

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Do you want a quick start to a career path? Do you need to cut the cost of a four-year college degree? Do you want to sharpen your study skills before enrolling at a university? Do you need to attend classes at night or on weekends? Do you want to attend college close to home?

If you said yes to even one question above, check out your options at a community college. You won't be alone - 45 percent of all first-time freshman go to two-year colleges. One reason: these institutions offer two kinds of learning:

If your goal is a four-year degree, you can earn a two-year associate degree at a low-cost community college, then transfer to a four-year college as a junior.

If your goal is career training, you can earn an occupational degree or certificate in two years or less, then start working immediately in many high-demand fields (like health care or computer technology).

FIT YOUR EDUCATION TO YOUR NEEDS

If you need more academic preparation, a community college can offer a leg up to achieving your goals. New students usually take placement tests in reading, writing, and math.

If your high school grades aren't the greatest, but a four-year college is your goal, taking community college courses—and building a record of good grades—can polish your academic record. **No SAT or ACT required!**

If you are a fine student, community colleges offer challenging honors courses. You may be able to transfer directly into the honors program at a university, or at least make yourself a better candidate for it.

KEEP ON TRACK AT A COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Planning to transfer to a four-year college?

Talk to advisors at the community college. Most public community colleges offer two-year course plans that fulfill requirements at nearby colleges. To transfer without losing credits, follow those plans!

Talk to advisers at the four-year college you hope to attend, too. They may have inside information.

Make sure you have fulfilled requirements to declare a major at the four-year college—not just the general admissions requirements.

Don't self advise! If you are not sure whether a course will transfer, ask.

Keep going. Don't "gap" your education, taking time out between semesters or colleges.

Training for an occupation?

Talk to advisors at your community college, but don't just accept claims that when you graduate, you'll get a job—start a career.

Ask how many students have gone straight from the college to the workforce in recent years, what jobs they got, and with which employers.

Before you enroll, talk to potential employers in the outside world, too.