

STARTING THE COLLEGE RESEARCH PROCESS

Who, What, Why, Where & When!

Step One: Know Yourself

Choosing a college is not always simple. This is a time in your life when being reflective, patient and thoughtful will really help in your decision making process. It is necessary to devote time and energy when deciding which college(s) to consider, and the process begins with self-analysis and research.

Self-assessments can be difficult and sometimes uncomfortable; however, it is really the most important place to begin in this process. Begin by asking yourself the following questions which pertain to you as a person and student.

1. Who am I?
2. What matters to me?
3. How would a friend describe me?
4. How would I describe myself to someone who doesn't know me?
5. Why do I want to further my education? Why am I choosing to pursue a college education? What interests do I want to pursue in college?
6. How do I want to grow and change in the next few years? What kind of environment would stimulate or inhibit the growth I would like to see?
7. What satisfactions and frustrations do I expect to encounter in a university?
8. What degree of academic challenge and setting is best for me? How important is the prestige/ academic reputation of the college I attend? What size of college and class size will work best for me?
9. How would I feel about going to a university where I was rarely told what to do? How much structure and direction do I need through advisement?
10. How would I enjoy living in a different part of the country or world? How often do I want to be able to go home, or have family visit me? What kind of change in my lifestyle am I willing to make? How close or how far away from home do I want to be?
11. What kinds of surroundings are essential to my well being? Are there certain places, activities, terrain, weather or pace of life which make me happy? Do I prefer a fast paced environment where something is happening most of the time? Do I prefer an organized environment where I can join a wide variety of planned activities? Do I prefer a more relaxed environment where I can go my own way?
12. How would I feel about going to a university where the other students were quite different from me? How would I react? Would I be intimidated or exhilarated? Would I prefer to be with people who share my viewpoints and lifestyle or who challenge me to make and question my perspectives? What sort of personality do I want in a college?

13. If I am considering playing sports at the collegiate level, what is my vision of this? Does the program and level meet my expectation? Do I have an understanding of the program's expectation of me as a student and an athlete?

Step Two: Research Possibilities & Create a List:

There are endless resources in print and on the internet to use when researching colleges. Students should use these resources to research both career and college data. Do not limit your search by using only one search engine. A few options include:

NAVIANCE- create a preliminary list of colleges

UHS Counseling Center website

UHS Future Center

Collegeboard.org

College planning resources found at bookstores or public libraries

Keep an open mind and take advantage of the wide variety of university representatives who visit our school. It is important to make a personal connection with the college, and you can start by talking with the representatives of the universities. They can give you first-hand information regarding their school, and also give you ideas of other colleges, parallel programs or career opportunities after graduation. Remember, many of the college representatives who visit our school are the representatives who read your applications and can add significant input to the admissions committee discussions.

Ultimately, the goal is to find the right fit at the end of this process. When students are able to find this fit, they are more likely to be successful academically and personally. Finding the right fit can be both enriching and empowering for a student. You may begin to discover your hidden potentials and positives attributes, and eventually begin to meet and overcome your challenges.

1. Given my academic profile and personal qualities, what colleges and universities are realistically within my reach?
2. If I know what I want to study, which colleges offer that major or program of study?
 - a. Are there important differences in this major among the colleges I am considering?
 - b. Would I be admitted directly into this major or are there additional screening steps once I have been enrolled?
 - c. If I am unsure about my major, will that impact my opportunities to select specific majors in the future? Which majors require me to begin with that designated major? If I don't know what I want to study, what should I do? (Almost ALL colleges encourage students to apply as undecided or undeclared applicants.)
3. What are the institutional priorities, and do they match my personal priorities? Do I feel there is a connection between the philosophy/mission of the school and my personal values and preferences? (For example, if technology is important to you, develop a checklist or questions to ask when you visit the school. Research different resources for a starting point such as www.educause.edu.)