

ARE YOU READY FOR COLLEGE?

Your Guide to Career and College Planning



College

Tech School

University

2011-2012

WITHIN REACH . . . WITHIN YOU

No matter who you are—rich or poor, straight A's or all C's, rural or urban; whether you're the first one in your family to go to college or the 10th—if you have the determination and drive, you can attend a university, college or technical school and be well on your way to a great career. Yes, you!

UCanGo2, an initiative of the Oklahoma College Assistance Program and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, is your resource for information about planning, preparing and paying for college.

At UCanGo2.org, you'll find tons of valuable information that can get you started down the road to college. You can also check us out on Facebook for information about scholarships and college planning.

Don't know where to start? You're not alone! Read this booklet to get some good ideas about how to begin your journey. We're always here to help, so if you have questions or need more information, give us a call at 405.234.4239 or 866.443.7420 (toll free). Good luck!





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...and how are you going to get there?

In the blanks below, brainstorm three jobs that interest you:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How much money will you make?

Where will you live?

How big will your family be?

What kind of hobbies will you have?

How will your work make a difference in the lives of others?

Brainstorm a list of steps to get you where you want to be:



“I saved a ton of money by taking general education courses at my local community college, then transferring to a 4-year university to study graphic design.”



WHY GO TO COLLEGE?

Picture your life 10 years from now. Where do you live? What are your hobbies? Now, to afford this lifestyle, how much money do you think you'll need each month? Will you need higher education to reach your goals? Remember - it pays to start planning for your future now.

Look at the chart below to see how education after high school can increase your earning power. For example, in Oklahoma, the average beginning hourly wage for a certified electrician is \$19.28; it's \$12.05 an hour if you don't go to school and choose to get on-the-job training as an electrician's apprentice.

With moderate on-the-job training, you could be a(n)...	Hourly Wage	With a technical school certification or an associate, bachelor's or higher degree, you could be a(n)...	Hourly Wage
Electrician's Apprentice	\$12.05	Electrician	\$19.28
Nursing Aide	\$9.88	Physician's Assistant	\$37.37
Court Clerk	\$12.77	Court Reporter	\$25.17
Set/Exhibit Designer	\$10.58	Art Director	\$33.01
Fast Food Cook	\$8.17	Chef/Head Cook	\$17.42
Receptionist/Information Clerk	\$10.75	Human Resources Manager	\$29.90
Records Clerk	\$11.01	Diagnostic Medical Sonographer	\$28.27
Veterinary Assistant	\$9.95	Veterinarian	\$38.54
Psychiatric Aide	\$11.03	Psychologist	\$36.60
Security Guard	\$12.29	Detective	\$25.28



Know what you want to be in your working life? If not, check out the Career Quiz in the Student Workbook in the Resources section at UCanGo2.org and try the quiz at OKcollegestart.org. While neither one of these quizzes can determine exactly what your career path should be, they'll give you some options to think about. See if any of your interests match up with the fastest growing occupations in Oklahoma (p. 9).

GET S.M.A.R.T.

A famous Oklahoman, Will Rogers, once said, “If you’re on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there.” You’ve thought about going to college after you finish high school, so you’re on the right track. Now it’s time to decide how you’ll get there. Each step you take in your education from now on is a step toward college. It’s important to set your goal and plan the steps you’ll take to reach it. As you begin setting your goals, remember to “Think SMART!”

A SMART goal is a goal that’s Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-based. It’s a goal that’s very clear and easily understood.

For example, let’s say your goal is to save money for college expenses. Here’s how to make that a SMART goal.

SMART

The goal must clearly state what is to be achieved, by whom, where and when it is to be achieved.

Example: I want to save \$250 by the end of next year.

MEASURABLE

Measurability answers the question of quantity: How much? How often? How many?

Example: I’ll need to save \$3 from my allowance each week and save \$94 by eating less junk food and by doing extra jobs around the house, like mowing the lawn, painting or babysitting.

ATTAINABLE

Goals must be realistic or you'll get discouraged, and you probably won't reach them.

Example: Since my allowance is \$10 per week, I can save \$3 each week toward my \$250 goal and still have some money left to spend on other priorities.

RELEVANT

Your goals must be related to what you want to achieve—not only right now, but further on down the road.

Example: Saving \$250 or more each year will be an important part of my plan to pay for college.

TIME-BASED

Set a deadline and break your goal down into pieces that will be easier to accomplish. If you keep reaching the smaller goals, it'll be much easier to reach the big one at just the right time.

Example: By making monthly deposits into my savings account, I plan to save \$250 by Aug. 31.

Think of a goal and how you can apply the SMART principles to make it happen. Write it down below.

Smart: _____

Measurable: _____

Attainable: _____

Relevant: _____

Time-based: _____

FASTEST GROWING JOBS IN OKLAHOMA



Requires an associate degree or specialized training after high school

Occupation	Average Hourly Salary	Average Annual Salary
Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	\$12.06	\$25,100
Medical Equipment Repairers	\$16.50	\$34,300
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	\$16.58	\$34,500
Security and Fire Alarm System Installers	\$13.17	\$27,400
Environmental Science and Protection Technicians	\$19.32	\$40,200
Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians	\$17.71	\$36,800
Surgical Technologists	\$15.65	\$32,600
Respiratory Therapists	\$22.38	\$46,600
Electrical and Electronics Repairers (Powerhouse, Substation and Relay)	\$25.88	\$53,800
Physical Therapist Assistants	\$20.57	\$42,800

Requires a bachelor's degree or higher

Occupation	Average Hourly Salary	Average Annual Salary
Survey Researchers	\$12.88	\$26,700
Cartographers and Photogrammetrists	\$21.14	\$44,000
Personal Financial Advisors	\$21.68	\$45,100
Cost Estimators	\$23.00	\$47,800
Network Systems and Data Communications Analysts	\$27.78	\$57,800
Computer Software Engineers, Applications	\$29.71	\$61,800
Veterinarians	\$34.97	\$72,700
Financial Examiners	\$35.50	\$73,800
Petroleum Engineers	\$46.16	\$96,000

Source: Oklahoma Employment Security Commission

TRACKING MY CLASSES

Now that you're thinking about career options for your life after high school, it's time to consider your classes and activities. Jot down your volunteer work and achievements, and track the classes you've taken and the ones you need to take to meet entrance requirements for college. For example, did you take American history in the spring semester of your junior year? Write it down here. Visit OKcollegestart.org to track your classes online.

Freshman Year

Fall Semester:

Spring Semester:

Honors, Awards, Volunteer Work:

Sophomore Year

Fall Semester:

Spring Semester:

Honors, Awards, Volunteer Work:

Junior Year

Fall Semester:

Spring Semester:

Honors, Awards, Volunteer Work:

Senior Year

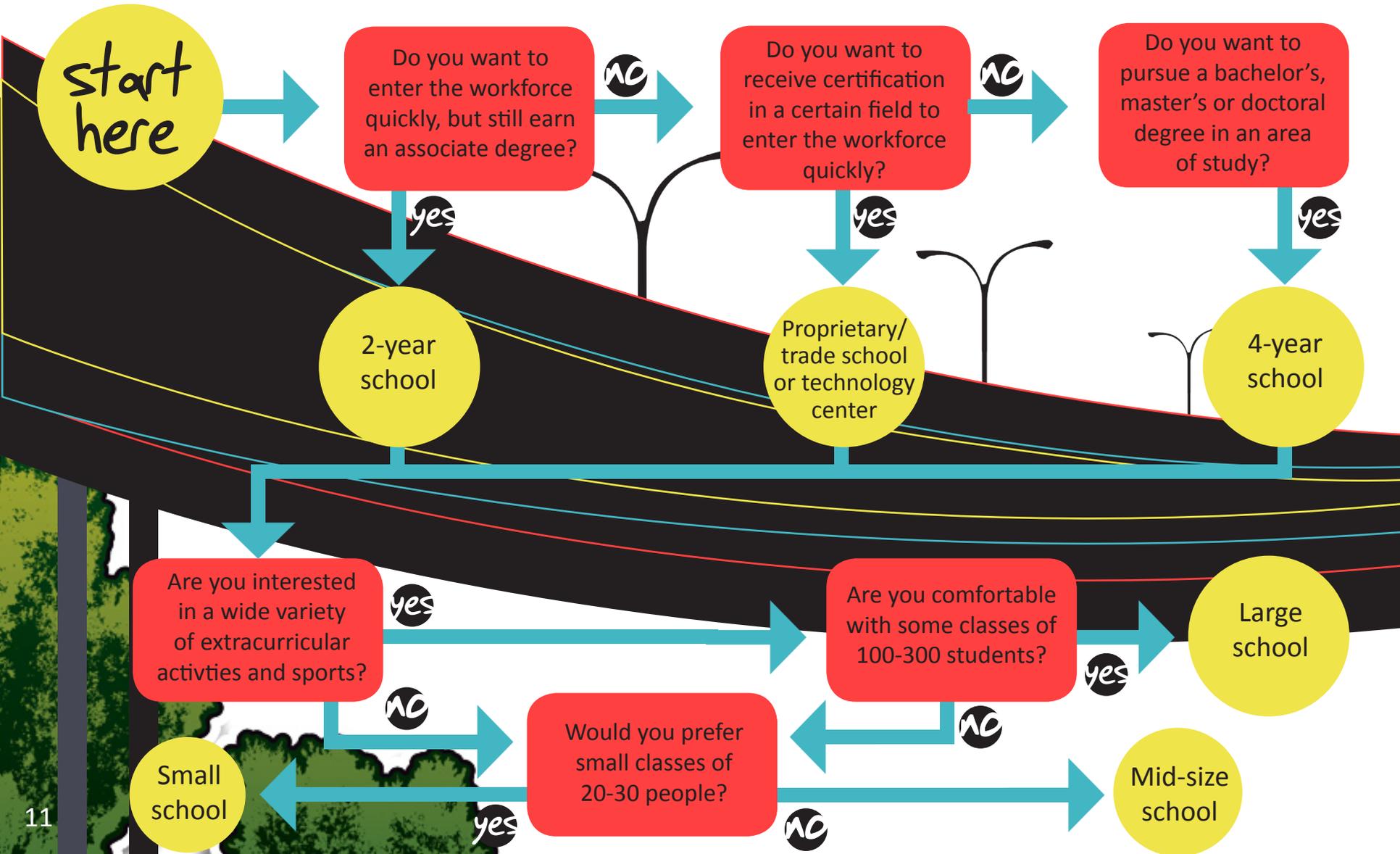
Fall Semester:

Spring Semester:

Honors, Awards, Volunteer Work:

PICKING A COLLEGE TYPE

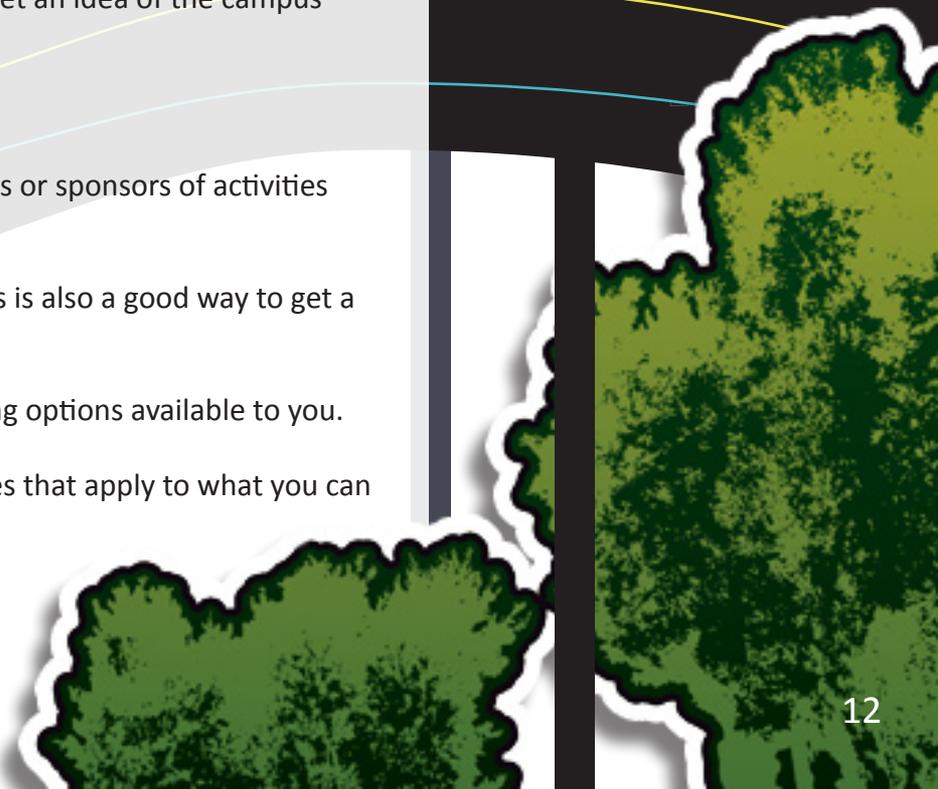
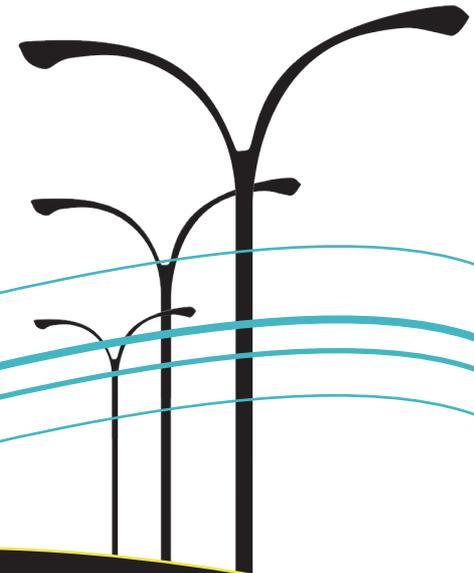
Choosing the right school can be a difficult task. Use this tool to help you decide what type of school is right for you. Read each question and think about your interests and priorities. Answer 'yes' or 'no' and follow the corresponding arrows to reveal the type of school that may best meet your needs. For more detailed information about selecting the right school for you, check out the Student Workbook on our website and the Explore Colleges section at OKcollegestart.org.



CAMPUS VISIT CHECKLIST

So you've figured out what type of school is most likely to be the best fit for you; now it's time to visit some schools that meet your criteria. Talk to your parents and your school about visiting some colleges you might be interested in attending. These visits can really help you make a more educated decision in choosing the school that's right for you. While on your campus visit, talk to as many people as you can and get a feel for the atmosphere. Don't pass up a chance to ask questions. Use this checklist as a guide to make the most of your campus visits.

- Visit the school's website to learn how to set up a campus tour. Tours are usually held throughout the day, so your family may need to plan the day around the visit.
- Schedule interviews with campus officials in admission, academic advising, housing and in your field of study.
- Don't forget campus maps and your list of questions for each campus office (see Getting Answers on the next page). Pick up a school newspaper to get an idea of the campus culture.
- Grab any financial aid or application forms you may need.
- If possible, sit in on a class that interests you. Talk to coaches or sponsors of activities you're interested in.
- Scan bulletin boards to see what activities are available. This is also a good way to get a feel for jobs available in the area.
- Eat in the cafeteria or around campus to check out the dining options available to you.
- Visit the dorms if you plan to live on campus. Ask about rules that apply to what you can and can't bring with you.
- Talk with students about the campus and ask questions.
- Visit the college bookstore to price new and used books.



GETTING ANSWERS

Coming to campus for a visit is easy enough. Leaving with all your questions answered can be a challenge! Take this opportunity to list questions you may have for each department you visit.

Admission Office

1. What are my chances of being admitted?
- 2.
- 3.

Financial Aid Office

1. When are priority deadlines for school scholarships and the FAFSA?
- 2.
- 3.

Academic Advising

1. How many classes should I take per semester?
- 2.
- 3.

Library

1. What's the policy for checking out books?
- 2.
- 3.

Health Clinic

1. What types of services do you offer?
- 2.
- 3.

Career Services

1. What jobs can I get with my chosen major?
- 2.
- 3.

Student Life Office

1. How many student organizations do you have and how can I get involved?
- 2.
- 3.

On-Campus Child Care

1. Do you give priority to students and do you offer any discounts on tuition?
- 2.
- 3.

Parking and Transportation Office

1. Can I take the bus to class if I live off-campus?
- 2.
- 3.

Housing Office

1. What meal plans are available? What can I buy with them?
- 2.
- 3.



For more information about scholarships and other financial aid options, ask for a copy of UCanGo2's *Are You Looking for Money* booklet or read it online at UCanGo2.org.

“I searched online and found a scholarship especially for vocal majors in Oklahoma.”

FRESHMAN CHECKLIST

- **Study hard.** Build good study habits to keep your grades in tip-top shape.
- **Save money.** Sign up for a college savings account from Oklahoma's 529 college savings plan (OK4Saving.org) or continue to add money to an existing account. It's generally best to keep savings in your parents' name.
- **Apply for Oklahoma's Promise.** If you didn't apply during 8th grade, visit okpromise.org for program requirements and to sign up for this scholarship program.
- **Take the right classes.** To be college-bound, your class schedule should contain at least four college-preparatory classes per year, including:
 - 4 units of English
 - 3 units of history/citizenship skills
 - 3 units of math (at or above Algebra I)
 - 2 units of electives from the classes mentioned or foreign language or computer science
 - 3 units of laboratory science

Some schools recommend you take an extra unit in math, an additional unit in lab science and two units in speech or fine arts (music, art or drama). Discuss your future plans with your guidance counselor.

- **Track it.** Investigate college entrance requirements at OKcollegestart.org, and use the site's High School Planner to keep track of your courses and grades.
- **File it away.** Create a "My Future" file and include copies of report cards, lists of awards and honors, lists of paid or volunteer school and community activities and skill assessment quizzes and results.
- **Think about it.** Start thinking about the university, college or technology center you'd like to attend. Check out the Explore Colleges section on OKcollegestart.org and plan a campus tour.
- **Take it to the next level.** Investigate AP and other honors-level courses to know what's available and if you're eligible to enroll.

SOPHOMORE CHECKLIST

- **Keep it up.** Study hard to keep your grades up and keep talking to your guidance counselor, teachers, and family about your plans after high school.
- **Save money.** Sign up for a college savings account from Oklahoma's 529 college savings plan (OK4Saving.com) or continue to add money to an existing account. It's generally best to keep savings in your parent's name.
- **Last chance.** Don't miss out on Oklahoma's Promise! If you didn't apply in the 8th or 9th grade, visit okpromise.org for more info.
- **Know what you need.** Review what courses you'll need to take to satisfy the requirements of the school you're interested in attending. Investigate AP and other honors-level courses and concurrent enrollment options to know what's available and if you're eligible to enroll. You may be able to enroll in college as a junior or senior if you meet certain requirements. Visit with your counselor and OKhighered.org to learn more.
- **File it away.** Keep updating your "My Future" file.
- **Be active.** Continue participating in extracurricular activities and volunteer work, and consider participating in academic enrichment programs, summer workshops and camps with a specialty focus such as music, arts & science. Many admission officers look for students who actively participate in their school and community.
- **PLAN.** Take the PLAN test (ACTStudent.org/plan) to help you prepare for the ACT, which you can take during your junior year. Ask your school counselor for more information.
- **Hit the books.** Study for standardized tests like the ACT and SAT. Visit the Test Prep section at OKcollegestart.org for helpful resources.
- **Jot it down.** Sketch out the pros and cons of each school you're researching. Be sure to evaluate degree programs, location, cost, etc. Need help? Check out the Explore Colleges section at OKcollegestart.org.

JUNIOR CHECKLIST

FALL

- **Take it to the next level.** Enroll in AP and other honors-level classes or, if possible, sign up for concurrent enrollment courses.
- **Add it to your calendar.** Also, find out when the ACT, SAT and AP (Advanced Placement) or other honors-level exams are offered. Contact the school(s) you plan to attend and ask which test they prefer. Once you decide which exam to take, sign up and prepare for it by using the Test Prep section found at OKcollegestart.org. You can also find helpful links for ACT and SAT test dates in the students section of UCanGo2.org.
- **Pare it down.** Narrow your list of schools based on research you've already completed. Your list will probably include three to five schools.
- **Get aid.** Financial aid, that is. Start researching your grant, scholarship and student loan options at OCAP.org.
- **See for yourself.** Attend a college fair event in your area. These events offer students and parents a chance to talk with schools and financial aid providers.

SPRING

- **Start the process.** You and your parent(s) may want to visit potential colleges during summer vacation so you don't miss school. However, some high schools consider a campus visit an excused absence. Check with your counselor. When scheduling your visit, keep in mind that many campuses are closed for spring break.
- **Repeat testing.** Register for the spring ACT and SAT tests. You may want to take the exam again over the summer and fall of your senior year to boost your score.
- **Select special classes.** If you're interested in taking AP or honors-level exam(s), sign up now. These classes are worth checking out because doing well could earn you college credit, saving you time and money in the long run.
- **Let it add up.** Continue to contribute to your 529 savings plan (OK4Saving.org) or another savings plan. Continue researching financial aid options.
- **Keep tabs.** Continue to add new report cards, test scores, honors or awards to your "My Future" file.

SUMMER

- **Recruit some ambassadors.** Ask teachers or other community members to write letters of recommendation for college admission.
- **Be courteous.** If you go on interviews or visits, don't forget to send thank you notes to those who helped you.
- **Do it again.** You may want to take the ACT and/or SAT test another time to boost your score.
- **Practice and evaluate.** Complete online admission applications by filling out rough drafts without submitting them. Focus on the essay portions of these applications and decide how you'd like to present yourself. Don't forget to mention your activities outside of school.
- **Apply early.** If you have a clear "first choice" school, decide if you're going to apply for early decision or early action. Be aware! If you're accepted for early decision, you may be committing yourself to attend that school.
- **Decide what you like.** Explore careers by taking a summer job or internship in your field of interest. Remember to set some money aside from your paycheck to pay future expenses!

SENIOR CHECKLIST

FALL

- Stay on track.** Continue to explore opportunities to earn college credit while in high school. Review courses with your counselor to make sure you're meeting high school graduation and entrance requirements for the school(s) that interests you. Remember to update your High School Planner at OKcollegestart.org.
- Keep saving.** Continue to plug money into your Oklahoma 529 plan (OK4Saving.org) or other savings account. It's best to keep savings in your parent's name.
- Sign up.** Register for the fall ACT and/or SAT tests. You can find helpful links with tests dates and more info at UCanGo2.org/student.
- Learn more.** Attend college fairs, college planning sessions and financial aid information programs for answers to your questions. If you haven't already, visit schools that are a good match to your abilities and career interests. After you've done your research, narrow down three to five schools you'd like to apply to.
- Go for free money.** Search and apply for grants and scholarships. Check out OCAP.org for helpful links. Be sure to check with local civic organizations or employers for additional scholarship sources. Talk with your counselor about potential options. Websites like FastWeb.com and Scholarships.com are also good resources.
- Fill it out. Send it in.** Check with the financial aid offices at schools you're applying to for specific information about scholarships, costs, and required financial aid forms.

SPRING

- Talk taxes.** Make sure you and your parent(s) complete your income tax forms as soon as possible so you're ready to complete financial aid applications.
- Get a PIN and submit the FAFSA.** Request a federal Personal Identification Number (PIN) at PIN.ed.gov; you'll use it throughout the federal aid process, including for completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Complete the FAFSA as soon as possible after Jan. 1. Apply online at FAFSA.gov each year you need aid.
- Look for the SAR.** Review the information provided on your Student Aid Report (SAR), which is sent to you after you file the FAFSA, for accuracy.
- Take the test.** You've studied hard, so take the exams for any AP and other honors-level subjects.
- Ask for it.** Request that your high school send your final transcript to your selected school(s).
- Sign and send.** Watch your mailbox or email for FAFSA results and/or award letters, which are usually sent by April 15. Promptly accept your financial award letter, if required. You don't have to accept all loan funds offered to you; borrow only what you need to pay for school!

SUMMER

- Decisions, decisions.** If you've been accepted to multiple schools, make your choice and notify the school you plan to attend as soon as possible. You may be required to pay a nonrefundable deposit to secure your spot.
- Pay attention to the MPN.** Complete the Master Promissory Note (MPN) to accept any necessary federal loan you've been offered. If you have questions, contact the financial aid office at your selected school.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFO?

UCanGo2 | UCanGo2.org

Oklahoma College Assistance Program | OCAP.org

Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education | OKcollegestart.org

Oklahoma Money Matters | OklahomaMoneyMatters.org

Federal Student Aid | StudentAid.ed.gov

SmartStudent Guide to Financial Aid | FinAid.org

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) | FAFSA.gov

FAFSA4caster | FAFSA4caster.ed.gov

FastWeb Free Scholarship Search | FastWeb.com

Oklahoma's Promise | okpromise.org

ACT Information | ACTstudent.org

Mapping Your Future | MappingYourFuture.org

The College Board | CollegeBoard.com

Oklahoma College Savings Plan | OK4Saving.org

Oklahoma GEAR UP | okhighered.org/gearup

Check out the
Resources page on
UCanGo2.org for tons
of college planning
tools.

'Like' UCanGo2 on Facebook
for college planning tips,
articles and scholarship
information.





UCanGo2.org

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an initiative of the Oklahoma College Assistance Program,
a division of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education



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