

Senior Year College Planning Calendar

September

- **Make an appointment with your high school counselor!**
- Register for the SAT, ACT, SAT Subject Tests if you have not already done so
- Continue & complete your applications (double-check for any additional requirements)
- Check your high school transcripts for any errors
- Make sure you have all information about financial aid & scholarships
- Attend open houses, receptions & college rep meetings at your school throughout the fall

October

- Take SAT, ACT or SAT Subject Tests if necessary
- Make sure teacher recommendations are secure
- Ask teachers if they need additional information and remind them of your deadline
- **Get early decision and early action applications finished up and sent in**

November

- Take SAT, ACT or SAT Subject Tests if necessary
- Download the FAFSA worksheet for you and your parents: www.FAFSA.ed.gov
- **Mail any scholarship applications**
- **Send in applications—pay special attention to the University of California, California State, Early Action and Early Decision deadlines in this month**

December

- Take SAT, ACT or SAT Subject Tests if necessary
- Send out any straggling applications
- Request your high school transcript be sent to every college requiring it for admission
- Contact colleges about possible local interviews
- Make sure you have a FAFSA ready to send out by first week in January

January

- Last chance to take the ACT, SAT and SAT Subject Tests (Note: most schools will not accept scores after their application deadline. Check each website for clarification.)
- **Send out your completed FAFSA on January 1st- first come, first served!!!**

February

- Continue searching for scholarship opportunities
- Review your FAFSA report when it arrives

March

- Narrow down the final selection of colleges

April

- Make a decision about which college to attend.
- Carefully look over scholarship and financial aid packages with your parents
- **Send one deposit to ONE college by May 1st**
- Notify other colleges of your decision not to attend by letter, postcard or an email to the admission office.

May

- Take any AP/IB exams
- Send thank you notes to teachers who wrote letters of recommendation for you and let them know your decision

June

- **Request your final transcripts be sent to the college you have chosen**
- Send thank you notes to scholarship programs that have awarded you aid

July

- Notify the financial aid office of the college you will be attending of any scholarships you have been awarded from private sources

College Categories

Large State Research Universities

Most people have heard of the large public universities or at least know their athletic teams. Needless to say, athletics can be very exciting at these schools. There are some other factors to consider when exploring these big schools. First are the large class sizes. Professors will not know you are in class, which also means they don't know who you are. You may not care about this fact now, but when it comes time for letters of recommendation for grad school or jobs, obtaining one can be quite difficult from a professor at a large university unless you get one of those prime research assistant positions. You have to be self-motivated to get involved socially and make yourself stand out. Oftentimes undergraduate students get left in the dust with graduate students around and professors consumed with their own research. Large universities have a large number of major options to choose from, but getting classes to fit your schedule can be more difficult, possibly even leading to a delayed graduation date. Majors can also be harder to get into, often requiring a separate application and selection process during sophomore or junior year. Large universities are filled with great diversity of all kinds and often have a large population of commuter students not living on campus. *Considering applying? Admission is typically highly selective.*

Regional State Universities

Regional state universities are smaller than the larger state research universities with more focus on undergraduate education. Regional universities often offer specialty majors that can be exciting for students. The classes and lecture labs can be smaller, but you still have the likelihood of teaching assistants for some of the larger classes. It can also be easier to get the classes you need for your major. Like the larger research university, there are many commuter students on campus, but there may be even more at a regional university. There also tends to be less diversity, at least geographically. While the athletic teams may not be as nationally recognized as some of the larger research universities, they can be more accessible. *Considering applying? Admission is typically moderately selective.*

Community Colleges

Community colleges are changing! Housing on or near campus is becoming more common and you can't beat the cost of tuition! More students are turning to community colleges for their first two years of college not only for the lower cost of fulfilling general education requirements, but also for the smaller class sizes and closer relationships with professors. Classes are also typically offered at more flexible times allowing for a part-time job, if necessary. Another advantage of a two-year college is the ability to get a fresh start with grades. After obtaining an associate degree, there is no need to depend on your high school record (or even test scores) for transferring to a four-year college or university. Community colleges typically have a very large commuter student population, and some are commuter-only, which can lead to limited social activities on campus and less student interaction after class. *Considering applying? Community colleges typically accept all students.*

Ivy League

Technically, the Ivy League is just an athletic conference of schools that have gained a prestigious reputation and have very low acceptance rates. The prime locations (although cold in the winter months) and beautiful campuses are hard to beat, as are the very well-recognized faculty who are active in their fields. Although sometimes clumped together, it is important to note that each Ivy League school has its own traditions and identity. While the name recognition may help a graduate obtain his or her first job, that's as far as "the name" typically goes. These schools have large endowments thanks to very strong alumni relations, and they are very expensive. They also have a very diverse student body with a common need to be highly competitive and serious academically. But it's not all studying and name recognition. Students must be actively involved to take full advantage of the university. *Considering applying? Admission is most competitive (often far below 10%).*

Large Private Universities

Similar to large public universities, large private universities are usually pretty recognizable by their athletic team, for better or worse! Large private universities come with a bigger price tag, but there is often more aid available for those in financial need. Some larger private universities also have graduate programs on campus, which makes research opportunities more abundant, but also more competitive for undergraduates. These schools tend to be centrally located in bigger cities, allowing for more widely available internship opportunities, especially with specialized majors for pre-professional tracking. The presence of many graduate students can also flow into the classroom experience, replacing a professor with a teaching assistant and limiting the interaction between students and professors. Socially, large private universities are very diverse and have a lot to offer. There is typically a very active student life and strong Greek system, but students still need to make the effort to get involved. The strong alumni affiliations and networking can be advantageous both during your time as a student and for the rest of your life! *Considering applying? Admission is typically highly selective.*

Small Private Liberal Arts Colleges

Don't let the initial tuition shock stop you from considering small private liberal arts colleges. These schools often have much more to offer in merit-based financial aid. The four-year graduation rates are often also higher. A broad emphasis on a liberal arts core enables students to explore majors without losing too much ground. Small liberal arts colleges often have very tight-knit communities, including close relationships between students and faculty. These relationships tend to last a lifetime with strong alumni affiliation and networking. While these schools are often located in more remote areas and can be difficult to travel to, this location also translates into more campus programming and student involvement in activities. Athletics can sometimes be more accessible for the more casual athlete. The focus at these colleges is on undergraduates, with professors teaching all classes and research opportunities strictly for undergraduates. Admissions can be "friendlier" with more flexible enrollment policies, often test-optional standards and interviews. *Considering applying? Admission is typically moderately to highly selective.*

Religiously Affiliated Colleges and Universities

Don't let a religious affiliation keep you from exploring a school. These days, many colleges and universities keep their historic affiliations for varying reasons (and tax advantages). You will commonly find that some students don't even know about their school's affiliation. Most Catholic affiliations do not focus so much on the Catholic faith, as much as emphasize a general understanding of world religions and ethics as a basis for education. Jesuits call this "educating the whole person." Catholic schools also have a strong focus on service learning. If a strong religious affiliation is something you are looking for, you can definitely find one for many different religious traditions, including some Catholic schools. There are also Quaker schools that focus on an egalitarian process, honor codes and student involvement in every decision making process on campus. Overall, with a few exceptions, students of all faiths still feel comfortable at a religiously affiliated school. The schools in this group have the same characteristics as the small private liberal arts schools above. However, there is a large contingent of small religiously affiliated schools that compete on the Division I circuit for athletics. *Considering applying? Admission is typically moderately to highly selective.*

Specialty Schools: Military, Technical, Art & Music Conservatories

Students with clear goals and serious attitudes about a specialized interest may sometimes be best at schools that allow students to focus and be surrounded by their strength. They also typically offer faculty very highly trained in their fields. Small class sizes and close relationships with professors can allow for a more individualized education. Many specialty schools offer a liberal arts component that may or may not be required. Portfolios, auditions and/or interviews are typically required. *Considering applying? Admission is typically highly selective to most competitive.*

My Thoughts on College

MY ACADEMIC FIT

- Smarter than most students around me
- About the same intelligence as most students at the school
- Need the challenge of other students working hard and/or tough classes
- Thrive on academic pressure/competition
- Want to study enough for “decent” grades but have plenty of time for other activities
- Need a relaxed atmosphere to excel

JUST MY SIZE

- Big fish, small pond: I’d like to be known and make a difference at school
- Small fish, big pond: I’d like to be relatively anonymous (*12,000+ students*)
- Know most of the other students on campus at least by sight
- On a first name basis with professors
- Mostly small classes (under 50 students)

MY KIND OF STUDENTS

- Co-ed / same-sex student body
- Majority of undergraduate students live on campus
- Geographic diversity: mostly in-state / from all over
- Ethnic diversity: diverse / large population of _____
- Socio-economic diversity
- Political diversity: balanced / conservative / liberal

MY SOCIAL LIFE

- Extracurricular activities: wide variety / Greek system / active community service
- Sports: intramural program / Division I, II, III / up-to-date fitness center
- Services available for learning differences: academic tutoring, writing labs, etc.
- Strong dorm community with most students remaining on campus over weekends
- Quality campus housing
- Guaranteed on-campus housing: for freshmen / for 4 years

MY LOCATION AND SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT

- General geographic location: East Coast / West Coast / Midwest / South / local
- Surrounding community: in or near a big city / small town / rural
- Access to variety of outdoor activities
- Access to a variety of art & cultural activities
- Attractive campus
- Particular climate preferred (describe) _____

MY EDUCATION

- School dedicated solely or primarily to undergraduate students
- Faculty focus: research and publications / teaching / world renowned reputation
- Curriculum: unstructured (few or no requirements) / traditional (core requirements)
- Study abroad, independent study, self-designed majors, internships, student research
- Specialized schools: art, music, architecture, business, engineering, _____
- Religious affiliation: strong / loose / no opinion

MY OTHER CONCERNS

- Cost of attendance
- Prestigious school name
- Graduate in four years
- Strong department in my field of interest (if you know what your major will be)
- Something else: _____

College Website Scavenger Hunt

How do I research this list of schools?

Going to websites and perusing college brochures, catalogs and those gigantic college reference books may seem a bit daunting, but with a little help it's a lot easier (and fun) than you might think! Write down your findings and keep it in your binder.

Remember that like every school itself, every website will be different. If you get stuck, use the hints for search tips. If you get REALLY stuck, just move on to the next one.

General Philosophy/School Environment

What is the school motto and/or missions statement? What kinds of rules govern the school? How are students involved in school governance and policymaking? Is there an honor code? Are all of these elements compatible with your own code of ethics?

HINT: HOMEPAGE, ABOUT, ACADEMICS, ADMINISTRATION

Academics

Find two courses (at least one in your academic area of interest) that you would like to take if you were to attend. Name the professors that teach them and find out something interesting about each professor's background.

How many professors are in the department you are interested in? What are the requirements for your intended major?

How is the curriculum set up? Are their core/distribution/general education requirements? Can students select their own curriculum?

HINT: ACADEMICS, MAJORS, COURSES, FACULTY, ADMINISTRATION, ABOUT

Social

Find an event you would like to attend on a weekend and also find one to attend during the week.

Find a club to join or some extracurricular or community service activity to explore on campus. If it's something you are involved in now that you know you would like to continue, can you find any similarities or differences in these programs? Be sure to also look for something you may have never tried or heard about or something that just sounds intriguing!

HINT: STUDENT LIFE, ATHLETICS, CURRENT STUDENTS, CALENDAR, EVENTS, ON CAMPUS

Getting There

How will you get to school every fall and after holidays? Will you drive, take a train or fly? If flying, how far is the airport from campus? Does the school provide any transportation to/from airports and train stations? How many stops will you need to make on a plane trip? Which airlines fly to the nearest airport? How long, on average, will it take you to get from home to campus? You may also want to think about the costs involved with your transportation and add it to your overall cost of attending.

HINT: GETTING HERE, ADMISSIONS, CAMPUS VISIT

My Interests

Choose at least five of the following to answer, depending on your interest. Use the same four (or more) questions for each college you research.

1. Find the names of two famous alumni from each college on your list

HINT: ALUMNI, UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE, NEWS, ABOUT

2. Record the hours the library is open. When was it last renovated? What type of study areas (quiet zones, group study areas) does it have?

HINT: CURRENT STUDENTS, ACADEMICS, ON CAMPUS, CURRENT STUDENTS

3. What program/events occur during freshman orientation? How long does it last? When does it occur?

HINT: PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS, ADMISSIONS

4. How many places are there to eat on campus? Any coffee houses? Do they meet any dietary restrictions you may have?

HINT: PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS, ADMISSIONS, STUDENT LIFE, STUDENT SERVICES

5. You'd like to spend a day off campus, in a city, on the slopes, at the beach, in the woods, etc. Where could you go? How far away is it? How would you get there (bus, train, car)? How far is public transportation from campus?

HINT: STUDENT LIFE, ADMISSIONS, PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS, AROUND TOWN

6. School spirit is important to you. Do they have any winning teams? How close is the stadium/field? Are student tickets free?

HINT: ATHLETICS, STUDENT LIFE

7. You love theater or music ensembles, art shows, lectures or other activities. How many productions/concerts/shows/lectures per semester are offered on campus, either for participants or spectators?

HINT: CALENDAR, STUDENT LIFE, SPECIFIC DEPARTMENT WEBSITES (ACADEMICS), COMMUNITY OUTREACH, ON CAMPUS, NEWS, EVENTS

8. What are your housing options as a freshman? Are there freshman only dorms? Are there coed dorms? Are the dorms newer or older? Are they close to academic buildings? How close are they to dining facilities? How are bathrooms shared (by room, suite, floor, hall)? What else is important to you?

HINT: STUDENT LIFE, HOUSING, RESIDENTIAL LIFE, ON CAMPUS

9. Find out about the freshman advising program. How is your advisor chosen? Do you also have peer advisors? When are meetings required? What type(s) of on-going activities do you do with your advisor and/or freshman class throughout the year?

HINT: CURRENT STUDENTS, PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS, ADMISSIONS, STUDENT LIFE, ACADEMICS

10. What type of academic calendar does the schools use? Semester? Quarter? Jan Term? Block system? Co-op? Some other configuration? Do they offer any special programs during any specific session (i.e., travel courses during J-Term)?

HINT: ADMISSIONS, CALENDAR, ABOUT, ACADEMICS

11. How available is academic support? Is there a writing center? Is there a math center? How often are these centers used? Is it required to use them freshman year? Is tutoring available? What is the cost? Are tutors other students or members of the community?

HINT: STUDENT SERVICES, ACADEMICS, STUDENT LIFE, RESOURCES

12. What percentage of students play intramural sports? Is the athletic center updated and centrally located? Do students and athletes have separate gyms?

HINT: STUDENT LIFE, CLUBS, ACTIVITIES, ON CAMPUS, FACILITIES, ATHLETICS

13. Does the school offer merit scholarships? What percentage of students receive these? Are there any financial aid “guarantees”?

HINT: ADMISSIONS, PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS, FINANCIAL AID

14. If you would like to participate in research opportunities in college, how easy is it for an undergrad to get involved? Can you be a freshman or sophomore? Are any positions paid?

HINT: ADMISSIONS, ACADEMICS, SPECIFIC DEPARTMENT WEBSITES

15. Greek Life. What sororities or fraternities are available? Do they have housing on campus? What percentage of students participate in the Greek System? When is Rush held (Fall or Spring)?

HINT: STUDENT LIFE, CLUBS, HOUSING, ON CAMPUS

16. You know you want to study abroad. Are there programs offered in countries of your interest? Does the college have its own programs abroad with its own professors? How easy is it to transfer credits? How many study abroad advisors are there? Are there specific requirements for certain programs? Will it be possible to study abroad with your anticipated major? What summer abroad opportunities do they offer?

HINT: ACADEMICS, STUDENT LIFE, STUDY ABROAD

17. Are internships available? Are they required? How are these integrated into the rest of your studies?

HINT: CURRENT STUDENTS, STUDENT SERVICES, CAREER CENTER, DEPARTMENT WEBSITES, ACADEMICS, ADMISSIONS

3 Reasons Why

When narrowing your list of schools, it's sometimes easiest to write out specific reasons why this school is one you really want to apply to. It might be helpful to copy this page for your parent(s) to also fill out so you can compare results.

	NAME OF SCHOOL	3 REASONS WHY I LIKE THIS SCHOOL
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
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9		
10		
11		
12		

Campus Visit Alternatives

It's not always possible to make a campus visit, but don't worry. Try one or more of the following options for getting that "campus feel" virtually. After your virtual visits, try emailing the admissions office for answers to any specific questions you have. Look first to see if they offer a regional rep for your area. If not, use the general email address for admissions.

YouiversityTV

www.youniversitytv.com

Many colleges feel YouiversityTV captures the essence of their campus better than anyone else. Best of all, it's free!

The U: Uncut

www.theu.com

A DVD set can be ordered and is a great option for getting to know a school in a fun and flashy way. The drawback is not many schools are featured. The online option can work too, but the website is a bit confusing to navigate and cluttered with advertising.

Collegiate Choice Walking Tours

www.collegiatechoice.com

These are DVDs you can order for over 350 colleges and universities. While not as flashy as the other possibilities in this list, Collegiate Choice is a basic film of a regular walking tour you would get if you visited campus yourself. Some are better than others.

Individual College Websites

Many colleges and universities make their admissions video available online. In addition, there is often an opportunity to take a virtual tour. Check it out!

Admission Blogs

More and more colleges and universities are using blogs on their websites to introduce prospective students to the school. You can often follow a first year student throughout the year, ask questions and read about the daily goings on!

Local Visits

If you have a local college or university near you, go for a visit! Even if you do not want to apply to that specific school, going on a campus visit can sometimes help you understand what you are (or are not) looking for in your future college experience. Questions or concerns you hadn't even thought about may come to mind. Better yet, if you have more than one college or university in your area, visit both to compare experiences. For example, try visiting a larger state university and a smaller private college. What are the advantages/disadvantages of each type of school? How do you feel at each? Experiences like these can really help you narrow your focus and help you get a better sense of your general likes/dislikes during your college search.

College Rep Visits at Your High School

Many colleges and universities send representatives to different high schools around the country to speak to prospective students. Keep on top of this visit schedule at your school and make arrangements to sit in on these presentations when possible. Tip: these visits are often in the fall.

Fly-ins

Some schools offer free fly-in programs for high achieving underrepresented students. If this might apply to you, first check the website for specific information and talk to your high school counselor. You can contact the college or university directly about this opportunity.