



## March 2025

### Juniors

Create an initial list of colleges.

Tour colleges in-person or virtual

ACT- April 5th (late registration March 16th)

### Freshmen - Juniors

Make plans for a productive summer.

Investigate summer programs, jobs, and internships.

## April 2025

### Seniors

Final letters from colleges should arrive by April.

Compare offers of admission: revisit top choices if possible.

Evaluate financial aid packages and consider college funding options.

Notify colleges that you will not attend.

### Freshmen - Seniors

Prepare for AP Exams.

### Juniors

SAT registration April 18th  
Test on May 3rd

## Lessons Learned About Campus Visits

As parents of sophomores and juniors schedule flights, rent cars, make hotel reservations, and book spring break campus tours, this whole “college thing” becomes eerily real.

Two experienced parents who have recently completed college visits and have come out the other side smiling share their advice:

“I would say that the best thing we did regarding campus visits was to start early. We looked closely at upcoming days off, vacation days, and even teacher/staff development days. If you wait until summer, you may not get a “real” feel of the campus dynamics. We made a point of visiting most schools at two different times to get an idea of school spirit, study habits, and student engagement. I also learned that colleges offer specialized sessions (engineering, business, honors college, etc.) only on certain days of the week.”

One parent realized she was embarrassing her teen on a few tours when she asked one too many questions. “For me, I need to know everything about the school.” Some questions seemed appropriate in the large group setting, and I left others until we were on the student-led tour. I did ask about traditions on campus, study abroad options, and the quality of the career services center.” Our advice - parents should ask questions when they must, but leave the bulk of the questions to their child.

This parent's best advice is to ask your child to write down their thoughts about the college immediately after settling back in the car because one school can look just like the rest. “I tried not to give my opinion before my child did. I didn’t want to color their observations,” I would ask questions and then wait until they were all finished to give my opinions.

The parents of the second family, whose teen ultimately applied for Early Decision, started preparing in their sophomore year because they felt it was important for their child to have a good working knowledge of each school prior to a visit. They made sure to ask the same questions on each visit.

You may also find that one visit simply isn’t enough. Families can later take advantage of Open Houses or Discovery Days offered by the schools, which provide even more information. Remember that schools also offer wonderful virtual visit options. Families who want to learn more about a school can register for the virtual information sessions.

Visiting college campuses can be eye-opening and very informative. Try to enjoy the process of researching and touring college as it can get overwhelming at times. Beyond the college campus, take time to visit the local town. Find a local ice cream store, independent bookstore, or something that your teen would enjoy. Cherish your journey together.

# Next Step College Admissions Planning

## Careers for Language Majors

*International business and  
banking*

*Diplomacy and international  
relations*

*Tourism and hospitality*

*Journalism and media*

*Education and translation  
services*

*Speech therapy and  
language pathology*

*Natural language processing  
and AI development*

*Forensic linguistics*

*Lexicography and dictionary  
creation*

*Teaching English as a  
second language*

*Sign Language  
Interpretation*

*Speech Language Pathology*

*Health Care Interpretation*



## Focus on Majors: Languages

There are roughly 311 different languages spoken in the United States alone, with more than 6,500 languages spoken worldwide. Globalization and increasing communication with foreign countries have increased the need for bilingual speakers. By entering into the field of World Languages or Linguistics, you will not only master a second language but will also enhance your perspectives as you learn to value other cultures and build connections with others who speak another language.

As global interconnectedness continues to grow, the value of language skills and linguistic knowledge has never been higher. For college-bound high school students considering their future majors, both world language studies and linguistics offer exciting and rewarding paths.

Majoring in a foreign language involves immersing yourself in both the language and culture of specific regions or countries. This field is ideal for students who want to develop language proficiency (speaking, reading, writing, listening), enjoy learning about new languages and cultures, aspire to work in international settings, and have a passion for travel and cross-cultural communication.

Language majors typically focus on language proficiency, literature of the target language, history and culture of relevant countries, and area studies. Popular language majors include Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, French, and German. For example, a Spanish major at the University of California, San Diego might take courses such as Spanish Composition, Introduction to Hispanic Literature, and Spanish Phonetics. Grinnell College offers a Chinese major with classes in Reading Chinese Literature, Chinese Food for Thought, and Modern China through Literature and Film.

An overlooked language major is American Sign Language (ASL). ASL is used by over

half a million people in the U.S. and is the fourth most studied language at colleges

and universities. California State University Northridge offers a Deaf Studies Major with concentrations in ASL/English Interpreting, Deaf Community Services, and Deaf Cultural Studies.

Unlike world language majors, linguistics students may not become fluent in multiple languages but, rather, gain a deep understanding of how languages work. This knowledge is applicable across various languages and contexts.

Linguistics is the scientific study of language itself. This major is suited for students who are fascinated by the structure and evolution of languages, enjoy analyzing patterns and solving puzzles, and are interested in the cognitive aspects of language use.

Linguistics majors typically study language structure, language acquisition and development, historical linguistics, sociolinguistics, and computational linguistics. For instance, a linguistics major at the University of Connecticut might take courses such as Phonology, Syntax and Semantics, and Language Acquisition. At The University of Colorado, Boulder students can choose a track such as Computational Linguistics, Socio-Cultural Anthropological Interactional Linguistics, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, or Cognitive Linguistics. When deciding between these majors, consider your personal interests and career goals. World language studies offer direct language skills and cultural knowledge, while linguistics provides a broader, more analytical approach to language.

Both majors cultivate critical thinking, communication skills, and cultural awareness – attributes highly valued by employers across industries. Whichever path you choose, you'll be well-equipped to thrive in our increasingly interconnected world.

---

# Next Step College Admissions Planning

---

## Financial Matters: Understanding Your 529 College Savings Plan



As college costs continue to rise, parents of college-bound students are increasingly turning to 529 plans as a strategic way to save for their children's education. Named after Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code, these tax-advantaged savings accounts offer a powerful combination of financial benefits and flexibility that can make a significant difference in funding higher education.

A 529 plan is a state-sponsored investment account designed specifically for education savings. These plans allow parents, grandparents, or other interested parties to contribute after-tax dollars into an account that grows on a tax-deferred basis. The key advantage is that when funds are withdrawn for qualified education expenses, they are not subject to federal income tax. Additionally, many states offer their own tax benefits, such as deductions on contributions or tax-free withdrawals for state residents.

There are two types of 529 plans:

### Education Savings Plans

These function similarly to retirement accounts, where contributions are invested in mutual funds or other investment vehicles. The account's growth is dependent on market performance.

### Prepaid Tuition Plans

These allow families to purchase credits at participating colleges and universities at current prices, effectively locking in tuition rates and protecting against future increases.

To maintain their tax-free status, **funds withdrawn from a 529 plan must be used for qualified education expenses.** These include:

#### Tuition & Fees

This is the primary use of 529 funds, covering costs at eligible postsecondary institutions, including colleges, universities, vocational schools, and even some international schools.

#### Room & Board

For students enrolled at least half-time, 529 plans can cover on-campus housing or off-campus housing costs up to the amount determined by the school's official cost of attendance.

#### Books & Supplies

Textbooks, required reading materials, lab supplies, and other necessary academic supplies are eligible expenses.

#### Technology

Computers, software, printers, and internet access required for coursework are eligible.

#### Special Needs Equipment

For students with disabilities, specialized equipment necessary for enrollment or attendance is an eligible expense.

#### Student Loan Repayments

Up to \$10,000 can be used to pay off qualified student loans for the beneficiary or their siblings.

One of the most attractive features of a 529 plan is its flexibility. If your child decides not to pursue higher education, receives a substantial scholarship, or chooses a less expensive school, you have options: change the beneficiary, use it for other educational pursuits, or hold it for future use.

529 plans offer numerous advantages that make them an attractive option for college savings:

#### Tax Benefits

The primary draw of 529 plans is their tax-advantaged status. Contributions grow tax-free, and withdrawals for qualified expenses avoid federal taxes. Many states also offer additional tax incentives for contributions.

#### High Contribution Limits

Unlike other savings vehicles, 529 plans typically have high contribution limits, often exceeding \$300,000 per beneficiary, depending on the state.

#### Estate Planning Benefits

Contributions to 529 plans can reduce your taxable estate. Special provisions even allow for accelerated gifting, where you can make five years' worth of gifts in a single year without triggering gift taxes.

#### Financial Aid Friendly

Assets in a 529 plan owned by a parent have a relatively small impact on financial aid eligibility compared to assets held in the student's name.

#### Low Maintenance

Once set up, 529 plans require minimal ongoing management, especially if you opt for age-based portfolios that automatically adjust as your child nears college age.

While 529 plans offer significant benefits, it's important to be aware of potential drawbacks:

#### Investment Risk

Like any investment, 529 plans can lose value, especially in market downturns.

#### Non-Qualified Withdrawals

If funds are used for non-qualified expenses, earnings are subject to income tax and a 10% penalty.

For parents of college-bound students, a 529 plan is a powerful tool to save for education while minimizing tax burdens. Offering tax-free growth, flexibility in use, and potential state tax benefits, these plans can significantly ease the financial strain of higher education costs.

As with any financial decision, it's crucial to thoroughly research your options and consider consulting with a financial advisor to determine if a 529 plan aligns with your overall financial strategy. By understanding the uses, benefits, and potential limitations of 529 plans, families can make informed decisions to better prepare for the rising costs of higher education, ensuring that their savings work as efficiently as possible to support their children's academic aspirations.

## Social Media and College Admissions

Okay students, let's be real. Your life is probably all over social media. From TikTok dances to Insta-worthy sunsets to those hilarious Snapchat streaks, it's how you connect, express yourself, and keep up with everything. But here's a thought that might make you pause before your next post: colleges might be watching. Yes, admission officers could be scrolling through your feeds, and what they see might impact your future.

Are colleges checking your social media? While not guaranteed, it's possible. Think of it this way: Admissions officers want to see beyond your academic achievements. A [survey](#) found that 28% actually review applicants' online presence. An admissions officer would investigate your social media accounts if they receive reports about harmful content about an admitted student. Check your privacy settings and use caution when sharing your social media account.

Let's talk about the worst-case scenario. Remember that story about Harvard rescinding offers to students who shared offensive memes? Or the student who lost their spot after a questionable video surfaced? No college wants a student who will bring negativity or controversy to campus.

Use social media to your advantage. Flip the script and view it as a tool to boost your college chances. Think of it as your chance to shine. Did you win an award? Crush a volunteer project? Create something amazing? Share it! Colleges love seeing passionate, driven students. Another smart move? Engage with the schools you're interested in. Follow them, comment thoughtfully on their posts, and show some love for their campus vibes.

Basically, think of your social media as your personal brand. What do you want it to say about you? Does it showcase your interests, your personality, and your goals?

Before you freak out, take a deep breath and do a little social media spring cleaning. Scroll back through your profiles and ask yourself, "Would I want a college admissions officer to see this?" "Would you want a grandparent to see your post?" If the answer is no, then get rid of it! Adjust your privacy settings, Google yourself to see what comes up, and remember that even private posts can sometimes find their way into the public eye.

Bottom line? Social media is powerful. Use it wisely, show your best self, and make sure your online presence reflects the amazing person you are. Because when it comes to college admissions, you want to be ready for your close-up.



**Joanie Till**

**702.808.6565**

[joanie@nextstepcollegeplan.com](mailto:joanie@nextstepcollegeplan.com)

[www.nextstepcollegeplan.com](http://www.nextstepcollegeplan.com)

Member NACAC, IECA, HECA