

Admissions 101: Top 10 Tips for College Search

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#1 – It's a BIG decision

- ▶ Four years of your life
- ▶ Build lifelong friendships/networks
- ▶ Time to launch career/life trajectory
- ▶ Invest time/resources to make the best decision by reviewing schools on the internet, talking to counselors, mentors and parents and VISITING CAMPUS.



#2 – All colleges are not created equal

- ▶ HUGE differences between large public research universities and small private liberal arts colleges
- ▶ Big differences among Christian colleges
- ▶ Decision should be about choosing the best fit.
- ▶ Don't be scared off by the published cost or "sticker price." When applying is not the time to worry about finances.



#3 – Don't sweat major too soon

- ▶ 50+% of students change their majors at least once after starting college.
- ▶ Most students can declare major at end of sophomore year and still graduate on time.
- ▶ Strong faculty advising helps with discerning call and choosing major.
- ▶ Major is not as important as you think.
- ▶ A liberal arts education prepares graduates for long-term career success.



#4 – College info at your fingertips

- ▶ Websites to help with college search
 - www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org
 - www.chegg.com/schools
 - www.cappex.com
- ▶ College fairs
- ▶ High school visits by admissions counselors
- ▶ College web sites, social media sites, student newspapers online
- ▶ Sign up for college admissions mailing lists



#5 – College search timeline

- ▶ Freshman year
 - Plan college–prep schedule for high school
 - Explore extra–curricular, leadership, service opportunities to strengthen college application
- ▶ Sophomore/Junior year
 - Start to ID criteria to inform college search
 - Mission, distance from home, size of college, campus setting (urban, rural, suburban), availability of majors/co–curricular programs
 - Start campus visits
 - Junior year take the PSAT or the SAT/ACT
 - Investigate outside scholarships
 - Make short list of colleges by end of junior year



#5 – College search timeline cont.

- ▶ Senior Year – Fall
 - Take or re-take the SAT/ACT
 - Apply for admission at schools on short list
 - Make final visit to all colleges on short list
 - Stay focused on grades – 7th semester counts!
 - Submit FAFSA after Oct. 1
- ▶ Senior Year – Spring
 - Apply for outside scholarships
 - Make college decision and submit deposit by May 1
 - Follow timeline for admitted/deposited students re: housing, registration, billing, etc.



#6 – Visit, visit, visit

- ▶ Coordinate with admissions office to get most out of visit
 - Campus tour
 - Sit in on class
 - Experience dorms/dining hall/campus life
 - Admissions/financial aid presentations
 - Meet professor, coach, music directors, etc.
 - Get feel for community, peer group
- ▶ Visit while classes are in session
- ▶ Options for special visit days
- ▶ Bring your parents/grandparents
- ▶ Connect with your admissions counselor



#7 – It PAY\$ to get good grades

- ▶ Getting good grades is best thing you can do for admissions and financial aid
- ▶ Take both SAT and ACT
 - Most schools accept either test
 - Many schools super-score results
 - Test-prep classes can pay off – literally
 - Be aware of test-optional schools



#8 – Focus on 4-year grad rate

- ▶ Directly related to total cost of degree
- ▶ Budget cuts at many public universities make it harder to graduate on time
 - Extra tuition, room and board, fees
 - Opportunity cost of delayed entry into the workforce
- ▶ Strong indicator of quality of faculty advising



#9 – What colleges are looking for

- ▶ Rigorous high school courses and good grades
- ▶ Strong SAT/ACT scores (at many schools)
- ▶ Involvement in co-curricular activities and other service, leadership, work
- ▶ Strong recommendations that speak to academic ability of student
- ▶ Well-written (carefully proofed) essay that introduces student to the admissions committee
- ▶ Students who show understanding of, and interest in, the mission of the school



#10 –It is all about the right match!

- ▶ What type of learning environment do you thrive in – know yourself.
- ▶ Ideal college vs. ideal type of college.
- ▶ What kind of people do you want to be surrounded by for four years?
- ▶ Ask lots of questions.
- ▶ Embrace your final decision; bloom where you're planted.