

College Insights

4140 Brookview Drive Atlanta, GA 404.271.5544 jtowles@towlesedu.com www.towlesedu.com

October 2019

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

**5th — SAT Reasoning and
Subject Tests**

**26th — ACT and ACT plus
Writing** (late registration until
10/4)

Attend area college fairs and
meetings

Meet with college reps visiting
high school

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

Complete CSS Profile if
required by colleges

FAFSA available October 1st

November 2019

**2nd—SAT Reasoning and
Subject Tests**

(register by 10/3 - late
registration 10/15)

Seniors – File Early Decision/
Early Action applications

Work on remaining college
applications

The Rise of Test Optional Admissions

In June 2018, the University of Chicago made an announcement on Twitter that set off shock waves within the world of college admissions. The Washington Post called it a “watershed, cracking what had been a solid and enduring wall of support for the primary admission tests among the two dozen most prestigious research universities.” The University released a statement indicating that they would no longer require applicants to submit any standardized test scores.

There have long been active discussions around the submission of ACT and/or SAT scores and colleges have often been accused of merely attempting to boost their application numbers or trying to attract a wider diversity of applicants by removing them as requirements. The movement started with smaller colleges that were more easily able to experiment with their applicant pool, and then carefully study the results of going test-optional. Interestingly, those early results revealed limited differences in academic performance between those who submitted scores and those who did not. These same findings are widely reported by many colleges and universities.

Over the past 5-10 years, many colleges have gone test-optional. The National Center for Fair & Open Testing, **FairTest**, maintains a list of test-optional and test-flexible colleges and universities. That growing list now contains over 1,000 accredited four-year institutions, but no research university as selective as the University of Chicago has ever been present – they have broken the barrier! What has long been known is that the requirement for standardized tests unfairly disadvantages low-income families and first-generation applicants, and is a barrier to a broad and diverse applicant pool. Colleges want to see that changed. This exciting

trend reveals that colleges want to create a fairer, more creative, and more technologically advanced approach to their admissions procedures, one that encourages more first-generation and low-income students to submit an application.

Universities are well aware that for many, test preparation can really take over a young person’s life. It can overwhelm regular schoolwork, extracurricular activities, part-time jobs, volunteer work, sports, and even simple fun with friends. High schools may provide workshops, test prep courses, and some random programs that can at times take away from the real work of education. Families that can afford to enroll their student in a professional test preparation program may see them leaving for those classes once or twice a week, for several hours at a time, and frequently taking the tests more than once – or twice - in their quest for higher scores. Standardized tests have become a huge burden to many young people, and more and more colleges are really asking themselves if they are truly worth that burden.

But a sea change is now well underway in the world of standardized testing and thoughtful planning is happening in many admission offices. Without scores, admissions must dig deeper into an application; test-optional colleges must decide how to use the scores they will continue to receive; and colleges must offer more creative ways of designing their applications. On the other hand, universities that receive huge numbers of applications – UC Berkeley received over 100,000 applications last year – cannot yet imagine how to review those numbers without the anchor of standardized scores. Students should still carefully study a college’s testing requirements and/or recommendations - some may be test-optional in admissions but may still require them for scholarship consideration. Stay tuned!

Career Options for Public Administration Majors

- Health care administrator
- Urban & regional planner
- City manager
- Public administration consultant
- Foreign service officer
- Auditor
- Criminal investigator
- Customs inspector
- Industrial relations specialist
- Labor management relations specialist
- Mediator
- Private investigator
- Systems analyst
- Public utilities specialist
- Budget analyst
- Political scientist
- Social services administrator
- Lobbyist
- Non-profit manager
- County clerk
- Financial administrator



Majoring in Public Administration

As the aging Baby Boomer generation nears retirement age, a large number of job openings will occur in government and public sector positions. Students interested in careers in public service will find themselves well-positioned for these anticipated openings in federal, state, and local government, in city management and urban planning, in work with non-profits or in positions with private firms dealing with government relations.

Public administration focuses on the management of public affairs. Public administrators function in governmental organizations in a way similar to that of business managers in the private sector. Students develop an appreciation for the socio-economic, political, and cultural environments in which businesses and governments operate. Majors must develop their ability to see all sides of complex issues and also hone their skills in negotiation. It is the public administrator who often must help those on opposite sides of an issue find common ground.

Public administration is a subfield of political science. It combines the teachings of political science with studies in economics, management, sociology, and psychology. Public administrators both formulate public policy and put these policies into place. Thus, public administration majors must learn about all aspects of policy making and implementation.

Success in this field requires finely developed problem-solving abilities. Knowledge of political systems and an understanding of economics, statistics, and computer science are necessary. Typical courses in the major include studies in public policy, grant writing, economic development, structure of state government, organizational theory, local politics and administration, public financial administration, human resources administration, voluntarism and information technology. Programs vary from institution to institution, with some colleges focusing on local politics or community development, while others may be geared more to those who

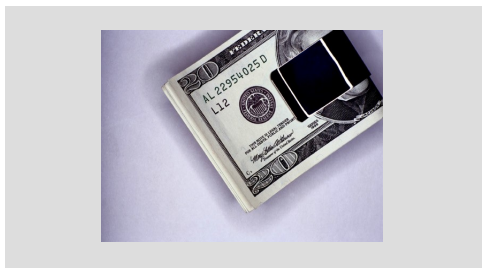
want a career in state or federal government. Still other programs specialize in environmental policy or nonprofit administration. When considering a college for this major, try to determine how well the institution's focus fits your vision of what you'd like to do in the future.

There's a lot of cross-over between public administration and related majors. Majors in areas such as economics, urban and regional planning, political science, sociology, health care administration, public relations, environmental studies and business administration and management all provide students with similar skills and competencies. Social work and human services may also work in closely related areas. Course work in each of these fields often employs the use of case studies or simulations to provide a sense of how things operate in the real world. Most programs require internships in governmental or nonprofit agencies to provide more hands-on experiences, while other programs utilize a co-op approach, placing students in paid positions for several semesters.

A bachelor's degree in any of these areas is required for entry level jobs in a variety of public service positions. Graduates may be employed by governmental agencies in positions such as assistant city manager, human resource manager, grant coordinator, neighborhood planner, or policy analyst. Nonprofits such as religious groups, chambers of commerce and other neighborhood organizations and schools also hire public administration graduates. Still others are employed by private companies to act as liaisons with governmental agencies.

Want to learn more? Visit the website of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) at www.aspanet.org. Those more interested in the human side of public administration may want to check out the website of the National Association of Social Workers (www.naswdc.org).

Financial Matters: Early Decision/ Early Action and Financial Aid



Early Decision is a *binding* admissions decision plan. In exchange for receiving an earlier admissions decision, students applying ED agree that, if they're admitted, they'll attend that college and withdraw all of their other college applications. Typically, Early Decision plans have deadlines in early November. Since ED is a *binding* agreement, students who've carefully and thoroughly researched their college options and decided with certainty that one particular school is their top choice are the best candidates for Early Decision. Although Early Decision can significantly increase your chance of admis-

sion at many colleges, there is a potential downside in ED for students who require financial aid to attend college.

How will applying Early Decision affect financial aid? If you're admitted during Early Decision, you'll typically receive the same financial aid package that you would have received if you'd applied in the regular admissions cycle. However, one of the main disadvantages of applying Early Decision is that if you're admitted in the ED round, you won't be able to compare financial aid offers from other colleges. You won't, for instance, know whether you might have received a significant merit scholarship or fewer student loans elsewhere. Because you're giving up the right to compare financial aid and scholarship offers from other colleges by applying ED, it's smart for families to use the Net Price Calculators on different college websites to get esti-

mates of how financial aid may vary before making the ED choice.

Like Early Decision, Early Action allows students to apply and receive an admissions decision earlier in senior year. Unlike Early Decision, Early Action is not a binding agreement. If you're admitted in the EA round, you can still apply to other colleges and will have until May 1 to make your final decision.

How does applying Early Action affect financial aid? Students will typically receive the same need-based financial aid package when they apply Early Action that they would if they applied during the regular admissions cycle. Unlike Early Decision, when you're admitted Early Action, your family will still be able to compare financial aid offers from any other colleges that admit you before you make your final decision about where to attend.

Why Are You Applying Here?

Many college applications include a supplementary essay that asks applicants why they are applying to that institution. Although it may be a shorter piece, this essay can be as important as the long application essay. Admission officers at some schools believe the response to this question tells them how much effort a student has put into getting to know the school and whether she is a serious applicant who is likely to matriculate. A student who has researched a college and knows it's the right place for her is also less likely to transfer or drop out, and that means a higher retention rate for the school.

While some students use this essay as an opportunity to demonstrate "fake" interest in a school, they usually end up with a generic answer that won't enhance their application. For students who are genuinely interested in a col-

lege, the process of answering this question helps them assess whether the school is a good fit and enables them to write a meaningful response.

When responding to the "why our college" prompt, in addition to writing what they think admission officers want to read, most students tell admissions officers what they already know. They are aware that their college has a reputation for educational excellence. They know the low student-teacher ratio and the great internship opportunities. This is the kind of essay that sounds as if it were lifted from a school's viewbook or website.

You need to use this essay to show that you and this school are a perfect match, and flattery is not the best way to do that. Telling a school that it is

respected will get you no respect. Instead, think about your interests, strengths and goals, and look for how they mesh with those of the school. If one school's mission statement talks about the importance of the life of the mind and another stresses its commitment to preparing students for the job market, you get a sense of the different approaches each college has to education. You may realize that one school is a much better fit for you. Taking the time to review course offerings in the catalogue, and reading up on professors, research opportunities, and student organizations will help you make sure you are applying to schools that are truly good matches. Instead of trying too hard to win over admissions officers, you will be able to make a compelling case for admission.



Joni L Towles

Certified Educational Planner

4140 Brookview Drive

Atlanta, GA 30339

404.271.5544

jtowles@towlesedu.com

www.towlesedu.com

Fall Timeline for Juniors and Seniors

Summer's over and there's plenty of work to be done on the college hunt. Here's a clip-and-save list of what you should be doing this fall:

Juniors & Seniors

Attend college presentations at your school – very important since the representative who comes to your school will most likely be the admission officer who will review applications from your area.

If a representative from a college that interests you is not visiting your school, contact that college's Admission Office and find out if and when a representative will be in your area – possibly for a College Fair. Then contact the representative and see if you can set up a brief meeting.

Seniors

Finish researching colleges and prepare a final college list with reach, target and safety schools.

Identify the number of essays and the specific essay prompts for each college. See if there are overlaps that allow you to use the same essay for multiple colleges.

Ask teachers in advance if they will write letters of recommendation. Prepare materials for recommenders that include Brag Sheet/Resume or other needed documents.

Make arrangements with your guidance office to send your high school transcripts and any needed guidance counselor recommendations.

Visit colleges you didn't have a chance to see over the summer or consider revisit-

ing colleges of particular interest. Meet with college reps who visit your school or your area.

Prep for the ACT, SAT and SAT Subject Tests as needed. Register before deadlines and have official test scores sent by the testing agency to colleges if required.

Discuss realistic financial commitments with parents. Explore financial aid and scholarships.

Study, study, study – first semester grades count.

Juniors

Visit colleges when traveling, take campus tours and sit in on college info sessions.

Attend college seminars, financial aid workshops, etc. to get up to speed on the process.

Take PSAT practice tests to boost performance on the October PSAT that serves as the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test.

Meet with your guidance counselor to review senior courses.

Create an academic portfolio – save essays and projects that you might reference in your applications.

Seek out leadership opportunities in your activities.

And of course, study, study, study. Remember that colleges don't see any senior year grades when students apply for either Early Action or Early Decision– so junior year grades carry a lot of weight.