



December 2023

Check the College Board and ACT websites for available test dates and sites in your area

Underclassmen — Review PSAT report with advisor and map out a plan for test preparation

Schedule spring SAT/ACT testing dates

Seniors — File any additional college applications before deadline dates

January 2024

Check the College Board and ACT websites for available test dates and sites in your area

Seniors – Search and apply for scholarships that match your qualifications

Seniors – File any additional college applications

Enjoy your winter break

Five Career Planning Ideas for High School Students

Many high school students are understandably more focused on getting *into* college than finding a job *after* college. Having at least a few ideas in mind for careers that might interest you is an important part of college planning. Here are five things you can do now – while you're still in high school – to start thinking about possible careers.

Know thyself. Begin with your current interests, talents, hobbies, strengths, and weaknesses. Chances are they all contain clues about the types of careers that might be a good match for you. Need more ideas? Try the College Board's Big Future careers website, which offers hundreds of suggested careers based on students' specific interests. Or, take a career assessment test designed for high school students (such as Princeton Review's Career Quiz) and see which jobs/careers are suggested for you.

Do some homework on jobs and careers. There are many types of jobs and careers that most people have never heard of or know little about. How do you discover them? Start by talking to the adults you know about their jobs. How did they get interested in their career? What education and skills are required to perform their jobs? What do they like about their careers? Don't be shy; adults are usually happy to answer questions. You can also learn about various careers online.

Two good starting points are the Occupational Outlook Handbook, published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the College Board's BigFuture site mentioned above. If you think you may be interested in a science or technology related field, the Sloan Career Cornerstone website is also an excellent resource to explore.

Connect the dots between college majors and careers. Although your college major does not always determine what you'll do for a career, understanding how various majors can connect to careers is part of career planning. As you explore the majors and programs offered at various colleges, take a moment to read through the relevant department's information on careers for students in that major.

Test the waters through extracurriculars and enrichment programs. Believe it or not, your extracurricular activities during high school allow you to explore potential jobs and careers. Managing finances for a school club, writing for the school newspaper or yearbook, helping to design and build the robotics club's entry, volunteering for a non-profit, and even being on an athletic team all offer opportunities to try out some of the skills you'll use in real life careers. Enrichment activities, such as summer programs on college campuses, can also help you learn about various jobs and careers. (continued on page 3)

Focus on Majors: Human-Centered Design

Career Paths for Human-Centered Design Majors

- *User Experience (UX) Designer*
- *User Interface (UI) Designer*
- *Service Designer*
- *Information Architect*
- *Content/Design Strategist*
- *Product Manager*
- *User Researcher*
- *Innovation Consultant*
- *Entrepreneur In Green Industry and Social Ventures*
- *Environmental Design Consultant*
- *Interaction Designer*
- *Product Designer (Internet & Software)*
- *Consulting Development Analyst*
- *Researcher in Government Agencies*
- *Data Analyst*



Each day we use products which are not expressly designed for all people. Band-aids were not produced to be inclusive to all skin types. Sunglasses are not built to fit all face types. What would our world look like if products were prototyped, developed, and researched with and for all people? Human-Centered Design (HCD) addresses this problem, emphasizing the importance of creating products that consider diverse user experiences.

Human-centered design study relies on four steps. Students will learn to **clarify** a problem, through collecting and observing data to understand a problem and how one might solve it. They will learn to **ideate** by applying different design thinking tools to amplify creativity and create unique solutions. They're trained to **develop** products by evaluating ideas to fit a product's desirability, feasibility, and viability. Lastly, students will understand how to **implement** a product to encourage adoption and continued growth.

In true interdisciplinary fashion, students majoring in human-centered design will begin to practice these four steps by taking courses within various fields. Students will study design processes and methods, computer science, customer assessment, analyzing research, concept generation, development, as well as engineering, entrepreneurship, environmental design, and psychology.

Various colleges offer bachelor's degrees in human-centered design, with programs differing in emphasis, and no two programs are alike. For instance, one can study Human-Centered Engineering Design (HCED) which bridges engineering, design, art, and social sciences. Programs with a focus on engineering place a strong focus on the foundations of physical sciences and mathematics to develop technical skills in usability and human factor engineering.

Students will learn how to solve complex engineering problems and produce human design solutions through the application of STEM-based principles.

Comparatively, other programs offer human-centered design through a liberal arts framework. Liberal arts programs focus on the need to generate large numbers of creative ideas and develop prototypes drawing on experience in a variety of courses such as anthropology, sociology, behavioral economics, art, and even improvisational theater.

Additionally, other universities provide hyper focused concentrations. For instance, students are able to study design and environmental analysis through a STEM certified program that highlights how people's daily experiences are shaped by the physical environment around them. An interdisciplinary program like fashion design and management integrates the world of fashion with new cutting-edge technological innovations.

Human-centered design careers are valuable in a rapidly evolving technological landscape, providing graduates with versatile skills applicable to diverse industries. Designers are seen as crucial in creating functional and user-resonant products. Graduates will have skills that are versatile and applicable in a wide range of industries, making them attractive for various career positions. Graduates will play a pivotal role in creating products that are functional and resonate with users.

Human-centered design is a good fit for students who are interested in taking coursework from a broad range of disciplines, excited about hands-on work and collaboration, and passionate about empathetic and equitable product development. Students should be ready to "think outside of the box" and create innovative solutions for both common and complex problems.

A2Z College Planning

Financial Matters: It's Time to Complete the FAFSA and CSS Profile



The bulk of college financial aid money comes from the federal government; this aid is distributed by colleges using information supplied by families when they complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). December 2023 is the expected first month that families can apply for student financial aid for the next academic year using FAFSA. However, the CSS Profile, which is used in addition to the FAFSA by about 400 colleges and universities, has been available since October 1.

Here's what you need to know:

Before completing the FAFSA, every contributor of financial information (parents and students) must first each create their own FSA ID <https://studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account>.

It is recommended that the FSA ID be created before the FAFSA opens in December. This will serve as an electronic signature when submitting the application in December.

All US colleges require the submission of the FAFSA if you are applying for need-based financial aid. You must complete the form found at <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa> when it opens in December 2023. There is no charge to submit this form.

The CSS Profile is used to gather more information to award institutional funds to deserving students. The CSS Profile can be accessed at <https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org>. **It is due midnight Eastern time of your earliest priority filing date**, but

submitting two weeks before is recommended. A list of colleges that require this form can be found at that web address. There is a \$25 submission fee for the CSS Profile, plus a \$16 reporting charge for each institution that receives the report. If you qualify, there are fee waivers.

Who should complete the FAFSA and the CSS Profile?

- Any family who believes they might qualify for financial aid at some time during the student's college years. The FAFSA calculations will consider parents' age and do not consider assets in retirement savings accounts or home equity in their formulas.
- Any family that expects to have two or more children in college at the same time.
- Anyone applying for merit-based aid at a college that requires the FAFSA or CSS Profile for consideration for merit aid. Check the scholarship and merit aid pages of your colleges' websites for more information.

Five Career Planning Ideas (continued from page 1)

Keep career planning in mind when visiting colleges. Every college campus has a Career Center staffed by professionals trained to assist college students with career-related concerns. They help students choose majors and careers, find internship and job opportunities, and gain critical job-hunting skills. When you visit, ask about the services offered by each college's Career Center. Or better yet, stop in the Center and say hello. While on

campus, you may also have chances to talk with professors and students. Use those opportunities to ask faculty about what their departments do to help prepare students for jobs after graduation and ask current students about internships they've done, research opportunities, and what their majors and career plans are. If you can't visit campuses, you can find some of the same information through each college's website and social media.

Online career planning resources:

- College Board Big Future Explore Careers
<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/explore-careers>
- Princeton Review's Career Quiz
<https://www.princetonreview.com/quiz/career-quiz>
- BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook
<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>
- Sloan Career Cornerstone
<https://www.careercornerstone.org/carp/an.htm>

Responding to Deferrals

Early decision, early action, and priority applicants receive admission decisions in a time frame that coincides with the holidays. Some will be thrilled with acceptance, others disappointed by being denied, and still others left in limbo by a letter deferring the decision until a later time. While disappointing, a deferral is actually a “maybe;” it’s important to stay positive and proactive.

Understand that each college has its own institutional priorities. A deferral is their way of expressing that they want to measure you against the applicants who apply for regular decision. If this is a college that you are really excited about attending, understanding what the admission committee would like to see from you is essential.

Colleges generally defer applicants because they still need more information to make a decision. Sometimes, the applicant’s grades may be in question; the admission committee would like to see some senior year grades before acting on your application. A strong showing in challenging senior classes will help sway the committee to “accept.” Have your mid year grades sent as soon as they are available to your designated admissions officer at your college. Be sure to tell your school college counselor about any new achievements (academic and co-curricular) so they can mention these in their mid-year report.

If you’ve retaken the SAT or ACT in winter, have the testing agency send the new scores to the college. If you have applied for Test Optional, inquire if other additional information might be helpful. Another strong recommendation letter (perhaps from a senior year teacher or an employer), copies of articles you’ve written for the newspaper, or other more recent evidence of achievement could be sent to support your application. Read the college’s deferral letter carefully; it will state exactly what type of updated information they would welcome.

Sometimes, the decision is determined by circumstances that are beyond your control. The college may be looking to increase diversity or, perhaps, has too many qualified applicants from your region. You can still influence the final decision by letting “Deferral U” know your interest in attending. Write directly to the admission officer in charge of your region, expressing your continued interest in attending and asking if any additional information would be helpful. A call from your school college counselor to the college could provide you with insight into the reasons behind the deferral. Stay resilient and rethink all of your college options—many colleges can provide a perfect fit! Your journey doesn’t end with a deferral; it can be an opportunity for personal and academic growth.

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