

October 2010

Review test materials
& take PSAT either
10/13 or 10/16

**9th – SAT
Reasoning and
Subject Tests**

**23rd – ACT and ACT
plus Writing**

Attend area college
fairs and meetings

Meet with college
reps visiting high
school

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

Submit "rolling"
admissions
applications ASAP

November 2010

**6th – SAT
Reasoning and
Subject Exams**

(register by 10/8 -
late registration
10/22)

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

**30th – Applications
due for University
of California
colleges**

Colleges That Change Lives

A 4.2 GPA student should be successful at any college, but when a college routinely admits B students and transforms them into high-achieving, confident college students, that school is having more of an impact than a highly ranked college that only admits top students.

If you are immersed in the college search process, you may have heard about Colleges That Change Lives, a book profiling 40 schools located around the country that offer very different programs but share a commitment to the undergraduate experience.

While most of the CTCL schools are small, private liberal arts colleges, Evergreen State College is a public school with over four thousand undergraduates. The wooded, waterfront campus in Olympia is less than an hour from Seattle. But what really distinguishes Evergreen is the unique interdisciplinary curriculum. Instead of taking four or five classes at a time, students sign up for one program, which is usually team-taught by several professors from different fields. Programs often include field projects, internships or travel, which are easy to schedule since students don't have other classes. There are no majors at Evergreen and students create their own course of study, in consultation with professors who get to know them well since they spend many hours together during an academic program. Students receive narrative evaluations of their work instead of grades, although grades can be provided if necessary for graduate school applications.

While a number of CTCL schools, including New College, Hampshire and Marlboro, allow students tremendous freedom to create

an individualized course of study, St. Johns College has a mandated curriculum. There are no majors and no course choices. Students spend their four years reading and discussing the great books of western civilization, and everyone studies Greek and French, as well as four years of math and three years of science.

Students looking for a more traditional curriculum might like Eckerd College, which has a waterfront campus in Florida, and offers a nice selection of liberal arts majors as well as terrific marine science programs. The school helps students make a smooth transition to college by bringing freshmen to campus three weeks before the fall semester starts, and having them take an interdisciplinary seminar with the professor who will serve as a mentor throughout freshman year.

If you want a beautiful campus with trees but need to be near a major city, Goucher College, just outside Baltimore, offers the best of both. You will also be seeing the world beyond campus as Goucher requires all students to study abroad and provides a \$1200 stipend to help with travel expenses.

Most of the CTCL schools are not highly selective when it comes to admission, but that doesn't mean you won't work hard to earn a degree. Some of the schools require students to complete a major research paper, similar to a master's level thesis. It's no surprise that so many graduates of CTCL schools go on to earn Ph.D.s.

In addition to offering small classes and nurturing faculty, many of the CTCL schools also offer merit scholarships, making these colleges a real bargain for strong students. Learn more about Colleges That Change Lives at: www.ctcl.org

Public Liberal Arts Colleges that Rival a Private Liberal Arts Education

When you think of public higher education, you're probably not picturing small classes and accessible professors. Big public universities like University of California, Penn State, and University of Michigan are not known for providing a personal touch. But there are some smaller public colleges where you can find the kind of intimate academic experience more typically found at private colleges, and the cost, even for nonresidents, can be much less than a private school.

Before the University of Virginia started accepting women in 1970, smart young women in Virginia headed for the University of Mary Washington. The beautiful campus is in the historic city of Fredericksburg, about an hour south of Washington. The 4,000 students pledge to live by the Honor Code. In addition to a full slate of liberal arts majors, UMW offers a bachelor's degree in business administration. More than 20 percent of the students come from out of state. Tuition and fees for the 2010-2011 school year will be just under \$20,000 for nonresidents.

Despite the name, St. Mary's College of Maryland is not a religious school, but the state's public honors college. The name comes from the location in St. Mary's City. A true liberal arts college, with fewer than 2,000 students, SMCM has a lovely riverfront campus. The isolated location contributes to the strong sense of community on campus. While the school doesn't offer the excitement of city life, students who enjoy the water can walk down to the boathouse and check out a kayak or sailboat. More than 15 percent of SMCM students are from outside the state. Tuition and fees for nonresidents total about \$25,000 and merit scholarships are available.

New College is the public honors college of

Florida. This nontraditional school is for students who are intellectually curious and enjoy independent study. Students work closely with professors to design an individualized curriculum, and their progress is assessed by narrative evaluations rather than grades. All seniors write a thesis in their area of concentration. With only about 800 students, New College offers a more intimate learning community. The waterfront campus is two miles from downtown

Sarasota, and there are many beaches in the area. While tuition and fees are more than \$27,000, students who have submitted all required application materials by February 15 are guaranteed a scholarship, ranging from \$1,000 to \$12,500 a year.

At 5,000 students, Southern Oregon University is bigger than a liberal arts college, but small enough to focus on undergraduate education. SOU's

location in Ashland, home of the Shakespeare Theater Festival, offers great opportunities for students interested in theater, as well as more than 30 majors in liberal arts, education and business. Hiking, river rafting and other recreational pursuits are also available, and the school is starting a new degree program in Outdoor Adventure Leadership. Tuition is just over \$20,000, but students in nearby states may qualify for a Western Undergraduate Exchange scholarship that brings tuition under \$10,000; residents of states outside this area can receive other merit scholarships.

The application process at public liberal arts colleges is similar to private colleges, with admissions officers typically looking beyond grades and test scores to consider essays and recommendation letters. Learn more about public liberal arts colleges at the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges: <http://www.coplac.org/index.html>



Southern Oregon University offers great opportunities for theatre majors as well as those interested in the liberal arts

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Focus on Finances: Need-Based Financial Aid



Financial aid is based on the philosophy that parents and students should bear the primary responsibility for paying for college education to the extent to which they are able. The filing of financial aid forms (FAFSA,

Profile, and institutional forms) provides the necessary information so colleges can determine the extent to which families are able to pay.

FORMS:

- **FAFSA:** The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is the primary document required by all colleges and universities. This document must be filed between January 1st and March 2nd of the senior year. The final information requested comes from the Federal Income Tax Forms for the previous year. The FAFSA is filed online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. A FAFSA Worksheet is also available on the website.
- **Profile:** Relatively few colleges (mainly private colleges) require the CSS Profile in addition to the FAFSA because they need to have more information

How the SAT differs from the ACT

It becomes easier to decide which test to take for college admissions if you understand the basic differences between the SAT and the ACT. Although either exam will be accepted for admissions purposes at every U.S. college and university, some students find they will score higher on one test or the other. In general, young women tend to do better on the ACT while men excel at the SAT; students who enjoy math and puzzles are more likely to prevail on the SAT while those who focus on the classroom experience will prefer the ACT. The very tone of each test bears this out—the ACT tends to be more straightforward, while the SAT has a tricky way of asking questions and presenting answer choices. The SAT also exacts a penalty for guessing; the ACT does not.

The Verbal section of the SAT is more challenging for bilingual students and for those for whom English is a second language than is the ACT's English and Reading sections. The vocabulary on the SAT is more difficult; there are no "vocabulary-based" questions on the ACT.

The English section of the ACT focuses on punctuation and basic grammar, while the SAT emphasizes grammatical quirks such as passive voice and subject-verb agreement. If you read a lot and have highly

educated family members, the SAT will work for you. Once again, non-native English speakers and those who will be first in their family to seek a college degree are more likely to do better on the ACT.

- **Institutional Financial Aid Form:** Some colleges have their own financial aid form that is part of the college application. This form must be filed along with the FAFSA if the applicant is requesting financial aid from these institutions.

The information from the FAFSA determines the extent to which a family is able to pay for college expenses. This extent to pay is called the **Expected Family Contribution (EFC)**. To determine financial need, the EFC is subtracted from the **Cost of Attendance (COA)**. The greater the costs at a college, the higher the established need.

$$\text{COA} - \text{EFC} = \text{Need}$$

Colleges meet financial need in two ways:

1. **Gift Money** (Grants and Scholarships) and
2. **Self-Help** (Loans and College Work-Study).

College financial aid packages usually consist of both types of aid.

On the essay-based part of the Writing section, the SAT requires more abstract thinking, and asks you to apply specific examples to a general theme to bolster your argument. The ACT Essay, however, nearly always deals with some issue relevant to schools and thus to common student experiences.

The tricky personality of the SAT comes through clearly on the Math section. Although the level of math tested tends to be lower on the SAT than on the ACT (there's no trigonometry on the SAT), the SAT requires you to use simpler math concepts in an unusual way. Knowing the formula does not guarantee you the right answer on the SAT. The math on the ACT, however, is more straightforward; if you have adequate time, knowledge of the formula will point you to the correct response.

In deciding which test to take, consider your background and approach to problem-solving. If you're still not sure, take one of each, and then retest with whichever exam yields higher scores.

Why Do You Want to Go? Research Those Colleges!

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So often, the colleges that make students' short lists appear for less than the best reasons. In some cases, the student (or her family) is going for the "name" school, without real regard for the opportunities offered at that institution or an understanding of how well the school fits that particular student. You need to have a good reason for including each of your colleges on your final list.

Sometimes, students are looking for a particular course of study. If that's you—make sure that your targeted academic subject is offered at each of your colleges. Check each college catalogue to determine the breadth and depth of courses offered at the undergraduate level in that major. For lists of colleges with strong departments in a wide variety of disciplines, check out the lists in [The College](#)

[Finder](#) by Steven Antonoff, or consult the rankings of the graduate programs in *US News and World Report*.

Although students sometimes choose their colleges for location or size or sports teams, keep in mind that many colleges will offer you many of the same attributes. When colleges ask "why us", your answer should be for an academic reason. Perhaps the college is known for unique interdisciplinary offerings that fit your interests, or it has a great books curriculum that matches your desire for a classical education. Since nearly all colleges offer study abroad and community service opportunities, these are generally not good enough reasons for including School X on your list. Dig deeper into the educational opportunities available at each college on your list, and you'll find the ones that fit you best!

Website of the Month: www.collegeweeklive.com

Here's your chance to connect with admissions officers from colleges across the nation while dressed in your sweats! CollegeWeekLive is a free, online, virtual college fair. Here you can visit a variety of college booths, talk with the university admissions officers, and get your questions about their school answered. Their big Fall event occurs on Nov. 3rd and 4th from 10 am-10 pm EST. You can choose from the more than 300 colleges represented at this Fair. Check the event calendar on their website for other upcoming Fairs including University of California day on Oct 7th and Ohio Day on Oct. 13th. There's even a Paying for College Fair on Jan. 13th.

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