

THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS

Do Research: Create Your Initial College List

Research Your Options!

Resources:

The Internet
Books
People
Campus Visits

Final Thoughts

Now that you've given some careful consideration to your personal preferences, finding colleges that meet your needs is the next step in the process.

How do you choose colleges that might be a good match for you? The most popular and easiest ways to access information about colleges are by searching the internet (individual college websites and college search sites), books (college guides and catalogs), talking to people (family, friends, SI Alumni, and of course, your counselor), and visiting college campuses (take a tour).

The Counseling Department suggests that you utilize a variety of resources to learn more about colleges. Here are a few thoughts for your consideration:

The Internet:

The web offers a vast array of information and can be an invaluable resource for your college application process. For this reason, please make sure that you double check information that originates from a private source (blog, independent website) vs. the college website.

Please see 'Helpful Websites' in the appendix of this guide.

Books:

Start with the library in the Counseling Center to get a sense of the different types of books available.

• **College Catalogues**

Each college has a catalog which provides a comprehensive review of degrees offered, course requirements for graduation, course offerings, as well as, tuition and fees. This is an excellent way to gain first-hand knowledge of a particular college. Once you start your college education, this catalogue will become a constant reference guide as you work with your advisor to choose a major and select your courses to meet graduation requirements.

• **Guides and Other Reference Material**

There are books that cover just about any topic related to college choice, admission, and the decision process. We created a brief bibliography of recommended books covering a variety of topics. There is a 'Suggested Reading List' in the appendix of this guide for your review. Please note that there is not one great book for everyone, so a trip to the library or a bookstore is always a good idea to find the book(s) that suit you best.

People:

(Family/Friends, Counselor, Faculty, Coaches, Admission Representatives, Current College Students)

Talking to people with experience with the colleges you're considering is always an important step. Keep careful notes to reflect on as you make your final choices.

Remember: The purpose of asking for opinions is to gather perspective as you move through the fact finding process. You may also discover some additional college suggestions that you had not yet considered. No individual opinion should sway you until you have had the chance to gather all of the facts you need in this process.

Family/Friends

Sample Interview Questions

Consider asking the adults in your life some questions. A few examples are provided here for your review. Please feel free to adapt these or make up your own so that you're comfortable asking. Remember, it doesn't matter what the specific career is, the point of this is to learn more about the opportunities out there. You may be surprised!

- Where did you go to college?
- Did you like it?
- What were some of the positives/negatives?
- What did you major in?
- Does your current career relate to your college major?
- How did you discover your career?
- Where would you apply now if you could start again? Why?

College Admission Representatives

Before and after application season, college admission staff is focused on introducing prospective applicants (that's you) to their particular college in hope of sparking your interest.

An excellent resource for both general facts and perspective on the total experience, college representatives typically have a sense of the type(s) of students who are successful at their college. Every campus has its own character and culture which is in large part, made up by both the students and the faculty. Consider that many representatives are recent graduates hired by their college to represent the total college experience to you, the prospective applicant. This person may be an invaluable resource.

Whenever you have the opportunity, go out of your way to meet admission staff and learn more about a college and its mission. In addition, go online and review the majors offered, campus location, and read the home page just to get a sense of the school. Then, when you speak with an admission representative, you can ask informed questions which will provide you with better information about the college and give the admission representative some insight as to your potential level of interest.

Places to find College Admission Representatives:

- **St. Ignatius College Preparatory:** Throughout each school year, the SI Counseling Department hosts 100+ individual college representatives both in the Counseling Center (throughout the Fall) and in College Fair settings in the gym. Admission representatives always look forward to the chance to discuss their college with interested (and curious) SI students. While seniors are often the primary audience, all interested students are welcome.
- **College Fairs:** Fairs take place in a variety of venues from conference centers to high school campuses, and can be quite large, including a variety of colleges and universities. Fairs are scheduled annually at SI. For example: In the Fall we host the Jesuit College Fair and we are also the San Francisco site for the College Admission Case Studies event in the Spring. A college fair is held in our gym after the Case Studies event concludes.
- **Various Venues in the Bay Area:** Colleges may find a venue at a hotel, high school campus or another location to host an information session for interested families. Typically, such opportunities are posted on the admission section of the college website and publicized to students who have expressed interest in their college.

College Visits

Visiting a campus is a great way to connect with people who know about the particular college. If you haven't done so already, begin visiting college campuses. It is a great way to take some of the 'mystery' out of finding the 'right fit' and gaining valuable perspective. If possible, plan ahead—go on the tour and listen to the information provided. College websites have tour information available under 'admissions'. *Go to the 'College Visit Worksheet' in the Appendix of this guide for additional suggestions.*

After each campus tour and information session you attend, take notes about your impressions.

- What did you like?
- What didn't you like?
- Was there anything you heard or saw that you realized was important to you?
- Could you imagine living on that campus for four years? (consider dorms, food, location)
- Did you get a good sense of the type of students who attend this college?
- Did any questions come up for you?

In addition to helping you sort out your college options, this exercise will also help you fine tune what you're looking for in a college and allow you to make great decisions when you create your final college list.

Campus Visit Etiquette:

During a Campus Visit: Remember that the admission office is hosting your visit. Ask informed questions and do your best to avoid basic questions that are easily addressed on the college website.

When you get home: Write a note of thanks for the time/attention you received. In the age of e-mail, a handwritten note stands out and is often appreciated and may be addressed to the person you spoke with at the admission office of the college.

The College List: Finding 'The Right Fit'

The key to a well researched college list is the time and attention given to identifying your needs and goals for the next phase of your education. It is in everyone's best interest to ensure a well rounded list of colleges by taking a conservative approach to making your final choices.

Use common sense to create a strong final list by placing each college in one of three different categories: Challenging, Possible and Likely in terms of your admissibility. Colleges representing each category are essential for students to ensure a well rounded list of colleges. As the college admission process has become more competitive and students feel the need to apply to several schools, it is always a good idea to take a practical approach and include 2-3 'likely' colleges on your application list.

A **'Challenging'** (Reach) College is one in which the average GPA & Standardized Test Score of admitted students is above your GPA/Test Scores.

A **'Possible'** College is one in which either the average GPA or Standardized Test Scores of admitted students is equal to or below your scores.

A **'Likely'** College is one in which both the average GPA and Standardized Test Scores are lower than your scores.

From this perspective, students should consider their cumulative GPA and current standardized test scores and compare them to the average GPA and test score total typically accepted by the college. This information may be found on the college website. In addition, for information specific to graduates of St. Ignatius, students and parents may look at their Family Connection account.

A bit of advice: Each college on your list should be a school you would gladly attend if it were the only school you were accepted to. It is not unusual for a senior to have 6 or more potential first choices; this makes for a much more fluid process as you submit applications and ultimately, select a college to attend.

Many colleges make admission data available for the most recent incoming class. If you wish to compare the statistics of SI students on Family Connection to the college's general profile, visit the college website.