Sometimes college terms can feel like an entirely different language. Use this alphabetically organized tool to decode the college process! Underlined words throughout are links, click away!

**Part 1: General College Terms**

**Part 2: WCC Specific Terms**

**General College Terms**

**Academic Advisor:** Someone who helps you with planning which classes to take, and provides you guidance in reaching your academic goals. The Academic Advisor can be comparable to a high school counselor that you might work with at a high school.

**Admitted:** Being admitted to a college or university means that you can enroll in classes there, and be a student! Usually, after being admitted, there are some follow-up steps you’ll take to prepare for the first day of school.

**Applying to college:** Applying to college is your way of saying that you’d like to be a student there. It involves submitting a form (application) where you provide your personal information, and sometimes, additional items like an essay about yourself or letters
of recommendation. Some applications cost money, and some are free.

**Associate Degree:** A college degree, usually earned in about two years, with about 60 credits; including general education courses, electives, and courses required to advance towards a specific college major. Also commonly referred to as a transfer degree. Different types include, but are not limited to, **Associate in Arts & Sciences**, **Associate in Science**, and **Associate in Business**.

**Add/drop period:** Time frame when students can drop or add courses to their course load without consequences, including incomplete marks on their transcript.

**Bachelor’s Degree:** A college degree, usually earned with about 120 credits, and usually takes a full time student about 4 years to complete. About 80% of WCC students are working towards completing an **Associate Degree** (essentially the first portion of a Bachelor’s) to transfer to a University where the Bachelor’s Degree options are vast.

**Campus:** The physical buildings and grounds of the college

**Cohort:** A group of students working through a curriculum together towards the same degree.

**Community College:** A college option where students can access higher education beyond high school at an affordable cost in their local community. Many community colleges focus on 2-year associate degrees, transfer degrees and professional technical degrees, although some also offer bachelor’s degree options!
**Credits:** The measurement of time spent per week in a college class. College classes will usually be between 2 and 5 credits.

**Degree Plan:** A degree plan is a planning document that helps you determine which courses you should take each quarter to earn your degree. You can work on your degree plan independently or with your Academic Advisor.

**Financial Aid:** Money that students can apply for, provided by federal and state agencies, to support students in paying for college. Students can apply with either the FAFSA or the WASFA application.

**First-Generation Student:** A college student who is the first in their family to go to college. An experience that is celebrated and honored at WCC.

**GPA:** GPA stands for Grade Point Average, which is a number from 0 - 4.0 that represents a student's collective grades from all of the credits they've earned.

**Hybrid Degree:** Also called a blended degree, hybrid programs combine traditional learning on campus with online components.

**Instructor:** Instructor, faculty, and professor all kind of mean the same thing - they are your teacher! The person leading the class.

**Lecture:** The talking portion of your college class, when the instructor is sharing out information.

**Major:** The specific area of study that a student focuses on within
their bachelor’s degree, in addition to the foundation of general education courses.

**Minor:** A secondary focus that often complements the major. For example, a student might Major in Psychology and Minor in Sociology.

**Office Hours:** Office hours are times offered by instructors (in-person, or virtually) for students to drop in to ask questions and receive guidance one on one about the class, assignments, etc. In addition to office hours, students can also make unique appointments to connect with their instructors if needed.

**Open Enrollment:** Open enrollment refers to colleges allowing all applicants to attend, as long as they have a high school diploma or a GED.

**Orientation:** An event, either in-person or virtually online, to support students who are new to the college in getting prepared for their first day. Usually Orientation will contain information about campus resources, how to choose classes, how to register for classes, and generally how to be a successful student.

**Placement:** The placement process will differ slightly per college. Placement determines your academic starting point to inform which level of courses it makes most sense for you to register for. It is important to choose placement wisely especially if you have a time frame in which you want to complete your degree in. If you place too low, it will take longer to get into college level courses and you will not be able to go up into a more difficult course. If you place too high you are still able to drop the class and register for a class that matches your abilities best.
Prerequisites: Classes that must be completed in order for a student to advance into the next course, and often in preparation for applying to a Major. Often, prerequisites will be taken within an associate/transfer degree.

Professional Technical Certificate: A specialized education in which the student learns technical skills that will prepare them for a job in that field. For example, Massage Therapy, Paralegal Studies, or Visual Communication. About 20% of WCC students are working towards a PTC.

Registration/Registering: The process of planning your courses every semester, and reserving your place in the class by paying the tuition bill. Essentially, 'signing up' for each of your classes.

Residency: A student’s cost of tuition can be impacted by whether or not they are a resident of the state, or a non-resident. State residents will pay in-state tuition, whereas non-residents typically must pay out-of-state tuition. Residency is usually determined by physically living in a state for at least one year. Each college will have residency staff who can support students in determining their residency.

Transcript: The record of the grades you’ve earned in your classes, like a report card. You’ll have a transcript in high school, and then a new transcript for college. If you take any college credit classes in high school, those will carry over to your new college transcript.

Transfer: The process of moving from one college to another (or college to university). Transferring requires submitting transcripts of your coursework/grades, and an application to the college/university.
**University:** A college option where students can access higher education beyond high school. Universities can be either public or private, with a range of costs, and focus on offering Bachelor’s Degrees in a variety of majors, along with even more advanced levels of education such as Master’s Degrees and Doctorate Degrees.

**Waitlist:** A term commonly seen during registration periods. Students hoping to enroll in a full class can opt to be placed on a waitlist. This saves a place in line in case spots open up from registered students dropping or changing plans.

**Withdraw:** If you register for a class, and then decide that you do not want to take it, you can withdraw. You may choose to withdraw for a variety of reasons, such as deciding on a different class that is a better fit, or for financial reasons.

**Work Study:** Work Study is a form of Financial Aid. Each college will have employment opportunities on campus that fall within the Work Study category, and students who are eligible for Work Study can apply for those jobs. The earnings made through Work Study positions will go toward the student’s tuition.
**Academic Advisor:** You will get connected to a WCC Academic Advisor based on your academic interest, after you have applied and been admitted to the college. They can help you with placement, guide you through the registration process, and help you choose classes and create a degree plan that will lead you to your academic goal. At WCC, you set up an appointment with an Advisor through Starfish. The Academic Advisor can be comparable to a high school counselor that you might work with at a high school.

**Access & Disability Services:** The department on campus that works with students to provide classroom learning accommodations. Much like a high school IEP or 504 plan.

**AIM/AIM Coach:** Achieve Imagine Motivate is a program at WCC that provides coaching and mentoring for our students. An AIM Coach is someone you can connect with to tackle academic conversations, but also conversations about your whole life as a student - interpersonal, financial, health and well-being, etc.

**Blue Slip:** A Blue Slip is the way WCC students request getting into a class from their instructor if they are on a Waitlist. It is simply a template for emailing the instructor.

**Intercultural Center:** A space (in-person and virtual) on campus where students can go to find community, explore and celebrate identity, and engage in conversation and learning.
The Intercultural Center primarily serves our Black and Brown students, Indigenous students, and all students of color, but all WCC students are welcome.

**Intercultural Center Peer Navigators:** Amazing student leaders employed by WCC to be mentors to students via the Intercultural Center.

**Learning Center:** A place on campus (also offered virtually) where WCC students can get support with their schoolwork from WCC student peer tutors, as well as instructors. The Learning Center contains the Writing Center and the Math Center, but you can really get help with any class you are in!

**MyWCC Student Portal:** Your personalized student portal. Through it, you can register for classes, view your transcripts, access your student email, pay tuition, make appointments with your Advisor, and more!

**Orca:** A super amazing toothed whale in the oceanic dolphin family! Orcas are black and white, travel together in pods, and are the Whatcom Community College mascot. Go Orcas!

**Outreach:** The team at WCC here to support you through the ‘getting started’ steps. From why WCC, to the application itself, and navigating the steps between then and the first day of school.

**Pod Leaders:** The Pod Leaders are a team of current WCC student employees, who work as peer mentors, coaches, and a support system for other current WCC students.
**Running Start:** A program for local high school students to earn WCC college credit and high school credit at the same time. Students can participate during 11th grade or 12th grade, either part time or full time. Running Start students pay some fees, but not tuition. There are specific Academic Advisors at WCC to support RS students.

**Starfish:** An online tool for WCC students to use to schedule appointments with their Academic Advisor, create and work through degree plans, and to see flags or kudos raised by instructors.

**Student ID Number (SID):** This is the 9 digit number that you will receive from WCC in your admissions email, after you apply. Your SID links you to all of the WCC technology, like a student network account, student email, WiFi, and more.

**Student Life & Development:** An exciting department on campus that encompasses WCC student government, student clubs, and the programming and diversity board, which is the team of student employees that plan campus events. We highly recommend getting connected to SL&D as you begin your WCC journey!

**Virtual One Stop:** The webpage that acts as a virtual campus for current WCC students. Various contacts, departments, and resources can be found on this one page.

**Virtual Welcome Center:** The webpage most helpful for students exploring the possibility of coming to Whatcom Community College. A virtual place for future students.
**WCC Application:** You will complete and submit an application to WCC to begin your college experience. It typically takes around 15 minutes to apply, and does not cost any money! WCC uses the same application platform (Web Admissions Center) as the other community and technical colleges in Washington, so you can resubmit the same application to several colleges if you’d like. The application can be done online or with a paper form. You will fill it out with your personal information. WCC does not require a personal statement, SAT scores, or letters of recommendation. WCC is an open enrollment institution, so any student who is 18, and has graduated high school or has a GED will be admitted! Once you’ve applied to WCC, you can expect to get an email confirming your admissions within around 5-7 days. That email will include your student ID number, which will identify you as a WCC student and help you with your next steps.

**Zoom:** A free, video communication tool used by WCC, and many other schools, to connect with students while socially distancing.

**Zoom Fatigue:** You know that moment when you feel absolutely over participating in a video call conversation? When your eyeballs are glazed over and you are beyond being able to manage your facial expression? Yep - That's Zoom Fatigue! We get it too, and completely empathize :)

*As always, reach out to Outreach@whatcom.edu with your questions and curiosities!*