

PrepTalk™

Advice for Montgomery County Parents and Students on College Preparation • Fall 2001

Make PrepTalk Your Program

The print version of PrepTalk is achieving such success, we're bringing it to television. The television version, which airs on the cable channels for Montgomery College and Montgomery County Public Schools, provides another outlet for sharing valuable information on the college preparation process. Consult the MCPS and MC Web sites and cable channel listings for viewing times.

PrepTalk, a joint service of Montgomery County Public Schools and Montgomery College, provides you with information about financial aid, testing, study skills, time management, and the college planning process.

Joint Venture

Dr. Jerry Weast, superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools, and Dr. Charlene Nunley, president of Montgomery College, discuss their common goals for college success. See page 3.

SuccessTalk

Bright ideas and techniques for better learning and study skills and personal growth.



MoneyTalk

Useful information about the college financial aid process and tips for applying for aid.



TestTalk

What to expect from the various college-prep tests and what scores mean.



The Inside Scoop...

Look for these segments throughout this newsletter to find helpful information for getting ready for college. From taking tests, planning academic schedules, and improving study skills, to paying for college and planning for key deadlines—you'll find it all here.

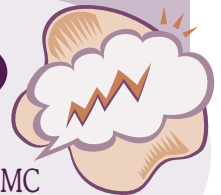
TickTalk

Deadlines for high school testing and the college planning process.



StraightTalk

Quotes and anecdotes from current MC students who graduated from MCPS high schools.



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A service of the Montgomery College-Montgomery County Public Schools Partnership

PrepTalk

The Top 10 Must Do's on a College Visit



Our mission during college visits is simple: You want to find out as much as you can about what it is like to be a student. Here are our Top 10 Must Do's to help you achieve this goal:

Talk to as many students as you can

If you aren't a social butterfly, now is the time to become one. Talk to as many students as you can to give yourself the most complete picture of what it's like to be a student there.

Talk to an admissions officer or financial aid officer

Set up an interview. Be prepared with questions, and if you are asking for money from a financial aid officer, have documents to support your case.

Go to a lecture or two, especially one in areas that interest you

There's no better way to sample the faculty than to see them in action (if school policy permits). Try to select a class that you would take as a fresh-

If you are unable to take a tour, walk the campus. Go inside buildings and libraries.

man. See if you are able to follow the general idea of the information presented. Ask if you can see the syllabus.

Eat the food

You may think this is trivial, but after having to eat it for four years, you won't regret making it a small consideration.

Sleep in the dorms or check them out

Find out what it's really like to live in a six- by nine-foot cell—we mean dorm. Check out the bathroom to see how many people you will be fighting with to use the showers. Ask students how difficult it is to get housing off campus.

Go to a party, athletic event, or other extracurricular event

You will not spend all of your waking hours studying. That's where extracurricular activities, athletic events, parties, and socializing come in. You will find that college offers something for everyone, and that you will have one of the best times in your life because of it!

Go to a meeting or speak with an officer or member of a club that interests you

Colleges have clubs for almost any interest you could possibly have. They usually include organizations for the environment, politics, religion, arts, culture, and more. Try to meet with students who participate in activities you are interested in.

Take a tour

Tours given by the colleges offer you a general overview of the campus and its history. If you are unable to take a tour, walk the campus. Go inside buildings and libraries.

Check out facilities you are likely to use

These might include the gym, library, student center, swimming pool, track, dance studio, athletic court, music practice rooms, computer center, etc.

Explore the community

Notice the shops and services, public transportation, and entertainment. Eat at a restaurant. Buy a t-shirt. Go to a dance club.

Source: Gen and Kelly Tanabe, authors of *Get Into Any College*, www.supercollege.com

PrepTalk™

A newsletter for Montgomery County parents and high school students on preparing for college. Produced in partnership by Montgomery County Public Schools and Montgomery College. Please direct queries to:

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Study with a Buddy

Set up a "buddy system" with a friend (or several friends) to facilitate note-taking and studying for tests. Additionally, be sure to have the names and phone numbers of a couple of students in each class to call upon if you miss a class.

Source: Quince Orchard High School Guidance Department Web site



Preparing Students for the Next Level

A Note from the Superintendent of Schools and the Montgomery College President

In its Winter 2001 issue, “Youth at the Crossroads: Facing High School and Beyond,” The Education Trust, an independent nonprofit organization working for the academic achievement of all students at all levels, kindergarten through college, reveals two important conclusions:

First, to gain solid footing in the economy of the 21st century, students will need at least some postsecondary education. We can no longer think of high school as a stopping point in the educational process.

Second, to have any chance of success in postsecondary education—or, for that matter, in the world of work—high school students must regularly engage in rigorous, intellectually challenging work during their secondary school years.

With these conclusions as a backdrop, we are delighted to bring you this third edition of *PrepTalk*, a joint publication of the Montgomery College-Montgomery County Public Schools Partnership, which aims to improve our students’ readiness for the rigors of college and life beyond high school.

Together, we are focusing our joint efforts in four main areas:

Identification and monitoring

We start by identifying the students and the areas of learning most in need of attention. An example of this came last fall when we introduced the offering of the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT™) to all 10th grade students.

Acceleration and support

Once we’ve identified those students and areas needing more attention, we’ll dedicate additional staff and resources, as appropriate, to help our students accelerate the learning process. We must ensure that our students are being adequately challenged and are taking the right courses to be prepared for college-level work.

Professional development

Teacher and staff training is a critical component of our success. In this arena, we are both enhancing our resources and combining some of our efforts in professional development.

Parent and community outreach

The more you—the parents and students—know about what it will take to be prepared for college, the better you, and all of us, will succeed in this important mission.

Dr. Jerry D. West, Superintendent
Montgomery County Public Schools

Dr. Charlene R. Nunley, President
Montgomery College

TickTalk

Mark Your SAT® Date



- Upcoming SAT® test dates:
January 26 (SAT® I and SAT® II)
March 16 (SAT® I only)
- SAT® registration deadlines:
December 21 (SAT® I and SAT® II)
February 8 (SAT® I only)

Applications are available at your high school career center or online.

Source: The College Board Web site, www.collegeboard.com

New Jobs in the Workplace Require Greater Education and Skill

From “Youth at the Crossroads: Facing High School and Beyond,” *Thinking K-16*, Winter 2001, published by the the Education Trust:

- 70% of the 30 fastest-growing jobs will require an education beyond high school.
- 40% of all new jobs will require at least an associate’s degree.
- Despite the surge in college enrollment, college-level job openings between 1990–2008 will nearly equal college-educated entrants to the workforce.

Source: *Thinking K-16*, Winter 2001
The Education Trust, www.edtrust.org

LD Students Make the Grade in College

Maegan has a learning disability, but when she enrolled at Montgomery College, she didn't tell anyone. "I had B's and C's in high school, so I thought I was ready for college," she said. "I hoped if I ignored my learning disability, it would go away."

But it didn't go away, and Maegan failed her first English class. When she failed a second time, she still couldn't write in complete sentences, she didn't know how to organize her ideas, and she procrastinated, often starting papers the night before they were due.

Her English professor suggested she enroll in Montgomery College's College Access Program (CAP). CAP is an intensive, two-semester program that helps students with

"I hoped if I ignored my disability, it would go away."

learning disabilities master the English, reading, and writing skills necessary to succeed in credit courses, earn an associate's degree, and transfer to four-year institutions.

CAP's trained staff members taught Maegan to build her skills and helped her learn coping strategies.

After completing hours of homework, attending weekly tutoring sessions, finishing computer exercises, and limiting her working hours, Maegan's reading speed and comprehension scores increased. When she returned to her credit English

class, Maegan passed the English competency test on the first try—and earned a B in the course.

CAP is open to students who have: a diagnosed specific learning disability; average or above-average intelligence; reading comprehension of at least sixth grade; motivation to commit the time and effort necessary to complete the program; and absence of an emotional or behavioral disorder as the primary disability.

For more information on CAP, call Disability Support Services at 301-279-5058 or visit MC's Web site at: www.montgomerycollege.org **PT**

MoneyTalk

Scholarship for LD Students



The National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) established the Anne Ford Scholarship awarding \$10,000 to a graduating high school student with learning disabilities who plans to pursue a college degree. The ideal candidate has worked around his or her learning differences to achieve full academic potential. For information, visit NCLD's Web site at www.ld.org

Source: www.ld.org.

Tips for College Preparation for LD Students

- Be sure to apply for more time to finish the SAT®. If you have a documented learning disability, you may be able to get more time to complete the test.
- Make sure the college has an extensive, supportive learning disabilities office. Colleges are mandated by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" for students with learning disabilities—notetakers, extra time on exams, etc.
- Inquire about extra fees for support services. Schools that go beyond what the law mandates can charge extra for services.
- Understand what your specific disability is. Colleges require documentation to qualify students for learning disability services, including psychological, achievement, and intelligence tests conducted by a psychologist in the past three years, describing in detail the disability, along with appropriate remedies and accommodations.
- Look for a program that teaches students how to work around their learning disability—not just accommodate it.
- Visit the college's office of learning disabilities before applying, or call the program's administrators. Talk to students enrolled in the program.
- Take responsibility for yourself. Visit the college's learning disabilities office after you've enrolled to discuss the help and accommodations you will need.
- Consider a reduced course load the first couple of semesters.

Source: www.ldonline.org

MoneyTalk

What's FAFSA?

All colleges use the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to determine your eligibility for federal financial aid. The FAFSA can not be transmitted or submitted until January 1, 2002, for the 2002-03 academic year.



Source: Montgomery College Financial Aid

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FAFSA Arrives in November

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is available in your high school's career center usually by Thanksgiving.



Source: Springbrook High School Guidance Department and Career Center Web site

Score Big on College Goal Sunday

Hundreds of counselors and financial aid professionals—and thousands of MCPS students—will take part in College Goal Sunday, a program designed to make higher education a reality and alleviate the financial burden for many. The first-ever program will be held at Wheaton High School on Sunday, February 10, 2002, at 2 p.m.

College Goal Sunday is a charitable collaboration sponsored by the Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, Inc. (ASFAA) in cooperation with the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

College Goal Sunday is designed to help college-bound students receive free professional assistance in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA),

the financial aid form required by colleges and universities.

Financial aid professionals, primarily from colleges and universities, will help students and their families complete the FAFSA form and learn more about applying for college financial aid.

Spanish speaking-professionals will assist families who need assistance; if possible, professionals conversant in other languages may be available.

The College Goal Sunday program is sponsored through grants from The Lumina Foundation for Education and USA Funds, two Indiana-based nonprofits with a particular interest in higher education. Comcast is the media sponsor for the event. For information, visit www.usafunds.com or www.luminafoundation.org. **PT**

Q&A: Self-Help or Gift Aid—What's Best?

How do I know which financial aid package is the best deal?

Surprisingly, it's not always the package that offers the largest amount of money. The type of aid offered can be critical.

How much of the award is gift aid (grants and scholarships)? That's free money, and the best aid package will contain a large percentage of it.

How much of the award is self-help aid (student loans and employment)? Self-help aid has strings

attached—either repayment of the loan or campus employment throughout the semester. Self-help isn't a bad deal, but many first-year college students want to avoid accumulating loan debt until later in their academic careers.

If one school is offering to cover your financial need with a substantial amount of gift aid, it may be a better choice than the schools that offer more money overall, but a higher percentage of self-help aid. **PT**

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Let's Make a Deal

Although some colleges and universities refuse to make deals, you can, in some cases, negotiate your financial aid award. If a student is gifted in an area that is important to the school, the school might take a second look at the award. Also, students whose families experienced a drastic reduction in their income (e.g., high medical bills, job loss) may ask the financial aid office to recalculate their financial need.



Source: Montgomery College Financial Aid

Q&A: Should I Apply to a Safety School?

How many colleges should I apply to and how many of those should be safety schools?

After beginning with a long list of possibilities during junior year, I would research, visit schools, and reduce that list to four to six colleges by late summer. Although some

It is better to spend your time preparing several thoughtful applications...

college applications are short, one- to four-page forms, many others are lengthy applications requiring several essays and short answers. Preparing an applica-

tion worthy of you takes a great deal of time. It is better to spend your time preparing several thoughtful applications that represent you rather than throw together 12 poorly done ones.

I define a safety school as a college that you feel is a good match for you in terms of size, location, and majors offered, as well as one to which you are 99 percent certain you will be admitted. It is also one that is acceptable to your parents and fits within their budget. If all of these criteria are met, one safety school may be sufficient.

Source: usnews.com/usnews/edu
Missy Alford Sanchez is the director of college counseling at Woodward Academy in Atlanta. ©U.S. News & World Report

StraightTalk

How did high school prepare you for college?

“Seneca Valley was a good school. I learned a lot there that has helped me at Montgomery College. College is a lot harder than I expected, but I am doing well and getting decent grades.”

Darius

Seneca Valley High School Graduate

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Postmark the Date

The priority deadline for Maryland State grants and scholarships is March 1. Your FAFSA must be transmitted or postmarked no later than March 1.

Source: Montgomery College Financial Aid

SuccessTalk

Notes=Success

Keep your notes from class discussions, presentations, and readings as study aids for tests and quizzes. These notes should be identified by date and, when possible, by objective. If these notes are removed from their notebooks before the end of the semester, they should be stored for use at the end of the semester (i.e., for the final exam).

Source: Quince Orchard High School Guidance Department Web site

It's Okay to Be Sloppy—But Do It on the Copy

Before you begin filling out your college applications, make a photocopy of each application to use as your rough draft. Practice on the photocopy until you are satisfied. Copy the information from the rough draft to the original application. Type or print legibly in black ink on the application.

If your information exceeds the allotted space of any section of the application, prepare an

identical section on a blank sheet of paper and mark it as Attachment A. Print or type “See Attachment A” in the appropriate section on the original college application. Enclose the attachment(s) in your application. Make sure each piece of paper you attach includes your name and social security number on the top.

Source: Springbrook High School Guidance Department and Career Center Web site

Reading to Learn



ou can make the most of your reading time with these useful hints:

Organize your thoughts before you start

- What do you already know about the topic? Where did you get the information?
- What do you think the text will be about?
- What do you want to learn from your reading?

While you read, think about these things:

- Are there unfamiliar words in the reading? Write them down and try to figure out the meaning from the context. Then look the words up in the dictionary and read the sentence again to be sure you understand. Watch to see if the new words show up again in the reading.



- How can you tell if some parts of the text are more important than others?
- Does the new information change your thoughts about what you knew before?

After you've finished reading, think about what you've read and learned

- What were the main ideas?
- What were the most important new words you learned?
- What else would you like to know about the topic? How could you find out more?

Discuss a new idea with your parents or friends, or write down your thoughts.

Source: *Teaching Content Reading and Writing* by Martha Ruddell

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Maryland, My Maryland



Always list at least one Maryland college on your FAFSA so you can be awarded state aid.

Source: Montgomery College Financial Aid

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Deadlines Matter



Financial aid application deadlines vary from school to school. Check with the schools you are applying to and find out their priority date. Missing a priority deadline can mean less grant aid and more loans.

Source: Montgomery College Financial Aid

SuccessTalk

A Resume Paves the Way



When filling out your college application, prepare a resume or summary of your high school experience. Include honor roll, awards, activities—both in and out of school, leadership positions held, and community service (number of hours and a description of what and where you performed your service). If you had paying jobs, list your employer dates of employment, and the number of hours worked.

Source: Springbrook High School Guidance Department and Career Center Web site

StraightTalk

How did high school prepare you for college?



"This is my first semester. [Montgomery College] is very challenging. I took some time off so I am trying to get used to things. It feels no different than high school—almost like a continuation of it."

Jennifer

Seneca Valley High School Graduate

"I think Rockville High School definitely prepared me. My teachers there were great!"

Karen

Rockville High School Graduate

"I wish I would have had more challenges in high school. Then I would have been more prepared."

Shante

Seneca Valley High School Graduate

"I should have taken advantage of harder classes in high school—especially history and math."

Kyle

Damascus High School Graduate

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Recommended Program of Study for College

As students plan their high school classes, their focus should be on meeting graduation requirements, as well as college admission requirements. The following courses are highly recommended for college-bound students.

English

Four years required for a Maryland high school diploma. Focus on:

- Rules of grammar
- Communication and problem-solving skills
- Writing techniques
- Library research skills

Mathematics

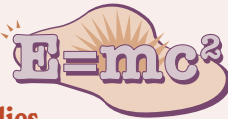
Four years required, including algebra and geometry. College-bound students should also take:

- Advanced algebra
- Trigonometry
- Calculus

Science

Three years required. Recommend three years of lab sciences:

- Biology
- Chemistry
- Physics



Social Studies

Three years required.

- American history
- World history
- National, state, local government

Foreign Language

Minimum three years recommended.

Additional Requirements

Minimum one year required in each of the following course areas:

- Arts and Music
- Technology Education
- Physical Education

Minimum one semester required in:

- Health Education

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his publication provides information on what students should know to ensure their success beyond high school. We hope you'll find it useful and that you'll share your feedback.

Available in alternative format by contacting the MCPS Department of Communications, 301-279-3391 or TDD, 301-279-3323.

For copies of the two previous issues of *PrepTalk*, call Elena Saenz-Welch at 301-279-5150 or Charla Levine at 301-279-3370 or e-mail partnership@mc.cc.md.us.

Montgomery County Public Schools
Montgomery College
Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Institutions 11/01

StraightTalk

How did high school prepare you for college?



"I probably would have been more prepared [for college] if I had concentrated on my classes rather than my social life."

Jason

Damascus High School Graduate

"High school prepared me well. The only thing I was not prepared for is trying to find time for schoolwork between classes and my job."

Darien

Richard Montgomery High School Graduate

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