

CHOICES AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

The choices you make now about high school and going on to further your education will affect your income and career opportunities for the rest of your life. Here are some numbers about income level, contrasted with unemployment rates for the same education levels.

Education Level	Annual Income of Individuals 25 and older*	Unemployment Rate**
High school dropout	\$19,535	14.9%
High school graduate	\$27,381	10.3%
Associate's degree	\$36,186	8.4%
Bachelor's degree	\$46,931	4.7%
Master's degree	\$60,206	

Sources: *U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2010 Annual Social and Economic Supplement;
**U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, 2010

Not to say that going on to a college or university for an associate's or bachelor's degree is the right path for everyone. It's not. But it *is* true that you'll have more success and satisfaction in whatever career you choose if you pursue more training and education in that field after high school. Having good options after high school depends on the good choices you make *during* high school. Make sure you do your best work to keep your options open. Whatever you choose, planning will make the difference in how many options you have, and how easy it is to explore them when the time comes.

THE POSTSECONDARY PLANNING CALENDAR

Freshman Year

- Challenge yourself to take the hardest classes in which you can be successful. Consider an Advanced Placement (AP) class if offered.
- Attend the Four-Year Plan orientation with your counselor or advisor. Complete your plan and discuss it with your family, teachers, advisor, and friends.
- Research career possibilities and required schooling.
- Open a “My411” account online and keep up to date on HOPE and other student financial aid programs available through the Georgia Student Finance Commission by visiting the website at www.GAcollege411.org or by calling 1-800-505-4732.
- Study, work hard, and earn the best grades you can.
- Get involved in extracurricular activities and service in your community. Start a portfolio of your best work and a record of achievement. *See worksheets on pages 27–34 to help you keep track of your achievements.*

Sophomore Year

- When registering for this year's classes, take the most challenging classes in which you can be successful. Consider taking AP classes in your best subject areas.
- Participate in a career-interest activity with your counselor. Discuss results with parents, teachers, and peers.

Use Career Cruising (www.careercruising.com) at home and school to continue to investigate careers.

- Take the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) in October to prepare for college-admissions exams and identify your academic strengths and weaknesses.
- Attend college fairs in your area and plan campus visits to colleges and technical schools.
- If you have an after-school or summer job, consider saving part of your paycheck for college expenses.
- Stay involved in school and community activities and keep adding to your record of achievement. Save copies of report cards, awards and honors, and items for your portfolio.
- Continue to update your “My411” account at www.GAcollege411.org, and keep up to date on changes to financial aid and admissions requirement.
- Consider dual enrollment— Accel or Move On When Ready— to earn both high school and college credit next year. *See page 10 to learn more.*

Junior Year

- Continue to give your best efforts in the classroom. The rigorous classes you registered for in the spring will help you develop the knowledge and skills you'll need for college.

- Register to take the PSAT in October for a small fee (approximately \$15). The junior year PSAT is REQUIRED to qualify for National Merit Scholarship competition and Georgia’s Governor’s Honors Program.
- Continue to use websites like *www.careercruising.com* to research careers. See sections throughout this booklet for more great online resources.
- Continue to update your “My411” account at *www.GAcollege411.org*, and keep up to date on changes to financial aid and admissions requirement.
- Read your Junior Newsletter and attend college fairs. Request information from colleges that interest you. Look for scholarship opportunities open to juniors. Consider visiting colleges with your family during breaks from school.
- Try out the FAFSA4caster— an online tool that allows you to get an early estimate of your federal aid eligibility. You’ll find it at *www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov*.
- Register for and take the SAT and/or ACT (college-admissions exams) in the winter and spring of this year if you plan to go to college. Take one or both of the tests again in June if you need or want to raise your scores.
- Meet with your counselor to complete the Junior Review of your status toward graduation and to discuss your plans for postsecondary education or training after high school.
- Stay involved in extracurricular activities. Apply for leadership positions and add those to your record of achievement.
- Register for NCAA Clearinghouse if you want to be a college athlete at a Division I or Division II school.
- Begin the application process for a military academy appointment, if interested. In the fall, request a recommendation from your U.S. senator or representative.
- Use your summer wisely— work, volunteer, or take a summer course.
- Continue adding to your college savings.
- Write some of those college application essays during the summer before your senior year. Collect writing samples and assemble portfolios or make audition tapes.
- Stay involved in extracurricular activities and pursue leadership opportunities.
- Attend Application for Graduation session with your counselor to confirm eligibility for on-time graduation and coursework still needed.
- Continue to update your “My411” account at *www.GAcollege411.org*, and keep up to date on changes to financial aid and admissions requirement.
- Retake SAT or ACT in fall. If attending a technical or two-year college, ask when you should take the COMPASS Test for class placement.
- Read your Senior Newsletter, attend college fairs as you narrow your choices, and familiarize yourself with financial aid information. During the summer before and fall of your senior year, make contacts with your top-choice schools to show your level of interest.
- Know the difference between early action, early decision, and other admissions programs with early fall deadlines. If you feel strongly about a particular school, talk to your counselor and consider whether one of these admission programs is right for you. Meet all deadlines.
- For regular admission, select colleges or postsecondary schools and apply for admission in the fall. Some honors programs require separate applications or earlier deadlines. Meet all deadlines to ensure that your applications will be considered.
- Use the record of achievement you’ve been updating to help you fill out your college applications. Your teachers, counselor, and coaches also may find this information to be helpful as they write recommendations for you.
- Request letters of recommendation and transcripts well in advance of deadlines. Provide stamped and addressed envelopes to your teachers, counselors, and coaches who are writing recommendations for colleges and scholarships.
- Apply for scholarships and keep an eye on deadlines. Many are due in early spring, but some are due in the fall of your senior year.
- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form as soon as possible after January 1. Be aware of financial aid deadlines for schools in which you are interested. FAFSA or the HOPE Scholarship and Grant Application is required for a student to be eligible for postsecondary tuition, books, and fees under HOPE at eligible Georgia schools.
- If applicable, complete the NCAA eligibility process, including sending final transcript.

Senior Year

- Don’t let up! Maintain an academically rigorous course of study. Colleges look at your senior schedule during the application process and may take back an offer of admissions if your grades slip second semester.