

## January 2023

Juniors - Check College Board and ACT websites for available test dates and sites in your area

Seniors – Search and apply for scholarships that match your qualifications

Seniors – File any additional college applications

## February 2023

### 11<sup>th</sup> – ACT

(register by 1/6)

Juniors – Begin your college search utilizing college websites, virtual tours and information sessions

Juniors – Map out dates and prepare for spring SAT and/or ACT exams

Seniors – Contact colleges to be sure your applications are complete. Send mid-year grades if required. Update colleges with any new information that might influence admission

## Prepping for Spring SATs/ACTs

Although many colleges remain test optional, there are good reasons to prep for and take the SAT or ACT. Most students feel some anxiety about taking college entrance exams. A good test prep course or working one-on-one with a tutor can help alleviate some of this anxiety by allowing students to become familiar with the exams and test-taking strategies. Here are some questions to ask if you are shopping for a test prep class:

**Who will be teaching the class?** Some test prep companies use recent college graduates who had high SAT/ACT scores when they took the exam in high school. Be cautious if this is the case. There is a difference between *scoring* well on an exam and being able to *teach others* how to do well. Be sure to ask about the training the instructors receive to help them become effective *teachers*, not just effective *test takers*. The best programs either use experienced educators as instructors or use educators to train instructors.

**What is the content of the class?** Does each class session divide time equally between the different sections of the exams, or are whole sessions devoted to specific sections? Is more time spent on particular sections or particular skills development? Additionally, ask how many full-length practice exams, using real exams, will be given during the course; the more, the better. But, also ask how the practice exams are scored and shared with students. Do they receive any personal feedback on their strengths and weaknesses on the exam? Of course, you should always consider how you learn best, and then look for programs that are a good match for your learning style. Some students will do best with private tutoring, while other students

can do well in a group setting.

### **What materials will be used in the class?**

The best test prep classes and test prep tutors will use actual SAT and/or ACT exams for practice. They will not create their own exams. While many test prep companies use their own proprietary study books, it's helpful if they also incorporate the College Board's and the ACT's own study guides into the classroom.

**What is the class size?** Look for smaller groups, and be sure to ask how much time is allocated in each class session to answering individual questions.

**What is the refund policy?** If you think the course isn't helping after a session or two, can you get a refund? What happens if you get sick or have a scheduling conflict that requires dropping out of the course?

**Can the tutor provide references?** Checking references is especially important if you are considering hiring a private tutor. However, keep in mind that what works well for one student isn't necessarily the best fit for all students; in checking references, be sure to dig deeper in your questions to try to get a sense of the tutor's style, approach, and ability to adapt to your or your child's needs.

**What is the tutor's or prep class success rate?** Use caution here. If a class or tutor suggests that all students who take the course will raise their scores by 100 or 200 points, it should set off warning bells. Students in any class will learn and improve at their own rates; it is very rare to see the same increases across the board for *all* students. Similarly, don't be overly impressed by promises that you can retake the prep class for free if your scores don't increase. You want a course that helps the *first* time.

## Career Paths for Visual Arts Majors

- Advertising designer
- Animator
- Architect
- Art administrator
- Art appraiser
- Art consultant
- Art conservator
- Art director
- Art historian
- Brand manager
- Costume designer
- Court artist
- Curator
- Engraver
- Fashion designer
- Filmmaker
- Floral designer
- Graphic designer
- Industrial designer
- Interior designer
- Jewelry designer
- Multimedia artist
- Painter
- Photographer
- Photo journalist
- Producer
- Sculptor
- Set designer
- Stylist

## Focus on Majors: Visual Arts

There are a number of options for students who want to study art in college, and it is important to choose the right kind of program. If you think you want to major in art but are not sure that you want to pursue a career as an artist, a liberal arts college with a good art program could be just right. You would earn a Bachelor of Art (BA) degree and take a fair number of liberal arts courses in addition to art classes. You could even double major or minor in another subject, and it should be easy to change your major if you decide art is not for you. Your group of friends would include students who are majoring in different subjects, and you would have a traditional college experience.

If you are a committed artist and want professional training to prepare you for a career, you could be a good candidate for a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degree. If you study at an art school, you will be immersed in art, spending much of your time in a studio. You begin taking foundation courses in art during your first semester, and you will take fewer liberal arts courses, typically in the humanities and social sciences rather than math and natural sciences. You will be part of a community of people who share your passion for art. You need to be very sure that you want to pursue a career in art, because if you change your mind, you may only be able to transfer a limited number of credits to a liberal arts school.

At an art school within a university, you can get the professional training of a BFA program and have access to the resources of a university. You will not be only surrounded by art students but will meet people with diverse interests and have the option to participate in traditional college experiences such as football games and fraternity parties.

Making sure a college is a good match for your needs is always important, but even more so for students who are pursuing a professional art degree. You need to know what kind of art education you want and you need to make sure that the school's philosophy and approach is right for you. Find out if the teachers are practicing artists and look at their work. Check out the school's facilities and equipment. As an art student, having access to museums and galleries is also valuable.

If you want to major in art at a liberal arts college, you won't need a portfolio for admission to the college, though you may want to submit one for scholarship consideration, as many schools offer talent scholarships. If you apply to a BFA program, your portfolio will be extremely important.

Each school has its own instructions for submitting a portfolio. You will need 10 to 15 pieces that convey the breadth and depth of your work. You may be required to write a personal statement about your artwork. Your art teacher may be able to help you put together a portfolio or you may want to find a consultant who specializes in art school admission.

National Portfolio Day is held in cities around the country. If you want to study visual arts in college, this is a wonderful opportunity to get advice about your portfolio. You need to have a plan in order to make the best use of Portfolio Day. It is usually crowded, and you could spend a lot of time waiting in line to talk to a representative, so locate the two or three schools you are most interested in and start with your favorite school. More information is available at [National Portfolio Day Association](#).

# Financial Matters: Money for College



Money should **never** stop anyone from attending college! Yes, college can be expensive, but there are resources available to help you and your family pay for college. Major sources of financial aid for college include:

**Grants** – Grants are “gifts” from the government and from individual colleges that reduce the cost of college. Grants are awarded based on your family’s financial situation. Colleges are the largest source of grants for college. The Federal Government and some state governments also offer grants to help students from lower income families pay for college costs. Grants do not have to be paid back or earned. Grants may be renewed every year you attend college, although if your family’s financial situation chang-

es, the amount you receive may also change.

**Merit scholarships** – Merit scholarships are offered by many colleges and private organizations. Scholarships are similar to grants in that they are a gift; you don’t have to repay them. Merit scholarships can be awarded for many reasons, including your grades, test scores, extracurricular activities, intended career or college major, and in some cases, your family’s financial situation. Some merit scholarships are only good for your first year of college; others may be renewed every year you attend college.

**Federal work study** – Work study is a program that allows students to earn money for college expenses by working in an on-campus job while they attend school. Usually, a work study job will help you pay for books and other personal expenses, but not tuition or your living expenses. Work study jobs often have flexible hours that make attending classes easy. Work study jobs can also be a great way to start building a resume. Work study does

not have to be paid back, but you don’t receive it until you begin working.

**Federal student loans** – The Federal government offers low cost student loans to help students and parents pay for college expenses. When used wisely, Federal student loans can be a good way to finance some college costs. Federal student loans have low interest rates, and in most cases you won’t have to start paying them back until you graduate (if you leave college without graduating, however, you will still be required to pay the loans back).

**Important tip:** Every college is required by the Federal government to give your family an estimate of the amount of financial aid you’ll be eligible to receive before you even apply. The estimate can help you compare colleges and make sure your college list will be financially feasible. To get the estimate, go to each college’s website and look for the Net Price Calculator; this is usually located in the financial aid section of college websites. If you can’t find it, just enter “Net Price Calculator” on the website’s search tool.

## Thinking About Summer— “Elite” Summer Programs

You may have been impressed with the fancy mailings you’ve received notifying you that “You’ve been nominated” or “You’ve been identified as a strong candidate for our selective summer program.”

Hopefully, your scam antenna is up. You are probably asking yourself why so much money is being spent on these fancy mailings. Yes, you’re right, it is a marketing ploy. We often wish we could convince these companies to reduce their marketing costs and then cut the fees for these programs.

Many of the programs are solid. Students may have great experiences, learn a lot, and enjoy being in an academic environment on a college campus away from their families - those are all points in support of these programs.

The downside is that they are very pricey, hence elite, and are typically not very selective at all. We refer to many of them as “pay-to-play” programs.

The companies and the colleges behind such programs have typically created for-profit enterprises to benefit their company or college. The programs look as if they are incredibly selective but that is usually not the case.

The big question is, “Will these programs help get you into college?”

Colleges may be happy to see these programs on a student’s resume because they may indicate the student has intellectual/personal interests and commitment, but they also generally

indicate that the student is from an upper-middle-class background and can afford a \$3000-\$10,000+ summer experience.

So, if the biggest reason you’re considering attending one of these programs is because you think it will seal the deal to gain acceptance at your dream college, think again. These programs won’t hurt you, and if your family can afford it, they can provide great learning experiences and exposure to professors and other motivated students.

The most important thing to do this summer is something that matters to you; show a college what you care about, what you’re curious about, what motivates you, what makes you different. Use your summer wisely.



**Elizabeth Levine**

[liz@SignatureCollegeCounseling.com](mailto:liz@SignatureCollegeCounseling.com)

845.551.6946

[www.SignatureCollegeCounseling.com](http://www.SignatureCollegeCounseling.com)

## Avoid Senioritis

Many students think that because they have worked so hard throughout high school, they have earned the right to slack off second semester of senior year. Mid-year grades are being sent to colleges, and some students have already been accepted at their favorite school. Why not kick back and enjoy life?

But an offer of admission is conditional, and students are expected to maintain their academic performance throughout senior year. Every year, colleges around the country rescind admission offers.

You are admitted to a college based on the information in your application, and if there are any changes, you need to let the college know. If you have dropped a class that was listed on the application you submitted to colleges, your application has changed. Colleges receive your final transcript during the summer, and you don't want to find out in July that you no longer have a place in the freshman class.

It is much better to be honest and explain why you dropped the class or why your grades have gone down. If the drop in academic performance is severe enough to jeopardize your acceptance, admission officers may be able to advise you on how to salvage your admission.

There's another reason to keep working hard in school. It makes the transition to college-level work easier. That's one of the advantages of taking AP courses, which require a high level of commitment throughout senior year in order to prepare

for AP exams in May. The anti-slacker curriculum built into AP classes will help you adjust to college more easily.

If you start procrastinating during senior year, it's difficult to get back to good study habits when you arrive at college, where there will be lots of distractions and no parents reminding you to finish your history paper before you go out for pizza with your friends.

While you do need to keep your grades up, making sure you have some fun during the second half of senior year will help you avoid burnout. Just don't go overboard quite yet. Summer is only a few months away, and you will have plenty of time to play before you go off to college.

It's not just lower grades that can torpedo an offer of admission. While spray painting the school gym might seem like a fun prank, a disciplinary issue can also be the end of your college acceptance.

Parents who have suffered through the long college admission process may not be thrilled when their child takes part in "senior ditch day." But as long as a student is doing her work and keeping her grades up, there's no reason to panic. The last few months of senior year can be tedious, and it's understandable that students aren't as motivated as they were earlier in their high school career. Remember that students who keep senioritis under control will get their reward when they embark on the great adventure of college, in just a few months.