Riley Baker Educational Consulting

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February 2016

6th – ACT and ACT plus Writing

11th grade students: Begin your college search. Map out dates and prepare for spring SAT and/or ACT exams.

12th grade students – Contact colleges to be sure your applications are complete. Send mid-year grades if required. Update colleges with new information that might affect admission.

March 2016

5th – New SAT Reasoning Exam

(register by 2/5 - late registration 2/23)

9th and 10th grade students - Make plans for a productive summer. Investigate summer programs, jobs, internships

11th grade students – Create an initial list of colleges.

Prepare for spring SAT/ACT exams.

What are the *Best* Extracurricular Activities?

Students and parents often ask "which extracurricular activities do colleges like best?"

The answer surprises many: the 'best' extracurricular activity is one that a student sincerely enjoys, rather than one chosen simply because it might appeal to college admissions officers.

When college admissions officers turn to the activities section of a student's application, they aren't looking for a list of *specific* activities. Instead, what they're looking for is a sense of who the student is as a person. How does this student choose to spend his free time? What interests the student the most? What talents and skills will this individual bring to our campus?

Authenticity matters. Students who chase after titles or accolades just to satisfy some imaginary college admissions checklist are doing themselves a disservice. Colleges receive thousands of applications from high school newspaper editors, student body presidents, band members, community volunteers and athletes. There's nothing wrong with pursuing any of these activities, of course, but if the main reason you're participating is because you (or your parents) have heard that admissions officers like to see a particular activity on college applications, you're probably not showing your true self to colleges. And, ultimately, that's what colleges are looking for when they read your application: *you*.

The 'best' extracurricular activities, therefore, will vary for each student. One student might have a passion for sports, while another loves nothing more than reading and writing poetry in their spare time. Both can be great ways to spend your time and be of interest to a college admissions committee --- but only if they truly interest you. Sometimes, finding the activities that most excite you takes time. That's OK; high school *should* be a time for exploration. If you start off freshman year thinking you'd like to write for the school newspaper then discover in junior year that you have a passion for acting, go ahead and give the Drama Club a try. The key is to pursue activities that you honestly enjoy; those are the activities that will give an admissions committee a hint of who you really are.

Students and parents also wonder how many extracurricular activities colleges expect students to participate in. Is your strength as an applicant measured by how many activities you do? Simply put: no. While colleges prefer students who do more with their spare time than just study or play video games, admissions committees don't tally the *number* of activities an applicant participates in so much as the *depth* of participation. The student who joins ten different activities, but only puts token time and effort into each of them, is less interesting to an admissions committee than the student who only does a single activity, but loves it so much that he devotes most of his free time to it. So, think *quality* of participation not *quantity* when deciding on how to spend your time.

Finally, don't forget that extracurricular activities – no matter how impressive - never trump an applicant's grades, course selection, and test scores. While it's important to find and pursue activities that interest you, school work should always be your first priority. First and foremost, colleges are looking for applicants who have shown they're ready for college-level academic work. An impressive extracurricular resume is just icing on the cake for an applicant who has been successful in the classroom.

Majoring in International Business

Careers for International Business Majors

- Business analyst
- Foreign affairs specialist
- International buyer
- Management specialist
- Bilingual educator
- Customs broker
- International trade specialist
- International marketing specialist
- International banker
- Cultural advisor
- Import compliance specialist
- International economist
- International accountant
- Corporate trainer
- Global sourcing specialist
- International financial officer
- International consultant
- Foreign service officer
- Entrepreneur
- Translator/Interpreter

Websites such as www.goinglobal.com and www.indeed.com are just a couple of the resources available for finding jobs and internships in International Business around the world.

As our world becomes more connected through technology and the global marketplace, the demand for workers possessing degrees in International Business is growing rapidly. Many domestic corporations are currently establishing offices overseas and they need culturally competent and well-trained business people to act as representatives for their companies. International Business graduates are likely to be responsible for facilitating communications and business deals, with a high degree of both expertise in their field and cultural sensitivity. Successful employees should demonstrate strong leadership skills, consistently ethical behavior, and adaptability to rapidly evolving technologies. Put simply, this career is all about learning how to effectively conduct business in the global marketplace.

Although there are certainly many jobs available to those who earn a Bachelors' degree in International Business, obtaining a Master of Business Administration (MBA) or a Master of International Management (MIM) can increase career options and access to better-paying managerial or administrative positions. These Masters degrees generally take an additional one to two years of study. As opportunities and salaries increase, the job market for International Business graduates has become more competitive. In the past, having an MBA was more than sufficient to secure a high-paying job, but today, students may want to consider obtaining a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA), equivalent to a PhD, and additional specialized business certifications. The DBA is also strongly encouraged for those who are interested in careers in research or academics.

There are many job options for students who wish to pursue degrees, particularly advanced degrees, in this field. You can work in an overseas corporate office, in which case it is important to consider how you feel about extensive travel abroad, often with long and/or odd hours. There are jobs available in the government sector in fields such as education, healthcare, and aerospace. Another option is consulting, usually in the short-term, within specific areas of business such as banking, law, technology, and international trade. Working as an international accountant often requires an MBA and specific accounting licensure qualifications. It also involves expertise in tax law and currency exchanges, along with an understanding of how to read and create financial statements in the format required by other countries and their respective laws. An international economist studies the market, analyzes trends, and makes projections about countries that companies are doing business with overseas. International banking is another lucrative field with excellent job prospects, because of emerging international markets. Jobs are available within domestic banks that hold foreign accounts and in internationally owned institutions that do business in the United States.

Students majoring in International Business can expect to take classes in management, economics, business law, international finance, foreign languages, international marketing, and international operations. Becoming proficient in a second language and possessing a high degree of knowledge about computer and software programs and their constantly evolving technologies, are considered crucial skills in today's market.

This major is best suited for students who are interested in business, travelling, and learning about other cultures and languages. It helps to be flexible, a strong communicator, and good with numbers. You should possess an excellent understanding of multicultural business etiquette and world affairs. There is a fast-growing demand for professionals in this field, and above-average job growth projected over the next decade, so majoring in International Business could be the first step towards having a long, successful and fulfilling career.

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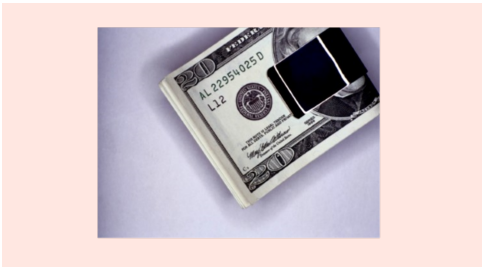
Financial Matters: Sources of College Scholarships—Part 1



With college costs rising every year, many families are eager to investigate college scholarship opportunities. Merit scholarships can be a great way to reduce student debt and keep college expenses under control. There are two main sources of college merit scholarships, and smart families will investigate both sources.

Merit scholarships awarded by colleges

Colleges are the largest source of scholarship money, awarding millions in scholarships to admitted students each year. Some colleges have extremely generous scholarship programs; a few even offer full tuition scholarships to highly qualified applicants. However, the number of scholarships and the amounts available vary widely from college to college, and some colleges offer only need-based financial aid and do not offer merit scholarships at all.

Still, if your family is interested in merit scholarships, the place to start is researching the scholarship opportunities available at the colleges that interest your child. Many colleges will list the scholarships available in the financial aid section of their websites. If you don't see anything about scholarships there, or have questions, don't be shy about emailing the college's Admissions Office and/or the Financial Aid Office.

To maximize your child's chances of receiving a scholarship from a college, encourage your child to pay attention to the eligibility requirements for scholarship consideration at each college. If most of a college's scholarships require a 4.0 average, but your child is more of a "B" student, the college likely won't be a good bet for scholarship money. However, there are plenty of colleges that *do* offer scholarships to "B" students, or who award scholarships based on other criteria. Encourage your child to keep an open mind and cast a wide net in her college search for the best chance at receiving scholarships from colleges.

(Next month: Finding Private Merit Scholarships)

Set Up a Summer Internship Now

It's hard to begin thinking about summer plans in February, but if you're hoping to find an internship this summer, this is the time to begin your search. The most popular summer internship positions are generally filled in the dead of winter. Internships allow you to "try on" a possible future career and provide first-hand knowledge about the everyday activities of your chosen profession. Other than an apprenticeship, there is probably no better way to learn how well a particular career fits you, your values, your interests and your hopes for the future. Contacts made during an internship may also form the beginning of your professional network. Mentors may offer advice about colleges and programs of study or about job opportunities.

How can you go about setting up a summer internship for yourself? First, consider the individuals you or your family members know who work in that field. Approach these people yourself, or ask family or friends to make a phone call on your behalf. Check with your teachers and college advisor; members of your school community may also be able to offer suggestions for intern placement. Another idea is to visit the website of the relevant professional organization; e-mail them asking about the possibility of an internship in your area.

When seeking an internship, send a cover letter detailing your desires and what you offer in return. Highlight your prior experiences such as classes in AP Sciences for those seeking a lab research internship or skills in web design, social media or film editing. Be sure to include information about the dates and times you'd be available to work. Attach a resume to the cover letter, including contact information and references Follow-up your submission with a phone call or email within ten days at most.

Expect to be asked to provide some minimal administrative services such as filing or answering phones or entering data, but the internship should offer you many opportunities to learn about that career. Although most internships are unpaid, the experience you gain can pay benefits that last a lifetime.

Understanding Rank and GPA

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4.0, 4.8, 3/200, weighted and unweighted, decile and quartile - school records sometimes read like a numbers game designed to quantify your performance. Underclassmen need to understand how these measures are determined, what they mean and how they impact college admissions.

High schools have many ways of computing grade point average (GPA). Most common is the 4.0 scale in which an A is worth 4 points, a B is 3, a C rates 2 points and a D carries 1. For schools that use numerical grades, the grade range for each letter grade will appear in the student handbook. Your unweighted GPA is the cumulative average of your high school grades converted to a 4.0 scale. Many high schools award additional points for honors and/or Advanced Placement courses, resulting in weighted GPA's in excess of 4.0. The school's policy about weighting will also appear in the school profile as will information about which courses are included in calculation of the GPA.

Since high school policies about GPA calculation vary from school to school, colleges often recalculate a GPA for their applicants, utilizing a standard system for all applicants. Many colleges only include core courses (math, science, English, social studies, foreign language) in their recalculated GPA. Colleges will also standardize the way in which weighted grades are assigned. This recalculation helps to level the playing field and permits the admissions officers to evaluate all students on the same basis. While colleges consider other factors in addition to GPA when making admissions decisions, it's important to remember that some schools (especially public colleges) have a minimum acceptable GPA.

Rank in class is generally first computed at the end of junior year; it may be based on either weighted or unweighted GPA. Rank may be described as a position compared to all members of the class (as 3/200), or by group (such as top 10% or 2nd quartile). Most small high schools do not provide class rank; these numbers within a small population can be misleading. When rank is provided, college admission officers use the information in their admissions decisions. Some states have mandated automatic admission to the state university system for students who rank in the top 4%, or top 10%, or top 20% of their high school class. Students who do not meet this requirement may be admitted through consideration of other factors. By understanding your GPA and rank in class, and through an appreciation of the way these numbers are used in the admissions process, you can more effectively gauge your chances of admission at a particular college and make better choices about the colleges that are appropriate for you.

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