



January 2025

Seniors—

Fill out the [FAFSA](#).

Search and apply for scholarships.

File any additional college applications.

Have mid-year grades sent to colleges, if applicable.

Avoid senioritis!

Juniors—

Check [College Board](#) and [ACT](#) websites for available test dates.

Create a test plan for spring SAT or ACT exams.

Look at Fairtest for list of test optional or test-blind colleges.

February 2025

Seniors—

Make sure your college applications are complete.

Read the entire emails from colleges and respond if necessary.

Update colleges with any new information that might influence admission.

Juniors—

Begin researching colleges by using websites.

Attend virtual or in-person tours and information sessions.

Choosing High School Courses

When choosing courses for the following year of high school, do you pick classes because they will look good on your college application? Do you worry that you aren't taking enough or any honors or AP classes? The truth is, that successful college preparation looks different for every student, whether your goal is a small private college, a flagship university, or an elite college. The key to all future academic opportunities is a well-rounded education, so students should seek to gain skills, knowledge, and information. Students also need to find ways to develop a global perspective by learning more about the world beyond their classroom. Be knowledge-thirsty as opposed to grade-hungry!

To be competitive, students should aim to take four years in all core subjects. This includes English, the same foreign language, history/social science, math, and science. Elective classes can also reveal the range of an applicant's interests and help enrich their overall presentation. Taking advanced classes in your areas of academic interest also reveals more about you. Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors courses represent one approach to academic challenge. It's important to consider the amount of time and work needed to fully engage in the course. Too many honors and AP courses can sometimes become overwhelming due to the amount of reading, writing, and other preparation required within the context of a student's overall schedule and extracurricular activities. Standard-level courses, on the other hand, are equally valuable and often more appropriate for building strong skills.

For students with learning differences or those who find standard courses better suited to their learning style, success comes from finding the right balance. Imagine you're learning to play a musical instrument - while some students might jump into advanced pieces, others might benefit more from mastering basics with excellent technique. Both approaches can lead to becoming a skilled musician.

Think of course selection as creating your academic soundtrack. Some students might excel at classical piano, while others shine in jazz or contemporary music. Similarly, your academic choices should reflect your strengths and interests while gradually building your capabilities.

This means different things for different students: for those with particular academic strengths, it might mean taking advanced courses in those areas while maintaining standard-level courses elsewhere. A student comfortable with mathematics but who finds language arts challenging might take AP Calculus while enrolling in standard English classes.

Many students find success through paths beyond traditional high school courses. Dual enrollment at a community college can provide a different learning environment. Summer programs and online courses offer flexibility in timing and pacing.

Colleges are like different types of communities - each with its own culture and expectations. Some might emphasize research and academic intensity, while others might value practical experience

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Next Step College Admissions Planning

Careers for Philosophy, Politics, & Economics

- *Public or Private Attorney*
- *Political Activist*
- *Human Rights Advocate*
- *Journalist*
- *Primary or Secondary Teacher*
- *University Researcher*
- *Public Administrator*
- *Business Management*
- *International Business*
- *Financial Analyst*
- *Economist*
- *Consultant for Non-Governmental Organization*

Focus on Majors: Philosophy, Politics, & Economics

Born at Oxford University in the 1920s and now offered at more than 150 universities globally, Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) isn't your typical single-subject major. Think of it as the academic equivalent of a Swiss Army knife – it gives you multiple tools to tackle today's most challenging problems. Whether you're passionate about climate change, social justice, or the future of technology, PPE provides you with three distinct lenses to analyze these issues.

Imagine you're trying to solve the puzzle of income inequality. Through philosophy, you'll explore what makes a society "fair." Politics will help you understand how governments can create (or prevent) change. Economics will show you how markets affect wealth distribution. It's like having three superpower perspectives in one degree.

According to an article in *Forbes*, students considering applying for a degree in PPE are advised to look beyond the multidisciplinary title. Prospective students should investigate how well the different fields are integrated into the coursework or research requirements for the degree, and whether the range and style of the courses suit their needs.

For instance, the University of Pennsylvania requires students in this major to specialize in a thematic concentration of their choice. This includes Choice and Behavior, Globalization, Public-Policy, Governance, and Distributive Justice.

Ohio State offers concentrations such as Justice and Moral Reasoning, Global Cooperation and Conflict, Law, Policy, Governance, and Choice and Behavior.

Pomona College's PPE major requires students to take four courses in each of the three categories: philosophy, politics, and economics. Students will choose one department to focus on with two more courses from that discipline. All seniors are required to take the course *Freedom, Markets and Well-Being*.

PPE graduates leave with analytical skills and an interdisciplinary perspective. Many students go on to graduate school or work in a variety of careers.

PPE graduates can adapt to almost any career environment. Want to be the next tech entrepreneur? PPE's analytical skills will help you understand market trends and the ethical implications of new technologies. Dreaming of becoming a lawyer? The logical reasoning and argumentation skills you'll develop are exactly what law schools love. Interested in changing the world through public service or non-profits? PPE's comprehensive understanding of social systems will give you the tools to make meaningful changes.

PPE graduates participate in diverse fields. You'll find them working as management consultants helping companies solve complex problems, as journalists breaking down complicated global issues for the public, and as policy advisors shaping government decisions. Some become business leaders; others choose careers in international development; and, yes, some even become philosophers.

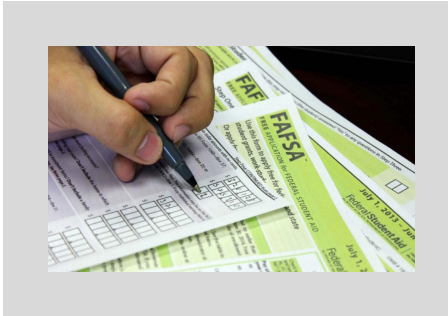
The skills you'll develop go beyond career preparation. PPE teaches you to think critically about big questions: What makes a society just? How should we balance individual freedom with collective good? What role should technology play in our future? These are the kinds of questions that don't just make you more employable – they make you a more engaged citizen of the world.

So if you're the kind of student who's curious about everything, who loves to debate big ideas, and who wants to understand how the world really works, PPE might be your perfect match. After all, in a world where problems don't fit into neat categories, we need thinkers who can cross boundaries and see the bigger picture.



Next Step College Admissions Planning

Financial Matters: What Parents of High School Seniors Need to Know



This year's financial aid landscape brings changes that parents of college-bound seniors should understand. The traditional financial aid timeline has shifted, and being prepared for these changes will help your family navigate the process more effectively.

This year's Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) launched in December 2024, rather than its usual October opening. While the form itself is shorter and more streamlined, the processing timeline has expanded considerably. For many families, particularly those applying to private colleges, there's an additional form to consider: the CSS Profile. Unlike the FAFSA, the CSS Profile application opened on schedule in October 2024 and is required by approximately 400 institutions, primarily private colleges and universities.

First, it's important to understand that even though the FAFSA opened later, submitting both the FAFSA and CSS Profile (if required) as soon as possible is essential. The CSS Profile is more detailed than the FAFSA and requires additional financial information, including home equity and small business assets. Completing it early can give schools a fuller picture of your family's financial situation. The initial processing of FAFSA applications may take several weeks, and colleges won't receive student information until late January or early February 2025. CSS Profile data, however, is typically processed more quickly and is already available to schools.

These processing delays create a domino effect on financial aid award letters. Regular decision applicants might not receive their awards until March or April 2025, while even Early Decision and Early Action students may have to wait until February or March to learn about their aid packages. Some institutions may send tentative awards based on preliminary information, including CSS Profile data, but final numbers could change once FAFSA information becomes available.

Given these timeline shifts, parents should take several proactive steps. Submit both the FAFSA and CSS Profile (if required) as soon as possible, if you haven't already done so. Keep all tax and income documents readily accessible, as you may need to reference them quickly if questions arise. The CSS Profile typically requires more detailed financial information than the FAFSA, including information about home equity, retirement accounts, and small business assets, so gather these documents as well. Additionally, maintain close communication with the financial aid offices at your student's chosen schools to understand their specific timelines and requirements.

It's also wise to prepare for possible appeals or special circumstances reviews. If your family's financial situation has changed since 2023 (the tax year used for the 2025-26 FAFSA), document these changes carefully. While the FAFSA has limited space for explaining special circumstances, the CSS Profile provides more opportunities to detail unique financial situations. Many schools have specific processes for considering special circumstances, and understanding these procedures in advance can save valuable time later.

Choosing High School Courses (continued from page 1)

and hands-on learning. The key is finding institutions that match your preparation and goals.

Advice for parents supporting your student through this journey: Like being a good coach - you want to challenge them appropriately while avoiding burnout. This means encouraging courses that match their abilities, helping them access support resources when needed, and celebrating progress rather than only

grades. Successful college preparation isn't about maximizing course difficulty, it's about building a strong foundation for future learning while developing confidence in your abilities. Think of it as training for a marathon - the goal isn't to sprint every practice run but to build endurance and strength consistently over time.

Remember, students, you can't design your school's curriculum but you can control how you complete your four years of high school, so plan well.

Take advantage of all opportunities at your school and in your local area. Try to immerse yourself in meaningful activities that reveal more about who you are and what matters to you. Remember, go for quality not quantity. Consider ways to supplement and/or advance your curriculum by completing a dual-enrollment program or summer classes. Aiming for mastery in core subjects will clearly show readiness for the rigor of the college classroom.

Understanding College Deferrals

A deferral represents a "not yet" rather than a rejection, moving your application to the regular decision pool for further consideration. This allows colleges to gather more information while allowing applicants to strengthen their cases for admission.

Colleges often defer applicants to evaluate senior-year academic performance, particularly in challenging courses. They may want to see additional standardized test scores or new accomplishments before deciding. Sometimes, deferrals stem from institutional needs such as geographic diversity, and balancing enrollment targets, rather than individual application shortcomings.

When receiving a deferral letter, read it carefully, as it typically contains guidance about welcomed additional materials, submission deadlines, and required actions. Ensure your school promptly submits your mid-year grades. Consider providing new standardized test scores if allowed and if they strengthen your profile. An additional recommendation letter from a current teacher or mentor who can speak to your recent growth and achievements may also prove valuable.

Demonstrating continued interest plays a vital role in the process. Write a thoughtful letter to your regional admission officer expressing your enthusiasm for the school. Include specific reasons why

the institution remains your top choice and detail any new achievements or activities since your initial application. Ask whether they would welcome additional materials to support your candidacy.

Your school counselor can serve as a valuable ally too. They can contact the college for insights about your deferral, include updated achievements in their mid-year report, and offer guidance on strengthening your application. While pursuing these steps, maintain strong academic performance and remain engaged with your other college applications to keep your options open.

Remember many deferred students ultimately receive acceptance letters. How you handle this situation demonstrates important qualities colleges value: resilience, adaptability, and the ability to respond constructively to challenges. Any single decision doesn't undermine your future success and your determination to navigate this process will serve you well in your academic journey and beyond.

Focus your energy on elements within your control: maintaining excellent grades, pursuing meaningful activities, and showcasing your genuine interest in the school. Stay positive and remember that many excellent colleges could fit your educational goals. While challenging, this experience helps you develop valuable skills that will benefit you throughout your college career and future endeavors.



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