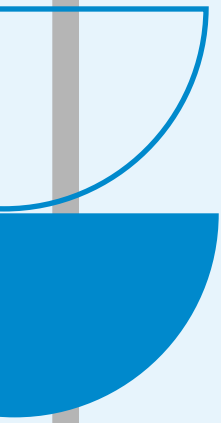


A GUIDE FOR

Launch



STARTING COLLEGE



COLLEGE SUCCESS TEAM :

Many people will be involved in helping you successfully transition to and through college. In the space provided, list the information for the primary contact people who will be the most help getting ready for the next chapter in life.



| ROLE | NAME | CONTACT |
|-------------------------------|------|---------------|
| Counselor/Advisor | | Ph: Email: |
| Admissions Counselor | | Ph: Email: |
| Financial Aid Administrator | | Ph: Email: |
| Academic Advisor | | Ph: Email: |
| Student Orientation Assistant | | Ph: Email: |
| Dean of Student's Office | | Ph: Email: |

Congratulations – You’re going to college!

You’ve been dreaming for years about what you’ll do after you graduate, and it’s now time to LAUNCH into that next phase of your life!

This Guide outlines the actions and steps you need to take while transitioning to and through college. This transition guide provides important information and resources to help you take those actions.

Beginning with this section, look for information that applies to you – based on whether you plan to:

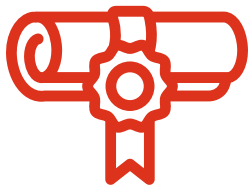
- **Attend a four-year college or university to earn a bachelor’s degree**
- **Enroll in a community college first, and then transfer to a university after two or three years to earn a bachelor’s degree**
- **Obtain an associate degree or certificate at a community college**
- **Obtain a certificate or license from a Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) or other technical/vocational school**

There are checklists for most sections of this guide along with plans and guidelines for completion. You’ll need to pay attention to specific deadlines and due dates since they vary across colleges.

This booklet is all about helping you successfully transition from high school to college. You’ll find resources on everything from what to do during the summer after you graduate to an exhaustive list of college terms.

DON’T FORGET...

Find people at your new school whom you feel comfortable with and can ask questions. Your high school support team is still available to help you succeed.



WE KNOW YOU’RE EXCITED ABOUT COLLEGE, BUT IT’S IMPORTANT THAT YOU STAY FOCUSED YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR. STARTING STRONG ALWAYS SUPPORTS AND INCREASES THE LIKELIHOOD FOR FINISHING STRONG!



Launch

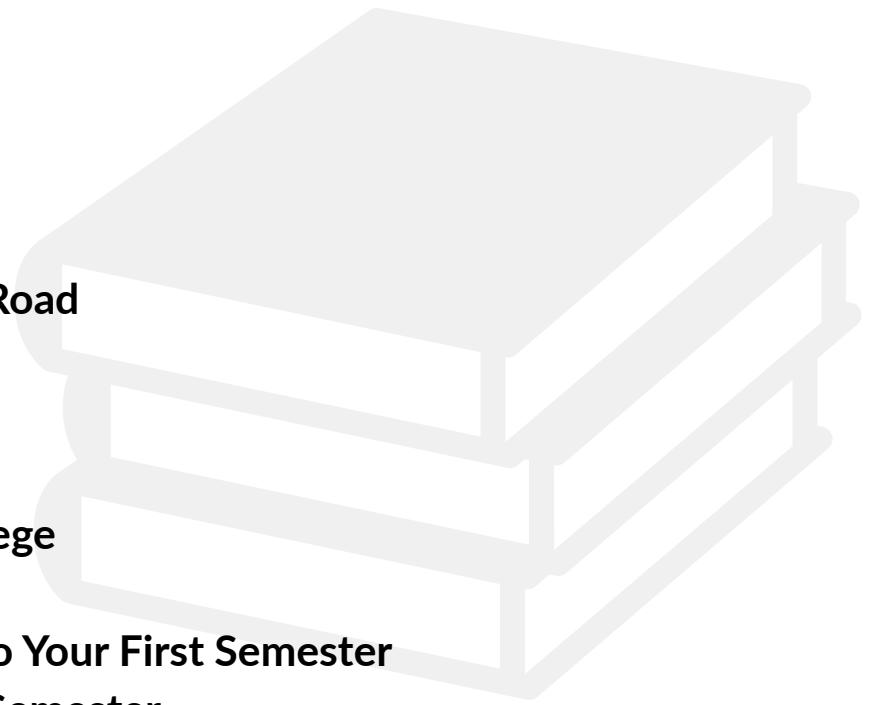
To help with college and career planning, this guide has areas in which to record personal information. If you will be carrying the guide from place-to-place or are at risk of losing it, please *do not* write your personal information in this guide.



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Top Two Tips

Many things have been shown to promote success in college, but two stand out far and above the rest.

#2 - GET INVOLVED

Colleges vary in size, but most of the time they are much larger than your high school. It is important for you to find your smaller community within the larger campus. These will become your people to co-experience college, and you can support each other through all the ups and downs during the journey. Joining an organization has repeatedly been shown to be the second most powerful factor that positively supports college success. Students who are a part of any campus organization always make better grades and graduate at higher rates. Seek your people!

#1 - GO TO CLASS

Getting involved is powerful, but nothing comes close to the #1 factor impacting college success - **GOING TO CLASS!** We can hear your deep sigh and see your imaginary eye roll, but going to class is critical. Go to class, engage in discussions, pay attention, ask questions, turn in assignments on time, and you'll have a degree before you know it. Going to class seems like a no brainer, but you need to go to class and engage with your professor enough that he/she learns your name. If you make that your habit, statistics say you're on track to graduate!

Different Rules for the Road

Generally speaking, there are similarities between Tennessee's three main college options with regards to applying, new student orientation, and enrolling. Below is a breakdown of how they differ to better understand your choices.

| TCATs | Community College | University |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCATs are open enrollment institutions, which means everyone who applies gets admitted. • Because of this, most TCATs don't mail out admission acceptance letters like other schools. • TCATs operate on trimesters as opposed to semesters, so you'll need to familiarize yourself with this new type of calendar. • The trimesters are broken up into fall, winter, and spring schedules. • TCATs are hands-on training to learn a trade. • Another word for trade is a skill (i.e. masonry, welding, HVAC, lineman, practical nursing, etc.) • If you don't enjoy the classroom, but love the work site, then a TCAT might be the right choice for you. • TCATs operate on clock hours worked as opposed to number of hours/classes taken. • A clock hour is literally the amount of time students spend working in the lab learning the trade/skill. • TCAT programs typically have stop points where students can earn different levels of certification through graduation. • TCAT diplomas are intended to be approximately one-year programs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCs in Tennessee are also open enrollment institutions, which means they accept all students who apply. • However, most CCs still mail out admission acceptance letters. • CCs operate on traditional semesters like high school: fall and spring. • CCs provide a hybrid educational bridge between the TCAT and 4-Year School. They provide classes and programs that are geared toward trades/skills and hands-on learning similar to a TCAT. • However, CCs also provide traditional college classroom styled classes preparing to either enter the workforce with an associate degree or transition to the 4-year school in pursuit of the bachelors degree. • CC campuses and classrooms tend to be smaller than the 4-year schools, with more direct access to instructors. This allows some students a smoother transition from HS to college. • CCs operate on the hours system which usually equates the total number of hours you're in class each week equals the total number of hours you'll earn when completing the semester (i.e. 15 hours a week in class = 15 hours earned toward degree) • CCs degrees are intended to be approximately 2-year programs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNIVs are closed enrollment institutions, which means students must meet certain criteria for admission. • Because all UNIVs require the application/admission process, they will mail student acceptance letters. • Similar to CCs, UNIVs also operate on semesters like high school. • UNIVs provide lab training when required, but most classes are lecture based. • UNIVs will most likely be larger in regards to student body size and campus footprint. • UNIVs also provide campus housing and in most cases require students that live outside of a certain diameter to live on campus for a period of time. • UNIVs also operate on the hours system like CCs, so students transferring in from that system will continue in that format. • UNIVs offer degrees that are required for some careers (i.e. to become a lawyer or physician, a student must earn a bachelors degree and earn an adequate score on a graduate admissions test). • UNIVs degrees are intended to be approximately 4-year programs. |

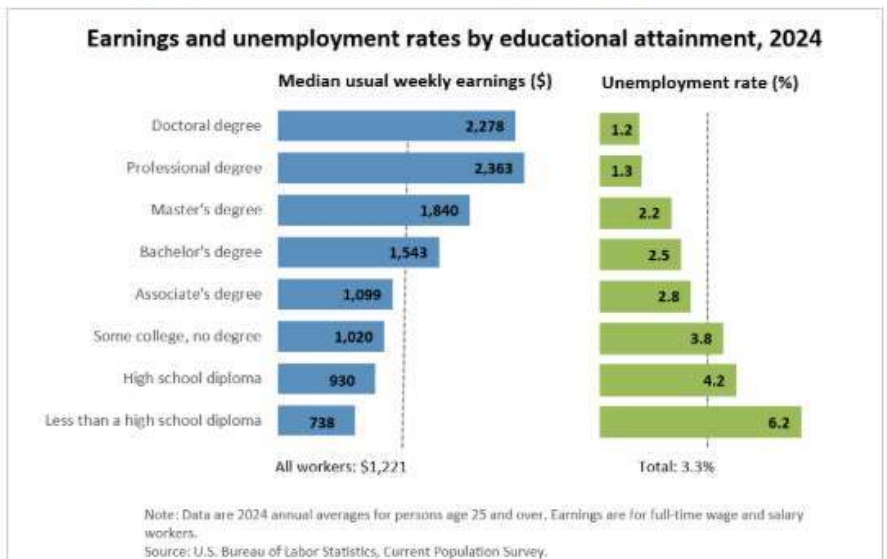
College vs Work

You may be on the fence about going to school or going to work. Don't look any further than the graph on the right to see the earning differences between high school diplomas and college degrees.

Generally speaking, the more educated you become, the more valuable you are, and the more money someone will be willing to pay you for your services.

If you're wondering whether it pays to stay in school, take a look at data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS): As workers' educational attainment rises, their unemployment rates decrease and earnings increase.

As the charts show, workers age 25 and over who have less education than a high school diploma had the highest unemployment rate (6.2 percent) and lowest median weekly earnings (\$738) in 2024 among those at all education levels. Workers with graduate degrees had the lowest unemployment rates and highest earnings.



Starting Strong!

No matter where you've decided to attend college – staying on track to earn your certificate or degree is extremely important. Many times, how successfully you start something impacts how you finish. In this section, you will find pointers and general advice intended to help you start on track and stay organized to reach your degree or professional certificate goal.

Start here:

Review the entire starting strong section before and during your transition to college. It is helpful to see the complete picture of everything that needs to happen before and beyond your first day on campus. If you're unsure about anything on your summer before college checklist, explore the rest of this guide for additional details. If you're still unsure about something, reach out to any of the people you listed on page 1. Those people are so valuable in a successful transition to college.

SECTIONS

Each section outlines specific action steps that serve as a guide to your postsecondary plan. Reference the bullet points or checklist that applies to you, then use the pages throughout this guide to find the information and resources you need to successfully LAUNCH your college experience.





Freshman Orientation

You've applied and been admitted. Hopefully your financial aid is set up after submitting your TN Promise and FAFSA applications and becoming HOPE Scholarship eligible. Your next step in becoming a college student is attending freshman orientation. Every college has their own version of orientation, and this is the school's initial step in helping you transition to college life. Orientation is critical because it addresses the following areas for any type of school:

- Familiarizing yourself with campus and learning where your classes will be held
- Meeting with faculty members to learn some of the specific classes and activities expected of you in your major
- Double checking all your financial aid (grants, scholarships, loans, etc.) is good and address any lingering issues that could prevent your money from being ready on day one
- Reserving your campus parking pass
- Registering for your courses
- Making new friends! College is a fresh start, and that process begins at orientation

The following two are specific to students attending a university:

- Viewing your future residence hall room so that you can learn how much stuff to bring when you move in
- Selecting the meal plan that best fits your needs/lifestyle

Summer Before College Checklist

After registering for freshman orientation, use this checklist to stay on track throughout the summer. Whether you plan to attend a university, community college, or technical school, review these steps to ensure you're fully prepared to start classes in the fall.

- Complete all financial aid tasks, including correcting any errors on your FAFSA and completing verification (if selected). Receive financial aid award letter(s).**
Questions? Contact the financial aid office at your college.
- TSAC Portal**
Make sure that you have updated your school choice, so state financial aid money is sent to the correct institution. Log in at collegefortn.org/tsacstudentportal.
- Arrange for housing. If living on campus, apply for and receive a housing assignment.**
Questions? Contact the office of residential life.
- Pay your housing deposit by the published deadline. At many schools, this serves as your enrollment deposit and may be nonrefundable.**
Questions? Contact the office of residential life.
- Plan for transportation to and from college, if you are not living on campus.**
Questions? Contact campus safety or police to learn of local busing systems/routes to campus.
- If you plan to commute to college or park a car on campus, register for parking. Each campus handles parking differently, so make sure to check out parking regulations before your first day.**
- Continually check your college portal and college email address.**
- Send official documents when needed. For example, your college may require that you send final high school transcripts or health care forms. Make sure you reply promptly to all document requests.**
- Complete placement testing, if required.**
Questions? Start by contacting your college's admissions office to determine if placement testing is required for you.
- Plan for additional costs during the school year. There are more expenses associated with college than just tuition. Make sure you have a plan to pay for things like books and transportation throughout the school year.**



Unwritten Rules of College - *no particular order*

Rule #1: Unassigned Assigned Seats

During the first week of class, most students pick a seat where they feel comfortable—maybe near the door, close to friends, up front by the professor, or off to the side. As the weeks go by, that choice becomes an unofficial assigned seat. If you know where your classmates typically sit—and you know where you usually sit—don't take someone else's spot. Just don't.

It might sound a little childish, but that seat is already claimed. Sitting there at random forces the person who usually sits there to find another place and throws off their routine.

Rule #2: Online Etiquette

Many of you will end up taking a few online classes. Make sure your microphone is muted, and if you're going to eat dinner or pick your nose, you should probably turn your camera off too (unless your professor requires mics and cameras to stay on). Also, be mindful of what's behind you when your camera is on. Make sure nothing questionable is visible in the background.

Rule #3: Library Etiquette

When you're in the library, remember that most students are there to study and get work done. They can't focus if people are disrupting the quiet environment. Talking on speakerphone, running around like it's a playground, leaving trash behind, and having loud conversations are all incredibly distracting. Don't be that person who makes the library a place others want to avoid. If you know you or your friends might get a little loud, consider reserving a study room. And if you need to take a call, step away from areas where others are working. It's just basic courtesy.

Rule #4: Walking Space and Pace

Everyone has their own pace throughout the day, and some people naturally move faster than others. When you're on the sidewalk or academic walkway, try not to walk too slowly if it causes foot traffic to back up between classes. And if you're walking with friends, don't spread out so wide that no one can get around you—especially if your group is moving slowly. No one should have to step into the grass just to get by. If you wouldn't want someone doing it to you, don't do it to them.

Rule #5: Some Things Happen for a Reason

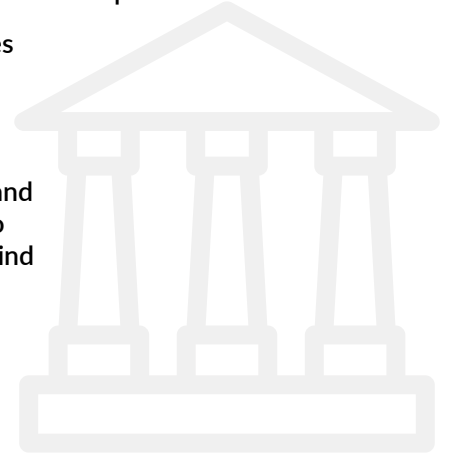
College is about learning new things and in college, you're not expected to have everything figured out right away. The whole point is to learn new things, explore different interests, and gain new experiences. Trying to decide what you want to do with the rest of your life can be stressful, and it's normal to feel pressured. Aim to have a clearer idea by junior year, but even if you're still unsure, that's completely okay. College will always have its ups and downs, and sometimes those moments happen for a reason.

Rule #6: Freshman Woes

It's the first week on campus, and everyone is feeling nervous, shy, and unsure about not knowing anyone or anything. Everything is new, and that can be scary—but don't worry. You're not alone. Don't hold back from connecting with other students. They're dealing with the same feelings and might really appreciate someone reaching out. Take advantage of the freshmen events. They're a great opportunity to meet, connect with, and socialize with other new students—some of whom may even be in your major. Getting involved makes the events more enjoyable and helps your college experience feel more fun and meaningful.

Rule #7: Tips on Communicating with Your Professors

1. If you're unsure whether to call someone Dr., just say Professor. It's always safe.
2. If a professor emails you, reply. If they took the time to reach out, you can take the time to respond.
3. Put your phone and laptop away in class. Don't type loudly on a keyboard, and don't hide behind a screen—professors notice everything.
4. If you miss class, don't ask whether you missed anything important. It's all important. Get notes from a classmate.
5. Don't ask whether something will be on the test. Anything discussed in class or in the textbook is fair game.



Steps to Academic Success

After registering and before classes start (every semester) you must:

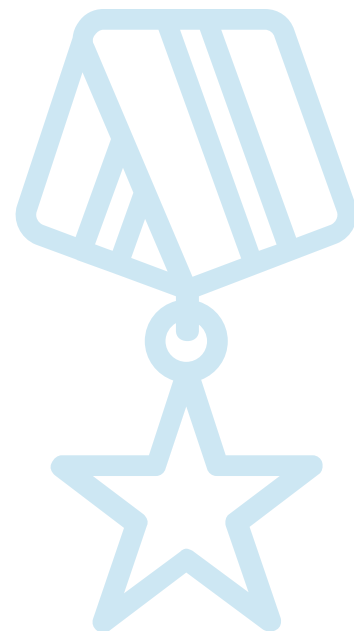
- Check your student email frequently!
- Complete all financial aid processes.
- Confirm your registration.
- Pay your fees.

Before classes start you should:

- Familiarize yourself with the location of your classes.
- Buy your books (Prior to your first day of class).
- If applicable, affix your parking decal to your vehicle.
- If your school utilizes an App, download it and create a profile.
- Sign up to receive emergency text alerts.

Once the semester starts:

- Go to class! The #1 thing you can do for your success in a class is to go and be actively engaged.
- Sit front and center, and do the following:
 - Actively take notes.
 - Ask questions.
 - Check your student email daily!
- Familiarize yourself with your courses.
- Meet with your academic advisor/coach.
- Seek out the tutoring center on campus and learn what resources are provided there and online.
- Talk to your professors. Visit them during office hours to get your questions answered.
- Find a mentor – A mentor is someone who is interested in helping you achieve your academic, professional and personal goals and who can help keep you on the right track through college and into your career.
- Get involved on campus! Research has shown that students who get involved in meaningful experiences both in and out of the classroom tend to achieve better grades and are more likely to stay enrolled and graduate.
- Take responsibility for your actions, the decisions you make, and the consequences of those decisions/actions.
- Verbalize your goal to graduate! Research has shown that students who verbalize their goal to graduate are more likely to do so than those who don't.



Week-by-week guide for the first semester



Week 1

- Convocation - attend this event if your school has it
- Week of Welcome - every college will have some version of Welcome Week activities, so check them all out
- Planners - get a planner, write your stuff down
- Check your student email - all schools will only communicate to you through your student email account
- Set up your class portal platform - every school uses one of these to track your progress in the classroom. Familiarize yourself with it early and it will help you down the road
- Books - buy your books prior to your first class. Nothing frustrates a professor more than hearing "do I need to buy this book?"

Week 2

- Meet your professors - Introduce yourself either after class or when they are in their office
- Go Greek? Honors? - join something!
- Meet your classmates - introduce yourself before or after class to the other students
- Don't forget to call home and stay in touch with your family
- Make it a habit to attend all classes and be prepared
- Check your student email
- Study tips from professors

Week 3

- High school and college courses are different. Be sure to study for your classes even if you don't have homework. Professors may not collect homework but you must complete it to gain the knowledge
- Attend an athletic event
- Check your student email
- Be sure to go to ALL of your classes. It will affect your grades!
- Form study groups with your classmates to prepare for exams

Week 4

- Check class portal to find out who your academic advisor is, then make an appointment to go meet him/her. Make a list of questions to take with you
- Do you need tutoring? Are your grades slipping? Ask your instructor or advisor for a list of tutors. Don't wait until after midterms. There are plenty of people to help you, but they can't help if you don't ask for it
- Go to a club or organization meeting that interests you. Get involved!
- Check your student email

Week 5

- Attend a Multicultural event
- Check out careers - Visit the Career Services office to learn what you can do with your major
- Nutrition and exercise count. If you don't feel well, you won't do well
- Try to get 8 hours of sleep a night to function at your best
- Recognize your habits - by now you've created routines and habits. Check-in with yourself to ask if some need addressing or removal.
- Check your student email

Week 6

- Take midterm exams
- Check progress reports on your class portal
- Check out your goals
- You've made it halfway through. Hooray!
- Check your student email
- Check out the Career Fair

Week 7

- Meet a new friend in the cafeteria for lunch
- Check your student email - if you haven't figured it out already, this is one of the most simplest but most vital pieces to college. At a minimum, put your student email account on your phone so that you at least see it daily even if you don't check/read everything

Week 8

- Fall break - Most schools will provide 2 or more days off for fall break. Enjoy your time, go home or on a short trip with friends. This is a great time to re-energize before the final push toward semester's end
- Take this week off of checking your email

Week 10

- Do you need to drop a class? Watch the calendar so you don't miss the deadline
- Check your mid-term grades
- Check your student email
- Get advisement for next semester

Week 11

- Have you registered for next semester yet?
- Financial aid?
- Check your student email
- It's not too soon to plan the curriculum for your sophomore year of college

Week 14

- Thanksgiving holidays - Another 2+ day break from school. Enjoy family, food, and football
- Study for finals, and plan for final projects
- Check your student email

Week 15

- Study for final exams
- Check your student email

Week 16

- Take finals
- Make sure you have registered for next semester before you go home. See your assigned academic advisor if you have a schedule different than what's on your student advisement form
- Sell your books back or return rented books
- Check with Financial Aid
- Check your student email!!!!

Congratulations on making it through your first semester of college!!!

Spring into your NEXT semester!

You made it through your first semester—well done! But don't get too comfortable just yet. You've got another semester ahead before wrapping up your freshman year. Here are five tips to help you start strong this spring:

- **Readjust your holiday schedule early.** Breaks usually mean great food, zero responsibility, and staying up way too late. A few days before returning to campus, start shifting your sleep and daily routine back to “school mode.” Running on energy drinks and a 4am–2pm sleep cycle won't set you up for success.
- **Keep your good habits—and fix the bad ones.** You know what worked well for you in the fall, so keep those habits going. You also know where you struggled, and most of that comes down to choices. Use the spring semester as a reset and make better ones.
- **Set goals.** Establish one academic and one personal goal for the spring. This pairs nicely with New Year's resolutions. Break them into weekly mini-goals, reward yourself when you hit them, and you'll be surprised how quickly you make progress.
- **Start improving your study habits now.** Whether the fall forced you to change how you study or you coasted through easily, remember college only gets harder. You might be smart, but the most disciplined person usually comes out on top. Build strong study habits now—they'll carry you through the next few years.
- **Resubmit your FAFSA by the end of your spring semester.** The FAFSA is your key to retaining financial aid. The FAFSA is your application for the Federal Pell Grant, and it is required to receive the HOPE, TN Promise, and Wilder Naifeh scholarships. Log back into your studentaid.gov account and get the FAFSA submitted before summer break!



College Glossary

There are a lot of acronyms and confusing terms on the road to college. Here are a few that you might be wondering about. If there's one you don't see listed here, check with your college/career counselor for assistance.

General College Terms

Adult learner: This term typically refers to an older student who usually has experience in the workforce and didn't necessarily attend college right after high school.

Campus: The physical buildings and grounds owned by a college or university.

Career services: A student resource department that helps students and alumni job-search, develop resumes, give interviews and network.

Cohort: A group of students working through a curriculum together towards the same degree.

College vs. university: Colleges are generally smaller institutions that focus on undergraduate education while universities are typically larger institutions that offer a greater number of graduate degree options.

Commencement: A formal graduation ceremony that celebrates recent graduates of the institution with their family and friends.

Continuing education: This typically refers to part-time formal education for working adults. Oftentimes professional certifications may require continuing education credit—though not all necessarily require college coursework.

Dormitories: (also called Residence Halls) Campus housing where full-time students live within close distance of the academic buildings.

First-generation student: A college student who is the first in their family to go to college.

Fraternities and sororities: Social and academic organizations for college students formed to pursue a common goal or ideals. Most are identified by letters of the Greek alphabet (Alpha, Beta, Gamma, etc.) and as whole comprise a school's Greek life.

Gainful employment: A regulation that requires for-profit college programs to prepare graduates for gainful employment in a recognized occupation in order to receive federal funding.

Higher education: Refers to any formal schooling after high school.

Orientation: Time at the beginning of a school year that serves as a training period for new students. Typically includes activities or courses intended to help students get to know the institution and how to use available resources.

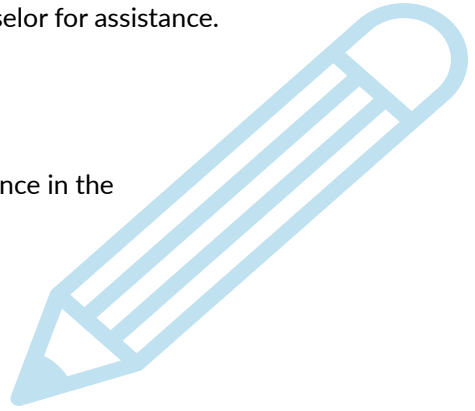
Post-secondary: Any education, whether degree-seeking or not, pursued after high school.

Private college vs. public college: Public colleges and universities are funded by state governments while private colleges and universities are not publicly-owned, often relying on tuition payments and private contributions to operate.

Provost: Sometimes called the vice president of academic affairs, a provost is a senior academic administrator who works closely with academic deans, department deans and faculty to ensure the quality of academic programs.

Registrar: A specialist tasked with handling several administrative and logistical areas of academia. The registrar's office is responsible for many administrative academic duties like registering students for classes, preparing student transcripts, preparing class schedules and analyzing enrollment statistics.

Student handbook: A student's primary resource on their school's academic policies, disciplinary procedures, student expectations and information about financial aid and other student services.



Tenure: Employment track for professors that essentially guarantees a permanent position at the institution (barring termination for cause or financial insolvency).

Terms vs. quarters vs. semesters: The academic year is often divided into terms—most commonly in the form of semesters or quarters. Semesters typically include a fall and spring semester and summer session that may be shorter. Quarters divide the year into four terms—each usually 10 or 11 weeks.

Traditional vs. nontraditional student: Traditional students generally attend college right after high school, are financially dependent on parents and attend full-time. While there's no set-in stone definition, "nontraditional student" typically refers to adult students (usually 25 or older) who either work full time, are financially independent, have children or attend college part-time.

Work-study program: Work-study programs help college students with financial need get part-time jobs to help pay for day-to-day expenses and tuition payments. Work-study jobs are federally- or state-funded.

Academic College Terms

Academic advisor: Academic advisors are staff members assigned to students in their department. They help students choose majors and minors, design a course of study and help ensure students fulfill graduation requirements.

Accelerated program: Programs designed to help students graduate sooner. Accelerated programs often include more stringent admission requirements and summer courses.

Add/drop period: Time frame when students can drop or add courses to their course load without consequences, including incomplete marks on their transcript.

Adjunct faculty/professor: Adjunct professors work as independent contractors who teach a limited number of classes, as opposed to full-time faculty.

Associate degree: Undergraduate degree that generally requires two years of full-time study.

Audit: When taking an "audit" course, students attend a class they are interested in without being required to complete assignments or take tests—giving them a chance to learn the material but not for credit.

Bachelor's degree: Undergraduate degree that generally requires four years of full-time study. Students must declare a major in a particular field of study and choose a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree path.

Competency-Based Education (CBE): Method of instruction and evaluation based more on the students' mastery of the material than time spent in seat. CBE allows students to show what they know either from independent learning, classroom learning or experiences in the field.

Certification: A non-degree credential that proves knowledge or skill in a specific area. Valued credentials vary by industry and job title.

Class rank: Refers to a student's standing in comparison with their classmates. It's often determined by grade point averages and is expressed as a percentile.

Clinical education: Often referred to as clinicals, these programs allow students to practice their skills under supervision of a practitioner. Clinical education is most common in the healthcare field.

Course catalog: A college publication that describes academic programs, their majors and minors, and required courses and their contents.

Core courses: Include fundamental classes like English, math, general science and history that provide a foundation for major-specific classes. The exact class requirements may vary depending on your major. Core courses may also be referred to as general education courses.

Course load: This refers to the total amount of courses a student is taking per term.

Credit for prior learning: College credit granted to students who can demonstrate knowledge gained outside of a traditional college setting that is used to satisfy course requirements. Examples can include work and life experience, independent study or industry certifications.

Credits: A measure of a class's time based on how many hours students spend in class, but specific numbers largely depend on the institution.

Curriculum: The knowledge, skills, lectures, assignments, tests and presentations that make up a course. It may also refer more broadly to the courses that make up a major or academic program.

Department: Academic division specializing in an area of study like Nursing, English, Engineering or Biology.

Department chair: Educator assigned to manage an academic department. They unite the department and act as a liaison between the department and college administration.

Didactic learning: This teaching method focuses on improving students' foundational knowledge one lesson at a time with teacher-directed lessons.

Dissertation: The completed thesis of a doctoral student. A long document of research and findings required to earn a doctorate.

Doctoral degree: The most advanced academic degree in most fields. Provides the graduate a high level of expertise and greater options for research, writing, teaching and management within their specialty.

Electives: Classes students choose to fulfill a general education requirement or just because they're interested in a topic outside of their major's core courses.

Faculty: Academic staff including professors, both full-time and adjunct.

Final exam: Test taken at the end of a course that usually includes subject matter from the entire course.

General education courses: Curriculum that creates the foundation of an undergraduate degree. It generally includes lower-level courses in English, Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences.

Grade point average (GPA): Represents the average of a student's final grades in all their courses. It's calculated by adding the final grades divided by the number of credit hours, though some classes may be weighted or measured on a different scale.

Grading scale: System in which letter grades are awarded a grade point or number to help calculate GPA.

Hybrid degree: Also called a blended degree, hybrid programs combine traditional learning on campus with online components.

Internship vs. externship: Both are experience building opportunities for students and the terms are often used interchangeably. That said, internships can take the form of paid opportunities to work in their fields in a low-level role for an employer. Externships typically aren't paid, are shorter and are often a form of job shadowing. For example, student nurses complete clinical externships under the supervision of established nurses.

Lecture: Oral presentation given by a professor to educate students. Sometimes this can refer to a class format that doesn't require lab-work hours.

Liberal Arts: Interdisciplinary study of humanities, social and natural sciences meant to give students a broad spectrum of knowledge.

Matriculate: A matriculated student is admitted, registered for classes and in good academic standing at a college or university.

Master's degree: A graduate-level degree pursued after completing a bachelor's degree program. A master's degree requires a year and a half to two years of full-time study and a high-level of mastery in a specific field at the completion of the program.

Midterm: An exam given approximately halfway through a course term that generally covers all lecture, reading and discussion material presented so far.

Minor: A secondary focus meant to add to the value to the student's major. A minor consists of the lower-level courses required for a major in the same discipline. For example a Business major with a minor in Spanish will be required to complete a certain number of lower-level Spanish courses—which are typically the same lower-level Spanish courses as those pursuing it as a major.

Pass-fail course: Instead of receiving a letter grade, students receive either a P or F on their transcript. Requirements for passing will vary depending on the course.

Plagiarism: Taking credit for someone else's work as your own including copying words, sentence structure or ideas. Plagiarism has very grave consequences in higher education.

Postgraduate education: Includes higher education completed after an undergraduate degree. This includes master's degrees and doctorate degrees.

Practicum: Practical application of theory learned in the classroom. Often a requirement for programs in Education, Social Work or other clinician fields.

Prerequisites: Courses required to take more advanced courses or apply to a program.

Probation: Academic probation means a student has fallen from good standing status and is at risk of being dismissed from the university. Institutions measure academic standing by GPA and courses passed. Policies regarding this will vary depending on the institution.

Professional certificate: Certification earned outside of an academic degree program to increase specific skills or knowledge to help keep professionals current on industry trends, technology and other topics.

Programmatic accreditation: Accreditation granted to academic programs, departments or entire schools within a university used as an independent validation of academic quality and is often tied to professional licensure exam requirements.

Registration: Process of reserving a spot in specific classes for enrolled students.

Seminar course: A course based on reading, research and group discussion. Seminar courses are typically smaller, led by professors and cover advanced topics.

Synchronous learning: Online classroom format where students learn together at the same time and can engage with classmates and instructors via chat rooms and video conferencing.

Thesis: An extensive research paper created as part of an academic program—typically at the graduate degree level.

Transcript: Official record of courses taken and grades earned at a given institution.

Transfer credits: Course credits carried over from one institution to another.

Tutors: A more experienced student or teacher who offers one-and-one academic help usually in a specific subject.

Undecided or undeclared: A student enrolled in courses but has not yet declared a major.

Waitlist: A term commonly seen during registration periods. Students hoping to enroll in a full class can opt to be placed on a waitlist. This essentially saves a place in line in case spots open up from registered students dropping or changing plans.

Withdraw: To drop a class after the add/drop grace period. Withdrawing often means receiving a W on your transcript.

Financial Aid College Terms

Assistantship: Most common at graduate level, assistantships give students the opportunity to earn tuition reimbursement by working for faculty members in their area of study.

Employer education assistance benefit: A benefit some employers offer that may cover some or all of student education expenses. Details will vary depending on employer—some may have stipulations to remain eligible for the benefit.

FAFSA: Stands for Free Application for Federal Student Aid. A document prospective students complete to determine eligibility for federal loans and grants.

Federal grants vs. state grants: Grants are need-based forms of financial aid that do not need to be repaid. Federal grants are awarded through the FAFSA. State grants are awarded through the student's home state and usually have different eligibility requirements than that of the FAFSA.

Income-driven repayment plan: A loan repayment plan where monthly payments are based on the borrower's income and number of dependents.

Net price: Calculated by taking the "sticker price" for tuition, room and board and other fees, and subtracting any scholarships and grants the student is receiving.

Room and board: Term for charges stemming from on-campus food services and housing.

Scholarship: An award given by a college, university or outside institution to help a student pay for tuition or day-to-day expenses. Criteria varies depending on individual scholarships.

Stafford loan: A direct federal loan with fixed interest rates.

Subscription-based pricing: As opposed to per-credit pricing, subscription-based pricing allows students to take as many courses as they can in a set period of time, usually per semester.

Subsidized vs. unsubsidized loan: If a student receives a subsidized loan, the U.S Department of Education pays all interest accrued during school, the 6-month grace period and deferment. Students with unsubsidized loans must pay interest either while in school or have the accrued interest added to the principal loan balance.

Tuition: The core price for college classes. Tuition may be listed as a flat rate for a range of credits, usually 12-18, or priced per credit.

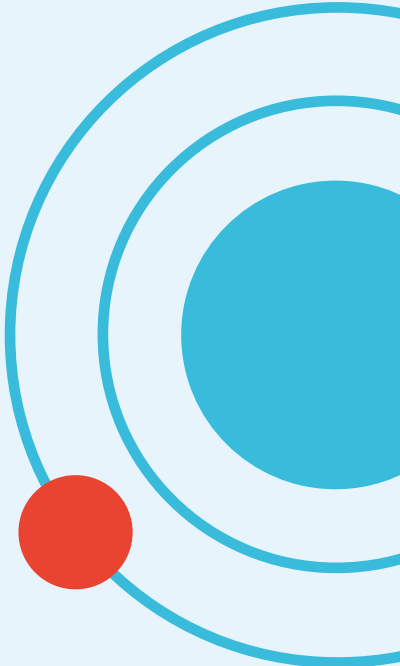


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