiting, by the back door,
- C. waiting by the back door,
- D. waiting by the back door

Find more practice ACT questions at www.actstudent.org.

Know the Score.

COLLEGE SCORECARD

Gather information about a college or program you're interested in using our College Scorecard Worksheet. It's easier to know if a college has what you're looking for if you have all of the information in one place.

The type of college training you need depends on the job or career you want, but the specific college or program you choose will depend on things that matter most to you, like cost, location, academic programs, financial aid, and admission requirements.

Refer to pages 40 & 41 for ideas to think about when you're looking at specific colleges, and page 50 for useful websites and resources.

Schools and libraries often have college catalogs, view books, or other resources to help you find out about a particular school. You may find it helpful to bring this worksheet with you when you go to college nights or fairs so you can ask questions and fill in the information as you look around.



THE BASICS

School name:

School type (2-yr., 4-yr./public, private, etc.):

Location:

Size:

Tuition:

Housing options:

Transportation options (parking fees, good access to public transportation, etc.):

ADMISSIONS

Selectivity:

Minimum required GPA:

Minimum required SAT/ACT scores:

ACADEMICS

Degree Type:

Majors you're interested in:

Academic support services for students (tutoring, faculty hours, etc.):

Average class size:

Ratio of professors to students:

STUDENT LIFE

Campus location (big city, town, rural, etc.):

Amenities nearby (movie theater, malls, grocery stores, etc.):

Diversity of student body (ethnically, politically, geographically, etc.):

Campus hangouts and regular events:

Clubs or campus groups that interest you:

COSTS & FINANCIAL AID

Percentage of students receiving aid:

Financial aid deadlines:

Scholarships/grants offered:

Average amount spent on books:

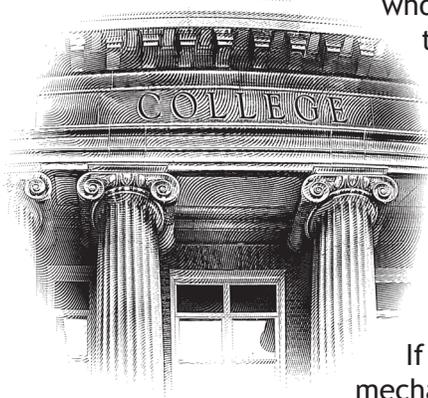
Average amount spent on housing:

Additional fees for specific classes/majors:

For Your Consideration.

WHAT'S MY TYPE?

Deciding which type of college to attend is a major decision to make. Whatever college you choose will shape who you are and what you do in the future. If you aren't quite sure what you want to major in when it comes time to apply for colleges, that's OK. Many two- and four-year institutions won't make you decide right away. In fact, college is a great way to try new things and explore your interests.



Two-year colleges can be a great way to save money and fulfill your general education requirements while you're deciding what to major in. Get your Associate degree in two years and then transfer to a four-year college or university.

If you already know you want a career in a technical trade like electrician, mechanic, hair stylist, make-up artist, gardener, or EMT, then going to a career college, trade school, certificate or apprenticeship program may be the right path for you.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Do you want to stay in the same town you grew up in, or do you want to get as far away as you possibly can? Maybe you're adventurous and want to live in another part of the state or country. Maybe you want to stay close to family and friends in the area you're used to. If you're from a small town, you might want to experience life in a big city. But if you're from the city, maybe you want to try living in the country for a while.

Some of the questions you need to ask yourself when looking at colleges are do you want to live in a suburban, urban, or rural area? Are there activities and resources like movie theaters, malls, grocery stores, and libraries near the campus? Do the local businesses employ college students? Are there activities and stores within walking distance, or does the city/town have good public transportation options?



SIZE MATTERS

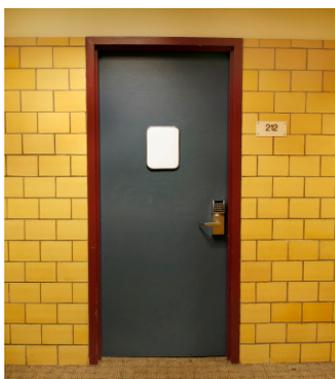
The size of the student population is another important factor to consider in your search for your perfect college fit. Some students feel more comfortable in a big campus with lots of students and others like smaller settings. Do you want to be a big fish in a small pond, or a small fish in an ocean?



MIX IT UP

Diversity can mean a lot of different things: the male to female ratio, the religious affiliation of the school, or the ethnic and/or racial backgrounds of the students and faculty. Schools with diverse populations of students offer great opportunities for you to meet and learn from people who are different than you.

LIVE AND LEARN

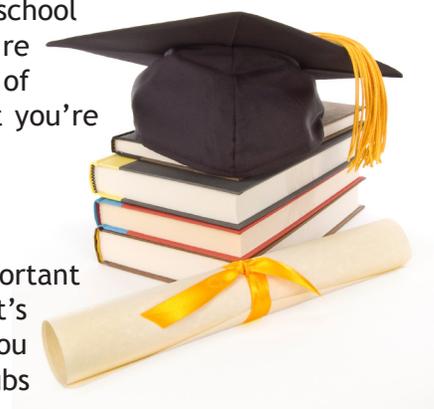


If you plan to live on campus, consider the cost of room and board. When you go on campus visits, check out the dorm rooms. Are they double occupancy or quadruple? Are the dorms co-ed or single sex? How many roommates are you comfortable having? Does the campus provide good laundry facilities? You may also consider nearby apartments and rental housing. But remember that dorms costs usually include cable, Internet, and utilities, and most rental housing options charge extra for those things. Also, keep in mind that some colleges require freshman to either live in the dorms or with their parents.

Another important factor to consider is food. Find out what meal options are available on campus, and what the associated costs are. It may seem like a trivial thing now, but when you're eating in the college cafeteria every day for a school year, you'll be glad you took the time to consider all of your options. This can be especially important for vegetarians and people with food allergies.

NO MAJOR SURPRISES

If you already know what you want to major in, then you need to select a school with a strong program in your particular major or area of study. Even if you're not sure yet what path you're headed down, find a few majors or areas of study that sound interesting to you and apply to colleges that offer what you're looking for.



LIVE IT UP

Are the social aspects of college like extracurricular activities and clubs important to you? Many people go to college for social as well as educational reasons. It's a great way to meet new people and open doors for you in the future. If you have specific interests that you want to pursue in college, check out the clubs and other opportunities each school on your list has.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY

If going to a college with a particular religious affiliation is important to you, then you should factor that into your decision. There are many colleges in Washington that are religiously affiliated, including Saint Martin's University, Pacific Lutheran University, and Gonzaga, among others.

ACCOMMODATIONS

If you are a student with physical or learning disabilities, going to an institution that offers strong accommodation programs and options could be important to you. If you have a physical disability, consider any mobility issues you have and how well each college campus is designed to accommodate you.



MONEY, HONEY

Don't focus too much on tuition costs. It's more important to find the school that's right for you, whether it's \$2,000 or \$20,000 a year. Also be aware of costs other than tuition, like books & supplies, mandatory fees, and other costs associated with your program or major.

“I know a lot of kids are told they don’t need to know what they want to do when they graduate, but I think it is very **IMPORTANT** for you to know what you want to get out of college/university. It could be any number of goals: graduate magna cum laude, get a BA, learn how to be independent, etc. Just get there and know what you want to attain for yourself so you have goals to work towards.”

Russell A. Monteiro
GEAR UP Graduate

Proofread Your Application

Make sure you fill out the Application for Admission completely, and have someone like a parent, counselor, or teacher proofread it for you. Nothing can sink you faster than mistakes on your application.

File Your FAFSA

Get it in on time. You want as many grants and scholarships as you can get to pay for college. Scholarships can greatly reduce tuition expenses.

Watch Those Deadlines

There are different deadlines for admission applications, financial aid, and transcripts, and different schools have different deadlines. Make a list of all the dates you need to remember.

Apply Online

Many colleges give the option of applying for admission online. This is a great way to speed up the college application process and save you the cost of a stamp.

Keep It Clean

Make sure all of the paperwork you send each school is free of finger smudges, spill marks, and wrinkle-free. Nothing gives a worse first impression than a messy, rumpled application packet.

Pay the Fee

Remember to include any required fees when you mail in your application. Many schools offer fee waivers, so ask the admissions counselor if you can apply for one.

Follow Up

Make sure the college receives all required information and documents. Make multiple copies of your application just in case.

Stay in Contact

If you’re contacted by the admissions department at a school you’ve applied to, make sure you answer their questions and provide them with any additional information they require as quickly as possible. No one likes to be kept waiting, and your quick attention will show them that you’re excited about the possibility of being accepted to their college.

COLLEGE APPLICATION CHECKLIST

SCHOOL NAME:
Regular Application Deadline:
Early Application Deadline:
Financial Aid Deadline:
Portfolio Deadline (if necessary):
Other Important Information/Deadlines:

APPLICATIONS	Complete?
Carefully read ALL application instructions.	
Fill out the college application either on paper or online.	
Have someone proofread your application before you submit it.	
GRADES	Complete?
Request your high school transcript at least one month before it is due to the college.	
TEST SCORES	Complete?
Is the SAT I required?	
Is the ACT required?	
Is the SAT II required?	
Send all required test scores.	
Send AP scores.	
LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION	Complete?
Request letters of recommendation (at least 1 month ahead of due date).	
Send thank you notes to recommenders.	
ESSAY	Complete?
Write essay(s).	
Proofread essay(s) for spelling & grammar.	
Have 2 people read your essay(s).	
SEND APPLICATION	Complete?
Make copies of all application materials.	
Include the application fee and remember to sign your application!	
Call the college and confirm that they received your application.	
Send supplemental materials, if needed.	
FINANCIAL AID	Complete?
Complete the FAFSA.	
Complete & mail institutional aid form, if necessary.	

Work it Out.

Comparing Financial Aid Awards

The worksheet on the next page will help you compare the financial aid offers that you receive from colleges. But before you begin, here are some questions you should ask each college's financial aid office about your financial aid:

- How do you get scholarships?
- Will you lose your scholarship or grant if you get bad grades?
- What happens to your financial aid award if your family income goes up or down?
- If you get a scholarship, will the college reduce the amount you and your family have to pay or will they reduce your grant aid or loans?
- What rules apply to your loans? When do they have to be prepaid, and what is the interest rate?
- How much will your monthly loan payments be?
- What happens if you cannot make a loan payment or don't have a job?
- How long do you have to pay your loans back?
- Is your work-study job assigned, or do you get to choose?
- How much do employers usually pay work-study students?
- How many hours can you work as a work-study student?
- What kinds of work-study jobs are available?

Financial aid is great, but you're probably going to need help figuring out how to use your money wisely and make it last.

There are great financial planning resources available to students. For help creating a budget and a financial plan for college, check out:

<http://hsfpp.nefe.org/students>
www.mymoney.gov

Also check out the Financial Roadmap planning form on pages 46 & 47 of this handbook.

	EXAMPLE	College #1	College #2	College #3
Tuition	\$5,416			
Required Fees	\$275			
Room & Board (food & housing)	\$4,100			
Books & Supplies	\$650			
Travel	\$350			
Other (personal items, clothing, etc.)	\$500			
Cost of Attendance (add all costs from categories above)	\$11,291			
Expected Family Contribution (EFC from your FAFSA report)	\$1,500			
Total Financial Need (Total COA minus your EFC)	\$9,791			
Scholarships	\$500			
Grants	\$4,000			
Loans	\$1,200			
Work Study	\$3,500			
Total Financial Aid (add financial aid from four categories above)	\$9,200			
Unmet Need (subtract total financial aid from total financial need)	\$591			
Out-of-Pocket Costs (add unmet need and EFC)	\$2,091			

Finance Your Future.

MY FINANCIAL ROAD MAP

To develop a spending plan, track all of your expenses over the next several weeks. After you have a clear picture of how you spend your money, fill out the first Actual column. Then set some spending goals and monitor how well you meet them in the second Actual column.

MONTHLY INCOME	BEST GUESS	ACTUAL	REVISED GOAL	ACTUAL
Your Salary				
Tips/Bonuses				
Grants/Scholarships/Financial Aid				
Other Income				
TOTALS				
MONTHLY BASIC EXPENSES	BEST GUESS	ACTUAL	REVISED GOAL	ACTUAL
Rent				
Utilities				
Health Insurance				
Car Insurance				
Cell Phone				
Groceries				
Car Payment				
Gasoline				
Parking				
Public Transportation				
Tuition & Education Expenses				
Daycare/Babysitter				
Savings				
Other:				
Other:				
Other:				
TOTALS				

OTHER MONTHLY EXPENSES	BEST GUESS	ACTUAL	REVISED GOAL	ACTUAL
Medical expenses/Copays/Medications				
Hair Cuts				
Toiletries				
Clothing				
Entertainment				
Dining Out				
Cable/Internet				
Hobbies				
Computer/Software expenses				
Newspapers/Magazines				
Music				
Books				
Other:				
Other:				
TOTALS				
DEBIT/CREDIT	BEST GUESS	ACTUAL	REVISED GOAL	ACTUAL
Credit card				
Student loan				
Other:				
TOTALS				

SUM IT ALL UP

add the totals of:

Basic Expenses + _____

Other Expenses + _____

Debit/Credit + _____

TOTAL MONTHLY EXPENSES = _____

DETERMINE YOUR MONTHLY BALANCE

subtract your total monthly expenses from your total monthly income:

Total Monthly Income _____

Total Monthly Expenses - _____

MONTHLY BALANCE = _____

If your expenses exceed your income, try looking at miscellaneous expenses for ways to cut back. You'll need to cut your spending or find a way to earn enough money to support your lifestyle.

Use Your Resources.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I want to be an electrician. I don't really need to go to college, do I?

There are certain skills you need to begin a career as an electrician or other type of tradesman/woman. You may be able to get a job as an electrician, construction worker, mechanic, hairdresser or in another trade without a postsecondary education, but your ability to advance within your career will be limited.

At a trade school or technical college, you'll get hands-on training to build your skills, you'll have the opportunity to get internships and/or apprenticeships, and you'll gain valuable experience and personal connections that will help you get a job after graduation. And many trade programs offer classes in management and leadership so that you can become a manager, team leader, or business owner later on. The knowledge and experience you gain by continuing your education after high school are things that would be very difficult to figure out on your own.

I've heard that Ivy League colleges (like Princeton University, Harvard, and Yale) are way better than other schools. Is that true?

In all honesty, the best college in the world is the one that's right for you. Ivy League schools have excellent academic programs and reputations, but that doesn't mean you won't find programs that are just as educational elsewhere. And just because a school has a good reputation doesn't mean you'll be happy there. Take your time, look at all of your options, and apply to the schools you think will be the best fit for your goals, aspirations, and lifestyle.

If my SAT score is lower than the average accepted student's score, should I forget about applying?

An average SAT score is exactly what it says it is an average. If the average score of applicants is 1000, some students scored above that, and some scored below. And remember, your SAT score is only one piece of your college application.

My GPA is kind of low. Does that mean I won't be admitted to any colleges?

If the rest of your college application is strong, you definitely stand a chance to being admitted to several schools. If not, your chances depend on the schools you apply to, and if you showed academic improvement, things may not be as bad as you think. If your grades weren't great your freshman and sophomore year but got better during your junior and senior year, you have shown your ability and desire to improve. Showing that you can improve after learning from past mistakes is always a good thing.

Another option to think about is to start out at a two-year community college. Most community colleges have open admission policies, so anyone with a high school diploma or GED can apply to take classes. If you start at a two-year school and do well you can always transfer to a four-year school later.

I don't like the essay topic assigned to me on my college application. Can I write about something else?

No. The most important rule of the college application process is to follow directions.

When should I send in my college applications?

First of all, make sure you meet the application deadline at each college you're applying to. Colleges often have different application dates, so check and double-check exactly when they want your materials in their hands. Second, while most schools will not hold applying later in their application cycle against you, you may have a better chance of getting admitted earlier in their application timeline when there are more openings. Even if applying early won't help you get in, it's always a good idea to plan ahead and leave yourself enough time to finish your application and get all your materials together by the deadline. Besides, getting your application turned in early lets the school official know you're serious about wanting to attend **their** institution.

What if I don't get in to the school I want?

You should apply to 4 or 5 colleges just in case you don't get accepted to your first choice. Apply to a reach school - one that you want to go to but may not be accepted to, a couple of target schools - schools you would enjoy attending that you're pretty sure you'll get in to, and at least one safety school - a school where you will be happy and that you are absolutely sure you will be accepted to. Remember that most community and technical colleges have open admission policies, so any of these schools are a good safety option.

I'm sick of school. Is it really that big a deal to drop out and get my GED? Isn't that the same as graduating from high school?

Well, yes and no. In some cases, a GED (General Equivalency Diploma) is considered the same as a high school diploma, and for some people it can be a good option. If you have an extended illness and miss a lot of school, or if you have other personal problems that limit your ability to attend high school, getting your GED might be a good option. But, when you leave high school early you miss out on a lot - and not just the fun stuff like friends, prom, and graduation.

There are a lot of things you'll learn in school that will never be on a test but that will help you navigate through life, like social skills, leadership, and good citizenship. High school is a great time to figure out what you like and who you want to become. If you dropout early and start working, it can be really difficult to find the time and the energy to devote to become the kind of adult you want to be. There are people who can help you get



If you have other questions about college that aren't answered here, check out www.readyssetgrad.org and www.college.gov.

Washington State GEAR UP

In Washington...

35,000

35,000 students receive services from 10 GEAR UP programs statewide. Services include mentoring, tutoring, college visits, test preparation, and admissions and financial aid assistance.

\$51,000,000

With the program's dollar-for-dollar cost share requirement, the total investment in Washington is over \$51 million. The federal investment is \$25.5 million per year.

75

75 school districts in the most disadvantaged communities in the state received support to promote reforms and improvements in the school curriculum and in teaching and learning methods.

At GEAR UP, we believe that young people who start planning in middle school have a better chance of entering college and completing their degrees.



Our results.

In 2011, Washington State University analyzed outcomes for Washington State GEAR UP students who graduated in the classes of 2001 through 2005. The analysis focuses on 769 students who earned scholarship credit through the program. For comparison purposes, parallel statistics have been included for a statewide population of low-income students from the same graduating classes who participated in the Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) program.

Contrasting GEAR UP participants with a comparison group of other low-income students, **GEAR UP students had more positive outcomes on virtually all measures of enrollment, persistence, and degree attainment.**



GEAR UP is the perfect example of what we can accomplish when we put the dreams and aspirations of our children's future first. We have created a college-going culture among young people who never thought they could take that next critical step in education. When we help these young people achieve their potential we are helping to keep the United States number one in the world."

- Congressman Chaka Fattah

Online Resource



www.readysetgrad.org

Ready Set Grad is a program to help ensure every student in Washington State has access to the tools, information, and support they need to graduate high school and make college accessible and affordable.

Our website works with students to plan their classes and extracurricular activities, discover college-planning events, connect with mentors,



and learn how to get into, pay for and complete college. Washington students have a wide range of potential opportunities, and we'll help you identify those applicable to you.



Our online tools help students of all ages—from middle schoolers to adult scholars—create their own college plan. We know the path to college is not the same for every student. The right path for you may be a certificate program, vocational training, or an associate, bachelor's, or graduate degree. We're here to help you earn whichever fits your life goals.



College: My dream. My plan.

GEAR UP is a national effort to encourage more young people to have high expectations, study hard, and go to college.

Washington State GEAR UP is a partnership of the Office of the Governor, the Washington Student Achievement Council, the University of Washington, The College Success Foundation, Northwest Education Loan Association, ACT, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Washington State Employees Credit Union, and 28 school districts statewide.

GEAR UP is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, in collaboration with state government, local communities, schools, colleges and universities, and the private sector.

WASHINGTON STATE GEAR UP PROGRAM

Washington Student Achievement Council

917 Lakeridge Way SW • PO BOX 43430 • Olympia, WA 98504-3430

Phone: 360.753.7800 • Email: GEARUP@WSAC.WA.GOV

For more information about Washington's GEAR UP program visit:

WWW.GEARUP.WA.GOV

For more information about financial aid, careers, and college visit:

www.readysetgrad.org

The contents of this (publications, film, book, report, etc.) were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.



www.facebook.com/readysetgrad
[@readysetgrad](https://twitter.com/readysetgrad)
www.readysetgrad.org