



INSPIRED
PATHWAYS



Summer Newsletter

INSIDE — JULY 2024

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On the ground in Algona, Knoxville and Nevada



Inspired Pathways college advisors during a visit with Gracie Davis, HR Technician in Knoxville, Iowa.

Hormel Inspired Pathways advisors visit Iowa locations to spread program awareness and provide in-person advising.

During the week of June 11th, two of the Hormel Inspired Pathways advisors traveled to production facilities in Algona, Nevada and Knoxville, Iowa to increase awareness of the community college scholarship and college advising services offered through the program.

The advisors held workshops with team members and leadership to help make sure parents of high school students are aware of the program and its benefits. They also met individually with dozens of team members, providing guidance and support to those who have children already enrolled or planning to enroll.

The experienced education professionals on the Pathways team are available to help answer any college or education questions, offering individual support to students and families as they navigate a variety of challenges on the way to reaching their education goals. "Working with the HR leaders and team members toward these goals in-person helped us accomplish a great deal," noted program's director, Nate Lockett,



Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC), among the colleges with the highest number of Pathways students enrolled.

In addition to free community college tuition for children of team members, Hormel Inspired Pathways program support includes introductory college process workshops, assistance with FAFSA financial aid application, college

applications, and continued success support. Plus, advisors can be helpful advocating on behalf of students with colleges directly to overcome bureaucratic challenges that are known roadblocks to college completion.



A Hormel Foods team member signing up for more program information.



Program director Nate Lockett assists a parent with the program application.



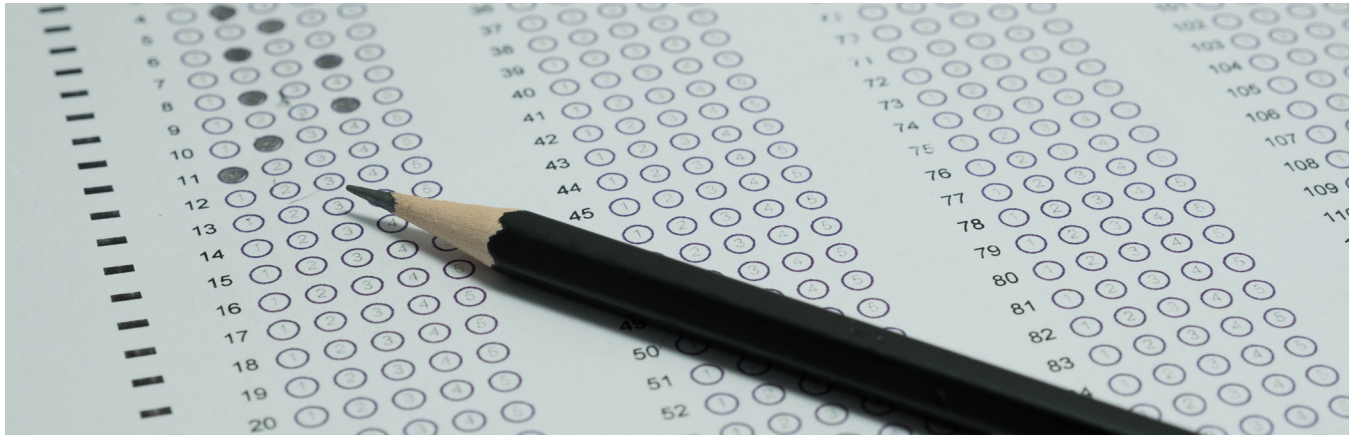
The Hormel Foods production facility in Knoxville Iowa.



Helping a parent complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for his son.



SATs & ACTs: What's Up with Testing?



For decades colleges and universities have relied heavily on two tests to help them make their admissions decisions. For just as long, educators have argued that these tests don't accurately reflect a student's ability to be successful in college. Placing so much weight on a single standardized test has led students to ignore the activities that ARE indicators of future success like enrolling in challenging classes, having a job, or engaging in experiential learning opportunities so that they can spend a significant amount of time preparing for a test.

Due to the pandemic, in 2020 colleges were forced to remove their testing requirements. This prompted the testing companies to implement some long-desired changes. The essays, arbitrary vocabulary sections, and point deductions for incorrect answers have been removed in favor of more reading and evidenced based questions, and options for taking the test remotely.

80%

of colleges still don't require the SAT or ACT test

Now four years out from the pandemic, 80% of colleges still don't require the SAT or ACT. However, a large number of colleges and universities have become what is known as "Test Optional" schools. This means you can submit a test score if you would like to. A good score can make it more likely that you will be eligible for scholarships and other awards.

Furthermore, a small number of the colleges with the nation's very best financial aid programs are starting to require testing again. This list of colleges includes most of the Ivy League schools and many other top universities.

What does this mean for current high school students who are planning on college? First, it's a good idea to at least try the SAT or ACT, because a good score can significantly improve the likelihood of getting into top colleges and receiving strong financial aid packages.

Because colleges are reviewing students more holistically than they were five years ago, it is important to push yourself in multiple areas. In addition to good grades and test scores, colleges really want to find students who are:

- Taking the most challenging classes at their high schools, especially the APs (Advanced Placement).
- Engaging in some sort of meaningful work outside of the classroom. That can be clubs, volunteering, internships, sports or jobs.
- Making a positive impact on a community they are a part of, including but not limited to their town, school or even their own household.

While standardized testing will likely never go away totally, it is no longer recommended to spend hundreds of hours or thousands of dollars on test prep. Your time would be much better used working to improve your grades and finding an area outside of school that you're passionate about and can become more involved in.

For those looking to get ready for the SAT or ACT, we recommend using Khan Academy's test prep program. It was created in collaboration with the organization that oversees the SAT, it is absolutely free, and most importantly, after taking their diagnostic exam, it tailors its questions to the specific needs of the student studying.

Academic Planning for Students in College Is Not Fun, but It Is Critical

In college, academic planning is more than just choosing a list of courses for next semester. Unlike high school where you have a few options for each subject, in college there can be dozens. And, in college the choices you make affect many things including: your major (obvious), but also if you'll be able to take minors, the type of specialties you can focus on in the future, the types of colleges you'll be able to transfer to, and most importantly, whether you'll be able to graduate on time with the degree you want.

With all academic planning, the place to start is the "program sheet." The term program sheet comes from the time when students would be handed a list of all available courses in their major and the requirements these courses met. Some colleges, like Riverland, still post PDF versions of program sheets, which can be searched for on the college's website. Other colleges, like Ridgewater CC, have gotten rid of official program sheets and now post a "List of Programs Offered," where you click your program to find the information.

Once you have this information, you will see:

- **Core Required Courses**
Every student at the college will have to take these, regardless of the major that the student is in. They often include liberal arts courses like history, humanities, math and English.
- **Major Required Courses**
Courses every student in the major has to take; they can be viewed as the foundational courses for the major.

- **Major Specific Elective Courses**

These courses within your major allow you to choose your focus area. For example, if you're majoring in business, for your Major Specific Elective Courses you may have the opportunity to choose between tracks in accounting, management, marketing, etc.

- **General Elective Courses** You have complete freedom to choose these courses. Depending on the degree, you may have between three and 10 of these slots available to you throughout your college career. Some students choose to take classes for enjoyment or interest, like art or a sport, which is a great way for business majors to take a break from all that calculus. Other students use this as an opportunity to add a minor to their degree. Each college is different, but on average, adding a minor only requires 15 credits, which equals about five classes, giving some overachievers the opportunity to pursue a major and two minors.

With all your available courses in front of you, you'll first want to see if any have prerequisites. If a course has **prerequisites**, it means there are other courses that you'll have to take first. You'll want to start your planning with these courses, as you don't want to get to the spring of your senior year with only two classes left, but one has to be taken before the other, meaning you'll have to take one in the summer or following fall. Second, you'll want to see if any have limited availability, which means they may only be offered at certain times, like only during spring semesters.

This background should help you make informed decisions on which classes to take to ensure you graduate on time with the degree you want. You still have to decide which major and minor(s) to pursue. If you have questions about course selection, academic planning or the types of opportunities different majors provide, you can talk to an advisor at your school, or feel free to reach out to our advising team by visiting : www.Hormelinspiredpathways.com and schedule a digital meeting, or send an email with your questions.

Wired for Success

Ben Palmer, son of Hormel Foods team member Curtis Palmer, builds the foundation for a career as an electrician with support from Inspired Pathways.



Ben Palmer, the oldest of the four Palmer boys, tries to be a leader and a good influence on his three younger brothers. He is setting a good example so far as an Eagle Scout, avid golfer and outdoorsman who graduated from high school during the COVID-19 lockdown. He met his soon-to-be wife during high school when they were juniors. Industrious and tenacious, Ben is now the first of his brothers to complete community college with his tuition fully covered by the Hormel Inspired Pathways program. Southeast Tech in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, has one of the top electrical programs in the state, and Ben is already working full-time as an electrician in the city, with the goal to become a master electrician, the highest level of certification.

Ben's father Curtis Palmer is a former Navy electrician who is now corporate manager of sanitation at Hormel Foods after 26 years with the company. Ben credits him with inspiring and supporting his career interests. "He told me lots of stories about being in the

Navy on the ship. In high school, I took a class through the shop, and they would have us wire the mock frame of a house. I caught on fast, and I liked the electrical part quite a bit — seeing everything work at the end."

Ben's debt-free out of college and already working. My wife and I are very, very appreciative of the company putting that on the table.

CURTIS PALMER, INSPIRED PATHWAYS PARENT

Hard Worker

Curtis, for his part, described Ben as having been an active kid who enjoyed hands-on learning and a “very hard worker” who likes to keep busy. This was reflected not only in Ben’s current path but also in his high school jobs, which included working at a Jennie-O farm as a maintenance person, where he loved helping people fix things and the fast pace of the work, aspects that he now enjoys about his career as an electrician.

An involved and practical parent, Curtis supported his son’s decision to attend a two-year school rather than four-year college as he had, and he helped Ben with his Inspired Pathways and college applications. They received help from Program Director Nate Lockett throughout the process. “Working with Nate has been nothing but awesome,” Curtis said. “He’s super helpful. He comforts you, like ‘I know FAFSA stuff is going on, and I assure you we’re not gonna leave you hanging.’”

Both father and son expressed enthusiastic appreciation of Hormel Foods for the generosity of the Inspired Pathways initiative. “With four boys, it was a godsend to have that opportunity offered,” Curtis said. “Ben’s debt-free out of college and already working. My wife and I are very, very appreciative of the company putting that on the table. And my boys appreciate it and recognize that this is something that not everyone gets.”

Inspired Pathways Made It Possible

Without the tuition support provided by Inspired Pathways, Ben’s pursuit of a career as an electrician would have been much less feasible, especially with the added expense of books and tools, which students must cover on their own. The costs vary by trade, but for an electrical program, their tools alone add hundreds of dollars of expenses. Ben said of Inspired Pathways,

“It gave me the flexibility to do other things,” noting that it’s uncommon for full-tuition scholarships to be offered for students entering trade schools.

Now, Ben’s younger brother Adam is following in his footsteps, having also successfully applied to participate in the Inspired Pathways program and soon to begin studying to become an HVAC technician. Like his brother Ben, Adam is also working at the same Jennie-O farm before starting college. Curtis thinks there’s a chance his older sons can both end up working back at Hormel Foods in the future. In addition to the enormous boon to his family specifically, he says of Inspired Pathways, “It’s good potential reinvestment into their employees.”



Checking Your FAFSA Status



We're currently a little over a month away from the start of the 2024-2025 school year, so now is the time to check your FAFSA to make sure you don't have anything else you need to do. Because of the disastrous rollout of an updated FAFSA platform this past academic year, millions of students were left in frustration as they were unable to log in, had weeks-long wait times for processing, and in cases came back to their FAFSA Dashboard to see all the information they had entered was no longer there.

To ensure that you don't encounter any issues at the start of your school year, we strongly suggest that you log back in and check your Dashboard.

Below is a guide to what each "Status Update" means. First you'll need to log in and scroll down to "My Activity." Once there you'll see one of the 5 statuses:

- **Draft** - At least one section of your FAFSA is incomplete. You'll need to go through and finish the incomplete section(s). Make sure to also hit "Submit" when you've finished entering all your information.
- **In Progress** - You've completed all of the sections, however you have not yet hit "Submit" on the last page of the form. Make sure to do this, or your FAFSA will not be sent to your college.
- **In Review** - All sections are complete and you've submitted. Now, you're just waiting on your FAFSA to be processed. If you see this status for more than a week, contact us. There could be some sort of delay with your FAFSA, and we want to make sure to let your college know that it is on the way so there are no delays to your scholarship.
- **Action Required** - This status is usually given when a mistake was made while filling out your FAFSA. However, it can also be a result of something as simple as forgetting to sign the form before you submit it.
- **Processed** - Your FAFSA has been successfully completed. You are now able to go to the "FAFSA Submission Summary" page where you can find your SAI number, which is the portion needed to complete our Inspired Pathways application.

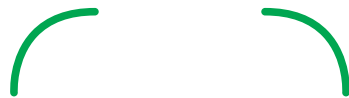
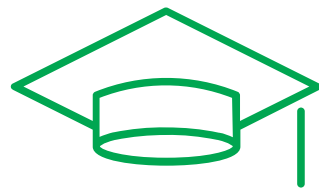
College Price Tags Don't Tell the Whole Story

It is no secret that the cost of four-year colleges has skyrocketed over the last decades. Many of the most selective private schools now have a cost-of-attendance over \$70,000, more than double the average full-time salary within the United States. Because of this, many students and families have all but given up on the idea of attending one of these colleges, even if the student is academically qualified.

Fortunately, some of the very best colleges and universities in the country are aware of this issue and have made a commitment to make their college affordable for any student capable of gaining admission. These schools, known as "Full-Need Met" colleges, are now telling students, "If you can get in, we guarantee that we will make sure you can afford to attend."

Each year more of the top colleges join this group, and now nearly 100 colleges and universities across the nation make this promise. Grinnell, Carleton, Macalester and all of the Ivy League universities guarantee they will work with families to ensure their school is affordable.

Importantly, unlike many public universities and community colleges that have different tuition rates for in-state and out-of-state students, Full-Need Met colleges don't make this distinction. It doesn't matter if you live down the street or across the country from your dream school. If you get accepted, you'll receive the same great financial aid package.



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Have Questions?

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