

Decoding College: A Glossary

As your KIPPster begins the college application process, the sheer number of new words and unfamiliar terms you hear can feel overwhelming. In this glossary, we've organized a few of the words you may hear and how they relate to your KIPPster's experience.

Understanding Wish Lists

At KIPP, we ask students to create a "Smart Wish List" of schools they will apply to. Research tells us that a healthy mix of schools will give them more options on decisions day. We recommend a wish list of 9 or more schools.

- **Wish List:** The list of schools where a student intends to apply. We recommend that KIPPsters build a wish list with 9 schools, distributed across "likely, target, and reach" schools. Students build a wish list in their junior year and finalize in their senior year. The goal is that students will apply to every college on their wish list.
- **Likely School:** A college where, based on the average GPA and test scores of accepted students, you have a high likelihood of being admitted.
- **Target school:** A college where, based on the average GPA and test scores of accepted students, students have a 50-80% chance of being admitted.
- **Reach School:** A college where admission might be a stretch for you, based on the average GPA and test scores of accepted students and the college's overall admission requirements.
- **Odds of Admission:** How we calculate the likelihood that a KIPPster will be accepted to a specific college or university based on their GPA and ACT scores and how many KIPPsters have been accepted in the past.

Types of Colleges

- **Associate degree:** Degree given upon completion of two years of full-time study or the equivalent. Most associate degrees are awarded by two-year colleges, although some four-year universities also offer associate degrees. Some associate degrees transfer to four-year universities; others are for career preparation.
- **Bachelor's degree:** Degree given upon completion of four years of full-time study or the equivalent.
- **Certificate:** Granted by a vocational/technical school or proprietary/trade school upon completion of a program; usually requires less than two years of full-time study. Some public and private universities and community colleges offer certificates, too.
- **College:** An independent institution of higher learning offering courses of general study leading to associate, bachelor's or graduate level degree programs.
- **Community college:** Also known as a "two-year college," a community college grants associate degrees for transfer to four-year institutions or for career preparation. Community colleges usually offer flexible class schedules with smaller class sizes. They are known as open door institutions because performance standards (standardized test scores or combination of class rank and grade-point average) are not required for admission.
- **Commuter college:** A college at which students live off-campus and travel to campus for classes.
- **Higher education center:** Institution with flexible admission standards that provides higher education opportunities to citizens in the areas surrounding the center. The center works with various colleges and universities to provide undergraduate and graduate courses and students can earn an associate, bachelor's or master's degree.
- **Independent colleges and universities:** Accredited colleges and universities that offer associate, bachelor's and/or graduate degrees in traditional subject areas. Private colleges and universities are not supported by state taxes and are not for profit. They receive the bulk of their revenues from tuition, donations and grants.
- **Liberal Arts University:** an institution that grants bachelor's degrees in arts and science fields, including humanities. A liberal arts university tends to have smaller class sizes that facilitate close interaction between faculty and students.
- **Private School:** Sometimes called "independent schools," these accredited colleges and universities offer associate, bachelor's and/or graduate degrees in traditional subject areas. They aren't supported by state taxes and are considered not-for-profit. The bulk of their revenue comes from tuition, donations and grants.

- **Proprietary/trade school:** A privately owned or out-of-state institution offering courses in Arkansas. This type of school prepares students for direct entry into an occupation or profession.
- **Regional university:** A university that offers bachelor's and master's degrees, and in some instances, associate and professional degrees. While regional universities focus primarily on instruction, they are also responsible for extension and public service, as well as some research. They tend to have mid-sized student populations and campuses.
- **Research university:** Also known as a "comprehensive university," a university that grants bachelor's, graduate and professional degrees and offers a wide variety of courses and degree programs. Along with instruction, research institutions also focus on research, extension and public service. Research universities usually have large student bodies and expansive campuses.
- **Residential college:** A college at which students may live on-campus in dormitories or apartments.
- **State (public) colleges and universities:** Colleges and universities that receive funding from state taxes to pay part of operating costs.
- **Technical branch:** Institution that has a special emphasis on education and training in technical fields. Some technical branches offer academic courses and programs, but not all institutions offer two-year programs that lead to an associate degree.
- **Technology center:** A school that prepares students to enter a specialized career, trade or vocation.
- **Two-year college:** An institution that grants associate degrees for transfer to four-year institutions or for career preparation. Two-year colleges usually offer flexible class schedules with smaller class sizes. They are known as open door institutions because performance standards (standardized test scores or combination of class rank and grade-point average) are not required for admission.
- **University:** A higher education institution that usually offers four-year degrees, as well as degrees beyond the baccalaureate level (graduate and professional degrees). They may also offer associate degrees.

Selecting Colleges

There are a lot of factors to weigh as your student decides where to apply. We tell students that their goal is to find their college "match." In other words, to find a college that's affordable, that fits their interest and personality, and that has a proven track record of graduating students on time.

- **Admission requirements:** Students wanting to attend a college or university must meet certain requirements to be considered for admission, such as achieving a specified ACT or SAT score, reaching a certain high school grade-point average and/or rank in class, taking specified high school courses, etc.
- **Average Financial Aid Package:** The average amount of money that our KIPPsters receive (in loans, grants, and scholarships) to attend a college or university.
- **Cost of attendance:** The estimated total cost of attending a college for one year. This amount includes tuition, fees, room and board, books, supplies and travel expenses. The amount of your federal aid can't be greater than your total cost of attendance.
- **Historic Graduation Rate:** The number of students who typically graduate within four or six years from the college. At KIPP, we also look at the historic graduation rate for students with backgrounds like our KIPPsters.
- **Retention Rate:** The percentage of students who return to a college for their sophomore year. An indicator of student satisfaction.
- **Student-Faculty Ratio:** The number of students at a college compared to the number of faculty. Some colleges see this as an indicator of class size and professor accessibility, but a lower ratio doesn't guarantee either. For a true indication of class size and professor accessibility, speak with students and professors at a college.
- **Unmet Need:** The amount of money, on average, that KIPPsters are responsible for paying to a college after financial aid. To calculate unmet need, we take the cost of attendance and subtract the amount of loans, grants, and scholarships that a student receives.

Applying to College

- **Advanced Placement (AP) courses:** Courses that allow students to take college-level coursework in high school. Many colleges and universities award college credit to students who successfully complete these courses and pass the corresponding AP exams.
- **Award Letter:** Official notification of the type and amount of financial aid a college is offering you.

- **Class rank:** Ranking of a student within a high school graduating class based upon his or her high school grade-point average.
- **Common/Universal Application:** Standardized application forms accepted by many colleges. After you fill out the Common or Universal application, you can send it to any college that accepts it as the institution's own application.
- **Early Action:** An early admission process for college. Students apply well ahead of priority deadlines and are typically notified by mid-December. Early action does not mean that a student must attend the college where they are accepted.
- **Early Decision:** When a student applies Early Decision, they apply well ahead of typical application deadlines to indicate that that school is their top choice. Unlike Early Action, students are typically expected to enroll in the college if accepted through Early Decision programs.
- **Full-time student:** An undergraduate student enrolled in at least 12 credit hours or a graduate student enrolled in at least 9 credit hours, or the equivalent, in one semester or academic term.
- **High school grade-point average (GPA):** Average of all grades earned in the ninth through 12th grades.
- **Major:** An academic subject area, such as economics or geology, in which students take many courses and choose to earn a degree.
- **Part-time student:** A student who is enrolled in a certain number of course credits or hours which are less than full-time. For an undergraduate student this is usually less than 12 credits or hours. For a graduate student, it is usually less than nine credits or hours.
- **Personal Statement:** Sometimes referred to as a college application essay. Personal statements are essays that give admissions officers insights into your character, personality and motivation.
- **Prerequisite:** A course which a student must take before enrolling in another (usually more challenging) course.
- **Semester:** Calendar system used by colleges and universities. Classes and grade reports are divided into two periods in the fall and spring, each lasting about 16 weeks and one period in the summer, usually lasting eight weeks.
- **Standardized test (ACT or SAT):** Test used by colleges and universities to evaluate applicants' academic skills and abilities. The standardized tests most widely used by colleges and universities are the ACT and SAT. Arkansas state colleges and universities rely primarily on the ACT.
- **Trimester:** Calendar system used primarily by the state's technical branches. Classes and grade reports are divided into three periods, each lasting about 10 weeks.
- **Tuition:** Payment students make to cover costs of their classes at state and private colleges and universities. Other fees may also be required.
- **Undergraduate student:** A student at an eligible school who's enrolled in a four- or five-year program that's designed to lead to an undergraduate degree.