

RESEARCHING COLLEGE OPTIONS

The Internet provides a plethora of information regarding the college selection process. It is possible to complete college searches to determine size of school, in state/out of state, private/state, majors offered and other options of campus life. Here are some questions that you may want to ask yourself before you begin the search.

I've thought about majoring in: _____

I prefer to be in:

a metropolitan area medium city rural area location doesn't matter.

I would enjoy a campus with about _____ students:

20,000+ 10,000 -15,000 5,000-10,000 less than 5,000

I would like to attend college in:

AZ TX CA Southwest Northeast Midwest location is not important

I really want to attend a college with a certain emphasis:

music & arts missions engineering medicine sports other

College activities I want to be involved in: _____

Rank these characteristics in order of importance

_____ Academic program or major

_____ Support Services

_____ Type of school (public, private, technical)

_____ Type of Community

_____ Admissions policy

_____ Minority representation

_____ Cost

_____ Gender ratio

_____ Location

_____ Programs for students with disabilities

_____ Size of Enrollment

_____ Athletics

_____ Reputation in particular field

_____ Campus activities/social clubs

_____ Religious Affiliation

_____ Other _____

Great free resources to use for college searches (verified as of 01/12/12)

www.nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/ www.collegeboard.com/parents/csearch/ www.college.gov

www.christianconnector.com www.fastweb.com www.collegeview.com

www.petersons.com www.christiancollegeguide.net www.collegeboard.com

www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/college/tools/search.php www.zinch.com

<http://www.collegeboard.com/parents/csearch/find-right-college/21165.html>

<http://www.nacacnet.org/PublicationsResources/steps/Pages/Article1.aspx>

Go to: www.mystudentedge.com, Select New User, Enter Access Code: YMZTTDFM, Complete registration page (create a user name and password)

In addition to the Internet available in the library, a wide variety of hard copy resources are available to you from the Guidance Office. While some Guidebooks from specific colleges are available in the Guidance Office, you will find that most colleges and universities are moving to on-line services for guidebooks and other materials. Campus videos may be checked out from the library, but always check the website for the most current information.

PLANNING A COLLEGE VISIT

The best way to learn about a college is to visit. Another source of valuable information is to talk to someone who is currently a student there. Find out what DCHS alumni attend the colleges and universities that interest you and try to see them when you make a campus visit or during the holidays when they are home.

COLLEGE FAIR

The College Fair is an important time to visit with college representatives. Check with your counselor to determine the dates and times of fairs in your area. The Tucson area usually hosts a Christian College Fair in October and a private and public College Fair in September or October. DCHS also hosts many college representatives in the Fall for students and parents to meet with. If you have a college you are extremely interested in, please let the Guidance Office know. Most likely, the representative attending your area fair will be the representative who will be the “First Reader” on all applications from your school and/or area of the country.

CONTACTING THE COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY

Students, please make sure that YOU initiate the contacts with the colleges and universities. This is an excellent learning opportunity for you. There will be opportunities for your parents to talk with college admissions representatives at a later date.

VISITING CAMPUS

Just being on campus for a few hours will tell you much about you and the college. Each of you has a “comfort zone” when it comes to people, places, and things. With a pre-approved absence form completed, you may miss school to visit a college campus. Remember, you should have completed your study of the college via the Internet and hard copy materials prior to the visit. The visit is to verify that your impressions are accurate. If the campus has a high school students’ visit day, try to attend these because they are specifically tailored to give a complete experience.

Always contact the admissions office on campus at least two weeks before the planned visit to schedule your specific appointment. If you wish to visit a class or specific department on campus, please make your wishes known to the representative setting up your visitation. A tour of the campus does not necessarily include visiting a class.

- Maps are available from the campus web site or hard cover materials. Get specific directions on how to get there and where to park. **BE ON TIME!!**
- If you plan to play intercollegiate athletics, try to meet with the coach during this visit. (request meeting ahead of time)
- It is difficult to make more than one thorough campus visit per day. It is possible to do two if the campuses are very close together, however, only one is recommended.
- Consider spending the night in the dorm if the admissions office organizes this.

Before you leave the campus, find out where the students “hang out” and go there and just sit and watch for about thirty minutes to an hour. Do the students look like you? Do they act like you? How do they treat each other? Are they carrying books? Do they look happy? Do you see yourself there? Why or why not? Now, write down the answers to these questions while it’s fresh. You think that you will always remember, but if you are visiting several campuses, it’s nice to have notes for reference. Remember to write your “thank you” notes after a visit.

Check out www.collegeboard.com/parents/csearch/explore-colleges/21178.html for a checklist for a visit.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR ON A TOUR

General appearance of the campus (poor maintenance/vandalism/campus pride)
Student attire (well dressed/very casual/sloppy)
Friendliness (eye contact/offer to help)
Student conversations (tone/classes/papers/books/parties)
Transportation (bikes/cars/foot/shuttles)
Faculty presence (office house posted/open doors/student interaction)
Library (hours/easy access)
Laboratory and computing facilities (hours/easy access)
Fine arts facilities (studios/practice rooms/performances)
Dorms (wired/singles/doubles/suites/coed/substance free/guaranteed housing)
Technology (wireless campus, laptops, computer labs)
Campus Security (campus police presence, shuttles, lighting)

TIPS FOR INTERVIEWS

If the college is far from your state, you may be asked to have your interview while making a campus visit or a local professional who is an alum may interview you. Some schools will arrange for phone interviews. Here are some tips for successful interviews.

1. Bring a copy of your resume. Don't assume that the interviewer has one.
2. Dress neatly.
3. Arrive early and get the lay of the land to be comfortable.
4. Be prepared. Do your research on the college before you arrive so that you can ask informed, intelligent questions.
5. Show self-confidence with a firm handshake and good eye contact.
6. Converse! Be engaging! An interview is a two-way conversation. Be prepared to hold up your end of the conversation. Answer the question that is asked and stay on the topic.
7. Take advantage of the opportunity to discuss issues, activities, or goals that you may not have presented in your application.
8. Write a thank you note to your interviewer.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Why are you interested in our college?
What do you expect to gain from a college education?
How have you prepared yourself for college?
What academic areas most interest you? Why?
What extracurricular activities brought you the most satisfaction? Why?
How have you spent your summers?
How do you spend your free time during the school year?
How would you describe yourself to someone who does not know you?
What has been the greatest personal challenge in your life?
Who are your heroes or heroines?
Why are you a good candidate for college?
What books have you read lately?
How would you describe your faith? (if applying to a Christian school)

QUESTIONS TO ASK COLLEGES

GENERAL QUESTIONS/APPLICATIONS

- What is distinctive about the college? What are its strengths and weaknesses?
- What is the size of the student body?
- What percent of applicants are accepted?
- When do you begin accepting applications?
- What is admission based upon? (test scores, GPA, rank in class, etc.) What high school courses are necessary for acceptance?
- What characteristics of a student are important to the admissions staff?
- What percent of first year students return as sophomores?
- What percent of entering students actually graduate?
- Do most students graduate in four years?
- How do I find out about scholarships, aid grants, student work programs or other programs that will help finance my college education? What forms do you require for Financial Aid?
- What are the costs? Tuition and fees? Room and board? Other?

ABOUT HOUSING

- What is the housing system?
- Describe the studying environment.
- Where do the freshman live?
- How safe is the campus?
- Do the majority of students commute or do they live on campus?
- Are there co-ed dorms?
- Do students leave campus on the weekends?
- Is housing guaranteed for first year students?
- What meal plans are available?
- Can I have a car on campus? Do I need one? Is there an extra cost for parking?

ABOUT ACTIVITIES

- What do students do to have fun?
- What activities could I participate in? (newspaper, orchestra, choral group, radio station, drama etc.)
- What intramural sports are available? Club sports?
- Describe student life on campus.
- What were some social or academic issues that concerned students last year? How did the administration react? What was the result?
- What kinds of activities does the student government organize? Do students attend the activities?
- Are there faith based activities available? Are these popular?

ABOUT ACADEMICS AND FACULTY

- Are classes taught by professors or by teachers' assistants?
- What percentage of freshman classes are taught by teachers' assistants?
- How easy is it for freshmen to get classes?
- What is the average class size for freshmen?
- Describe the relationship between the faculty and students.
- What is the student-faculty ratio?
- Whose responsibility is academic advising and when does it occur?
- Are there programs for overseas studies?
- Ask about internships in your major field.
- What are the three most popular majors on campus?
- What percent of graduates who apply to law school are admitted? Med School?
- Do you have a Placement Center on campus for Grad schools, jobs and internships?
- Describe the process of transferring into this institution after attending a two-year community college or from another four-year college.
- What would be the typical course requirements for a freshman?
- Are students encouraged/discouraged in their faith in the classroom?

COLLEGE VISIT CHECKLIST

(you may want to duplicate these pages for use at multiple colleges)

Name of College _____

Address of the School _____

Appointment Date & Time _____

Admission Contact _____

Ratings: 1 = poor

5 = excellent

Academics

Strength of areas of programs	1	2	3	4	5
Level of overall academic challenge	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of faculty	1	2	3	4	5
Support Services (tutoring, counseling, career placement)	1	2	3	4	5

COMMENTS:

Campus Life

Residence Halls	1	2	3	4	5
Food	1	2	3	4	5
Safety	1	2	3	4	5
Transportation	1	2	3	4	5

COMMENTS:

Campus Activities

Social Organizations	1	2	3	4	5
Sports	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities for Music & Theatre	1	2	3	4	5
Religious Organizations	1	2	3	4	5
Off-campus attractions	1	2	3	4	5

COMMENTS:

Campus Appeal

First impressions	1	2	3	4	5
Classrooms	1	2	3	4	5
Residence Halls	1	2	3	4	5
Dining Hall	1	2	3	4	5
Student Center	1	2	3	4	5
Library	1	2	3	4	5
Technology	1	2	3	4	5

COMMENTS:

COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

EARLY ACTION – if you apply for Early Action, you are declaring to the university that you have submitted all of your forms by the required deadline and that you are seriously considering attending that school. You may apply to more than one school on Early Action.

EARLY DECISION – is a legal binding contract. “I pick you...if you pick me...I’m coming!” **YOU ARE REQUIRED TO ONLY APPLY TO ONE INSTITUTION AS AN EARLY DECISION CANDIDATE.** You may apply to only ONE college that has Early Decision as an “early admit” and realize that Early Decision is a binding contract! Take this step very seriously and make it work to your advantage, not against you.

APPLY ONLINE!

If the college will accept the application online, it is a good idea to send it via the internet. If you send them a hard copy, you will be at the mercy of someone at the university (usually a work study student) to enter your data for you. In other words, you have more control over the application if you submit online. **Print yourself a copy** to preview and to keep before you submit the application to the university. For applications for individual colleges, go to the school’s website. Some colleges accept the Common Application at www.commonapp.org.

SNAIL MAIL

If you must mail the application, use a “working copy” and then submit a nice fresh clean neatly printed, or preferably typed, application. Make a copy!

NOTE: Do not wait until “the last minute” to give recommendation forms to counselors, teachers, or any other recommendation write. At least ten days notice is reasonable. Also, ignorance of application deadlines is no excuse. Make a schedule for completion of recommendations, essays, etc. and stick to it. It is hard to convince a college that you are really interested in them if you are slow in applying.

RECOMMENDATION GUIDELINES

- Meet face to face with the person you ask to write a letter of recommendation and bring a copy of your resume to that meeting.
- **DO NOT PUT REQUESTS IN TEACHERS’ BOXES.**
- Allow a **MINIMUM 10** working days for any recommendation to be processed from a teacher as well as from the Guidance Office. Provide an addressed stamped envelope to the writer or ask them to place the recommendation on file in the counselor’s office. Politely check back with the writer to verify that your letter was mailed.
- Follow-up with a “thank you” note to the person writing the recommendation.

WHO SHOULD WRITE LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Follow Directions for each school!

By the end of your junior year, you should have a general idea of the applications and their specific requirements regarding letters of recommendation. Carefully follow the directions for each college. Some schools will require specific teachers to write letters while others will offer you a choice. Most colleges will want you to use only teachers from your junior or senior year for teacher recommendations. If a college requires a “School Report”, please bring that form to the Guidance Office as soon as you receive it.

MAY 1st NOTIFICATION

While a college will not make you commit prior to May 1, you must notify the college no later than May 1st if you plan to attend in the fall. Failure to do so could cost you your acceptance.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

MILITARY ACADEMIES

If you are interested in one of the military academies, you should contact the academy NO LATER THAN THE SPRING OF YOUR JUNIOR YEAR. Several tasks must be accomplished simultaneously:

1. Contact the Academy to complete the Pre-Candidate information;
2. You must request a nomination to a military academy from your United States Congressman and Senators

Contact the U. S. Senators for your state at www.senate.gov. Contact the Congressman representing your district. Use the www.house.gov website and insert your zip code to find your representative. Many Congressmen have their academy applications available online. Once you complete the application, return it to the local office indicated on the forms and try to become familiar with the local office personnel responsible for academy applications.

An appointment to a Military Academy is considered to be a several hundred thousand dollar scholarship. It takes a strong desire to serve your country. The application process is tedious and life as a cadet is rigorous. The opportunity is without limits for the right applicant! The process is outlined below:

Sophomore and Junior Year

1. Contact the academy and ask them to put you in contact with the Liaison Office in your area.
2. Make sure your Guidance Counselor knows about your interest in the academy.

Junior Year

1. Make sure you take the PSAT.
2. Ask the Liaison Officer to help you apply for the special summer program.
3. Apply for a nomination through your Congressman.
4. Take the SAT and/or ACT.

Summer Before Senior Year

1. Take medical and physical aptitude tests as directed by the Academy.
2. Complete applications to the Academy.
3. Complete applications to the Congressman.

ACADEMY CONTACT INFORMATION

Air Force www.usafa.edu 1-800-443-9266	Army – West Point www.usma.edu 1-845-938-4041	Navy www.usna.edu 1-410-293-4361	Coast Guard www.cga.edu 1-800-883-8724	Merchant Marines www.usmma.edu 1-866-546-4778
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ROTC

The Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) offers a wonderful way to have education paid for with guaranteed occupations waiting for you after graduation. Many military officers come through the ROTC program. There are four year and three year scholarships with obligation to serve after graduation.

Students take full college course load, including military science courses. Students also wear uniforms once a week during military labs, drills and practical training activities. There may also be summer programs. Qualifications for ROTC scholarships include: high school academic record, SAT or ACT scores, extracurricular activities, and personal interview. (ROTC students may attend any college that accepts scholarships. They may even attend one college for class and take their ROTC classes at a different institution.) For information on ROTC and scholarships, contact the following:

www.military.com/rotc

ROTC (Army)
1-800-USA-ROTC
www.goarmyrotc.com

NROTC (Navy)
1-800-NAV-ROTC
www.navy.com/nrotc

AFROTC (Air Force)
1-866-423-7682
www.afrotc.com

PERFORMING AND VISUAL ARTISTS

Much like the athletes, performing and visual artists will need to communicate with the departments on their respective campuses. You will need a specific resume or portfolio to showcase your talent. The performing artists will in all likelihood need to audition or present a portfolio. Here's a helpful resource:

<http://www.nacacnet.org/EventsTraining/CollegeFairs/pva/students/Pages/PVATips.aspx>.

Begin communicating with colleges no later than your junior year to learn their schedules and timetables for audition and portfolio requirements. Be sure to check with all colleges on your list of possible colleges. For current information on local performing arts fairs, the following is available:

www.nacacnet.org/EventsTraining/CollegeFairs/pva/Pages/default.aspx

National Portfolio Day brings together experienced college representatives to review work and offer critique. NPD also offers a forum for the exchange of information regarding work, college plans and career plans. For more information visit the following website: <http://portfolioday.net/>

Thespians, please check with **ALL** of your colleges to determine respective audition times, places and requirements. You will often be required to perform different genres.