

# COLLEGE TERMINOLOGY

**Academic Advisor:** Academic advisors help students select the correct courses, review the course requirements, and assists with any academic problems students may encounter. At COM, students may receive advisement from their Faculty and/or the Student Success Center, located in the Enrollment Center.

**Academic Probation:** All colleges require students to maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) to remain in school. Any student not maintaining satisfactory progress toward his/her educational objectives will be placed on probation for a semester.

**Alumni:** An alumni is a person who has graduated from the institution. A male is called an alumnus, while a female is called an alumna.

**ACT and SAT:** These letters are acronyms for the American College Test (ACT) and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Both tests are designed to measure a student's level of knowledge in basic areas such as math, science, English and social studies. Colleges may require the results of either the ACT or SAT before granting admission. COM does not require ACT or SAT scores, but COM will waive testing requirements if an applicant has certain ACT and/or SAT scores. SAT and ACT scores are valid for five years.

**Application/Acceptance/Admission:** Application is the process by which a prospective student submits the required forms and credentials to his/her chosen institution. Application criteria may include one or more of the following: previous academic records, test scores, interviews, recommendations, and other information provided by the applicant. Depending on the application requirements of a particular school, the student can gain acceptance to the institution if the decision to accept the application is positive. COM students may be admitted by any one of the following methods:

1. Graduation from an accredited high school.
2. High School Equivalency Diploma (GED).
3. Transfer from another college.
4. Individual approval.
5. Special admission.

Admission is the status granted to an applicant who meets the prescribed entrance requirements of the institution. Application/Acceptance/Admission policies of colleges and universities vary widely. Students who wish to transfer to another college or university should review that college catalog for specific requirements.

**Associate Degree:** The Associate Degree is granted upon completion of a program of 60 credit hours with a cumulative GPA of 2.0 (a "C" average), exclusive of physical education activity courses or military science courses. Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees are conferred upon students who successfully complete programs designed for transfer to a baccalaureate-granting institution.

**Associate of Applied Science Degree:** The Associate of Applied Science degree is conferred upon students who successfully complete a program designed to lead the individual directly into employment in a specific career. The Applied Science degree has the same requirements as those stated above for the Associates Degree, but are generally non-transferable to another college or university.

**Audit:** A student who does not want to receive credit or a grade in a course may, with approval of the institution, audit the course as a

"visitor". The student usually must pay the tuition for the course. A student who audits a course usually cannot ask or petition the institution at a later date to obtain college credit for the audited course.

**Bachelor's Degree (also called a Baccalaureate Degree):** This degree is the undergraduate degree offered by four-year colleges and universities. The Bachelor of Arts degree requires that a portion of the student's studies be dedicated to the arts (literature, language, music etc.). The Bachelor of Science degree requires that a portion of the studies be dedicated to the sciences (chemistry, biology, math, etc.). The minimum credit hour requirement for a Bachelor's Degree is 120 hours.

**Bookstore:** Most colleges and universities have bookstores on or near the college campus. Bookstores generally stock all the books and other materials required in all the courses offered at the institution, as well as providing basic necessities and clothing items.

**Business Office:** The Business Office is responsible for all financial transactions of the institution. It may also be called the Bursar's Office or the Cashier's Office on some campuses.

**Catalog:** College catalogs provide all types of information parents and students need to know about a school. Catalogs list, for example, the institution's history and philosophy, policies and procedures, accreditation status, course of study, degrees and certificates offered, physical facilities, admission and enrollment procedures, financial aid, student life activities, etc. The catalog is considered the student's contract with the institution.

**Census Day:** Census day is the last day that COM can exchange money, and the classroom official rolls are based on the students enrolled by the 12th class day (census day for a full semester).

**Certificate Programs:** Certificate programs are designed to provide specific job skills for students who need to move quickly into the workforce. At Texas community colleges, certificate hours range between 15-51 vocational credit hours and generally do not require any general education coursework (communications, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, etc.). Level one certificates require between 15-42 credit hours, whereas a Level two certificate requires between 30-51 credit hours.

**CLEP:** The College Level Examination Program (CLEP) can be administered to students who desire to obtain college credit by taking proficiency tests in selected courses. If a student scores high enough on the test, college credit can be awarded. There is a charge for each test taken. Information concerning an individual institution's policies toward CLEP Tests can be found in the institution's catalog.

**College:** A College is an institution of higher education that grants degrees and certificates. The term is also used to designate the organizational units of a university such as the College of Education or the College of Engineering.

**Commuter College:** Some colleges do not have on-campus housing, and all students live off campus and commute to the college for classes. COM is a commuter college.

**Concurrent Enrollment:** A student can enroll and attend two educational institutions at the same time provided that certain criteria are met. For example: In Texas, high school juniors and seniors can concurrently enroll in high school and in college provided they meet established criteria. A college student can concurrently enroll at two higher education

institutions provided that certain criteria are met. Permission for concurrent enrollments is generally made in advance.

**Counselor:** A counselor is a professionally trained staff person who is available to assist student with self-assessment, academic questions, vocational information, normal-range personal problems, and can make referrals to other agencies as needed.

**Course Numbers:** All COM courses are identified by numbers containing 4 digits. If the first numeral is 1, the course is freshman level; the numeral 2 designates a sophomore level course. The second numeral indicates the credit in semester hours. The third and fourth numbers indicate the type and course sequence.

**Credit Hours:** Credits are assigned to a course based on how many hours a week it meets (i.e., a 3 credit course meets for 3 hours a week). A specific number of credits are required to graduate.

**Curriculum:** A curriculum is composed of those classes prescribed or outlined by an institution for completion of a program of study leading to a degree or certificate.

**Degrees:** Degrees are rewards for the successful completion of a prescribed program of study. There are three basic types of degrees: 1) Associate: obtainable at a community or junior college, 2) Baccalaureate or Bachelor: offered by four-year colleges and universities, and 3) Graduate: post-baccalaureate degrees (Master's and Doctorate degrees) offered through university graduate schools.

**Degree Requirements:** Requirements prescribed by an institution for completion of a program of study are generally termed degree requirements. Requirements may include a minimum number of hours, required GPA, and prerequisite and elective courses within the specified major and/or minor areas of study.

**Department:** A department is the basic organizational unit in a higher education institution and is responsible for the academic functions in a field of study. This term may also be used in the broader sense to indicate an administrative or service unit of an institution.

**Developmental Courses:** The developmental studies mission is to assist all students in the strengthening of the basic skills necessary for survival in and out of a college environment. Students must take developmental courses if the COM placement test indicates a need for improvement in reading, writing and math. These courses do not apply toward a certificate or degree.

**Division:** A division represents a number of different units of a college or university:

1. an administrative division of an institution usually consisting of more than one department;
2. an academic division of an institution based on the year-level of students, lower and upper division; and
3. a service division of an institution that is composed of a number of service departments, such as the Student Services Division.

**Drop and Add:** Students are generally permitted to drop courses from their class schedules and/or add other courses. Colleges allow varying lengths of time for students to add and drop classes. The college catalog or class schedule should note the correct procedures. Students usually need written approval from designated college officials to initiate the dropping or adding of classes. Some institutions charge a fee for adding and dropping.

**Eight Week Session:** An eight-week session offers courses that are scheduled in the first or last eight weeks of any semester.

**Electives:** Electives are courses that do not fulfill any particular requirement in the student's course of study, but may count toward total graduation requirements.

**Enrollment:** Enrollment is the procedure by which students choose classes each semester. It also includes the assessment and the collection of fees. Students can be deregistered (removed from their classes) if they fail to pay their tuition and fees.

**Extra-Curricular Activities:** These activities are non-classroom activities that can contribute to a well-rounded education including activities as clubs, student government, and recreational and social organizations and events.

**Faculty:** The faculty is composed of persons who teach classes for colleges. Some colleges differentiate between faculty and instructors. Instructors are hired to teach a specific class or classes, while faculty members have contracts with the college that require additional duties beyond teaching.

**Fees:** Fees are additional charges not included in the tuition. Fees may be charged to cover the cost of materials and equipment needed in certain courses, and they may be assessed for student events, programs and publications.

**Final Exams (Finals):** These end-of-the-semester exams are either given during the last week of classes each semester or during a specific week called "Finals Week". The type of final administered in a course is left to the discretion of the instructor. Final exams given during Finals Week are given on specified dates that may be different than the regular class time and are usually two hours in length.

**Financial Aid:** Aid for paying college expenses is made available from grants, scholarships, loans and part-time employment from federal, state, institutional and private sources. Financial aid from these programs may be combined in an "award package" to meet or defray from the cost of education. The types and amounts of aid awarded are based upon financial need, available funds, student classification, academic performance, and sometimes the timeliness of application.

**Free Application for Financial Student Aid (FAFSA):** The FAFSA is a form used by the college financial aid office to collect information about the student's total family income, assets, and expenses in order to analyze the family's potential contribution toward college expenses.

**Fulltime Enrollment:** A full-time student is enrolled in 12 or more credit hours in a semester (full-time status for a summer term may require fewer credit hours).

**Honor Roll:** To be on the Dean's list, a student must have completed a minimum of 12 semester hours with a grade point average of at least 3.5. President's List is earned with a GPA of 4.0. Developmental courses are not used in computing GPA.

**Humanities Courses:** Humanities courses cover subjects such as literature, philosophy, foreign languages, and the fine arts. Most undergraduate degrees require a certain number of humanities credit hours.

**Hybrid:** A hybrid (HY) course is a blend of face-to-face instruction with online learning. In a hybrid course, a significant part of the course

learning is online and as a result, the amount of classroom seat-time is reduced.

**Junior/Community College:** A Junior/Community College is often called a two-year institution of higher education. Course offerings generally include a transfer curriculum with credits transferable toward a bachelor's degree at a four-year college or university, and an occupational or technical curriculum with courses of study designed to prepare students for employment in two years.

**Learning Communities:** A Learning Community is composed of students who take a combination of courses, such as Reading, Psychology for Success and Physical Health as a group. The goal is to increase student success by providing academic and social support for one another as the cohort of students take a set of courses together.

**Lecture Classes:** In lecture classes, students attend class on a regular basis and the instructor lectures on class material.

**Letter Grades/Grade Point Average (GPA):** Most colleges use both letter grades and GPA's using the following method: A's are worth 4 points; B's are worth 3 points; C's are worth 2 points; D's are worth 1 point, and F's are worth 0 points. To calculate a GPA, multiply the number of hours a course is worth by the number of points for the letter grade, then add up the totals for each course and divide by the number of credit hours.

**Laboratory Classes:** Laboratory classes require students to perform certain functions in controlled situations that help them test and understand what is being taught in the lecture class.

**Major/Minor:** A major is a student's chosen field of study and usually requires the successful completion of a specified number of credit hours. A minor is designated as a specific number of credit hours in a secondary field of study.

**Mid-term Exams (Midterms):** During the middle of each semester, instructors may give mid-term exams that test students on the material covered during the first half of the semester. Some classes have only two tests, a midterm and a final.

**Mini-Session:** Mini-sessions are offered between two major semesters, typically fall and spring or spring and summer.

**Non-Credit Courses:** Some courses have zero (0) credit hours and do not meet the requirements for a certificate or degree at a given institution. Non-credit courses (also referred to as continuing education courses) offer students the opportunity to explore new fields of study, increase proficiency in a particular skill area or profession, and develop potential or enrich life experiences.

**Open-Door Institution:** Open-door institutions are usually public junior/community colleges. The term "open-door" refers to an admission policy that states that anyone who meets certain age requirements can be admitted to that college. Open-door admissions policies do not mean, however, that students can take any classes that they choose. Students must meet class pre-requisites in order to enroll in specific classes. COM is an open-door institution.

**Online Courses:** Online courses are offered completely on the computer accessed via the internet. At COM, online courses are referred to as Internet (IN) classes.

**Part-Time Enrollment:** A part-time student is enrolled in fewer than 12 credit hours in a semester.

**Pass/Fail Courses:** Pass/Fail courses do not earn letter grades or grade points for students. If a student passes a pass/fail course, he/she receives a "P" (pass) or "S" (satisfactory) on the transcript and the credit hours. If the student does not pass the course, they will receive an "F" (fail) or "U" (unsatisfactory) on the transcript and no credit hours. Pass/fail courses are not calculated into the student's GPA.

**Prerequisites (Prerequisite Courses):** A prerequisite is a condition that must be met before a student can enroll in a course. The prerequisite can include a specific skill level (a minimum ACT, SAT or basic skills test score) or the completion of a specific course, called a prerequisite course. For example, Accounting I is a prerequisite for Accounting II.

**Private/Public Institutions:** Private and public institutions differ primarily in terms of their source of financial support. Public institutions receive funding from the state or other governmental entities and are administered by public boards. Private institutions rely on income from private donations or from religious or other organizations and student tuition. Boards of trustees govern private institutions.

**Registrar:** The registrar of an institution is responsible for maintaining all academic records. Duties may also include maintenance of class enrollments, providing statistical information on student enrollment, certification of athletic eligibility and student eligibility for honor rolls, certification of the eligibility of veterans, administering probation and retention policies, and verification of the completion of degree requirements for graduation.

**Resident/Non-resident Status:** The amount of tuition a student pays to a public (state supported) college is determined by the student's state residence status. If a student is a resident of the state, then the student pays a lower tuition rate. A non-resident will pay a higher tuition rate. Residency requirements vary from state to state, but are determined by where a student's parents live if the student is younger than a certain age. Tuition rates for private colleges are not based on residency.

**Residential College:** Many colleges have on-campus housing for students, called dormitories. Usually first (and sometimes second) year students are required to live on campus.

**Schedule of Classes:** Colleges publish a Class Schedule for each semester. With the help of Academic Advisors or Faculty Advisor, students make up their own individual class schedules for each semester they are enrolled. Courses are designated in the Class Schedule by course department, course number, time and days the course meets, the room number and building name and the instructor's name. A class schedule is a list of classes a student is taking and includes course name and number time and location of the class. COM's schedule of classes can be found on the college website in WebAdvisor.

**Student Identification Card (ID):** A student ID is usually required in college. A Student ID generally includes a photograph of the student, a student number, the student's name, the name of the college, and the semester enrolled. The ID's require validation each semester. The card is often required for admittance to functions sponsored by the college or for identification when cashing checks or other purposes. COM's ID cards may be obtained in the gym when a receipt for classes is presented.

**Syllabus:** A course syllabus is a summary of the course. It usually contains specific information about the course; information on how to contact the instructor, including the instructor's office location and office hours; an outline of what will be covered in the course, with a schedule of test dates and the due dates for assignments; the grading policy for

the course; and specific classroom rules. Syllabi are usually available to students the first class session.

**TBA:** This acronym stands for “to be announced” and is used when information is not available at the time of schedules are made available to students.

**Transcript:** The transcript is a permanent academic record of a student at a college. It may show courses attempted, grades received, academic status, and honors received. Colleges do not release transcripts if a student owes money to the college.

**Transfer of Credits:** Some students attend more than one institution during their college careers and will wish for accumulated credit hours from the former institution to transfer to the new institution. To transfer credits, a student must have an official transcript sent to the new institution, which will determine the courses that will apply toward graduation requirements.

**TRiO Program:** TRiO began with Upward Bound, which emerged out of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 in response to the administration’s War on Poverty. In 1965, Talent Search, the second outreach program, was created as part of the Higher Education Act. In 1968, Student Support Services, which was originally known as Special Services for Disadvantaged Students, was authorized by the Higher Education Amendments and became the third in a series of educational opportunity programs. By the late 1960’s, the term “TRiO” was coined to describe these federal programs.

**Tuition:** Tuition is the amount paid for each credit hour of enrollment. Tuition does not include the cost of books, fees, or room and board. Tuition charges vary among colleges and are dependent on such factors as resident or out-of-state status, level of classes enrolled in (lower, upper or graduate division), and whether the institution is publicly or privately financed.

**Tutor:** A tutor is a person, generally another student, who has completed and/or demonstrated proficiency in a course or subject and is able to provide instruction to another student. Tutors usually help students better understand course material.

**Twelve Week Course:** These courses begin four weeks after the regular semester has begun, or end four weeks prior to the end of a regular semester.

**Undergraduate:** An undergraduate is a student who is pursuing either a certificate or an Associate or Baccalaureate degree.

**University:** A University is composed of undergraduate, graduate and professional colleges and offers degrees in each.

**Virtual College of Texas (VCT):** The Virtual College of Texas is a collaborative of Texas community and technical colleges. Through VCT, students may register at their local colleges to take credit and non-credit distance learning courses from other colleges throughout Texas.

**Web Enhanced Courses:** These courses are traditional lecture courses; however, students will be required to access assignments or information via the internet.

**Withdrawal:** Students may withdraw from courses during a semester, but there are established procedures for doing so. The college catalog and/or Class Schedule generally specify the procedures. Written approval from a college or university official must be obtained. Classes from which a

student withdraws are usually listed on the student’s transcript, and the student is responsible for paying the tuition and fees for the class.