

College Prep Checklist

Sophomore Year

Don't let planning for college get you stressed. Checklists are great tools to keep you organized, focused and connected with everything that needs to be done.

Students

- Research careers that fit your interests and match them up with college majors.
- Use the **GAfutures** *College Search* tool to start researching colleges and create a list of top choices.
- Attend PROBE College Fairs or other college prep events at your school or in your area.
- Discuss your classes and review graduation, college entrance and academic rigor requirements with your guidance counselor and parents.
- Check your HOPE GPA to see if you're on track to be eligible for the HOPE or Zell Miller Scholarship.
- Take the PSAT/NMSQT to help you prepare for the real thing.
- Look into skilled trade careers and the HOPE Career Grant.
- Think about how to spend your summer: work, volunteer or take a college-level course.
- Update your high school portfolio with all your achievements and activities.

Parents

- Attend a PROBE College Fair or a GSFC Outreach event like a financial aid night with your child.
- Encourage your child to take responsibility by balancing homework and other activities or a part-time job.
- Learn about the different options for your child's standardized tests.

Visit the *College Planning* section of **GAfutures** for additional information on preparing for college.

College Prep Vocabulary

When it comes to financial aid and planning for college, there are some key terms you should know to help you understand the process and make informed decisions.

529 Plan: Tax-advantaged savings plan designed to encourage saving for future college expenses. Path2College is Georgia's 529 plan.

COA (Cost of Attendance): Total cost of attending a college or university, including tuition, room and board, books, lab fees, transportation and basic living expenses.

EFC (Expected Family Contribution): Number used to determine your eligibility for federal student financial aid. EFC is determined by the financial information you provide on your FAFSA, the application for federal student aid. Your EFC is reported to you on your Student Aid Report (SAR).

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid): Filling out a FAFSA is the first step in the financial aid process. To be eligible to receive federal financial aid, a student must complete a FAFSA.

FSA ID: Provides access to Federal Student Aid's online systems and can serve as your legal signature. You must have an FSA ID to complete the FAFSA.

Grant: Money given to students for their education that does not have to be repaid. Often based on need, grants may come from federal or state programs, or sometimes from private charitable organizations.

HOPE GPA: Your HOPE GPA determines if you are academically eligible for the HOPE or Zell Miller Scholarship. It includes only grades earned in core subjects – English, math, science, social studies and foreign language. You can check your HOPE GPA beginning in 10th grade through your *My GAfutures* account.

Merit-based: Financial aid based on academic, athletic or some other type of achievement.

Need-based: Need-based financial aid is reserved for low-income students.

Pell Grant: Federal program that provides need-based educational grants for low-income students. Pell Grants do not have to be repaid.

SAR (Student Aid Report): Your SAR summarizes the information entered on your FAFSA form and shows the amount of your EFC.