



College Search Resources

Websites:

There are numerous websites with college search functions. Many allow you to input characteristics that you seek in a college and in return will generate a list of colleges that match. This is a great way to generate a list of colleges to begin researching.

- collegeboard.com
- petersons.com / collegequest.com (both require students to sign up for a free membership)
- princetonreview.com
- gocollege.com
- embark.com
- usnews.com
- collegeview.com
- careersandcolleges.com
- fairtest.org

College Guidebooks:

These books contain listings of colleges accompanied by either strictly factual information or a subjective review of the institution based on various criteria/sources. Some college guidebooks focus on a very specific characteristic or type of college (ex. liberal arts colleges, character-building colleges, colleges with strong support systems for students with learning differences, etc.). A listing of very general yet popular guidebooks is below. There are many more available for your reference.

- The College Board Handbook
- Peterson's Guide
- Fiske Guide to Colleges
- The Princeton Review Series
- Insider's Guide to the Colleges
- Kaplan Series

It is vital to remember that factual information in guidebooks may not be accurate. Always contact the college directly when trying to determine deadlines or requirements.

Counselors:

Although there are different types of counselors, they are all there for one purpose: to help. Students are encouraged to visit these professionals often to get advice, guidance and support. They can also help when trying to generate a preliminary list of colleges.

College Counselor: If you attend a private school (or some public schools), you probably have a college counselor whose primary job is to help you identify a list of target colleges to which you are academically qualified to gain admission. This person will also help you through the college application process and will be your advocate as colleges begin to make decisions. The school most likely has a comprehensive resource room filled with college information. A college counselor has usually had extensive experience in college admissions or counseling and can be an excellent resource.

School Counselor: In addition to personal and academic advising, school counselors do a wonderful job advising students when it comes to applying to colleges. The guidance department at a high school has many helpful books, videos and other resources to help prepare you for the college search/admission process.

Independent Counselor: Independent Counselors are an option for families who wish to seek college advice from a professional who has no affiliation with your high school. This person will work at great length one-on-one with a family. There is usually a large fee for this service, but independent counselors typically have had college admission experience and are intimately familiar with colleges around the country.

There are also a number of services (usually test-prep companies) that provide college counseling, among other services. Princeton Review, Kaplan, and Achieva are three examples. The fee can range roughly from \$500 - \$1500 and each program distinguishes itself in a different way. Some include individual counseling while others are structured in a classroom setting. With the purchase of an SAT prep course, some companies offer a discount on their college counseling services.

Colleges and Universities:

The resources listed above are great for learning general information about a school, but the best resource of them all are the schools themselves:

Websites: This is one of the most popular ways that prospective students become better acquainted with the specifics of a college/university. Keep in mind that the information provided is somewhat biased because it is presented by the institution itself. The institution has a vested interest in a prospective student being excited about courses, faculty, majors, study abroad, athletics, housing, and the varied opportunities that it provides. Other popular features include virtual tours, student profiles, an online course bulletin and links to the application or to the common application.

Publications: Once a prospective student is on a college's mailing list, there will be an endless stream of letters and brochures that will arrive in the mail. Much of this information is specifically designed to appeal to college-bound teenagers and, similar to college websites, tends to only discuss the positive aspects of a school. This is a great way to determine whether a college or university has the characteristics that the student is looking for. Be aware that students will often receive information from schools in which they have not expressed interest. This occurs when colleges purchase names of students who took the PSAT or SAT and receive a certain score.

College Representatives: College representatives can be an invaluable resource for students, especially when they are considering colleges that are far away from home. One of their many responsibilities is to meet with students, parents and school counselors. Most often, you will see them at college fairs or at your high school. You may have noticed that your high school makes announcements in the fall about which colleges are visiting on a particular day. These college representatives are there to talk to students interested in their schools. They are also there to learn more about the high school for when applications are reviewed. Learning about a high school allows representatives to advocate for students from that school. College representatives also may host receptions in your area so you can learn more about the school without having to visit campus. Staying in touch with these representatives is highly recommended. Getting an email address or phone number ensures that you have a direct line to information. It can also be advantageous to have met the admissions representative to your region if they visit your school in the fall because they will most likely be reading your application after it is submitted in the winter. Face-to-face meetings may not be possible during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many colleges have developed virtual tours, remote information sessions and opportunities to chat with students as well as admissions staff. These are good opportunities to learn more about the college and ask questions about their application review process.