Most colleges and universities in the U.S. offer programming in the summer for high school-age students. The programs vary by topic, duration, and cost, but all offer an opportunity to get better acquainted with the college and their undergraduate student experience. Below we outline all the factors you should consider when deciding whether or not a pre-college summer program is how you want to spend your break.

**What are the benefits of a pre-college summer program?**

**Experience college life**

Most college summer programs will offer a residential or commuter option, meaning you can get a very real sense for what it would be like to attend that college as an undergraduate. Rather than a college tour (which you should also try to do), this can be a great way to really get to know the colleges you're seriously considering attending! Even if you don’t end up attending the institution, the experience of living like a college student in the summer can be a helpful step to prepare you for the transition from high school to college.

**Meet prospective students and broaden your community**

Colleges and universities attract students from all over the state, nation, and often times from other countries. You can get a taste for that breadth of background and experiences when you attend a pre-college summer program, and learn with students outside of your high school or hometown. These friends might even become peers you consult down the road as you think about where you want to apply to college.

**Explore your academic interests and deepen your knowledge**

There’s summer coursework available for a broad array of academic and career interests, from journalism, to performance art, to STEM, to everything in between. This can be a great opportunity to explore a field of interest with greater depth, as you’ll be immersed in college-level material while collaborating with other students who share your interest in the subject. The experience can inform your academic planning for the coming school year and/or your college application decisions—if you loved that summer film course you’ll likely want to consider colleges with great media and art major programs!

**Earn micro-scholarships for attending a college summer program**



Attending a pre-college summer program can be an opportunity to not only demonstrate interest in the college, but show your commitment to your academic growth by pursuing studies in the summertime. Further, in some cases an academic pre-college summer program can count as college credit, so take the time to read the details of programs you may be considering. There are currently 101 colleges on RaiseMe that award a micro-scholarship for attending their summer program. Log in to your student account to see which colleges offer this award!

**What factors should I consider when deciding on a pre-college summer program?**

**Cost of Attendance and Financial Aid**

Most pre-college summer programs have a tuition cost to enroll and many will have an additional fee for room and board if you are interested in living on campus. Some programs are very expensive; however, many will offer financial aid for demonstrated need and/or will have scholarship opportunities. When researching programs with scholarships, QuestBridge is a good place to start!

*(https://www.questbridge.org/high-school-students/college-prep-scholars/summer-programs)*

**Location**

Location is an important factor when considering where to apply to college, and it’s also a key factor when applying to a summer program. In most cases, tuition for a summer program will not include the travel costs to campus, so keep this in mind when weighing the cost-benefit of particular programs.

**Duration**

Pre-college summer programs can vary in length from as little as two weeks to as long as eight weeks. It’s important to think about how much of your summer you can devote to a program and reflect on what you hope to get out of the experience. In theory, the longer the program, the more time you’ll have to really get to know your peer group, campus life, and the academic material.

**How can I find the right pre-college summer program for me?**

One of the best resources we’ve found to search for summer programs is College Greenlight. *(http://blog.collegegreenlight.com/blog/2018-summer-programs-with-financial-aid/)*

The programs listed are all very high-quality and can be attended at low cost and/or provide many financial aid opportunities. Additionally, Summer Program Finder let’s you filter your search by academic interest, cost, region, duration, and keyword.

*(http://summerprogramfinder.com/find-a-summer-program/)*

To enroll, most pre-college summer programs require an application, with deadlines starting as early as February. For summer 2018 there are still programs whose application deadlines have not passed! Here are a few you may consider:

1. [Rensselaer PREFACE Summer Program](https://info.rpi.edu/pre-college-initiatives)
2. [St. John’s Summer Academy](https://www.sjc.edu/summer-academy)
3. [University of Chicago Summer Bridge Program for Chicago Public School Students](https://collegebridge.uchicago.edu/summer-bridge)
4. [Indiana University Bloomington High School Journalism Institute](http://mediaschool.indiana.edu/hsji/)

For those of you that are rising sophomores and juniors, take some time to research pre-college programs at length so you can discuss with your counselors and be prepared to apply in spring semester of 2019!

Keep in mind, pre-college programming is just one of many ways that you can pursue fun, enriching, and academic experiences in the summertime. Stay tuned for more resources on how you can make the most of your time off from school!