ABOUT THE TOOLKIT:

It’s never too early to start talking to students about going to college. Iowa College Aid is committed to providing critical early college awareness and support to students and families through Course to College, GEAR UP Iowa, and AmeriCorps. This toolkit offers information to help schools in their efforts around building a college-going culture for students in middle school and early high school as well as their families.

WHY IS EARLY AWARENESS IMPORTANT?

College awareness and exploration are essential on a student’s path to postsecondary success. By exploring college programs and career options, students ensure their academics and extracurricular involvement position them to enter and succeed in a college that will meet their academic, social and emotional needs. Early college and career exploration leads students to:

- Have time for more than one campus visit to the colleges they are interested in
- Choose colleges that offer programs in their desired areas of study
- Learn about financial aid options in advance allowing more time for families to prepare
- Apply to colleges and universities that are an academic match and a good college fit

Alarmingly, qualified first generation, low-income, underrepresented students are less likely to apply to college and more likely to undermatch – a term used to describe students who apply to or attend a college which is less selective than their academic ability. As a result, these students are less likely to persist and complete college degrees.

IN THIS TOOLKIT

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EARLY AWARENESS TOPICS:

Early awareness programming is intended for middle and early high school students, and it should supplement a school’s existing college and career exploration and readiness efforts. This includes organized and individual college visits, ACT/SAT preparation, and activities that best suit particular grade levels. Use this section to understand the key components for building your early awareness efforts.

Career Search/Major Search

One of the first steps to helping a student on their educational journey is to help them identify their skill sets and interests. College and career planning websites are great resources to help students discover possibilities and learn how to match interests and abilities with a promising career.

Career Coach is a Future Ready Iowa initiative and it is designed to help students find a career by providing current data on wages, employment, job postings, and associated education and training. It offers a short assessment that suggests careers based on interest.

O*Net Interest Profiler is a web-based interactive tool that can help students find what their interests are and what kinds of careers they might want to explore.

Have students use the What’s the Right Career for Me? worksheet found in the Activities Section to record their interest scores and career matches. Next, encourage students to seek out job shadowing opportunities to get first-hand experience. Once they have a career in mind, help them explore programs or majors that align with those interests.

+ STUDENT RESOURCES

Offering games and activities that discuss college and careers in a fun and enjoyable way is a great way to engage students. Look for activities at the end of this toolkit that align with our topic areas.

GEAR UP IOWA COLLEGE BINGO

Directions: Using the bingo sheet below, find students or staff at your school that fit the descriptions in the bingo boxes. Have your students sign their name in the box that describes them. You should not have any duplicate signatures. Good luck!

COLLEGE TRIVIA

All answers are public or private two-year or four-year colleges in Iowa.

Q: Which college is Iowa’s first public institution for higher learning?
A

Q: Which college uses the saying “Be Orange!”?
A

Q: Which college became the nation’s first “wireless community” when they gave laptop computers to all full-time students and faculty at the Storm Lake campus with the ability to connect to the campuswide wireless networks?
A

Q: Which college has two swim courses named Saturn and Triton in one of their campus ponds?
A

Q: Which college was eventually named after a famous Iowa governor who also served as a United States Senator and Secretary of State?
A

Q: Which Iowa college was the first to graduate a woman?
A

Q: Which college did George Washington Carver start his education at?
A

Q: Which college has a stadium called the “Dome”?
A

Q: Which college is located in Iowa Falls, IA and their mascot is the Panthers?
A

Q: Which college goes by the initials DMACC?
A

Q: Which college did Governor Branstad receive his law degree from?
A

Q: Which college did Governor Branstad serve as a United States Senator and Secretary of State?
A

Q: Which college did Governor Branstad receive his law degree from?
A

Early Awareness Toolkit | 2
TYPES OF DEGREES

The type of education or training a student will need depends on his or her career choice. Once students have an idea of what they may like to do for a career, help them explore what level of education is preferred or required.

Apprenticeship: Apprenticeships combine classroom studies with on-the-job training supervised by a trade professional.

Certificate/Diploma: These programs focus on a particular skill needed for a specific career and can generally be earned in two years or less.

Associate Degree: A two-year degree that can be earned at any community college (or some technical/business colleges or four-year colleges) and may be applied towards a bachelor’s degree at a four-year college or university.

Bachelor’s Degree: An undergraduate degree that can be earned at any four-year college or university.

Advanced Degree: These degrees include master’s, doctoral and professional degrees and, in most cases, require the completion of a bachelor’s degree or higher.

+ Activities Section: What Can You Do With Your Degree? word search

+ STUDENT RESOURCES

Iowa College Aid offers “What is College? : Exploring What’s Possible After High School”, an online video discussing degree types and possibilities for each degree. You can see the video in Iowa College Aid’s Video Gallery here.
TYPES OF COLLEGES

As students begin their college search, they will find there are many different options—colleges, universities, community colleges, private colleges, public colleges, proprietary colleges as well as career, vocational and technical schools.

It is important to help them learn what makes each college unique:

**Regent Universities:** Iowa has three public universities—the University of Iowa, Iowa State University and the University of Northern Iowa. These are the largest universities in the state and they offer bachelor’s and advanced degree programs.

**Independent Colleges and Universities:** Iowa’s 26 independent colleges and universities offer academic programs in a smaller classroom environment compared to regent universities. In addition to bachelor’s degree programs, some of these colleges also offer graduate level degrees.

**Community Colleges:** Iowa has 15 community colleges covering the entire state. Community colleges offer Associate of Arts (AA) and Associate of Science (AS) degree programs as well as numerous career and technical education diplomas and certificates, many of which take less than two years to complete.

**Technical, Business and Professional Schools:** In addition to traditional colleges and universities, a variety of Iowa institutions offer certificate or diploma programs that provide specialized career training in a particular field.

+ Activities Section: Iowa College Trivia
**COLLEGE FIT**

College fit refers to academic, social, and financial factors that meet a student’s wants and needs. Other factors include:

- distance from home
- geographic location (in state or out of state)
- campus atmosphere
- academic resources such as tutoring and writing assistance
- class size
- majors offered
- student activities

A campus visit is the best way for students to make sure a college fits their needs. If that’s not possible, encourage students to do a virtual tour or connect with the college via social media.

Iowa College Aid offers “What is College? College Fit”, an online video that gives students and families tips on what to look for when trying to find the college that fits best. You can see the video in the Iowa College Aid Video Gallery.

+ Activities Section: College Awareness Word Search

**CAMPUS VISITS**

Starting campus visits early will allow time for students to visit a variety of college types and locations before junior year. Many colleges will host campus visits for students as early as middle school.

Keep in mind that campus visits should look different for early grades compared to the more “traditional” visits geared towards juniors and seniors. Abby Welborn, Middle School Counselor at Iowa State University, says the key is to first “hook” middle school youth early with something fun and then follow up with facts. Otherwise, they will not be interested. Ask colleges to include hands on activities such as STEM projects, scavenger hunts, theatre set design, and financial aid or admissions simulations to name a few.

Middle school students might not be ready for detailed admissions and financial aid presentations yet, but it’s still a good time for an intro to college. Ask admissions staff to include the following topics in campus visits:

- College Life- What’s it like to live on campus? What does a typical day look like? What activities can they participate in? How often will they see their families?
- Majors & Careers- What is a major? How do you pick a major and a career? What if you don’t know what to pick?
- Getting into College- What are the requirements to get in? What should they take in high school? What is GPA, class rank, RAI?
- Motivation- Why is college beneficial? Why is it important to do well in high school? What possibilities lay ahead? What excites them about college?

Check out our GEAR UP Iowa Campus Visit Toolkit for more information on planning campus visits!

+ Activities Section: Campus Scavenger Hunt
FINANCIAL AID

Middle and early high school might be too early for students to learn the ins and outs of financial aid. Instead, it’s important for them to know that college can be affordable and there is money available to assist.

FAFSA

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) serves as the application for federal and several state programs. It’s important that students know what this is early on and know that they must file it each year they plan to attend college in order to stay eligible for federal student aid.

FAFSA4Caster is a free financial aid calculator that gives an early estimate of a student’s eligibility for federal student aid, including federal grants and loans. This information helps families plan ahead for college.

Student Loans

For some students, student loans can be a good option to cover college expenses. When borrowing, remember that unlike grants or scholarships, which do not need to be repaid, student loans must be repaid with interest. Federal loans are fairly common and students may qualify by filing the FAFSA. Private loans offered by banks or credit unions may also be available but they are not federally insured and might be more costly than federal loans.

Grants & Scholarships

Students need to know that scholarships and grants are available at the local, state, and national level. Some require a separate application but many grants and scholarships are awarded based on information in the FAFSA. At this stage, students need to know what the FAFSA is so they can complete it October of their junior year.

College Savings

Middle school is a great time to talk to students and families about saving for college. A savings account is a good start but investing in a college savings account typically earns more and it offers federal and state tax benefits.

College Savings Iowa is the state-administered 529 plan which allows family and friends to contribute toward the education expenses of young people regardless of income or state of residence. This plan is among the most highly regarded 529 plans in the country due to its tax advantages and low fees.
### ENTRANCE EXAMS

College entrance exams are standardized tests used in the college admissions process. Most students take entrance exams for the first time in spring of their junior year and possibly retake it in the fall of their senior year. Here’s a breakdown of the ACT and SAT which are the most common entrance exams accepted by admissions offices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>SAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of sections</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content areas tested</td>
<td>English, math, reading and science</td>
<td>Reading, math and writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test length</td>
<td>3 hours 40 minutes</td>
<td>3 hours 50 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing section required</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing months</td>
<td>March, May, June, August, October, November and December</td>
<td>March, May, June, August, October, November and December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>$50.50 without writing $67 with writing</td>
<td>$47.50 without essay $64.50 with essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fee waivers available (to those that qualify)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score range</td>
<td>1-36</td>
<td>400-1600</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Your Course to College

Your Course to College is Iowa College Aid’s comprehensive guide that includes information on planning, preparing and paying for college.

Iowa College and Career Readiness Academy

Iowa College and Career Readiness Academy (formerly Go Alliance Academy) offers professional development courses for secondary school educators and college-access professionals to deepen their knowledge about college and career advisement.

Federal Student Aid College Preparation Checklist

Checklists for every year to help students and families prepare and pay for education beyond high school.

College Board College Planning Checklists

Checklists to help students ensure they’re on the right track for college. Check out the Parent Action Plans broken down by grade level in addition the Educator Resource Center.

College Greenlight College Fit Kit

College Greenlight offers tools and ready-to-print resources designed to complement your programs and engage your students.

ACTIVITIES SECTION

The following pages contain student activities to help build early awareness and create a college-going culture.

What’s the Right Career for Me?
Worksheet - Students will explore potential careers.

What Can You Do With Your Degree?
Word Search - Students complete a word search based on types of degrees.

GEAR UP Iowa College Trivia
Students answer trivia questions about Iowa colleges.

Campus Scavenger Hunt
Instructions and list of locations for a campus scavenger hunt.

College Awareness Word Search
Students complete a word search of commonly used college terms.
WHAT’S THE RIGHT CAREER FOR ME?  
(Instructions for educators)

1. Hand out worksheet and have students go to mynextmove.org. If able, pull website up on screen in front of room and walk through the initial screens with students.

“If you know what you want to do, you can search careers by key words or browse careers by industry. Today, we are going to do a career assessment, so click the “start” button under “tell us what you like to do.”

“Based on your answers to 60 questions, you will get feedback on careers that match your interests. After we are done with the assessment you will be able to explore some of those careers and take notes on the worksheet provided.”

2. When students get done answering questions, they will come to a screen with numbers for each of the interest areas at the top of their worksheet. Have them enter their scores in each of the corresponding boxes. They can click on the hyperlinks to learn more about each area or press next to continue.

Job Zones: “Each O*NET career is in one of five Job Zones, which are groups of careers that need the same level of experience, education and training. For today’s purpose, we are going to use your future job zone, which is the experience, education or training you plan to get in the future.” (If they click on each job zone, that will tell them what kind of education or training they would need.)

“Since our focus with GEAR UP is education beyond high school, we’ll encourage you to look at zones 3 or above today. If we have time, you can still explore the other 2 zones and compare job outlooks and salaries for other careers.”

3. Students can change job zones at the top of the screen. Point out the puzzle pieces to show best fit and great fit. Bright outlook or sun means new job opportunities likely in the future. Green leaf represents careers that are part of the green economy. Registered apprenticeship logos are careers that allow you to earn a paycheck while getting hands-on experience in that field.

The pay ranges can be found by clicking “Local Salary Info” under Job Outlook.

“After you have explored possible careers, take some time to think about which ones you would like to learn more about by completing an informational interview or a job shadow.” (Ask if they know what an informational interview or job shadow is just to make sure.) “Identify someone you know that works in those occupations you want to learn more about. If you don’t know anyone, use your resources and ask for help. Your family, school counselors, teachers and GEAR UP Iowa staff are all people who can help make those connections for you!”
## WHAT’S THE RIGHT CAREER FOR ME?

### Interest scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Realistic</th>
<th>Investigative</th>
<th>Artistic</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Enterprising</th>
<th>Conventional</th>
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### Occupations for further exploration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Zone</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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### Occupational research

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Low range of pay</th>
<th>Average pay</th>
<th>Upper range of pay</th>
<th>Education/training required</th>
<th>General occupational outlook</th>
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### Next step: informational interviewing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Person to interview: name, title and contact information</th>
<th>Date of informational interview or job shadow</th>
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WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH YOUR DEGREE?*

With a 2-year degree (Associate Degree) you can be a:
- Police Officer
- Registered Nurse
- Forensic Technician

With a 4 year degree (Bachelors Degree) you can be a:
- Physician Assistant
- Graphic Designer
- Computer Technician

With a 6 year degree (Master Degree) you can be a(n):
- School Counselor
- Accountant
- Engineer

With an advanced degree (Doctorate) you can be a:
- College Professor
- Doctor
- Pharmacist

*Source: Access College Foundation
Directions: Try to find all 12 occupations going vertical, horizontal or diagonally

With a 2-year degree (Associate Degree) you can be a:
- Police Officer
- Registered Nurse
- Forensic Technician

With a 4 year degree (Bachelors Degree) you can be a:
- Physician Assistant
- Graphic Designer
- Computer Technician

With a 6 year degree (Master Degree) you can be a(n):
- School Counselor
- Accountant
- Engineer

With an advanced degree (Doctorate) you can be a:
- College Professor
- Doctor
- Pharmacist

*Source: Access College Foundation*
All answers are public or private two-year or four-year colleges in Iowa.

Q: Which college is Iowa’s first public institution for higher learning?
A ________________________________

Q: Which college uses the saying “Be Orange!”?
A ________________________________

Q: Which college became the nation’s first “wireless community” when they gave laptop computers to all full-time students and faculty at the Storm Lake campus with the ability to connect to the campus-wide wireless network?
A ________________________________

Q: Which college has two swans named Lancelot and Elaine in one of their campus ponds?
A ________________________________

Q: Which college was eventually named after a former Iowa governor, who also served as a United States Senator and Secretary of State?
A ________________________________

Q: Which Iowa college was the first to graduate a woman?
A ________________________________

Q: Which college did George Washington Carver start his education at?
A ________________________________

Q: Which college has a stadium called the “Dome”? 
A ________________________________

Q: Which college is located in Iowa Falls, IA and their mascot is the Panthers?
A ________________________________

Q: Which college goes by the initials DMACC?
A ________________________________

Q: Which college did Governor Branstad receive his law degree from?
A ________________________________
COLLEGE TRIVIA (answers)

All answers are public or private two-year or four-year colleges in Iowa.

Q: Which college is Iowa’s first public institution for higher learning?
A  The University of Iowa

Q: Which college uses the saying “Be Orange!”?
A  Wartburg College

Q: Which college became the nation’s first “wireless community” when they gave laptop computers to all full-time students and faculty at the Storm Lake campus with the ability to connect to the campus-wide wireless network?
A  Buena Vista University

Q: Which college has two swans named Lancelot and Elaine in one of their campus ponds?
A  Iowa State University

Q: Which college was eventually named after a former Iowa governor, who also served as a United States Senator and Secretary of State?
A  Kirkwood Community College

Q: Which Iowa college was the first to graduate a woman?
A  Cornell College

Q: Which college did George Washington Carver start his education at?
A  Simpson College

Q: Which college has a stadium called the “Dome”?
A  The University of Northern Iowa

Q: Which college is located in Iowa Falls, IA and their mascot is the Panthers?
A  Ellsworth Community College

Q: Which college goes by the initials DMACC?
A  Des Moines Area Community College

Q: Which college did Governor Branstad receive his law degree from?
A  Drake University
KNOW HOW 2 GO CAMPUS SCAVENGER HUNT

What
The following scavenger hunt from KnowHow2GO is a fun and interactive way to get students to tour a local college and become comfortable and familiar with a campus environment. The activity requires students to form teams and find locations on a list provided to them within a set amount of time. The team that proves they’ve visited the most locations wins!

Why
College campuses can be a daunting place for pre-college students, especially those who’ve never visited. This scavenger hunt is an entertaining way to introduce students to a college campus — and let them explore it on their own.

Who
The scavenger hunt is targeted at students in grades 8 – 10. Assign each team to a college student mentor or admissions ambassador who can lead them around campus and answer questions along the way.

Others Items Needed
- Campus maps for participants
- Copies of the scavenger hunt list
- Pens/pencils for each student/team
- Camera phone or camera phone for each team leader
- Optional prize(s)

Basic Instructions
1. Coordinate with the admissions office at the college you plan on visiting. Many of them are willing to build in hands-on activities if time permits.
2. Once you have permission from the admissions staff, ask them for suggestions for locations to include on your scavenger hunt list. Use the Sample List of Campus Locations/Actions for ideas.
3. Ask about any security access issues (if buildings cannot be entered without student ID cards, etc.). The list should only include locations on the campus that students can prove they’ve visited through photos. For example, do not include the football field if students are not allowed inside the stadium.
4. Each team should have a college student leader who can guide students around campus and help ensure the scavenger hunt finishes within an agreed-upon time.
5. Students will take a picture next to the location on campus that corresponds to the question or statement on the scavenger hunt list.
6. At the end of the time period, review the pictures. The team with the most correct pictures in the shortest amount of time wins!
7. Debrief the activity with students.
SAMPLE LIST OF CAMPUS LOCATIONS/ACTIONS FOR SCAVENGER HUNT

The list you provide to students will depend on the campus. Remember to ask about any possible security issues, rules or guidance. Use this list as a guide as you’re planning your event:

Earn one point per item, unless otherwise noted:

- How many world language courses are offered on campus?
- What is the name of the university’s mascot. Earn a bonus if you take a picture with the mascot or mascot statue.
- Take a picture outside the residence hall where first-year students live.
- Find the gymnasium and take a picture of their hours of operation for the day.
- What is the name of the campus radio or TV station.
- Take a picture outside of three academic buildings.
- Go to a fraternity or sorority house, and ask for the name of its president. Earn an extra point for taking a picture with him or her.
- Go to an arts building and take a picture in front of a student display.
- Grab a brochure or flier about a student organization.
- Jot down the names of two campus cafeterias or food stands.
- What is the name of a cultural organization on campus?
- Locate the public bus stop nearest to campus. Write down the cross streets.
- Pick up a copy of a free campus newspaper.
- Pick up a brochure from the health center.
- Pick up an informational brochure from a career center.
- Sketch a picture of a statue on campus.
- Take a picture in a computer lab.
- Take a picture outside of a science lab.
- Take a picture in or around an athletic field or stadium. Earn an extra point for a picture with a student athlete or coach.
- Take a picture in the university bookstore. Earn an extra point if everyone in your group is wearing something with university colors.
- Take a picture with a student wearing a university sweatshirt or t-shirt. Don’t forget to ask their permission.
- Take pictures on a bench that’s been dedicated to an alumnus.
- Talk to five students—write down their names, majors and hometowns on the back of this page. Each conversation is worth one point.
- Take a picture outside of the campus library.
- Visit the admission office and pick up a brochure about admissions criteria. Earn an extra point for finding out the school’s minimum ACT score.
- Visit the financial aid office and collect a FAFSA brochure. Earn an extra point if you find information about a scholarship and provide the name of it.
Directions: Try to find all 24 words going vertical, horizontal and diagonally

- Admissions
- Application
- Bachelors
- Books
- Careers
- Classes
- College
- Diploma
- Education
- Essay
- Financial Aid
- Program
- Grants
- High School
- Housing
- Institute
- Loans
- Requirements
- Sat Score
- Scholarships
- Trade School
- Transcript
- Tuition
- University

*Source: Access College Foundation*
Directions: Try to find all 24 words going vertical, horizontal or diagonally

- Admissions
- Application
- Bachelors
- Books
- Careers
- Classes
- College
- Diploma
- Education
- Essay
- Financial Aid
- Grants
- High School
- Housing
- Institute
- Loans
- Program
- Requirements
- Sat Score
- Scholarships
- Trade School
- Transcript
- Tuition
- University

*Source: Access College Foundation