

## COLLEGE APPLICATION and ADMISSIONS TERMINOLOGY

**Accredited-** Having met and maintained specific standards that qualify the graduates for admission to higher or more specialized institutions.

**ACT-** A standardized test, given on specific test dates, similar to the SAT. Originally more common in the Midwest, it is now widely accepted at most colleges and can often be substituted for the SAT in the admissions process. It includes tests in English, math, reading and science reasoning with an optional writing section.

**Admission Test-** See SAT Reasoning Test, SAT Subject Test and ACT.

**Application Deadline-** A real deadline! If the deadline says January 15, it is not the 16<sup>th</sup> or the 17<sup>th</sup>. Get your application in early! The date is usually the postmark date but it is always wise to read the instructions carefully in order to be sure.

**Associate's Degree-** A two-year degree earned by a student completing a prescribed course of study at a community or junior college.

**Bachelor's Degree-** A degree awarded at a college or university upon completion of a prescribed four-year course of undergraduate study. The most common types of bachelor's degree are B.A. (Bachelor of Arts) and B.S. (Bachelor of Science).

**Candidate's Reply Date-** Essentially all colleges subscribe to the Candidate's Reply Date which gives an accepted student until May 1 to make a final choice of colleges. Early Decision acceptances require a response prior to this date.

**Class Rank-** A student's standing based on his or her cumulative numeric average as compared with that of other members of the class. In a class of 100, the student with the highest numeric average would be ranked Number 1 and the lowest Number 100. At the present, PCS does not publish an official class rank.

**College-** (*as opposed to university*) - The terms are often used interchangeably, any real distinction is disappearing and "college" in the name of an institution can add to the confusion. However, in the U.S., a college generally offers a collection of degrees (primarily undergraduate) in a specific area of study. A university is usually made up of a collection of colleges- for example, the College of Nursing, the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Engineering, etc. When you attend a university, you typically graduate from one of their colleges.

**College Board-** This organization provides college-entrance testing, such as SAT, TOEFL, PSAT and AP exams.

**College Scholarship Service (CSS) and Financial Aid PROFILE-** This is a financial aid service from the College Board required by some colleges. While similar to FAFSA in that it is used to determine eligibility for aid, it assesses financial need in slightly different ways. Many people believe it provides a better opportunity to make the college aware of special or extenuating circumstances. Check with the colleges you are applying to in order to determine whether this needs to be filed. Not all colleges accept this form.

**Common Application Form-** A standardized application form, recommendation form and school report form accepted by over 340 cooperating colleges and universities. Some colleges and universities will also have a required supplement to the Common Application. See [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org).

**Cooperative Education-** A program in which periods in the classroom are alternated with periods of related employment.

**Core Courses-** Refers to both required and elective course in Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and Foreign Language. Many colleges and the HOPE scholarship program (Georgia) only calculate GPA from the core courses.

**Credits/Units-** The terms "credits" and "units" are used interchangeably to identify how much each course passed counts toward meeting the credits/units required for graduation from high school.

**Deferred Admission-** Permits a student to spend a year working or traveling before beginning college. You must apply, be accepted and request a deferment following acceptance. Colleges generally allow this, but are not required to do so.

**Early Action/Early Notification-** A non-binding application and notification procedure whereby the candidate submits an application early in the fall and is advised of the decision on his/her application before Christmas. Students may keep other applications active since they are usually not obligated to accept this offer of admission until May 1.

**Early Admissions-** A special program in which outstanding high school students request and are admitted to a college upon completion of tenth or eleventh grade.

**Early Decision (Binding) -** An admissions application option available at some schools for students who are ready to commit to that institution if they are accepted. Application deadlines tend to be in October or early November with decisions being made prior to Christmas. (This necessitates admission testing during the 11<sup>th</sup> grade.) Students may only apply early decision to one institution since they are agreeing to enroll at the college if accepted. If students are not accepted, schools will often reconsider the application under regular admission. Students are encouraged to use this plan only if totally committed to a specific college.

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) -** A form required by most colleges when applying for financial aid, including federal loans and other aid. It requests financial information from the current year tax return for the student and student's parents/guardians.

**Gap Year-** A year, usually between high school and college, where the student works or participates in other activities. Yearlong mission trips or enrichment experiences are examples of gap year options.

**Grade Point Average (GPA) -** A system used to evaluate the overall academic performance of students. The number comes from determining the number of "grade points" a student has earned in each course (a certain number of point for an A, B, C, and so on) and then dividing that number by the total number of credit hours. PCS uses a 4.0 system. A **weighted average** assigns extra value to grades earned in honors classes. Due to a wide variation among high

schools in grade point scales and weighting, many colleges recalculate the GPA of all applicants (often using only academic courses) in order to compare apples to apples. It gives them a truer picture of how applicants compare with each other in performance in academic subjects.

**Honors Program or Honors College-** A program offered by some colleges for strong academic students, usually including the opportunity for educational enrichment, independent study, acceleration, or some combination of these. The program may also include special living arrangements, more personal mentoring by faculty or special leadership roles on campus. Often times these are not programs you apply for initially. Instead you receive an invitation to apply with your acceptance letter. Check with individual colleges to determine your eligibility.

**Liberal Arts-** A program of studies concentrating on Arts and Humanities.

**Matriculate-** To enroll as a member of a college or university.

**NCAA Clearing House (Eligibility Center) -** Review high school transcripts and SAT/ACT test scores of students offered NCAA Division I and II scholarships to make sure all NCAA requirements are met.

**Open Admission-** A policy of some colleges of accepting all students with a high school diploma or GED. Some offer admittance to students without either a diploma or GED.

**Out-of-State Tuition-** An additional fee charged by a state college or university to students who are not state residents.

**Quarter System-** An academic school calendar dividing the academic year into 4 units.

**PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholar Qualifying Test) -** A shortened version of the SAT offered in October for high school students in grades 10 and 11. TO be considered for the National Merit Scholarship program, students must take the PSAT during the junior year.

**Regular Admission-** A student applies to the college by the designated date, the application is evaluated with the whole pool of applicants, and notification of the college's decision is sent to the student on or about April 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) -** Three and four-year programs for military training offered at selected colleges and culminating in an officer's commission upon graduation.

**Rolling Admission-** The policy of a college to notify a student of its decision as soon as possible after the completed application has been received rather than deferring the decision until all applications are received and considered- "first come, first served".

**SAT Reasoning Test-** College Board tests given at test centers throughout the year. Test scores are given in three areas: critical reading, math and writing. A perfect score is 2400 (800 on each section). However, most colleges are still evaluating the writing portion (which was added in 2005) and the most commonly quoted numbers are still the critical reading and math score, based on a 1600 scale.

**SAT Subject Tests-** College Board tests given throughout the year in specific subjects. Not all colleges require these, and those that do will often specify which ones you need to take. Used in both admission and placement decisions.

**Semester System-** An academic school calendar that divides the academic year into two units.

**Study Abroad-** An arrangement where a student is able to complete part of their college program in another country. This can be a summer, a semester, a year or some other period of time. In some cases the college may operate the campus abroad, or it may have a cooperative agreement with an institution in another country.

**Transcript-** The official and complete record of a student's academic performance at a given institution.

**University** (as opposed to college) - The terms are often used interchangeably, any real distinction is disappearing and "college" in the name of an institution can add to the confusion. However, in the U.S., a college generally offers a collection of degrees (primarily undergraduate) in a specific area of study. A university is usually made up of a collection of colleges- for example, the College of Nursing, the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Engineering, etc. When you attend a university, you typically graduate from one of their colleges.

**Waiting List-** The policy of deferring student notification of acceptance or rejection past the usual notification date until the college has heard from students previously offered admission.

## FINANCIAL AID TERMINOLOGY

**Award Letter-** Written notification from the college advising the student of the dollar amounts he/she may expect to receive from the various financial programs. Specific program information, conditions and student responsibilities are included, as well as instructions on how to accept or decline the offer. You may accept part of the offer and decline other parts- e.g., you could accept the grant money but decline the work study portion of the award.

**College Scholarship Service (CSS)- also known as the PROFILE-** A supplement to the FAFSA used by some colleges to award non-federal funds. It should only be submitted to the colleges who specifically require it. The methodology used is somewhat different from the FAFSA and there is more flexibility to report extenuating circumstances. The CSS is found on the College Board website ([www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)). There is a fee to file it and additional fees for each college to which it is sent.

**Consolidation Loan-** A loan which allows a student (usually already graduated) to obtain a single loan with one interest rate and one repayment schedule that replaces the various student loans that were taken out over the course of their education.

**Cost of Attendance (COA)-** Tuition and fees, estimated room and board, transportation costs, books, supplies and miscellaneous personal expenses.

**Custodial Parent-** The parent with whom the student lives. It is this parent's financial information that is used in the FAFSA need analysis when parents are divorced or separated. Unlike FAFSA, the CSS profile looks at the income of the non-custodial parent as well.

**Deferment (of Loan)-** Most student loans allow for a period of time when payments of principle are not required. Whether or not interest accrues during this time depends on the type of loan. Most student loans are deferred during this time a student is at least a half-time student and for six months following that time.

**Dependent Student-** FAFSA considers all students under 24 years of age, who do not meet the conditions laid out in this paragraph, to be dependent students for financial aid considerations regardless of whether or not their parents agree to provide financial support for education. A student can be considered independent if they are married, a graduate student, have a child, are a veteran or were an orphan or ward of the state until age 18.

**Expected Family Contribution (EFC)-** The amount that a family is expected to be able to contribute to the student's education. The Federal methodology need analysis formula used to determine this is approved by Congress. The EFC includes both the expected parental and student contributions and takes into account things such as family size, number of family members in school, income (both student and parent) and assets. Certain things, such as the value of your primary residence and retirement savings are excluded from the equation. Family budget, medical expenses or standard of living are among the things that do not enter into the equation.

**FAFSA- (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)-** The required form for anyone wishing to be eligible for financial aid. Find the application and instructions online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). Do not go to fafsa.com. It is a fee-based program and is not the official website.

**Financial Aid Package-** A combination of grants, loans, scholarships, and college work-study that is described in the Award Letter.

**Financial Need-** The difference between the Cost of Attendance and the family's ability to pay (determined by the Expected Family Contribution).

**Gift Aid (Grant or Scholarship)-** Financial aid which does not have to be repaid (sometimes referred to as grant-in-aid) and is awarded to students with financial need and/or outstanding ability in general scholarship, athletics, or the arts.

**Independent Student-** FAFSA considers all students under 24 years of age, who do not meet the conditions laid out in this paragraph, to be dependent students for financial aid considerations regardless of whether or not their parents agree to provide financial support for education. A student can be considered independent if they are married, a graduate student, have a child, are a veteran or were an orphan or ward of the state until age 18.

**Merit-Based Aid-** Assistance, usually grants or scholarship, given based on achievement or talent in a particular area such as grades, athletics, fine arts, etc.

**Need-** See Financial Need.

**Profile (College Scholarship Service- CSS)-** A supplement to the FAFSA used by some colleges to award non-federal funds. It should only be submitted to the colleges who specifically require it. The methodology used is somewhat different from the FAFSA and there is more flexibility to report extenuating circumstances. The CSS is found on the College Board website ([www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)). There is a fee to file it and additional fees for each college to which it is sent.

