

Collegiate Lingo 101

Academic year: The school year that begins with autumn classes. The academic year at most US colleges and universities starts in August or September.

Admissions Office: This is where your application, and any application questions will be directed. This is an important office when first starting out!

Advisor: School official, usually assigned by your college or university, who can help choose your classes and make sure you are taking the right courses to graduate.

Associate's degree: A type of degree awarded to students at a US community college, usually after two years of classes.

Bachelor's degree: A degree awarded to undergraduates, usually after four years of college classes.

Business Office: This is where all financial transactions will take place and where any bills will be issued from. i.e pay for tuition, lab fees, transcript requests etc.

Course Number (or CRN): The number your college or university uses to classify a course. You usually need this number in order to register for a class.

Credit Hour: The number of hours assigned to a specific class. This is usually the number of hours per week you are in the class. The number of credit hours you enroll in determines whether you are a full-time student or a part-time student.

Elective: A class you can take that is not specifically required by your major or minor.

Extracurricular activities: Groups you belong to outside of class, such as sporting teams, clubs and organizations.

Financial Aid: Money you receive for you college tuition or expenses that you may or may not have to pay back. (See: "Grant," "Loan," and "Scholarship")

Financial Aid Director: This person is in charge of the financial aid office on campus. Their job is to answer any questions you might have and guide you through the process of applying, receiving, and verifying any aid your student might need. Remember, financial aid starts over each academic year!

Full-time student: A student who enrolls in at least a minimum number (usually 12) of credit hours of courses.

General education classes (or Gen Eds): Classes that give students basic knowledge of a variety of topics. Students often must take general education classes in order to graduate. This set of classes includes different courses and is called by different names at various colleges and universities.

Grant: (typically called a PELL Grant) A form of financial aid from a non-profit organization (such as the government) that you do not have to repay.

Internship: A temporary job, paid or unpaid, usually in the field of your major. You may be able to receive college credit for an internship.

Loan: A form of financial aid that you must repay.

Collegiate Lingo 101

Major: Your primary area of study. Your college major is the field you plan to get a job in after you graduate (for example: business, linguistics, anthropology, psychology).

Minor: Your secondary area of study. Fewer classes are required for a college minor than for a major. Colleges and universities usually don't require students to have a minor. Many students' minors are a specialization of their major field. For example, students who want to become a science reporter might major in journalism and minor in biology.

Non-resident: A student who isn't an official resident of the state where a public university is located. Tuition at public universities is less expensive for residents.

Office hours: Time set aside by professors or teaching assistants for students to visit their office and ask questions or discuss the course they teach. Your professor or teaching assistant will tell you at the beginning of the term when and where office hours will be every week.

Online classes: Courses you take by computer instead of in a traditional classroom.

Online portal: Many schools utilize an online portal which offers a secure way for students to view invoices, class schedules, unofficial transcripts and grade reports.

Part-time student: A student who doesn't enroll in enough credit hours to become a full-time student, as defined by your college or university. Part-time students often take only one or two classes at one time.

Prerequisite: A class that must be taken before you can take a different class. (For example, Astronomy 100 may be a prerequisite for Astronomy 200.)

Private University: A university that is privately-funded. Tuition for a private college or university (before scholarships and grants) is the same for all students.

Public University: A university that is funded by the government. Public colleges and universities are less expensive for residents of the state where they are located.

Registrar: This office maintains all student academic records. This is where you will: request your transcript, find enrollment verification, check grades, register for classes, and plan graduation.

Resident: A student who lives in and meets the residency requirements for the state where a public university is located. Tuition at public universities often is more expensive for non-residents.

Scholarship: A form of financial aid that you do not have to repay.

Semester: Type of academic term. A school with this system generally will have a fall semester and a spring semester (each about 15 weeks long), along with a summer term.

Syllabus: A description of a course which also lists the dates of major exams, assignments and projects.

Transcript: An official academic record from a specific school. It lists the courses you have completed, grades and information such as when you attended.