



# GETTING TO COLLEGE STARTS NOW

## Make the Dream Real.

You want the best for your children. That usually includes dreams of a college education. Certainly, a college education expands an individual's knowledge and skills, but it also brings greater job opportunities and the chance to earn more over a lifetime than someone who only has a high school diploma. Increasingly, employers are looking to hire individuals with a college degree. Making the right choices now and through high school will open up possibilities that are not available without a college education.

## What Matters to Colleges?

### Factors in the admission decision \*

Important Factors Considered in Admission Decisions	Importance to College Admissions
1. Grades in college prep courses	90.6%
2. Grades in all courses	86.5%
3. Strength of curriculum	86.4%
4. Admission test scores (SAT, ACT)	84.9%
5. Counselor recommendation	62.3%
6. Teacher recommendation	59.4%
7. Essay or writing sample	56.5%
8. Class rank	52.3%
9. Student's demonstrated interest in the college	49.6%
10. Extracurricular activities	44.0%

\* Factors vary from college to college.

Source: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2008. Excerpted from Clinedinst, M. & Hawkins, D. (2009). State of College Admissions 2009. Accessed online March 2010 at <http://www.nacacnet.org/PublicationsResources/Marketplace/research/Pages/StateofCollegeAdmission.asp>

# Middle School to College.

## Getting there together.

### In Middle School

- Talk often about the future. Set goals.
- Determine and encourage exploration of your child's talents and passions, and help cultivate those skills.
- Expect the best – academic success and hard work.
- Be familiar with the courses your child is taking each year. Look ahead at what is offered in high school to start lining up the course sequences.
- Make it a point to meet with teachers and counselors to discuss areas of academic weakness and ways to provide support and extra help.
- Explore future careers together. Exposure to different jobs and professions can be inspiring. Look at college programs to see what coursework is required for different academic majors. It will show what preparation a student needs to start a program.
- Promote organization, responsibility and good study skills.

### In High School

#### Freshman Year:

- Consider course sequences carefully and help encourage courses that keep your child challenged and on track for college and/or a certain career.
- Insist on good study skills and check that your child is completing schoolwork teachers assign. Homework helps reinforce concepts and new material making it easier to learn and retain. Be sure students get help with academic work if needed.

#### Sophomore Year:

- Encourage involvement in clubs, school organizations, sports, or community service to expand your student's connections and experiences.
- Together, start researching colleges and universities that offer majors that coincide with your child's specific interests.
- Practice taking standardized admission tests as some colleges require them.

#### Junior Year:

- Visit college campuses to begin building a list of potential colleges and universities.
- Attend financial aid meetings at your school – together – and complete the FAFSA4caster to get an idea of financial aid to help pay for college.

#### Senior Year:

- In the fall, students begin completing admission and financial aid applications. Set up a calendar noting each college's admission application deadline – every college is different! It's also important to work closely with the school's guidance or college office since counselors need to supply information to the colleges as well (the student's official high school transcript, for example). Again, watch deadlines carefully as they vary from college to college.
- Fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) *as soon as possible after January 1*. This is a free form that colleges use to assess your family's ability to meet college costs and determine eligibility for federal and some state scholarship, grant and loan aid.
- Students should apply for any other scholarships found in their searches. Watch those deadlines, too.
- Continue visiting colleges to "feel the fit" and help make the final choice.
- Most colleges let students know whether they are accepted or not beginning in March. Students need to reply to the colleges to accept or decline the offers of admission and financial aid by the stated deadline. Then, off to college!

*Getting to College Starts Now* is published by the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (cicu) as part of a federal College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) awarded to cicu by the Higher Education Services Corporation (NYSHESC). The grant provides the majority of the budget for this publication.



COMMISSION ON INDEPENDENT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

© 2011 by the Commission on Independent College and Universities, 17 Elk Street, P.O. Box 7289, Albany, NY 12224-0289. (518) 436.4781. [www.nycolleges.org](http://www.nycolleges.org) and [www.cicu.org](http://www.cicu.org). [colleges@nycollege.org](mailto:colleges@nycollege.org)