



There is a lot of terminology that colleges and universities use which can be overwhelming. This list of terms will help youth and providers navigate the college research journey.

- **Academic Advisor** - professional who provides guidance and support to students regarding their academics and goals. They assist with academic planning, course selection and major and career exploration. This is similar to a guidance counselor.
- **Associate's Degree** - undergraduate academic degree program generally awarded by a community college or junior college upon completion of a 2-year program.
- **Bachelor's Degree** - undergraduate academic degree program awarded by a college or university upon completion of a program of study lasting four years. It is considered the first level of education and is a common requirement for many entry-level professional positions.
- **CSS Profile** - College Scholarship Service Profile is an application that many colleges and universities use to award non-federal financial aid. Many colleges and universities require this as part of their financial aid application process. It is administered online through the College Board's website. There may be a fee associated based on family income level.
- **College** - the general term used to describe post-secondary education study. Colleges often have smaller and more specialized programs of study and limited opportunities in comparison to larger universities.
- **Commencement** - a term for graduation.
- **Cost of Attendance** - includes tuition and fees as well as other expenses such as room and board, textbooks, supplies, transportation, and personal expenses. This is an estimate of the total amount students expect to pay for one academic year.
- **Early Action** - non-binding early admission program. If a student is accepted under early action they are not obligated to attend and can choose other offers of admission.
- **Early Decision** - binding early admission program. If a student is accepted under early decision, they are committed to attending that institution and must withdraw all other college applications.
- **FAFSA** - the Free Application for Federal Student Aid is used to determine eligibility for federal and state financial aid.
- **Federal Student Aid** - financial aid from the federal government used to help pay for your college education. This includes work-study, grants, and loans.
- **Federal Work-Study** - funding from the government that is earned through an on-campus job.
- **FERPA - Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.** Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. As a college student, you have more rights and you will need to sign a waiver for your caregivers to have access to your record.
- **Financial Aid** - the various types of funding provided to students to help them pay for their education expenses. This includes federal student aid, federal work-study, grants, loans, and scholarships. The amount and types of aid will vary from student to student and from year to year and from college/university to college/university.
- **First-generation Student**- first in the family to graduate from a 4-year institution. Every college/university may define it slightly differently.
- **Grants** - Need-based award that does not need to be repaid; grants can come from the college/university, state government, and the federal government.



- **Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs)** - a designation given to colleges and universities in the US that have a high enrollment of Hispanic students. Institutions must meet certain criteria to qualify including full-time enrollment of at least 25% Hispanic students.
- **Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)** - institutions of higher education in the US established during the period of segregation, when African Americans were largely excluded from mainstream institutions. The primary mission is to provide high-quality education to African American students.
- **Liberal Arts** - emphasize a broad-based education in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, focusing on critical thinking, communication skills, and interdisciplinary learning.
- **Loan** - funds that are borrowed and must be repaid with interest.
- **Major** - primary area of study that a student chooses to focus on during their degree program. Completing the requirements for a major is necessary to earn a degree in a specific field. Having a major is required.
- **Master's Degree** - graduate-level academic degree typically awarded by colleges and universities upon completion of a program of study that usually requires anywhere from one to three years of full-time study beyond a bachelor's degree.
- **Minor** - a secondary area of academic focus that may complement the major but requires fewer credits to complete. This is in addition to a major and allows students to explore interests outside of their primary field. Having a minor is optional.
- **Prerequisite** - a condition that has to be met before you can enroll in a course.
- **Private Institution** - funded by tuition, fees, donations, and other private sources. They do not receive direct government funding, except federal financial aid for students.
- **Public Institution** - funded by the government, typically at the state level. They receive funding from taxpayer dollars and may also generate revenue from tuition, fees, donations, and research grants. Public colleges are often part of a state university system or network.
- **Regular Decision** - standard admissions process used for accepting students. Unlike early decision and early action, regular decision follows a more traditional timeline.
- **Rolling Admissions** - when applications are evaluated, and admissions decisions are made on an ongoing basis as applications are received.
- **Room and Board** - also referred to as Housing and Meals, the cost of housing and meals for students who live in campus sponsored housing.
- **Scholarships** - merit- or need-based award to support a student's education that does not need to be repaid.
- **Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs)** - institutions of higher education that are primarily located on or near Native American reservations in the US.
- **Tuition and Fees** - the costs associated with attending college or university. Tuition is the amount charged by colleges and universities for instruction and academic services. Fees are additional charges to cover specific services, facilities, or administrative costs such as student services fees, activity fees, and lab fees.
- **University** - generally are larger and more comprehensive institutions compared to colleges. Often offer more programs, research opportunities, faculty, and campus life options.