College 101 Dictionary

A Collection of Commonly Used College Terms
College 101 Dictionary

This dictionary was prepared by the CSU Channel Islands, Office of Admissions to provide prospective college students with a better understanding of commonly used terms when searching for and applying to colleges and applying for financial aid. The dictionary is organized into sections that make understanding these terms easier for every step of your journey as you begin your college career.
THE BASICS

What is “college”? What are the different types of colleges? Here is your crash course in College 101 basic terms before you begin your college search.

LOOKING FOR A COLLEGE

Size? Location? What factors go into looking for a college and what do they mean? Own the college search process by understanding these terms.

APPLYING & THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

When it’s time to apply to schools, you’ll breeze through the application once you’re familiar with these terms. Better understand what colleges look for in your application and how they make the all-important “final decision”.

PAYING FOR SCHOOL & FINANCIAL AID

You’re going to college! Now you just have to pay for it... What kind of help can you get when it comes to your college tuition and fees? What is FAFSA?

PARTING WORDS

You’ve learned what you can from us. Now take these last few tips and we’ll see you in college!
THE BASICS

TYPES OF COLLEGES

When looking for a college, the ultimate goal is finding the right fit. Start by identifying the type of school you want to attend. There is no one type of school that fits everyone’s needs and educational goals. Which of these types of schools sound like a good fit for you?

Public University
A 4-year institution that receives public funding from the government, and usually offers many major and minor options. Tuition ranges for in state and out of state students.

Private University
A 4-year institution supported by tuition, endowment, and donations and not operated by the government. They are typically more expensive than public colleges. Some are closely affiliated with religious organizations.

Community College
Generally, a 2-year institution of higher education that anyone can attend and offers different levels of instruction adapted to fit the needs of the community. Degrees offered will range from Certificates to Associate Degrees.

Technical/Vocational School
A school that offers specialized training in a particular industry or career. Possible programs of study include the culinary arts, fire fighting, dental assistant and medical-records technology. These colleges usually offer certificates or associate degrees.

Arts College
A school that provides training in areas such as photography, music, theater or fashion design. Most of these colleges offer associate or bachelor’s degrees in the fine arts or a specialized field.
Deciding what degree you are hoping to receive will help narrow down the type of college that you will be searching for. Here are a list of possible degrees/certificates you can obtain in college.

A Doctorate Degree is the highest degree attainable. It qualifies the individual to teach at the university level in that particular field and/or to work in a specific profession. The duration of the program can be anywhere from four to ten years.

This is the standard graduate-level degree. It is granted to those who have demonstrated a mastery of a specific field of study or professional practice. It usually consists of a full-time 2-year program of study.

The standard 4-year college degree. It is offered in hundreds of subjects at 4-year institutions and numerous online schools. A Bachelor’s degree is a usually prerequisite for all graduate and doctorate programs.

This is the basic 2-year college degree often awarded at community colleges. Associate degrees often involve a set of basic preparatory coursework, equivalent to the first two years of a Bachelor’s program.

Often involves certification in a specific field (medical assistant, paralegal, technician, etc.). These tend to be relatively quick, between 6 weeks to a year. Most require a High School Diploma or GED.

According to the 2011 US Census Bureau, only 1-2% of Americans have obtained a Doctorate Degree. Will you be part of that percentage?
I was looking for a school that focused on being creative and offered majors in art. Smaller class sizes were most important to me, but I didn’t want to pay a lot of money for that. What’s important to you when looking for colleges? There are different things that should factor into your search process that can give you some direction on how to start looking for schools. Below are some of many common college search factors.

Areas of Study
These are the programs or majors that a school offers. Many universities offer a variety of subjects to study while some colleges specialize in specific areas like art or nursing.

Campus Demographics
This describes the characteristics and makeup of the student body at a school, including ethnicity, gender, age, religious affiliation, size of student body etc.

Cost & Financial Aid
The amount needed to pay for tuition and other expenses at a school, as well as the amount of scholarships and loans they offer to cover those costs.

Housing
Where students live while attending school. Dorms, Residence Halls, and Student Apartments are examples of on campus options at different colleges.

Location
What city, state, or country in which a school is located. This could also describe the type of environment in which a school is located around (i.e. urban, suburban, rural, etc.).

Sports & Extracurricular Activities
Most universities will participate in NCAA sports, if you are looking to take your talents to the college level. But even if you are not, take a look at the different intramural sports, clubs, and organizations you could join.
College

/ˈkælij/ n.

An institution of higher education that grants degrees and certificates
Applying to colleges can be a daunting task. We will break down the application into five categories to help you better understand what you are getting into. If you know the following terms it could make the difference between finishing an application in a few days instead of a few weeks!

**WHEN TO APPLY**

Different colleges have different deadlines. It is important to know when they are and what type of deadline a college has set up. Knowing the key dates is essential to your planning.

**WHAT WE CONSIDER**

Every college has specific qualities they are looking for in prospective students. Understanding what colleges expect from you can go a long way in turning yourself into a competitive applicant.

**TESTS**

“Make sure to take the SAT.” “No, the ACT is better.” “But you also have to take the TOEFL” “WHAT TEST SHOULD I TAKE?!” We’ll help you out here.

**THE APPLICATION**

You want to make sure that you complete everything and turn in all that is required in order to be considered by the college. Here is what you will commonly see on college applications.
Admissible
The term used to describe an applicant who fulfills the admissions requirements set by an institution.

Course Rigor
Measure of how challenging an applicant's classes or combination of classes are (Advanced Placement, Honors, International Baccalaureate, College in the High School and Running Start are examples of classes that tend to be more challenging).

Extracurricular Activities
Activities you may be involved in that are not high school courses (i.e. basketball, DECA, Culinary Club, a part-time job).

Grade Trend
The improvement, regression, or constancy of course grades and GPA throughout an applicant's academic history. Typically, colleges want to see a progression or upward grade trend with students' grades.

Holistic Review
The review process which evaluates a prospective student's application and considers the whole person. Different factors taken into consideration may include academic record, grade trend, activities list, personal statement(s), letter(s) of recommendation, etc.

TIPS
1. Read the directions. Make sure that you know exactly what the college is asking you to submit.
Common Application
An application that students can use to apply to any colleges and universities that accept the Common Application. This application only needs to be filled out once; the information on this application is sent to multiple schools. Generally, a separate fee must be paid to each college for whom the student applies to through the Common Application.

Letter of Recommendation
A written statement of endorsement on a student’s behalf, usually by a teacher, coach, advisor or other adult who is able to speak to the student’s achievements and/or character.

Personal Statement
An essay component of the college application that gives applicants the opportunity to tell a school about themselves - their hopes, ambitions, life experiences, inspirations, etc. and give the school a more holistic view of themselves.

Transcript
The official document containing the record of a student’s academic performance and testing history. The school at which a student is or has been officially enrolled must issue the transcript.
You’ve finished your application. Good work! Now the college is using some confusing words about your application status. Let us help you decode those words.

**Acceptance**
A student's application to attend a college or university is approved and the student is able to enroll.

**Admissions Appeal**
A student may contest an admissions decision made by a college or university if they believe that the college did not make the right decision. Applicants tend to have a justification of why they believe the wrong decision was made.

**Deferred Enrollment**
An applicant is accepted but agrees to enroll in school in a future quarter/semester/year.

**Denial**
A student's application to attend a college or university is not approved. The decision to deny an applicant's admission can be based on various factors (i.e. applicant did not fulfill the minimum admissions requirements, limited space, etc.).

**Dually Enrolled**
Involves a student who is enrolled in two separate institutions.

**Waitlisted**
An applicant is neither accepted nor denied and may be offered admission if spaces become available.

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**YOU’VE BEEN ACCEPTED! NOW WHAT?**

Make sure to read all the instructions from your future college. Here are some of the common actions you might have to take.

- Visit the campus (not required but recommended)
- *Confirm your admission
- Submit final transcripts
- Take any subject placement test(s)
- Sign up for Orientation
- Measles Immunization Verification Form
- Activate your online account

*Confirmation may require a nonrefundable deposit.
De·gree

/ di-gre / n.

An academic rank conferred by a college or university after examination or after completion of a course of study.
The price tag for college can be expensive. However, if you put in the effort and do your research, attending a college can be more affordable than you think. Here is your guide to understanding the basics of Financial Aid.

Fill out your FAFSA

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) can be filled out online at fafsa.ed.gov

FAFSA considers

- Family Members
- Family Income, Assets, etc.

Calculates

EFC
Expected Family Contribution

Once accepted to the college, they will decide how much aid to provide you.

Colleges will send a FINANCIAL AID notification with the amount of scholarships, grants, and/or loans.

You can accept or decline your financial aid options.
**Award Letter/Financial Aid Notification**
An offer from a college or university that outlines the total amount and types of financial aid and scholarships the school is willing to provide if a student accepts admission and enrolls.

**Cost of Attendance (COA)**
Typically the COA includes tuition and fees, room and board, books, supplies, transportation, miscellaneous expenses and loan fees.

**Expected Family Contribution (EFC)**
This number is a result of information provided on the FAFSA (i.e. income, household size, number of family members enrolled in college, etc.). It is used to determine a student’s eligibility for federal student aid and represents how much a family can reasonably pay towards college expenses.

**FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)**
An application for prospective and current students to determine eligibility for financial aid.

**Grants**
Funds awarded to students that do not have to be repaid. Grants are often based on financial need.

**Scholarships**
Money awarded to students based on academic or personal achievements and financial need.

**Work-Study**
A federal student aid program that provides part-time employment while enrolled in school to help pay for educational expenses.

**Loans**
Funds for students to borrow to pay for educational expenses. Students are required to repay loans with interest.

**Private Loans**
A nonfederal loan provided by a lender such as a bank or credit union.

**Subsidized Loan**
A loan based on financial need for which the federal government pays the interest that accrues while the borrower is enrolled in classes or in deferment status.

**Unsubsidized Loan**
A loan for which the borrower is responsible for paying the interest. Interest accrues from the date of disbursement and continues throughout the life of the loan.
Find Scholarships

There is more than one way to get a full ride to college. By taking the time to search and apply for scholarships, you could find enough to pay for your education. Make this your part time job! There are three common place you can find scholarships.

Websites like fastweb.com, collegeboard.com, and scholarships.com are great for searching for scholarships and spreading a wide net.

Universities/Colleges may provide two types of scholarships. One is awarded automatically based on merit (grades, service, etc.). Other scholarships require students to apply, separate from their admission application. Check the Admissions or Financial Aid section of the school’s website.

Some businesses may offer scholarships and don’t post them on scholarship search engines. Check out different businesses’ websites to find out if they are offering any scholarships.

Christian Ramos | Major: Mathematics

“All throughout high school, I had been dreading choosing a college to attend. It meant having to make a big decision about my future. As soon as I found Channel Islands, that big decision became an easy one. The environment here at CI is extremely welcoming, and it has what I like to call the “home town” feel. Receiving the Presidential Scholarship was a great honor, and it was a sign of immense trust. Channel Islands is so much more than a school that offers what I think I want. It’s a community I can trust to guide me where I want to go, but also introduce to me various opportunities to explore passions I never knew I had.
PARTING WORDS

Since you got all the way to the end of our dictionary, you obviously know the importance of college. Let us leave you with our final tips and send you on your way.

GO TO COLLEGE
There are countless statistics out there that prove going to college will open up more doors for you than if you just have a high school diploma. Even if you aren’t sure about what you want to do in the future, college is the time to help answer those questions.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT FIT
As you know, there are thousands of colleges to choose from. Do your research, take some tours, and decide what campus fits your needs and personality best. Being comfortable in your environment will help you become a better college student.

LOOK FOR SCHOLARSHIPS
Make searching and applying for scholarships your priority. There are millions of dollars worth of scholarships out there. You just need to take the time to look and find them. This could save you a lot of money in the long run.

ASK QUESTIONS
Don’t be afraid to ask questions. This new journey you are on can be a complicated process. Speak to your high school counselors, call up the colleges you are interested in, and talk to your friends who are in college. People want to help you. Sometimes you just need to ask the questions.
Campus
\`kam-pəs\n
n.
The area and buildings around a university, college, school, etc.