

ALBUQUERQUE ACADEMY
COLLEGE GUIDANCE OFFICE

COLLEGE SEARCH & APPLICATION WORKBOOK



ALBUQUERQUE
ACADEMY

Throughout this workbook, there are **essential questions** for your reflection — some directed to parents, others to students, and all for your family to consider together. Spend time thinking about these questions, and jot down a few thoughts in the spaces provided.

We start with a question that is a central part of the Albuquerque Academy College Guidance Office (CGO) advising process:

What’s Your Deal?

We once asked Brenna Heintz, a trusted colleague who has held admission roles at selective colleges, “What do you think when you open up a new file and begin to read?” Ms. Heintz immediately answered, “When I open up a new application, I am asking one big question: **What’s your deal?** I want to know what is the student’s passion, what drives them, what are their goals, what will they bring to my campus.”

That is a good way to think about your college search and application process. We are going to help you discover, define, enhance, and communicate your “deal” to colleges through the application process. (Another good way of thinking about this is the question: What is your superhero origin story? How did you get to be the amazing person you are today?)

Whatever method works best for you, your “deal” or your origin story, it is important that you realize a big truth about both approaches — that **you may not know what it is yet.**



Essential Question: What is my deal?

A Journey of Discovery

Figuring out your deal and putting together an overall plan for your college search takes time. We don’t expect you to know the answers right away. Instead, we help you discover the factors and characteristics that matter most to your search, and then we make sure you end up with the best options to get you on the right path to a productive and fulfilling future.

CGO Quick Reference

The College Guidance Office, or CGO, is located in MI61, at the north end of the Music Building across from Brown Hall.

Main Number..... (505) 828-3220
Department Emailchargercgo@aa.edu
CEEB and ACT Code.....320 003

Ralph Figueroa, Dean	(505) 828-3218	figueroa@aa.edu
Dean Jacoby, Director	(505) 828-3219	jacoby@aa.edu
Shaun Gehres, Associate Director	(505) 858-8802	gehres@aa.edu
Jessica Becenti, Counselor	(505) 828-3301	becenti@aa.edu
Mauree Thordahl, Coordinator and Registrar	(505) 828-3220	thordahl@aa.edu



College Guidance Webpage

<https://www.aa.edu/academics/college-guidance/>

Publicly available information about the Albuquerque Academy College Guidance Office, including our school profile and college matriculation list



CGO ChargerHub Portal

<https://portals.veracross.com/albuquerqueacademy/cgo>

Information for Academy students and parents, including CGO events and announcements



Scoir

<https://www.scoir.com/>

Online college search and application tool available to students and parents starting sophomore year



College Kickstart

<https://www.collegekickstart.com/>

College application data available to juniors and seniors

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Timeline for Parents

The College Guidance Office is officially part of the 10-12 Division, and most of our work with students and families takes place in those years. Every November, we have a special program for parents of 6th-grade through 9th-grade students; check the Academy calendar for details.

Here is a timeline for thinking about the process as well as some questions to keep in mind. It includes the typical meetings you will have with the college advisers over the course of your student's Academy career.

Grades 6-8

Focus on Exploration and Growth: While the expectation for all Academy parents is that college is the next step for your students, we don't want you to lose sight of the amazing growth and experiences that your students will have in their first years at the Academy. These early years are the best time for your students to discover who they will become in the future. The college process in later years asks them to take a hard look at who they are and where they might go in the future. We find that the students who handle the process best are the ones who have made many attempts before finding the right path. Encourage your students to explore various activities, knowing that some of them might not work out. Give them opportunities to try, and even fail.



Meet with the CGO: Parents of 6th- to 9th-grade students are welcome to schedule an appointment with one of the college advisers. The easiest way to set up a meeting is to email us at chargercgo@aa.edu. **Plan to attend the Overview for 6-9 Parents program in November at least once.**

Visiting Colleges: Parents are sometimes surprised when we talk about visiting colleges at an early age. We find that the more college campuses a student has set foot on, the more they understand what they like and don't like. So, while we don't want you to plan exhaustive college trips with your young students, we do want you to think about opportunities to make time for stops at colleges that are near destinations you otherwise plan to visit. There is no need to attend anything official, such as a tour or information session; just walk around. Breathe the air. Ask your student if they could picture themselves at this college or one like it.



Essential Questions: What dreams or passions have my student expressed, even in small ways? In what kinds of environments do my child thrive? What strengths — academic, personal, or interpersonal — do I admire in my child? How can I support these traits?

Financial Planning: Few parts of the process cause more anxiety than dealing with the question of paying for college — and for good reasons. College costs show no sign of stopping their rapid climb, and changes in federal policy can make this process even more uncertain. We explore this topic in Chapter 9, but we want to make sure parents of our younger students think about and try to plan ahead for college costs. This is especially critical for families that will send more than one child at a time.

A good starting point is to consider setting aside funds in an educational savings account, such as a 529 plan. Valuable information on New Mexico’s 529 plan can be found [here](#).



The most important thing to remember is that there are many financial options to consider. Do not let the “sticker price” of any college deter you or your student. Take time to investigate the financial support each college can offer students. Use Net Price Calculators to help you estimate college costs.

Ninth Grade

Permanent Record: Ninth grade is a critical starting point in the college search process. For most colleges, ninth grade is when your student's permanent high school record begins. Academy transcripts do show some advanced courses taken in eighth grade at the Academy, along with the grades earned, but those classes do not count in the official grade point average.

Course Selection: Every year, at least one Academy senior tells us, "I wish someone had told me to work a little harder in school. I know I could have done more here." Invariably, we have to break it to that senior that we *did* tell them, especially starting in ninth grade. With the start of your student's permanent record, it is time to think about academic rigor. We do not want your student to focus on grades and studying at the expense of mental health or quality of life, but at the same time, taking slightly harder courses may open more doors down the road.



Meet with the CGO: While all 10th and 11th graders meet with college advisers when they select courses for junior and senior year, the same is not true for ninth graders choosing courses for sophomore year. This may be a good time to arrange a brief meeting with one of the college advisers to talk about the rigor of the curriculum and the plan for your student's high school course choices.

This is the minimum curriculum expected by highly selective colleges and universities.

- English: 4 years
- History: 3 or 4 years, including U.S. history
- Science: biology, chemistry, physics (one year each)
- Math: 4 years, preferably through calculus
- Foreign Language: 3 or 4 years



Explore the [Curriculum Guide](#): Start thinking about courses you'd like to take in the coming years. Filter the Academy's hundreds of course options by grade, department, AP/Advanced options, and more, and create an account to save your favorites.





Essential Questions: What kind of support does my child need most from me right now? What fears or hopes do I have about this process — and how might they affect my actions? What will help me transition from parenting a teenager to supporting a young adult?

Look at Extracurriculars: Ninth grade is a good time to re-examine your student’s extracurricular resume. Do they have a range of activities, or are they focused on one or two things? What do they pursue outside of school? Those activities matter in the process. Give your student a chance to reset and try something new. Ninth grade is the perfect time to explore a new interest, while still giving your student time to demonstrate passion and develop leadership — key things that colleges look for.

Tenth Grade

Welcome to 10-12: The College Guidance Office is part of the 10-12 Division at the Academy, and your student has regular contact with the college advisers starting in 10th grade. Students are assigned to a primary college adviser in the spring of their junior year. Until then, and even after that point, students and parents are welcome to meet with and seek advice from any adviser.

College Knowledge 10 — College Explorations: 10-12 students are required to complete a semester-long College Knowledge class each year. College Explorations meets in the spring of 10th grade. CK 10, as we call it, provides a broad overview of the process and introduces students to basic vocabulary and processes. Toward the end of the semester, sophomores and their parents are given access to Scoir, our online college search platform. Students learn much more about Scoir in CK 11.

UNM Field Trip: In September, we take the entire sophomore class to the University of New Mexico for a tour and information session so they can see what it's like to visit a college campus and think about whether it would be a good fit. This trip helps set the stage for talking about college visits in CK 10.

PSAT Practice: In October, all 10th graders sit for a practice version of the PSAT. This test is not used in the college application process; it is strictly to give students experience with testing conditions and expose them to the material that will be covered on the PSAT/NMSQT in October of junior year and on the real SAT, typically taken in spring of junior year. PSAT practice results are uploaded to Scoir.

Course Registration: In the spring of 10th and 11th grades, college advisers review students' course selections for the coming school year. Having a brief conversation with each student about their college goals can help CGO advise them about the rigor of their curriculum choices and the best way to maximize their college options. The college advisers also make sure students are on track to fulfill all Academy graduation requirements.



Meet with the CGO: Although not required, we invite any parents who want to discuss curriculum choices and college goals to make an appointment with one of the college advisers.

Reminder — College Visits and Extracurriculars: While most Academy students visit colleges as juniors or seniors, visiting in sophomore year can be helpful. While it is probably too soon to plan intensive college visits, if your family is traveling, consider taking some time to walk around nearby colleges. Many Academy juniors and seniors note that college visits they made with older siblings were helpful for their own college decision-making, so if you take your younger children, they are likely to get something from the experience as well.

Sophomore year is also a good time to check in with your student about their activities. Are they happy with their extracurriculars? Are there other areas they have considered exploring? Starting new activities in the sophomore year is perfectly acceptable for the college application process. Activities need to reflect students' passions and interests. By junior or senior year, demonstrating leadership in activities is helpful.



Essential Questions: Am I helping my child find their best fit for activities, or am I projecting my own preferences? How might this be an opportunity for my child to become more independent?

Summer Programs: The summer after 10th grade can be an ideal time to explore academic, extracurricular, and service interests. It is important that your student has time to relax and have fun, but summer is a great time to try something new.

Eleventh Grade

Colleges Visit Us: Each year over 100 college admission officers visit the Academy to speak with students, and the majority of those visits come during the fall semester. College visits are generally scheduled during lunch from 11:40 a.m. to 12:20 p.m. or during collaboration time/office hours from 1:45 to 2:10 p.m. Any 10-12 student is welcome to speak with these college reps, but their primary audience is juniors. Please encourage your student to watch for announcements about these visits. (Sorry, but parents may not attend.)

College Fair and Tri-School Symposium: In September, the RMACAC — our professional admission association — sponsors a large college fair, usually held at the convention center in downtown Albuquerque. College reps from around the country are in attendance, and it is a great opportunity for your 11th grader to learn more about colleges. The fair takes place on a Sunday afternoon, and the Monday following is the Tri-School Symposium, at which a number of college reps present panels and discussions about the admission process. The event is one of the tri-school programs we sponsor with Sandia Prep and Bosque School.

PSAT/NMSQT: In October, all juniors take the PSAT/NMSQT at the Academy during school hours. Although still a practice test for the SAT, the test is used to qualify students for the National Merit Scholarship Program and for the College Board's National Recognition Program. Students should take the test seriously but not worry about it excessively. In the end, it is still practice.

Junior & Parents Night: In November, CGO hosts an evening event that marks the official kickoff of the college application process. This program gives an overview of the college search process and outlines the next steps in your student's college search. All juniors and parents are strongly encouraged to attend.



CRITICAL CGO MEETING: Every Academy junior is required to meet with their college adviser and at least one parent or guardian. This meeting helps our office determine the parameters and limitations of each junior's college search and is critical to the success of the application process. Meetings are available starting in late November and extend through the spring semester. Your junior's college advisor will send a scheduling link to the student and parents/guardians.

College Knowledge — Planning: CK II takes place in the spring semester. This round of the College Knowledge class is the most intense, and we cover a lot of material about the search and application processes. We also discuss the fundamentals of the college essay, which most students also work on during junior English class.

The Common Application: The Common App, as it's known, is an online application platform that most Academy students use for the majority of their college applications. We introduce it to students in CK II and spend time throughout the semester working on different parts of this application.

ACT and SAT: Spring semester is the ideal time for students to take the real version of the SAT or the ACT. Even though most colleges remain test-optional, it is a good idea to take at least one test that can be used in the process. We discuss test prep options in CK II.

Course Registration: The college advisers review the course selections made by every junior, with a close eye on graduation requirements.

Tri-School Case Studies: Another event in the tri-school series, the Case Studies program for juniors and parents is held at the Academy in April. This program also brings a group of college admission officers to campus, this time to discuss a set of mock applications. This extremely informative program gets rave reviews.

College Visits: Spring break and the summer after junior year are key times for in-person college visits. Students and parents/guardians are encouraged to meet with college advisers to help plan these trips.

Twelfth Grade

Summer Check-Ins and Application Workshops: We open the College Guidance Office in early August for brief check-in appointments with rising seniors. The Rising Seniors Information on the [CGO ChargerHub portal](#) provides links for scheduling these meetings. There are also optional August application workshops; details are on the CGO calendar.



College Knowledge — Transitions: Fall of senior year is the busiest part of the college application process. The focus of the College Guidance Office is on helping seniors complete their applications while still having time to focus on their academics and activities. CK 12 takes place during the fall semester to give seniors the most important thing they need — time to work on applications. We find that by providing 75 minutes every fourth day to dedicate to college application work, seniors manage the application process more smoothly.

Finalize the List: Finalizing the college application list is one of the key tasks for fall of senior year. Most Academy students apply to eight to 12 colleges, with a mix of colleges that are likely to admit the student, some that are a match but not assured, and a few “reach” colleges. Parents should have their seniors show them College Kickstart, a data-rich online platform.



Essential Questions: What messages am I sending — explicitly or subtly — about prestige, rankings, or outcomes? Am I creating space for honest conversations without pressure or judgment?

College Fair and Campus Visits by Reps: Seniors should watch for announcements about college rep visits and the RMACAC College Fair in September. While some seniors may still be “shopping” for a few colleges to add to their application list, most will be targeting the colleges to which they are likely to apply. Last-minute questions and conversations with an admission officer who just might be the person reading their application can be very productive.

Applications and Essays: CK 12 gives seniors focused time to complete their college applications and essays. Before a student submits their Common Application, their college adviser reviews the entire application to make sure it is as strong as possible.



Meet with the CGO: Early fall is a good time to set up a meeting with your student and their college adviser to go over the final college application list. It is also a time to discuss whether a student should apply under an early application process such as Early Decision or Early Action.

In addition to the application list, fall of senior year is also a good time for seniors and parents to have a focused conversation about college finances and the realistic expectations and limitations that should be taken into account when finalizing college application lists.

CGO Meeting Timeline Summary

Grades 6-8

Meetings are available by request; some families meet to ask specific questions about the process. Email chargercgo@aa.edu to schedule a meeting. The Information for 6-9th Grade Parents program is held in November.

Grade 9

Students' permanent records begin. Feel free to schedule a meeting to discuss the process and course selection.

Grade 10

College Knowledge seminars begin. Parents receive access to Scoir, our college search platform. Meetings are available by request.

Grade 11

The college search process begins. Juniors and at least one parent/guardian meet with the student's assigned college adviser starting in November to set the basic parameters for your student's search and explore college options. The meeting will explain the application process in detail.



Important Note: It is a good idea to schedule a follow-up meeting closer to the end of junior year to discuss summer plans and college visits. You may schedule follow-up meetings with any of the college advisers.

Grade 12

Schedule a meeting in the fall to go over your student's final college application list. Discuss early application strategies and financial aid process. Optional: Schedule a meeting to go over financial aid applications.

While not required, it is a good idea to set up a meeting in the spring with one of the advisers to review the list of colleges to which your student has been admitted. We are happy to help you and your student pick the best option and consider the financial implications of this decision.

Checklists for Students Grade 9-12

FRESHMAN YEAR

- Work hard and learn academic material thoroughly. Doing well in school will open more doors for you in the college process.
- Develop your academic interests. What are your favorite classes? Which classes do you do best in?
- Explore and participate in activities outside of class that you find interesting. Identify things that you care about and get involved with them, whether on campus or off.
- Think about summer opportunities, including summer session classes to complete history or science graduation requirements.

Your Permanent Record Begins: Although a few colleges focus more on your academic record beginning in 10th grade, the transcripts provided to colleges include grades starting with your freshman year. And if you have taken advanced math, language, and art courses in eighth grade at the Academy, those grades will also appear on your transcript, though they do not count toward your GPA.



Important Note: Albuquerque Academy transcripts only list semester grades. Marking period grades are not included. This means that if you do not do well in the first marking period, you have a chance to improve your grade by the end of the semester.

Senior Moment: Every year, at least one senior tells their college adviser that they wish they had worked harder when they were in 9th and 10th grades. “Nobody told me,” they often say, “that working just a little harder and improving my grades a little would matter to colleges.” The truth is, we *did* tell them, as we tell every class of ninth graders. We are telling you again here. We do not think you should spend so much time studying that you do not have rich and vibrant personal and extracurricular lives, but we want you to have as many good options for college as possible, and earning good grades can open more doors.

SOPHOMORE YEAR

Welcome to the 10-12 Division: The upper school at the Academy is different in many ways from lower grades. Give yourself time to get to know how things work in 10-12. You have more free time and more control over your schedule. How will you use them? The 10-12 faculty, including the CGO staff, play a big role in your college application process. Take time to get to know your teachers and advisers. It will pay off in the end.

- Continue to do strong work in the classroom. Do you have a better idea of your academic interests and strengths? Let us know. This is also a time to explore new academic pursuits.
- Consider taking AP exams if you are enrolled in Advanced Placement classes.
- Continue your extracurricular and community-based activities, becoming an involved and engaged community member. Haven't been involved in many activities? This is the year to expand your options.
- Go to the RMACAC College Fair, generally held in September at the Albuquerque Convention Center. Watch for details from CGO in the daily email.
- Take the PSAT in October and a practice ACT in the spring.
- Open your Scoir account as part of your CK 10 class in spring.
- Make a plan for summer. We want you to have a fun and relaxing break, but summer is also a great time for volunteering, working, research projects, or Think Summer classes for credit.
- Consider visiting colleges.

JUNIOR YEAR

- Keep up your academics. Junior-year grades are often critical to your college applications, but it is also OK to explore new academic pursuits.
- Stay involved and active in your extracurricular and off-campus activities. Look for leadership opportunities.
- Go to the RMACAC College Fair in the fall.
- Attend the Tri-School Symposium in the fall.
- Take the PSAT/NMSQT in October.
- Attend Juniors & Parents Night in November.
- Schedule your individual junior meeting with your college adviser.
- After your college adviser meeting, schedule another meeting with your adviser and at least one parent or guardian.
- Research colleges, through Scoir, College Kickstart, college websites, and other search tools. This is the time to explore colleges you don't yet know.
- Visit a variety of colleges to get a sense for how different campuses can look and feel. Not sure where to visit? Your college adviser can help you plan.
- Take either the ACT or the SAT in the spring or early summer.
- Start a discussion with your family about roles, finances, and goals related to college.
- Talk to lots of people about college — teachers, advisers, friends of your family, and college reps — to get different perspectives.
- Register with the NCAA if you plan to play competitive sports in college.
- Ask at least one teacher if they will write a letter of recommendation for you.
- Make a plan for summer. It is good to relax and have fun. It is also great to get a summer job. But keep in mind that summer can also be a time to pursue activities, interests, and opportunities that will help colleges understand your “deal.”

Think About Academic Rigor: Junior year is the true kickoff of the college search and application process. While senior year is when you put the finishing touches on your applications, you build the foundations of your search as a junior. This is the time to ask big questions about your goals and plans for the future. As always, we don't expect you to have all the answers, or at least not all of the final answers. Let the process evolve.

One big topic to consider is academic rigor. More than any other factor, **doing well in a rigorous high school curriculum is the key to success for students who are interested in applying to highly selective colleges.** Remember, there are plenty of really great colleges that are not highly selective. But if you think you want to apply to these selective colleges, you need to think about taking the most rigorous courses that you can handle.

Most highly selective colleges expect you to take the following courses, at a minimum:

- English: 4 years
- History: 3 or 4 years, including U.S. history
- Science: one year each of biology, chemistry, and physics
- Math: through calculus
- Foreign Language: 3 or 4 years

SENIOR YEAR

- Attend the optional application workshops in early August.
- Schedule your required short check-in meeting with your college adviser before school starts (or right when you get back).
- Need to meet with your parents/guardians and your college adviser? We can set that up for you.
- Focus on your academics. Contrary to popular belief, senior year really does count in the admission process.
- Meet with college representatives who visit the Academy. The visitor schedule can be found on the calendar in Scoir.
- Attend the RMACAC College Fair in September, being sure to touch base with any college reps from institutions you plan to apply to.
- Attend the Tri-School Symposium in September for interesting and informative workshops presented by visiting college reps.
- Set a final list of colleges, including plans for Early Decision, Early Action, and Restrictive Early Action (ED, EA, REA) applications.
- Retake ACT or SAT tests, if necessary.
- Review, revise, and finalize your application essays and supplemental essays.
- Send official test scores from the testing agency directly to college admission offices.
- Complete and submit applications to colleges.
- Complete financial aid applications — FAFSA and CSS (if needed), attending workshops for support as needed.
- Start planning your Senior Project.
- Check your email often for communications and notifications from the colleges you applied to.
- Visit colleges that have admitted you, perhaps during spring break.
- Enjoy your Senior Project! Remember, the CGO is still available to help with your college decision, even if you are not on campus.
- Compile financial award information from college acceptances for comparison. The CGO has tools to help you understand the components of each award and what they mean for your bank account.
- Notify the college you will attend and submit a deposit to save your spot no later than May 1.
- Come to our office and pin your flag on our map.
- Graduate!

OUR Essential Question: Where will YOU go?

Senior year will see the pinnacle of all your hard work in the college process and will end with the resolution of all your searching and a single answer: your next destination. It is too easy to see this process as the end goal of your entire experience at Albuquerque Academy, the final result of all your efforts.

We assure you that it is not.

Your next steps — college, a gap year, or something else — have never been the point of your time here. Yes, we are a college preparatory institution, and yes, what we have been preparing you for is to succeed in college. But do not let the race to the finish make you lose sight of all the amazing experiences and encounters you have had along the way. It is all of the people, all of the lessons — in and out of the classroom — and all the mistakes and triumphs that we want you to carry with you once you leave our school. Your time *here* has been the point all along.

We will remind you of this many times during your senior year: **no college admission decision — positive, negative, or neutral — defines who you are as a person or a student.** Decisions are merely the semi-random results of a process that, at times, is far from logical and far from fair.

In your last months here, the question that you will face constantly, which can make the process more stressful, is the well-intentioned question that you will hear from family, friends, teachers, and classmates: *Where* will you go? It is the right question, but it is always asked with emphasis on the wrong word.

The question has never been about *where*. Because, quite frankly, the “where” has never been important. We say that because year after year we have watched Albuquerque Academy graduates do amazing things and exceed all expectations by attending absolutely any college you can think of. No matter how big or small, how selective or non-selective, how urban or rural, we know that every Academy student has the ability to astound us with their future achievements.

So, it is not *where* will you go that we ask. It is *where* will *you* go? It has always been about who *you* are, and what *you* will do, no matter where the future takes you.

Chapter I: The College Knowledge Program

THE CORE OF THE ACADEMY COLLEGE ADVISING PROGRAM

The College Knowledge Program is a required course in which the CGO conveys the majority of the information and guidance necessary to manage the college search and application process. College Knowledge is a semester-long seminar that students take in 10th, 11th, and 12th grades.

In addition to being a source of important information, the College Knowledge courses are a way to help 10-12 students get to know the CGO team. Each section is taught by one of the four advisers, although some individual lessons are taught by several advisers or by all four, and our office coordinator/registrar also teaches some classes.

College Explorations — 10th Grade Spring

Laying the Foundation: The first year of College Knowledge takes place in the spring semester of sophomore year. It is intended to be a broad introduction to some of the basic concepts regarding college types, college visits, financing, and the application process. This course is designed to dispel common misconceptions about college applications.

The course also allows sophomores to get to know the members of the College Guidance Office in a casual classroom setting. The course meets approximately once a month during spring semester. Topics covered in College Explorations include course selection and the college process, an introduction to the Scoir online search tool, types of colleges, the parts of a college application, standardized testing and test prep, and planning for summer.



Essential Questions: What is the hardest part of the college application process? What is the thing that worries you most?

College Planning — 11th Grade Spring

Sharpening the Focus: College Planning, the second year of College Knowledge, is required for all juniors. The junior class is divided into eight sections, and each college adviser teaches two of the College Planning sections. The class meets approximately once every four days in the spring semester.



Essential Question: What is your superpower? What is a skill, talent, or state of mind you have that makes a difference to people around you? Rather than physical or academic skills, focus on interpersonal skills that you use in engaging with others.

CK II places more emphasis on the tools that students use for their college searches and, eventually, their applications. The primary tool that students use is the online search and processing platform, Scoir, which was introduced sophomore year. There is also more in-depth discussion about testing and test prep, financing college, and the college essay and other requirements of college applications.

College Transitions — 12th Grade Fall

Let's Get It Done: College Transitions, the final year of the College Knowledge program, takes place in the fall semester of senior year. Again, eight sections are taught by the college advisers and meet approximately every four days. CK 12 is devoted mostly to giving seniors time to work on their college applications. Seniors bring their laptops to class, ready to work.



Essential Question: The college process is all about making decisions about your future. How do you know when you have made a good decision? Is it a feeling you get? Is it feedback from others? What decisions in the past have really felt like good ones? What can you learn from those decisions that will help you make choices about college?

Chapter 2: The Tri-School Programs

COMBINING RESOURCES

The Tri-School Programs are a collaboration between the Academy, Bosque School, and Sandia Prep that were introduced over 20 years ago. In addition to offering helpful and timely programs to juniors, seniors, and parents from all three schools, the Tri-School Programs are able to attract a larger number of college admission officers by providing access to this larger audience.

The Symposium

In early fall, juniors, seniors, and parents are encouraged to attend the Tri-School Symposium. The Symposium offers a variety of college application process workshops presented by visiting college admission officers. Sample topics from recent years include Making the Most of Campus Visits, Paying for College, and How to Shine on Your Common Application. The Symposium is usually scheduled for Monday evening after the RMACAC College Fair and is held at Bosque School.

Financial Aid Night

Early in the spring semester, Sandia Prep hosts the Tri-School Financial Aid Night. This presentation by a college financial aid director gives students and parents practical and detailed information and advice about navigating the financial aid application process. The presentation covers information on both the FAFSA and CSS Profile.

The Case Studies Program

The Tri-School Case Studies Program takes place in April at the Academy. The program gives juniors and parents a chance to try their hand at making admission decisions. College admission officers lead small group discussions about three mock applications, and students and parents try their hand at making a difficult admission decision.

Chapter 3: College Application Types

MANAGING THE PROCESS

Academy seniors apply to many types of colleges and universities using a variety of application platforms and admission plans. However, we find that most colleges fall into four basic categories.

In-State Colleges: UNM, NMSU, and NM Tech

All seniors apply to the University of New Mexico during their College Knowledge class. Like many large public universities, UNM has an online application that is simple to complete; most students finish the application in under 10 minutes. Seniors are also encouraged to consider applying to New Mexico State University and New Mexico Tech. All of the public colleges in New Mexico are covered under the Legislative Lottery Scholarship Program and are the best deal, financially, for Academy students.



Essential Question: In addition to financial considerations, there are many good reasons for choosing to attend college in state. The CGO likes to say that staying in New Mexico should be Plan A for all Academy students. We want you to take the idea seriously. Now the actual question: Is staying in New Mexico for college the best option for you?



Important Notes About UNM: If seniors want their standardized test scores considered by UNM, which is test-optional, they must send their scores directly to UNM from the testing agency. **The College Guidance Office does not send standardized test results to any colleges.** Students must always submit their own scores directly to college admission offices. Also, apply for UNM scholarships by December 1.

Selective Colleges

The second–most common application type that Academy students submit are applications to selective colleges, mostly private institutions. The most frequently used application tool for selective colleges is an online platform called the [Common Application](#). The Common App is accepted by more than 1,100 colleges, including many state colleges and universities. Juniors start working on their Common Applications in College Knowledge class spring semester. In the fall, seniors finalize all the application pieces in their College Knowledge class and add their assigned college adviser to their Common App so they can provide feedback before it's submitted to colleges.

Large Public Universities

Many large public universities have online applications that are similar to the UNM application and easy to complete. A few public universities have their own application platforms, such as the University of California system. The [UC portal](#) typically accepts applications from October 1 to November 30.



In addition, it's much harder to get admitted to some large public universities if you don't apply under an early program like Early Action. Examples include Tulane University, the University of Michigan, and Texas A&M. For those colleges and others, the key is to apply as soon as possible.

“Snap Apps” and Direct Admissions

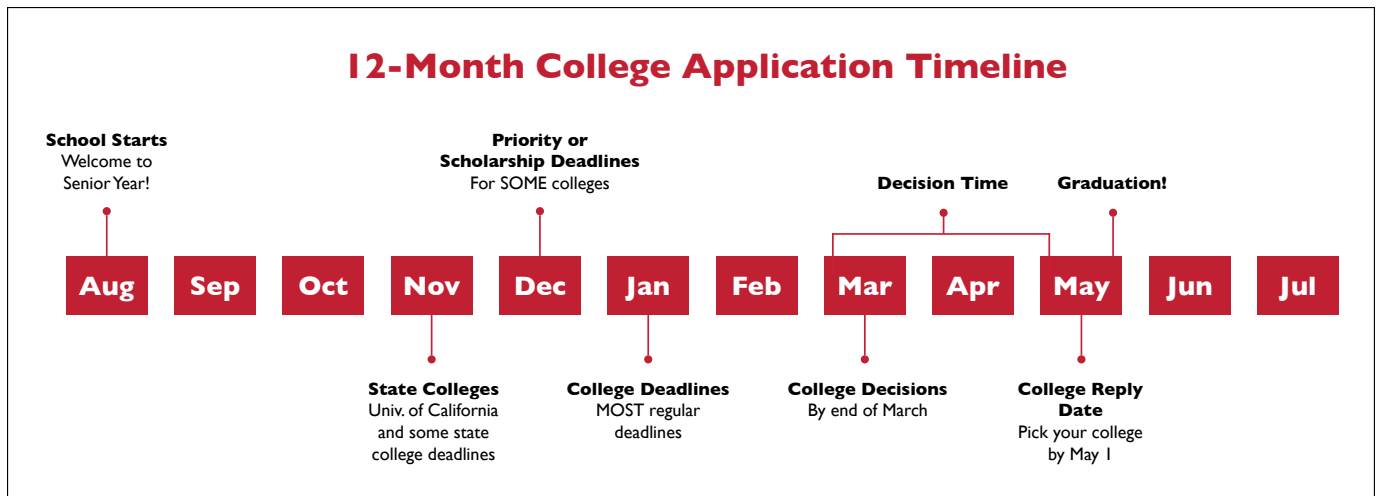
Some private colleges send seniors links to “special” applications, described as “partially completed” or “waiving some requirements” to sound enticing. They may waive essay requirements or their application fee.



These so-called “Snap Apps” are an easier way to apply to some very good colleges, most of which are moderately selective or not selective. There is nothing wrong with using them for some of your college applications. Let us know if you are using a “Snap App,” and remember that we need at least two weeks to complete your Academy Recommendation.

The Common Application introduced a new application method in 2024 — Direct Admissions. This process allows colleges to use the information entered on the Common Application, an online application accepted by over 1,100 colleges, to offer admission to someone before they have applied. A growing number of organizations facilitate [Direct Admissions](#), including those that do not use the Common App.

Regular Admission



This graphic shows the typical timeline for regular admission college applications. Some application deadlines are in the fall, with the majority being in January. Typically, admission decisions are released in mid to late March. **The universal reply deadline is May 1, and all seniors must enroll in their chosen college by that date.**

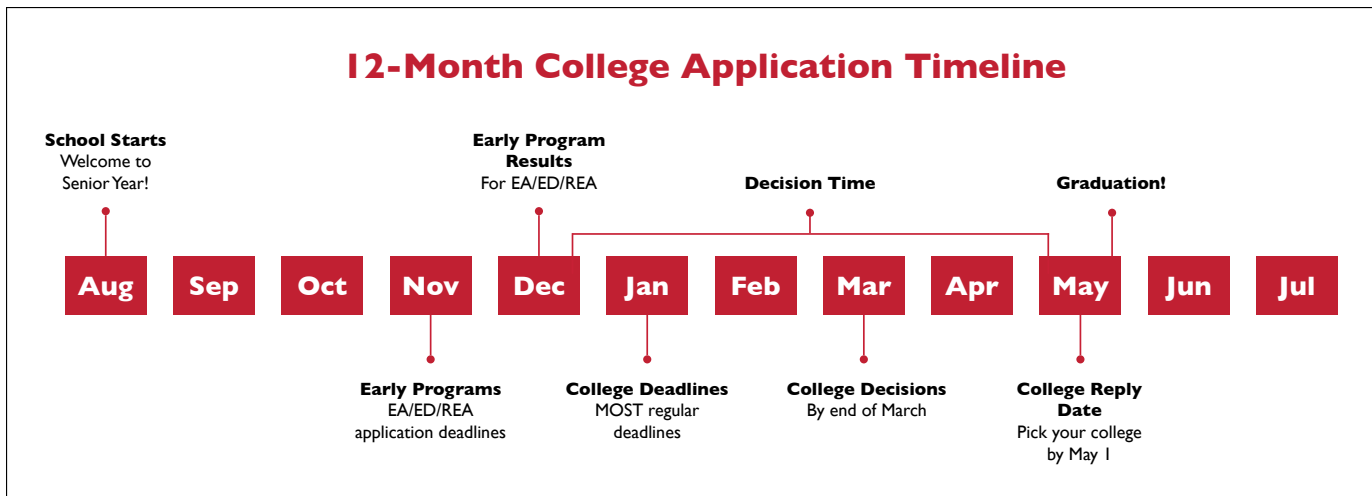
Rolling Admissions

Some colleges process admission applications as they are submitted, and students are admitted on a rolling basis. For colleges that practice Rolling Admissions, it is a good idea to apply as soon as you put together a strong application. If the college offers a priority deadline, we recommend meeting that deadline because it often provides the best chance at acceptance and earning merit scholarships.

Here are some colleges popular with Academy students that operate under Rolling Admissions:

- Arizona State University
- Brigham Young University
- Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
- Michigan State University
- Northern Arizona University
- Ohio State University
- University of Arizona
- University of Portland
- University of San Francisco
- University of Utah
- University of Wisconsin

A Different Timeline



Some application plans can dramatically shift the timeline for students. Students applying through early programs may be admitted in December, giving students more time to consider their choices and giving colleges much more time to market their institutions and convince admitted students to choose them. There are both advantages and disadvantages to this accelerated timeline.

Early Action

Early Action applications generally are due in November, and students receive their decision — an admission, a denial, or a deferral to the regular decision pool — in early to late December. If you are denied in early action, you cannot reapply for regular decision. **Early Action is a non-binding application process, so if a student is admitted, they are not required to commit to the college until May 1, after they have received all college decisions.**

Applying under an Early Action program usually gives an applicant a better chance of being admitted at some colleges. In general, since Early Action is not binding, we encourage students to apply under this application process when available.

Early Decision

This application method is the most serious option and should be used following careful consideration. **Early Decision is binding. If a student is admitted under an Early Decision plan, they must enroll in the college and withdraw all other applications.** We urge students to be very cautious about applying Early Decision. Most colleges that offer Early Decision have a November deadline and send decisions in mid to late December. Some colleges offer two rounds of Early Decision — Early Decision I with a November deadline and Early Decision II with a January deadline, allowing a student, theoretically, to apply to one college in ED I and then, if rejected, apply to another college under ED II.

In addition to receiving a college decision early, the biggest benefit to Early Decision applications is that ED gives a considerable boost to a student's chance of being admitted. That is not a reason to apply under ED, but it is an important consideration.

Restrictive Early Action

Restrictive Early Action programs, also called REA plans or Single-Choice Early Action programs, are a hybrid between Early Action and Early Decision. Like regular Early Action, students are not bound to accept an admission decision if they have applied using an REA application. However, **if a student applies under a Restrictive Early Action program, they cannot apply early decision or early action to any other college.** (Some exceptions vary by college.) Carefully read the exact conditions of Restrictive Early Action programs.

A Big Disadvantage to Applying Early Decision

Applying Early Decision requires the student, parents/guardians, and the college counselor to sign a contract indicating that the student will attend if admitted. If a student requires financial assistance to attend college, colleges that have Early Decision generally provide a fair financial aid package according to their usual aid policies. However, being accepted under Early Decision prevents a family from being able to compare the financial aid packages or merit scholarships from other colleges. While all colleges use the same data and formulas to calculate the financial needs of families, how they award financial aid packages can vary greatly. This makes Early Decision a disadvantage for students and families that require significant financial assistance.

Chapter 4: Applying to College

TELLING YOUR STORY

We understand that college applications are a source of great anxiety. Essentially, though, this is a process in which you tell your story to colleges, and they decide whether or not you fit what they are looking for in their student body. There are no tricks to it, and there is no secret recipe. There are no shortcuts.

We hope this idea is comforting. Applicants simply need to honestly represent themselves and who they are as students and community members. Yes, there are strategies involved, and we help you with those.

All you need to do is discover what your story is and let us help you tell it in the best possible way.

Activities: What Are Your Interests?

For many colleges, particularly those that are highly selective, extracurricular activities are an important part of your profile. Although strong academics are important, many colleges also want to see strong achievements outside of the classroom. Admission offices are not just admitting strong students; they are also trying to create a community, so your contributions beyond the classroom make a difference.

Everything Counts: Activities include school sports, clubs, organizations, performing arts, and other arts groups. Colleges also want to know about church-based activities, family responsibilities, part-time jobs, political work, personal hobbies, and anything else that you are interested in and devote your time to.

Myth #1 — More is Better: Many students operate under the misconception that they need to be involved in as many different extracurricular activities as possible to be competitive at highly selective colleges. Sometimes students ask, “How much community service do I need for this college?” or “How many clubs do I need to have on my list?”

Take a deep breath. More is not better and never has been. Colleges want to see the depth of your commitment to your activities. They want to see leadership. If you have one or two things that are important to you, focus on those, and demonstrate leadership experience in those activities. But don’t think you need to add specific activities that you have no real interest in pursuing.

Myth #2 — The Rare Talent: Some families say they’ve heard there is high demand for oboe players, tuba players, or some other specific talent or activity. While sometimes a student can get more attention for a particular talent or achievement in a specific area, there is no set list

of what activities matter. In truth, even if a college is looking to fill a specific need in its school community, those needs change from year to year, so don't try to game the process. Focus on your talents and passions.

The college advisers help students list their school activities and outside interests the best way possible on their college applications.

The College Essay: Your Story, Literally

For many students, college essays are the most stressful part of the application process. While essays are an important part of some applications, many colleges do not require them. At colleges that do, they are used to assess a student's writing ability and to learn about the student and what they may bring to the community.

College essays are not long. The Common Application, the most frequently used application platform, requires essays to be 250 to 650 words. That is enough space for a good short story. It is not enough space to tell your whole life story or to delve into serious emotional or personal issues. We tell students that their job is to think of a single snapshot from their life — a single event, anecdote, memory, or situation that tells the story of how they want the colleges to see them.



Essential Questions: Here are some questions that can help you decide on a focus for your college essay. What is the biggest challenge you've faced, and how did you respond to it? How have you made a difference in someone else's life or in your community? When did you stop trying to fit in and start being yourself? Is there a "before and after" moment regarding how you see yourself and your identity?

The college advisers work extensively with juniors to help them explore what story they want to tell in their essays and the most effective way to tell it. In addition, most junior-year English teachers assign the writing of a college essay in the last marking period and involve the college advisers to help provide feedback on essay drafts.

High School Transcript: Your Academic Story

The Albuquerque Academy transcript is the permanent record of each student's high school coursework. Academy transcripts also list advanced language, math, or art classes a student took in eighth grade, as well as health class, but those grades are not calculated into the GPA on the transcript.

Academy Transcripts Show Only Semester Grades: MP 1 and MP 3 grades are not listed on transcripts, and neither are marks for effort.

The Academy Transcript Has Three GPAs: a cumulative 100 point, an unweighted 4.0, and a weighted 4.0 GPA. The methods for calculating the GPAs are described on the Academy transcript.



Official Student Transcript

6400 Wyoming Blvd NE | Albuquerque, NM 87109-3899
505-828-3200 | www.aa.edu
CEEB Code: 320003

Grade 12 2024-2025	S 1	S 2	CR
Adv Senior Humanities	91		0.50
AP World History: Modern	90		0.50
Adv History Through Sports	96		0.50
Advanced Calculus	95		0.50
Personal Financial Literacy	94		0.50
Data Science			
AP Physics I	83		0.50

Year Specific Unweighted GPA: 92 Credits Earned: 3.00
YTD Unweighted GPA: 3.91 YTD Credits Earned: 26.75

Grade 11 2023-2024	S 1	S 2	CR
Advanced Internet of Things	100	100	1.00
Adv English II-Art of Nonfiction	91	93	1.00
AP Comp Gov & Politics	93	88	1.00
Spanish IV Conv & Comp.	90	95	1.00
Advanced Trigonometry/Pre-Cal	89	90	1.00
Multi-Sport Athletics		P	1.00
AP Environmental Science	93	95	1.00

Year Specific Unweighted GPA: 93 Credits Earned: 7.00
YTD Unweighted GPA: 3.92 YTD Credits Earned: 23.75

Grade 10 2022-2023	S 1	S 2	CR
Health Seminar 10		P	0.25
AP Computer Science Principles	98	98	1.00
English II	91	93	1.00
AP US History	91	89	1.00
Spanish III	95	94	1.00
Geometry/Algebra II	90	88	1.00
Multi-Sport Athletics		P	1.00
Biology 10-12	92	93	1.00

Year Specific Unweighted GPA: 93 Credits Earned: 7.25
YTD Unweighted GPA: 3.91 YTD Credits Earned: 16.75

Grade 9 2021-2022	S 1	S 2	CR
English I	92	89	1.00
Experiential Education 9th	P	P	0.25
The Modern World	95	94	1.00
Spanish II	93	93	1.00
Algebra I/Geometry	89	89	1.00
8-9 Physical Ed/Athletics	P	P	1.00
Chemistry 9	90	86	1.00
Photo-Digital Design I	96	99	1.00

Year Specific Unweighted GPA: 92 Credits Earned: 7.25
YTD Unweighted GPA: 3.87 YTD Credits Earned: 9.50

Grade 8 2020-2021	S 1	S 2	CR
Health Issues 8	P	P	0.25
Spanish I	87	93	1.00
Foundation in Art	85	89	1.00

Year Specific Unweighted GPA: Credits Earned: 2.25
YTD Unweighted GPA: YTD Credits Earned: 2.25
Total Credits Earned: 26.75

Student Information

Charger, Jennifer Erik

6400 Wyoming Blvd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87109-3899

Date of Birth: 12/19/2006

Graduation Year: 2025

Cumulative Grade Point Averages

Weighted GPA 4.29

Unweighted GPA 3.91

Cumulative 100 point GPA 92

AP and Advanced courses are given additional weighting in GPA calculations.

This transcript lists three GPAs:

weighted
unweighted
cumulative 100-point

Cumulative 100 GPA: Our transcripts show semester grades on our 100-point scale and averages those grades to produce an overall Cumulative GPA.

Unweighted GPA: All semester grades on the 100-point scale are converted to 4.0 grades. After the grades are converted, they are averaged to calculate the unweighted GPA.

Weighted GPA: For every semester of Advanced Placement or Advanced coursework (the most rigorous courses offered) the student has a semester grade in, an extra .02 points are added directly to the unweighted GPA to determine the weighted GPA.

For example, a student who takes 6 semesters of Advanced Placement or Advanced coursework would earn a weighted GPA calculated by adding .12 directly to the unweighted GPA.

Notes

Albuquerque Academy does not rank students.

Marlene Stadel Registrar

Signature

03/25/2025

Print Date

Letters of Recommendation: Who Else Tells Your Story?

While non-selective colleges base much of their decision on grades, course rigor, and standardized testing when provided, selective colleges are likely to want to learn more about you. The Academy sends the Academy Recommendation, a letter that describes your academics as well as your efforts outside of the classroom. Your Academy Recommendation is written by your college adviser and reviewed by a faculty committee. In addition to your essay and your Academy Recommendation, many colleges require Teacher Recommendations to get the clearest possible sense of your intellectual work.



Essential Questions: Which teachers know me best? Can they speak to my strongest qualities? Which teachers have written strong comments for me in the past? (Hint: Ask your parents about this. They often pay more attention to comments than you do.)

Most colleges require two Teacher Recommendations from:

- People who taught you junior or senior year
- Core academic teachers: math, science, English, history, and foreign language
- Different departments (i.e. not two English teachers)
- People who know you well (and like you), rather than classes you did well in

Certain programs, such as art or music conservatories, some engineering programs, and some STEM fields, may have additional considerations.

Important Notes About Applications:

Use your **full legal name** on college applications. Has your name changed recently? If so, make sure your correct name is on your Academy record, your transcript, and your standardized test scores.

Albuquerque Academy's school code, which you may need to provide, is **320 003**.



You may be asked to list what colleges immediate family members have attended, what degrees they received, and when. Check with your parents to make sure you have this correct.

Chapter 5: Standardized Testing

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Standardized testing has gotten complicated. This is our position about the best way to approach standardized testing:

Most Academy students submit test scores to at least some of the colleges on their list. For this reason, we think that taking either the SAT or ACT in the second semester of junior year and having a standardized test score that can be submitted is the best strategy, particularly for students who plan to apply to highly selective colleges.

You can take these tests at the Academy, which serves as an open test site — meaning that students from any school may take their test here — for most ACT and SAT test dates. However, we are a small site, and our test dates can fill up quickly. It is a good idea to register early.

Why Testing?

Just before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, California public universities decided to stop using standardized testing for admission decisions, and more colleges followed their lead. While a handful of colleges have reinstated the testing requirement, many are doing fine without them. (All information below is accurate as of Spring 2025.)

Testing Required

- Some highly selective colleges require testing — Yale, Harvard, Brown, and Dartmouth, for example.
- Some engineering schools require testing — among them, MIT, Cal Tech, Georgia Tech, and Purdue.
- Some large public universities require testing, especially in the south — the University of Tennessee, the University of Texas, Florida universities, and the University of Georgia, for example.
- Military academies require testing.

Test Blind

- University of California and California State University colleges DO NOT USE testing.
- Lewis & Clark College, Pitzer, Reed, Worcester Polytechnic, and the University of San Diego are additional examples of test-blind institutions.

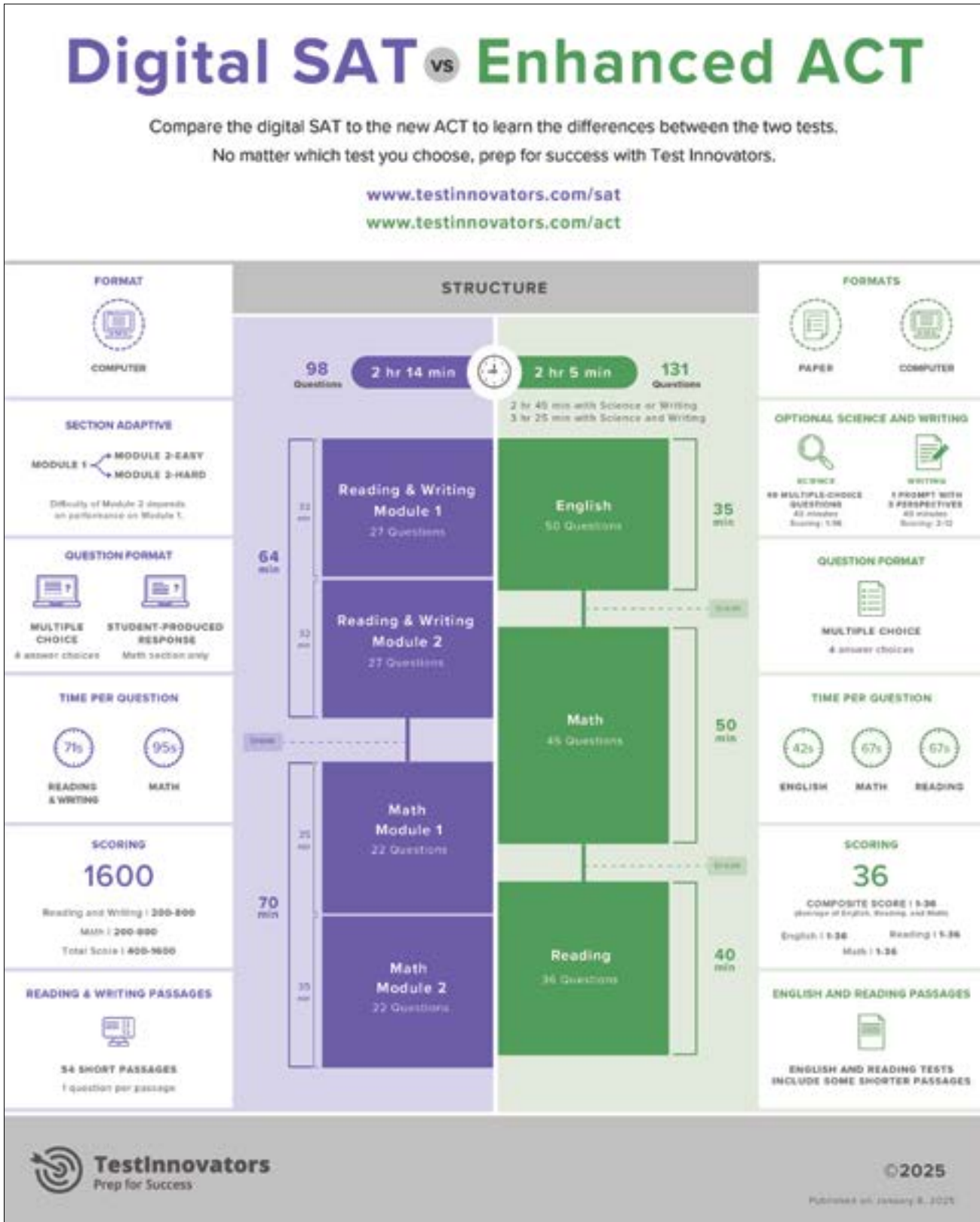
Test Optional

- At this point, most colleges are test optional. This means that students decide if their testing represents their ability and whether their scores fall within the normal range of accepted students at a college.
- A student may choose to send scores to some universities and not to others. It is common for Academy students to submit their testing to only some of the schools on their list.
- **Test optional does not mean that colleges do not want test scores.** They are happy to use testing as part of their evaluation of an application.
- Similarly, **test optional does not mean that colleges will disadvantage students for not submitting test scores.** Instead, they place more value on other parts of the application.
- Most selective colleges receive test scores for about half of their applicants. College Kickstart, a resource available to juniors and seniors, provides data about the percent of applications and acceptances without testing for each institution. Students should review this information when deciding whether or not to submit test scores.
- View a list of test-optional colleges at [FairTest](#).



The ACT and the SAT

Although they started as very different tests designed to measure different things, the ACT and the SAT have become more similar.



Super Scoring

Almost all colleges allow you to superscore your SAT or ACT results. This means that if you retake a test, colleges accept the highest “subscores” (SAT: evidence-based reading and writing and math; ACT: English, mathematics, and reading) to create the highest overall “super” score across multiple test administrations. For this reason, students should plan to take the test more than once. We encourage them to begin testing junior year.

A Few More Reminders

- The Academy-administered practice tests are just for practice. No college sees results of the PSAT or the practice ACT taken sophomore year.
- The PSAT is the qualifying test for National Merit recognition.
- All colleges accept either the SAT or ACT. There is no preference.
- You can take the SAT and ACT as many times as you want.
- The SAT is digital only.
- The ACT offers both paper and digital options (for now).
- If you receive accommodations for work at the Academy, you can qualify for testing accommodations.

Test Prep

Preparing for standardized tests can help students achieve a better score by becoming familiar with the test format and basic strategies for taking the tests and developing speed. While we don’t want anyone to spend a lot of money and time on test prep, focused and intense practice can help students earn their best score.

Ways to Prepare

- Review your PSAT and practice ACT results. **FREE**
- Use Khan Academy, the official SAT test prep site. **FREE**
- Take the five practice tests in the College Board Blue Book App that you downloaded to take the PSAT. **FREE**
- Use the online ACT and SAT test prep available on My Drive in Scoir. **FREE** (\$500 value, paid by Albuquerque Academy)
- Guidebooks: There are LOTS. We don’t recommend any particular one. **Inexpensive**
- Classes: Local companies provide a curriculum. They are effective because they force you to prepare. **More Costly**
- One-on-One Tutoring: This can be particularly effective because practice is tailored to your needs. **Most Expensive**

The Academy cannot recommend a tutor or service, but the lists below include people and programs students have used and recommended over the years.

Tutoring Companies

- Huntington Learning Center
- Kaplan
- A+ Academic Coaching
- Tutor-Me Albuquerque
- Sylvan Learning
- Tutor Doctor

Individual Private Tutors

- Beau Borrero (505) 699-4707
- Glenda Durano (505) 918-7669
- Rosalyn Guillory (505) 294-2550
- Ann Harris (301) 345-1624
- Toby Meek (206) 409-4037
- David Schifani (505) 821-5220

It's Up to You

Decisions about testing are up to you. A dean of admission at a college that has been test-optional for a long time put it simply, "Students need to decide if their standardized test score really reflects their abilities. That is how they should decide whether or not to submit scores."

We agree, and we are happy to speak with you further about your choice and your testing plan.

Chapter 6: Know the Scoir

SCOIR: THE ONLINE COLLEGE SEARCH & APPLICATION PORTAL

[Scoir](#), pronounced “score,” is an online college planning platform that helps students navigate the college search and application process. It is a one-stop shop where students can easily search for colleges, maintain an application list, access academic information, view Academy-specific admission data, and much more. Scoir is also a document portal for the college application documents — transcripts, letters of recommendation, application agreements, and so on — transmitted by the College Guidance Office in support of student applications. **Because Scoir plays a central role in application documents, its use is mandatory.**



Important Note: Students submit all of their documents and information via online applications, application platforms like the Common App and the University of California application portal, or even by paper. They submit all standardized test scores through testing agencies. **The College Guidance office does not submit test scores.**

Opening Your Scoir Account

In the spring of sophomore year, students receive an invitation via email to register for Scoir. Parents receive their own credentials at the end of sophomore year.

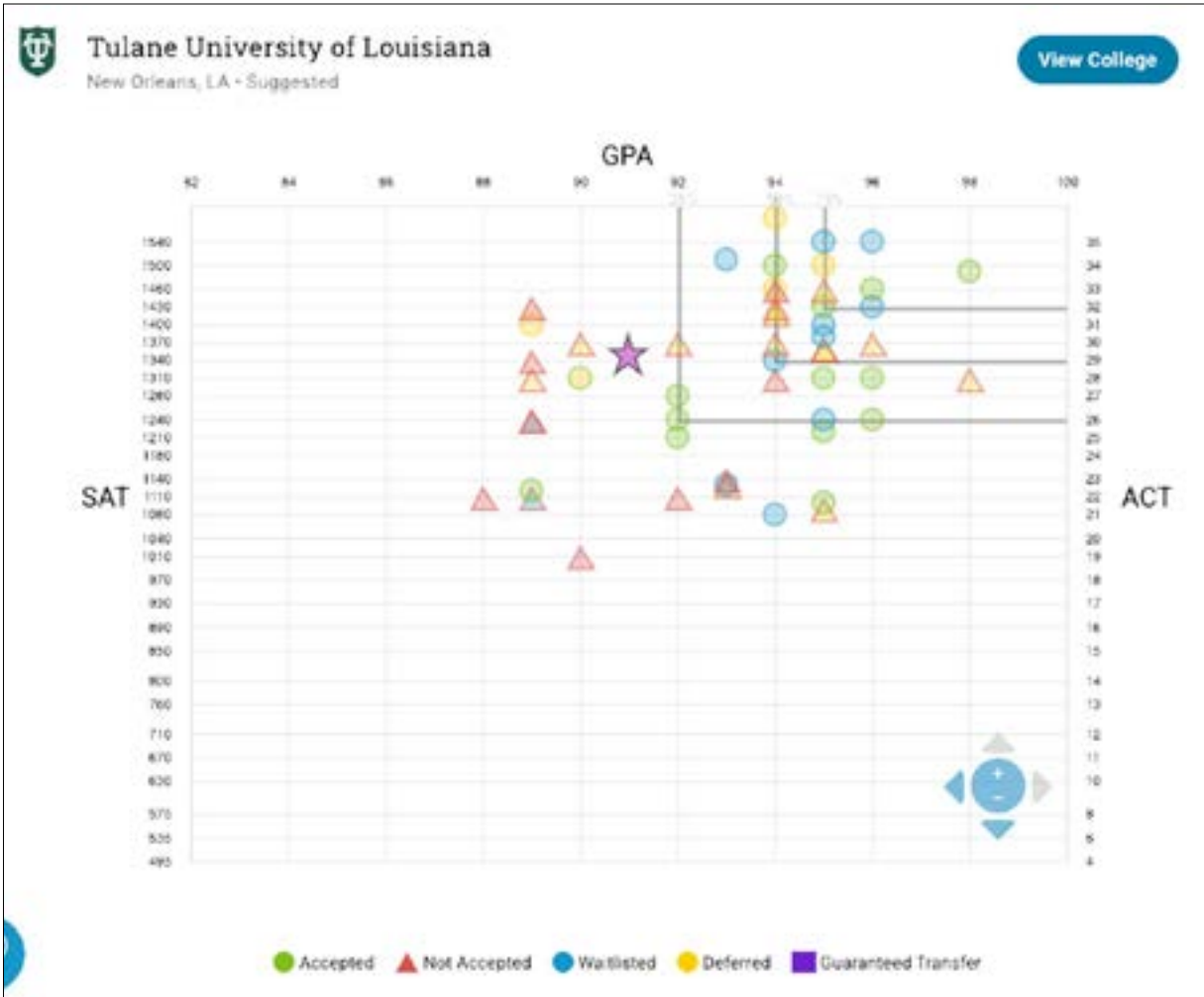
Discover

Scoir has a database of over 3,500 colleges and universities. Students can discover a wide range of colleges that match their interests and preferences. The Scoir Discover tab allows college searches using the following criteria:

- Academic focuses and majors
- 2-year or 4-year degree
- School size
- Campus setting
- Size (undergraduate student population)
- Distance
- Location, state, or region
- Admission selectivity

Scattergrams

Students can see how their GPA and test scores compare with those of other Academy students who applied to a particular school along with their admission decision. Students who've entered their data into Scoir appear as a star on the scattergram.



Important Note: The admissions process is complex, and test scores and GPA do not tell the whole story. Use these scattergrams as a rough estimate of admission chances.

My Colleges

The My Colleges tab allows students to manage their college list. Here students can “follow” colleges that they are interested in exploring. In addition, parents and college advisers can suggest colleges for the student to consider.

Later in the process, students indicate which colleges on their “following” list they plan to apply to.

When a college is on a student’s “following,” “applying,” or “applied” list, they can contact students through Scoir with such information as representative visits to the Academy, application instructions, and scholarship information.

My Drive

Each student will have a My Drive on Scoir where they can access practice test results, unofficial transcripts, and other important documents.

Applying to College

By senior year, Scoir is a central tool in the college application process. All colleges to which an Academy student is applying must be on their “applying” or “applied” list in order for the college to receive official documents from the Academy. All school documents are transmitted, and can be tracked, through Scoir.

Chapter 7: College Kickstart

DETAILED DATA ON COLLEGES

[College Kickstart](#) is a powerful college application data platform, available to students from spring semester junior year to fall semester senior year. Parents, ask your juniors to show you the data in College Kickstart, and feel free to try the demo found on the College Kickstart homepage.



Your Application Plan

College Kickstart “grades” a student’s college list based on their GPA and test scores using public admission data and Albuquerque Academy application data. The goal is to ensure that juniors are considering a balanced application list, earning a B- or better.



Impressive Information

Kickstart is also a treasure trove of detailed data about colleges. Once students have set up a list of prospective colleges, Kickstart presents a variety of data in various screens or “views.”

The **Summary View** offers important data concerning deadlines, application platforms, testing, and campus visits. This view also has some hard-to-find data we have not seen elsewhere, such as “demonstrated interest,” which tracks how much colleges value interactions with prospective students.

The **Requirements View** is a great way to stay on top of application requirements for every college on a student's list. Of particular note is a detailed list of essay requirements, including the primary essay, supplements, and optional essays.

Financial Aid Need-based and Merit-based Views display information on how much financial aid colleges offer, with separate views for need-based and merit-based financial aid. These views rate how much aid each college gives in each category, and links take users straight to the college's website for more detailed information.



Important Note: College Kickstart is not connected to Scoir or any application platform. The data can help students decide which colleges they put on their application list, but they need to **make sure all of the colleges they are applying to are listed in Scoir**. If colleges are not listed in Scoir, the Academy will not send application materials.

Chapter 8: Visiting Colleges

For many students, visiting is the only way to really know if they want to attend a college. Living in New Mexico, where there are not many colleges, this takes some planning.

We encourage families to visit colleges as early as sophomore year to start getting an idea of your preferences. Visit different types of colleges (large, small, mid-size, tech, liberal arts, arts, women's, historically Black, etc.) early on to get a feel for these environments. Because college visits can be time consuming and expensive, it is fine to hold some visits for the spring of senior year after learning of admissions decisions.



Essential Question: What kind of environment helps me thrive? What am I looking for in a college? What things are helpful, which are important, and which are essential?

When to Visit

Breaks and long weekends are a good time to visit. You should not miss classes to visit colleges. If you must, notify your teachers of the dates you will be away, and collect assignments in advance.

Some students want to visit early in the process — by spring of junior year or the summer before senior year — to determine if they are interested in a college. Other students wait until after they have been admitted to a college before visiting, during a short window in the spring of senior year. Aim to visit during the school year when the college is in session; visiting when the college is not in session is much less helpful.

Planning

Plan your itinerary and give yourself ample time at each campus. Research the college before you visit, and come up with questions you want to ask. Check the college's admission website to schedule an official campus tour.

Information Sessions

Many colleges offer information sessions conducted by the admission office. These sessions will cover the admission statistics and application process and special programs. If you are visiting many colleges in a short period, it is OK to skip some information sessions, as they can get repetitive. But don't miss the tour!

Tours are a Must

Official tours are the best way to explore a college and see if it might be a good fit. Generally, tours are conducted by current students, so they are a great opportunity to ask questions about student experiences.

If students and parents are visiting together and there are multiple tour options, we strongly suggest having students go on different tour groups from parents, maximizing the chances to get information and allowing everyone to ask questions freely.

Don't be afraid to take some control of the tour — ask to visit areas or facilities that interest you. If you don't get to see the places you want, give yourself time to walk around and visit the specific buildings/departments you really want to explore.

If you have time, eat in a college dining hall or student center, request to meet with appropriate faculty/staff through the admission office, or observe a class that interests you or is required for freshmen. Consider spending the night in a college dorm if that's an option.

Pro Tips

If you are visiting multiple colleges, take a picture of something that has the name of the school as soon as you arrive — a sign on a building or a banner — so you can identify your other photos later. And take notes on what you observe. What did you like? What questions do you have?

Read the campus newspaper — most colleges still publish physical papers — for a glimpse of current campus events and issues. And check out the kiosks and bulletin boards located in many buildings and dorms. The flyers on those spaces are a great snapshot of campus life.

After your visit, send a thank you note/email to school officials you met.

Online and Virtual Tours

Since the pandemic, most colleges now have robust online college tour offerings. There are also websites that offer college tours, such as [YouVisit.com](https://www.youvisit.com) and [CampusTours.com](https://www.campus-tours.com).

Chapter 9: Paying for College

How much families are willing to pay for a college education is an important question because the price of college keeps going up, even as it varies greatly across colleges.

Cost of Attendance

When it comes to college costs, families tend to focus on tuition, but that is only part of the picture. In order to plan effectively, students and parents need to consider the full cost of attendance, which can include:

- Tuition and fees (some state colleges charge higher tuition for out-of-state residents)
- Housing and food (living expenses)
- Books, course materials, supplies, and equipment
- Transportation
- Personal expenses, including a personal computer

Different Types of Support

The two main types of support available to help families pay for college are financial aid and merit scholarships.

Merit scholarships are not available at all colleges; College Kickstart is a great resource for evaluating the options and scholarship application processes at each school. Merit scholarships can be awarded for a wide range of reasons, from academic achievement to leadership, service, athletics, or artistic strengths.

Financial aid is awarded by the federal government and by colleges as grants, scholarships, loans, and work-study positions.

Colleges and universities generally use one of three methods to calculate a family's financial strength with respect to their ability to pay for college: the federal formula, the institutional formula, and the consensus formula (a combination of the federal and institutional formulas).



Essential Questions: What can my family pay for my college education? What questions do I need to ask in a serious conversation with my family about finances and paying for college?

FAFSA

The federal formula is calculated using the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#), or FAFSA. As the name indicates, the FAFSA is free to complete; never pay to complete this form. The FAFSA uses information about a family's income and expenses to calculate how much of the cost of a year of college they can manage. If parents/guardians are not filing taxes together, the FAFSA considers the parent/guardian with the higher income.



CSS Profile

The [CSS Profile](#) calculates the institutional formula used by some colleges to determine how much aid a student might qualify for. Not every college requires a CSS Profile. The CSS Profile includes the financial information of non-custodial parents and other financial factors not considered on the FAFSA.



Net Price Calculators

The federal government requires each college to have a Net Price Calculator (NPC). Your family can enter some basic financial information, and the college will predict the amount your family would be asked to contribute to your education each year. These predictions can include possible merit awards. NPCs are not a guarantee and can be inaccurate. [My Intuition](#), available for a few dozen universities, is a good alternative.



One of the most important parts of planning for college costs is to maintain an open dialogue about your family's financial ability. Families should use the Net Price Calculators to have realistic conversations about whether or not colleges are truly affordable.

Outside Scholarships

While there are several large national scholarships, the majority of Academy students who win scholarships receive small awards generally ranging from \$500 to \$2,000.

In the fall of senior year, check for scholarship opportunities with employers, municipalities, and faith-based organizations, volunteer groups, or membership societies (Rotary, Elks, VA, etc.) to which the student, parent, or even grandparents belong.

Private organizations also award college scholarships; those awarding large dollar amounts are very competitive, and scholarships for smaller dollar amounts are usually for students whose interests align with the organization's mission.

Several search engines can assist students seeking private scholarships:

- Petersons.com
- Unigo.com
- Fastweb.com
- Chegg.com
- Niche.com
- CollegeNet.com
- GoingMerry.com

Most of these sites require that students set up a profile to obtain scholarship leads.

Chapter 10: Helpful Resources

THE TRUE ANSWER TO EVERY QUESTION ABOUT COLLEGE

While we have tried to provide clear information about the college search and application process, it is important to remember that the answer to any of your questions will vary depending on your particular circumstances. In fact, Mr. Jacoby has long promoted the adage that the true answer to ANY QUESTION about the college process is **it depends**.

Do not be discouraged. We have spent, literally, decades working on this process with thousands of Academy students and families. We will help you find the right answers for you. With that in mind, we offer some helpful resources that you may want to utilize in your journey.

All the best,
The CGO

Timeline for 10-12 Students

	10 TH GRADE	11 TH GRADE	12 TH GRADE
FALL	RMACAC College Fair UNM Field Trip PSAT Exam	RMACAC College Fair College Symposium PSAT/NMSQT College Visits*	CK 12 – Final Countdown RMACAC College Fair College Symposium SAT/ACT Retakes Finish Applications College Visits*
WINTER	Review PSAT Results Test Prep Options Bluebook Practice Tests, Khan Academy, Methodize	Junior & Parents Night Individual Meetings with Students and College Adviser	Regular Applications College Interviews Admission Results College Visits*
SPRING	CK 10 – College Explorations Practice ACT Set Up Sclair Account	CK 11 – College Planning Meeting with College Adviser, Student, and Parent/Guardian College Kickstart Case Studies SAT or ACT College Visits*	Compare Financial Aid Packages Senior Projects May 1: Commit to a College Graduation!

*College visits can take place at any time during the process.

Researching Colleges

There are many search tools available, some free and some not. Here is a sample of a few websites and guidebooks and some other ideas for researching colleges more in-depth. The sources below are among the most informative for students and families, and we recommend them highly.

- BigFuture.collegeboard.org
- Colleges That Change Lives, ctcl.org (We have copies in the CGO.)
- Fiske Guide to Colleges (We have copies in the CGO.)
- NCES College Navigator (nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator)

Applications

- Common Application (commonapp.org)
- ApplyTexas.org
- University of California Application (admission.universityofcalifornia.edu)

Standardized Testing: Registration

- ACT.org
- SAT.org

Standardized Testing: Prep

- MethodLearning.com
- Khan Academy (khanacademy.org/test-prep)

Financial Aid

- Free Application for Federal Student Aid — FAFSA (studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/afsa)
- College Scholarship Service — CSS Profile (cssprofile.collegeboard.org/)
- College Cost Estimator (MyIntuition.org)
- Western Undergraduate Exchange (wiche.edu/tuition-savings/wue)

Merit Aid

- College Kickstart > My Plan > Merit Aid View
- Colleges have their own processes and deadlines for awarding merit aid; research the colleges that interest you.

College Admission Blogs

Some college admission offices have their own blogs, which can be a rich source of information and tips for applying.

- Colorado State University (admissions.colostate.edu/blog/)
- Georgia Tech (sites.gatech.edu/admission-blog/)
- MIT (mitadmissions.org/blogs/)
- University of Texas – Austin (texadmissions.com/blog/)
- University of Southern California (admissionblog.usc.edu/)



6400 Wyoming Blvd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87109
(505) 828-3200 | aa.edu