



September 2019

10th and 11th grade students—
Register & prepare for PSAT

Seniors – Finalize college list;
work on applications & essays;
review transcript for accuracy;
request recommendation
letters from teachers and
counselors; meet with visiting
college reps

**14th – ACT and ACT plus
Writing**

October 2019

10th and 11th grade students—
Review test materials & take
PSAT

**5th — SAT Reasoning
and Subject Tests**
(register by 9/6 — late
registration 9/24)

**26th — ACT and ACT plus
Writing** (register by 9/20 —
late registration 10/4)

Attend area college fairs and
meetings

Meet with college reps visiting
high school

Seniors - Continue work on
college applications; complete
Early Decision/Early Action
applications

Complete CSS Profile if
required by colleges

FAFSA available October 1st

Managing Stress

In a 2018 study by the American Psychological Association, “Stress in America Generation Z”, it was shocking to read that that school/mass shootings are now a high source of stress for teenagers, with 3 in 4 seeing this as a significant source of anxiety. Worry about the current state of the nation also gives young people great anxiety, as does global warming, the rise in suicide rates, and reports of widespread sexual harassment. That’s a lot to worry about! The overwhelming majority of teens also report symptoms of stress such as depression, sadness, and lack of motivation, sleep, or energy on a regular basis. School has always been high on the list of stressors for young people – exams, tests, deadlines, organization, time management, friends, and money. In fact, an earlier 2014 “Stress in America” survey found that the number one cause of stress was school, with teen girls worrying more than boys by a significant amount.

The good news today is that stressed teens are more in tune with their mental health than ever before and are more likely now to seek out and take advantage of professional help. Here are some additional ways you can manage stress:

SLEEP:

Young people now are so heavily scheduled. School all day, often sports in the afternoon, clubs, organizations, fun with friends and then homework. The ideal amount of sleep for an adolescent is at least nine hours a night. Reduce or avoid screen time in the late evening, stop the energy drinks/coffee after 6 and keep your evenings calm. Make your bedroom a quiet, peaceful place that encourages sleep.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:

One of the very best ways to manage stress is by moving. Explore and engage in activities you really enjoy – yoga, biking,

dancing, hiking, swimming, tennis – all great options for those who don’t relish team sports. Being part of a sports team can also be a great stress reliever as you both move your body and enjoy fun with friends.

SAFETY FIRST:

Given there are justifiable concerns about personal safety in school and in social situations, it’s important to have a safe haven. Maintaining family traditions and rituals can bring a sense of calm and connection. Family dinner can be an important habit but, if meals together are impossible, help your family to establish a family movie or pizza night.

FRIENDS:

A 2017 study published by BMC Psychiatry revealed a higher level of anxiety in girls than in boys, and reported that girls’ friends can be both a source of support and a source of even more stress. It appears that girls with only 1 or 2 very close friends bring less drama into their lives than those who try to juggle 6 or 7. Consider limiting some of the larger group activities if these prove stressful to you.

Social media has exacerbated a ‘frenemy’ culture exponentially and online bullying has exploded. You may not want to totally disengage from social media, but consider limiting your exposure. Share only with your closest friends and give out very limited information – no last names, birthdays or addresses. Encourage connections with friends in the ‘real’ world and remember that ‘de-friending’ is perfectly fine. If the cyber bullying is overwhelming, end all use of social networking pages.

TALK:

Make time to talk to your parents. They care about you and will do all they can to help if they know you are having difficulty coping with all the demands and expectations on teenagers today. If necessary, seek out professional help.

Examples of Interdisciplinary Majors

Ancient Studies: combines archeology, literature, philosophy, art history, military history, architectural history, religious texts, and law

Biopsychology: studies both biology and psychology

Gerontology: studies the physical and psychological aspects of aging through biology and psychology combined with courses from literature, history, philosophy, and religion

Peace Studies: combines coursework in history and international relations

Medieval & Renaissance Studies: includes coursework from history, art history, philosophy, literature, music, and languages

Neuroscience: combines the fields of biology, psychology, chemistry, engineering, and others to come to a more specific understanding of how brain structures influence behavior.

Strategic Communication: includes coursework from communications, business, psychology

PPE: Philosophy, Politics and Economics combines study from three disciplines. It may also be combined with studies from law.

Interdisciplinary Majors

Many colleges and universities now offer you the option of exploring several different areas of study, combining specific courses across a variety of disciplines tailored to your career goals and/or academic interests. This flexible and personalized approach to the completion of an undergraduate degree is a wonderful way to customize your field of study and to focus your interests within a range of interconnected subjects. Colleges that provide this exciting opportunity may often offer both a BA and a BS in interdisciplinary majors, so you can select a few related fields of academic interest and complete most of your coursework within these topics. A BS will be a rigorous science-based degree program that may combine traditional sciences with business, psychology, humanities or even social sciences. As an interdisciplinary major, you will still need to compete your school's graduation requirements, typically know as 'General Education' requirements.

Different areas of interdisciplinary studies are constantly evolving. Some well-established fields include Fine Art and/or Performing Arts – these may straddle art, dance, music and theatre. Business can combine finance, marketing, economics, human resources, and management. Neuroscience and biochemistry are good combinations, and it is interesting to note that molecular biology is a new field that has been recently developing after breakthroughs resulting from the discovery of the structure of DNA, and other new technologies. The study of history now offers the combination of politics and economics, as well as other aspects of the humanities and social sciences.

One well-established interdisciplinary studies department (ISF) is located at UC Berkeley. There, you can choose a course of study that is made up of courses taken in the social sciences, the humanities, and/or the professional schools and colleges, alongside the required courses in ISF. You may also work with a faculty advisor to address 'significant research problems in the social sciences and humanities from an interdisciplinary perspective', and complete both a major research project and a Senior Thesis. Recent examples of such studies include Language and Power in Education, Global Health

and Society, and International Health and Development. St Olaf College in Minnesota has a center for cross-disciplinary academics called the Center for Integrative Studies. Their name references the intentional combination of diverse methodologies, experiences, subject matters, learning styles, and resources. You may use integrative studies to create and complete a major that meets your unique academic goals and ambitions. Brown University students often engage in coursework that crosses departmental boundaries, all designed to support and encourage individual interests and goals.

It would be a mistake to think that a program of interdisciplinary coursework is for students who don't really know what they want to study. It is a rigorous program of study for you if you have a goal and/or a focus, and you wish to enhance your study of that specific discipline by combining coursework from complementary fields. If, for example, your interests are within the fields of translation or diplomacy, you might want to study two foreign languages, governmental policy, political science, social science and history; if you're a budding entrepreneur you may want to complete coursework in psychology, human resources management and finance; and if you seek entrance into medical school, you may study biological sciences, classics and English. Some colleges permit the selection of an integrative major only at the sophomore level, and others require an application for admission. Georgetown University, for example, requires applicants to interdisciplinary studies to have completed most of their core requirements and achieved a minimum GPA of 3.5.

The field of interdisciplinary studies continues to grow, and offers many exciting opportunities to enhance your undergraduate experience. Reach across boundaries to develop your own exciting career goals and you'll graduate with an important body of knowledge that will propel you forward. Employers love graduates who show this depth, and graduate schools welcome students who are so clearly devoted to the creation of new knowledge – and this new knowledge is one of the main goals of integrated programs of study. Tomorrow's complex problems will require a multidisciplinary approach, and narrowly-focused studies will become inadequate.

NEPA Career & College Counseling Associates

Financial Matters: File the FAFSA as Soon as October 1st.



The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is the primary form used by colleges to determine eligibility for need-based aid. In some cases, colleges will not consider an applicant for merit aid unless that student has first submitted a FAFSA. The FAFSA should be filed as soon as possible after October 1st of the student's senior year, and then yearly while attending college.

The FAFSA collects basic information about both the student's and his/her parents' incomes and assets, and uses

this information to determine an *expected family contribution* (EFC). The EFC is the amount that the student and family is expected to contribute towards that individual's college expenses during the next academic year. The difference between the EFC and the *total cost of attendance* at your college of choice is known as *demonstrated need*. Colleges use this information to prepare a customized financial aid package for each admitted student who qualifies for financial aid.

The package may include both grants and loans as well as self-help (work-study) opportunities. **Only some colleges guarantee to meet 100% of established need, so financial aid may not cover all of your expenses at a particular college.**

Complete the FAFSA online at <https://fafsa.ed.gov>. You'll need your 2018 tax returns and other financial records noted on the site. You'll also want to apply for a Federal Student Aid ID (FSAID) for both student and a parent so you can sign your form electronically. Completing your FAFSA early in the cycle allows early decision and early action colleges to provide your family with a realistic estimate of your financial aid package.

Families of high school underclassmen can get an early estimate of eligibility for aid by completing the FAFSA4caster available at FAFSA4caster.ed.gov. This online tool will also provide information about other sources of financial aid for college.

Rigor of Curriculum

Looking to attend a highly selective university? You'll need to make good choices when selecting your classes, beginning as early as eighth grade. Middle school students may have the option of taking their first year of a foreign language and/or a more advanced Math class such as Algebra 1. When a student submits a college application, the admission reader also receives detailed information about academic options available at that student's high school. The reader will expect to see that the applicant has taken the most challenging classes available, and has done well in those tough classes.

Further proficiency may be demonstrated with a strong performance on the SAT Subject Tests, AP Tests or the IB tests. Colleges will carefully examine overall academic rigor and performance, as well as grade trends over the course of high school – they don't like to see downtrends, ever, so if you struggle in a tough class, always seek help.

In order to be competitive and well balanced, students should take 4 years of English, 4 years of one foreign language, 2-3 years of History/Social Sciences, 4 years of Mathematics and 4 years of laboratory sciences to an advanced level. Note that the majority of successful applicants to an Ivy League college will present with 4 classes in each core subject. Elective classes can also reveal the range of an applicants' interests. Taking advanced classes in your areas of academic interest also reveals more about you, but you may want to be cautious about taking on more advanced coursework in weaker subjects that are not an imperative for your likely area of college studies. Selective colleges highly value students with special talents, strong personal qualities, long-term involvement in some important extracurricular activities and evidence of resourcefulness and resilience. Colleges want students who will take advantage of the many opportunities they'll find on campus, come prepared to develop new

knowledge, and show academic curiosity both in and out of the classroom.

It is a given that students should take advantage of AP courses, Honors classes and the most advanced options offered at their school, but there are other ways of completing more advanced coursework that will be interesting to an admissions review committee. Taking college classes, perhaps through dual enrollment, demonstrates the applicant's ability to manage college-level coursework and shows careful time management. Other students may choose to take summer classes on a college campus. MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) are other ways of taking on additional coursework in areas of interest. You can't design your school's curriculum but you can control how you complete your four years of high school, so plan well for the most rigorous program you can comfortably handle while still having a balanced life.



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Writing a Note-Worthy Essay

You want your essay to be the one that is passed around the admissions office.... or not. It's a little bit like the difference between being famous and infamous. We all know that a sincere, well-written essay that provides insights about how the student has matured, is occasionally shared among the admissions staff. That's the recognition you should be aiming for.

So how do you make your essay famous instead of infamous? Here are some basic tips to consider:

Don't write the "safe" essay. Pick a topic that only you can write about. It could be something that others also experienced, but make sure to have your own personal take on how it affected you. Lots of students think that the only things colleges care about is community service, so they feel the need to write about their mission trip experience. It is very hard to write a compelling essay that is remarkably different from the hundreds or even thousands of other mission trip essays. Admission officers have read it all before.

Avoid the generic and get specific. Don't write that you're well-rounded or that many people have had an impact on you. Tell the reader what you've done, how you've been influenced and by whom.

Don't repeat information that is elsewhere in your application. There is no need to share your participation level (hours per week and weeks per year) because colleges ask for that information on your activity list. It is important for you to use every opportunity to provide insight into who you are and impress the admissions office. Certainly you can talk about your extracurricular activities in your essay, but talk about *how* and *why* you're involved in these activities.

Don't complain. If you have endured difficult circumstances, it is appropriate to share your story. But don't point fingers, whine or sound like you've given up. It's important to demonstrate perseverance and resilience. The better essay will talk about how you have dealt with, and hopefully overcome, the obstacles presented.