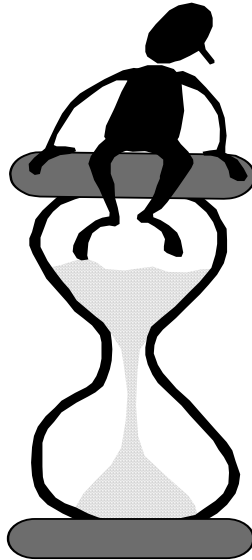
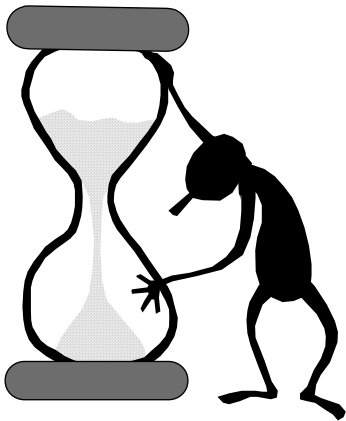


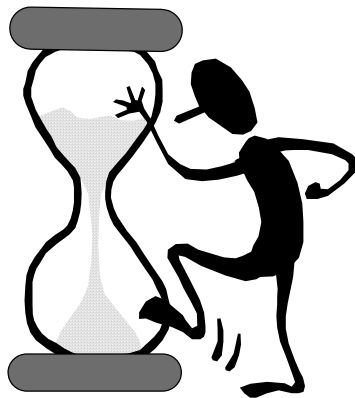
SOPHOMORE TRANSITION BOOKLET
NORTH EAST ISD
2010-2011



“I HAVE TIME.”



“OR DO I?”



“WHERE’S MY TIME GOING?”



“I NEED MORE TIME!”

This booklet was prepared by NEISD counselors for NEISD students and parents.

NEISD GUIDANCE SERVICES – ONE VISION, ONE VOICE

MISSION AND GOALS STATEMENT

The mission of the North East Independent School District Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program, in partnership with parents, school and community, is to provide a system of services which fosters the academic, career, and social development of all students.

Our goal is to empower children to reach their maximum potential and become caring, productive, and responsible citizens.

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Picking Up Momentum

It's time to pick up the pace, dig a little deeper into your studies, and really focus on making your top choices of the colleges you'd like to attend. And in the meantime, you'll be preparing for, and taking, several important tests that may impact your future.

Push Yourself!

- **Catch the right classes.** To get into college, start by taking the right classes in high school. Find out what classes you need to meet entrance requirements and sign up for them now.
- **Lock in requirements.** You may not need them to finish high school, but most colleges require four years of math, English, science, and social studies. Plus, most want at least three years of the same foreign language.
- **Meet the challenge.** Sure, grades are important, but the tougher the courses you take, the more likely it is that a college will decide to take you. In general, most colleges prefer students who challenge themselves with harder courses, even if they earn only average grades, than those who take easier courses just to get higher grades.
- **Achieve honors.** Honors and advanced placement courses are the gold standard for colleges and carry much more weight than other courses in working out your grade point average.
- **Tap into computing.** Courses in computer science (or even classes that require you to use computers in researching or completing projects) will give you the skills you need to make the grade at college.

Explore Your Interests

What are you good at? Do you have something you love to do? Whether it's playing sports, building models, or playing an instrument, your interests today say a lot about what career you might have tomorrow. To get there, follow these ten steps. And be sure to discuss them with your school counselor and your parents or guardian:

1. **Make a list of your skills and interests.** Think hard about what you enjoy and what you are good at.
2. **Find out more about the kinds of jobs that interest you,** along with their educational requirements, salary, working conditions, future outlook, and anything else that can help you decide what's best.
3. Make a second list of possible jobs that you would like to have and **compare it with your skills and interests.** The job that matches your skills and interests the closest may be the career for you.
4. **Choose your career goal.** Once you've decided what occupation matches up best with you, then you can begin developing a plan to reach your career goal.
5. **Develop a career plan.** Think about what you want to do and find out more about the kind of training, education, and skills you will need to achieve your career goal.
6. **Select a school** that offers a college degree or training program that best meets your career goal and financial needs.
7. **Find out about financial aid** to help support you in obtaining your career goal.
8. **Learn about job hunting tips** as you prepare to graduate or move into the job market.
9. **Prepare your resume,** and practice job interviewing techniques.
10. **Go to the GO (Career) Center** at your high school for additional information and help on career planning. Another tool that you can use from home is the Kuder Program.

The Kuder Program offers research-based assessments of career-relevant interests, abilities, and job values in order to help individuals consider career options that are a good match for them. The system offers complete, current databases of occupations, college majors, schools and training institutions, financial aid/scholarships, and military options. Users can also learn how to develop good job-seeking skills through effective resumes, cover letters, job applications, and interviewing skills. Every student has an account with the Kuder program purchased by the district. The counselor will help you to log on and set up an account.

Talking to Your Parents

The best way to communicate with parents — or any adult — is to keep talking to them, no matter what. Strong relationships really depend on keeping the lines of communication open. Here are some ways to approach your parents (or any adult) with a specific topic:

- **Plan what you want to say ahead of time.** Think over what you want to say in advance, and write down the two or three most important points you want to make.
- **Let them know directly that there's something you'd like to discuss.** To be sure you have their full attention be direct in your language. Say, "There's something important I want to talk to you about" instead of "Hey, when you have a moment I'd like to talk."
- **Pick a good time to talk.** Try to approach them at a time when you know they'll be less busy and more able to focus on you. You may even want to ask if they could talk at a particular time so that you know you have their attention.
- **Write it down first.** Some people find it easier to put their ideas into a letter. Let the other person read it and then have your discussion.
- **Disagree without disrespect.** Parents are only human, and they can feel offended when their views are challenged. Using respectful language and behavior is important. Resist the temptation to use sarcasm, yell, or put down your parents and you'll have a much better chance of getting what you want.

Talking to Your School Counselor

Your school counselor, or guidance counselor, may be one of your best resources as you plan for college. She or he has information about admission tests, college preparation, and your education and career options. Here are some basic questions to help get you started:

- Do you have any information to help me start exploring my interests and related careers?
- What are the required and recommended courses -- for graduation and for college prep?
- How should I plan my schedule so I'll complete them?
- Do you have any after-school or evening sessions available for college planning?
- Do you have college handbooks or other guides that I can browse or borrow?
- What activities can I do at home and over the summer to get ready for college?
- What kinds of grades do different colleges require?
- Where do other kids from this school attend college?
- What are the requirements or standards for the honor society?
- How does our school compare to others, in terms of test scores and reputation?
- Which elective courses do you recommend?
- Which AP courses are available?
- When is the PSAT/NMSQT going to be given here?
- Is this school a testing center for standardized tests, or will I need to go somewhere nearby?
- Are there any college fairs at this school or nearby?
- Can you put me in touch with regent grads who are going to the colleges on my list?
- If my colleges need a recommendation from you how can I help you know me better, so it can be more personal?
- Are there any special scholarships or awards I should know about now so I can work toward them?
- Can I see my transcript as it stands now to see if everything is as I think it should be?
- Do you have any forms I need to apply for financial aid?

Talking to Your Teachers

OK, so it may be hard to think of your teachers as real people. But they eat pizza, watch movies, and enjoy sports on the weekends just like you. And they know about more than just their subject matter. Given the chance they can offer you the kind of advice and support that might change your life forever. Here's how to build a connection:

- **Show some interest.** Obviously, your teachers are really interested in their subjects. Showing the teacher that you care - even if you're not a math whiz or fluent in French - sends the message that you are a dedicated student.
- **Schedule a conference.** Schedule a private conference during a teacher's free period to get extra help, ask questions, inquire about a career in the subject, or talk about your progress in class. You may be surprised to learn that your teacher is a bit more relaxed one-on-one than when lecturing in front of the whole class.
- **Be yourself.** Teachers can sense when your only motivation for trying to be a "favorite student" is to get special treatment or a good grade. Just be yourself and forget about trying to show off.
- **Deal with study problems.** If you find a subject hard, talk to your teacher right away about extra tutoring. If you find it boring, talk to your teacher about ways to see the subject in a different light. For example you may hate math, but learning how to calculate averages and percentages can help you in everything from sports to leaving a tip.
- **Show some respect.** Just as teachers need to be fair and treat everyone equally, students have responsibilities too. You don't have to like your teacher or agree with what he or she says, but it is necessary to be polite.

Talking to Other Adults

No matter how good your relationship is with your parents or guardian, there will be times when you'll feel more comfortable confiding in other adults. Even if you'd rather talk to friends about certain things, an adult may have more experience, be able to contact the right person, or find the best resources to get help.

- Most adults will keep your conversations confidential if you ask them to, unless they fear that your health or well-being may be in danger.
- Other adults who may be able to help include teachers, your school guidance counselor, other family members, such as an aunt, uncle, or older sibling, parents of a close friend may also be able to help.
- If you're involved in a church group or belong to a synagogue or mosque, your spiritual or youth group leader may also be a good source of advice.
- If you're involved in an extracurricular activity, such as sports or drama, you may feel close enough to your coach or advisor to ask him or her about more personal stuff.

NEISD Students Entering 9th Grade in the 2007-08 through 2009-10 School Years

Courses	Minimum	Recommended	Distinguished
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English Language Arts	4 credits	4 credits	4 credits
Mathematics	3 credits	4 credits	4 credits
Science	2 credits*	4 credits	4 credits
Social Studies	2.5 credits*	3.5 credits	3.5 credits
Economics	.5 credit	.5 credit	.5 credit
Languages other than English	None	2 credits	3 credits
Physical Education	1.5 credit	1.5 credit	1.5 credit
Health Education	.5 credit	.5 credit	.5 credit
Speech	.5 credit	.5 credit	.5 credit
Technology Applications	1 credit	1 credit	1 credit
Fine Arts	None	1 credit	1 credit
Electives	5.5 credits	3.5 credits	2.5 credits
Academic Elective* (science or social studies)	1 credit	None	None
Total	22	26	26

Updated 10-13-09

NEISD Students Entering 9th Grade in the 2007-08 through 2009-10 School Years

The default program for ALL NEISD students is the Recommended Program. Any student considering graduation on the Minimum Program must see a counselor. Only students meeting strict criteria during the spring semester of their senior year will be able to select the Minimum Graduation Program. A waiver acknowledging understanding of the Texas Minimum Graduation Program must be signed. Students graduating on this program are not eligible to attend a four-year college upon graduation from high school.

Courses	Minimum	Recommended	Distinguished***
English Language Arts	English I, II, III, and IV are required. Immigrant students with limited English proficiency may substitute English I SOL and English II SOL for English I and II only.	English I, II, III, and IV are required. Immigrant students with limited English proficiency may substitute English I SOL and English II SOL for English I and II only.	English I, II, III, and IV are required. Immigrant students with limited English proficiency may substitute English I SOL and English II SOL for English I and II only.
Mathematics	Three credits must be taken in grades 9-12. The three credits must include Algebra I and Geometry.	Three credits must be taken in grades 9-12. The three credits must include Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry. Computer Science counts as a math credit.	Three credits must be taken in grades 9-12. Three credits must include Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry. The fourth math credit must have an Algebra II prerequisite. Computer Science will not count for the DAP.
Science	**Two credits must consist of Biology and IPC. A student may substitute Chemistry or Physics for IPC and then must take the second of these two courses as the academic elective.	Four credits are required. The four credits must include Biology and two credits from either IPC, Chemistry, Physics, Principles of Technology or Medical Microbiology or Pathophysiology. IPC must be taken before Chemistry and Physics to meet the graduation requirement.	Four credits are required. The four credits must include Biology, Chemistry and Physics. IPC, Principles of Technology, Medical Microbiology/Pathophysiology will not count as the 4 th required science credit for the DAP.
Social Studies	**Two and one-half credits must consist of World History or World Geography, United States History and US Government.	Three and one-half credits are required and must include World Geography, World History, US History, US Government.	Three and one-half credits are required and must include World Geography, World History, US History, US Government.
Economics	One-half credit is required; transfer Economics courses must have an emphasis on the free enterprise system.	One-half credit is required; transfer Economics courses must have an emphasis on the free enterprise system.	One-half credit is required; transfer Economics courses must have an emphasis on the free enterprise system.
Languages other than English	None	Two credits of the same language are required. Exploratory Language and Culture courses do not meet the foreign language requirement.	Three credits of the same language are required. Exploratory Language and Culture courses do not meet the foreign language requirement.
Physical Education	On and off campus substitutions/waivers are allowed. Students may earn a total of two PE credits for graduation. Substitutes: Drill team, Marching band (fall only), cheerleading, dance, approved private programs. See your counselor for specific waiver information	On and off campus substitutions/waivers are allowed. Students may earn a total of two PE credits for graduation. Substitutes: Drill team, Marching band (fall only), cheerleading, dance, approved private programs. See your counselor for specific waiver information	On and off campus substitutions/waivers are allowed. Students may earn a total of two PE credits for graduation. Substitutes: Drill team, Marching band (fall only), cheerleading, dance, approved private programs. See your counselor for specific waiver information
Health Education	One-half credit is required.	One-half credit is required.	One-half credit is required.
Speech	One-half credit is required.	One-half credit is required.	One-half credit is required.
Technology Applications	One credit is required and may be selected from the designated courses in Technology Applications or Career Technology. See the course catalog for specific courses.	One credit is required and may be selected from the designated courses in Technology Applications or Career Technology. See the course catalog for specific courses.	One credit is required and may be selected from the designated courses in Technology Applications or Career Technology. See the course catalog for specific courses.
Fine Arts	One credit is required and may be selected from courses in the areas of art, music, theatre arts or dance.	One credit is required and may be selected from courses in the areas of art, music, theatre arts or dance.	One credit is required and may be selected from courses in the areas of art, music, theatre arts or dance.
Electives	Four and one-half credits are required.	Three and one-half credits are required	Two and one-half credits are required.
Academic Elective** (science or social studies)	One credit consisting of World History or World Geography, or an approved science course (see Science above).	None	None

***To graduate on the Distinguished Program, four advanced measures are required. These include national recognition on the PSAT (one measure maximum); original research/project (2 measures maximum); performance on AP exams or grades in college credit courses (4 measures maximum). SEE YOUR COUNSELOR FOR SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS.

Updated 1-21-11

NEISD RANK IN CLASS POLICY
FOR STUDENTS ENTERING 9TH GRADE IN FALL 2007 AND BEYOND

RANK IN CLASS

- All courses taken in grades 9-12 during the regular school day or in summer school and required for graduation will be included in the class ranking. This will include 3 and one-half elective courses for the Recommended Program and two and one-half elective courses for the Advanced/Distinguished Program. Elective courses that produce the highest weighted grade will be counted for class rank. Class rank will be based upon a weighted grade point average.
- Grade point averages are determined by multiplying each semester grade of a ranked course by a rank factor and computing an average. The rank factor recognizes differences in level of difficulty between Advanced Placement, Pre-Advanced Placement, Regular, and Content Modified coursework. Courses modified as to methodology shall utilize the same rank factor assigned to regular courses.
- The weighted grade point average determines the rank in class. The student earning the highest

Course Level	Rank Factor
Advanced Placement (AP) and dual credit AP	1.29
Pre-Advanced Placement, Honors, GT non-AP, and dual credit non-AP	1.15
Regular	1.00
Content Modified	.90

weighted GPA is ranked number one and all others take the following positions in increasing numeric order. Ties in rank will be broken using the most courses taken given a weight of 1.15 and/or 1.29.

- Preliminary unofficial class standing reports will be issued to students following the second and fourth semesters of high school. Official class standing will be issued to students following the sixth and seventh semesters of high school. Class rank is determined using a weighted system that supports academic achievement and rigor. All courses taken in grades 9-12 and required for graduation will be counted. Class rank is based upon a weighted grade point average.
- Students are designated within a range of their high school class, as follows: top five percent, top ten percent, top quarter, second quarter, third quarter, fourth quarter. The position of each student is reported as "number (___) out of (___) students in graduating class."

GRADE POINT AVERAGE / HONOR GRADUATES

- Students achieving high standards of academic excellence shall be recognized at the graduation ceremony as honor graduates based on the following criteria:
 - Completion of the Recommended or Advanced/Distinguished Achievement Graduation Program.
 - Accumulation of a minimum of 52 semester classes of coursework.
 - Overall weighted average greater than or equal to 90 at the end of the seventh semester. (The rank factor listed above is used to determine the overall weighted average.)
- Honor graduates meeting the criteria specified above shall be designated as follows:

Honor Graduate Designations	Cumulative Grade Average
Summa Cum Laude	100+
Magna Cum Laude	95-99
Cum Laude	90-94

For students entering 9th grade in 2007 and beyond

9 th grade	0-5.5 credits
10 th grade	6-11.5 credits
11 th grade	12-18.5 credits
12 th grade	19 credits OR The student is able to enroll in all courses needed to graduate on the Recommended High School Plan at the end of the current school year

Your Sophomore Road Map

There's an old Chinese saying that goes, **"The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."** But no matter how unsure you feel taking that first step, every single one after that will be a little easier. It also helps if you have a road map to follow through your sophomore year—and here it is.

Prepare for standardized testing

- Take the PSAT in October. The scores will not count for National Merit Scholar consideration in your sophomore year, but it is valuable practice for when you take the PSAT again in your junior year when the scores will count, as well as for the SAT Reasoning Test, which you should also be taking in your junior year. You will receive your PSAT results in January.
- Start preparing for the SAT Reasoning Test.

Update your file of important documents and notes

- Copies of report cards
- Lists of awards and honors
- Lists of school and community activities in which you are involved, including both paid and volunteer work, and descriptions of what you do.

Continue your college search and visits

- Think about selecting a school, finding out about the different types. Decide which characteristics are most important to you, such as the size of the school, distance from home, cost, and extracurricular activities.
- Visit colleges and talk with college students.
- Be ready with a list of questions to ask on your campus visit. A sample list is provided on the following page.
- Use this list of college characteristics to decide how to evaluate different colleges.
- Review the high school courses you need to take to meet the requirements of the colleges you are interested in attending.

Find out about pre-AP, AP, and Dual Credit courses at your school

- Ask which pre-AP, AP, or Dual Credit courses are available.
- See if you are eligible for the classes you want to take.
- Find out how to enroll in them your junior year.

Other top tips

- Continue extracurricular activities, as admissions officers look at students' extracurricular activities when considering them for admission.
- Continue participation in academic enrichment programs, summer workshops, and camps with specialty focuses such as music, arts, and science.
- Continue to meet with your college/career counselor at least once a year

Why College?

Planning for college sometimes can seem endless and a big drain on your time. But here are four quick reasons why college is really worth it:

- **Any post-high school education you obtain will increase your future income.** Most college graduates earn a lot more money during their working years than people who stop their education at high school.
- **The more education you get, the greater your employment opportunities will be.** According to one estimate, by the year 2028 there will be 19 million more jobs for educated workers than there are qualified people to fill them.
- **Continuing education after high school is much more important for your generation than it has been in the past.** Today most good jobs require more than a high school diploma. Businesses want to hire people who know how to think and solve problems.
- Education beyond high school gives you many other benefits, including **meeting new people, taking part in new opportunities to explore your interests, and experiencing success.**

Helpful Hints for a Campus Visit

A campus visit is highly recommended. Before you visit the campus, consider some of the options below. It is also important to develop a list of questions and plan specific activities in order to accomplish your goals.

- Schedule an interview in the Admission Office.
- Inquire about admission requirements (test, high school grades, etc.).
- Discuss your chances for success.
- Learn about the college environment.
- Determine the placement record for graduates in your field of study.
- Talk with students.
- Meet the faculty.
- Investigate your academic program.
- Consider attending a class—witness class size, teaching style, academic atmosphere.
- Check the student residence halls and dining facilities.
- Ask about financial aid opportunities (deadlines, forms required, etc.)
- Obtain a school calendar and fee schedule.
- Take a campus tour.
- Identify career planning services for undergraduates.
- Visit the library.
- Ask about the amount and kind of study necessary for success.
- Investigate transportation options.
- Find out how students use their out-of-classroom time.
- Become aware of student activities (clubs, organizations, intramurals, etc.).
- Inquire about campus life in terms of dating and social activities.

Here are a few sample questions:

How many students in the freshman class?
How many students in the largest lecture class?
Do professors teach freshman classes?
How accessible are faculty members to students?
What percentage of freshman get their first-choice classes?
What extracurricular activities and athletics are available?
What interesting outlets for students does the surrounding community offer?
What ethnic and/or religious groups are available for student participation?
How do fraternities and sororities influence campus life?
Are freshman required to live on campus? Is housing guaranteed?
What is the general atmosphere of the campus?
Is there a career planning and placement center?
What counseling services are available for students?
What kind of medical facilities are available for students?
What are the library hours?
What about computer labs—equipment, hours, availability?
What types of intramural sports are available?

REMEMBER, when creating your own questionnaire choose questions important to you!

So you want to go to college.....

.....The Top Myths About Colleges

Myth #1 - It's better to get good grades than take challenging courses. When you have even some success in advanced or accelerated courses, it indicates to a college that you can handle challenging courses – like those you will find in college. A challenging college preparatory program or some advanced placement courses will help you succeed in college.

Myth #2 - The standardized tests (ACT, PSAT, & SAT) are more important than your high school grades. Colleges know that your performance in high school is a better predictor of college success than the standardized tests. That does not mean that most colleges will ignore your test scores. Some state institutions with large numbers of applicants may use scores to determine if you are eligible.

Myth #3 - I need to decide on my career before I can choose a college. College is your time to explore. Except in a few specific situations, you can choose a major in your sophomore year and still complete your degree in four years. A surprising number of students discover their ideal field while taking a course they didn't expect to like. If you're not ready, choose a college that allows you to keep your options open. Take your time.

Myth #4 - You can't get into a selective college if you did poorly in 9th or 10th grade. Colleges look for improvement in performance as a sign that you can and will do the work. In fact, a vast improvement as a junior and senior indicates to a college that you have settled down. However, do not expect to catch up for three poor years in one good semester as a senior.

Myth #5 - If I haven't heard of a college or university, it can't be very good. You may not hear about many of the nation's finest colleges until you are well into your adult life. Athletics on television is how most colleges get to be known, but many great colleges do not get that kind of exposure. Some of the nation's finest colleges don't play big-time athletics. Judge a college on its own merits, not on name recognition.

Myth #6 - A lot of out-of-class activities will make up for poor grades. Yes, colleges consider out-of-class activities such as athletics, student government, and music when they review an application. But colleges look at your academic performance first. Lots of out-of-class activities help only if the college already believes you can do the work.

Myth #7 - You should go to the most prestigious college that admits you. Actually, you should go to the college that "fits" you best. If it happens to be prestigious, that's fine. However, fit has to do with how you feel when you are on campus, that matches with how you learn and how the professors teach, along with the academic pressure you can handle. If the college isn't a good match, you will be unhappy regardless of the prestige.

Myth #8 - Big colleges are best if you haven't decided on a major field. Many students think that because there are more courses to choose from, a large college offers greater options for undecided students. If you are undecided, the best college is one that has core requirements or distribution requirements that ensure you will explore new areas and fields. Also, look for colleges with the strongest academic advising and career counseling programs regardless of their size. Good advising can help you choose an academic and career path you will enjoy rather than one you think you might like right now.

Myth #9 - The quality of the academic program in which I am interested is the most important characteristic of a college. About two of five students change their major fields of interest before they actually enroll in college, and about one of two changes the major field once enrolled. Look for a college that has your current field of interest but is also strong in all its areas. It's worth noting that the research on success in graduate school and in employment after college suggests that the best way to master a major field is a combination of learning theory and active, hands-on-learning by doing. What's more valuable is having the opportunity to do research on your own or to work side by side with a professor on a project rather than simply taking more courses in the field.

Myth #10 - The best time to visit colleges is after you have been admitted. Many students have fallen for this myth only to find that none of the colleges to which they were admitted "felt" right when they visited. If possible, visit before you apply and again after you have been admitted. If you can visit only once, make it before you apply.

Myth #11 - College is for only four years. This is wrong on two fronts: 1) You can't trade in your degree for another one if you didn't go to the best college for you the first time. Your college is with you for life. 2) Only about one of five students completes college in four years. In fact, only two of five students complete college in six years. If you plan to be out of college in four years, learn what each college's four-year graduation rate is.

Myth #12 - Your life will be ruined if you don't get admitted to your first-choice college. Thousands of students each year do not get admitted to their first choice college, and most are happy, healthy individuals today. Yes, rejection is hard on your ego, but you will not be alone. Additionally, the vast majority of students who settle for their second choice and end up happy at that institution.

Myth #13 - You have to take only the minimum college prep courses to get into college. Technically, this is true. In reality, it is not. The more mathematics, science, and languages you take, the better your chances are for getting into a good four-year college, and the better your chances of success once you get there.

Myth #14 - You will have a better chance of getting into professional or graduate school if you go to a university that offers these graduate programs. Many students and parents mistakenly think that attending a university with a law school, medical school, or graduate school guarantees admissions into that program at graduation. Very few universities give their students special preference for graduate study, and those that do reserve it for only the very best students. Many small colleges and universities have excellent records in placing students in professional schools and graduate programs. The key to admission is succeeding in a strong major program at a challenging college, not where you go. Regardless of where you attend, there are no guarantees.

Myth #15 - Liberal arts colleges do not have good science programs. The "liberal" in liberal arts means "broadening" and "freeing" – as in freeing one's mind from narrow thinking. The term "liberal arts" is a shortened version of the full title: liberal arts and sciences. Most liberal arts colleges have been emphasizing science for all students for a century or more. Since the best way to learn science is by doing science, small colleges with small classes and fewer students in the laboratories often have an advantage. Proportionally, far more physicians and Ph.D.s have earned their undergraduate degrees from small liberal arts colleges than from large universities.

Myth #16 - Residence halls are simply places where you sleep. Living at home while attending college is a good option for many students. However, residential life can add a great deal to your college experience. At "residential colleges," the staff takes advantage of the 24-hour learning experience. Many colleges and universities have regular activities in the residence halls, ranging from film festivals to Super Bowl parties. The famous college tradition, the late night "bull session," often deals in subject matter from academic courses to personal beliefs. Attending college is a unique time in your life and living on campus may help you blend your academic, social, personal, and recreational activities.

Myth #17 - Large universities have greater diversity. This is true if "diversity" simply means have greater numbers of African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and international students. Unfortunately, the size and nature of a large university often mean that there is little interaction among those various ethnic and racial groups. At large universities, groups of students can often choose to live and learn together and separately from other students. At small schools, however, the student population is small enough that you will get to know nearly everyone. If the value of diversity is to learn to understand and appreciate other cultures and groups, then small colleges often offer greater diversity.

Myth #18 - Colleges are concerned only with my intellectual and academic development. Many colleges and smaller universities pride themselves on their ability to "develop the whole person." Some of this personal development comes from requiring a broad-based general education that contributes to your understanding of the world and our society. Plus, personal growth takes place in the residence halls where you learn things like tolerance and how to get along with different kinds of people.

Myth #19 - Only the very best students receive financial aid from colleges. If you are admitted and have financial need, colleges generally want to make it possible for you to attend. In fact, the greatest proportion of financial assistance at private

colleges tends to go to students in the middle of the class. High-ability students, or students with special talents, may receive "merit-based scholarships."

Myth #20 - The federal government provides most of the financial aid. Government grants comprise only a moderate proportion of the financial aid available. In fact, the government continually reduces the amount of grant money – money that does not need to be paid back. Private colleges, especially, supply the largest portion of financial aid.

Myth #21 - Even if I get financial aid, I will end up with large loans to repay when I graduate. To see that you don't have too much debt at graduation, most colleges allow you to borrow only a reasonable amount. Nationally, on average, students will usually have only \$2,500-\$3,500 per year in loans. At most private colleges, this represents less than 20 percent of the annual charges. Depending on the loan, you will usually have 10 years to repay, and you don't start the repayment until after you graduate.

Myth #22 - You can't trust the college about financial aid. Financial aid is not a "you vs. me" business. The job of a college's financial aid officer is to make it possible for all admitted students to attend their college while staying within the federal guidelines.

The 411 on Cash for College

The Top Myths About Financial Aid

Myth #1 - College is just too expensive for my family.

Despite the media hype about rising college costs, a college education is more affordable than most people think, especially when you consider college graduates earn an average of \$1 million more over their careers than high-school graduates. The average yearly cost of a four-year public school in 2005-2006 is just \$5,491. There are some expensive schools, but high tuition is not a requirement for a good education.

Myth #2 - There's less aid available than there used to be.

In fact, student financial aid in 2004-2005 rose to a record level of more than \$129 billion. Most students receive some form of aid. Less of this aid now comes in the form of grants, however; most aid is awarded through low-interest loans or institutional and other grants. You should consider carefully the financing packages you've been offered by each college to determine which makes the most financial sense.

Myth #3 - My parents' or guardians' income is too high to qualify for aid.

Aid is intended to make a college education available for students of families in many financial situations. College financial aid administrators often take into account not only income but also other factors. Aid is awarded to many families with incomes they thought would disqualify them.

Myth #4 - My parents saved for college, so we won't qualify for aid.

Saving for college is almost always a good idea. Since a lot of financial aid comes in the form of loans, the aid you are likely to receive will need to be repaid. Tucking away money could mean you have fewer loans to repay, and it won't mean you're not eligible for aid if you need it.

Myth #5 - I'm not a straight "A" student, so I won't qualify for aid.

It's true that many scholarships reward merit, but the vast majority of federal aid is based on financial need and does not even consider grades.

Myth #6 - If I apply for a loan, I have to take it.

Families are not obligated to accept a low-interest loan if it is awarded to them. Even if you are awarded a loan, you can turn it down and try to find money elsewhere.

Myth #7 - Working will hurt my academic success.

Students who attempt to juggle full-time work and full-time studies do struggle. But research shows that students who work a moderate amount often do better academically. Securing an on-campus job related to career goals is a good way for you to help pay college costs, get experience, and create new ties with the university.

Myth #8 - I should live at home to cut costs.

It's smart to look at every way of reducing college costs, but living at home may not be the best way. Be sure to consider commuting and parking costs when you do this calculation. Plus, living on campus may create more opportunities for work and other benefits.

Myth #9 - Private schools are out of reach for my family.

The most important thing is finding a school that meets your academic, career, and personal needs. In fact, you might have a better chance of receiving aid from a private school. Private colleges often offer more financial aid to attract students from every income level. Higher college expenses also mean a better chance of demonstrating financial need.

What Next?..... How 2 Succeed

When you're making college plans, it's normal to feel a little uncertain at times. After all, it's one of the biggest decisions in your life.

That's why it really helps to know that other students out there struggled with the same feelings and got through it.

Here are the words of real students who have been there:

"Put Yourself Out There"

"You never know who can help you, and later in life they can still help. If you shut out people, you're going to be by yourself. Network, lean, connect, and talk to people. You can't go through high school staying to yourself. Colleges these days are looking for well-rounded people. So get out of the shell and put yourself out there."

--Eric

"College Is Attainable"

"Stepping foot on a college campus as a high school student puts you that much closer to your goals. You can only go after things that you know about, that's the thing. You visit a college, and maybe you don't like that one-- but you find something there that's interesting that you could possibly get into. Maybe they have a publication on campus that you thought was really cool. Maybe they have a nice hangout spot. It makes it more tangible. Something that you can grasp and build on. It shows you college is attainable."

--Niema

"Taking That Chance"

"I did not think about going to college. The only purpose I went to the college for was to play tennis, but actually I made a couple friends. One is a girl, and the other one is a boy. They are Chinese. They go here. They are college students, and they know more English than I do. By taking that chance you are able to meet people at the college who will serve you as a bridge.

-- Naixing

"Reach for More"

"My identity in my house, 'cause I come from a big family, is 'The one that goes to college. The one that's trying to do something for her life.' My brother's the one with the three kids who lives with us. My other sister's the single mother raising two kids on her own. My other sister's only 19 with a one-year-old son. The other one is working in food services, the same job like my mother. Everybody looks at me. They're proud of me. Just to know that somebody is proud of you makes you reach even more."

-- Aileen

All quotes statements from the book *First in the Family: Advice About College from First-Generation Students* (Next Generation Press, www.nextgenerationpress.org).

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ACT: College admission test that measures English, math, reading, and science reasoning. Scores range from 1-36 along with a composite score and 11 sub-scores broken down by subject areas. An optional writing test is offered. Calculators are permitted on the math test but not on the science test. Pick up registration forms at school or register online at www.act.org.

Advanced Placement Tests: Designed for students who have completed college level work in high school, AP tests are given in specific subject areas and are used to determine if a student may gain advanced standing in college.

Admission: The decision to allow a student to enter a college or university.

Admission Test: A standardized test used in the admission process to predict the likelihood of a student's success in college.

Application: A formal request for admission to a college or university; requires the submission of forms and other materials.

Aptitude: A natural ability or talent.

Associate's Degree (A.A., A.S.): A two-year degree that generally prepares a student for further study. Some associate's degree programs provide sufficient training for specific careers, but many students in two-year colleges plan to complete their studies at a four-year college.

Bachelor's Degree (B.A., B.S., B.F.A., B.A.A.): A four-year degree in a specified subject.

Certificate: Recognition provided to a student for completion of a short-term vocational or career training program.

Class Rank: A measure of each student's academic performance in high school.

Common Application: A standardized application form used by a consortium of colleges for admission.

Degree: The rank or title given by a college or university to a student who has met certain academic requirements.

Diploma: Certificate issued by a school, college, or university to a student who has met coursework and graduation requirements.

Doctorate Degree (Ph.D.): Master's Degree plus advanced graduate courses in specialized area. Normally requires three to five years of additional full-time studies after completion of a Master's Degree.

Early Action: Early action is used primarily in highly selective colleges. Early action follows the same timetable as early decision (see below), but allows the accepted candidate until May 1 to accept or decline the offer of admission. Under an early action program, it is possible for an applicant to be denied admission outright and not automatically deferred for later consideration.

Early Decision: Not to be confused with early action, early decision is a plan under which a student applies to the first-choice college early in the fall (usually by November 1 of the senior year) and agrees by contract to enter that college if offered admission. Early decision applicants are judged on the basis of their junior year test scores, class rank, and grades.

Important Note: Early decision and early action programs vary from college to college. Read the literature of each college carefully, and ask questions if you do not understand some aspect of the program.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC): An Amount the student and student's family are expected to contribute toward his/her education. It is used in determining eligibility for federal student aid.

Extracurricular Activities: Any school activity, such as athletics, drama, or music, that offers the student an opportunity to complement his or her classroom experiences.

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) www.fafsa.ed.gov: A form required by the government for application to any federal education aid program. A FAFSA is used to determine the specific Federal Student Aid programs that can contribute to a student's total college financial aid package and in what proportions. High school seniors should submit the FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1. The FAFSA is processed free of charge and must be submitted each year a student applies for financial aid.

Financial Aid or Assistance: Any financial award to a student (grant, scholarship, or loan).

Grade point average (GPA): An indicator of the student's overall scholastic performance.

Grants: Awards based on financial need that do not require repayment. Grants are available through the federal government, state agencies, and educational institutions.

Honors program: Any program offering the opportunity for superior students to enrich their educational experience through independent, advanced, or accelerated study.

Letter of Recommendation: An assessment of the student's aptitudes, abilities, and interests, written by a teacher or counselor and used by colleges and universities in the admission process.

Major: The subject of study in which the student chooses to specialize; a series of related courses, taken primarily in the junior and senior years of college.

Master's Degree (M.S., M. A.): Bachelor's Degree plus graduate courses in specialized area. A Master's Degree usually requires two additional years of full-time studies after completion of a Bachelor's Degree.

Open Admissions: The policy of some colleges of admitting virtually all high school graduates, regardless of academic qualifications such as high school grades and admission scores.

PLAN: a pre-ACT test and examination of interests and skills for 10th graders.

PSAT/NMSQT: Preliminary SAT and National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. Enables students to practice for the SAT Reasoning Test and serves as the qualifying test for scholarship competitions conducted by National Merit Scholarship Corporation.

Regular Decision: The application process in which a student submits an application to an institution by a specified date and receives a decision within a reasonable and clearly stated period of time.

Rolling Admission: The application process whereby a college reviews an application when the individual folder (application form and all supporting data) is completed and communicates the admission decision within a few weeks of reviewing the folder.

SAT (Reasoning Test): College admission test designed to measure critical reading, math, and writing skills needed for academic success in college. SAT scores range from 200 to 800 in each of the three sections (writing, math, and critical reading). Bring a calculator to use for the SAT math section. Pick up registration forms at school or register online at www.collegeboard.com.

Scholarship: Financial aid based on merit and paid directly to the student in the form of an outright gift. Some scholarships are given to students who exhibit a particular ability or skill, such as in music or athletics.

Standardized Tests: Tests such as ACT and SAT that provide college admission officers with a comparative standard for evaluating a student's academic aptitude and likelihood of success in college.

Student Aid Report (SAR): The information received after the FAFSA has been processed. The SAR reports the Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

Transcript: The official record of high school or college courses and grades, generally required as part of the college application.

Work/ Study: Money earned in a job obtained through the help of the college's financial aid office. Hours/ location of the job are compatible with academic life and school schedule.

Helpful Websites

www.act.org = Provides information on all tests and products produced by ACT, as well as great college info.

www.CampusTours.com = Virtual tours to hundreds of colleges and universities.

www.collegeboard.com = The College Board Web site provides information on all tests and products produced by the College Board, as well as great college info.

www.collegefortexans.com = Project by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board which provides information regarding preparing, applying, paying, and getting through college.

www.collegenet.com = Identifies schools based on criteria such as location, size, degree programs, etc.; provides links to individual college Web sites.

www.ed.gov/thinkcollege = U.S. Department of Education regarding college and career planning at all age levels.

www.hacu.net = HACU (Hispanic Association of colleges and Universities) represents more than 300 colleges and universities committed to Hispanic higher education success in the U.S., Puerto Rico, Latin America, and Spain.

www.hbcuconnect.com = The Web site for historically Black colleges and universities.

www.infoplease.com/homework = This site includes homework help, study advice, writing tips, resources (atlas, almanacs, encyclopedias, dictionaries) and historical facts.

www.KnowHow2Go.org = American Council on Education and Lumina Foundation for Education

References

American Council on Education and Lumina Foundation www.KnowHow2Go.org

College Board www.collegeboard.com

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board www.collegefortexans.com