

News You Can Use



September 2011

ACT provides this monthly newsletter to inform students and their parents about college and career planning. ACT is a not-for-profit organization that serves millions of people in schools, colleges, professional associations, businesses and government agencies with programs and services that help people achieve their education and career goals. Visit www.actstudent.org for more information and services.



College Planning ACT

Key Dates

September: The ACT student video contest ends Sept. 12. The winning entries will be rewarded with thousands of dollars in scholarship money. You can vote for the winners online at www.actstudent.org/videocontest starting Sept. 26.

October: The late registration period for the Oct. 22 ACT® test date, with a late fee, is from Sept. 17 to Sept. 30.

November: The deadline to register for the December ACT test date, with a late fee, is Nov. 18.

High school seniors who are making plans to attend college next fall should complete any early admission/decision applications for colleges they are interested in attending.

December: The ACT will be administered on Dec. 10.

Complete and mail college applications with Jan. 1 deadlines.

Start preparing for the FAFSA, because it will be available Jan. 1.

Pass it on: lessons from the class of 2011

More high school students are preparing better for life after high school by taking challenging courses. The class of 2011 ACT test results show a growing percentage of students meeting all four of the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. That's an increase of 1 percentage point over last year and 4

percentage points over five years ago. This has occurred as the population of ACT-tested graduates has grown to new levels—up by 25 percent since 2007—and become more diverse.

ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks indicate whether students have a high probability (75 percent or greater) of earning a "C" or better and about a 50 percent chance of earning a "B" or higher in corresponding first-year college coursework. Only 25 percent of the 2011 U.S. high school graduates met all four benchmark scores.

In English, 66 percent of the students met the benchmark of 18, which corresponds to first-year college composition. A math score of 22 corresponds to college-level algebra, and was exceeded by 45 percent of 2011 graduates. In reading, 52 percent met the benchmark score of 21, corresponding to work in first-year social science courses, which require a great deal of reading and comprehension skills. In science, a score of 24 translates to likely success in college-level biology for 30 percent of 2011 graduates.

Less preparation means more remediation. As more and more unprepared students go to college, up to 40 percent are forced to take at least one remedial class just to get up to speed on college-level work. Those courses cost money and slow progress toward earning a degree. Students who are required to take remedial work are also more likely to drop out of college.

Prepare a road map to get to college, take challenging classes and stay on course. When you need help or encounter a potential obstacle, seek a parent, teacher, counselor or mentor who can help you get back on target to success.

Start thinking about your college major

The major you select in college is a big step in the beginning of your career. It also may be the deciding factor in why you choose one school over another. While the decision may seem far off, it's never too early to start determining your passions, strengths and vision for the future. ACT has many resources to help you start thinking through your career goals and which major might be best for you.

For instance, the Map of College Majors located at <http://www.actstudent.org/majorsmap/index.html> displays 80 popular fields of study based on the interests of thousands of college students. Each point on the map corresponds to the interests of actual students in that major. The map helps you see similarities and differences between majors, based on student preferences.

What courses do you need for college?

In high school you must meet certain class and subject requirements in order to graduate. Similarly, colleges and universities have requirements of their own when considering students for admission. Make sure you understand what the colleges and programs you're interested in are looking for and that you're meeting their guidelines.

ACT advises high school students to take a core curriculum of classes to prepare for college, and it's increasingly important for careers as well. The recommendations are to complete four years of English and at least three years each of math, social studies and natural sciences. Taking advanced courses beyond the recommended core classes gives you a better chance to be ready to enter college without needing remedial classes.

Use your ACT test scores to see how prepared you are for college. Research shows that students who earn a score of 24 or higher on the ACT Science Test are more likely than others to be ready for college biology. Students earning a score of 22 or higher on the ACT Math Test are more likely than others to be ready for college algebra. Students earning an 18 or higher on the ACT English Test are likely to have the

skills necessary to be ready for college English composition classes. And students earning a score of 21 or higher on the ACT Reading Test are likely to succeed in college-level social sciences courses.

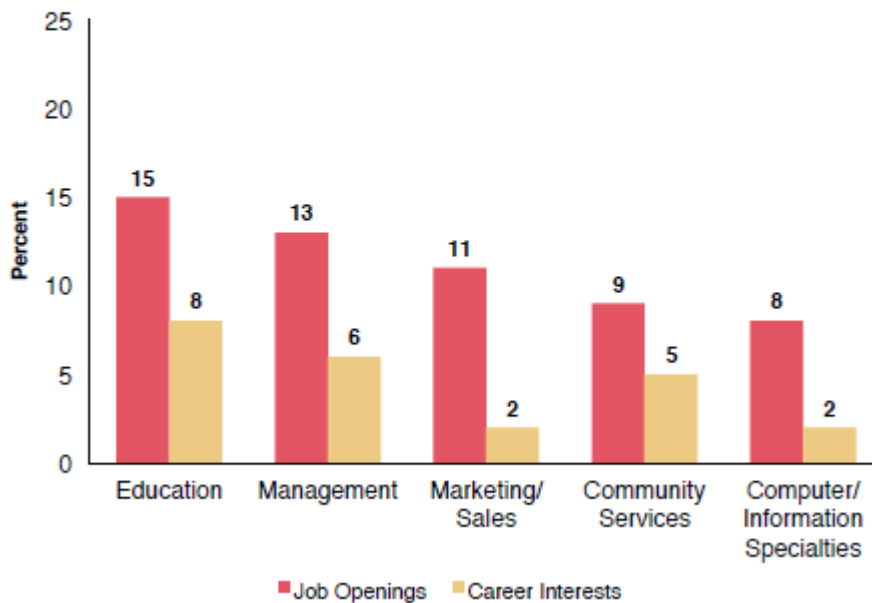


The career interest gap

The five fastest growing occupational fields will account for more than half of job openings for graduates with two or more years of education after high school. However, according to our research students are interested in different careers. Each student taking the ACT test fills out a survey which asks them about their career interests. From those responses it's apparent that there are not enough students interested in careers which are in the highest demand.

ACT's latest research shows the projected job openings in the five fastest growing fields account for 56 percent of the demand for jobs calling for at least a two-year degree. As you can see by the information below, the projected demand in all five fields is nearly twice that of the potential supply. In Marketing/Sales and Computer/Information Specialties fields, the projected demand was substantially greater than that of the potential supply.

Percent of 2011 ACT-Tested High School Graduates with Career Interests and Projected 2018 Annual Job Openings by Career Field



ACT video contest

ACT's first ever video contest is calling on students to tell their friends why they should take the ACT. Winning entries could win thousands of dollars in scholarship money.

The contest encourages students to think creatively about ways to describe how the ACT fits into their plans to attend college. Participants must be U.S. high school junior and senior students who plan to apply for admission to a U.S. two-year or four-year institution in 2012 or 2013.

The top 10 video submissions will appear on the ACT student website where students from across the country will have the chance to vote on their favorites. The student with the winning video will receive a \$5,000 scholarship to the college of his or her choice and the winning video will be featured on the ACT website. Second- and third-place winners will receive \$2,500 and \$1,000 scholarships, while others finishing in the top 10 will receive \$500 scholarships.

Winners will be selected based on creativity, visual appeal and overall impact. Important contest dates and deadlines:

- **Submissions:** Aug. 1 – Sept. 12, 2011
- **Online Voting:** Sept. 26 – Oct. 9, 2011
- **Winners Announced:** Oct. 10, 2011

For more information, visit actstudent.org/videocontest.



Matching your skills with the right career

Now more than ever, employers are looking for employees who are Work Ready. This means they want people with very specific skills that will make them successful at a given job.

Whether you're looking to go to college or right into the workforce, ACT's WorkKeys is an important first step to prepare for education, training or a career. The tests can help you compare your skills to the skills real jobs require and can also set you apart from others when being considered for a job. Employers use the results to both hire and properly train employees.

WorkKeys is proving itself successful all over the country. Consider how it's worked for Energizer, the popular battery producer. Energizer implemented the WorkKeys system inside one of their plants in Asheboro, North Carolina.

In the first three months of hiring after starting to use the WorkKeys system, none of the Energizer employees were let go because of a lack of skills. The plant also found they didn't have to spend nearly as much time training new hires. "Once they went through the WorkKeys process, they qualified at a quicker rate," said Bernadette Young, human resources manager at Energizer.

Young also says the plant saw fewer mistakes and employees in the most important jobs were able to accomplish more work. "It comes to them easier, and there's less of a learning curve," Young said.

Many employers across the country are now requiring WorkKeys assessments. If your school doesn't offer the tests, visit <http://act.org/workkeys/locations.html> to find a testing site near you.



Test date reminder

Registration is now open for the national ACT test date on Oct. 22, 2011. The late registration period, with an additional fee, is Sept. 17-30, 2011. Register online today at actstudent.org.

Other test dates during the 2011-12 school year are: Dec. 10, 2011; Feb. 11, 2012; April 14, 2012; and June 9, 2012. Regular registration deadlines for these dates are about five weeks before the test date.

An optional Writing Test is available in addition to the multiple-choice achievement test. Go to actstudent.org/writing to learn more about the Writing Test, including the colleges that require it.

The ACT student website can help with test prep, including many free tools. Sample questions are available, along with *Preparing for the ACT*, a booklet with a complete practice test, scoring key, writing prompt and sample essays. Plus, the ACT student website has test-day tips, a list of what to bring to the test location and approved calculators for use on the Math test.

Want more? Sign up for ACT Online Prep™, the only test prep program developed exclusively by ACT test development professionals. At only \$19.95 for a year's use, it's a great tool.

For all your questions about the ACT test, visit actstudent.org.