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# The CAP System™

## Resource Guide



1

Career Planning



2

College Selection



3

Calculate ROI



4

Slash Costs



5

Get Hired!



# DON'T SPEND A DIME ON COLLEGE UNTIL...



As millions of parents — and even grandparents — sit down with students to help with decisions about college in this new post-COVID environment, many are losing thousands due to poor choices, not asking the right questions, or failing to take the steps covered here to make the best decisions.

The purpose of this resource is to help students and parents build a simple *College Action Plan*, which focuses on specific strategies to ensure that every dollar spent on higher education is invested wisely. While our goal was not to address every decision you may want to make as you develop your Plan, this unique process covers essential questions millions of students never ask. They'll help you cut the cost of college, protect personal wealth, and costly avoid mistakes that could affect your financial lives for decades...*before* spending your first dime on college.

Here are the 5 Steps necessary to build an effective Action Plan:

- 1) Career Planning
  - 2) College Selection
  - 3) Determine Your ROI
  - 4) Slash Costs Even More
  - 5) Get Hired: Be the Grad Every Employer Wants
- Bonus: Scams & Traps to Avoid



Review each Step of the Resource Guide after watching the related videos, then use this information to complete your own personal College Action Plan. **Note:** Web links frequently change, so check back often to view new or updated links.

The tools are easy to follow, and will highlight the critical questions every student needs to ask, harmful traps to avoid, and techniques to prevent costly mistakes.

You'll also experience real-life examples of how others just like you achieved these goals, or lost thousands due to indecision and lack of planning. To begin, click on the 'Get Started' icon at the top of your Dashboard.

# Step I: Career Planning

After viewing the ‘Step I’ video, you’ll find more details and helpful links in this Resource Guide. It’s estimated that over 50% of students enter college with an undeclared major. Not only does this cause stress and anxiety, but when total costs can average \$20,000 to \$70,000 (and up) per year, college is no longer the place for young adults to figure out what they want to do with their lives.

It’s just too expensive, and can leave both students and parents saddled with thousands in unnecessary student loan debt...or depleted retirement funds.

College today should be a path to your ultimate destination - a great job offer - but it’s important to know where you’re headed before taking that first step...and you’re training for jobs of the future. Here are some simple strategies that can help you determine the right direction.

- **Focus on your career path** – So what’s the best way to determine the right career for you? The first step is to focus on your ultimate goal. In other words, what do you want to do with your education? Become a teacher, an engineer, or maybe even a doctor? Go to [JobSearch](#) to explore options, future job prospects, salaries, and more. You may also want to review some of the helpful resources in Step 5.

You may not have a totally clear direction at this point, but if you don’t have a *clue*, it might be a good idea to delay college until a later time.

- **Internships or mentorship programs** – These are great ways to get a taste of the field before actually committing years of study and thousands of dollars toward a specific field. See [Mentoring.org](#), or [NACE](#).  
**Example:** Kim completely changed her long-term career goals by using this strategy. Planning to obtain a business degree, she interned in the business office of a pharmaceutical firm, but found research so fascinating, she switched to a science major instead.



Companies like [Amazon](#) are even offering alternatives to college with their on-the-job *skills* training for high school students.

- **Debt forgiveness** – Another strategy students use to cut college costs is to identify career fields that are interesting, but that also have a high potential for student loan debt forgiveness. The government estimates 25% of workers qualify for some type of student loan debt forgiveness, but many fail to explore their options. See more at [StudentAid.ed.gov: Forgiveness](#). Also see this [PSLF New Tool](#).

- **Research the job market** – Researching the job market helps evaluate the likelihood of obtaining employment upon graduation. The last thing anyone wants to do is spend four to six years obtaining a degree only to find companies in their field aren't hiring. Students majoring in the **STEM** fields (watch for new grants on this site as well), which include *Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math*, are generally in high demand, but there are many other successful degree programs as well. Go to [Monster.com](https://www.monster.com) or [PayScale.com](https://www.payscale.com) to explore the jobs employers are looking to fill. Doing this now – and throughout your college life – will ensure there are no unexpected surprises after graduation.
- **Geographic location of jobs** – Another critical job-related question is whether there will be jobs in the area where you want to live. If not, are you willing to relocate? Go back [here](#) to see jobs by location.

**Example:** Todd planned to use his design and computer skills to become an architect, but found there was a two-year waiting list for experienced architects in his Midwest hometown. He switched to computer animation and was immediately hired upon graduation.



- **What will the job pay?** – No one wants to become one of more than eight million borrowers currently struggling to repay their student loans, so a key question is whether your career choice will pay enough to cover living expenses, as well as student loan payments. See [CollegeRecruiter: Salary](#), [PayScale: Salary](#), [GlassDoor: Salaries](#), or this [Job Seeker Salary Calculator](#) to begin exploring salaries for your future job. We'll use these numbers when determining your ROI: *Return on Investment*.
- **Is a degree really important?** – Higher education isn't the only option for many high school grads. There are numerous **career fields** that do not require a four-year degree. Rather than incurring tens of thousands in student loan debt, it may make sense to explore these options. Also, see this [list](#) or [here](#) for more jobs that don't require a degree.
- **Requirements** – Once you identify that a degree is essential, it's time to be more specific in defining the requirements many employers are looking for in their candidates. Too many students ignore this step; it's one of the reasons so many new grads fail to receive a job offer right out of school.
- Here are just a few factors they may evaluate:

- **Major:** What major and degree programs will they expect new hires to have?
  - **Minor:** Is there a minor that would help you stand out from other applicants?
  - **Soft & Hard Skills:** Which skills are important to employers? See: [Skill Gap 2020](#)
  - **GPA:** Will your *grade point average* be a deciding factor?
  - **School:** Does the school really matter?
  - **Other:** Are there any other academic or personal requirements that may be important?
- **Match major to school** – And finally, after researching your career field and determining the academic qualifications employers are looking for, it's time to match your major to the right school. If they don't place an emphasis on that degree program, or it's new to the school, it may be harder to schedule the classes needed, which means it could take longer to graduate...and add thousands in tuition and fees, room and board, and other college costs. See [Best Colleges & Career Planning Curriculum](#).

Answering these career questions *now* can cut college costs by thousands...and help determine the best path as you begin building a plan for your academic career.

**The Next Step:** Now it's time answer key questions as you begin to build your personal College Action Plan. You can always go back and revise it at any time. Once completed, move on to the 'Step 2' video.

