How to Research Schools

You’ll be spending the next 4 years of your life at a school, whether you’ll be dorming or not. It is important for you to find the perfect school for you academically, emotionally, and financially. Also, admission for some schools is more limited than others so it is important to research them to make sure they satisfy academic requirements, offer helpful resources regarding majors and career opportunities, and have extracurricular activities.

**College Resources:**

* Go onto <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search> and fill out your preferences to find the school best for you! This website is a good place to start if you’re completely clueless about which school you want to attend.
* <https://www.mycollegeoptions.org/college-search/us.aspx> gives you a list of colleges in each state along with information regarding the school type, campus setting, total enrollment, incoming freshman, religious affiliation, applicants admitted, application deadline, and highest degree offered.
* Use CollegeNavigator <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/> to help find the costs of tuition and other expenses in your college of interest.
* Use Niche <https://www.niche.com/?ref=colleges> to see which colleges are best for you according to your intended major, SAT/ACT score, campus size, etc. Make an account and take the college quiz. This website will show reviews of the school, acceptance rate, net price, etc.

Some things that are important to keep in mind when searching for schools are:

**The Type of College**

* Community orsometimes called junior colleges, technical colleges, or city colleges, are primarily **two-year** public institutions that provide lower-level education. These colleges grant certificates, diplomas, and associate degrees. This is also usually the cheaper option when it comes to attending college.
* 4-year universities provide programs of study that take approximately **4 years** to complete. Students that complete these programs earn a bachelor’s degree. These colleges usually include strong student communities, sports teams and extracurricular activities, student clubs and organizations, and more. Private universities are owned and operated by individuals or organizations and do not receive federal or state funding, but instead receive funding from alumni, corporate, and individual donations. Funding for public universities comes from state and federal taxes, as well as student tuition and fees, and private donors. Some examples of public colleges include Binghamton University and Queens College. Since we, Bayside High School students, are based in New York, it is important to understand the difference between SUNY and CUNY–public institutions in New York.

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→SUNY stands for “State University of New York” and CUNY stands for “City University of New York”. CUNY’s are exclusively located in the city while SUNY’s are located all throughout the state. SUNY’s are limited in New York City and are often larger, offering more academically rigorous classes.

* Vocational schools offer field-focused programs - either short-unit classes of ten weeks, or long-term programs of up to **two years**. Vocational schools allow students to gain intensive learning experiences, while setting them up to succeed in their field. The training is specific and relevant to the work they would do in a professional setting of their field choice. Vocational schools differ from community colleges and four-year institutions because no extra classes are necessary to graduate. This allows more time to develop career-focused skills and to gain on-the-job success and fulfillment.

*Source:* <https://www.thoughtco.com/types-of-colleges-4689039>

**The Size of the College**

It is always important to consider the number of students that attend a college. Everyone is different–some people enjoy a larger school with a bigger community, while others enjoy a smaller school with a closer, more tight-knit community. There are many pros and cons to each different sized school so it is important to consider both sides.

* Large colleges have over 15,000 students. Some include New York University, UCLA, Michigan State, and University of Texas at Austin.

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| Pros* More extracurricular opportunities (sports, cultural, government, student organizations).
* More career choices. Some schools provide more programs, allowing you to explore new options that suit you more.
* Networking connections. You can meet many more new people and grow your connections in a larger school.
 | Cons* You can get lost in the crowd. Larger schools have lecture classes with up to 300 students, which make it harder to stand out and make an impression with your professor.
* It also might be more overwhelming because it is intimidating being surrounded by so many people.
* Longer walks. A bigger campus can make you have to take longer walks before you reach your next class, especially when one building is across the campus from another.
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* Medium colleges have between 5,000 to 15,000 students. Some include Yale, University of Arkansas, University of Montana, and Binghamton University.

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| Pros* More academic options than a small college
* Not too big or too small of a lecture class.
* Wide range of activities and clubs.
* Allows to establish intimate relationships while also allows to keep meeting new people.
 | Cons* Less academic options than a large college
* Less options for activities than a large college.
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* Small colleges have up to 5,000 students. Some include Hobart, Colgate, Grinnell, and Reed.

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| Pros* Classes are smaller and it can be easier to learn in a smaller class setting with more interactions with the professor.
* A student council or government will have more impact and influence to create changes.
* Students get to create deeper connections and you can stand out more.
 | Cons* Limited academic options
* Fewer student activities (clubs, sports).
* Limited campus experiences since there is limited space, so you may have to live off-campus.
* Fewer internship opportunities
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**Faculty to Student Ratio / Class Size**

* If you are the type of person that learns better when there’s constant interaction with a teacher, a college with a smaller faculty to student ratio or smaller class sizes may be better for you. Some students that attend a college with a larger faculty to student ratio can sometimes feel neglected or feel as if they are not getting enough help. Furthermore, instruction can be misunderstood and misinterpreted. However, those are just some concerns and not everyone feels that way. Some enjoy having a larger class size or faculty to student ratio because they feel they work better independently and do not feel a need to rely on the teacher’s assistance as much. Everyone has a different learning style so it’s important to keep in mind that all colleges are different. You should pick the one right for you.

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 **The Price of the College**

* While a private institution might be more reputable, the name might not always be worth the cost. Taking out too many loans may cause setbacks in the future. Community College is a great way to minimize cost especially while being undecided. Paying less in tuition may allow for dorm possibility and investments. Students are encouraged to research programs or jobs that will cover the cost of their future education.
* Some schools may offer better financial aid to students that apply or offer scholarships that match your interests and qualifications. If you know your family cannot afford to go to a certain college or that you won’t make enough money in the future to pay off your loans, it might be better to attend a different college.

**Programs and Majors Available**

* Programs and majors will almost always be on the college’s website so you can search the college you’re interested in and see what they have to offer. If you know what you want to major in, search schools that offer good programs and opportunities according to your interest. Some colleges have specific programs that are for specific majors, which is a plus! If you are unsure of what major you want, there are a couple of websites you can check out that will tell you what is best for you such as <https://www.mymajors.com/>

**The Extracurriculars Available**

* If you are looking to join a specific club, team or organization, extracurriculars are very important. Some colleges don’t have a reputable dance team, an active creative writing club, etc. However, you can always start your own club! Be sure to check their website and see what they offer. Keep in mind that you’ll be spending the next 4 years at that school and you should look for a school that has your interests.

**Requirements (SAT/ACT Score, Subject SAT, SAT Essay, Supplements)**

* You can find all requirements of a college online if you just simply search it. You can also see which colleges require you to write a supplemental essay through CommonApp. Once you add a college to your college list on CommonApp, it will show you everything needed to be done in order to submit an application to that college. This year, some colleges are not requiring students to send in their test scores. For these schools, if you feel that sending in your scores represent your work, you can send in your scores. However, don’t feel pressured to because colleges understand circumstances in not being able to take the test, and you won’t be at a disadvantage if you don’t send them in.

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Finally, as you search, it is crucial that you keep your college research organized and clear. You can create a google doc, hand write it, or even create a spreadsheet. Thankfully, we found a clear spreadsheet you can use:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1-vOwR98S-Sh193QmORM7lSlFLovIAYSeyFLVmhsJEJ0/edit?usp=sharing>

Researching for schools can be stressful so start early!

Good luck (: