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OKLAHOMA'S OFFICIAL COLLEGE PLANNING WEB SITE

OKcollegestart.org is Oklahoma's official Web site for college planning. The comprehensive site features information and tools in both English and Spanish that can help make planning, applying and paying for college easier for students and their families.

OKcollegestart.org also features a Counselor Center where counselors can monitor student progress through career exploration, college selection, financial aid and completion of college admission applications.

THE COUNSELOR CENTER ON OKcollegestart.org

The Counselor Center on **OKcollegestart.org** is where counselors can communicate with students through e-mail and chat sessions about their plans for college. Counselors can work with students individually or in targeted groups based on grade level, interests or other profile elements.

Counselors can also combine their calendars with students and their intended colleges and post reminders about upcoming events and deadlines to help keep students on track to meet their individual goals. The site also gives counselors the ability to generate reports on student progress that help identify gaps in students' college plans, such as a missing required course, etc.

To participate in the Counselor Center, counselors must create an account with **OKcollegestart.org** and ask students for permission to access personal profile information. The account is password-protected and includes a free e-mail address to make communication with students easier.

OKcollegestart.org FOR STUDENTS

OKcollegestart.org gives students the opportunity to create an individual plan for college that includes secure records of academic progress, activities and achievements throughout high school. Students have the option of simply browsing the site for planning for college information or creating an account that is protected with a username and password for access to enhanced features, like applying to college online and online advisement. All user registrations come with a free e-mail address that can be used for communicating with counselors or potential colleges.

OKcollegestart.org FEATURES THE FOLLOWING TOOLS FOR STUDENTS

PLAN FOR COLLEGE

Students can use the Plan for College application to match their high school courses to entrance requirements at Oklahoma's colleges and universities. This section features a Planner Timeline to help students identify what they should be doing each year to prepare for college.

The High School Planner provides a place for students to create portfolios and enter their high school courses, grades, activities, awards, jobs, etc. If students grant permission, specified counselors can also review and print this information for distribution to scholarship and award programs, referral letters, etc.

EXPLORE COLLEGES

With the Explore Colleges feature, students can research and identify Oklahoma college and university campuses that meet their needs. Specifically, students can:

- Click on Campus Tours and get facts about Oklahoma colleges all in one place.
- Search for campuses that match their criteria using the Undergraduate Student-Campus Matching Assistant.
- View and compare campus attributes side-by-side with the Undergraduate Comparative View.
- Use Distance Search to view how near or far Oklahoma colleges and universities are from home.

EXPLORE CAREERS

Students can use the Explore Careers feature to find out how their unique attributes match up with certain occupations.

With Explore Careers, students can:

- Review General Career Information with a quick overview of the challenges and opportunities students face in choosing a career.
- Assess values, interests and personalities in relation to occupations with Career Self-Assessment and see what the results indicate as good choices with the Student-Career Matching Assistant.
- View lists of different careers.
- Check out additional occupational information with Links to Other Career Resources.
- Track and store results of career explorations with My Careers.

PAYING FOR COLLEGE

Students should review the Paying for College section for information about current college costs and any additional expenses to consider when planning for college. This feature helps students and parents learn about finding and applying for the four major types of financial aid: grants, loans, scholarships and work-study.

Students can also begin a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) with **OKcollegestart.org**. Students who have created an **OKcollegestart.org** account and who complete the FAFSA through **OKcollegestart.org** can automatically transfer information to the application form. Students will need to obtain a PIN from the U.S. Department of Education prior to completing the FAFSA. Just follow the link provided on the site.

With the financial aid resources in this section, students can find out how to make paying for college a little easier. Specifically:

- Students can apply for the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship program through an online application or complete and print the application for mailing.
- Students can view a list of eligibility criteria for each loan, grant and scholarship offered by the state of Oklahoma.
- Determine an estimate of the amount students are expected to pay (Expected Family Contribution or EFC) toward college costs.
- Use the EFC and cost of attendance to estimate eligibility for need-based financial aid, such as grants.
- Use a calculator to determine reasonable borrowing amounts based on school costs and career-earning power with potential areas of study.
- Download and print financial aid brochures and guides.

TEST PREP

With the Test Prep feature, students will find helpful test-taking tips and strategies for the ACT and SAT. Students can complete practice tests that adapt to the test taker's skill level and provides instant feedback. Registered users can even invite a study coach who will be provided with progress updates. Students can also enter the date they are planning to take the ACT or SAT to create a personalized plan of study that includes e-mails and reminder prompts about the upcoming test.

APPLICATIONS AND TRANSCRIPTS

The Applications and Transcripts feature gives students the opportunity to apply online to colleges and universities in Oklahoma. Students who have created profiles with academic, extracurricular activity and achievement information can use their personal profiles to automatically fill in the application forms without having to type the same information for each application.

In addition, students are able to request high school transcripts and submit them with online college admission applications at some colleges and universities.

MY INFO

With the My Info section of **OKcollegestart.org**, students can create a personalized portfolio protected by a username and password. The My Info section includes the following applications:

My Profile – Students can enter and store academic, activity and achievement information. It is important that students keep this information up-to-date because it can be used to automatically fill in certain areas of online scholarship and college admission forms available on **OKcollegestart.org**.

My Colleges – Students can explore colleges online and select campuses to add to their My Info portfolios. This allows students and counselors to keep track of whether student coursework is matching up with required admission standards for different

colleges and universities. Students may add or delete colleges from this list at any time.

My Careers – Once students have completed the Career Self-Assessment and Student-Career Matching Assistant, any careers or majors that have met their specifications can be stored and accessed here for reference at any time.

My Applications – Once students begin college admission applications, My Info will track where they stopped entering information and will link them to all applications in progress. It will also provide dates and confirmation numbers of their submitted applications so students can keep track of when and where they applied.

My Recruiter – Students can select the schools to which they want to send their My Profile information and receive information about programs of study, financial aid and other details from the campuses.

My E-mail – Students can access a free **OKcollegestart.org** e-mail account that can be used for college planning purposes, such as communicating with a school counselor or college.

My Calendar – The calendar displays all upcoming events at student-specified colleges from individual profiles. The calendar can also display upcoming local events added by the selected counselor. Students can also add their own events and reminders.

OKcollegestart.org FOR PARENTS

The Information for Parents section provides detailed information about financial aid, paying for college, Oklahoma's Promise and saving for college. The site encourages parents to be involved in the planning-for-college process with their child. Specifically, the parent resources section includes:

- General financial aid information where parents can learn more about scholarships, loans and other financial aid that may be available for students.
- State scholarship program information, including Oklahoma's Promise requirements.
- Savings program details, including information about the Oklahoma College Savings Plan, which can be used to save money for college and reduce taxes.

For more information on **OKcollegestart.org**, e-mail richardson@osrhe.edu or call 405.225.9184.

For information on OKcollegestart.org counselor training, visit **www.okhighered.org/gearup/workshops-OKcollegestart.shtml** or call 405.225.9465 or 800.858.1840.