

News You Can Use



October 2008

ACT provides this monthly newsletter to inform students and their parents about college and career planning. ACT is a not-for-profit organization that serves millions of people in schools, colleges, professional associations, businesses and government agencies with programs and services that help people achieve their education and career goals. **Visit www.actstudent.org for more information and services.**



College Planning ACT[®]

Key Dates

November

- The deadline to register for the December ACT[®] test date is November 7.
- If any schools on your target list offer Early Action/Early Decision, consider the option and complete any paperwork.

December

- Some early admission decisions are available, so check with any schools to which you submitted an application.
- The ACT is administered on December 13.
- Complete and mail college applications with January 1 deadlines.
- Prepare for the FAFSA, because it will be available January 1.

January 2009

- File the FAFSA as soon after January 2 as possible.
- Registration deadline for the February ACT test date is January 6.

College planning terms

Common/universal application. Form that allows a student to submit one application to many different schools. Both are available online: www.commonapp.org and www.universalcollegeapp.com. Some schools also require supplemental forms.

Early decision. A binding agreement between you and the school. You apply early, and if admitted, are bound to attend the school. The application deadline occurs early and the admission decision is delivered early.

Rolling admissions. A process in which a school reviews applications and makes decisions on them throughout the year.

Early action. You can apply to an early action school and receive your admission response early. The decision is usually non-binding, but you may agree to forgo applying to other early action/early decision institutions. When conditions apply it is sometimes called Restrictive Early Action.

Open admissions. An admission decision, usually made by public junior and community colleges, without regard to your academic performance.

Transcript. The official record of your educational achievements, provided by your high school.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The key to unlocking student financial aid, it should be completed and submitted as soon after January 2 as possible. The form and supporting information can be found at www.fafsa.ed.gov.

You can find glossaries of college and financial aid terms on several websites, including:

<http://www.finaid.org/questions/glossary.phtml>

http://www.collegeconfidential.com/college_admissions/college_application_terms.htm

<http://www.fastweb.com/fastweb/resources/articles/index/100026>

Making the most of college visits

College visits allow you to “try on” potential colleges. For juniors, early visits can be the starting point for a list of potential schools. Seniors can use visits to pare their list down. Wherever you are in the process, ask lots of questions. Here are a few suggestions:

- What activities and services are available to help first-year students adjust academically and socially?
- What are the total costs of attending this school? Be sure the response includes additional fees, books, room and board, etc. And be sure to factor in any travel costs.
- What types of financial aid does this school offer and how do I apply for it?
- Who does the majority of the teaching—graduate assistants or professors?

You can find a list of other questions at <http://www.actstudent.org/college/visit.html>. Also, the National Survey on Student Engagement offers a college visit pocket guide at http://www.nsse.iub.edu/html/pocket_guide_intro.cfm, which you can download and print. It's available in English and Spanish.

And don't forget to take good notes. You can easily become confused if visiting several colleges. It might be helpful to take along a camera or camcorder to help capture the feel of each campus.



Check It Out

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Narrowing down college options

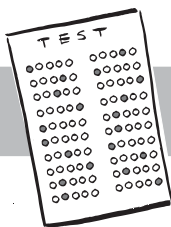
Finding a college that “fits” means taking into account majors, study abroad programs, internship opportunities, career placement success rates, and much more. Compiling data from many different schools can be challenging if you’re relying on marketing materials or information received during a campus visit.

One easy way to get a snapshot of a potential school is to review its Common Data Set. These uniform reporting documents, which are provided by many four-year colleges and universities, contain a wealth of information, including admission rates, financial aid sources, high school course requirements and recommendations, and more.

Here’s a sampling of the information you’ll find on a Common Data Set form:

- The relative importance placed on various factors in an application review.
- Freshman class profiles showing average GPA, ACT scores and class rank, allowing you to see your relative chances of being admitted.
- Tuition, room and board costs, as well as estimated expenses (books, transportation and others).
- How financial aid is determined (using federal methodology, an institutional methodology or both), and how much and what kinds of financial aid (loans, scholarships, need-based, merit-based) are awarded.

These forms quickly tell students whether or not the school fits with their graduation goals, skills and ability to afford a school. To locate, type “Common Data Set” into the search function on each school’s website.



Testing

ACT[®]

Inexpensive test prep tools

The ACT is a curriculum-based test, so it covers what you learn in school. To take full advantage of your education, ACT recommends that you take the test in the spring of your junior year. This way, you’ll have time to re-take the test, if you choose, before college application deadlines.

Free test prep aids are available at www.actstudent.org. Sample questions are on the site along with *Preparing for the ACT*, a free booklet with a complete practice test, scoring key, writing prompt and sample essays. The ACT registration packet, available from the counseling office, also contains the booklet.

ACT Online Prep™, the only test prep program developed exclusively by ACT test development professionals, is only \$19.95 for a one-year subscription. *The Real ACT Prep Guide*, a book featuring retired test questions, test-taking strategies, and optional writing test overview, is just \$25. Both Online Prep and the Guide are available at www.actstudent.org.

Test date reminder

The next national ACT test date is December 13, 2008. The registration deadline is November 7. Late registration, with an additional fee of \$20, is available through November 20. Register online today at www.actstudent.org.

Other test dates during the 2008-09 school year are: February 7, 2009; April 4, 2009; and June 13, 2009. Registration deadlines for these dates are normally about five weeks before the test date.

An optional Writing Test is available in addition to the multiple-choice achievement test. Go to www.actstudent.org/writing to learn more about the Writing Test, including the colleges that require it.

Test-day tips, a list of what to bring and approved calculators for use on the Math Test are listed on the site, too. For all your questions about the ACT test, visit www.actstudent.org.