Guidance and Counseling Glossary of Terms

The following terms are commonly used by guidance counselors and admissions personnel when working with college-bound students.

ADMIT: A student is offered admissions to a college or a university to which the student has applied.

ADMIT/DENY: A student is offered admission to an institution, but denied financial aid.

ASSOCIATE OF ARTS DEGREE (AA): A two-year community college degree, generally applied to a four year bachelor’s degree.

ACADEMIC CALENDAR: Breaks the school year into one of the following:

SEMESTER: Two terms of 17-18 weeks (varies by college).

QUARTERS: Three terms of 11 weeks (fourth term optional) (varies by college).

TRIMESTER: Two terms of 15 weeks (third term optional) (varies by college).

ACCREDITATION: The recognition by an outside agency that a school maintains high standards which enable students to qualify for admission to other accredited institutions.

ACT (AMERICAN COLLEGE TEST): A four-year college admission test covering English, reading, science reasoning and mathematics.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS: A set of rules, established by each college, by which a student is accepted.

AUDIT: To attend a class for the purpose of reviewing the information. No tests, grades, or credits are given.

AWARD LETTER: A letter sent by a college/university notifying a student of the financial package being offered. Students have the opportunity to accept or decline all or part of the offer.

BACHELOR'S DEGREE: A four-year college degree.

BRANCH CAMPUS: A small campus connected to, or part of, a large institution. Generally, students spend the first two (2) years at a branch campus and then transfer to the main campus to complete a baccalaureate degree. A branch campus provides students with a smaller and more personal environment which can help the student mature personally and academically before moving to a larger atmosphere.

CAMPUS BASED PROGRAMS: The title commonly applied to the primary student financial aid programs administered by institutions of postsecondary education. These programs include the College Work-Study Program, the Perkins Loan, and the Educational Opportunity Grant Program.

CANDIDATES REPLY DATA AGREEMENT (CRDA): Sponsored by the College Board, this agreement establishes a common date, May 1, that is the earliest time a subscribing college may require an accepted applicant to commit to whether he or she plans to attend.

CEEB (COLLEGE-LEVEL EXAMINATION PROGRAM): A company which provides college testing, such as SAT I, SAT Subject Test, TOEFL, PSAT, etc. ETS (Educational Testing Service) is the testing division.
CLASS RANK: A student’s standing as compared with that of the other members of the class, based on grade point average.

COLLEGE CATALOG: A book published by a college describing requirements for admission, degrees, services and course descriptions.

COLLEGE-LEVEL EXAMINATION PROGRAM (CLEP): Administered by the College Board, this program offers a series of subject examinations for college applicants who have gained knowledge in such nontraditional ways as independent reading, on the job training, or correspondence courses.

COLLEGE-PREPARATORY SUBJECTS: A term used to describe subjects required for admission to or recommended as preparation for college. It is usually understood to mean subjects from the fields of English, History, and Social Studies, Foreign Languages, Mathematics, Science, and the Arts.

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP SERVICES (CSS): A service of the College Board that assists postsecondary institutions, state scholarship programs and other organizations in the equitable distribution of student financial aid funds by measuring a family’s financial strength and analyzing its ability to contribute to college costs. CSS provides the Profile Form with which students may apply for nonfederal aid at some private colleges.

COMPREHENSIVE FEES: Cost of education, including tuition, room and board, fees, textbooks, etc.

COURSE LOAD: The number of course credit hours a student is enrolled in each semester. Twelve credit hours is a minimum to be considered a full-time student. The average course load per semester is fifteen credit hours.

CREDIT HOURS: The number of hours per week that courses meet are counted as equivalent credits for financial aid and to determine a student’s status as full-time or part-time. Upon successful completion of a course, credit hours are applied to graduation requirements.

DOCTORATE DEGREE (Ph. D., Ed.D., D.D.S., J.D., or M.D.): A degree requiring additional years beyond a bachelor’s degree.

EARLY ACTION: A student applies to an institution early in the senior year and requests an early notification of his/her admission to the institution. If the student is accepted, he/she is not obligated to attend that institution.

EARLY ADMISSION: The practice of admitting certain students who have not completed high school, usually students of exceptional ability who have completed their junior year to attend college. These students are then enrolled full-time at the college, and eliminate the senior year of high school. Colleges usually award a high school diploma to the early admitted students after they have completed a certain number of college level courses.

EARLY DECISION: A student applies to an institution early in the senior year and requests an early notification of his/her admission status. It is a contract between the student and the institution. If the student is accepted, he/she is obligated to attend the institution.

EARLY EVALUATION PROCEDURE: A plan under which applicants to Ivy League institutions receive an evaluation of their chances for acceptance between November 1 and February 15. Categories used are “likely,” “possible,” “unlikely,” and “insufficient evidence for evaluation.” Final notification is made on a common date in April.

ELECTIVE: A course needed for graduation credit but not one of the specific course requirements.
ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES: Limited English proficient students who speak English as a second language and who wish to take college-level courses need to demonstrate proficiency in English. TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) exam is a commonly used test to determine the level of English language proficiency.

EXPECTED FAMILY CONTRIBUTION (EFC): The amount a student and his/her spouse or family is expected to pay toward costs of school based on their income and assets.

FINANCIAL AID: Money which may be derived from a variety of sources (grants, loans, scholarships, work study) which helps pay for college costs. A “package” of funds is determined by family financial need and the availability of funds.

FINANCIAL AID PACKAGE: The financial aid offer from the institution which is usually made up of a combination of grant, loan, work-study, and/or scholarship monies.

FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA): The only acceptable form used to determine the amount of money a family will be expected to contribute to a student’s college costs. This form is required by all students seeking scholarships/financial aid.

GENERAL EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS (also called Core Requirements): Courses selected from several areas of study required for a college degree. Core requirements are completed the first two years of college. The second two years involve course work in major and minor areas.

GPA (GRADE POINT AVERAGE): The mathematical average of all course work given high school credit. Colleges often recalculate this average to include only core subject areas (English, Math, History, Science, and Foreign Language).

IMPACTED PROGRAM: A college degree program, such as computer science, which may be temporarily closed due to heavy enrollment or may require supplementary screening of students’ records for selection of the strongest candidates.

LOWER DIVISION: Refers to courses usually completed in the first two years of college.

MASTER’S DEGREE: A college degree usually requiring one or two years’ work beyond a bachelor’s degree.

MAJOR: The main area of study in college, requiring a planned series of courses during the four-year program.

MINOR: An area of concentration other than the major field of study.

NEED: The difference between the school’s cost of attendance and a student’s expected family contribution.

NEED ANALYSIS FORM (FAFSA): The basic form students need to submit to be considered for all types of aid such as institutional, state, private, and federal. Students should check with state and institutional agencies to determine if additional forms are needed.

PRELIMINARY SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST (PSAT): Qualifying test for the National Merit Scholarship Program.

PREREQUISITES: Courses, test scores and/or grade level that must be completed before taking a specific course.

ROTC: Many colleges have units of the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps that offer two and four-year programs of military training culminating in an officer’s commission.
ROLLING ADMISSION: A college gives an admission decision as soon as possible after an application is completed and does not specify a notification deadline. In addition, there is no application deadline.

SAT I (SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT TEST): The SAT I is an aptitude rather than achievement test. Primarily multiple-choice that measures verbal and mathematical reasoning. There was a new format in the Spring of 2005. Students will be asked to write a short essay on an issue and use examples to support their position. Math section allows for use of calculators.

SAT SUBJECT TESTS: One hour achievement test(s) offered in 15 subjects. Usually 2 prescribed tests are required by selective universities. These subject tests are required by competitive universities in addition to the SAT I.

SCHOLARSHIP: A gift of money awarded for achievement, skills, talents, and/or financial need.

STUDENT AID REPORT (SAR): Contains information submitted on your financial aid application. The student’s eligibility for aid is indicated by the EFC on the front of the SAR.

SUMMER SESSION: College summer school. Open entry, without formal admission, makes it possible for students to take classes at almost any campus and then transfer them to the “home” campus. Students who plan to continue in the fall must file for fall admission.

TOEFL (TEST OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE): An English exam for foreign students, used for placement in college English classes. See counselor for further information.

TRANSCRIPT: The complete permanent record of all courses and final grades earned, including date of enrollment, date of graduation, level of coursework, NYS Regents Exam scores, etc.

TRANSFER COURSES: College students who transfer from one college to another, usually by the end of the sophomore year. It is not recommended to change colleges during the junior or senior year when the student is completing major requirements.

TUITION: A fee that is paid for instruction in a private school, college, or university.

UNDERGRADUATE: College student who has not yet earned a bachelor’s degree.

UPPER-DIVISION COURSES: Courses designated for the junior and senior years of college.

WORK-STUDY: A federally funded program that makes part-time jobs available to students with financial need.