



Studying for the AICEP Exam

Tips for Studying:

Note: Looking at this page, it feels a little overwhelming! We have so many tips here, not because you should be doing all of them (you should NOT), but because people learn differently and we wanted to showcase the variety of strategies people use, with the hope that one or two will help YOU.

- I made study sheets for each of my 30 schools and scenarios and wrote out my responses. I am not a spreadsheet kind of person so writing things out helped the information stay in my mind. I not only responded directly to the questions asked, but since my practice is a combo of working with families on a private basis and consulting with larger groups of students and families at local public high schools, I tailored some of my answers (and choice of schools) to reflect those with whom I work. Doing this also helped me dive deeper into schools and campus environments that could potentially serve my families.
- I carried my study guide with me all the time and whenever I had a few minutes, I'd take it out to review.
- I took advantage of my [college planning software] and created a sample student with my 30 colleges listed. I then printed the profiles, which also included my visit notes, and made them into a notebook. In addition, I made a spreadsheet (also using [the software]) with each college and the characteristics I wanted to remember. I just studied the notebook and spreadsheet and felt prepared.

- I think the case studies are harder to study for as they are really more about experience with students and families. When I read each case study during the exam, I pretended I was sitting in the room with them- like I really made a mental picture of us around my table. Then, I just wrote what we would talk about and what I would recommend to them. The case studies aren't tricky- they're really designed to let the test-taker open a window into a typical family meeting.
- Set up a few hours to literally take a practice test prior to the real exam experience. Practicing calms the nerves and builds confidence.
- I did a quick scan of YouTube videos as refreshers. Some colleges (Cal Tech!) had really informative ones, others weren't. In the big picture, this was also good for counseling students. My students are more drawn to video for research purposes than I am, and broadening my understanding of that landscape was valuable.
- I made a single page PDF for each college and divided it into quadrants: Type of student, standout features, admissions, physical location. I found that the consistent visual structure of my template helped me to create a scaffolding for pulling together my school knowledge.
- I made a big huge Google sheet with the questions across the top and the colleges across the left side and I filled in answers for each question, for each college! The filling in part took about a month, maybe longer. Then I kept the sheet open on my screen and studied it every time I had a spare 10 minutes for about 2 months.
- Don't know how you could study for the cases, other than to conduct a sound, ethical practice and know the institutions. So, all of my studying was refreshing myself on institutional knowledge by going through my notes from my visits and what both Princeton Review and the Fiske Guide had to say about them.
- Don't think about just the top 2 tiers of schools. Think of C+ & B- students as well. You will be tested on your area of specialty so think of colleges in ALL the ranges of your specialty for example: From C- to A+ schools. Write out a sample case study and time yourself to see how long it takes to write all that you want to say. Rest well the day before. Eat well before the test.
- I created a spreadsheet in which I listed all 30 schools that I chose. I then populated fields with all the information that answered the questions that I was told the exam would focus on. These included: Type of student, general admissions criteria, top programs, stand out features, similar institutions, physical plant, the environment and community around the campus, and a column for any additional notes I thought were important. I spent time reading through and trying to name the areas that filled each column.

- I think reviewing my notes was the most useful thing I did. I really didn't have to study much, except to review those programs and aspects that are particular for each school. I felt ready for the test because I "knew my stuff" simply because I had been so immersed in it for quite a long time.
- In order to prepare on my own, I focused mostly on my 30 schools that I could potentially be tested on. I made flashcards where I had notes about size of school, strongest programs, campus culture, unique programs, what type of student best fit there, cost, similar schools, etc. I felt that this focus could also help me prepare for my case study questions, if I needed to talk about any of these schools as good fits.
- For the Case Studies, I prepared lists of schools that were strong in different areas- schools for students with learning differences, schools with big spirit, schools that were less selective, schools that had strong co-op/internship programs, schools for the artist, schools for Engineers, etc. I knew if I had some connections to different student needs and schools that I was familiar with, I would be able to connect these schools with a particular student. I wasn't worried about identifying what type of school environment the student needed and coming up with extra questions, these are things I do every day.
- My suggestion is to try coming up with school ideas for each student you work with, without referencing the computer initially. This helps you realize how much you know. Once I realized I could say "I believe" or "if I remember correctly" when I stated points about schools I was suggesting, I knew I would be ok. In the real world we have the internet and books to verify what we think we remember.
- I created a flash card for each school with the 5 questions and their answers on the back. Writing out the answers initially was helpful, as was quizzing myself regularly (I started a couple of months ahead of my test date, first gathering info, then creating/studying the flash cards and, finally, 1-2 weeks ahead, writing out the answers on a separate page.)
- When I began studying, I wrote out the Institutional Knowledge answers for one of my schools and then sent them to [my commissioner] for feedback. Then I knew if I was on the right track....
- Think about a way to categorize schools, so that when it comes to the Professional Knowledge section, you can go through lists mentally as you search for schools to recommend. I used athletic conferences because I'm generally pretty familiar with the schools in the more well-known conferences.
- Map out what you need to learn. Get colourful and creative, use mind maps, Venn diagrams and topic trees to clearly layout what you need to study. This will help you visualise the topics

- You are a unique learner. Think about what you know about yourself. Note that your study strategies can be totally different from those used by a friend. You know what has worked for you in previous studying/testing circumstances.
- Your first step in your studies should be to read and understand the structure of the Assessment. Review the webinars on the AICEP website.

Words of Encouragement:

“If you know colleges and you know how to counsel, then you should not worry.”

“This is an incredible learning process and professional development experience. I feel like I know those 30 schools really well and now research all of my schools this way.”

“Readers of your Assessment will be peers. That's who you are ‘talking to’ on the Assessment. They understand that you may not have taken a test in years. They understand that you may not remember every detail. Demonstrate your knowledge of institutions and your knowledge of how to think about and act on a student in need of institutional suggestions.”

And Finally...

Believe in yourself! The fact that you are being asked to take this exam means that the commissioners believe you have the expertise and experience necessary to pass it.