

College Terminology

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Since this college thing is completely new to some of you, I thought it might be a good idea to let you in on some of the college lingo. People who work for colleges will often throw around words you've never heard before, and expect you to know what they mean. This can sometimes create problems when you think they mean something entirely different from what their intention was. In addition, each college has slang terms for many policies and procedures, and you will need to be aware of what they are. This information might be particularly useful to print and keep for a while, so feel free to do that, if you like. Anyway, the following is simply a list of college terms I think you will find useful. It is written by a good friend of mine, Mr. Bill Etheredge, and he has used it with his high school students for many years.

Bill Etheredge has been in the field of Education for more than 30 years, 18 as band director and more than 15 as high school counselor. He is currently High School Counselor at The Colony High School in The Colony, Texas. In addition, he served as President of Band Boosters and Senior Advisor to the Band Alumni Association of his former school, Ardmore High School, in Ardmore, Oklahoma. He holds a Bachelors of Arts Degree in Education and a Masters Degree in Counseling from East Central University, in Ada, Oklahoma. A number of Mr. Etheredge's college preparation materials are used statewide in Oklahoma by High School and Vocational /Technical School Counselors.

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Academic Advisor/Counselor - This person will help you select the correct courses, review the course requirements in the field you have selected to pursue and help you with any academic problems you may encounter. At some institutions, academic advisement is conducted by faculty as part of their job duties. Other institutions may designate specific staff as academic counselors.

Academic Probation - All colleges require students to maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) to remain in school. Any student not maintaining satisfactory progress toward his/her educational objectives will be placed on probation for a semester.

Academic Suspension - A student on Academic Probation may be placed on Academic Suspension if he/she fails to maintain or achieve the minimum cumulative GPA required. A student placed on suspension will be dismissed from the college for a specified time period - usually one semester. Specific requirements may be placed on the student's re-entry into college.

Advanced Standing Credit - These are credit hours that an institution accepts toward a degree from courses that the student has earned elsewhere. Such credit may be given for work done at another higher education institution, by examination or "testing out," or by military service.

Alumni - people who have graduated from the institution.

ACT and SAT - These letters are acronyms for the American College Test and the Scholastic Aptitude Test. Both tests are designed to measure a student's level of knowledge in basic areas such as math, science, English and social studies. Colleges may require the results of either the ACT or SAT before granting admission.

Application/Acceptance/Admission - Application is the process by which a prospective student submits the required forms and credentials to his/her chosen institution. Application criteria may include one or more of the following: previous academic records, test scores, interviews, recommendations, and other information provided by the applicant. Depending on the application requirements of a particular school, the student can gain Acceptance to the institution if the decision to accept the application is positive. Admission is the status granted to an applicant who meets the prescribed entrance requirements of the institution. It must be noted that there is a wide variation nationwide in the Application/Acceptance/Admission policies of higher education institutions. Check the college catalog for specific requirements of the schools you are considering.

Associate Degree - The Associate Degree is granted upon completion of a program of at least two, but less than four years of college work. Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees are conferred upon students who successfully complete programs designed for transfer to a senior college. The Associate Degree requires completion of a minimum of 60 credit hours, exclusive of physical education activity courses or military science courses, with a cumulative GPA of 2.0 (a "C" average).

Associate of Applied Science Degree - This degree is conferred upon students who successfully complete a program designed to lead the individual directly into employment in a specific career. The Applied Science degree has the same requirements as those stated above for the Associate Degree.

Audit - A student who does not want to receive credit in a course may, with approval of the instructor, audit the course as a "visitor." A student who audits a course usually cannot ask or petition the institution at a later date to obtain college credit for the audited course.

Bachelor's Degree - This is the undergraduate degree offered by four-year colleges and universities. The Bachelor of Arts degree requires that a portion of the student's studies be dedicated to the arts - literature, language, music, etc. The Bachelor of Science degree requires that a portion of the studies be in the sciences - chemistry, biology, math, etc. The minimum credit hour requirement for a Bachelor's Degree is 120 hours.

Bookstore - All colleges have bookstores. It will generally stock all the books and other materials required in all the courses offered at the institution as well as providing basic sundries and clothing items.

Business Office - The Business Office is responsible for all financial transactions of the institution. It may also be called the Bursar's Office on some campuses.

Catalog- College catalogs provide all types of information parents and students need to know about a school. It lists, for example: the institution's history and philosophy, policies and procedures, its accreditation status, courses of study, degrees and certificates offered, physical facilities, admission and enrollment procedures, financial aid, student life activities, etc.

CLEP - The College Level Examination Program can be administered to students who desire to obtain college credit by taking proficiency tests in selected courses. If the student scores high enough on the test, college credit can be awarded. There is a charge for each test taken. Information concerning an individual institution's policies toward CLEP Tests can be found in the institution's catalog.

College - A College is an institution of higher education that grants degrees and certificates. The term is also used to designate the organizational units of a university such as the College of Education or the College of Engineering.

Commuter - A commuter is a student who lives off-campus and drives to class, or commutes.

Concurrent Enrollment - A student can enroll and attend two educational institutions at the same time provided that certain criteria are met. For example: In Oklahoma, a high school senior can concurrently enroll in high school and in college provided he/she meets established criteria. A college student can concurrently enroll at two higher education institutions provided that certain criteria are met. Permission for concurrent enrollments are generally made in advance.

Course Numbers - All courses are identified by numbers usually containing 3 or 4 digits, for example Freshman English might be 1113. The first digit indicates the class year in which the subject is usually taken, the middle 1 or 2 digits identify the course within the subject field (nobody I've ever met knows what they mean), and the last digit indicates the number of credit hours the course carries. A course number beginning with a "0" indicates that it does not carry credit hours applicable to a degree.

Credit Hours - Courses taken in college are measured in terms of credit hours. To earn one credit hour, a student must attend a class for one classroom hour (usually 50 minutes) per week for the whole semester (usually 16 weeks). Classes are offered in 1 - 5 credit hour increments, and sometimes larger amounts.

Curriculum - A curriculum is composed of those classes prescribed or outlined by an institution for completion of a program of study leading to a degree or certificate.

Degree Requirements - Those requirements prescribed by other institutions for completion of a program of study are generally termed degree requirements. Requirements may include a minimum number of hours, required GPA, prerequisite and elective courses within the specified major, and/or minor areas of study.

Degrees - Degrees are rewards for the successful completion of a prescribed program of study. There are three basic types of degrees:

Associate - obtainable at a two-year community or junior college, **Baccalaureate or Bachelor's** - offered by four-year colleges and universities, and **Graduate** - Obtained after the bachelor's degree, i.e., Masters or Doctorate.

Department - A department is the basic organizational unit in a higher education institution, and is responsible for the academic functions in a field of study. It may also be used in the broader sense to indicate an administrative or service unit of an institution.

Division - A division could be several different things: an administrative unit of an institution, usually consisting of more than one department; a unit of an institution based on the year-level of students - i.e., lower and upper division; or a branch of the institution, instructional or not - i.e., the Division of Student Affairs.

Drop and Add - Students are generally permitted to drop courses from their class schedules and/or add other courses. Colleges allow varying lengths of time for students to add and drop classes. The college catalog or class schedule should note the correct procedures. Students usually need written approval from designated college officials to initiate dropping or adding a class. A small fee is often required.

Enrollment - This is the procedure by which students choose classes each semester. It also includes the assessment and collection of fees. **Pre-enrollment** is the method by which students select courses well in advance of the official enrollment date of the next term.

Extra-Curricular Activities - These are non-classroom activities that can contribute to a well-rounded education. They can include such activities as athletics, clubs, student government, recreational and social organizations and events.

Faculty - The faculty is composed of all persons who teach classes for colleges.

FAFSA -Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The almost universal application for financial aid, including loans, grants, college work-study and other federal and state programs. It is often required before a student can be considered for scholarships also.

Fees - Fees are additional charges not included in the tuition. Fees may be charged to cover the cost of materials and equipment needed in certain courses, and they may be assessed for student events, programs, and publications.

Final Exams (Finals) - These exams are usually given during the last week of classes each semester. The type of final administered in a course is left to the discretion of the instructor. Final exams are given on specified dates that may be different than the regular class time, and are usually listed in each semester's class schedule.

Financial Aid - Aid is made available from grants, scholarships, loans, and part-time employment from federal, state, institutional, and private sources. Awards from these programs may be combined in an "award package" to meet the cost of education. The types and amounts of aid awarded are determined by financial need, available funds, student classification, academic performance, and sometimes the timeliness of application.

Fraternities/Sororities (also called the Greek System) - Fraternities (for men) and sororities (for women) are social organizations that are active in various activities. Through a process of mutual selection, called Rush (which takes place during a specified period of time), students may be offered the opportunity to "pledge" a certain fraternity or sorority. Not all colleges have these organizations.

Full-Time Enrollment/Part-Time Enrollment - A full-time student is enrolled in 12 or more credit hours in a semester (full-time status for a Summer term is usually 6 credit hours). A part-time student is enrolled in less than 12 credit hours in a semester (less than 6 in a Summer term).

Honor Roll - Students are placed on honor rolls for GPAs above certain specified levels. Criteria for President's, Dean's, or other honor rolls vary at different institutions. In most cases, students must be enrolled full-time to be eligible.

Humanities Courses - Humanities courses are classes covering subjects such as literature, philosophy, and the fine arts. Most undergraduate degrees require a certain number of humanities credit hours.

Junior/Community College - A Junior/Community College is a two-year institution of higher education. Course offerings generally include a transfer curriculum with credits transferable toward a bachelor's degree at a four-year college, and an occupational or technical curriculum with courses of study designed to prepare students for employment in two years.

Lecture/Laboratory/Discussion Classes - In lecture classes, students attend class on a regular basis and the instructor lectures on class material. Laboratory classes require students to perform certain functions in controlled situations that help them test and understand what is being taught in the lecture. Discussion classes offer students the opportunity to talk about material being taught, ask questions, and discuss material with their classmates. Discussion classes are often taught by Masters or Doctoral students, and are becoming more common on college campuses.

Letter Grades/Grade Point Averages (GPA) - Most colleges use both letter grades and GPAs in determining students' grades. Grades at most colleges are figured using the following method: As are worth 4 points Bs are worth 3 points Cs are worth 2 points Ds are worth 1 point Fs are worth 0 points To figure a GPA, simply multiply the number of hours a course is worth by the number of points for the letter grade, then add up the totals for each course and divide by the number of credit hours. The result is the grade point average.

Major/Minor - A major is a student's chosen field of study. It usually requires the successful completion of a specified number of credit hours. A minor is designated as a specific number of credit hours in a secondary field of study.

Mid-Term Exams (Midterms) - During the middle of each semester, instructors may give mid-term exams that test students on the material

covered during the first half of the semester. Some classes have only two tests, a midterm and a final.

Non-Credit Courses - These are classes or courses that do not meet the requirements for a certificate of a degree at a given institution. Non-credit courses may serve one of several purposes: to explore new fields of study, increase proficiency in a particular profession, develop potential or enrich life experiences through cultural and/or recreational studies.

Open-Door Institution - Open-door institutions are usually public two-year junior/community colleges. The term open-door refers to an admission policy that states that anyone who is 18 years of age or older, whether or not a high school graduate, can be admitted to that college.

Pass/Fail Courses - Pass/fail courses do not earn letter grades or grade points for students. If a student passes a pass/fail course, he/she receives a "P" (pass) or "S" (satisfactory) on the transcript and the credit hours. If the student does not pass the course, they will receive an "F" (fail) or a "U" (unsatisfactory) on the transcript and no credit hours. The evaluation for the pass/fail course is not figured into the student's GPA.

Petition - A petition is both the process and the form a student fills out to request consideration of special circumstances. For example, if a student is denied admission, they may petition for admission based on extenuating circumstances.

Prerequisite Courses - A prerequisite course is a course taken in preparation for another course. For example, Accounting 1 is a prerequisite for Accounting 2.

Private/Public Institutions - Private and public institutions differ primarily in terms of their source of financial support. Public institutions receive funding from the state or other governmental entities and are administered by public boards. Private institutions rely on income from private donations, or from religious or other organizations and student tuition. Private institutions are governed by a board of trustees.

Registrar - The registrar of an institution is responsible for the maintenance of all academic records and may include such duties as:

maintenance of class enrollments, providing statistical information on student enrollment, certification of athletic eligibility and student eligibility for honor rolls, certification of the eligibility of veterans, administering probation and retention policies and verification of the completion of degree requirements for graduation.

Schedule of Classes- Colleges publish and distribute a Class Schedule book for each semester, during the previous semester. With the help of academic advisors and/or faculty members, students make up their own individual class schedules for each semester they are enrolled. Courses are designated in the Class Schedule by course department, course number, time and days the course meets, the room number and building name, and the instructor's name. A class schedule is also simply a list of classes a student is taking, which includes course name and number, time and location of the class, and possibly the instructor.

Student Identification Card (I.D.) - A student ID is usually required in college. It is similar to a driver's license and generally includes a photograph of the student, a student number (often the social security number), the student's name, the name of the college and the semester enrolled. The IDs require validation each semester. The card is often required for admittance to functions sponsored by the college or for identification when cashing checks or for other purposes.

Syllabus-An outline of the important information about a course. Written by the professor or instructor, it usually includes important dates, assignments, expectations and policies specific to that course. Some are quite lengthy.

Textbooks - Books required of students enrolled in college classes. Professors notify students which books they must purchase (and sometimes additional, optional textbooks) at the beginning of each semester/class. Spend less money by buying used college textbooks for your education.

Transcript - The transcript is a permanent academic record of a student at college. It may show courses taken, grades received, academic status and honors received. Transcripts are not released by the college if the student owes any money to the college.

Transfer of Credits - Some students attend more than one institution during their college career. When they move or transfer from one college to another, they also transfer accumulated credit hours from the former institution to the new one. The new institution determines which courses will apply toward graduation requirements.

Tuition - Tuition is the amount paid for each credit hour of enrollment. Tuition does not include the cost of books, fees, or room and board. Tuition charges vary from college to college and are dependent on such factors as resident or out-of-state status, level of classes enrolled in (lower, upper or graduate division), and whether the institution is publicly or privately financed.

Tutors - A tutor is a person, generally another student, who has completed and/or demonstrated proficiency in a course or subject, and is able to provide instruction to another student. Tutors usually help students better understand course material and make better grades.

Undergraduate- An undergraduate is a student who is pursuing either a one-, two-, or four-year degree.

University - A university is composed of undergraduate, graduate, and professional colleges and offers degrees in each.

Withdrawal - Students may withdraw from courses during a semester, but there are established procedures for doing so. The college catalog and/or Class Schedule generally specifies the procedures. Written approval from a university official must be secured, and some fees must be paid.