

The College Cost Reduction & Access Act Kicks In

July brings a little relief from rising tuition costs and general cost of living pressures. That relief comes in the form of reduced interest rates on subsidized federal Stafford loans. The rate is now 6% instead of the prior 6.8%, and the rate will continue to be reduced to 3.4% in 2011. What does that mean in dollars? A student who starts this coming fall with a loan can expect to save more than \$2000 over the life of the loan. The rate cut should positively impact over 5 million student borrowers nationwide.



In addition to the federal loan interest rate reductions, the maximum Pell Grant has been increased by \$490 to \$4,371 for the 2008-9 award year. These grants, unlike loans, do not have to be repaid. The maximum cap will continue to rise to \$5,400 in 2012.

The act also created a Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) grant, which provides grants of up to \$4000 per year for students who plan to teach in a public or private elementary or secondary school if the school serves students from low-income families. Students interested in the TEACH grant program can find more information on-line, and should also contact the college where they will be enrolled for the academic year. There are very specific eligibility requirements for TEACH grants. ▲

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Inexpensive SAT/ACT Prep Tips

- Read, read, read! (novels, not comics)
- Get a set of flash cards and start on them early.
- Learn dictionary.com's "Word of the Day".
- Read the newspaper.
- Visit a news website such as CNN and read the top stories.
- Do crossword puzzles.
- Write in a journal.
- Solve logic puzzles.
- Answer the SAT question of the day on-line.
- Take the practice tests offered on-line or at your school. ▲

College Rejection: Not All it's Cracked Up to Be



With record numbers of students applying to more colleges than ever, even students with near perfect grades and test scores are facing something entirely new to them: rejection. In surprising numbers, the best and the brightest find themselves without a spot at their top choice college. But many stories of tears, devastation, disappointment and outright anger are later followed by tales of a different sort. Many of these students, who went on to their second or third choice schools, later report wonderful experiences. In fact, in retrospect many actually thank the schools that rejected them for making a better decision for them than they would have made for themselves. Could it be that rejection actually isn't the end of the world? Is it possible that there is more than one "right" school for every student, and sometimes the schools help to identify the best one? This revelation will no doubt be met with shock and skepticism by those who simply can't picture themselves at a school that they once sneered at as second best. But if you keep an open mind, and aren't overly influenced by rankings and perceived status lists, you might just find yourself at the *real* first choice: the college that is *right* for you. ▲

The Common App and the Universal App

In an effort to make college applications more efficient and more accessible, two entities now offer on-line or paper applications that are accepted at multiple colleges and universities. Many colleges require their own supplemental application in addition, but they still offer a reduction in overall effort if more than one of your potential colleges accepts them. Currently the Universal App is accepted at 75 institutions, while the Common App is accepted at over 345. The Common App has been around since 1975, whereas the Universal App is new and is attempting to be more inclusive in its membership. Both offer a great way to get a glimpse at application content, and we recommend downloading both in your freshman or sophomore year. Take a look at what they ask for and build your resume with that in mind. The Common App is found at www.commonapp.org and the Universal App is at www.universalcollegeapp.com. ▲





To SAT or to ACT: That is the Question

As application time draws near, this question often crops up. And the answer can be determined by taking two steps: First, find out for sure what your potential colleges require. Read carefully! If it says the school will “accept the ACT” - they may still “require the SAT” as well but simply offer to look at ACT scores in addition. On the other hand, many schools are now requiring one or the other. This is a nice advantage so, if all your potential colleges do so, move on to step two: Find out which you are best at! You can do this by taking one or more practice tests of each, even those found on their websites. www.actstudent.org (ACT) and www.collegeboard.com (SAT). Your high school may also offer practice tests and, if so, be sure to take advantage of them.

The two tests are quite different philosophically, which is why you might perform better on one than the other. The ACT strives to test knowledge you’ve acquired in the various subjects taught in high school. It is 175 minutes long (plus the optional 30 minute writing test) and has sections in English, math, reading, and science. The SAT tries to test for innate ability and test taking skills, often by confusing phrasing and tricky questions. It is 225 minutes long with sections in math, writing and critical reading. To prep for the ACT, you generally review actual subject matter. For the SAT, you actually benefit from learning test taking tricks. You are penalized for wrong answers on the SAT but not on the ACT. And there’s another advantage unique to the ACT test: you decide which scores to send. With the SAT, you can only request that a score report be sent, and it includes the scores for every SAT you’ve taken. The costs are similar: \$30 for the ACT or \$44.50 for the ACT with writing, and \$43 for the SAT. Both fees include sending scores to four colleges.

If time and money permit, it might be a significant advantage to take both tests, depending upon what your research yielded as to your colleges’ requirements. That way you’re covered no matter what, and you might find that you perform surprisingly better on one over the other. But if that’s not a realistic option, at least make an informed decision. If in doubt, contact the college’s admission office to be sure. And don’t despair; many students score better on these tests than they expect to. ▲

Remaining 2008 SAT and ACT Test Dates



Date	Test	Register By	Late With Fee
September 13, 2008	ACT* in some states	August 12, 2008	August 13-22, 2008
October 4, 2008	SAT & Subjects	September 9, 2008	Sept 10-16, 2008
October 25, 2008	ACT	September 19, 2008	Sept 20-Oct 3, 2008
November 1, 2008	SAT & Subjects	September 26, 2008	Sept 27-Oct 10, 2008
December 6, 2008	SAT & Subjects	November 5, 2008	Nov 6-Nov 18, 2008
December 13, 2008	ACT	November 7, 2008	November 8-20, 2008

Summer Checklist for Junior and Seniors

Juniors

- Fill your summer with resume-building activities.
- Work on your target list of possible colleges.
- Visit websites of colleges that pique your interest.
- Start some prep for and the SAT and/or ACT if you can; (The PSAT is coming)
- Plan college visits for the upcoming school year.
- Read. Work on your vocabulary one way or another. Make it a family game!
- Work on your resume.



Seniors

- Athletes, register with the NCAA Clearinghouse if applicable.
- Keep up your summer resume-building activities.
- Prep for upcoming SAT and/or ACT tests if you will be taking them this fall. Read! Work on vocabulary.
- Get organized with a bin and folders.
- Download applications and work on essays if current ones are posted.
- Finalize your resume and list of target schools.

Visit our resource website at: www.getin2college.com/protected/websource.html (password was emailed to you)