



Photo provided by Oklahoma City Community College

Academic advisor: The person at a college or university who helps students decide what classes to take, what major to pursue, etc. An advisor is similar to a high school guidance counselor.

Admission requirements: Students wanting to attend an Oklahoma 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.

Advanced Placement (AP) courses: Courses that allow students to take college-level coursework in high school. Many Oklahoma colleges and universities award college credit to students who successfully complete these courses and pass the corresponding AP exams.

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.

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Bachelor's degree: Degree given upon completion of four years of full-time study or the equivalent.

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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.

Class rank: Ranking of a student within a high school graduating class based upon his or her high school grade point average.

Clock hour: A 50- to 60-minute class, lecture, recitation, faculty-supervised laboratory, shop training or internship in a 60-minute period. Also, can be 60 minutes of preparation in a correspondence course.

College: An independent institution of higher learning offering courses of general study leading to associate, bachelor's or graduate level degree programs.

College catalog: A booklet published by an individual college or university that contains detailed descriptions of course and degree offerings, fees, academic policies and requirements for graduation.

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.

Comprehensive university: See research university.

Concurrent enrollment: A program that allows eligible high school students (juniors and seniors) to take credit-earning college courses.

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.

Credit hour: Credit given for attending one lecture hour of class each week for five weeks or equivalent. Most college classes are three credit hours, meaning their total meeting time for a week is three hours. To calculate tuition, multiply the number of credit hours for each class (three) by the cost of tuition per credit hour.

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Default: Failure of a borrower to repay his or her student loan according to the terms agreed upon when the promissory note was signed. Defaulted accounts are reported to the major consumer reporting agencies which may affect a borrower's ability to get credit in the future.

Deferment: An authorized period of time during which a student loan borrower may postpone principal payments and/or interest payments.

Degree: A recognition of academic achievement at a particular level granted by an institution of higher education, normally as the result of successfully completing a program of study.

Direct PLUS loan (parent loan): A non-need-based loan available to parents with a good credit history to help pay educational expenses of a dependent, undergraduate student who's enrolled on a least a half-time basis.

Direct Subsidized Loan : A need-based education loan for which interest is paid by the federal government during the in-school, grace and deferment periods.

Direct Unsubsidized Loan : A non-need-based loan for which interest isn't paid by the federal government. Borrowers are responsible for all interest accrued on unsubsidized loans from the date the loan is disbursed.

Doctorate (doctoral degree): The highest level of academic achievement in our country.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC): The amount a student and his or her family are expected to pay toward college expenses for one academic year. This amount is calculated based on the information supplied by the student and parents on the FAFSA application.

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Federal Work-Study (student employment): A program providing part-time jobs for undergraduate and graduate students with financial need, allowing them to earn money to help pay educational expenses. The program encourages community service employment and work related to each student's course of study.

Financial aid: Money provided to the student and/or parents to help pay for the student's education. Major forms of financial aid include gift aid (grants and scholarships) and self-help aid (loans and work-study).

Financial need: The difference between the cost of attendance and the expected family contribution, minus any other financial aid received, is the student's financial need. Financial aid packages are based on the amount of financial need.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): A federal form required each year to apply for federal student aid. Forms are available online at FAFSA.gov. The information provided on this form is used to determine the student's expected family contribution (EFC), which allows financial aid offices to identify the types of aid the student is eligible to receive.

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.

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Grace period: A transition period – generally six months following the date a borrower leaves school or drops below half-time enrollment status – during which the borrower isn't required to make student loan payments. This period is designed to help the borrower prepare for repayment.

Graduate student: A student working toward a master's or doctoral degree.

Grant: Aid that's usually based on financial need and doesn't have to be repaid.

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Half-time student: An undergraduate student enrolled in at least six credit hours or a graduate student enrolled in at least five 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.

Higher education center: Institution with flexible admission standards that provides higher education opportunities to citizens in the areas surrounding the centers. 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.

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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.

Interest: A fee charged for the use of borrowed money. Interest is calculated as a percentage of the principal loan amount. The rate may remain constant throughout the life of the loan (fixed rate) or it may change at specified times (variable rate).

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Lender: A financial institution (e.g. bank, savings and loan, or credit union) that loans funds to students and parents for educational costs through the private or alternative loan program. These loans typically have higher interest rates and less favorable repayment options than federal loans. All federal education loans are funded by the U.S. Treasury through the Direct Loan program.

Loan: Borrowed money that must be repaid with interest.

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Major: An academic subject area, such as economics or geology, in which students take many courses and choose to earn a degree.

Master Promissory Note (MPN): The MPN is a legal agreement that lists conditions under which a federal student loan is borrowed and the terms under which the borrower agrees to repay the loan with interest. It allows a borrower to receive loans for either a single academic year or multiple academic years.

Master's degree: A graduate degree that follows a bachelor's degree; may be required before earning a doctoral degree.

Minor: An area of interest studied at the same time as a major. It requires fewer courses than a major.

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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.

Prerequisite: A course which a student must take before he or she can enroll in another (usually more challenging) course.

Professional student: A student majoring in what are considered the professional degrees. These include Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.), Law (J.D. or LL.B.), Medicine (M.D.), Engineering, Business Administration (M.B.A), Nursing (B.Sc.N.), Pharmacy (Pharm.D.) and more.

Proprietary/trade school: A privately owned or out-of-state institution offering courses in Oklahoma. This type of school prepares students for direct entry into an occupation or profession.

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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.

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Scholarships: Financial awards given for a variety of reasons, such as good grades, special talents or career plans. Scholarships don't have to be repaid.

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. Oklahoma state colleges and universities rely primarily on the ACT.

State (public) colleges and universities: Colleges and universities that receive funding from state taxes to pay part of operating costs.

Subject area test: Standardized tests given by ACT in math, science, reading and English. Public colleges and universities look at these test scores when helping students enroll in courses.

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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.

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 be also required.

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.

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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.

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.

U.S. Department of Education: A government agency that oversees education and federal student aid in the United States.