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February 2023

11th – 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

March 2023

11th — SAT

(register by 2/10)

9th, 10th and 11th grade students - Make plans for a productive summer. Investigate summer programs, jobs, internships

Juniors – Create an initial list of colleges

How College Admission Has Changed

The college admission process wasn't nearly as anxiety-producing thirty years ago. Parents who haven't been through it yet have heard horror stories from friends and relatives, but they don't understand why things are so different now.

For one thing, more students are applying to college. Thirty years ago, half of high school graduates applied to college, but today more than two thirds submit applications. Back then, those who did apply usually stayed closer to home, often only applying to public universities in their state. Today's students apply more widely.

They also end up with more debt. The continuing increases in applications at expensive schools suggest that despite, or perhaps because of, an uncertain economy, families still see a college degree, especially from a brand name school, as important for their children and worth the financial sacrifice.

Parents are often shocked at how much more expensive college is today. College costs have outpaced inflation. The new, well-equipped science centers you see on so many campuses are expensive. Labor costs have gone up in higher education, just as in other industries. But in manufacturing, productivity can also increase with technological advances. It is more difficult to increase efficiency on campus without losing the personal attention that students and parents expect in college.

The application process has become easier in some ways and more difficult in others. The Common Application means students no longer have to prepare a separate application for each college. The convenience of the Common Application and

the anxiety about getting into a good school motivate students to apply to more colleges. In 1990, only 16 percent of students applied to six or more colleges; that percentage doubled 30 years later. Many students now apply to 10 or 15 schools, driven by fear of rejection. Test-optional policies have led to students applying to schools they would have considered unreachable before, again increasing application numbers.

The anxiety that students feel is mirrored in colleges, where admission officers are under pressure to keep increasing their application numbers. Colleges compete with rival schools to look more selective and desirable, and to get high rankings, a priority for families obsessed with "best" schools.

Thirty years ago, students were often competing in a smaller applicant pool, with other students from similar backgrounds. Today, admission officers have expanded their recruiting efforts, both across the country and internationally. The deluge of applicants with near perfect grades and high test scores makes admission to highly selective colleges unpredictable, as admission officers choose one high-achieving student while turning down another as they attempt to craft the ideal freshman class.

What has not really changed is the number of available seats. Most colleges have not increased their capacity dramatically. When you have more students applying for roughly the same number of spaces, fewer students will be admitted.

To make the process less stressful, focus on the programs and characteristics that are most important to you in a college, and then find schools of varying selectivity that offer what you want.

Career Paths for Health Care Administration Majors

- **Clinical Manager**—runs the business side of a healthcare services facility
- **Health Information Manager**—utilizes IT training to manage the databases that are required for a healthcare facility to run smoothly
- **Nursing Home Administrator**—is responsible for the day-to-day operation of a nursing home
- **Community Health Coordinator**—identifies and addresses health needs of a community
- **Chief Nursing Officer**—oversees the health facility's nursing department
- **Clinical Administrator**—manages a clinic or outpatient surgery or serves as a department head in a hospital
- **Practice Manager**—is part of the management team for a large medical practice

The Association of University Programs in Health Administration maintains a searchable database of certified undergraduate and graduate programs at: [Find a Program - Network \(aupha.org\)](http://Find a Program - Network (aupha.org))

Majoring in Health Care Administration

Do you love the idea of a health care career, but hate the thought of all of the science classes required for a medical or nursing degree? If so, consider a major in health care administration, one of the fastest growing career paths in the health care industry.

When most people think of hospitals, they picture doctors, nurses and other medical caregivers. However, behind the scenes, health care executives play a vital role in health care delivery by making sure that the systems and services are in place to support the work of medical personnel at hospitals, nursing facilities, managed care companies, and other health care organizations.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics, virtually all new private sector jobs created in the last five years were in the health care industry. Health care is the second largest employer in the U.S., employing over 11 million people, and health care administration/management jobs are expected to grow 28% over the next ten years. Health care managers and executives are also well compensated, with a median pay of just over \$101,000 a year. Top executives at large hospitals can make \$800,000 or more.

Health care managers, administrators and executives work in a variety of positions including patient care coordination, health communications and marketing, human resources and staffing, healthcare planning, finance, and information technology. They don't just work in hospitals, either. Health care executives can be found working in physician offices, managed care and insurance companies, and even in consulting firms and government agencies. It's an exciting and diverse field, offering lots of room for career growth and the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping to make a difference in people's lives.

A career in health care administration might be right for you if you are:

- Concerned with the health and well-

being of people from all walks of life

- A problem-solver who can keep up with ever-changing situations and new laws and regulations
- A good communicator with excellent interpersonal skills
- Analytical, detail-oriented, and organized

A bachelor's degree in health care administration is usually a prerequisite for entry level jobs in health care management. At present, 49 colleges and universities offer undergraduate majors in health care administration, certified by the Association of University Programs in Health Administration (AUPHA). As a health care administration/management major in college, you'll combine classes in business subjects such as accounting, marketing, human resources and information technology with healthcare-specific courses such as hospital management, health care policy, medical economics, and health delivery systems. In many programs, you'll also take classes in epidemiology (the study of disease causes and effects), health psychology, sociology and anthropology. A healthcare administration major is flexible enough so that students considering medical school can also fit in the required science and math pre-requisite courses.

Most health care administration programs require majors to complete a semester-long internship in a health care organization; a few programs alternate classroom time with a full-time on-the-job learning program called cooperative education. Some programs also allow students to specialize in specific areas of health care administration, such as health informatics.

Another pathway into this field is to complete an undergraduate degree in a relevant academic area, such as business or public health, and then pursue a Masters degree in health care administration/management.

Financial Matters: Tax Benefits Help Cover the Cost of College



College is expensive, but two educational tax benefits can help U.S. students offset the cost of college by reducing their or their parents' Federal tax obligations. Many American families, however, aren't aware that these programs exist. In fact, the U.S. Government Accounting Office estimates that 14 million eligible families miss out each year. Here are the key benefits to be aware of as your child plans for college.

Lifetime Learning Credit: The Lifetime Learning Credit allows American families to claim a tax credit of up to \$2,000 on the first \$10,000 spent on qualified educational expenses. Qualifying educational expenses include tuition, required fees, and course-related books, equipment and supplies. Expenses for room, board, transportation, and personal expenses are not included. There is no limit on the number of years this credit can be claimed,

but it cannot be combined with the American Opportunity Tax Credit in the same tax year.

Who's eligible: Families with a modified Adjusted Gross Income of up to \$138,000 if married and filing jointly; or up to \$69,000 for single, head of household or widowed taxpayers.

American Opportunity Tax Credit: The American Opportunity Tax Credit allows parents to claim a tax credit for 100% of the first \$2,000 and 25% of the next \$2,000 (or up to \$2,500 total) for tuition, fees and required course materials paid for students enrolled at least half-time in college. Expenses for room, board, transportation and personal expenses are not included. Up to \$1,000 of the credit is refundable, even if you owe no Federal income tax. There is a limit of four years of credit per student, and it cannot be claimed in the same year as a Lifetime Learning Credit or the Tuition/Fees deduction.

Who's eligible: Families with a modified Adjusted Gross Income of up to \$180,000 if married and filing jointly, or up to \$90,000 for single, head of household, or widowed taxpayers. Student must be pursuing a degree or a

recognized educational credential.

In addition to these Federal tax credits, the **Student Loan Interest Deduction** also provides tax benefits. This tax benefit allows taxpayers to deduct up to \$2,500 in interest payments on Federal and private student loans used to pay educational expenses. The taxpayer claiming the deduction must be legally obligated to pay the loan. Therefore, a parent cannot claim it if they're paying off a student loan taken by the student, but they can claim it if the parent has taken a parent PLUS loan or a loan specifically for educational expenses for the student. On the flip side, students may claim the deduction for student loan payments only if their parents are no longer claiming the student as a dependent for tax purposes.

Who's eligible: Families with an Adjusted Gross Income of up to \$170,000 if married and filing jointly, or up to \$85,000 for single, head of household or widowed taxpayers.

Learn more at the [IRS, Tax Benefits for Education Information Center, Tax Benefits for Education: Information Center | Internal Revenue Service \(irs.gov\)](#)

Feeling Stressed? Try a Meditation App

Anxiety levels are off the charts for both high school and college students in our post-Covid world. **Insight Timer**, a meditation, relaxation, and mindfulness practice app, introduces students to the practice of meditation. Users can choose a set of guided meditations of varying lengths, led by a variety of wellness experts. Other options include

meditations designed to improve sleep or manage stress. Both the free and paid apps can help students build lifelong habits for relaxation, reflection, and focus.

Ten Percent Happier is another meditation app that teaches the basics of

meditation. It also offers special meditations to tame anxiety, better handle stress, develop healthy habits, improve focus, and deal with emotions. This app does have an annual subscription fee after a free trial period. Both are available for Apple and android systems.

Big Fish or Little Fish?

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Would you rather be a big fish in a small pond, or a little fish in a big pond? As you start your college search, this is an important question for both students and parents to consider.

Many people assume that it's better to attend the most selective college possible, even if your high school grades, test scores, and other measures place you towards the lower end of the college's student body. The rationale behind this "small fish in a big pond" line of thinking is that students will always benefit from being surrounded by smarter peers, as well as enjoy the perceived prestige of the more selective school.

Yet, research suggests otherwise. Multiple studies have shown that students who opt to be a top student at a less selective college (in other words, a big fish in a small pond) tend to feel more competent, have better college GPAs, and higher career aspirations than students who just squeaked into a more selective college. This is true even when the student attending the less selective college had a less impressive admissions profile (i.e., high school GPA, test scores) than the student who picked the more selective school.

Author Malcom Gladwell also points out how being a big fish in a small pond can be especially beneficial to students planning to pursue STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) degrees and STEM-related careers. At a presentation at Google Zeitgeist, Gladwell discussed how many students who begin college intending to major in STEM fields switch to non-science and math majors. Those whose scores are in the bottom third were most likely to switch majors.

The equation doesn't change based on the selectivity of the college, noted

Gladwell. A student's SAT scores may put him in the bottom third of peers at a highly selective university, or at the top of his peers at a less selective school. But, the odds of the student persisting through to graduation in a STEM major will be greater at the less selective college where he is in the top third.

"As human beings, we dramatically underestimate the cost of being at the bottom of a hierarchy," said Gladwell in his presentation. "We form our self-assessment and confidence based on our standing relative to the group, not the entire world." Being among the top students in a college – regardless of its selectivity – makes a student likely to see himself as capable of keeping up with the group.

Of course, there are many reasons for choosing a college. A student and his parents may prefer the programs, location, financial aid, extracurricular activities, or a host of other characteristics of one college over another. A motivated student can also succeed at a variety of institutions, regardless of how he or she compares to campus peers. Students who are likely to be "big fish" among their classmates at a highly selective college will reap the same benefits as they would by attending a less selective school. And, some families value the perceived prestige of attending a more selective institution, even if it means their child will be a small fish in the big pond.

Deciding if you'll be better suited to being a big fish in a small pond or a small fish in a big pond is an important part of finding a college that will be the best match for you. See Malcom Gladwell's presentation online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3UEwbRWFZVc>