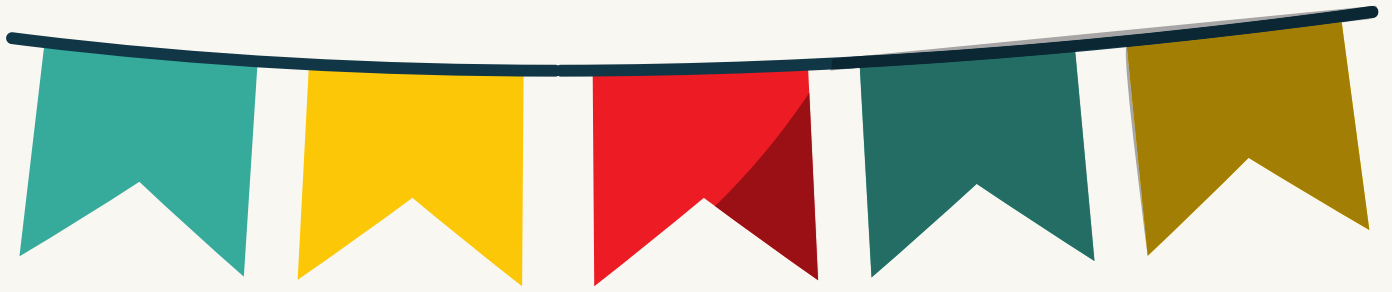


WASHINGTON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL



# GRADUATE HANDBOOK

NEXT STEPS FOR FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS



# CONGRATULATIONS!

## YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE AWAITS.

"No one gets through college or life on their own, So when you hit those walls — and you will — don't be surprised, don't be shocked, don't think it's you, don't think you're not supposed to be there. Go get some help. Don't sit in your room alone. Do not stew or stir. Go out and build your base of support."

-Michelle Obama

# GRAD TO-DO LIST

## 1 LOG ON TO YOUR COLLEGE'S WEBSITE

Most colleges now provide a website, named something like my.collegename.edu, where you can check your financial aid status & other important deadlines. Most of the information that colleges expect you to read & complete will be sent through the portal.

## 2 REVIEW FINANCIAL AID AWARD

Check to see whether there are additional steps that you need to take to apply for aid. If you are going to go to a community college, you will most likely receive your financial aid letter in June. Talk to your counselor about how to pay whatever balance is left after your financial aid award. Learn where to go on campus for emergency loans/ financial support.

**Selected for FAFSA Verification?** Relax. Being selected does not mean that you did anything wrong. Verification is the process your school uses to confirm that the data reported on your FAFSA form is accurate. Some people are selected at random; and some schools verify all students' FAFSA forms. Next, follow up. Do not ignore this request. All you need to do is provide the documentation your school asks for—and be sure to do so by the school's deadline, or you won't be able to get financial aid.

**Send in your deposit. If you cannot afford it, ask if you can have your fees waived, deferred, or included in your financial aid package.**

## 3 SEND YOUR FINAL TRANSCRIPT

Double-check with your school registrar that they sent an official copy, then check on your college's student web portal (or call the admissions office) to confirm that it indeed showed up. Make sure that your AP/IB course credit is sent and accepted by the college. Make sure that your dual enrollment transcript is sent and accepted by the college.

## 4 SIGN UP FOR ORIENTATION

You will learn more about the college, register for classes, and may meet with your advisor. Explore the possibility of a summer transition or bridge program. If you cannot attend in person, find out if there is a distance-orientation to participate in.

## 5 TAKE PLACEMENT TESTS

Students are often required to complete placement tests before orientation or the fall. Prepare for these tests. Your results may mean that you can skip some intro courses or that you need more preparation. **Don't be afraid to ask for a fee waiver or to re-test.**

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## EXPLORE ON-CAMPUS SUPPORTS

Learn how to access tutoring and academic support services. Register for disability services, if needed. Locate and learn about TRiO program, mental health counseling services, on-campus food pantry, clothing, and other supports, if available. Consider looking into off-campus supports, too.

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## IF ON-CAMPUS, SEND DORM DEPOSIT

Complete any housing forms if you are going to live on-campus. Most colleges require you to pay a housing deposit and complete a housing form in order to be eligible for on-campus housing. Some colleges have limited housing, so do this step ASAP. **If you cannot afford it, ask if you can have your housing fees waived, deferred, or included in your financial aid package.** Ask for year-around housing, LGBTQ-safe housing, or family housing options, if needed.

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## PROVIDE PROOF OF IMMUNIZATIONS

You'll need to submit a copy of your official immunization record, which you can get from your personal doctor or your county health department. Explore college health plan requirements and what services are offered on campus.

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## ORGANIZE TRANSPORTATION

Make a plan for getting to campus the first time. Find out what local transportation options are available on campus. Make a plan for getting home and back on breaks.

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## MAP YOUR CLASSES

Before the first day of school rolls around, map out the exact location of each of your classes—using the building name and room number. (And if your college has multiple campuses or locations, pay extra attention to that.)

## SHOW UP &

## ASK FOR HELP WHEN NEEDED!



# RESOURCES & SUPPORT

Successful college students use a variety of available resources such as tutoring, informal student study groups, meeting with professors during office hours, meeting with an academic advisor, and asking for help when they need it.

There are many free resources to help students transition to college and get personal, health, financial, and academic support. If you are a first-generation student, meaning you are the first person in your family to go to college, colleges may have programs designed just for you. All you have to do is ask.

## COMMON PROGRAMS TO HELP NAVIGATE YOUR WAY

**TRiO Student Support Services Program (TRiO SSS)** is offered at many community colleges and four-year schools. This program is for students who are low-income, first-generation or have disabilities. TRiO provides tutoring, teaches study skills, and offers academic counseling. This program helps students navigate the college system and offer social and cultural events to help students build a supportive social network.

**Diversity/Equity/Multicultural Student Affairs** is an office or center that typically connects historically underrepresented students and those who are first in their family to attend college. Find information about resources, scholarships, clubs, organizations, events, and more.

**Passport to Careers** helps foster youth and alums. You will receive guidance from college academic and financial aid counselors, assistance with finding housing during school breaks and over the summer, special consideration for the State Need Grant and State Work Study financial aid programs.

**College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP)** helps students who are children of seasonal workers. CAMP offers counseling, tutoring, skills workshops, financial aid stipends, health services, and housing assistance.

**Campus Disability Service Offices** help provide assistance (placement testing, classroom, assistive technology, and more) for students with disabilities.

**First Year Experience** is a program offered by many schools. This program can help students transition to college throughout their first year. It is free and open to all.

There are also **free tutoring** and **writing centers**, as well as, **career counseling** and **academic advising** for students at all schools. Most schools have a **mental health counselor** and **health facility** on campus.

# MY RESOURCES

This list identifies common student support resources found at college. Review your college or university's website. Identify what supports you may need, and what is available on your campus. You may add to or edit this list. **NOTE:** Each college website is different; however, there are usually four main tabs: Admissions, Academics, Student Life, and Student Services.

## DETAILS & LINKS TO INFORMATION

### ACADEMIC

Academic Advising: \_\_\_\_\_

Tutoring/Academic Support: \_\_\_\_\_

### ON-CAMPUS SUPPORT SERVICES

Disability Services: \_\_\_\_\_

LGBTQ Support: \_\_\_\_\_

New Student Programs, like First Year Experience: \_\_\_\_\_

Peer Affinity Groups, like for undocumented students, 1st Gen Support Groups: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Advisors/Support Services Team/Liaisons: \_\_\_\_\_

TRiO: \_\_\_\_\_

Programs for Youth/Alumni of Foster Care: \_\_\_\_\_

### FINANCES

Fee Waivers: \_\_\_\_\_

Financial Aid Office: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Grants: \_\_\_\_\_

Scholarship Office: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Employment: \_\_\_\_\_

### RESIDENTIAL HOUSING

Gap Housing/Year-Round Housing Options: \_\_\_\_\_

LGBTQ Housing (Gender-Neutral Dorms, Alternatives to Campus Housing): \_\_\_\_\_

On-Campus Family Housing: \_\_\_\_\_

### HEALTHCARE

Counseling Services: \_\_\_\_\_

Health Center: \_\_\_\_\_

### LOGISTICS

Campus Map: \_\_\_\_\_

Childcare Availability & Cost: \_\_\_\_\_

Computer Labs: \_\_\_\_\_

On-Campus Food Banks: \_\_\_\_\_

Transportation Support: \_\_\_\_\_

### SOCIAL

Diversity & Events Outreach: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Leadership Office/Student Life/Student Clubs & Organizations: \_\_\_\_\_



## REGISTRATION CRASH COURSE

### TYPES OF COURSES

**General Requirements:** Classes from different subjects (think math, humanities, science, or foreign language) that you're required to take as part of your degree plan.

**Major Requirements:** Courses within your declared major or program that you need to take to earn your degree—like how history majors (unsurprisingly) have to take a certain number of history-related classes.

**Electives:** Optional classes from outside your major that let you explore other interests and generally cool stuff. Like “The Art of Walking” or “Introduction to Turntablism” (both 100% real classes at real colleges).

**Prerequisites:** Courses that give you the background or skills needed to take a higher/harder class. Basically English I is a “prereq” for English II, and so on...

**Developmental Courses:** These don't count toward a degree, but can be required based on placement scores. They help boost knowledge so you can successfully tackle a college-level course.

### SCHEDULING CLASSES

Before you even think about registering, meet with your academic advisor to figure out the classes you need to take. You'll probably want to enroll in 12 hours (or 4 classes per semester or 3 classes if your school uses quarters). That is considered full-time, but be sure to check if any of your scholarships require more hours.

A college class usually only meets 2–3 per week. You will want to use non-class time for reading and assignments.

When you are building your schedule, be realistic. If you are not a morning person, try to avoid those times. Make sure to leave time to get from class to class and to eat meals. Aim for a mix of classes of those that require a lot of reading versus those that do not. Schedule your work hours based on your class schedule—not the other way around.

### COURSE FORMATS

**Labs:** Usually paired with lectures, these sessions are hands-on learning tasks.

**Lectures:** What people think when they think of college—a professor speaking in front of a big room and students taking notes.

**Seminars:** These advanced courses usually focus on a specific topic, with professors or visiting experts lecturing and students having discussions and doing presentations.

**Studio:** Mainly for art and music. These classes devote some time to lecture and some time to creating things.

**Online:** Totally delivered over the internet. These classes conduct all discussions via email, online portals, and chats.

**Hybrid:** This course style is a mix of in-person and online formats.

# TIPS FOR COMMUTERS

## Plan Your Schedule

Save time and transportation costs by scheduling your classes for 2 or 3 days per week. Don't forget to eat! You may want to pack a lunch or buy a meal plan.

## Get Organized

Figure out a good organizational system. Create a calendar and to-do lists. You will need to bring all of your books and materials for classes that day, and maybe even job stuff. There are usually not any lockers in college.

## Parking Permits

If your campus requires a parking permit, get that sorted as soon as possible.

## Find Parking

Map out your classes to find the nearest parking lots. Parking availability will change from day to day so it is good to be aware of options.

## Getting to Class

Figure out exactly how long it will take you to drive to campus (make sure to factor in traffic), find parking, and walk to class.

## Public Transportation

If you live near campus, see if there is a bus system available for students to get to and around campus.

If you are taking public transportation to campus, be sure to plan your route with the exact trains or buses that you'll need.

## Plan for Weather

Think about if you should bring layers, an umbrella, comfortable shoes, etc.

## Get Involved

Students who live in dorms have many opportunities to bond and feel a part of a community. If you are a commuter, you may have feel like you don't fit in with the campus community or know the campus and its resources as well as your peers. Find a mentor, join clubs or study groups, organizations, or activities to get involved and make friends.

## On-Campus Time

Hunt down areas on campus where you can hang out between classes. FYI: The library is a great option, and they usually have computers you can use.

Make smart use of your on-campus time. Find a work study position or a campus job. Study, visit professors during office hours, meet with your advisor, etc.

## Balancing Act

Commuters must balance their responsibilities at home and at school. Build relationships with your instructors and classmates.

If you are living at home, talk to your family about your needs. If you are struggling, see a counselor on campus. If you have problems with you a course, consider talking to the professor during office hours. Communicate with your friends and families. Practice self-care.

## Use Your Resources!

Use the school's resources and support services. There are personal, health, financial, and academic resources for students. Don't be afraid to ask for help that you are already paying for.

# THE FIRST YEAR IN FIVE STAGES

The transition from high school to college is an important milestone. Many students who live on-campus or commute experience a wide range of emotions during their first year at college. These emotions are normal and often occur in five stages. The following timeline includes examples of things students commonly face during their first year of college.

## 1. THE HONEYMOON PERIOD.

You may experience anxiety, anticipation, and an initial sense of freedom when you begin school. Homesickness and the desire for frequent contact with family are common. You may be getting to know roommates, making new friends on campus, and finding your way around. This period tends to be a time when you might incur many expenses for items such as textbooks, school supplies, and room decorations/furnishings.

## 2. CULTURE SHOCK.

You begin to grasp the realities of adjusting to college. You begin to get feedback on your progress in class. You might experience shock at the workload, grades on first exams, or time management problems. You may feel out of place and anxious. For example, you might be dealing with the following items for the first time:

- Sharing a room with strangers.
- Budgeting time and money.
- Finding support and being a self-advocate.
- Managing a commute from home to school.
- Navigating a new community.
- Managing challenging coursework and a job.

This phase will pass. This feeling is very typical. There are free resources on campus to help-- you just need to ask.

## 3. INITIAL ADJUSTMENT.

As the year goes on, you will begin to develop a routine. You will become familiar with campus life and new academic and social environments. If you are living on a campus, it is also completely normal for conflict to develop between roommates. You may be sharing a room with someone who is quite different from you. Most students are able to work things out when they discuss issues directly with one another or with a Resident Advisor.

If you are a commuter, you may feel like you don't fit in with the campus community or know the campus and its resources as well as your peers. Commuters also must balance their responsibilities at home and at school. It is important that you work to build relationships with your instructors and classmates. You can depend on outside support systems and also access the school's academic and social services.

You may reassess your time-management strategies, begin to explore majors or careers, and make plans with academic advisors. You might begin to plan to move off campus for next fall.

## 4. HOMESICKNESS OR LOSS OF CONFIDENCE.

With final exams finished, many students return home for winter break, and there may be concerns about how you will adjust to routines at home. For many, winter break is an opportunity to catch up on sleep and reconnect with old friends. You will also begin to receive your first-semester grades and may experience joy, disappointment, or relief. Homesickness often occurs right after a vacation. You may become a bit insecure and have some misgivings about your new environment. You might wonder if you belong at college or if college is really all it is supposed to be. Homesickness is normal. As with any major transition period, students will have their ups and downs. Many students feel homesick at one time or another during their first year.

## 5. ACCEPTANCE AND INTEGRATION.

You finally feel like you are a part of the college community. You begin to think of it as home. You feel more confident with your time-management skills and experience less stress with exams. You will also be enrolling in classes for the fall and considering options for the summer. You might have mixed feelings about leaving for the summer and decide to stay to take classes and/or pursue summer work opportunities.

# PLANNING TO TRANSFER

## FROM A 2-YEAR TO A 4-YEAR?

Some 4-year schools have online resources that you can use to scope out the transferability of a particular course.

### USE ONLINE RESOURCES

Your community college advisor can help you create a transfer plan to make sure the classes you take will count towards your degree later.

### WORK WITH AN ADVISOR

## STRATEGIES

### DEVELOP A TRANSFER PLAN

A transfer plan or agreement lists the community college classes you will take to transfer equally to your future school. Each transfer plan is specific to an exact university and an exact degree. If you change majors or schools, you should redo this plan.

### DECLARE INTENT

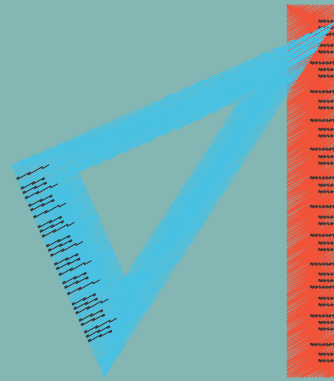
It's super important to declare your intent to transfer (and the school you want to transfer to) as early as possible in your first semester so you can maximize your number of transferable classes.

### WARNING!

Not all community classes may count towards a 4-year degree. Some may transfer, but not actually get you closer to a degree.

# Did you know that your grades impact your financial aid?

You will need at least a 2.0 cumulative GPA. If you are starting at a community college, usually only classes where you earn a "c" or better will transfer.



Always know your college's financial aid performance policy. Be sure to know the policy for any scholarships you may have.

In college, you have to maintain better than a "c" average to keep your financial aid. Some specific majors may require a higher average. It is called "Satisfactory Academic Progress", which is evaluated every year.

You cannot go over the max hours allowed (150% of what is required to graduate).

Financial aid will only pay once for you to repeat a class that you got a passing grade in. And you will need to complete at least 67% of your attempted class hours (with any grade—just no incompletes).



# How to keep paying for college.

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- ✓ You need to reapply for financial aid every year that you are in college.
- ✓ Fill out the FAFSA or WASFA as soon after October 1 as possible for the following school year.
- ✓ For the FAFSA, you and your parents will use the same FSA ID you created during your senior year of high school. Be sure to allow your parents plenty of time to complete their portion.
- ✓ Ask your financial aid office for help with your FAFSA or WASFA application or see if they have any 12th Year Campaign events.
- ✓ Find out what your school's priority date is for financial aid. Make sure all your paperwork is done by then to get the most aid.
- ✓ Keep searching for scholarships all year long for every year you are in school. Check to see if your school offers a foundation or institutional scholarship.
- ✓ Keep an updated resume to help with scholarship applications and recommendation letters.
- ✓ Selected for FAFSA Verification? Don't panic or ignore this request. All you need to do is provide the documentation your school asks for—and be sure to do so by the school's deadline, or you won't be able to get financial aid.
- ✓ Encounter a financial emergency? Check to see if your school will offer a one-time emergency loan.

Notes

# THE 12TH YEAR CAMPAIGN

THE 12TH YEAR CAMPAIGN IS ADMINISTERED BY THE  
WASHINGTON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL (WSAC)  
WITH SUPPORT FROM THE WSECU. FOR MORE  
INFORMATION AND RESOURCES TO HELP WITH YOUR  
COLLEGE PREPARATION, VISIT  
[WWW.READYSETGRAD.ORG](http://WWW.READYSETGRAD.ORG).



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