



# The College Search: A Step-by-Step Guide

OFFICE OF UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS

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# Presentation Overview

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- Welcome!
- The College Timeline
  - Freshman Year
  - Sophomore Year
  - Junior Year
  - Senior Year, Fall
  - Senior Year, Spring
- Exploring the Best Fit
- Visiting Campus

# Freshman Year

## Getting Started

**It's Never Too Early To Plan For the Future!**

- Explore various clubs and organizations sponsored by your high school or local community. Learn what it would take to join the ones that interest you most.
- Take a class in a subject that sounds fun. Step outside of your comfort zone to begin exploring academic interests and possible fields of study.
- Study hard and get excellent grades.
- Begin saving money for college.
- Take on a challenge: try working part time, volunteering or mentoring in your local area to explore possible careers. If nothing else, you'll start earning some money for your college fund!

# Sophomore Year: Exploring Your Resources

## Extra Curricular

- Quality over quantity.
- Choose a few activities that truly interest you and devote yourself to them--take on a leadership role or increase participation.
- Volunteering is a great way to identify your interests and develop skills, or to test out a potential major or career.

## Academic

- Establish a positive relationship with your guidance counselor.
- Understand the course selection process for next year. What types of classes are available? Which subjects do you enjoy?
- Begin to build positive academic relationships with your teachers. Ask questions and participate in class discussions.
- Inquire about PSAT testing and the National Merit Scholar program.
- Remember to establish good study skills and continue to maintain strong grades!



# Junior Year: Final Preparations

## Continue Academic Excellence and Extracurricular Involvement

- Stay involved in the activities and organizations you've joined. Add leadership roles if you haven't already.
- Maintain a challenging academic course load and keep working hard to earn good grades. **Junior year performance is extremely important in the college admission process.**
- Continue to challenge yourself academically when selecting courses for senior year. Colleges are looking at your schedule for senior year, even if they won't see the grades earned!
- Over the summer, consider enrolling in an academic course (many colleges offer summer programs for high school students), volunteering, or holding an internship. Internships can both build your resume and provide valuable work experience.
- Think about taking a practice ACT or SAT exam if you haven't already. Prepare to take your first official exam in the spring.

# Junior Year: Final Preparations

## The College Search

- Attend college fairs, financial aid seminars, and other events sponsored by your high school or local community.
- Start researching colleges and asking your guidance counselor which schools might be a good fit for you.
- Decide on a few key factors that will help narrow the search.
- Review college brochures and applications. Become familiar with application requirements.
- Talk with your family. What are their expectations? What type of school do they imagine for you?
- Register for an ACT or SAT exam in February, March, or April. Create a study plan to prepare. (Taking the exams more than once increases your chances of improving your score!)
- Begin visiting colleges and taking tours! Many colleges offer tours daily during summer months.
- Start a calendar with important application deadlines (admissions, financial aid, scholarships).



# Senior Year: Taking Action

## Fall

- Sign up for the September, October, or November SAT or ACT exams.
- Check on application and financial aid deadlines. They vary from college to college—make sure you have a master calendar to keep everything straight!
- Meet with your guidance counselor to be certain that your list includes colleges that are appropriate to your academic and personal goals.
- Begin asking for your teacher and counselor recommendations. Be sure to give your teachers plenty of notice to complete their letters before deadline.
- Investigate merit scholarships to learn if there are any additional deadlines that need to be met.
- **Start sending in your applications—many colleges begin accepting applications in August or September!**



# Senior Year: Taking Action

## Spring

- Remember to monitor the status of your applications, to be sure that all your materials are sent and received on time. Call, email, or check online!
- Fill out and submit all appropriate financial aid forms (including the FAFSA).
- Check your email! Many colleges now communicate important information, such as your financial aid package and your admission decision, via email. If the address you use on your application changes, notify the colleges.
- Finish your high school career on a strong, positive note. Remember, you will be required to send in a final transcript before beginning college—don't ruin your future by catching senioritis!
- Before **May 1**, decide on the one school of your choice. Send in your tuition deposit and notify other colleges that you will not be attending.

# Exploring the Best Fit

Some things to consider when searching for the right “fit” with a college campus:

## Location

- Close to home? Rural, urban, suburban? What does the campus look like?

## Academic Programs

- Do they have what you want? What if you change your mind?

## Career Building Opportunities

- Do they have research, internship, workshop, and alumni network opportunities?

## Size

- How large is the student body? What is the average class size and student teacher ratio?

## Extracurriculars

- Is the student body diverse? What can I do outside of the classroom? (besides study!)

# Visiting Campus

Visiting colleges is an important step in determining best fit.

- Check to see if an interview is offered or required.
- The best time to get a sense of student life is during the academic year, when students are on campus and school is in session. If that's not possible, summer visits are still useful, especially if summer classes are in session!
- Check to see if you can sit in on a class or speak to someone from a specific academic department if you have a strong academic interest.
- Eat on campus to get a sense of what you would be eating as a student.
- Take a tour! If the tour is led by a student, ask them about campus life.



# Contact Info



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