

Riley Baker Educational Consulting

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November 2012

3rd—SAT Reasoning and Subject Exams

Seniors – File Early Decision/
Early Action applications

Work on remaining college
applications

Register for a PIN at
www.fafsa.ed.gov if you'll be
applying for financial aid

December 2012

1st—SAT Reasoning and Subject Exams

(register by 11/1 - late
registration 11/16)

8th—ACT and ACT With Writing (register by 11/2 - late registration 11/16)

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.

Acing the Interview

Although it's rarely required as part of the admissions process, many colleges do offer prospective students the opportunity to interview, either on campus or with an alum in their home town. It's natural to be nervous about your interview, so here are a few tips to make sure that you arrive on time, prepared, properly attired, and ready to make a positive impression.

- Dress comfortably, but not too casually, in clothing that doesn't itch or ride up (or down) when you are seated.
- Confirm time and place, and be sure you have good directions. Know your interviewer's name, and have a phonetic spelling written down if necessary.
- If you will be touring campus on the same day as your interview, allow enough time to get there without rushing. Add a couple of extra minutes for a trip to the restroom and a quick glance in the mirror. Do a practice smile to check for any unwanted bits of food— and deposit your gum in the trash receptacle. And remember to turn off your cell phone!
- Greet your interviewer with a **firm** handshake, good eye contact and a smile.
- The interview is a two-way street. It's an opportunity for the interviewer to get to know you, but it's also a chance for you to learn more about the school and why it would be a good fit for you.

The interviewer will no doubt have some standard questions for you. These questions may include:

- What have you enjoyed most about high school?
- What are some of your favorite activities?
- What are your strengths as a student?

- Is there anything you would change about your high school?
- What do you do for fun?
- Are there any books or authors that have had a profound effect on you? (or, what's the last book you read – or the last movie you saw?)
- What did you do over the summer?
- What current world issues concern you the most today?
- Can you discuss an academic project or paper you are proud of?
- What are your major interests?
- What do you hope to experience in college?
- Why have you chosen to apply to this college?
- Do you have any questions for me?

Of course, the interview is a conversation, not just a Q and A session, so be prepared to talk about current events or what you are reading now. And be ready with a couple of questions for the interviewer about some aspect of the school that interests or concerns you.

If you don't understand a question, ask for more information. If you really need more time to formulate an answer, make sure to get your interviewer's email address so you can respond later.

By the end of your conversation (which might last a half hour or so) your interviewer should have some understanding of the events and experiences that have helped shape you as an individual, and will also know what inspires you both intellectually and academically.

On your way out, shake hands again and make sure you have some contact information so you can follow up with a thank you note.

Famous Communication Graduates

Stephen Colbert - Actor, writer and producer of *The Colbert Report*

Beth Harris - Marketing Director, *The Academy Awards*

Andy Horrow - Chief Marketing Officer at *Mike's Hard Lemonade*

Dennis Kucinich - Congressman from Ohio and former presidential candidate

Gary Larson - *The Far Side* cartoonist

Donovan McNabb - Quarterback for the *Philadelphia Eagles*

Joby Warrick - National security reporter, *The Washington Post*

Oprah Winfrey - Television host and magnate

Focus on Majors: Communication Studies

It's on Princeton Review's List of the Top Ten Most Popular College Majors - Communication Studies. Sounds interesting and marketable, but what is it, and more importantly, can it help you get a job?

Communication Studies is an academic field that examines how people share meaningful symbols. The symbols themselves, the ways in which they are transmitted, and the interpretation of the symbols are all within the scope of this field. This interdisciplinary major encompasses the entire range of communication from face-to-face conversation to mass media and interpersonal understanding.

Communication Studies is a generalist path with a curriculum that can be tailored to work in a variety of industries. Most colleges require students to have some familiarity with the broad spectrum of communication issues. Students are then allowed to concentrate in an area of particular interest. Advertising, Broadcasting, Communication Technology and Production, Journalism, and Public Relations are a few of the concentrations that might be available. Typical courses are likely to include Interpersonal Communication, Group Communication, Persuasion, Mass Media and Society, Cross-Cultural Communication, TV & Film Production, and Ethical and Legal Issues in Media. Courses in economics, finance, management, marketing, political science, psychology and sociology can also help.

Practical experience is critical for Communications students. Whether you host a campus radio program, work as a producer for the university TV station, or write for the campus newspaper, hands-on involvement that you can list on a resume is key. Participating in internships, co-op programs and study abroad will also help you bridge the transition from college to workplace.

There are thousands of undergraduate Communication Studies programs. The challenge is to identify colleges and pro-

grams that most closely fit who you are and what you want to do. Because all types of colleges offer Communications majors, institutional, not just departmental, fit should be your top priority. Some departments include the study of communication disorders, while others do not. Some programs are grounded in the liberal arts, concentrating on analytical, speaking and writing skills, all of which are highly transferable to a wide range of careers. Other departments are more professionally focused, offering curricula that are more workplace driven. You can study communications either through identified majors, or by designing your own course of study, tailored to your specific interests.

Communications Studies is a modern marriage of theory and application, combining liberal arts education with practical, professional training. In our global information age, enterprises from businesses and educational institutions to engineering firms and medical providers all must communicate effectively with their constituents, their customers, and the public. Over \$1 billion is spent annually on employee and membership communications, and even more goes toward external communications. Job competition is strong, with preference given to candidates with industry-specific knowledge, communications training, and appropriate internship or volunteer experience.

The career choices for communications professionals are incredibly diverse. Degrees in Communications lead to a wide range of career paths including advertising, broadcasting & film, marketing, media relations, personnel, and sales. Less obvious career options include community relations, customer service, corporate training, international relations, and publishing. Communications graduates also work in fundraising, social media management, tourism, website management, and risk management. For more information visit the National Communication Association at www.natcom.org.

Financial Matters: Tuition Discounts



With the sticker price at some colleges and universities exceeding \$50,000 per year, even affluent families are feeling the bite. It's no wonder, then, that tuition discounts are appealing to those families who might not qualify for need-based financial aid. How much could these tuition discounts be worth? According to the College Board, private colleges currently offer average tuition breaks in excess of 33%, while state universities discount tuition an average of about 15%. To get these scholarships, however, students must gener-

ally be in the top quarter of the entering class in terms of grades and test scores. Students who hope to enroll at a reach school will not be eligible for a discount.

If you're interested in pursuing these scholarships, consider the following:

- Be sure to apply for financial aid. Affluent families often fail to complete the FAFSA and the CSS Profile forms because they do not expect to qualify for financial aid. A small number of schools, however, won't even consider a student for merit-based aid unless you have filed these forms.
- Look beyond the Ivy League—the Ivies, by mutual agreement, can offer only need-based aid. Many other fine colleges, however, are happy to reward academically strong students. Consider such

schools as Tulane, Washington University in St. Louis, Providence College, University of Southern California, Oberlin, and Fairfield University. To find out if a college offers merit (non-need-based) scholarships, try the search engine on its website. Public universities will also offer discounts to the strongest students along with acceptance to their honors programs.

- Be prepared to travel. Colleges are interested in attracting students from diverse areas of the country. Identify areas that appeal to you and seek out schools in that region that may offer merit aid. You'll need to convince colleges outside your region that you're seriously interested—plan on visiting campus or taking part in area visits and interviews.

Taking an Active Approach to Learning

You've probably received your first "progress report" this semester with an early indication of how you've been doing in each of your classes. Or perhaps your school uses a "live" gradebook. In either case, it's time to use your current grade report as a "reality check" - are you achieving at a level that will enable you to reach your academic and college goals? If not, it's time to take a proactive approach to learning.

Think about your performance in each class. What has gotten in the way of your earning the grade you hoped for? If homework assignments (or the lack of them) have impacted your grade, promise yourself that you will complete all future assignments both on time and completely. Speak to your teacher about her policy about accepting late or incomplete assignments. Is class

participation the issue? Make sure that you become an active participant in class, offering answers when questions are asked and taking a contributory role in class discussions.

Test results getting you down? Start a study group and include some of the strongest students in your class. Arrange to meet with your instructor after class for extra help and study tips. Teachers love kids who care—make sure your teacher knows that his subject is important to you and that you want to do well. If you continue to have difficulty in a class, consider getting outside help. Check with your school or an advisor about tutors available to help with a particular subject. Sometimes, all you need is a different point of view to make your learning come alive and to help you achieve your academic goals.

Website Review

Last month, we featured an article on honors colleges that may be found at both public and private universities across the U.S. Honors colleges are especially appealing to students who want to experience both "big college" life as well as the intimacy of a smaller college learning community. The website www.publicuniversityhonors.com can simplify your search for these types of programs.

The site includes lists of public honors colleges and universities along with rankings of many of the programs. Articles on the site address such topics as "Choosing a Public University Honors Program" and "College Value: Public Honors vs. Private Elites". Many of the rankings are derived from U.S. News & World Report listings, so view these with a critical eye.

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Admissions Office Blogs

To connect with prospective applicants, admissions offices across the U.S. often recruit current students to write blogs about their college experience. Although these officially sanctioned (but uncensored) blogs can sound a bit like a promotional tool, they often do provide a real insider's view of life at that institution. Happily, bloggers are likely to tell you about both the good and the bad. Ideally, the reader will come away with an idea of what makes that college unique and interesting. Blogs can put a very human face on the institutional façade.

Bloggers are generally selected by the admissions office staff. At some schools these students receive a small stipend each month, while at others they are volunteers. This is similar to the practices involving student tour guides. But are they really helpful? At MIT, the admissions website gets 15,000 page views a day. When MIT surveyed admitted students in a recent year, they discovered that the blogs were among the three most useful things in helping students to decide to attend.

Some colleges offer blogs written by the Director of Admissions. These present a more official view of admissions at that institution. Try out some of these blogs yourself to get an insider's look of life at your target colleges.

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign:

http://blog.admissions.illinois.edu/?page_id=14

Lehigh University:

<http://lehighadmissions1.blogspot.com/feeds/posts/default>

Tulane University:

<http://tuadmissionjeff.blogspot.com/>

Johns Hopkins: <http://blogs.hopkins-interactive.com/>

Oregon State University:

<http://oregonstate.edu/admissions/blog/>

Olin College of Engineering: <http://studentblog.olin.edu>

Clark: <http://clarkdiaries.clarku.edu/>