

College Advising 101 Worksheet

Planning Your Transition to College

Congratulations! You've made one of the most important decisions of your life: to continue your education beyond high school! There is a lot to do as you plan your transition. Whether you're entering college for the first time, enrolling in just one class, seeking additional job training, or working toward your degree, use this worksheet as a road map along your journey. We want to help you reach your destination.

Are you ready?

This worksheet will help you prepare for what lies ahead. We will explore three types of preparation to help you become "Academic-Ready," "Financial-Aid-Ready," and "College-Life-Ready."

Throughout this worksheet, the word "college" can mean any higher education institution, including a vocational school, community college, or college or university (whether public or private).



- 1. Parents and Guardians:** Using this worksheet to start discussions with your student will introduce questions that will lead to more questions. Keep track of important information in the "Notes" section.
- 2. First in your family to go to college?** Share this worksheet with your parents and encourage them to go with you!
- 3. We highly suggest** that you visit the campus if you haven't already. Before you visit, think about the questions you want answered. During your time on campus, take good notes.
- 4. Did you know** that for one hour (unit) of credit, you can expect to spend at least 2½ hours studying outside of class each week? That means that for a three-hour class, you will study 7½ hours outside of class per week. For 15 hours, or five classes, you will spend 37½ hours of study time per week outside of class. Budget your time wisely!

Academic-Ready

As you map out your higher education journey, there are a couple of things you can do to get “Academic-Ready.” First, create your Academic Plan. Second, make sure that any credits you have already earned are counted toward your program of study. You may already be farther along than you realize in reaching your goals.



Developing an Academic Plan

If you don't know where you're going, any road can take you there! An Academic Plan should be a guide that helps you make informed choices and reminds you what you're trying to achieve. It will change and evolve as you learn and grow, so always take time to update it.

First, ask yourself:

- What do I get excited about? _____
- What kind of life do I want for myself? _____
- What are my short- and long-term goals? _____

Use your answers as the foundation for your Academic Plan. In building on that foundation, consider:

- What do you hope to accomplish? _____
- Will the higher education you're seeking prepare you for the career you want? _____
- What will be the outcome of your higher education? _____
- How will you know when you have reached your goal? _____
- What will be your next step in accomplishing your goal? _____
 - It might be helpful to start at the end and work your way backward.
 - Determine each step and what must be accomplished to progress to the next step.
 - Include as much detail to your Academic Plan as you can think of — this is for your eyes only.



Receiving credit for college-level work

As you get ready to enter college, you may already have credits that can apply toward the requirements for your program of study. List them below and make sure to notify your college if you have any of the following:

- AP (Advanced Placement) credits _____
- IB (International Baccalaureate) credits _____
- Dual enrollment credits (courses you took at a local two- or four-year college while also taking courses at your high school) _____
- Concurrent enrollment credits (courses you took at high school that counted toward high school and college) _____
- CLEP (College Level Examination Program) credits _____

Once you've determined if you have any credits to apply, find out:

- Is there a limit to the amount of credits your college will accept? _____
- Will the credits count as general electives or satisfy specific course requirements? _____
- If you are just graduating from high school and have a lot of transfer credit, will you still be regarded as a freshman? _____



Preferably, you will be regarded as an entering freshman. Many colleges reserve higher amounts of scholarship and need-based funding for entering freshmen, so this may be to your advantage.

- How can you obtain an academic audit once you have chosen your major? (This audit will list, specifically, the classes required to complete your program.) _____

Sample Academic Plan

What do I get excited about?
Helping others

What kind of life do I want for myself?
A career in public service

What are my short- and long-term goals?
To finish my degree and enter the nursing profession

What do I hope to accomplish?
To become a registered nurse

Will the higher education I'm seeking prepare me for the career I want? *Yes*

What will the outcome of my higher education be?
Bachelor of Science in Nursing

How will I know when I have reached my goal?
When I begin my nursing career

What will be my next step in accomplishing my goal?
Meeting with an academic advisor to determine what courses to take my freshman year in college ...

Financial-Aid-Ready

So how are you going to pay for college? Here are some things you'll need to learn from your college about its financial aid application process.



Submitting your aid applications

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the only form necessary to apply for federal student aid (which includes grants, loans, and work-study). Since some federal student aid funding is limited, does your college have a priority deadline for FAFSA submission?

- Is the FAFSA the only form your college requires, or does it have other forms to apply for state or institutional aid?

- Once you've submitted your FAFSA, note that date here. _____
- What email address did you provide on the FAFSA, and how often do you check it? _____
- What was the date you received your Student Aid Report (SAR)? _____
- When will the college notify students of their financial aid awards? _____
- When is your college's scholarship application deadline? _____
- Once you've submitted your scholarship application, note that date here. _____
- Once you've received your financial aid award letter, do your awards add up to the full cost of attendance? It is important to understand this concept so you are aware of what your out-of-pocket costs may be (if your awards do not meet all of your costs), and so you can determine how your college's cost and awards compare to those of other colleges. _____

Defining cost of attendance: This is the cost of attending a particular college. It includes direct costs, such as tuition, fees, housing, meals, etc., as well as indirect costs such as books, supplies, laundry, transportation, personal care items, etc.



Understanding your college's awarding policies

Each college determines its own policies for distributing financial aid funds. Ask your college about its financial aid packaging philosophy.

- How does the financial aid office at your college determine a student's awards — for example, are the awards based solely on financial need?

If circumstances have changed your family's financial situation for the worse after you receive your financial aid award notification, visit with your financial aid counselor. Do not be afraid to ask for a reevaluation of your financial aid package. Asking for special consideration can only help you; not asking can mean a missed opportunity! Be respectful but persistent if you feel that your circumstances are not being given proper consideration, and make sure to submit additional documentation necessary for review of your case in a timely manner.

- How might your financial aid award change from your first year through subsequent years (assuming your financial need remains the same)?

- Can you expect the same percentage of aid each year? _____
- Can you expect the amount you must borrow to increase each year? _____
- Under what circumstances (dropping below a minimum grade point average or enrollment) can you lose your financial aid award or scholarship? _____

Defining satisfactory academic progress: The federal government requires that students who receive federal student aid perform at an academic level that would allow them to progress in a timely manner toward their graduation requirements. Each school may establish its own satisfactory academic progress policy; however, at a minimum, students must maintain a "C" average or higher.

Documentation necessary for reevaluation:

Date of submission:

College-Life-Ready

You'll want to find the answers to the following questions before you begin your first term at your college, so that you'll feel in tune with your school from the first day you arrive on campus.

- What is the college's mission and how does it "speak to you" on a personal level? _____

- How will you interact with faculty inside and outside of the classroom? _____

- How can you get involved in the college's community? _____

- What programs or services does the college provide (for example, mentor programs) to help students adjust to college life?

 - Will you have an academic advisor to help you plan your program? Will you have an assigned faculty member? _____
 - Does the college have writing centers and/or math labs? _____
 - List all of the college's support resources (academic, financial, personal, etc.).
Time management: _____
Tutoring/study skills/test taking : _____
Financial literacy: _____
Personal development/life skills: _____
Academic planning: _____
Career planning: _____
Community involvement: _____
Special interest engagement: _____
Other: _____

College life takes time to get used to. You will have highs (meeting new friends and taking interesting courses) and lows (tough mid-term exams and homesickness). However, the more you connect to your college, the more likely you'll adjust to college life and persist in completing your program!



You're almost ready to hit the road ...

It stands to reason that the more time you take preparing for college, the more likely you will succeed in completing your program of study. This worksheet can guide you in getting answers to important questions that will ease your transition to college. Review the answers you write here and add more pages if you need them, keeping all of your documents together for easy reference. Discuss your answers with a loved one, a teacher, or a counselor — someone who knows you well — and make informed plans based upon your goals. Enjoy your higher education journey. We wish you safe travels!

TIPS

- Research shows that colleges where faculty members are an active part of their students' lives in and out of the classroom produce better student outcomes and enable greater student success. Get to know your faculty members.
- Many students choose to work off campus, sometimes full time, and attend college part time to avoid borrowing student loans. Part-time enrollment often hurts your chances of completing your program of study. Full-time enrollment is more likely to lead to program completion, which will, hopefully, allow you to start earning a higher salary sooner rather than later.
- Students who work part time (up to 21 hours) on campus often perform better academically than those who do not.
- Borrow student loans to cover educational expenses, not to fund lifestyle choices. If you live like a graduate while in college, you will live like a college student once you graduate.



A student loan is a form of self-help financial aid, but remember that it is a debt that you must repay. Unpaid balances will hurt your credit and may prevent you from buying a car or home or securing employment. Also note that a student loan generally cannot be eliminated by bankruptcy. Borrow wisely.

About TG

TG promotes educational access and success so that students can realize their college and career dreams. As a public, nonprofit corporation, TG offers resources to help students and families plan and prepare for college, learn the basics of money management, and repay their federal student loans.

For more information about TG, visit www.TG.org.

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1609-61199