

# Riley Baker Educational Consulting

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## May 2019

**1<sup>st</sup>** – Common reply date for college enrollment

**4<sup>th</sup>** – **SAT Reasoning and Subject Tests**

**7<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup>** **AP exams**

Juniors – work on resume

Seniors – notify the colleges that you will not attend and take some time to thank those who wrote your letters of recommendation

Evaluate financial aid packages and explore college funding options

## June 2019

**1<sup>st</sup>** – **SAT Reasoning and Subject Tests**

(register by 5/3 - late registration 5/22)

**8<sup>th</sup>** – **ACT and ACT plus Writing**

(register by 5/4 - late registration 5/20)

Seniors – thank teachers and others who helped you

Seniors – thank scholarship providers for aid

Seniors – have your final transcript sent to your college

## Student Support Services on Campus

Colleges and universities are a student's new 'home away from home', and as such, must provide comprehensive support to their student body. That support comes in many different forms and knowing what is available should be part of the research a family completes before selecting a college. Support may be of several types – academic support, health and wellness support, professional support, and social support. Applicants need to have an awareness of both who they are and what they need in order to be successful as independent college students. Don't be blinded by the beautiful buildings, the exciting faculty, and the excellent facilities; look beyond the obvious and ask lots of questions about your options, should you need some help while enrolled. Here are the main areas of support you should learn about:

**Academic support:** At some point during your college career, it is likely that you will find yourself in need of assistance in a particularly challenging course. Most colleges have a learning center, a writing center, and/or an academic support center that may offer a wide range of services. Ask about tutoring in specific subjects – is it free or do you have to pay? Who does the tutoring? Are there mechanisms in place to help students write both research papers and academic essays? In this same vein, ask about faculty support – do professors encourage students to meet with them and work through challenges? Are there small study groups created for students in very large lecture classes that encourage feedback, questions, and offer

homework help? Some colleges also offer exam prep classes and one-on-one tutoring for student athletes. Also look at the library facilities on campus – what are their hours? Can you make photocopies there for free? Are there plenty of computers, either in the library or at a computer center, that you can use? Is there solid IT support should your own computer break down?

If you enter college with a diagnosed learning disability and know that you will require support services in college, it is imperative that you become familiar with the official process for requesting LD support on campus. This will require some paperwork on your part and is sometimes completed before you enroll. Does your college offer the specific assistance you require? Are there workshops available, learning specialists who understand your needs, and the appropriate facilities? Do they charge a fee?

**Health and Wellness support:** Just like at home, you may fall ill at some point during your college career. The most obvious support is a Student Health Center. Where is it? What are their hours? How do you get there if you are sick? Who runs the clinic and whom will you see there? Then, find out about the nearest hospital. If your illness or injury requires a hospital visit, know where it is located.

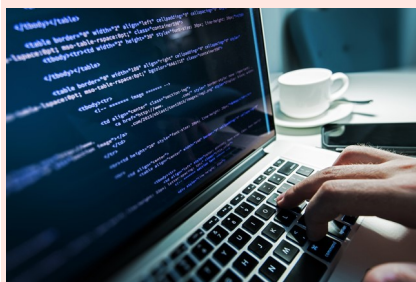
So many students enter college with a diagnosed psychological challenge – anxiety, depression or eating disorders are some common examples. Know about mental health support that you might need, including on-campus counseling, (continued on p.4)

## Career Paths for Computer Programming Majors

- Software developer
- Web developer
- Computer network specialist
- Computer programmer
- Computer science teacher
- Systems analyst
- Database developer

Programmers may work in a variety of fields including:

- Finance
- Government
- Health care
- Marketing & advertising
- Data security
- Software publishing



## Computer Programming

Computer programming is the study of computer languages and the ways to apply them. Students in this major learn how to develop, maintain, and fix software systems.

A major in computer programming would include classes such as database design, network security, and business communications. Courses are typically part lecture and part lab work. In lectures, students learn the necessary computer concepts, terminology and applications. In labs, students apply those lessons to real-world problems.

Labs are essential to the major because jobs in computer programming often require professionals to solve problems they have never seen before. New issues are constantly arising in technology, so computer programmers must be able to have the patience to solve difficult problems.

The major is designed to help students develop the necessary patience and problem-solving skills to be successful. Students will also become proficient communicators in order to understand a client's needs and issues. Through application, they will gain a strong attention to detail.

While most programs hone all of these abilities, the focus of the major differs greatly from college to college. Some schools concentrate on software and programming while others have a core in website design. Some colleges structure their programs so that students emerge with industry-approved certificates. Others focus on applications or networking.

Because simple programming jobs are moving overseas, students pursuing this major in the United States may benefit from also gaining knowledge in a scientific or business field of their choosing. That way, they have a specialized ability to use programming to meet a specific, industry-related goal.

For students looking to become computer programmers, there are two main types: application programmers and system programmers. System programmers develop

operating software systems such as Windows, as well as programs that help preserve networks or databases. Application programmers develop programs to address specific needs in specific environments. An application programmer might create a program designed to calculate and store students' grades, for example.

Students may become computer system analysts. Analysts work to improve the efficiency of existing systems.

Students more interested in website creation can go into web development. Web developers use coding and programming to create websites that are both aesthetically pleasing and functional. Web developers are different than web designers. Web designers focus on the graphic elements of a website while developers create the code that makes a website work. However, designers and developers often work together to build a website.

Computer support specialists work closely with computer-users in their organizations. They troubleshoot programs, fix technical issues, suggest updates, and perform routine checks on networks to prevent problems before they occur.

Database administrators specialize in data tracking and storing software. Administrators keep databases secure, check for errors or needed updates, and create software so that users can easily search for company data.

Computer programming majors may also become computer and information systems managers. Many managers have graduate degrees, but it is not always necessary. Managers are responsible for finding, testing, and suggesting new software programs for their companies. They often compare the virtues and costs of existing programs necessary for new company projects. It is up to them to present the program options to company executives.

Students who major in computer programming can find their niche in almost any kind of company. Majors graduate with many options and fields to explore.

## Financial Matters: College Choices & Return on Investment



There are so many moving parts to a student's search for the 'right' college – location, academic options, student services, clubs and organizations, career preparations – but none of them matters if a family is unable to afford that wonderful education. Attending college is a privilege and one that costs a great deal of money. For the most part, when we enter into a costly venture such as purchasing a new car, a house, or stock investments, the pros and cons of that purchase must be weighed heavily against the anticipated return on our investment, or ROI. How will the costs of that purchase compare to the benefits of making that purchase? In other words, how will the net cost measure up against both potential debt and potential earnings? Many young people graduate with thousands of dollars of debt and enter into an employment placement that typically provides an annual salary far below that level of debt. This puts new graduates into a very dangerous financial situation and impacts their ability to start their career and purchase a car. Students pursuing graduate degrees may often find themselves in debt for many years.

In order to come up with a realistic and honest assessment of the costs for each college under consideration, it is important to first calculate the true total cost of attendance – tuition, room, board, fees, transportation, entertainment and general living expenses such as cell phone bills and travelling home for the holidays. Expect that tuition will

rise, as well as fees and living costs. Once you have a complete picture of the total cost, then it's time to review the potential outcomes. Research career opportunities and the job placement support your college offers; review annual salaries in your chosen field; analyze the industry overall and be aware of any growth or cutbacks in your area of likely employment. If you have to move to another part of the country, what costs of living are associated with that location – compare across all your possible geographic locations. Finally, analyze overall growth of salaries in your field, alongside cost of living adjustments and inflation. Be honest with your analysis: there is no point in entering into debt for an industry that is on the decline. Think about the future of video stores, printing, photo finishing and telephone apparatus manufacturing as a guide to declining industry.

Knowing how much aid you will receive from a college is a critical piece of information in calculating return on investment. Submit your FAFSA as early as possible, and read about options for institutional aid – are there separate scholarship applications to complete? Know about the CSS Profile – does your college require that in order to be considered for institutional aid? Review your financial aid package very carefully. Understanding exactly the amount of financial assistance you may receive will be a big part of your calculations. As you educate yourself on your future employment possibilities, be guided by the rule that says: never borrow more than your anticipated first year's salary. If you find yourself outside of those parameters, look into ways of reducing your costs. Would accelerating your studies save you more money? Many high school students are able to gain

college credit by successfully passing AP and CLEP exams, or by taking classes at a community college while still in high school. This will reduce the time you have to spend in college to obtain your degree. Can you get a job during your college years? Would an in-state college meet your needs and keep you within your budget? Will the "name" college yield a post-graduate income higher than a similar degree from a less prestigious institution? For some people, money does not necessarily represent success, and immediate financial success may not mean as much as long-term satisfaction for graduates such as entrepreneurs and academics.

There are some helpful resources online for you to investigate. These include the College ROI Report, <https://www.payscale.com/college-roi>, released by Pay Scale, the Forbes listing, <https://www.forbes.com/pictures/eehd45eghkd/the-top-50-return-on-investment-private-colleges/#713220121869>, and the Princeton Review Best Value Colleges, <https://www.princetonreview.com/college-rankings/best-value-colleges>.

At the end of the day, the benefits of a college degree far outweigh the burden of taking on some debt. The degree represents a sound investment in your professional future and financial well-being. College graduates earn over 80% more over a lifetime than a high school graduate, and employees without degrees may find themselves unable to advance in their fields and earn more money. So is college worth it? Absolutely, 100% yes! Just do your research and learn as much as you can about your investment.

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## Student Support Services on Campus (cont.)

medication management, support groups and a crisis center. How easy is it to get an appointment? Do you have to be referred out to a local practitioner? Talk to your therapist at home to be sure you are asking the right questions; your mental health is an important part of your ability to transition well.

**Professional support:** Your goal, upon graduation, will be to enter the workforce right away or to enter post-graduate schooling. Does your college prepare you for the direction you have chosen? Is there a strong career center with connections to commerce, across the disciplines? Are there workshops offered for students that prepare them for writing resumes, conducting successful interviews, and meeting with prospective employers? Is there guidance for students seeking entry into a graduate program? Is there specific support for students bound for a

professional graduate program – medical, law, dental, veterinary, physical therapy, and pharmacy school? And does the school help you find that important first job – what is its success rate?

**Social support:** Most students arrive on campus rather fearful and anxious about their unfamiliar new life and surroundings; it may even be your first time away from home. In order to connect quickly to your new community, does your college offer special programs or academic courses just for first-year students? Does your residence hall conduct workshops for new students? Are the student clubs and organizations widely publicized and are new students encouraged to attend meetings? Finally, does the college offer a mentoring program – this is a wonderful way for a new student to be mentored by a senior student who can ‘show them the ropes’.