

My Reverse Timeline to College

The purpose of this exercise is to imagine what it will be like to be in college, and to think about how you will get there. We ask you to work backward: start with your first day in your first college class, and then think back to the present day.

This will be a difficult exercise because that future date is far off, and you probably don't have any current experience about life in college. Don't have to worry about being accurate (as in exactly predicting the future) because you have time to change your mind. However, you do want to be specific and realistic so that you can explore options and get good feedback on those options. The exercise is designed to help you create a picture of your future self.

A natural outcome of this exercise is that it stimulates questions that you can ask of the mentors. Mentors are living the life of college students and they have a diverse set of experiences. After visualizing your future in this exercise, ask the mentors about their experience. Ask them to help you get a clearer picture of your own, possible future.

Use your imagination to answer the questions below. Make notes about any other ideas that arise. Share these questions and your answers with at least two mentors over the course of the next few days.

Working Backwards: Questions for Reflection

Walking into my first class ...

1. What is the subject/topic?
2. Is the class on-line or in-person? What are pros and cons? Which do I prefer?
3. How big is the classroom for the in-person class? Large lecture hall, or seminar size?
4. What is the style of class? Lecture? Seminar? Lab?
5. Who is the teacher? (Age? Gender? Expert or not? How dressed? ...)
6. What do I bring to class? A notebook (yes!). A laptop? A calculator?
7. What do I wear? Is there a dress code, official or otherwise?
8. Where do you choose to sit? What matters to you in making that choice?

Preparing for my first class

1. How do I pick a class?
2. Are my first classes required, or electives? What would be my first elective?
3. Does my first class have a pre-requisite? If so, what is it?
4. Do I have to take a placement test to determine which class or section is best?
5. How/where to register? What building? What process? When?
6. How do I find an advisor to help me pick courses and manage the choices within my major?
7. How and when do I decide on a major? What is a major? What is a minor? Does getting a minor cost more?
8. What is a study-skills course? Should I take one even if it is not required?

Living arrangements while going to college?

1. Should I live in a dorm? What are the pros and cons? How do I find a dorm? Should I live in a single, double, triple, or ...? How much does a dorm cost?
2. If I live off-campus, how do I get to class? If I drive, where do I park? How much does parking cost?
3. If I live with other college students, how do I find them? What are good qualities in a roommate?
4. Where do I eat? At a cafeteria? At my dorm/apartment? How and where do I go to buy food?
5. How far in advance do I need to figure out where to live? When do I move in?

Applying to college

1. How do I apply? When?
2. What kind of research should I do before applying?
3. How many schools to I apply to?
4. How much does it cost to apply?
5. How do I do research on colleges I might want to attend?
6. How do I do an informational interview about a career? How do I set up an informational interview? What is the purpose of an informational interview?

Thinking about college while in high school

1. What can I do to prepare for being successful in college? Should I take specific courses?
2. What is important outside of courses? Don't just think about your high school resume. Think about what is important for you as a person?
3. Who can I ask for help in high school when thinking about college.
4. I heard that taking a gap year to work is a good idea? Should I? What are the advantages and disadvantages?
5. Could I take/audit a college course while in high school? What about edx.edu and coursera.org? What are the benefits and drawbacks of taking an on-line, non-credit course?
7. What is a study-skills course? Should I take one even if it is not required?