

COLLEGE COACH

c o n s u l t a n t s

October 2025

Seniors—

Attend meetings with college reps.

Continue to work on your applications: complete your applications if applying ED or EA; Check accuracy of transcripts.

10th & 11th Graders—

Take the PSAT

Attend [NACAC College Fairs](#)

If interested in the arts—
[National Portfolio Day](#)

Parents—

Complete [CSS Profile](#) if applicable.

[FAFSA](#) scheduled to open
October 1st

November 2025

Seniors—

Submit EA and ED applications and supporting documentation.
Check portals at least twice weekly.

Keep track of all deadlines and continue to work on remaining applications.

Juniors—

Check dates for upcoming [SAT](#) or [ACT](#) availability in your area.

The Truth About High School Grades

If you're a high school student with college aspirations or a parent supporting one, there's a fundamental truth you need to understand: straight A's don't carry the weight they once did. This isn't meant to discourage hard work, but rather to provide clarity about the current educational landscape and help you navigate it more effectively.

According to [Inside Higher Ed](#), over 47 percent of high school students now graduate with A averages, yet actual student achievement has been declining across multiple measures. While grades have been steadily climbing since the 1990s, performance on standardized tests like the SAT, ACT, and AP exams has been falling. Students are achieving higher grades in more advanced classes without corresponding gains in actual proficiency, creating a gap between perceived and real learning.

The consequences extend far beyond high school hallways. High school GPAs, once considered the best predictor of college success, have lost much of their predictive value. While many colleges initially dropped SAT and ACT requirements, selective institutions are now bringing these standardized tests back because they desperately need objective measures they feel they can trust. Students armed with excellent grades often march off to college only to find themselves placed in remedial courses because they haven't actually mastered the material their grades suggested they had.

This disconnect affects everyone. Employers complain that graduates lack basic workforce skills. College professors report that incoming students struggle with fundamental tasks like reading books thoroughly. Parents are often shocked when their straight-A students face rejection from selective universities, not realizing that in today's landscape, an A truly has become average.

The challenge for today's students is figuring out how to differentiate themselves when everyone seems to have identical transcripts. Many hardworking students have responded by piling on academic rigor, taking increasingly heavy course loads. However, this approach often backfires. Taking eleven AP classes might look impressive on paper. Still, it fundamentally changes the high school experience and can compromise the mental health and well-being that adolescents need to thrive.

While high school grades are determined using different rubrics across schools and teachers, standardized assessments like AP and IB exams are graded according to the same criteria nationwide. For students who have access to AP or IB programs, their scores can be a more reliable measure, but this path is not available or for everyone. This means that although an "A" in a high school class may be a weaker signal than it used to be, a score of 4 or 5 on an AP exam hasn't experienced the same decline in meaning. A student who can demonstrate objective mastery on a criterion-referenced test provides powerful validation of their classroom grades.

Students navigating this landscape should shift focus from grade accumulation to genuine learning and mastery. Rather than asking "How can I get an A?" ask "Am I actually learning this material?" Choose depth over breadth by selecting fewer courses where you can achieve genuine mastery and strong standardized test performance. Instead of retaking tests for higher grades, spend that time ensuring you understand the underlying concepts that will serve you in college. Seek meaningful challenges by choosing a few substantial extracurricular commitments over multiple superficial activities that you believe will look good on applications.

(continued on bottom of page 3)

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Focus on Majors: Construction Management

Construction is one of the largest industries, shaping skylines and communities. From skyscrapers to renewable energy facilities, every project relies on professionals to coordinate budgets, timelines, safety, and people. That's where Construction Management (CM) comes in.

CM is the business side of building. Architects design structures. Engineers handle technical systems. Construction managers ensure projects are completed efficiently, safely, and on budget. They bridge owners, contractors, and design teams, combining technical expertise with leadership.

CM programs blend business, engineering, and technology coursework to prepare students for careers in the building industry. A Bachelor of Science degree in CM typically includes classes in construction methods and materials, project management, cost estimating, building codes, law, and safety. Many programs also emphasize hands-on experience through internships with construction firms, work on campus facilities projects, and training in industry-standard software such as AutoCAD and Building Information Modeling.

When exploring CM programs, be sure to note which department or college offers the major. At some schools, it's in engineering, focusing on technical systems. At others, it's in business, emphasizing finance and management. The program's focus can shape career opportunities. Students should consider their strengths, interests, and goals when choosing a school.

Some universities even dedicate a department to CM. Wentworth Institute of Technology houses CM as a flagship discipline within its School of Management. The University of Florida offers one of the most respected programs in the country through its M.E. Rinker, Sr. School of Construction Management, a distinct school within the College of Design, Construction and Planning.

Certain colleges and universities have a strong reputation in CM. Colorado State University offers a well-established program with strong industry partnerships across the Rocky Mountain region. Purdue University offers opportunities in commercial, residential, and industrial CM, with a focus on integrating technology. California State University, Chico has one of the oldest CM programs in the country, with graduates highly recruited on the West Coast. Clemson University emphasizes sustainable construction practices, aligning with growing environmental priorities.

Students should also consider whether a program is accredited by the [American Council for Construction Education \(ACCE\)](#). ACCE accreditation signals that a program meets industry standards in project management, safety, estimating, contracts, and ethics. Graduating from an ACCE-accredited program can give students an edge when applying for jobs.

The location of a university can also significantly impact career opportunities. Schools situated in regions with robust growth and development, such as Texas, California, and Florida, often provide students with access to more internships and industry connections.

Graduates with a degree in CM have a wide range of career paths available to them. Many start as project engineers before advancing to leadership roles. Others may specialize in estimating, scheduling, or sustainability consulting. According to the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), demand for construction managers is expected to grow faster than average, driven by new infrastructure initiatives, renewable energy projects, and ongoing housing needs.

If you enjoy problem-solving, leadership, and seeing projects come to life, CM may be a good fit. The field offers earning potential, job stability, and the opportunity to make a tangible impact on the environment. For students who want to combine technical knowledge with business and leadership skills, CM is a rewarding major that literally builds the future.

Careers in Construction Management

- *Construction Manager*
- *Project Manager*
- *Cost Estimator*
- *Construction Supervisor/Superintendent*
- *Scheduling Specialist*
- *Facilities Manager*
- *Safety Coordinator*
- *Sustainability/Green Building Consultant*
- *Real Estate Development Associate*
- *Quality Control Specialist/Inspector*
- *Infrastructure Project Manager*



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Financial Matters: It's Time to Complete the FAFSA and CSS Profile



As your high school student prepares for college, understanding the financial aid process can make the difference between affordability and overwhelming debt. The good news? October 1st marks the opening of financial aid applications for the upcoming academic year, giving you a clear starting point for this important journey.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid ([FAFSA](#)) is required by every U.S. college and university if your student is applying for need-based financial aid. This federal [form](#) costs nothing to submit and serves as the gateway to federal grants, loans, and work-study programs.

Before you begin, both you and your student will need to create individual FSA IDs, which serve as electronic signatures when submitting the application. This ID will be used throughout your student's college years, so keep the login information secure.

The CSS Profile is used by some elite public universities and many private universities because it provides more detailed financial information than the FAFSA. This distinction matters because the CSS Profile is specifically designed for determining eligibility for institutional financial aid, while the FAFSA is primarily used for federal government funding programs. Schools that provide institutional aid without requiring the CSS Profile typically base their awards on the financial information from the FAFSA alone.

The [CSS Profile](#) is more comprehensive and detailed than the FAFSA, requiring additional financial information and taking longer to complete. There is a submission fee plus reporting charges for each college that receives your information.

It is recommended to complete both the FAFSA as your circumstances may change. Even if you don't think you'll need aid, many colleges still require the FAFSA or CSS Profile for merit scholarships, so completing these forms keeps all options open.

Since both the FAFSA and CSS Profile are designed to be submitted only once with all your colleges listed, your best strategy is to submit both forms before your earliest college deadline.

Missing a financial aid deadline can reduce the amount of aid your student receives, since some funds are limited and awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.

Check the financial aid pages on each college website where your student is applying, or contact their financial aid offices directly to verify deadlines for each application round (Early Decision, Early Action, and Regular Decision may all have different dates).

When completing these forms, keep in mind that student assets are assessed much more heavily than parent assets. Student assets are evaluated at 20% by the FAFSA and 25% by the CSS Profile, while parental assets are assessed at only 5.64% by the FAFSA and 5% by the CSS Profile.

This means if you have a 529 college savings plan for your student, make sure it's listed as a parent asset rather than a student asset. The beneficiary designation doesn't matter; what matters is who owns the account.

The time you invest in understanding and completing these forms properly could save your family thousands of dollars over your student's college career. Start early, stay organized, and don't hesitate to reach out to college financial aid offices with questions; they're there to help you navigate this process successfully.

The Truth About High School Grades (continued from page 1)

Parents play a crucial role in helping their children maintain perspective. While it's natural to want children to succeed, the definition of success needs to include happiness, health, and genuine preparation for future challenges. Remember that straight A's don't guarantee admission to selective schools, and the goal isn't just to accumulate impressive-looking credentials but to develop skills and knowledge needed for lifelong success.

This doesn't mean grades don't matter or that students should stop

working hard. Rather, it means putting grades in their proper context as one measure among many, and recognizing that in an era of grade inflation, objective demonstrations of knowledge and skill carry more weight than ever before.

The students who will thrive in college and beyond are those who focus on genuine mastery, maintain their well-being, and develop the critical thinking and learning skills that no amount of grade inflation can fake. Colleges increasingly want students who can actually succeed in their

programs, not just students with perfect GPAs.

In a world where an A has become average, the real differentiator isn't the grade itself but the authentic learning and growth it's supposed to represent. By keeping this perspective and focusing on substance over statistics, students and families can navigate the current educational landscape more successfully while preserving what matters most: genuine education, personal growth, and the foundation for lifelong learning and achievement.

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College Application Mistakes

When preparing and submitting college applications, proper planning and preparation can streamline the entire process. Start by carefully reading all instructions before beginning any application. Avoid waiting until the last day before deadlines, as this increases the likelihood of rushing and making careless errors. Mistakes on critical information like birth dates or social security numbers can cause significant processing problems. Additionally, last-minute submissions may encounter technical difficulties that may not be resolved quickly enough to meet the deadline.

Most applications include automatic timeouts for security purposes, so remember to save your work frequently if taking breaks. Always use the application's built-in navigation buttons rather than your browser's controls, as using the browser's back button can unexpectedly log you out and cause loss of unsaved information.

The Common Application provides a "Preview" function that allows you to see how your application will appear when viewed by admissions. Sometimes students discover that the spacing of their essay isn't formatted correctly. While you can send complete versions to admissions offices if answers are seriously compromised, this is only necessary for significant truncations. Admissions officers regularly see minor cutoffs and won't penalize otherwise strong applications for a few missing words. When sending complete materials, clearly explain that you're providing them

due to potential omission issues during submission.

After submitting the Common Application to a specific college, you cannot modify or resubmit it to that institution. However, when applying to additional Common Application schools, you can edit prior answers before sending your application to subsequent colleges.

Having someone proofread your application helps catch mistakes before submission. Remember that completing an application involves submitting the main application, any required supplements, and payment.

One common source of post-application stress occurs when admissions offices notify students of incomplete files. Resist blaming school counselors or support staff for missing transcripts. Admissions offices often require several weeks to process and file documents, and many colleges automatically send incomplete file notifications. Required documents are typically either at the college or in transit.

Many colleges provide online portals for checking application status. Be sure to look out for an email from each college with instructions for how to set up your online portal. Regularly monitor these accounts and check your email frequently to avoid missing important communications such as alumni interview requests. Stay vigilant about additional requirements, such as sending *official* SAT or ACT scores where required, or completing the STARS form, and ensure your high school submits midyear reports when required by specific colleges.