

WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

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BEFORE YOU VOLUNTEER

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LAYING A FOUNDATION

For first generation college-interested students, it is crucial that information about college and terms related to college are broken down in an understandable, comfortable manner. Often times, questions relating to college aren't comfortable or understood because the terminology is new thus leaving students without the foundation needed to begin asking questions. Begin with the basics and help paint the picture of college! Below are key terms and examples, often not understood by students, to help you provide explanations. Use these definitions and examples to reinforce conversations with students about college and to help you gain a foundation of what types of things may be unknown or misunderstood regarding college and the college process. Many students do not know that they don't know about college, thus, this is your opportunity to help them gain needed tools to visualize and realize a future with college!

2-YEAR COLLEGE: This is a community which students can attend for vocational training, certifications, 2-year (associates) degrees, take courses to later transfer to a university, or take courses at while attending a university in order to save money.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE: A community college is a 2-year public institution that provides higher education and lower-level tertiary education. Many types of degrees are offered including associates degrees, certificates, diplomas, and continuing and adult education. Community colleges offer opportunities to transfer to 4-year institutions, workforce preparation, developmental education (remedial education) for academic preparation for college, and industry training (certificates of skills or trades). Many community colleges have articulation agreements with specific 4-year institutions which facilitates the process for students of transferring credits towards a bachelor's degree. Community colleges are typically supported by local tax revenue. Because of the plethora of programs offered which vary greatly in duration and needed qualifications, for anyone driven to continue with education, community colleges offer opportunities, regardless of previous grades and performance.

4-YEAR COLLEGE: Also known as a university. These are the schools that can range in size from as small as 300 students to as large as 50,000 students where students can receive a bachelor's degree.

CAREER-BASED TRAINING: Career-based training typically includes specific training for trades or careers that take a short period of time for completion (several weeks to several months). Examples of this type of training include phlebotomy (drawing blood), Radiology Technician (x-rays), Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA), heating and cooling certificates, welding certificate, etc.

PRIVATE VERSUS PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS: Community Colleges are public colleges supported by state and local taxes and are usually smaller in size than universities. Public universities are partially supported by state taxes and are typically the largest universities in the country. The majority of Division I (highest level of college sports) college teams come from public universities which tend to be more affordable than private institutions. Private institutions do not get tax payer money but receive the majority of their funding from investments, donors, and tuition. Private institutions also differ from public universities in that they are typically more expensive to attend, smaller in size, and often have higher prestige when compared to public universities. Both public and private institutions have their pros and cons and it is important to make your selection based on what best suits your needs as a potential college student.

PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS: For example, law degree/jurisdoctorate (J.D.), masters in business administration (M.B.A.), medical degree (M.D.), doctor of veterinarian medicine (D.V.M.), and doctor of dental surgery (D.D.S.) are just a few of many different types of professional degrees. Professional programs require at least a 4-year bachelor's degree and often require a master's degree or professional experience for admittance.

ADMISSIONS: Every college has an admissions office that determines the requirements and procedures for applying to each institution. Typically the admissions office collects all application materials for review and makes all final acceptance decisions.

APPLICATION AND APPLICATION PROCESS (FEE WAIVERS): The application process is determined by each college. However, typically the application process follows a similar structure for the undergraduate level (at a 4-year institution). Often online, each applicant must fill out an application for admission. In addition, students must provide 2 - 3 recommendation letters, 1 - 2 written essays, statements surrounding extracurricular activities, school transcripts (GPA), and standardized test scores (ACT, SAT, etc.). For each institution's application, a fee ranging from \$25.00 - \$100.00 is typically required. Students can request an application fee waiver (a pass based on individual family finances that waives the fee for admission) from the institution and/or should request information from the admission's office, their high school counselor, teacher or mentor, or search for details on the college's website.

RECOMMENDATION LETTERS: For admittance to most 4-year colleges, students are required to submit recommendation letters from teachers, administrators, or community members. These letters are often required to explain the person applying to college, their activities, work ethic, personality, qualities, academic ability, etc. There are typically standardized recommendation forms that the student gives to individuals who will write the recommendation letters and submit them directly to the college.

CUMULATIVE GPA: The cumulative grade point average (GPA) is the average of all grades of a student for all semesters and classes taken up to the moment of calculation. Most colleges consider GPA as part of the admissions process.

COURSE VERSUS CREDIT: A course is the actual class that you are taking for example History 101. History 101 can be worth 3 credits as every course you take is worth a certain amount of credits ranging from 1 to 6 credits. In order to graduate you may need 120 credits which would mean you need 40 courses (give or take) to graduate. Some course credits can transfer from dual enrollment programs (college credit for courses taken in high school) from high school. Check with your advisor or school counselor.

MAJORS AND MINORS: A college major is a specific area of concentration of classes that leads to a college degree. Majors surround specific subjects, themes, or professional fields like business or biology. A minor is a student's chosen secondary focus of study in college. Typically a minor requires fewer total credit hours for completion.

GENERAL EDUCATION: These are the courses that are referred to as G.E. courses; courses not taken as part of a major. For example some G.E. courses are classes found within mathematics, writing, speech, arts, sciences, and humanities. There is a plethora of G.E. courses offered for students to choose from based on their interests. This leaves most students' course selections to look very different than their peers. G.E. course options are typically split into categories such as writing, social sciences, math, etc. Each student can work with an advisor to determine the most appropriate G.E. course selections. G.E. courses are crucial in helping college students develop a well-rounded knowledge base to become informed college graduates.

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DEGREE: A degree is the diploma or title received upon completion of all college academic requirements. Common academic degree types include high school diploma, Associates degree (typically 2 years), Bachelor's degree (typically 4 years), Master's degree (typically 1-3 years after a bachelor's degree), and Doctoral degree (typically 4-6 years after a bachelor's degree, sometimes requiring a master's degree for admission).

SCHEDULE: A schedule consists of the times and days for selected courses. For example, a college student may choose to take four courses in a semester (16 weeks). These courses may take place on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10:15 am - 11:45 am and 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm and then two courses on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 am - 10:15 am and 10:30 am - 12:00 pm. When selecting courses to take, students create a class schedule. Using this class schedule, students can create their own schedules based on their preferences and also help stay organized and monitor class attendance, work schedules, extracurricular meetings and activities, etc.

REMEDIAL COURSES: These are non-credit courses, often referred to as developmental courses that offer skills to develop reading, writing, math, or language skills in order to be at an academic level necessary to complete standard degree requirements. Some students entering college are under-prepared in one or more area and utilize remedial courses to help gain the skills necessary to be successful in required courses.

TUITION (IN-STATE VERSUS OUT-OF-STATE): In-state tuition refers to attendance at a school within the state where you live. For someone who lives in Michigan, the cost to attend Michigan State University during the 2012-2013 academic is \$21,200.50.¹¹ Out-of-state tuition (someone who lives in another state prior to applying to college) to attend Michigan State University is \$41,158.00.¹² For public universities, there is a major tuition cost difference to consider when deciding to attend a school in-state versus out-of-state.

FINANCIAL AID: Please refer to the "Ways to Pay for College" section on page 60-68 for detailed explanations and websites regarding the following types of financial aid. It is crucial that the youth understand what each of the items are and the differences between them as many first generation college students do not have extensive support with the financial aid process and find it intimidating and difficult to navigate. It is also important to share that all colleges have financial aid offices that can assist applicants with the process of applying for financial aid. The earlier students begin the financial aid process, the better their chances of diversified support.

FAFSA: Scholarships, Loans, Grants, Cost of living aid, Childcare grants

CAMPUS LIVING (THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE): Take time to share the details of what campus living is all about. If you lived on campus, then share the things that you learned about while living on campus. Remember that students are often not well informed when it comes to living on a college campus. Help the youth visualize that campus is often very similar to a small town or city.

- **DORMS:** If you currently live on campus and the youth comes to visit your campus, invite them to view your dorm room (accompanied by an approved chaperone or other authorized adult) so they can have an idea of what it is like to live in a dormitory. If you do not live in a dorm, find a friend willing to show your visiting student(s) their dorm room. If they cannot visit your campus, utilize resources like YouTube on the Internet and search for videos called "Campus Cribbs" that highlight what living on campus is like for students. Additionally, share details about dorms on campus such as laundry facilities, how many people per room, bathrooms and showers (in your room or a shared bathroom), tv or study lounges, etc. Explain how the common areas are used within the dorms.

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11. <http://ctr.msu.edu/coststudentaccounts/TuitionCalculatorFall.aspx>

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- **DINING HALLS:** If the youth visits your campus, take them to eat in the dining hall so they can experience how dining halls function and what they are like. If they don't visit, explain how dining halls function, how you pay, how much you can eat, when they are open, types of food, etc.
- **GYM:** If possible take the student to the university athletic center or exercise facilities on campus or in your residence hall.
- **COMPUTER LAB ACCESS:** All students on campus have access to public computer labs and Internet access. Most buildings have Wi-Fi access that students can use during class or in the public areas on campus. Students are given a log in and password to have access to campus computer-based resources. Many professors utilize the Internet and online based programs to communicate with students about their classes.
- **CLASSROOMS:** Classrooms are typically spread across campuses and are found within dorms, office buildings, libraries, etc. Classrooms range in size and style and usually have available Internet access.
- **EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:** There are hundreds of activities that provide opportunities to get involved on campus and within the surrounding community. Most colleges have registered student organizations (RSOs) that encompass groups from ping pong clubs to dance troupes, intermural athletic teams to business groups. Check for opportunities on each campus as each offers something unique.

After sharing campus living experiences with the youth or describing the different components above, they should have a better understanding of how living on campus is a self-sustainable home away from home.

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