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## November 2023

Seniors- File Early Decision/  
Early Action applications

Work on remaining college  
applications

Check College Board and ACT  
websites for testing opportunities  
in your area.

Underclassmen look for PSAT  
score release and review the  
report. Map out a plan for test  
prep with an advisor

## December 2023

Schedule spring SAT or ACT  
testing dates

Seniors- file any additional  
college applications before  
deadline dates

Enjoy your holiday break. Take  
some well earned time to be with  
friends and family.

## Determining The Strength Of A Department

When considering which schools to apply to, it is important to remember that different institutions specialize in different fields of study. Understanding the academic direction you'd like to pursue is a key factor in selecting your future college, as some majors may be stronger than others in a particular school, and vice-versa. Here are some pointers on how to determine the strength of a department at each college or university:

**Courses:** Look at how many undergraduate courses are offered through the department, as opposed to cross-listed courses from outside the department that still fulfill requirements. Are there courses dedicated to your department only as a way to ensure specialized time and attention is devoted to your major? Additionally, check if the department offers specializations and/or concentrations in the 3rd and 4th years. Research each concentration to see if it interests you. The availability of concentrations demonstrates the breadth and depth of the major.

**Funding:** Check to see if there are grants available for students to perform research within each department. If a department offers ample scholarship and grant opportunities, it not only reflects their budget, but also their commitment to allocating a portion of those funds to benefit students. Furthermore, research the sources of these funds (i.e. The National Endowment for the Arts or National Science Foundation). Certain foundations, due to their prestige, may

generate more funding for department amenities and grants. You can compare grant and award availability by searching for your desired college or university on <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator>.

**Faculty:** Research the faculty members in your desired department. Feel free to research individual members and determine if their work and experience aligns with your interests. You can check the department's size to see if it consists of just a handful of members or a substantial team. It is also helpful to connect directly with the departments at various schools and see about setting meetings with faculty. This can give insight into the accessibility of faculty members and their willingness to make time for students. Finally, you may check professor reviews on <https://ratemyprofessors.com>.

**Publications:** Publishing work is difficult and takes a substantial amount of time and effort. Delving into this realm to see which faculty members within the department have research published may sound meticulous, but it is well worth your time to determine the reputation of the school's major and its professors.

Each department and each college or university is unique and possesses its own distinctive characteristics. Some may have strengths where others have limitations. It's important to weigh the pros and cons of each college and university's department in order to determine which is the best for your academic path.

## Career Paths for Environmental Science Majors

- *Environmental Consultant*
- *Environmental Education Officer*
- *Environmental Engineer*
- *Environmental Manager*
- *Environmental Biologist*
- *Environmental Chemist*
- *Environmental Data Analyst*
- *Environmental Geologist*
- *Environmental Writer*
- *Habitat Restoration Engineer*
- *Marine Biologist*
- *Nature Conservation Officer*
- *Recycling Officer*
- *Sustainability Consultant*
- *Regulatory Compliance Manager*
- *Waste Management Officer*
- *Water Quality Scientist*



## Focus on Majors: Environmental Science

Environmental science is a branch of science that seeks to sustain the Earth's environment. The major is a combination of two different studies. The first considers how physical and biological sciences work together, and the second examines the application of scientific methods to solving environmental problems.

Environmental science is not to be confused with environmental studies. These are separate majors with different concentrations. While environmental science applies scientific knowledge to the environment, environmental studies has a core in the social sciences. Environmental studies looks at legal issues and economic policies, but environmental science looks at chemistry, biology, and physics.

In order to be successful in an environmental science major, students need a strong background in other forms of science. Majors will take classes such as geoscience, ecology, hydrology and land resource science. There will be some required classes in other sciences, and once those are finished, students can decide on a concentration that fits their interests.

Environmental science has many concentrations. Some examples include environmental chemistry, environmental physics, environmental biology, terrestrial ecology, natural resource management and environmental protection. If students find themselves particularly interested in a specific science, such as biology as it relates to the environment, they may choose a concentration similar to the first three. If not, they may specialize in natural resources or protection.

Regardless of the concentration, fieldwork is an important part of the major. Fieldwork provides hands-on experience that labs often cannot provide. Some programs allow students to conduct supervised research with members of the faculty. Paid summer research internships or fellowships are also available for students to gain practical experience.

Students will gain many skills throughout the study of this major. They will gain knowledge of several sciences, and they will learn how to apply this knowledge to real-world problems. Majors will gain an aptitude for solving problems and thinking outside of the box.

Because environmental science is by nature collaborative, students will work on many assignments in groups. This develops communication skills and allows students to practice the profession's jargon.

Finally, students will become proficient with computers. Throughout the study of the major, students will use computers for data analysis, remote sensing, GIS (geographic information systems) and digital mapping.

Those interested in teaching could teach in a high school or work in environmental education programs. Students who are interested in law can become an environmental lawyer. It would be necessary for these students to earn a law degree.

Students may choose to work for the state or federal government as environmental regulators. Another option is to work for advocacy groups or non-governmental organizations.

Environmental engineers use principles of engineering and chemistry to solve environmental issues. Environmental engineering technicians collect samples of groundwater and air to analyze pollution levels. Students who want to help fix environmental issues that have already occurred may opt for a career in environmental remediation.

Demand for jobs relating to environmental science is expected to grow. For more information, visit the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics at <https://www.bls.gov/>.

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## Financial Matters: Understanding Financial Aid Terminology



Navigating the world of college costs can feel confusing. Before you decide whether to apply for financial aid, do your research. If applying for aid, make sure to keep track of form submission dates. Parents should make sure their teen is sharing financial aid emails with them. Have discussions with your teen about college affordability. If you are considering a student loan, one rule of thumb is to never borrow more than the student expects to make in their first year salary after graduation.

Here is a glossary of terms to help you better understand financial aid:

### **Cost of Attendance**

The estimated cost of attending a university for one year. This includes tuition, fees, transportation, student health insurance, books, food and housing.

### **Demonstrated Need**

Your demonstrated (or financial) need is the difference between the cost of attendance (COA) and your student aid index (SAI).

### **Student Aid Index**

(SAI) Replacing the expected family contribution (EFC). It is a measure of your family's ability to pay for college.

### **Net Price Calculators**

A free online tool available on university websites. It allows parents or students to input information about themselves, then provides an estimated net price of attending that particular college. The actual cost of attendance is determined when the financial aid package is received.

### **FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)**

The form uses Federal Methodology which considers parental gross income as the main factor in determining aid eligibility such as grants, work study, and federal student loans:

<https://studentaid.gov/>

### **FAFSA ID**

A username and password which allows students and parents to identify themselves electronically to access Federal student aid websites. This is your legal signature. Both the parent and student must create their own ID.

### **CSS Profile (College Scholarship Profile)**

Issued by the College Board and is used to determine a student's eligibility for non-federal financial aid. The CSS Profile is a much more comprehensive look at a family's financial situation than the FAFSA. There is a fee for each application and not all colleges require this form -

<https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org/>

### **Grants**

Usually based on demonstrated financial need. They are usually awarded by the state or federal government and by the universities and colleges. Understand that a minimum GPA is required to remain eligible.

### **Scholarships**

Based on merit, scholarships can be awarded for academic success, athletic ability, artistic talent, diversity or leadership. There are numerous private foundations and community organizations that award scholarships. Students usually need to fill out an application and may need to write an essay or submit a letter of recommendation.

<https://www.fastweb.com/>

### **Student Loans**

Required to be paid back, often with fees and interest rates. Stipulations about college enrollment apply. Here are some of the different types of federal loans that might be offered:

**Direct Subsidized:** These loans are based on financial need, and the federal government pays the interest that accrues while the borrower is in school.

**Direct Unsubsidized Loans:** These loans are not based on financial need, and the borrower is responsible for all interest, including interest that accrues while in school.

**Direct PLUS Loans:** These loans are available to graduate and professional students, as well as to parents of dependent undergraduate students. They have higher interest rates and require a credit check.

**Work Study:** Financial need must be demonstrated to qualify for this program. Work study is an opportunity to work part-time on or near campus. Employers understand you are a student and will give you flexible hours. It is also a great way to gain some work experience that can be added to your resume.

## After Submitting Your Applications



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Your applications are in and you are enjoying that wonderful feeling of relief that comes with the last early submission, but don't put away those usernames and passwords just yet. Make sure to check your emails regularly, as well as the specific application portals for each college. Do not panic if you are notified that your application is incomplete, as the missing document probably has not been logged into the system yet. It's also a good idea to keep copies of your applications, just in case a document does get lost.

If you are applying for financial aid, make sure you are submitting required documents such as the FAFSA and the CSS Profile.

Be sure to keep up with schoolwork. Even if you have been accepted early at your favorite school, an offer of admission is always contingent upon successful completion of senior year. If your grades are significantly lower or you have lightened your course load, you could be jeopardizing your admission. Be sure to notify the admission office if you decide to drop a class or make any other changes to your schedule.

Some colleges will request interviews after you have submitted your application. Make sure to be prepared by practicing your interview skills. You may be asked to discuss your interests and experiences. Make sure you can answer the question about why you want to attend that particular school. It is also a good idea to have questions prepared for the interviewer.

If you submitted letters of recommendation, it is important to write thank you notes to those who took their time to write them for you. Teachers and counselors spend a tremendous amount of time doing this for students each year. Show them some appreciation.

Most importantly, celebrate your achievements despite the outcome of admission decisions. Be open to alternate plans. Sometimes they work out better than you expect.

It could be a few months before you find out where you have been admitted. Try not to obsess about upcoming decisions; find other things to occupy your time. Spending more time on community service is a productive way to channel your energy, and helping others can make you feel good about yourself.