Handout: Make Your College Plans A Reality!

*There are important steps that need to be completed over the summer for you to be able to enroll in the fall. The tasks listed below are common to most colleges, but you should check your acceptance materials or contact your college to see if there are other tasks specific to your college.*

**Pro Tip**: To find out how to complete any of the tasks below at your college, call your admissions office or try a Google search for each task. For instance, if you are attending the University of New Mexico and want to appeal your financial aid, Google “University of New Mexico financial aid appeal.”

Log on to your college’s personalized website

* Most colleges now provide a website, named something like my.collegename.edu, where you can check your financial aid status and other important deadlines.
* Your username and password were probably sent with your acceptance packet or in a separate letter/email.
* If you cannot find your username and password, contact your school’s admissions office.
* Log on to your college’s web portal. Most of the information colleges expect you to read and complete will be sent through the portal, not through the mail.

Finances

* Review your financial aid award and make sure you understand it.
* If you are considering an appeal, contact your financial aid office to ask how to appeal.
* Check your most recent award letter and your personalized web site to see whether there are additional steps that you need to take to apply for aid.
* Review your tuition bill and make sure you understand it. Students often have questions about the charges on their tuition bills, and there may be expenses that you can waive and not have to pay.
* Complete verification of financial aid, including loans.
* Talk with your counselor about how to pay whatever balance is left after your financial aid award.
* Develop a budget for college, including food and spending money.
* Learn where to go on campus for emergency loans/ financial support.

Academic

* Many colleges now hold required summer orientations for all first-year students.
* Register for or attend orientation ASAP. You will learn more about the college, register for classes, and may meet with your advisor.
* Check what documents you are required to bring with you to orientation.
* Explore the possibility of a summer transition or bridge program. Some colleges and universities have special transition programs for students with disabilities or first generation students. These programs can give you a head start and ease the transition.
* Set up an appointment to meet with your academic advisor.

On-Campus Support Services

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

placement testing

* Colleges often require placement tests in math, reading, and writing. Most colleges require students to complete placement tests before they can attend orientation or start in the fall. Some require you to do the tests online or on campus beforehand.
* Prepare for these tests. Your test results may mean that you can skip some introductory courses. Or they can show that you need more preparation before taking on college-level work.
* If you need more preparation, a college may require you to take a remedial/developmental class. While not unusual, you want to avoid it due to the cost and time associated with it. If placed into this level, consider preparing more and retesting.
* If there is a test fee, and it is a financial hardship, don’t be afraid to ask for a fee waiver.
* Complete required placement tests.

Residential housing

* 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.
* Find out the deadlines/timelines for finalizing housing commitment, when you can move into the dorm, etc.
* If you have special circumstances, consider:
  + Asking if you can have your housing fees waived, deferred, or included in your financial aid package.
  + Determining if there is year-round housing including during school breaks, if needed.
  + Finding out whether they offer LGBTQ-safe housing options.
  + Exploring family housing, availability of childcare and schooling for dependents on campus if you have a child.

Healthcare

* Check your college’s policy or requirements around health insurance. Colleges have different rules for which students are required to have health insurance, and whether or not students are automatically enrolled in the college’s student health insurance plan.
* If you already have qualifying insurance, you may be able to apply for a health insurance waiver.
* Know where student health services is located and what is offered there.
* Obtain proof of immunizations and documentation of a physical, if required.
* Explore college health plan requirements.

required paperwork and documentation

* Your college will expect to receive proof of your high school completion. Submit your final high school transcript and an official indication of your graduation to your college’s admissions office. 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.
* If you plan to live on campus, your school’s health services will require evidence of your immunizations. Submit immunization records to health services.
* Do you have the following records/documents that you might need for enrollment purposes?
  + Social Security Number or Federal ID Number.
  + Photo ID or driver’s license.
  + Birth certificate – showing date of birth and citizenship (if military, certificate of citizen born abroad); Naturalization/Immigration/Citizenship paperwork if applicable.
  + Proof of residency for qualifying for in-state tuition (e.g., high school transcript with address).
  + High school transcript, diploma, or GED certificate showing date of completion.
  + Permanent contact information.
  + Proof of disability diagnosis.
  + Dependent or Ward of the Court verification.

Transportation

* Organize transportation to campus.
* 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.

Supplies

* Determine what college supplies you will need (dorm and academic).

Adapted from SDP Harvard University: <http://sdp.cepr.harvard.edu/files/cepr-sdp/files/sdp-summer-melt-sample-nine-steps.pdf> and the SREB Go Alliance Academy.