

Federal Student Aid (FSA) Portal – Release 2

XAP Student Portal Functional Modules

Submitted To:

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INTRODUCTION

This section of the proposal is devoted to a description of the primary functional modules comprising the Student Portal system shown below:

Primary Modules:

1. Student Profile Database
2. Apply – Online Admissions Applications
3. Go to College – College Search Tools
4. Get Money – Financial Aid, Scholarship Search
5. Prepare – Academic Timeline, Student Planner
6. Plan a Career – Interest Assessment, Career Matching Assistant, Career Lists
7. MyFSA – Personal Portfolio
8. Support – Technical Assistance, Frequently Asked Questions, Help Line

1. STUDENT PROFILE DATABASE

The student profile module contains the data input, data storage, security measures, and data retrieval capabilities to permit student data to be inputted, stored, and used repeatedly by the student for multiple purposes. The student may use the profile data to:

- Populate (complete) admissions applications
- Provide data required by the Student Portal Student Planner module
- Populate the Scholarship Search profile
- Store career information in the Career Portfolio
- Populate additional forms and applications

Student data will be secured by limiting access to the data for display, modification, and update purposes. Data access will require a user identification (userid) and password.

The data input function and database design will take into account a wide variety of applications and forms to maximize the functional utility of the Student Portal Student Profile module. Although not all of the applications and forms will be functional from a retrieval and form population standpoint upon the release of the Student Portal, the system will be designed to collect and store the information required to support these forms/applications.

2. ONLINE APPLICATION

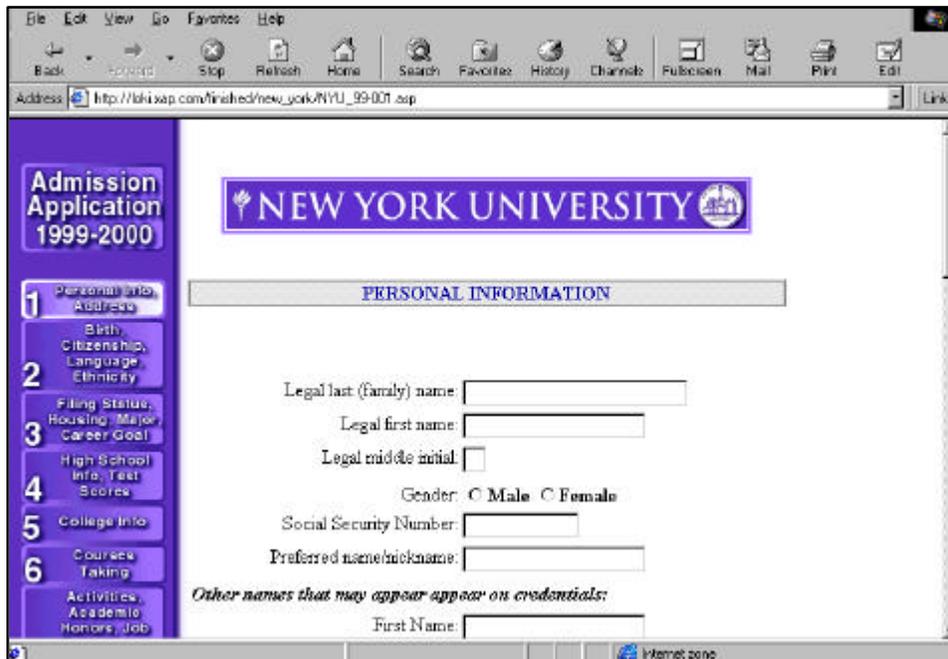
When students are ready to apply to college, the Student Portal permits students to conveniently link to online admission applications developed by Xap for colleges and universities throughout the country. All college that utilizes Xap's online application process will be represented in the application section. By merely pointing and clicking, applicants may send completed applications electronically to their appropriate destinations. After applicants submit their applications, they will be able to close the Xap national website window and return to the Student Portal. In this manner, the student's



applications can be electronically delivered from the Student Portal and automatically uploaded to the Student Information System at selected campuses, thereby eliminating the need for manual data entry and enabling student notification much sooner than with the traditional paper application. The applications are available to students online. All required information is automatically checked for accuracy, consistency, and completeness. Students may pay the application-processing fee via check, fee waiver, or credit card payment with the fee going directly to the campus where the student applied.

Xap Corporation is the leader in providing computerized electronic applications in the U.S. Several of Xap customers are successful in their software distribution and marketing to such an extent that for our most successful customers, in excess of 70% of their total applicant pools were derived from Xap computerized applications (online and downloadable/uploadable). Last year, Xap computerized applications were available on the Internet (online and downloadable) in addition to downloadable/uploadable versions, and almost 300,000 electronic applications were received by Xap customers. A captured screen image of a sample, online application is shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Xap's Online Application Sample



The primary objectives of computerized admission applications are:

For Campuses:

- Reduce costs (eliminate manual data entry)
- Improve accuracy of data
- Provide greater access to students
- Shorten notification time

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For Students:

- Make completing the application easier
- Make completing the application faster
- Provide a higher quality application
- Check the application for completeness and consistency

The computerized applications are designed so that the student may complete the application in multiple sessions if so desired. Through the use of a private User Identification and Password, the student may retrieve data previously inputted and stored, and complete any fields previously left blank. The student may also change fields as desired, and in this manner, application submission to multiple campuses is made very fast and convenient.

There is no other electronic application equivalent in features to the XAPplication™. It was designed with the "voice of the customer," with both the university customer and the student user customer in mind. The XAPplication™ is a customized electronic application for admission, designed to reduce costs, save time, and improve efficiencies within the Admissions Office. For the applicant, the XAPplication™ provides an easy-to-use program that improves the quality of students' applications and greatly reduces their preparation time. Because of its in-depth, multiple field edit/data check capability, Xap's application is the only electronic application that provides a full Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) process. This process can transfer validated and error-free applicant responses directly to each campus' student information system (SIS) without the need for manual data entry.

The online applications contain the following features to assist the student in understanding the questions and filling out the application accurately and quickly:

- A **private and secure national student database** created and accessed by the student. The database allows students to create student profiles, apply to multiple institutions, and save application information and complete the forms at a later time. Fields in the application are automatically populated from information in the student database. Xap monitors the application when a student submits it, notifying her/him when the institution successfully receives the application.
- An in-depth **data check capability**, including multiple-field data checks to ensure the elimination of inconsistencies, errors, and omissions. This feature is key to the use of a total EDI process, allowing data to be entered directly into each institution's SIS without the need for manual data entry or additional checking.
- **Messages** to help the applicant understand each question.
- A special **browse** function that informs the applicant where he/she is within the application, and permits the applicant to move about the application out of sequence, as he/she wishes.
- A **code translation "pop-up menu" user interface** that virtually eliminates all coding errors (e.g., high schools and colleges will be provided in CEEB codes).



- **Secure Internet and database servers** capable of accommodating 10,000 student applications per 10-hour day.
- **Pop-up menus** for fields with multiple options.
- Interactive notification of **major status** based on current information provided by each campus to assist the student in selecting a major that is "open."
- A **certification page** for students to complete prior to submitting the application page. We offer two options for completing the certification page, depending upon the preference of the campus: 1) the application is submitted entirely online with online certification, with the enrolling student's signature obtained at a later date, or 2) a certification page is printed, signed, and submitted via U.S. mail (together with the application processing fee).
- **Fee payment options**, at the discretion of the institution, to allow for payment by check or by credit card. The institution also has the option of providing online fee waivers.
- **Printing options** to allow the applicant to keep a hard copy of the application for his/her records.

2.1 Application Manager

To make it even easier to use the online application, Xap Corporation offers a special Application Manager, shown in Figure 2.3 below:

Figure 2.3: Application Manager

Submitted Applications

These are the college admissions applications you have completed and submitted on xap.com or any Xap powered site (Xap Mentor™ sites). You can view your application submittal screen by clicking the name of the college. The Retrieved on date is the date on which the college downloads your application.

Application	Term	Submitted On	Retrieved On
University of St. Thomas	F2001	12/4/2000 11:27 AM	5/16/2001 11:57 AM
Wayne Community College	Fall 2001	2/20/2001 11:38 AM	6/27/2001 1:16 PM
West Hills College	2002SP	11/16/2001 1:57 PM	11/16/2001 1:57 PM

Applications in Progress

These are the college admissions applications you have started but not yet completed on xap.com or any Xap powered site (Xap Mentor™ sites). You can go directly to your application by clicking the name of the college or you may remove this application from your XapPack by clicking the x icon next to the school you want deleted. You can also see when you started and last worked on your college applications. To begin a new application, go to the [Apply](#) section or use the search box in the left column.

Application	On Page	Started On	Last Modified	Delete
Adelphi University	1	7/11/2001 7:08 AM	7/12/2001 8:07 AM	
Alamance Community College	3	2/9/2001 11:13 AM	2/14/2001 1:57 PM	
Appalachian State University	1	10/11/2000 1:34 PM	1/4/2002 2:46 PM	



Access to select the campus to which the student is applying is menu driven. Of course, all data entered into the application for any campus will be used to populate the application for any other campus. In addition to selecting a campus, the Application Manager shows students when the applications were last edited, the terms for which they are applying, and the dates submitted. In addition, the applicant receives automatic confirmation that the campus has received the application. Overall, the Application Manager is a great help in reminding applicants where they are in the application process.

2.2 Campus Preferences and Control

Through the Control Center, Xap Corporation offers unique and highly useful tools to colleges that provide direct control over the application process, prospective student data, and institutional data that resides on Xap systems. Colleges have access to the Control Center by way of the Internet, protected by private user identifications and passwords.

The Control Center is tool that allows colleges to:

- Download and/or filter applications submitted online
- Open and close admission applications under several conditions
- Open and close majors
- Post notices to applicants in real-time
- Download and filter lists of prospective students
- Update in real-time the information which appears for each college on the Student Portal site.

3. GO TO COLLEGE

During the "Exploration" and Pre-application" phases of the program, the student shall be given the opportunity to explore and understand his/her educational opportunities. Xap will design a user interface for the Go to College section of the Xap national website for the Student Portal. The Go to College section will provide prospective students with an opportunity to explore their higher education options. In addition to understanding overall educational opportunities, a comparison among campuses encompassing several important university selection parameters will be presented to the student. Although it is assumed that all of the information presented in this section may be found on websites for each individual campus, and although the Student Portal Program does not generally intend to reproduce campus website information, it is deemed to be beneficial to the student to have certain data provided in a single area segmented by function rather than scattered across a large number of campus websites.

3.1 College Finder

The College Finder will allow students to select multiple parameters from several categories and ranges within those parameters that match their interests and needs. The results display all of the institutions that match the parameters and the percentage of parameters matched. Users will then be able to apply or link to more detailed information. The categories include those that are on www.xap.com, which currently are:



- Type of Institution
- Location
- Setting
- Size
- Academics
- Cost
- Campus Life
- Student Body

The College Finder will use data from the Common Data Set, a standard data set containing data from colleges and universities nationwide. In order to verify the accuracy of the information, campus representatives have an opportunity to review and update that information posted for their specific campuses. Campus updates are provided electronically, using the security measures established for this program, in a format specified by Xap.

A sample screen for the College Finder, showing the matching campuses, is displayed in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: College Finder Sample Screen

The screenshot shows the College Finder interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons for home, apply, go to college, get money, prepare, plan a career, and support. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with 'college selection' and 'campus tours'. The main content area features a 'go to college' button and a progress indicator with steps: type, location, setting, academics, size, cost, campus life, student body, and 'your results!'. The 'your results!' step is highlighted in yellow. Below the progress indicator, the text reads 'search results' and '1 - 50 of 199 possible matches. They are listed in order of best match, then alphabetically.' A table follows, listing colleges with their match percentages and buttons for 'Key Facts', 'Apply Online', 'Campus Tour', 'Contact Info', and 'Add to XapPack'.

College	Key Facts	Apply Online	Campus Tour	Contact Info	Add to XapPack
CSU San Marcos (86%)		APPLY			
CSU Stanislaus (86%)		APPLY			
Sonoma State University (86%)		APPLY			
Azusa Pacific University (81%)					
Claremont McKenna College (81%)					
Dominican University of California (81%)					
Pitzer College (81%)					
Scripps College (81%)					
UC San Diego (81%)					
Bethany College (76%)					
Biola University (76%)					
Cal Poly San Luis Obispo (76%)		APPLY			

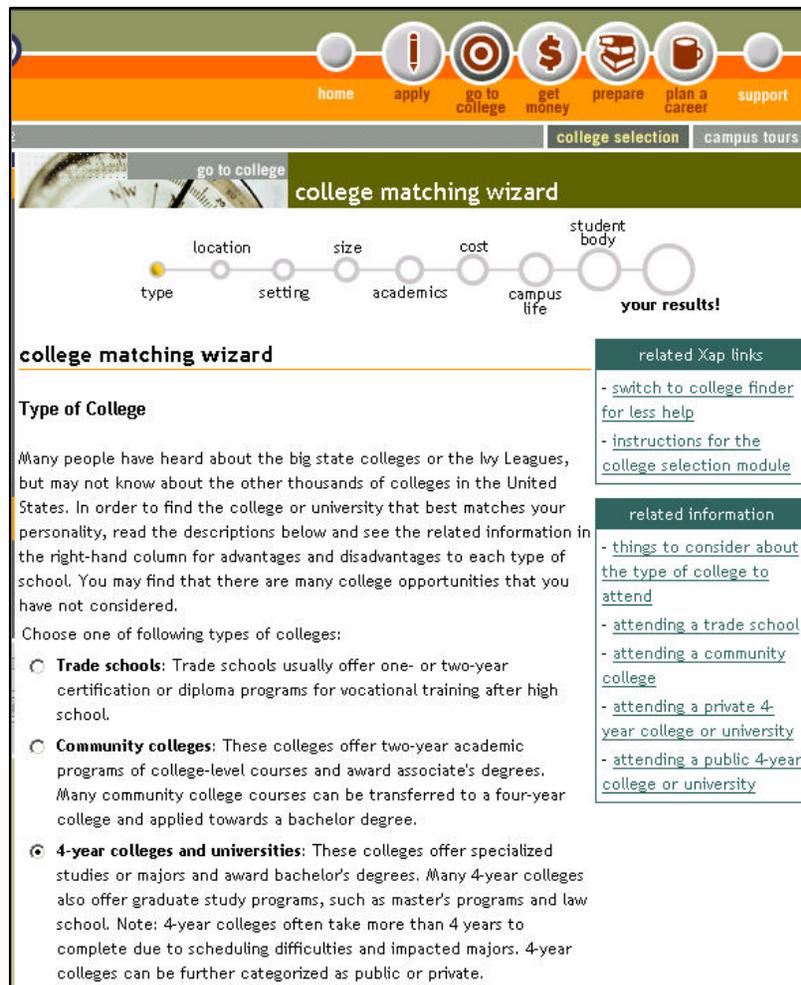
Certain parameters are too difficult to quantify/rank. This type of information will be located in the Campus Tours module of the Student Portal. In addition, students will also be directed to the campuses' individual websites.

3.2 College Matching Wizard

The Student Portal College Matching Wizard provides a similar format to the College Finder. Students select parameters from several categories, and resulting colleges are displayed according to how closely they match those parameters. However, the College Matching Wizard provides additional help to prospective students, particularly those beginning the college search process. Each screen provides descriptions and general guidance for students, thereby allowing them to make better-informed selections.

Figure 3.2 displays some of the detail provided in the Matching Wizard.

Figure 3.2: College Matching Wizard Sample Screen





The data for the College Matching Wizard will come from the Common Data Set, a standard data set containing data from colleges and universities nationwide. In order to verify the accuracy of the information, campus representatives will have an opportunity to review and update that information posted for their specific campuses. Campus updates will be provided electronically, using the security measures established for this program, in a format specified by Xap. Xap will use its best efforts to determine and validate missing data; however, if Xap cannot determine and validate certain data, a match will not be made for that parameter during the system's search.

3.3 Campus Tours

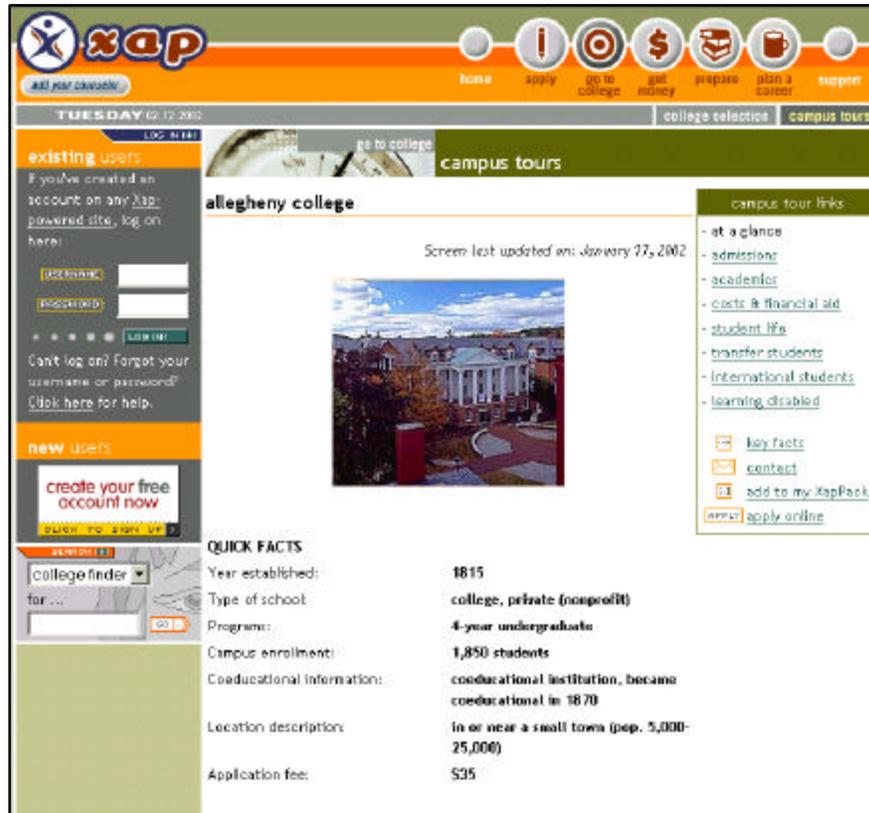
As part of the Student Portal, Xap will provide an interface to the Campus Tours section of Xap's national website. The Campus Tours section will permit students to "visit" campuses online and learn about several aspects of each campus. Each campus tour contains the following generic sections in addition to specialized information submitted by each campus.

- At a Glance
- Admissions
- Academics
- Costs and Financial Aid
- Student life
- Transfer Students
- International Students

Although the format provides consistency among the various campus tours, campus-specific information, such as photos, artwork, and colors, promote individuality. In addition, campuses may submit audio and video clips, as well as Quicktime™ virtual reality tours, to include in the campus tours section for students to access.

Figure 3.3 displays a sample page from one of the campus tours.

Figure 3.3: Campus Tour Sample



4. FINANCIAL AID

Xap recognizes that ED has a wealth of student aid functionality and content, and that the functions and concepts included in this section may be repetitive and/or not needed. Since ED's websites and the Student Portal proposed here will work together in a seamless fashion, ED can select any part of the work described below, as it desires.

A large number of Internet sites and print publications offer information on financial aid. Some Internet websites contain worksheets or calculators for estimating the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and loan payments. A typical guide to student financial aid contains about 100 pages of text replete with a large number of new terms. Most students and parents find this information overwhelming and difficult to assimilate since it may not all be applicable/relevant to their own financial situation.

We propose to work closely with the Department of Education to design and develop a new, interactive module that leads parents and students through steps for building a financial aid portfolio, and presents information that "matches" the data entered by the user in customized worksheets. This new module, which might be called the Financial Aid Wizard, will allow parents and students to personalize, store, and view information in simple steps. It will also display up-to-date information from the Department of Education on federal financial aid programs.



The Financial Aid Wizard will allow a student or parent to create his/her own personalized view of financial aid. It will save them from reading many pages of text with information and definitions that may not be pertinent to their financial situation.

The primary objective of the Financial Aid Wizard is to guide the user through the steps for estimating his/her financial need, and build a financial aid portfolio. The content and steps of the Financial Aid Wizard will be customized jointly with the U.S. Department of Education. The following six steps (shown in the table below) offer an example of how the Wizard might be comprised.

Table 1: Financial Aid Wizard Steps

Steps	Worksheets/Customized Content
1. Cost of Attendance	Cost of attendance worksheet with personalized list of colleges
2. Scholarship Search	List of scholarships from scholarship search utility
3. EFC, Federal Grants, Other Grants/Aid	Interactive calculator that computes EFC, Pell, and other aid programs
Deadlines	Table listing forms and filing deadlines for selected colleges and option to add deadlines to personal calendar.
5. FAFSA	Automatic transfer of data to FAFSA-on-the-web
6. Award Letters	Worksheet for entering award letters, and a comparison utility for comparing award letters

Step 1: Cost of attendance worksheet

The cost of attendance worksheet allows a user to search for, and enter colleges of interest into a worksheet. The system automatically fills in cost data from its database for tuition, room and board, additional fees, books and supplies, and all other miscellaneous expenses. The student is advised to check these numbers with the colleges and update them as needed. Each entry in this worksheet will be an editable field, and the user may type over the information that is automatically filled in from the database.

This first step establishes the baseline costs for colleges of interest. The data fields within the cost of attendance worksheet will be customized to specifications provided by the Department of Education. In this step, the Wizard will also convey the message that college is affordable, and encourage the users to explore the next steps to develop a plan to pay for college costs.

Step 2: Scholarship Search

This step will provide free scholarship search. The Student Portal will search the Xap database of scholarship data to provide a list of scholarships, including descriptions and contact information, that best meet the student's profile. The student is strongly encouraged to discover and apply for relevant scholarships. This step will also highlight any U.S. Department of Education or federally sponsored scholarship programs.

Step 3: EFC Estimator



The purpose of the EFC estimator is to introduce students and parents to the EFC and provide a quick estimate of the EFC, federal awards such as Pell, and subsidized Stafford loans. The EFC estimator will have three screens. The questions on the first screen will classify the user as a dependent or an independent. The second screen will collect income information for the student (and parents if dependent). The third screen (output screen) will display the EFC, Pell Grant eligibility and subsidized Stafford Loan eligibility. If there is a gap in the funding, the student/parent will be shown additional aid programs such as state and university sponsored awards, unsubsidized Stafford Loans, PLUS loans (for parents of dependent students) and private loans. This step will display the most up-to-date information on federal programs.

Step 4: Financial aid deadlines

Step 4 will display the priority closing dates for FAFSA, institution forms, state aid form, CSS/PROFILE form (if required) and any other relevant forms for the colleges selected in Step 1.

Step 5: FAFSA-on-the-Web

Step 5 introduces the student to the FAFSA form and provides strong encouragement to file the FAFSA using FAFSA-on-the-web. The Student Portal will automatically transfer data fields that are approved by the Department of Education to the FAFSA on the Web.

Step 6: Comparison of award letters

This step will allow a student to compare his/her award letters using summary metrics such as grant to loan ratio, and self-help to grant ratio. When a student or parent inputs the data from award letters, the Wizard automatically computes these ratios and displays them in a table for students to review and compare. This step also provides guidelines for comparing award letters using these ratios and other criteria.

The interactive steps within the Financial Aid Wizard offer an excellent medium to display relevant information and updates from the Department of Education to the students and parents. The Wizard through its interactive worksheets and presentation of relevant financial aid programs provides a powerful and unique tool for parents and students to obtain comprehensive and current information for building a strong financial aid portfolio.



The following figure shows the main page of the Get Money section on Xap's national website.

Figure 2: Financial Aid



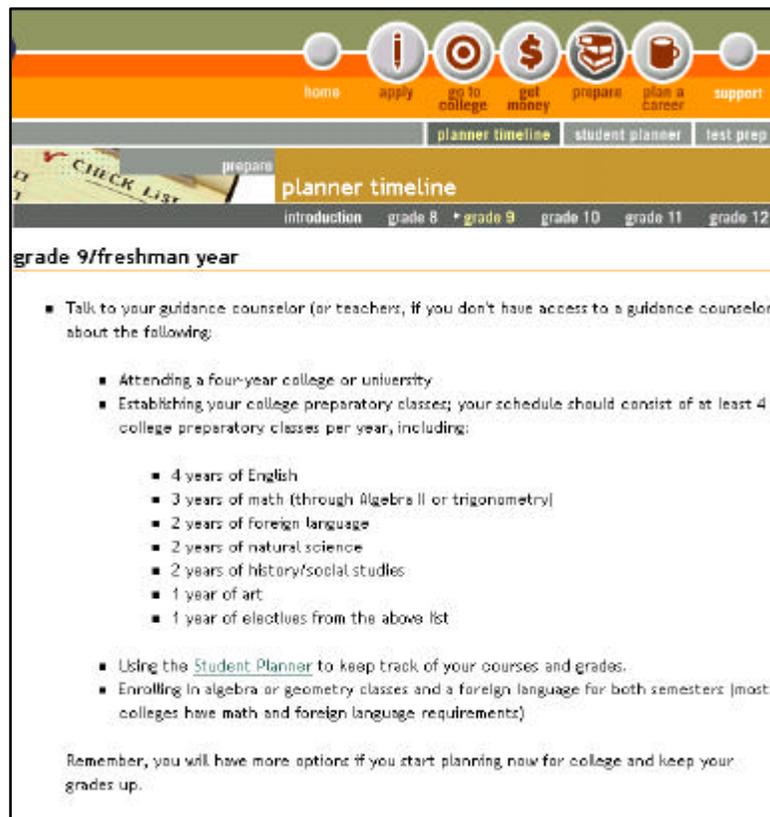
5. ACADEMIC PREPARATION

An important section within the Student Portal is the Prepare section, which will include features to assist prospective students with preparing academically for college. Xap will design a user interface for the Prepare section of the Xap national website for the Student Portal. The section will include the Planner Timeline and the Student Planner.

5.1 Planner Timeline

The Planner Timeline will provide students with general guidance on what steps to take to prepare for college, beginning with academic preparation, and continuing through the college exploration, application and financial aid processes. In addition, the Timeline provides recommendations on courses and actions to take for students in grades 8 through 12. A sample screen, Figure 5.1 is shown in the following figure.

Figure 5.1: Planner Timeline



5.2 Student Planner

The purpose of the Planner is to maximize the student's opportunity for admission while planning for solid entrance requirements. The Student Planner will be designed to allow students to transfer data from their multi-use, private database to the Student Planner in order to avoid re-entering data already stored in their database.

The Student Planner will be designed to provide general guidance for prospective first-time freshmen. Students will have an opportunity to enter past, current, or future high school courses, dividing the courses according to generally recommended subject areas (e.g., math, science, English, language, etc.). Students will then be able to compare their self-entered course work with minimum required



levels of proficiency and recommended levels of proficiency. These required and recommended levels of proficiency will be college or university specific, based on data gathered from institutions.

On the basis of their comparisons, students can either confirm that they are on track to satisfy course requirements, or adjust their schedules to be in a better position to meet those requirements.

An example comparison results from the Student Planner is shown in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2: Student Planner – Courses Processed Data

Abilene Christian University										
High School Units	Agriculture	Art	English	Foreign Language	History / Social Studies	Math	Natural / Physical Science	Elective	Other	Total
Required	0	0	4	2	3	3	3	1	0	16
Recommended	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Completed	0	0	3	2	3	3	3	0	0	14
Completion Status **	C	C	NC	C	C	C	C	NC	C	

Allegheny College										
High School Units	Agriculture	Art	English	Foreign Language	History / Social Studies	Math	Natural / Physical Science	Elective	Other	Total
Required	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Recommended	0	0	4	2	3	3	3	2	0	17
Completed	0	0	3	2	3	3	3	0	0	14
Completion Status **	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	

6. PLAN A CAREER

The Student Portal’s Career Planner is a “One-Stop-Shop” assistant for career planning, beginning with student interest assessment, translating the student’s interests to vocational tracks, describing vocations and providing associated in-state starting salaries, specifying programs and majors required for vocations of interest, and listing which schools of interest offer those programs and majors.

Interest assessments and translations of interests to career paths are handled by Career Key™ which will be licensed for use on the Student Portal by Xap.

Xap has access to the U.S. Department of Labor’s national careers database. Using the Career Finder, users can search for careers that match their interests, educational level, abilities, preferred working environment, preferred industries, and general work activities.

Figure 6.1: Plan a Career

7. MyFSA

The MyFSA will allow users to store information for future use. The areas in the MyFSA will be consistent with those provided on www.xap.com and include the following:

- Calendar – users can access a personal calendar to view personal and college events on a daily, weekly or monthly basis.
- Applications – allows a user to track the progress of applications that the user has begun on the Student Portal.
- Colleges – allows users to store and access colleges selected by the user. When appropriate, this function automatically populates worksheets and tables hosted on the system with the selected colleges.
- Student Profile – allows users to store and access personal information. The Profile automatically populates forms on the Student Portal.
- Financial Aid – allows a user to store and access scholarship information, expected family contribution estimates (EFC), and college costs.
- Careers – allows users to store and access career and major information.