

College Planning

College Planning encompasses all areas that contribute to your decision to attend one particular university. During this time you should be thinking about where you want to attend, what is required, what you hope to gain, and deadlines among other factors. Below we have outlined some of the things you might want to consider when planning to apply to or accept an offer from a university.

Deciding Where to Apply - 10th/11th Grade

- Think about what you want out of your college experience
 - Big school vs. small school, public vs. private, in-state vs. out-of-state, what you can afford, close to home vs. far away.
 - Look for academic, athletic, and extracurricular programs that fit your interest
- Visit the schools you are interested in to get a better idea of the school's campus and atmosphere.
 - If the school is too far or you can't go, try a virtual tour.
- Talk to alumni to get opinions about a school.
- Consider your grades, test scores, and extracurriculars when deciding where to apply.
 - Potential schools should be classified as safety schools, good matches, and reaches.
 - Safety schools:
 - Schools with lower average scores and grades than your own
 - These schools act as your safety net if you don't get accepted to or can't afford preferred schools.
 - Most people apply to 1-2 safety schools.
 - Good matches:
 - Schools with average scores and grades similar to your own.
 - Most people apply to 2-4 good matches.
 - Reaches:
 - Schools with higher average scores and grades than your own.

- These are the “dream schools” that you would go to if acceptances and finances weren’t an issue.
 - Most people apply to 1-2 reaches.
- Consider application fees when deciding how many schools to apply to, as they can get expensive.
 - In many cases, if you have financial difficulties, colleges will issue application fee waivers (either through the common/coalition app or their own online application).
 - Also remember, that at the end of the day you are only attending one university. When applying, have your goals clear so you do not spend time on applications for universities that you will not seriously consider.

12th Grade Planning

12th grade planning is focused on applying to colleges. Here you need to consider which school you actually are applying to/applied to, how much financial aid they are willing to give you, and which one best fits you goals.

There are a lot of factors in this decision, here are two resources that break down by month what you should be doing to choose, apply, and enroll in a university.

- [Senior Year College Planning Calendar](#)
- [12 Grade: College Planning Timeline](#)

Here are some tips that you may want to consider:

- Compare Financial Aid Packages
 - For many students, financial aid is a deciding factor in their college decision
 - Start by comparing how much you will owe to each school; this will depend on many factors, such as whether they are in-state or out-of-state and the amount of aid offered by each
 - For each school, look at the aid offer carefully and compare how much is gifted aid money and how much will have to be paid back

- Make a Pros and Cons List for Each School
 - While these ideas may already be swirling around your head, writing them down can provide some much-needed clarity
 - Decide which elements of each school you value most (academic programs, location, price, proximity to home, etc.)
 - When writing out your cons, consider your deal breakers, and use these to help narrow down your list

- Visit or Revisit Potential Colleges
 - If you are going to spend the next four years pursuing your education, you want to make sure you like your new home
 - Some colleges give accepted students an opportunity to sit in on classes, so use this as a chance to see what the school is really like
 - Read the school newspaper or strike up a conversation with a student to really get a feel for the campus

- Trust Your Gut
 - You may feel like one college just *feels* more right than another
 - Find a balance between gut feelings and logical thinking when making your decision