

College Prep

Building a College List

- What do you want to study?
 - Nursing, engineering, accounting, etc. may require specific schools
- How do you learn best?
 - What kind of support do you want?
 - Do you like knowing your professors?
- Geography? Sports? Arts?
- Understand likely Net Price
- Make a plan that gives you options in May – some colleges are a reach for everyone. Include these sparingly

Choosing Majors

- What are you interested in? What do you like? What are you good at?
- DO MORE OF THOSE THINGS! Make a checklist of activities to explore
- Use process of elimination for majors that require a four year curriculum
 - Nursing
 - engineering
 - Accounting

Choosing a learning environment

- Pay attention to graduation rates instead of rankings
 - www.collegescorecard.ed.gov
 - www.collegedata.com
- Internships and outcomes
 - Look for **First Destinations** data (national and institutional data)
 - Ask about employers – who comes to campus
 - Use Linked In Schools tool to research career paths and outcomes
- Learning environment
 - Student/teacher ratio and average class sizes
 - Hands on opportunities

Visiting Campuses

- Visit if possible
 - Juniors – this is a top priority for the year
 - Seniors – it's not too late; overnight visits in spring are a good way to make your final decision
- Look for the important clues
 - Architecture fades into the background once you live there
 - Are students engaged? Friendly?
 - Are faculty approachable?
 - What's happening on campus? How does it feel?
- Ask about favorite professor, internships, activities

Understanding Admissions Chances

- The news is better and worse than you think
- Good news – most colleges admit most students
 - Average admit rate is 66%
 - Only 30% of schools filled their classes by May 1 last year
 - Admissions officers are looking for reasons to admit you
- Very selective colleges are VERY hard to get into
 - Almost perfect grades and test scores are a good start
 - What else are you bringing to the table?
 - Still, it's difficult; apply, but build a good list with other schools
 - Consider Early Decision if you're very certain and can afford it

What matters?

Gallup-Purdue Index, a recent survey of 30,000 U.S. college graduates, found that those who have achieved great jobs and great lives were more likely to have:

- Known a professor well
- Participated in an internship
- Done a long term project
- Been involved in extracurricular activities
- Graduated with minimal student debt.

Important things to know about applying

#1: THIS IS A HUMAN PROCESS!!!!

- A real, live person will be reading your application. They want you to be real and human too.
- Make a plan – map out tasks and organize
 - Read websites carefully - look for checklists and deadlines
 - Plan to beat deadlines by two weeks
 - DON'T WAIT TO SEND THINGS – order ACT scores right away, ask for letters of recommendation, etc.
- The application as a canvas – what do you want them to know about you?

Colleges are looking for the student's voice

- The essays matter – read great essays
 - Tufts, Johns Hopkins and others post essays
 - www.essayhell.com
 - College Essay Guy
 - THE ESSAY IS NOT A FORMAL PIECE OF WRITING; don't make it sound like a 40-something person wrote it. Do make it sound like a smart, interesting 18 year old wrote it.

- Be cautious of the personal statement prompts
 - Better not to read them – use the above resources instead
 - The prompts can encourage you to write about the saddest, hardest moment in your life. That is often not your best self or best story

- Take advantage of the supplemental prompts- other parts of the canvas

Supplemental Essays and other ways to show you care

- This is a human process – colleges want to feel your love for them.
- Supplements:
 - Read the prompt carefully
 - Answer the question with information about you and an understanding of the college
 - Consider your whole story – what have you already told them? What haven't you highlighted yet?
- Visit, interview, email, be knowledgeable....

Cost of college = UGH!

- Knowledge is power.
 - Don't avoid this part of the process!
 - Don't delay – this isn't something you want to start thinking about in April of your senior year
 - Have hard conversations; seek information; keep your eyes on the prize – not college, but an education!

- Use Net Price Calculators
 - Every school must have one on their website - google
 - Ask admissions officers how accurate they are
 - Play with ACT scores to find triggers

Financial Aid and Scholarships

- Money from the colleges is the biggest, best source of scholarship funds
 - Renewable, big chunks of money
 - In some cases it goes to everyone, in some cases only to top students
 - ASK!

- FAFSA and CSS Profile
 - Two tools to apply for need-based aid from the government (federal and state) and from the colleges

Outside Scholarships and Loans

- Real money; not usually a difference-maker
 - Make it a job – 1-2 hours/week; can yield \$1,000 and \$2,000 increments
 - Use Naviance scholarship search
 - Know about local opportunities, parents' workplaces, etc.

- LOANS
 - Not more than you'll make the first year
 - Federal loans should be the only ones you take out
 - Consider living at home; less expensive options
 - Always include a financial safety school

Things to do

- As a family, talk about college plans, especially money. What funds are available? Give students a chance to make informed plans
- Register for ACT/SAT/SAT Subject Tests; Seniors – send test scores
- Research Schools – plan visits, understand the application process and student profile
- Make a list that is realistic – both admissions chances and cost
- Do things that interest you – work, academic research, volunteer activity - delve deeper.

Talk to adults about work and school

Ask these questions:

- What kind of work do you do?
- Do you like it? How did you get there?
- If I'm interested in a career like yours, what should I do? What should I study? Where should I go to school?
- What other adults should I talk to?



THANK YOU

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