

4- The College Search

Two 45-min. sessions

Objectives: The students will be able to:

- identify factors to consider when choosing a college
- gather information about specific colleges from a variety of sources
- make comparisons among colleges

Materials:

- Overhead projector, transparency pens
- Overhead transparencies: *College Search Graphic Organizer*
- Books: The College Board's College Handbook, Peterson's Four Year Colleges/Two Year Colleges, Kaplan's Unofficial Guide to the 320 Most Interesting Colleges. College 411: Student Guide to Higher Education & Financial Aid in Maryland
- Consider Maryland booklets (Or Xeroxed pages),
- Handouts: *College Factors to Consider Web*, *What I want in a College* questionnaire, college comparison graphic organizer, and *Web Search: Finding the Right College*.
- OPTIONAL: computer lab w/internet access

NOTE: The *Consider Maryland Module* includes some of the activities of this module. You may want to make modifications with this module if your students have already completed the Consider Maryland module.

Session 1 Activities

1. Ask students to guess the number of colleges and universities in the U.S. (3,600) (*This would be a good time to review the different types of colleges or introduce them if not covered in previous sessions- 4 year, 2 year, liberal arts colleges, universities, etc.)
2. Ask students to think about how they could narrow down this high number to come up with a list of 10 colleges to research: *What are you looking for in a college? What is important to consider when choosing a college?*
3. Display transparency: *Choosing a College Web* and distribute copies to students. Discuss factors/criteria for choosing a college. Record student responses on transparency. (Depending on student interest, you could ask a student to write responses on the sheet while you facilitate the discussion.). Some factors to consider: Location (distance from home and urban/rural/suburban area), Size, Cost, Reputation, Competitiveness, Student Population- diversity, HBCU, etc., Facilities, Academic Programs- Majors Offered, etc.
4. Remind the students why these qualities are important- the key to finding the right college is to identify the characteristics that fit a person and will make for a happy and successful college career.
5. Distribute *What I Want in a College* questionnaire and provide time for students to complete.

6. Survey student opinion about the most important features of a college to them and ask them to write a paragraph summarizing what they are looking for in a college. (Be sure to model with examples).

Session 2 Activities

1. Tell the students: The next step in the college search process is to find out which colleges best meet ones' background and talents, as well as match the factors identified as important to one's academic and social success.
 2. Discuss guidelines for the search: (Show transparency) *Guidelines for the Search:*
 - Finding a college requires you to be a good researcher.
 - All colleges have good points and bad points.
 - Don't let stereotypes guide your choice of colleges.
 3. Review and Discuss Sources of Information: People, Paper, Internet Sites, etc. and display a source when possible. (College Board Handbook, a college publication, copy of a college's web page printed from the Internet, etc.)
 4. Distribute: *College Comparison Worksheet*. Use the *Consider Maryland* brochures to locate specific information about colleges and to compare 2 Maryland schools using the same criteria.
 5. **PLAN A:** Use the Internet and utilize several college preparation/search websites. The College Board website allows students to tailor a college search to meet individual preferences. (See CollegeBound's Internet resources list for additional websites). The following steps can be used to introduce students to the college search functions of the College Board website. See student handout: *Web Search: Finding the Right College*.
 - Go to www.collegeboard.com
 - Click on the "*Finding the Right College*" link.
 - Read: "*Quick Start College Search*"
 - Click on and complete the "*Advanced Search*" questionnaire. This will lead students through a series of questions to determine their preferences related to the college search.
 - Click on: *See Results* (By submitting their preferences, students will receive a list of matching colleges). Print list of colleges, if possible. Click on links to read background information about colleges. From here, you can also link to an individual college's website.
 - Click on: *Side-by-Side Comparison* and College Board will do a quick, easy to read comparison of colleges you select. (Direct students to enter the names of three colleges). Print chart if possible.
 - Click on "*Like Finder*" and College Board will locate similar colleges for you.
 - Take a virtual tour of two different colleges by clicking on the college website links.
- * *Remind students that they can arrive at most colleges' home pages simply by typing: [http://www.\(name or initials of college\).edu](http://www.(name or initials of college).edu)*

PLAN B: Use the College Board Handbook and *Consider Maryland* booklets. Other Resources: Barron's Profiles of American Colleges, Peterson's Four –Year Colleges, Kaplan's Unofficial Guide to the 320 most Interesting Colleges, individual college publications) Students could either work independently or in groups.

Follow-up:

- Provide students with a sample letter requesting information from a college. Ask students to select four colleges and write four letters to mail.
- Ask students to email a college and request general information to be sent to home address.
- Assist students with the task of revising their college lists throughout the year.

Guidelines for the Search

1. Finding a college requires you to be a good researcher.
2. All colleges have good points and bad points.
3. Don't let the stereotypes guide your choice of colleges.

People Sources of Information

1. Guidance Counselor/College Access Specialist
2. College Representatives
3. Alumni (graduates of the college)
4. Currently enrolled students
5. Parents
6. Friends

Paper Sources of Information

1. Objective College Guidebooks
2. Subjective College Guidebooks
3. Printed material from the College itself
(viewbooks and catalogs, student newspapers)

Computer, Cyberspace and Other Sources of Information

1. General internet web sites
2. Financial Aid information web sites
3. College web sites
4. Computerized college searches, CD-Roms
5. College videotapes

* Adapted from: CollegeMatch, Steven R. Antonoff and Marie A. Friedemann, Octameron Associates.

What I Want in a College

Need help beginning your college search? The following exercise will help you determine what you are looking for. You don't need final answers to all of the questions right now. Discuss your responses with your parents and come back later to any questions you're not sure about.

1. Do I want to:
 - a. commute to my college campus or
 - b. live on a college campus?

2. What type of school do I want? Would I be happier at a liberal arts college or a big university? A community college? A music or arts school? A technical or trade school? I'm willing to consider: (Circle all that apply)
 - *Community colleges:* Offer two-year programs where you can earn an Associate's degree. This prepares you for a job or transfer to a four-year institution.
 - *Four-year colleges & universities:* Generally classified as either *Liberal Arts Colleges* or *Universities*.
 - *Liberal Arts Colleges:* Liberal arts & sciences is the term used to describe the most general and most common form of undergraduate education in the U.S. Liberal Arts programs are designed to develop general knowledge and reasoning ability as opposed to specific preparation for a career. If you are uncertain about your career field, then you should consider liberal arts colleges for the strong foundation and springboard they will provide for the world of work and future study (graduate school, law school, business school, etc.)
 - *Universities:* Offer a broad range of both undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Generally larger than other types of colleges and offer more majors and have more research facilities than other colleges.
 - *Specialty schools:* Art schools, culinary schools, music conservatories, and schools of design. These schools specialize in a single, usually artistic area.
*Special note: Many universities also include schools of art or music and some smaller colleges have strong arts programs- so you don't necessarily have to attend a specialty school to major in the visual or performing arts. Research both!
 - *Trade/Technical schools:* These schools offer certificates or degrees in specific areas such as computer programming, paralegal, or dental assistance, etc. for students who may want to enter the job market as soon as possible. While may offer a less well-rounded degree than the associate degree programs offered at community colleges, obtaining one of their career-oriented degrees or certificates can show employers that you have the skills and qualities they want.

(over)

3. I'm willing to consider colleges that are:
 - a. In/near a big city
 - b. Away from a big city in a small town
4. I'm willing to consider colleges that are:
 - a. In the Baltimore Metropolitan Area
 - b. Less than 3 hours from home
 - c. More than 3 hours from home
5. Would I feel more comfortable in a large, sometimes impersonal setting, or would I rather live in a smaller, more close-knit environment? What size college appeals to me?
 - a. Small: up to 3,000 students
 - b. Medium: 3,000-7,000 students
 - c. Large: over 7,000 students
6. I'm planning to consider colleges that have Admissions Policies which are:
 - a. Open. All students are accepted to limit of capacity.
 - b. Liberal. Many students are accepted from the lower half of the class.
 - c. Traditional. Students rank in the *top 50* percent of the class and have a *good* academic record.
 - d. Selective: Students rank in the *top 25* percent of the class and have a *strong* academic record.
 - e. Highly Selective: Student ranks in the *top 10* percent of the class and have a *very strong* academic record.
7. Do I want an academically demanding environment, or would I prefer to be at a school which is a little more low-key?
8. Do I want to attend a racially diverse school? How do I feel about attending a predominately white school? Am I interested in attending an HBCU (historically black college or university)?
9. Do I want an extensive athletic program? Do I want to play sports just for fun (maybe on a club or intramural team) or do I want to play on an intercollegiate team? (List here any sports in which you are interested).
10. Does fraternity or sorority life interest me? *On some campuses the Greek system is more of an extracurricular activity, on other campuses, it can be central to the whole social scene.*
11. Am I interested in participating in extracurricular activities while I'm in college? Is there an activity I'm involved in now that I'd like to continue? Would I like to try something new? (List any activities here).

College Comparison Worksheet

College Name			
Location <ul style="list-style-type: none">• distance from home			
Size <ul style="list-style-type: none">• enrollment• physical size of campus			
Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none">• type of school (2 yr/4 yr)• school setting (urban/rural)• location & size of nearest city• coed, male, female• religious affiliation			
Admission Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">• deadline• tests required• average test scores, GPA, rank• special requirements• notification			
Academics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• your major offered• special requirements• accreditation• student/faculty ratio• typical class size			
College Expenses <ul style="list-style-type: none">• tuition, room & board• estimated total budget• application fees, deposits			
Financial Aid <ul style="list-style-type: none">• deadline• required forms• % receiving aid• scholarships			
Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• residence hall requirements• availability• types and sizes• food plan			
Facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• academic• recreational• other			
Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• clubs, organizations• Greek life• athletics, intramurals• other			
Campus Visits <ul style="list-style-type: none">• when• special opportunities			

Name _____

Web Search: Finding the Right College

www.collegeboard.com

1. Go to www.collegeboard.com
 2. Click on: **Finding the Right College** link.
 3. Click on: **College Search**.
 4. Click on and complete the **Advanced Search** questionnaire. This will lead you through a series of questions to determine your preferences related to the college search.
 5. After you have completed the questions, click on: **See Results**. **If few or no matches were found, you will want to expand your list to see colleges that were close (but not 100%) matches. Also- the website allows you to go back and revise your "preferences" - which you might need to do if you narrowed your search too much.*
 6. List the names of the matching colleges and universities here. If possible, print the list.
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7. Click on a college name and read the *college profile*.
8. Click on **Side by Side Comparison**. Enter the names of three colleges and College Board will do a quick, easy to read comparison of the colleges you select. Print the chart if possible.
9. Click on **Like Finder** and College Board will locate similar colleges for you. List their names here.

10. Click on **college quickfinder** and enter the name of a college you'd like to research that was not included in your *Results* list. Read the "college profile".
11. Take a **virtual tour** of a college by clicking on the college website link.
12. Record the address information you will need to write a letter requesting information from a college that interests you.



HELPFUL WEB -SITES

COLLEGE SEARCH/APPLICATIONS

ACT (www.act.org) - register for ACT, ACT prep, and college search

CollegeBound Foundation (www.collegeboundfoundation.org) - covers everything from college planning, admissions tests, and financial planning. Targets graduates of Baltimore City public schools.

College Board Online (www.collegeboard.org) - register for SAT, send scores, and SAT Learning center.

College Link (www.collegelink.com) - allows on-line college applications. Includes the Common College Applications.

College Net (www.collegenet.com) - students may complete, file and pay for admissions applications on-line.

College View (www.collegeview.com) - complements college search software program available in many high schools.

Embark.com (www.embark.com) - on-line research tool to prepare, apply, finance and get ready for college.

Peterson's College Quest (www.collegequest.com) - Peterson's collaboration with NASFAA (National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators) to provide college hunting tips, financial aid options and on-line applications.

Princeton's Review's Review.com (www.review.com) - search schools, manage the application process and find the funds to pay for it all.

Test Prep (www.testprep.com) - scholastic testing systems, student and school based college entrance test preparation exams.

TOEFL (www.toefl.org) - website for test of English as a foreign language programs and services.

USNews (www.usnews.com) - link to the annual list of top college and universities