

College Search

DEVELOP YOUR COLLEGE LIST WITH VARIOUS DEGREES OF SELECTIVITY:

PROBABLE - you meet all of the requirements and have a 75% chance of getting in.

COMPETITIVE - you have at least a 50/50 chance of being admitted.

REACH - you might have a 10-20% rate of being accepted.

WILD CARD - colleges with an acceptance rate lower than 25%. Even the strongest candidates for these schools should not expect that they will receive an acceptance.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

There are thousands of accredited four-year colleges in the United States. No wonder you may be feeling overwhelmed by all of the choices.

It's time to begin an organized search and start focusing on schools that will be right for you. Follow these steps.

Get to know yourself and what you want in a college.

- Develop and review your **Key College Criteria** List (found in this unit) – then prioritize it.
- Take career-interest inventories — they will help you look at majors and the schools that offer the best coursework for you.
- Look at your grades and test scores, so you can compare how you will fit in at different campuses.

KEEP IN MIND THAT YOU ARE NOT JUST LOOKING FOR GOOD SCHOOLS, BUT SCHOOLS GOOD FOR YOU!

Do your research.

- Look at college websites—you will find information on admissions, campus events, special programs and majors, athletics, the faculty, student services, financial aid, blogs, and more.
- Review books at your local library or school career center. Look for college guidebooks such as *The Fiske Guide to Colleges*, *The College Handbook* and the *Book of Majors* (both published by College Board) and other books such as *Colleges That Change Lives* and *The Insider's Guide to Colleges*.
- Use websites such as www.bigfuture.org, or www.petersons.com, www.collegedata.com to help you find colleges that match your criteria and interests.
- Talk to people - your educational consultant, high school counselor, teachers, parents, friends, and college alumni.
- Attend college fairs in your area. Use the College Fair Checklist to ensure you are prepared with questions to ask the college representatives.
- Ask questions and take notes when college representatives come to your school.

Visit college campuses in person or online: See the back of this fact sheet for information on making the most of your campus visit. If you can't visit, check out www.ecampustours.com and www.collegeweeklive.com for online virtual tours.

**LOOK UP EACH
COLLEGE'S
MISSION
STATEMENT.**

**YOU CAN LEARN
A LOT ABOUT
THE CAMPUS
CULTURE AND
THE GOALS OF
THE ACADEMIC
LEADERSHIP BY
READING THIS.**

**USE THIS
INFORMATION
TO DETERMINE
IF YOUR
GOALS MATCH
THOSE OF THE
UNIVERSITY.**

Majors

First things first. Before you can properly choose a college, you need to consider what you will study. If you haven't already spent time exploring your interests, it is wise to do so before you begin choosing colleges to which you will apply. If a university doesn't offer a major you are interested in, the college isn't likely worth considering. If your field of study is truly undecided, it will be important for you to find a school that readily offers opportunities to explore different majors and interests during your first year.

Note that some colleges are known as liberal arts colleges. These schools are known for offering a wide breadth of coursework across many disciplines. Liberal arts colleges typically offer numerous college major options, but each choice will likely include courses in language, history, and literature.

Once you have an idea of what you want to study, the next step is evaluating the programs at each school. Here are some things to look for:

- Is the department accredited by a professional organization?
- What is the philosophy of the department in regards to the subject? Some departments may be very research focused, while others may be more theoretical in their approach. For engineering and science majors, it can be helpful to know if the courses are taught more hands-on or theoretically.
- Consider the faculty. How many professors are tenured? Does the department have visiting faculty? How many professors are in the department?
- Who will teach your classes - professors or teacher's assistants? Are professors readily available for discussions outside of class?
- Check out the facilities and availability of equipment and laboratories.
- Find out what graduates are doing when they leave the department. What percentage go on to graduate school versus find employment in their field? Which employers are hiring them or which schools are they attending for graduate school? Consider this information in light of your goals.
- Find out if you are required to declare your major as a freshman or a sophomore. Some programs require that you apply with a preliminary major – such as pre-medical, pre-law, or pre-nursing — and earn your way into the program through coursework. Be sure to find out the requirements and what it takes to compete for acceptance.
- How difficult/easy is it to get classes in your major area of study?
- Is the department open to minors, double-majors, or taking courses outside of the major?
- Read through the actual courses in the curriculum guide for your major. These are the classes you will invest your time in during the next few years.

**REMEMBER THAT MANY SCHOOLS ARE TRACKING
“DEMONSTRATED INTEREST” – OR HOW MUCH
EFFORT THEY PERCEIVE THE STUDENT IS MAKING
TO GET TO KNOW THEIR SCHOOL.
CHECK OUT SOME SUGGESTIONS ON THE
LAST PAGE OF THIS FACT SHEET**

BE SURE TO USE
YOUR NAME (NOT
YOUR PARENT'S
OR A FRIEND'S)
WHEN SIGNING
UP FOR CAMPUS
TOURS AND
APPOINTMENTS
WITH COLLEGE
STAFF.

NOT ABLE TO VISIT
IN PERSON? CHECK
OUT THESE ONLINE,
VIRTUAL TOUR
OPTIONS FOR A
QUICK LOOK AT A
CAMPUS:

WWW.CAMPUSREEL.
ORG

WWW.
CAMPUSTOURS.COM

WWW.YOUVISIT.COM

WWW.
ECAMPUSTOURS.COM

Campus Visits

Although campus visits can be time consuming and costly, there is no better way to determine if a school feels right for you. It is worth the time to organize your visits and ensure you make the most of them. Here are a few tips to get you started:

Before

Check the college website for the following:

- Set tour schedules and learn how to register.
- Locate the office where tours begin.
- Browse campus maps and parking information.
- Check the academic calendar — it's best to visit when classes are in session.
- Consider special events you might want to attend while on campus.
- Seek suggestions for places to spend the night before or after your tour.
- Ask about how to arrange an interview with an admissions officer or meeting with a department representative for your potential major. See tips for interviews on the **RÉSUMÉ FACT SHEET**.
- View virtual tours to get a feel for the campus.
- Make a list of questions that are important in finding a good fit.
- Pack your camera and notebook so you can keep a record of your trip.

During

- Walk around to get a feel for the campus.
- Take the campus tour and ask questions.
- Go into the library — does it look like a place where you'd like to study?
- Read the notices on bulletin boards - do any interest you?
- Have lunch or coffee at the student union and talk to students; ask them about student life, traditions, and activities on campus.
- Visit the recreation center and sports complex.
- Attend a class lecture, sporting event, play, or concert.
- Explore the surrounding community and investigate transportation options so you'll know how to get around town and what it has to offer.
- Read the student newspaper and other publications.
- Join a tour through the residence halls to check out décor, cleanliness, and comfort.
- Check out the Career Center and the services it offers to students and graduates.

After

Complete your **Campus Visit Worksheet** while your memory is fresh. Ask family members their opinions — little brothers and sisters can be pretty observant at times.

- Make sure you have the name of the admissions officer you met and send a thank-you note or email. Ask for a business card.
- Review your notes. Compare what the colleges have to offer and your reaction to what you learned while you were there.
- Add, delete, or place the college in a "maybe" category.

DEMONSTRATED INTEREST

Throughout the years, advancements in technology have provided colleges with a vast amount of data to utilize in their college admissions decisions. Much like the exercise students go through to explore options and find a good -match college, colleges are working toward finding good-match students. Students who actively learn about the campus, academic programs, location, and other factors are typically perceived as students who are more interested in the institution and thus, more likely to accept an offer to attend. This is so important that many schools are now measuring how interested they think students are in their school — this is called **Demonstrated Interest**.

A few examples of ways you can demonstrate interest in colleges include:

- Visit the campus.
- Follow the school on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram — write a few posts or “like” material on the site— actively participate.
- Call the admissions office to ask a question or request a information.
- Open email messages that colleges send to you — click on links in the email that you find interesting.
- Attend college fairs and visits that college admissions representatives make at your high school.
- Get to know a couple of students who attend the college.
- Send a thank you note or additional questions to college representatives you met.
- Connect with your college admissions representative to communicate your interest.

Notes:

