

College Search

Self-Analysis

The better you know yourself, the better able you will be to find a suitable college. In addition you will be better prepared to present yourself during an interview and on the application and essays.

Questions to Ask Yourself:

- What are my academic interests?
- What do I like to learn when I can learn on my own?
- How do I learn best?
- What has been my best intellectual experience?
- What are my academic weaknesses?
- Do my scores and GPA accurately reflect my abilities and potential?
- Are there any outside circumstances that have interfered with my academic performance?
- What have been my best high school experiences that I would like to duplicate in college?
- What do I like to do in my free time?
- What activities show patterns of commitment, competence or contribution?
- What events have shaped my growth and thinking?
- What are issues that I feel strongly about?
- How would other people who know me well describe me?
- What is my social style? Am I more comfortable in groups or alone?
- How do I respond to pressure, competition, or challenges?
- What are my career goals?
- What kind of person do I hope to become?
- How do I define success?

Once you have thought about yourself, turn that thinking to college and ask yourself:

- Why do I want to go to college (what do I hope to achieve)?
- What interests do I hope to explore?
- Is there any overriding consideration in my choice of college?
- What level of academic challenge do I seek?
- Am I more interested in career preparation or general knowledge?
- How do I want to grow and change in the coming years?
- Do I care how far I will be from my family?
- Does it matter to me if a college has a famous name?

You may find that your answers contradict each other. Remember that there is no perfect college. Your college search is an opportunity to balance and prioritize those aspects that are more and less important to you.

College Search Questions

Now you are ready to look at specific colleges and evaluate their suitability for you. The information you need is available in a wide array of resources detailed in the next section.

Information to Consider:

- Type of College/University (specific?)
 - liberal arts college
 - technically oriented colleges
 - arts/music oriented colleges
 - military academies
- Size
- Geographic location
- Special emphasis (ex: religious affiliation)
- Curriculum and philosophy (flexibility, course availability, core curriculum, innovative programs)
- Admissions selectivity (least selective to most selective)
- Academic programs (majors, interdepartmental programs, independent study, study abroad)
- Environment (both on and off campus)
- Graduation requirements and degrees awarded
- Athletic programs and facilities
- Services available (ex: strong support for learning disabled)
- Costs (tuition, room, board, books, fees, travel, incidentals)
- Financial Aid availability
- Graduate placement (graduate schools, career counseling)
- Faculty (level of degrees, accessibility to undergraduates)
- Student body (size, academic level, social/ethnic/economic diversity, commute vs. residential)
- Campus organizations (Greek life, clubs, etc.)
- Housing (variety, availability for all four years, comfort)
- Rules (cars, parties, visitation)
- Safety Issues

Campus Visits

Call the College Admissions Office at least 3 weeks ahead to schedule your visit and interview, if necessary. If you will be visiting during the school year, ask if it is possible to visit classes or stay overnight in a dorm. Get daily times for tours and information sessions. Plan your visit beforehand to avoid missing out on opportunities to see more of the campus and student life. Visits can provide the most telling and decisive information about a college. Be sure to research the colleges beforehand, so you are prepared to ask any questions you might still have. Leave yourself plenty of time to just wander and possibly talk with students.

Tours generally last about an hour and the group size will vary. Campus tours are usually led by student volunteers and provide background of the college's history, an overview of academic and student life and a view of the resources available. While not every facility is available for visits during the tour, if you are interested in a specific part of campus (sports center, music facilities, dorms, science labs) be sure and ask. At worst, your tour guide can point it out and you can return later on your own.

Group information sessions are an easy and efficient way for the school to provide general information to a large gathering of students and parents. They are often scheduled to run either immediately before or after one tour each day.

Class visits may be possible during the academic year. The student can generally attend a class or two for the entire period and may be able to talk with the faculty afterward.

Some colleges have designated students who serve as overnight hosts or offer common rooms to visiting students. Generally, overnights are not offered on weekends and may be limited to one night only.

Plan to arrange meetings with coaches, music or drama advisors and learning specialists on your own. The admissions office will be able to provide names and phone numbers of the person to contact, but will usually ask you to call directly to arrange a meeting.

Below are a number of suggestions to make the most of your campus visits.

- Visit the library—is it accessible, noisy, comfortable, computerized, open late at night?
- Get a copy of the school newspaper—what are the issues on campus?
- Look at bulletin boards—what activities and events are happening on campus?
- Visit the bookstore and snack bars—what are students talking about?
- Seek out students—is the campus climate conservative or liberal? Is safety an issue? What do they do on the weekend?
- Ask questions about workload and size of classes.
- Ask about faculty accessibility and who teaches most of the classes.
- Find out if there is a writing center or special help/tutoring.
- Visit the best and worst dorms. Is special interest or theme housing available?
- Check on computer accessibility in dorms and other locations.
- Ask about the relationship between the college and nearest town.
- Ask your tour guide what s/he thinks are the biggest drawbacks to the college.

Trust your gut instinct. Listen to the positive and negative feelings you get from the moment you step foot on the college campus.

COLLEGE VOCABULARY

Terms Used For Undergraduate Admissions/Financial Aid

APPLICANT POOL

Number and quality of students applying in any given year as first time freshman to a four-year college or university. The “applicant pool” varies from year to year.

APPLICATION FEE

The sum of money charged by colleges to cover the cost of handling student applications. Fees range between campuses for each application. Some students are eligible for fee waivers.

ADMISSIBILITY

Term used informally to refer to applicants’ qualifications when a campus must use selection criteria because it cannot accept all eligible applicants. A student may be “eligible,” but not “admissible.”

ASSOCIATE DEGREE (AA)

A degree awarded by a community college upon completion of a two-year program of study.

BACCALAUREATE DEGREE (BA)

A degree awarded by a college or university upon completion of a four-year program of study.

CAL GRANT A

An award given to California residents attending a four year college or university. Recipients are selected on the basis of achievement and financial need. The award covers student fees and tuition.

CAL GRANT B

An award given to California residents who demonstrate exceptional financial need. For the freshman year the award covers part of educational and living expenses.

CONDITIONAL ADMISSION

An act by which a school accepts a student even though that student has not met the minimum admission requirements. In return, the student must first enroll in remedial course primarily during the summer prior to the freshman year. This summer course is many times referred to as SUMMER BRIDGE.

EARLY DECISION

A process (typically for private schools) by which the student submits a college application in November or December and learns of their acceptance in December or January. If admitted, the students must withdraw their other applications and accept the school's offer. You may only apply for early decision to one school, thus it is recommended only if you haven't any doubts about where you want to attend college.

EARLY ACTION

SIMILAR TO early Decision, except if accepted, the student is **NOT** committed to attend the institution and other applications may be submitted.

ROLLING ADMISSIONS

Admission decisions are made on a continuous basis and notification is sent within approximately 3 to 8 weeks after the receipt of a completed application and all supporting data

REGULAR ADMISSIONS

A particular college sets a specific date by which all application materials must be submitted to be considered for admission. Notification of acceptance or rejection is sent to all students on a specific date.

ELIGIBILITY

A student meets the minimum entrance requirements for admission for freshman status. This eligibility requirement includes the subject requirement, and the examination requirement.

ELIGIBILITY IN LOCAL CONTEXT (ELC)

Under ELC, the top 4 percent of students in each participating California high school will be designated UC- eligible, beginning with students entering the University of California in fall 2001, and are guaranteed admission to ONE (UC determines which campus) of the UC's eight general campuses. To be considered for ELC, you must complete 11 specific units of the subject requirements by the end of the junior year. With the assistance of each participating high school (RBV being a participating high school), the University will identify will identify the top 4% of students on the basis of GPA in the required coursework completed in the 10th and 11th grades. Schools must obtain parental permission to forward the transcripts to UC. See page 8 in the UC application booklet for more information.

EXPECTED FAMILY CONTRIBUTION

Financial aid term which is the amount that parents and the students can be reasonably expected to pay for post-secondary education.

FAFSA

Free Application for Federal Student Aid- a form used to apply for financial aid. This forms determines eligibility for grants, parent loans, student loans and on-campus work study. Priority filing period between January 1st –March 1st.

FILING PERIOD

The appropriate time to submit application for admission and financial aid. CSU filing period is October 1st - November 30th. UC filing period is November 1-30.

G.E. (GENERAL EDUCATION) REQUIREMENT

These are the requirements designed to give undergraduates a broad background in all major academic disciplines. Each school has its own G.E. requirements. The student can take these requirements at a four year school or at a community college.

INDEPENDENT STUDENT (FINANCIAL AID)

Any student who will be at least 24 years of age by December 31 of the award year may be considered independent for the purpose of financial aid eligibility. A student under 24 years of age may be considered independent only if he or she meets one of the following criteria:

1. Is a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces.
2. Is an orphan or ward of the court.
3. Has legal dependents other than a spouse.
4. Is married and will not be claimed by parents or guardians as a dependent for income tax purposes for the first calendar year of the award year.
5. Is a graduate student and will not be claimed by parents or guardians as a dependent for income tax purposes for the first calendar year of the award year.

PELL GRANT

The governments largest grant program for undergraduates only. Students need to demonstrate exceptional financial need.

PERKINS LOAN PROGRAM

A federal loan program with repayment at a low interest rate, beginning nine months after the borrower ceases to be at least a half time student.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Standards above and beyond the eligibility requirements used by a campus or program when the number of eligible candidates exceeds the spaces available. The standards include depth and breadth of coursework and other academic criteria. This criteria is used to accept between 40 and 60 percent of those accepted.

STAFFORD LOAN

Money that students may borrow from banks at favorable interest rates. The loan may be subsidized by the government if the student meets certain requirements.

SUPPLEMENTAL CRITERIA

Along with academic criteria, criteria used to select applicants with special talents and special circumstances (ethnicity, gender, and location of residence).

TRANSFERRABLE ADMISSIONS PROGRAMS

A variety of four-year campus programs to support transfer students from community colleges. Some offer academic support and admissions counseling others guarantee admissions to a specific program at a specific university or specific campus. Check with the community college campus if interested in a transfer admission program.

Links to many colleges systems

<http://www.california.edu/>

The California College Explorer

<http://www.CaliforniaColleges.edu/>

The Diagnostic Writing Services (DWS)

<http://www.essayeval.org/>

The Mathematics Diagnostic Testing Program (MSDTP)

<http://mdtp.ucsd.edu/Welcome.html>

Seven Misleading Myths About College Admissions

Myth #1 *“Colleges receive so many personal essays that they probably only glance at them”*

Fact College admissions officers read personal essays with great care. Writing about yourself in a way that makes you unique is the one significant thing you can do to overcome lackluster test scores and a mediocre school record. Don’t wait until just before the deadline and dash off anything to get it in the mail.

Myth #2 *“Colleges do not look at the senior year grades.”*

Fact All private and public college admissions committees analyze not only senior year grades in the first and final semester but also the degree of difficulty of the senior year course of study. The UC and CSU systems as well as private schools look very closely at courses taken in the senior year. As for second semester grades, if there is a significant change in academic performance from January to June, the college that originally accepted you may require summer school work, put you on probation for the first semester of college or, more likely, rescind your acceptance on grounds that you are not the same student they originally admitted or did not meet the minimum requirements for admission. **DO NOT TEST THIS MYTH!!**

Myth #3 *“It’s important to have as many varied extracurricular activities as possible to impress college admissions people.”*

Fact Colleges are looking for quality of involvement rather than quantity. They want a well-rounded student body made up of students who are vitally interested in particular activities and who haven’t spread themselves so thin that they’ve demonstrated no commitment to anything. Colleges prefer, for example, the student who was solely dedicated yearbook editor, rather than the student who dashed in and out of ten activities. They call this “productive follow-through.”

Myth #4 *“It is better to go to a big university that is well known than to a small college that a few people have heard of.”*

Fact All generalizations about large versus small schools are dangerous. A prestigious university like Stanford would be more ideal for many students, but some would fare better in a small, less widely known college such as University of San Diego. It is important to define the things you want in a college-to understand yourself, not to be influenced by other’s opinions. Research the schools, the population and student body for yourself- **VISIT THE SCHOOLS YOU ARE LOOKING AT.**

Myth #5 *“Ivy League colleges are the only ones worth applying to.”*

Fact This is another cliché! The Ivy League colleges such as Stanford, Harvard, Princeton, and Yale, are among the most selective schools in the nation, but they may not offer what you want; besides, did you know that the Ivy League is simply an athletic league like the Big 10 or the Pac-10? Certainly, the Ivy League is known for its academic quality but it does not have a monopoly on academic quality! It is worthwhile to explore other areas of the country and to remember that many prominent men and women have graduated from non-Ivy League schools.

Myth #6 *“I don’t have enough money to go to college”*

Fact Financial aid continues to be more readily available than you might think in the forms of grants, loans, opportunities for on-campus work, and scholarships. Refer to the financial aid section of this book and APPLY by the deadline.

Myth #7 *“If I make the wrong decision about college, my life will be ruined.”*

Fact While it is important to realize the significance of your college choice, you should remember that if you find, in spite of an informed choice, that you are not well-suited to your college, you can transfer to another college. So, be conscientious about the selection process, but don’t envision yourself as a character in a Greek tragedy.

COLLEGE BOARD

College Admission Tests

SAT I	ACT	SAT II
(2-part)	(4-parts)	(one hour multiple choice in specific subject)
50% English 50% Math	25% English 25% Reading 25% Math 25% Science	5-Subject Areas 18-Different Tests You may take 1-3 tests at each setting
Used By Most Colleges For Admissions		Required By The UC's And Some Private Colleges* The UC's generally ask for: 1-English 1-Math 1-Your choice

“BRAG SHEET”

A “brag sheet” or personal resume is helpful to have completed not only when requesting recommendations from teachers or your counselor, but when you sit down to write your college entrance essay. To request a letter of recommendation (needed for most private colleges) from your counselor, you will need to make an appointment to discuss your college plans, goals, etc. at least 2 weeks before you need your letter. Please bring to your appointment the following items to help your counselor write a letter that best represents you and your accomplishments: Secondary School Report Form (if applicable), mailing envelope with two stamps, and the completed Brag Sheet. Take your time and think about all you have accomplished

Name _____

Student ID # _____

Counselor _____

Social Security # _____

Academic Achievements:

Grade Point Average _____ SAT I: Verbal _____ Math _____

SAT II: Writing _____ Math _____ Elective _____

ACT composite _____ **please note next to the score the month and year taken*

Awards Earned: (briefly describe each)

AP Tests Taken and Scores Earned:

Activities: List your school activities including clubs, teams, and student government. Circle each grade you participated in the activity and any leadership positions held.

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Work Experience, Community Service, or Church Activities:

List three teachers who could be contacted for a recommendation

Additional information you want to include

Extracurricular, Personal, and Volunteer Activities Worksheet

Please list your principal extracurricular, community, and family activities and hobbies in the order of their interest to you. Include specific events and/or major accomplishments such as musical instrument played, varsity letters earned, etc. Check in the right column those activities you hope to pursue in college.

Keep this list in your college files and update as needed. This will help greatly when filling out college and scholarship applications.

Activity	Grade level				Approximate time spent		Positions held, honors won, or letters earned	Continue in college?
	9	10	11	12	Hours/wk	Weeks/year		

Work Experience

List any job (including summer employment) you have held in the past three years.

Specific nature of work	Employer	Approximate dates of employment	Approximate no. of hours spent per week

Please describe which of these activities (extracurricular and personal activities or work experience) has had the most meaning for you, and why.