

College Terms to Understand

Academic Advisement:

a meeting between a student and an advisor to discuss career plans, program of study or class selections prior to registration.

Academic Accommodations:

changes in the delivery of course material and/or in the assessment of knowledge that assist students in meeting the standards of the course. Students are eligible for accommodations based on the documentation of their disability. A few examples of accommodations include notetakers, recorded textbooks, time extensions on course assignments, extended test time, sign language interpreter, and the use of assistive technology during class and exams.

ACT:

a test published by American College Testing which measures a student's aptitude in mathematical and verbal comprehension and problem solving. Some four-year colleges in Virginia require students to take this test and submit their test scores when they apply for admission. Some colleges accept this test or the SAT (see below for explanation of SAT). Most students take the ACT or the SAT during their junior or senior year of high school. For additional information, see <http://www.act.org>

Admissions Counselor:

a person working in a college Admission and a college Admission and Registration Department who assists students preparing application materials.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA):

a civil rights law stating that public institutions cannot discriminate on the basis of disability. It helps to implement and enforce Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and also outlines additional protections for people with disabilities.

ASSET or COMPASS:

tests that measure a student's ability in math and English. Either the ASSET or COMPASS test is given to students who apply to a technical or community college. The test results are used to determine the student's placement in English and math. The results do not determine admission status. It is recommended that students complete the test just prior to or directly following high school graduation. Students must contact the testing office available on each college campus to arrange for a test time. The student through contacting the Disability Services Office arranges accommodations for the test. For additional information, see <http://www.act.org/asset/index.html> or <http://www.act.org/compass/index.html>

Assistive or Adaptive Technology:

equipment that promotes capability in handling a wider range of activities with greater independence for students with disabilities. Examples would be large

print displays on computer screens for a student with a visual impairment; computer voice output for a student with a reading disability and variations of the standard keyboard for a student with a mobility impairment.

Audit:

enrolling in a class on an audit basis means the class would not count for credit or grade point average. In some cases the audit fee is less than the tuition rate. Registration for audit may require the permission of the instructor.

B.A. or B.S.:

B.A. stands for "Bachelor of Arts", and B.S. stands for "Bachelor of Science". These college degrees can be earned at four-year colleges and usually take four years to complete. Some colleges only grant B.A.s and others only grant B.S.s it depends on the kinds of courses offered at the particular college.

Blue Book:

a booklet with a blue cover that contains lined paper for writing essay test answers. Blue books are usually available for purchase in the campus bookstore.

Certificate Programs:

programs that offer short-term training in a wide variety of areas and are available at community and technical colleges.

COMPASS or ASSET:

tests that measure a student's ability in math and English. Either the COMPASS or ASSET test is given to students who apply to a Technical or Community College. The test results are used to determine the student's placement in English and math. The results do not determine admission status. It is recommended that students complete the test just prior to or directly following high school graduation. Students must contact the testing office available on each college campus to arrange for a test time. The student through contacting the Disability Services Office arranges accommodations for the test. For more information, see <http://www.act.org/asset/index.html> or <http://www.act.org/compass/index.html>

Course Number:

each class has a designated number that must be used during registration to insure proper class placement.

Course Load:

number of credit hours for which a student is enrolled during a semester.

Credit Hour:

dependent upon the amount of time spent in class, courses are assigned credit hours. This may range from one to eight hours.

Disability Support Services (DSS):

college support and advocacy services for students with disabilities. This service may go by various names depending on the individual college (such as Disabled Student Services, Educational Access or Special Needs). To receive

these services, a person with a disability must place a request with the DSS office and provide documentation regarding the disability.

Documentation:

relative to a student with a disability requesting services at a college, this is a written assessment from a professional with expertise in that particular field of disability. This documentation is required in order to determine the student's eligibility for services and the specific services that are needed. Since there is some variance among colleges as to the documentation required to receive services, students are encouraged to inquire at all colleges of interest.

Early or Priority Registration:

students complete a final course selection and make a payment or deposit for tuition and fees in advance of the general student population. This accommodation is granted to disabled students whose documentation states the need for early registration.

Elective:

a course you choose to take that is not required in your major field of study, but may be used for credit toward a degree.

Equal Access:

providing to students with disabilities who are "otherwise qualified" the same educational opportunities and full participation in programs and activities as provided to all other students.

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid):

a form that all students applying for financial assistance are required to complete in order to determine eligibility for financial aid. This form is available from your high school career center or guidance counselor or from any college financial aid office. For more information, see <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>

Fees:

charges that cover costs not associated with the student's course load. This may include a charge for registration, parking, and for the use of lab equipment or computers.

Financial Aid or Financial Assistance:

money available from various sources to help students pay for college. Students must establish eligibility and funds can be competitive.

Financial Aid Package:

total amount of financial aid given to a student. Federal and non-Federal aid such as grants, loans, and work-study are combined to help meet the student's need. Using available resources to give each student the best possible package of aid is one of the major responsibilities of a school's financial aid administrator.

Financial Need:

in the context of student financial aid, financial need is equal to the cost of education (estimated costs for college attendance and basic living expenses)

minus the expected family contribution (the amount a student's family is expected to pay, which varies according to the family's financial resources).

Full-time Student:

student with a course load of 12 or more credit hours per semester.

GED Certificate or Diploma:

the equivalent to a high school diploma. It certifies that a person has obtained a passing score on five separate tests: Writing Skills, Social Studies, Science, Interpreting Literature and the Arts, and Mathematics. For more information, see <http://www.acenet.edu/calec/ged/intro-TT.cfm>

Grant:

a sum of money given to a student for the purposes of paying at least part of the cost of college. A grant does not have to be repaid.

IEP (Individualized Education Program):

an important document that outlines an annual educational program for students who qualify for services because of a disability.

IEP Manager:

a school professional, usually a special education teacher, who is responsible for the student's educational program.

IEP Meeting:

an annual meeting to develop an educational program that is formalized in writing.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):

a federal law outlining the responsibilities of public schools (K-12) in regards to providing an appropriate education to students with disabilities.

Learning Strategies:

activities that help people use the learning style to best approach new learning.

Learning Style:

the way a person takes in, understands, expresses and remembers information; the way a person learns best.

Loan:

a type of financial aid that is available to students and to the parents of students. An education loan must be repaid. In many cases payments do not begin until the student finishes school.

Major:

a student's primary area of study, which is usually decided during the sophomore or junior year of college.

Modification:

making a change in a college program or course, such as increasing the length of time permitted to complete a degree program. Colleges are required to

make "reasonable modifications" for qualified students with disabilities if the change does not alter an essential or necessary element of the program.

Otherwise Qualified:

as a student with a disability, you are "otherwise qualified" when you meet the same academic requirements and standards as non-disabled students. These requirements and standards must be considered necessary to maintain the integrity of a course, program or college policy. For example, a student with a disability is required to meet the instructor's expectations for all students in regards to class participation, work standards, attendance, and ability to demonstrate acquired knowledge.

Open Admissions:

a policy that supports admission to most or all students who apply to the school. At some colleges it means that anyone who has a high school diploma or a GED can enroll. At other schools it means that anyone over 18 can enroll. "Open admission", therefore, can mean slightly different things at different schools.

Part-time Student:

student with a course load of less than 12 credit hours per semester.

Postsecondary:

refers to all programs for students leaving high school, including programs at community colleges, technical colleges, four-year colleges and universities.

Prerequisite (Prereq.):

a requirement that students must meet before enrolling in a specific course.

PSAT/NMSQT:

the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test, a practice test that helps students prepare for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). The PSAT is usually administered to tenth or eleventh grade students. Although colleges do not see a student's PSAT/NMSQT score, a student who does very well on this test and who meets many other academic performance criteria may qualify for the national Merit Scholarship Program. For more information, see <http://www.collegeboard.com>

Reasonable Modification:

a change in the academic requirement of a program. The change cannot alter what is considered the essential or necessary content of what is being taught.

Registration:

students complete a final course selection and make a payment or deposit for tuition and fees.

ROTC:

Reserve Officers Training Corps program, which is a scholarship program wherein the military covers the cost of tuition, fees and textbooks and also

provides a monthly allowance. Scholarship recipients participate in summer training while in college and fulfill a military service commitment after college. For more information, see <http://www.armyrotc.com/>

SAT:

Scholastic Aptitude Test that measures a student's aptitude in mathematical and verbal comprehension and problem solving. Many four-year colleges in Virginia require students to take this test and submit their test scores when they apply for admission. Some colleges accept this test or the ACT (See above for explanation of ACT). Most students take the SAT or the ACT during their junior or senior year of high school. For more information, see <http://collegeboard.com>

Schedule of Classes:

a listing of all courses with course numbers, credit hours, rooms, times, days and instructors for one semester. Schedule books are published each semester and available in the Registrar's Office.

Scholarship:

a sum of money given to a student for the purposes of paying at least part of the cost of college. Scholarships can be awarded to students based on academic achievements or on many other factors.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973:

a civil rights statute that is aimed at preventing discrimination against persons with disabilities. The law requires that college programs be prepared to make appropriate accommodations and reasonable modifications to their college's procedures and practices, so students with disabilities can fully participate in the same programs and activities that are available to non-disabled students.

Self-Advocate:

someone who can speak up in logical, clear and positive language to communicate about his or her needs. To be an effective self-advocate, a student with a disability must understand his/her particular type of disability, how it impacts learning, AND become comfortable with describing to others the disability and related academic needs.

Substitution:

a replacement of a class required for completion of a degree or certificate with another class. The substitution can be granted to a student with a disability if the student's disability documentation supports the need for a class substitution AND the substitution does not alter an essential or necessary element of the program.

Syllabus:

a summary or outline distributed by an instructor that states the main topics, readings and assignments to be completed during the semester.

Transcript:

a list of all the courses a student has taken with the grades that the student

earned in each course. A college will often require a high school transcript when a student applies for admission to the college.

Tuition:

the amount of money that colleges charge for classroom and other instruction. Tuition can vary widely between colleges.

Waiver:

an agreement that a specific class which is a part of a degree or certificate program is not required for a particular student. A waiver is only granted to a student with a disability if the student's disability documentation supports the need for the waiver AND the waiver would not alter an essential or necessary part of the program.

Work-Study Program:

a program that allows students to work part-time during the school year as part of their financial aid package. The jobs are usually on campus and the money earned is used to pay tuition or other college expenses.

Reprinted with permission from the
Postsecondary - Innovative Transition Technologies Project

www.postitt.org

www.VaCollegeQuest.org