

# Riley Baker Educational Consulting

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## October 2013

10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students:  
Review test materials & take  
PSAT either 10/16 or 10/19

**5<sup>th</sup> — SAT Reasoning  
and Subject Tests**

**26<sup>th</sup> — ACT and ACT plus  
Writing** (register by 9/27 —  
late registration 10/11)

Attend area college fairs and  
meetings

Meet with college reps visiting  
high school

Seniors - Continue work on  
college applications; complete  
Early Decision/Early Action  
applications; complete CSS  
Profile if required

Submit “rolling” admissions  
applications ASAP

## November 2013

**2<sup>nd</sup>—SAT Reasoning and  
Subject Exams**  
(register by 10/3 - late  
registration 10/18)

Seniors – File Early Decision/  
Early Action applications

Work on remaining college  
applications

Register for a PIN at  
[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) if you'll be  
applying for financial aid

## “Must Do” Stops On College Websites

College websites can be invaluable sources of information about colleges once you know how to get the most from them.

**Website search tool** – The most important part of any college website is its search tool. Search tools will help you find what you're looking for quickly and efficiently. Most colleges place their search tool on the home page of their website. Find it and use it!

**Admissions page** – Most students turn to this page first. It is usually tagged “admissions” or “prospective students.” On the admissions page, look for the following important information:

*Freshman profile* – The freshman profile provides data about the acceptance rate, average GPA, and average test scores for the most recent freshman class. This can help you get a sense of how your GPA, test scores, and personal characteristics stack up.

*Application requirements* – The “how to apply” section explains exactly what you need to do to apply, including which applications are accepted, whether the college offers Early Decision or Early Action, and the college's requirements for recommendations and standardized testing. Although your student portal and other online sites provide some of this information, college policies do change. You should check the application requirements for every college on the college's own website before you apply.

*Financial aid and scholarships* – If you need financial aid to attend, or are hoping to be considered for merit scholarships, a stop at the financial aid section is a must. Here you'll find information about the cost of attending that college, including tuition and campus living expenses. Every college also offers a Net Price Calculator in the financial aid section, which can help your family get an early estimate of how

much financial aid you may receive. The financial aid section also explains which forms are required and provides deadlines. If the college offers scholarships, usually scholarship information will be included in the financial aid section as well.

*The college's key selling points* – Colleges use the admissions section of their websites as a marketing tool to lure prospective students. The admissions section will give you a sense of how the college sees itself – what does the college think makes it unique? You'll often be able to find a list of undergraduate majors here as well. The admissions section usually includes glossy photos and videos designed to put the college in the most attractive light. All of this information is helpful, but keep in mind that it is designed to convince you to apply. To make an *informed* decision about whether a college is right for you, you'll need to go beyond the admissions website once you've decided that a school is a possibility.

**Academics** – Hopefully, you're going to college to get an education, so, once you've perused the pretty pictures in the admissions section, it's time to dig down into the information about academic programs. Look for a tab or link on the college's homepage (not the admissions page) labeled Academics. This usually will take you to a list of the departments in that college, as well as a list of majors.

*Department academics*: Pick at least two departments in subjects that interest you as possible majors and head to their department websites. Things to look for on department websites:

*Requirements for the major* – What courses does this school require you to take if you decide to major in this subject?

*Faculty bios* – How many faculty teach in this department? How many are full Professors? What are the research interests of the faculty in this department?

(continued page 3)

## Careers for International Relations Majors

*“While a degree in international relations does not lead to a specific career in the way that, for example, accounting or engineering does, a major in international relations, by emphasizing clarity in speech and writing, analytical skills and a detailed knowledge of world politics prepares students for careers in government, journalism, law, non-governmental organizations, international business, and teaching and research.”*

Lehigh University Website



## Careers for Political Science Majors

Business Relations  
Campaign Manager  
Intelligence Analyst  
Journalist  
Law Enforcement  
Legislative Aide  
Public Administration  
Realtor  
Urban Planner  
Non-profit Administration

## Majors: International Relations & Poly Sci

Although business majors are the most popular, the social sciences account for the second most frequently chosen major. The social sciences address the problems and challenges that affect our world today, and the knowledge and skills gained in these areas can be applied to nearly any career path chosen later. Our increasingly global society has provided numerous opportunities for international relations graduates. Political science studies equip students for leadership positions as well as graduate studies in areas such as law.

Majoring in international relations might be a perfect fit if you are interested in history and languages, enjoy foreign travel and learning about different cultures, or find yourself fascinated by the political arena. Students majoring in international relations generally begin with survey courses in international relations, world history, sociology, anthropology, and micro and macroeconomics. This is a truly interdisciplinary study, generally taught by professors who specialize in political science, economics, or history. Since international relations is not generally a free-standing department at most colleges, the programs tend to differ in emphasis from college to college. Some colleges stress the United States' perspective while others take a more global view. In some cases, language and literature receive greater prominence than the more typical emphasis on political science, economics, and history. By Junior year, students take classes that reflect their program's direction. These may include such courses as diplomacy, regional issues, international organizations, U.S. foreign policy, human rights, law, and national security. When choosing your college for this major, examine the course catalog to determine if that college's emphasis fits your area of interest.

A political science major might be a better fit for the student interested in current events, politics, social justice, community service, student government, and history.

Political science and government majors study both domestic and international issues such as civil rights, war and peace, economic development, and forms of government. The major begins with introductory classes in political science or international relations, along with classes in research and analytical methods. More advanced courses may cover such topics as global political economy, constitutional law, and international security. In many cases, poly sci majors also minor in a related field such as history, anthropology, or economics. These courses help to provide a background that explains the factors that influence and shape political institutions. Capstone or research projects are common, and many students take advantage of opportunities to get practical experience in their field of interest. Internships in local governmental offices, a “Washington semester” working in D.C., and study abroad experiences all enhance the academic program.

As our global society has grown, graduates with degrees in international relations have become highly sought after. Many companies have moved to the international arena, creating a real need for individuals who understand international political, cultural, and economic issues. Graduates may start with entry level positions in the federal government, work for the United Nations or other humanitarian organizations, find positions with companies engaged in international business, or work in international journalism. Having experience living and working overseas strengthens the applicant's resume.

Political science and government majors will find themselves with similar career options. Many will enter fields like federal, state and local government, business, public service, the Foreign Service, the diplomatic corps, politics, journalism, and public administration. Graduates from both of these majors often pursue graduate degrees in their field or go on to attend law school.

## Financial Matters: Studying Out-of-State at In-State Prices



Because of agreements developed between some neighboring states, many out-of-state students pay tuition at the same or only slightly higher rate than would in-state residents. For example, students from Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota and Wisconsin may be eligible for tuition reductions at certain mid-western insti-

tutions through the *Midwest Student Exchange Program*.

The *Western Undergraduate Exchange* (WUE) program allows residents of member states to enroll in participating institutions at a reduced tuition. States served by WUE include Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

The *Academic Common Market* provides reduced tuition (often at in-state fees) for students in sixteen southern states who want to pursue degrees not available at their own in-state public universities. Undergraduate reciprocity programs are available to students in Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware,

Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Some state universities, such as the University of Texas at Austin, attract highly qualified students to their state by offering them scholarships that include the right to pay in-state tuition. Other state systems, such as that of the Virginia public colleges, have a tuition structure that may result in out-of-state students paying no more than they would for a similar education in their home state.

The bottom line is to check out prices at all programs of interest to you. You may just be surprised by the cost of studying out-of-state!

## “Must Do” Stops On College Websites (continued from page 1)

**Department unique features**—How does this department describe itself? Are special opportunities available to students, such as internships, research projects, and study abroad?

**General academics**—You won't be taking all of your courses in the same department, so take a look at general academics. Use the search tool to find the college's catalog. The catalogue will describe that institution's graduation requirements. Do they have a core set of classes that all students must take, or a more flexible approach? What other things are required for graduation such as an internship or capstone project?

**Other academic information**—Are you interested in applying to graduate school? Law school? Medical school? Use the search tool to search for information on graduate school advising, pre-law advising, or pre-health/pre-med advising. Worried about finding a job after graduation? Search for “career center” or “career advising” to learn how the college helps their graduates. Want to study abroad in

college? Search for “study abroad” or “international programs” to learn what programs the college offers.

**Student life**—You're not going to be studying 24 hours a day, so while you're on the website learn about what it's like to be a student at this college. Many colleges have sections of their website that are tagged “student life” while others have sections for “current students.” Here's some information to look for:

**Student newspaper**—Use the search tool to find the student newspaper. Don't just read the current issue; most sites also have online archives. Look for information about events on campus, the hot issues that students are talking about, complaints about campus life and classes, safety in the local community, and any other information that provides a sense of what it's really like to go to this college.

**Campus clubs and organizations**—How can you get involved? Are there clubs or organizations that interest you? What about groups that relate to your intended major or career?

**Residential life**—What type of on-campus housing is offered? A search for residential life will tell you about campus options.

**Athletics**—If you'd like to play or watch a particular sport in college, be sure to check out the athletics section of the website.

**Specialized information**—Before leaving the website, consider looking for:

**Campus learning center**—What tutoring and other support services are available to help you succeed?

**Office of Disability Services**—If you have a learning disability, a physical disability, or other health issues, find the Office of Disability Services section to learn about the process of requesting accommodations and support resources.

**International Students Office**—If you're coming from abroad, check out the International Students Office web pages to learn about special programs, housing, and events for international students.

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## How Parents Can Help

Applying to college is often stressful for both students and parents. While completing applications and meeting deadlines is the student's responsibility, parents can provide support and encouragement. Here are some ways parents can help.

**Organization**—There is a lot of paperwork involved in the application process. Help your child put together a safe, easy-to-access place to store all of the college application materials. But don't do *too much*. This needs to be *your child's job*, not yours. If you are putting more effort into the process than your child, take a deep breath and a step back. Putting your child in charge of managing the process, even if he is moving slower than you would like, will help him cement the organizational and time management skills needed to be successful in college. Don't deny your child this important learning and growth opportunity.

**Make sure your child gets rest, eats well, and has time for fun.** Applying to college, while keeping up grades and maintaining a full schedule of after-school activities, is challenging for most students. Help keep stress to a minimum, and make sure she stays healthy.

**Ask how applications are going, but don't nag!** Most students appreciate their parents' interest in their college applications, but be careful not to inadvertently add more pressure. Expect that your child may, at times, seem to

be living in a parallel universe where time moves at a much slower speed. That does not mean that she is ignoring looming deadlines, or that everything won't get done on time. It may, however, get done on your child's schedule, instead of yours.

**Apply for financial aid on time.** Create a master list of requirements and deadlines for each college on your child's list, and respond promptly to college requests for financial information. Since colleges base financial aid on your previous year's income, plan to do your taxes as soon as possible after January 1st of senior year.

**Check your worries and anxieties at the door.** Although it's normal for parents to feel anxious, don't let your own worry add to your child's already high stress levels. Insisting that she add colleges to her list at the last minute "just in case", rewriting her essays, or talking about your daughter's chances of admission with other parents may send the message that you don't believe she'll be admitted. Your child needs to feel that you are confident that everything will turn out OK. So assure your child that you know she will be happy and successful at whichever college she ends up attending.

**Offer lots of love, hugs, and support.** This is an important experience, made easier if it is a loving journey, rather than an anxious one.