
Giving It a College Try

by Janet Thomas
Associate Editor

Surprise! The ol' college try starts long before you get to college. All of those choices on the horizon may seem distant, but it's an optical illusion. They're lots closer than you think.

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Kevin* always planned on continuing his education at a university. He knew he could make good grades if he studied hard, but in ninth grade he was having too much fun with his friends to get all his assignments turned in. His grades were low, embarrassingly low, but he thought he would just have to do well the next three years to make up.

Kevin decided that to make sure he got good grades, he would take the easiest classes he could in high school. His sophomore year he coasted through with as many elective classes as he was allowed and was happy with his Bs and Cs.

By his junior year, things were getting serious. Graduation was less than two years away. He worked hard that year, but he decided he didn't have time for seminary and dropped out.

Then Kevin decided to postpone taking his ACT test until the beginning of his senior year. He didn't feel really up-to-speed after being out of school all summer, but he hoped he did well enough on the test to meet the university's requirements.

Kevin got everything together on his application to mail to the university admissions office. He knew when the deadline was, so he didn't worry about getting it in early. He mailed his application two days before the deadline and assumed the mail would get it there on time.

Kevin was turned down for admission to the school he wanted to attend. He made several big mistakes that seriously hurt his chances. Here's what Kevin should have done differently:

Take charge early. What many students like Kevin don't realize is that all *four* years of high school count in their cumulative grade point average. Because Kevin's ninth grade year was in a junior high, he thought he could have a good time, not do the work required, and that somehow it wouldn't matter. It matters.

Take college prep classes. Kevin thought that he could help his grade point by getting good grades in less demanding classes. Many universities are paying particular attention to the type of classes students chose to take in high school. For example, BYU adjusts a student's high school GPA to give more weight to the college prep classes. "We want students to take a more rigorous program in high school," said Erland Peterson, dean of

admissions and records at BYU. “We go through a process of recalculating or adjusting the grades according to the difficulty of the course.” Classes that are considered as college preparatory include advanced mathematics, laboratory sciences, history, English, literature and writing, and foreign language.

Take entrance exams early. If the school you plan to attend requires an ACT score, you may want to take the test at the end of your junior year. “We recommend that a student take the ACT test in April or June of their junior year of high school,” said Brother Peterson. “At the end of the school year, a student is more familiar with the curriculum. Also testing skills are a little better at the end of an academic year than after a three-month vacation.”

Taking the test early also gives a student the chance to take it again if the results are not as good as they should be. Some students freeze up in an unfamiliar testing situation.

Stay ahead of the deadline. Kevin made the mistake of waiting until the deadline to get his application in. It is important to make sure your application is complete and mailed in early. This is especially important if there is an enrollment ceiling on the school you are interested in.

“We encourage students,” said Jeff Tanner, associate dean of admissions and records at BYU, “to apply as early in their senior year as possible. If the application is not complete and in our office by the deadline, it is shuffled into the late pile and is not considered in the first group. If our freshman class is filled out of the first group, the late applications may not be considered.”

Take seminary. If you are considering attending a Church-owned university or college, both BYU and Ricks are now giving added attention to students who have taken seminary. Both admissions offices are looking at how many years of seminary an applicant has completed. It does not matter if the seminary classes are early morning, release time, or home study. And if you’re not going to attend an LDS school, seminary is still a good preparation for institute, which should definitely be a part of your college plans.

Kevin decided to stay at home and attend a community college before going on his mission. He worked hard and earned nearly straight A’s his freshman year at his community college. Earning such a good grade point while doing college level work will make it possible for him to be considered as a transfer student to the university he wants to attend following his mission. But Kevin wishes he hadn’t had to find out the hard way what he needed to do to get into the school of his choice.

It’s all a matter of take and give.

1. Take all of the advanced placement and college prep classes you can handle. Then give you best effort.

2. Take entrance tests in you junior year. You'll give yourself time to repeat them if you don't do well.
3. Above all, take seminary. It'll give you an education for eternity.

LDS Institute and LDSSA

You don't have to attend a Church-owned college or university to be fully involved in taking religion classes or participating in LDS social activities. There are 1,273 LDS institutes of religion organized in conjunction with 1,711 colleges and universities in 62 countries throughout the world. LDS institute is a great place to sign up for college-level religion classes and to get involved in the Latter-day Saint Student Association (LDSSA).

At schools with many LDS students, separate student wards are organized, giving students a chance to serve in many different ward callings. Or local wards willingly welcome students into their Young Adult programs.

Find out about the institute or LDSSA. Institutes are listed in the telephone books under the name of the Church along with other stake and ward listings in the college area. Also the stake nearest the school will have a representative assigned to help provide students with information about classes and activities available to LDS students. The schools themselves will often have information about institute or LDSSA.

Ask your seminary teacher. Your seminary teachers will have access to a directory of institutes. They may also have information about institute and LDSSA and can tell you more about what you can expect.

Getting involved in institute can be one of the most rewarding things you do during your college years.

For More Information

Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, is a four-year university. During the past few years, the grade point average and ACT test score requirements have become more stringent for admission to BYU. For more information about what you can do in high school to prepare to apply to BYU, write to Admissions, A-185 ASB, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602, and ask for a copy of their brochure "Come Prepared."

Ricks College, a two-year junior college, has an open admissions policy (anyone may apply). They have several programs such as a summer option that helps a student make the transition to college-level work. Ricks also offers career counseling and tutoring in nearly every class to help students raise their skill levels. Write to Ricks for their View booklet. Admissions, Administration 186, Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho 83460-4104.

BYU—Hawaii is a four-year university that encourages students from the Pacific islands and the Asian rim to attend. Applications from mainland high school students are not

encouraged. Application information is available by writing to Admissions, BYU—Hawaii, Laie, Hawaii 96762.

Other Options

College or university life is not the only path to post-high-school education, of course. Many high school graduates go on to further education at technical schools, art schools, vocational schools, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training. Depending on your career field and preferences, one of these programs may better suit your needs.

Counselors can offer suggestions about how best to prepare for your future. Whatever path you choose, give sincere and prayerful consideration to what you want to do with your life, and look for opportunities to serve others while doing something you honestly enjoy.

Gospel topics: education, institute, seminary

[illustrations] Illustrated by Scott Snow

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