COLLEGE PLANNING HANDBOOK

Part Two: College Selection & Visits
The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with an overview of the college admissions process. It is important that students and parents carefully read all parts of the handbook and refer to it frequently. This handbook consists of five parts:

- Part One: Overview & Timeline
- **Part Two: College Selection & Visits**
- Part Three: The College Application
- Part Four: Paying for College
- Part Five: Student-Athletes
There are over 3000 accredited colleges and universities in the United States. Developing a list of colleges that is “right” for you is an involved process. The first step is self-assessment, taking stock of your values, interests, and aspirations. It is hard to assess the fit of a college or university before you have a clear sense of who you are and what you are looking for or need in a college setting. Think about your strengths, weaknesses, interests, aspirations, challenges, and needed supports. It is likely you have never done this kind of soul searching before so take your time with it, but don’t dismiss this important part of the process. Kenyon College wisely advises: “Don’t begin your college search with rankings and reputations. Start with yourself: your priorities, preferences, and personal style.”

### Goals and Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>What adjectives would I use to describe myself? How would my parents,</td>
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<tr>
<td>siblings, best friends, classmates and teammates describe me?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What aspects of Portledge have I enjoyed most? What have I enjoyed least?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Am I looking for a new and different experience or something familiar</td>
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<tr>
<td>and comfortable?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do I define success?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is the desired outcome of my college education? Graduate school?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment? Personal and/or intellectual growth?</td>
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### Academics

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<th>Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>What are my favorite and least favorite courses? What do I choose to</td>
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<td>learn on my own? What am I curious about?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is my learning style? Active or passive? Hands-on or abstract?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is learning a means to an end (a way to secure a career) or an enjoyable</td>
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<td>experience for its own sake?</td>
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<td>How hard do I like (or am I willing) to work in college? What is the</td>
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<tr>
<td>average amount of time I study each night?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do I like to participate in class? Do I need access to teachers</td>
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<td>outside of class? Do I like a lecture-style class where I am less</td>
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<tr>
<td>involved in the classroom conversation or a more discussion-based</td>
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<tr>
<td>approach?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do I need support services such as a Writing Center or a Learning</td>
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<td>Resource Center?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do I have a certain career or major in mind?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do I like the idea of a core curriculum or would I benefit from an</td>
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<tr>
<td>academic program that offers greater flexibility?</td>
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Ch. 2 College Selection

One of the most important tasks in the college process is creating a college list. Your initial list may have as many as 30-40 colleges that reflect the characteristics you are looking for, such as size, location, major, lifestyle and so on. Your preliminary list will likely include colleges you have never heard of before. Research them anyway – never let yourself be guided by name recognition alone. Plan to explore the full range of possibilities available to you!

Step 1: Research

Researching colleges is among the most important tasks you will perform. The goal of your research is to end up with a carefully curated list of colleges you know well and like. You will need to use multiple sources to determine what makes each school interesting to you and why each is on the list. Make sure you investigate each college fully and do not rely on hearsay alone. Too frequently, stereotypes are misleading and prevent further exploration of an appropriate institution. (“Someone told me that Colby is too small; someone told me that Penn State is too big; someone told me that Miami is too far away, etc.”) There are many colleges where you will be happy (fit in with other students, find the level of education you need and want, be productive, feel good on campus). Researching colleges means learning about many schools in order to find several schools where you really want to go.

Where do I start?

1. **College Guides:**
   You might want to purchase your own copy of these books. Following is a list of recommended guidebooks and then some thoughts on how to use them wisely:
   - *The Fiske Guide to Colleges* (Edward Fiske)
   - *Looking Beyond the Ivy League and Colleges that Change Lives* (Loren Pope)
   - *The College Handbook* (The College Board)
   - *Barron’s Best Buys* (Barron’s Education Series)
   - *The College Board Guide to 150 Popular College Majors* (The College Board)
   - *Historically Black Colleges and Universities* (Arco)
   - *The Student-Athlete’s Guide to Getting Recruited* (Stuart Brown)
   - *Guide to Performing Arts Programs* (Carole Everett & Muriel Topaz)
   - *The K&W Guide to Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities or Attention Deficit Disorder* (Marybeth Kravets & Imy Wax)
   - *Creative College: A Guide for Student Actors, Artists, Dancers, Musicians and Writers* (Elaina Loveland)
   - *Cool Colleges: For the Hyper-Intelligent, Self-Directed, Late Blooming, and Just Plain Different* (Donald Asher)
   - *College Guide for Visual Arts Majors* (Peterson’s)
   - *The Advocate: College Guide for LGBT Students* (Shane Windmeyer)

Other books about college admission you might find interesting:
   - *Where You Go is Not Who You Will Be* (Frank Bruni)
   - *The Gatekeepers: Inside the Admissions Office at a Premier College* (Jacques Steinberg): This book was written by a *NY Times* reporter who spent a year following an admission officer and several applicants through the admissions process at Wesleyan University.
THE SMART WAY TO USE COLLEGE REFERENCE GUIDES
(Condensed from the admissions webpage of Willamette University)

Avoid the Easy Trap
You face many questions as you decide which college to choose: Public or private? Big or small? Down the street or halfway around the world? Which colleges offer the best programs in my area of interest? Determining which college is the best overall best fit for you is complicated by the fact that your range of options may seem overwhelming. In the United States alone there are more than 3,000 colleges and universities. It’s no wonder choosing a college can be a daunting task! And it’s no wonder prospective students and their families crave tools that will make the process simpler.

Enter the College Guides
These magazines, books, and websites fill the demand for synthesized information about colleges and universities by publishing a summary of each school’s characteristics and, in some cases, by ranking and comparing them based on varying criteria. While many of these can be useful to you as you begin the college search process, you do not want to fall into the easy trap of placing too much faith in the guides as arbiters of what your “best” college choices are.

Selecting a college is an inherently individual process. Therefore, the greatest strength of college guides is also their greatest weakness. They are, by their very nature, incapable of adequately addressing all of the questions and concerns you should be raising as you undertake the complex and personal process of selecting a school. That’s why it’s good to know the smart way to use college reference guides:

A: Consult a Variety of Sources
- College guides are based upon information gathered and presented in different ways. Some guides attempt to quantify and rate colleges; others simply present data. Some mix subjective and anecdotal data into their reviews; others do not. Rather than hoping for a one-stop source where you can find all you need, you’ll develop a fuller picture if you explore several guides.

B: Consider the Reliability of the Information Presented
Take a few minutes to understand the methodology used by a guide in evaluating colleges. An introductory section to the guide should explain this. Here are a few tips to keep in mind:
- Don’t take numerical rankings too literally. Sources that try to place colleges in a precise rank order are trying to quantify the quantifiable. That’s why you’ll see, for example, Willamette University ranked 96th by Washington Monthly but 63rd in US News & World Report – because these publications consider different factors in their ranking formulas. Only you should decide what weight to give what characteristics.
- Note when data is anecdotal. Sometimes guides rely upon subjective opinions that are not gathered in a scientific manner.
- Realize that even objective data can be distorted. Statistics like enrollments, freshman academic profiles, retention, and graduation rates are often reported to the guide writers by the colleges themselves and colleges may define or calculate this data differently.

C: Pay Attention to the Overlap
- As you consult a number of college guides, look for the areas of convergence, where guide after guide suggests the same attributes of a particular college. Conversely, on points where guides seem contradictory, take it as a signal that you should probe more deeply into those areas on your own.

College guides can be helpful in the matching process, but ultimately the only ranking that really matters is yours, so you should base it on a personally tailored and comprehensive search.
2. **Online Sources:**
The Internet has become an invaluable resource for doing college research. You can search college databases, including the one found on SCOIR, by location, size, major, and cost to find matches for you. You can also request view books and course catalogues; take a “virtual tour” of campuses; learn of all admissions requirements and deadlines; find out about scholarships and financial aid; browse the curriculum, course descriptions, and academic requirements; and learn more about campus life, activities, and athletics by going directly to an individual college’s home page. **Visiting the websites of colleges that interest you is highly recommended.**

Following is a short, but by no means comprehensive listing of useful websites:

| SCOIR                  | app.scoir.com/student/collegesearch/
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<tr>
<td>Peterson’s Guide</td>
<td><a href="http://www.petersons.com">www.petersons.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>CollegeXpress</td>
<td><a href="http://www.collegexpress.com">www.collegexpress.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The College Board</td>
<td><a href="http://www.collegeboard.com">www.collegeboard.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td><a href="http://www.act.org">www.act.org</a> or <a href="http://www.actstudent.org">www.actstudent.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CollegeNet</td>
<td><a href="http://www.collegenet.com">www.collegenet.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MyCollegeGuide</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mycollegeguide.org">www.mycollegeguide.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Application</td>
<td><a href="http://www.commonapp.org">www.commonapp.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition for Access, Affordability and Success</td>
<td><a href="http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org">www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FairTest</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fairtest.org">www.fairtest.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCAA</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ncaa.org">www.ncaa.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>SUNY Schools</td>
<td><a href="http://www.suny.edu">www.suny.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>CUNY Schools</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cuny.edu">www.cuny.edu</a></td>
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Also, very helpful is *Web Resources for the College-Bound* compiled by the National Association for College Admission Counseling. Have fun, but be wary of websites like *College Confidential* that regularly post inaccurate information.

Finally, we highly recommend this Malcolm Gladwell article on college rankings: www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/02/14/the-order-of-things

2. **College Representative Meetings at Portledge**
Every year around 50 college representatives visit Portledge to answer questions about their colleges and to meet you. **COME TO THESE MEETINGS! Many of these people will be the “first readers” of your application: think of them as the Long Island “advocates” on the admissions committee at their colleges.** Your attendance at these visits can be very productive encounters, and on occasion can be an important component of a student’s success in the admissions process. An ongoing dialogue between you and the admissions officer may happen organically as a result of your meeting in this setting. Should you be unable to attend because of a conflict in your schedule, try to take a few minutes to introduce yourself to the visiting admissions officer. Ask for their business card, and fill out one of the cards that tracks your attendance and demonstrates interest in a college.
The schedule of college meetings will be posted on SCOIR and reported in the daily announcements. A particular college might also contact you about a visit if you are already on its mailing list. Even if you have not heard of a specific college, or you do not know much about it, this is a great way to learn more. If you have a class at the time of the visit, and it is a school you are considering, you MUST ask your teacher at least 24 hours in advance if you may be excused in order to see the representative. In no event should you make the request on the day of the meeting itself. In addition, you may not be excused if you have a test or lab scheduled during the visit. Even if you have had an interview at the college, you can (and should) say hello to the representative and convey your enthusiasm. A good impression and a contact at the college may be very helpful in your admissions process.

**Recording Your Research**

Use these pages as a note-taking device to help narrow your preferences as you complete your research. Cross out descriptors you don’t want or need and highlight elements that are important to your selection of colleges.

I. **Student Enrollment**
   I. Small; medium; large; freshman class size; % undergraduate students; % freshman who return for sophomore year; % freshmen who graduate; male/female ratio; % commuter/resident; geographic origin; % minority; % international students; % on financial aid

II. **Location and Surroundings**
   II. New England; Mid Atlantic; West Coast; Midwest; South; Southwest; a foreign country; distance from home; travel costs and convenience; local options; urban/suburban/rural; weather; nearest city; recreational opportunities; internship opportunities

II. **College Type and Philosophy**
   II. Religious/public/private/historically black/co-ed/single sex/college/university liberal arts; technical/vocational; conservatory; art/design; pre-professional for business, engineering, fine arts. Other specific degree offering ___________; semester/trimester/quarter/module or block curriculum traditional; progressive; deeply scholarly; career oriented; comprehensive group of majors

III. **Curriculum**
   III. Required freshman courses; core curriculum vs. self-designed curriculum; majors/minors in your areas of interest; number of courses offered in your areas of interest; depth of courses offered in your areas of interest; interdisciplinary courses; research opportunities; field work; internships; study abroad; joint degree programs; cooperative plans (co-op); pre-professional programs

IV. **Academic Environment**
   IV. Faculty with PhD; teaching course load; faculty scholarship; emphasis on undergraduate teaching and learning; faculty-student ratio; average class size; advising; office hour policy/accessibility; % of classes over 50 or under 20 students; departmental clubs; nature of out of class interaction with faculty; workload; academic pressure/competition; student attitude toward learning; forums for exchange of ideas; career advising; % who go on to graduate school; graduate school and job placement
VI. **Campus and Student Life**
   - Homogeneous or diverse; degree of tolerance for differences; mainstream or offbeat students; competitive or inclusive social scene; cohesive or fragmented community; school spirit; controversial campus issues or activism; interest in political, social or world issues; liberal/ directive or restrictive social regulations; large dorms/ small houses; availability of single rooms or other specific set up; system of housing allocation/ roommate selection; centralized on campus dining; student center; single sex/ co-ed dorms; housing guaranteed; substance free housing; activities related to your interests; Greek life; definition of fun on campus; presence of religious, ethnic or cultural groups

VII. **Admissions**
   - Deadlines; application type; early programs, rolling programs, regular decision; fees; specific high school course requirements; Common Application supplements; testing requirements; standardized testing optional; how many recommendations; interview offered; % accepted; average ACT/SAT scores of admitted students; need blind or need considered

VIII. **Costs and Financial Aid**
   - Minimum/ maximum costs per year; student budget for housing, personal expenses, fees, books, travel costs; % of students receiving aid; range of awards; average award; need or merit funds available; loan and job expectations; payment plans

IX. **Intangibles**
   - Does the atmosphere appeal to me? Can I see myself on this campus?

**Step 2: Refine & Balance Your List**

The final goal of the college selection process is to refine your initial list into a balanced final list of not more than 10, or at most, 12 schools (6-8 is the ideal number if you have done your research thoroughly!). The schools on the final list should fall into three categories: Likely, Target, and reach with no more than 3 in the Reach category, at least two in the Likely Category and, ideally, the majority in the Target category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likely Schools:</th>
<th>Those where we believe your chances for admission are at least 75%. It is important to note that we cannot predict admission for the coming year; we can only assess based on what has happened in the previous years.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target Schools:</td>
<td>Chance of admission is about 50%. Your profile looks to be in line with the average accepted student but there are no guarantees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach Schools:</td>
<td>Portledge students with similar grades and test scores to your own are rarely admitted. Chance of admission is around 20-30%.</td>
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</table>
In determining where a school falls on your list, we use our best judgment based on experience, Portledge students’ application history, national trends, and institutional changes. We offer candid and direct advice to help you evaluate your chance of admission to any given college – this is not a judgment of you or your potential in college. Ideally, your final college list will be constructed with a balance of optimism and pragmatism.

It is our experience that students have less trouble coming up with schools in the Reach category and more difficulty adding schools in the Target and Likely categories. Sometimes schools in these categories require more thorough investigation. Please note that the term “Likely” should not only refer to the student’s chance of admission but the student’s feelings about attending the school if admitted. One of the biggest mistakes a student can make in the college selection part of the process is focusing too narrowly on one school or on Reach schools. A commitment to developing a well-balanced list based on careful research is truly a key component of a successful college process.

**Ch. 3 College Visits**

Campus visits can be a helpful part of the college search process. When you visit you will see your potential home for the next four years. We often focus on how colleges select students, but equally important is how students select colleges. **When visiting you should be focusing not on whether or not you can get in, but whether or not you want to get in and be part of this particular campus community.**

When planning to visit a college, first visit their website. There you will find helpful information, including a description of the activities you may participate in while on campus. These typically include tours, information sessions, classroom observations, and interviews. Serious athletes may also want to visit with a coach. Some students also meet with faculty members in their intended major. Many colleges post helpful travel information, including hotels and directions. Visits do not typically require appointments or reservations but sometimes they do. Most of the time you can book appointments via the website. As a general rule do not schedule more than two colleges per day. Allow plenty of time to visit the campus, neighborhood, and surrounding area.

Students should complete the majority of their visits before returning to school in the fall. A great time to visit is over spring break as most colleges will be in session. In addition, many colleges have prescribed prospective student days with special offerings. If you conclude that you truly love the school, you should return in the summer or early fall for an interview (if available). Fall visits should be scheduled on days we are closed. If you must miss a day of school, make sure to fill out a Planned Absence Form and have it signed by your teachers and a college counselor. Remember that while it is possible to miss some school to look at colleges, it is crucial that you earn good grades since your first priority must be your schoolwork.

When on the campus tour, be sure to ask the student guide many questions. Students are the best sources of information about a college. If possible, attend a class and spend some time walking around the campus without a guide. Check out the student center, a dining hall, the athletic facilities, the library, or other hubs of student activity. Be a keen observer to get the best sense you can of the college’s campus culture and environment. Explore the areas of campus (and the surrounding area) where you think you will spend the most time. Walk around the academic departments that interest you. Be absolutely certain to “sign in” at the admissions office and fill out their registration information. Many colleges consider your visit to be the best way to “demonstrate interest” and may take your interest into consideration when making admissions decisions, especially at liberal arts colleges.
Finally, take notes during your visit. Very quickly colleges can begin to look and sound alike. Take photos with your phone of particularly memorable spots on campus. Use the “College Visit Journals” found at the end of this chapter or simply log notes in your phone. It is important to record first impressions, your thoughts about the visit, and the names of people you met. If you interviewed, plan to send a thank-you note to your interviewer as soon as you return home.

At the end of your visit ask yourself two key questions:
- Do I see myself fitting in here?
- Am I comfortable and at ease here?

**Parent Tip:** After visiting a college, wait to offer your opinion and thoughts until after your child has offered theirs. This will allow you both to learn the student’s most candid and genuine thoughts before any family influence has registered!

### College Interviews
Colleges have highly varying policies on interviews, but generally interviews are handled in one of four ways:
- No interview – group information sessions only
- Alumni interviews – optional, off-campus, informational meetings available on a first-come, first-served basis
- Optional informational interviews on campus, often with a student
- Evaluative interviews on campus “are encouraged” — this approach is increasingly rare, but if a college offers it you should definitely take advantage of the opportunity to participate

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<th>What you can do to prepare:</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Schedule early, especially at schools where interviews “are encouraged,” as they will run out of slots quickly</td>
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<td>- Prepare for the experience with a college counselor</td>
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<td>- Read all available material on the college</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Do not ask questions covered in official materials or catalogues and instead use printed or web information as a jumping off point for more specific or deeper questions about academic or other kinds of programs</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Be prepared to talk specifically about yourself and your interest in the college</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Be prepared for unusual, open-ended, or cryptic questions:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Craft a few thoughtful questions about the college</td>
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</table>
**That day:**

- Be prompt and call if you are running late
- If you are afraid you may forget the questions you prepared, write them down. Better to look at your notes than to not have any questions for the interviewer when the time comes
- Try to be relaxed and dress appropriately (as if you are going out for a nice dinner; no jeans, but neither is business attire required!)
- Be confident and assertive, but never overbearing or overly familiar. Shake hands firmly; maintain eye contact
- Be in charge; your parents should play a supporting role, if any
- Treat every interview as if the college is your VERY TOP choice
- Turn off your cell phone and don’t chew gum!
- Engage in a conversation as much as possible
- Make sure you leave knowing your interviewer’s name. Write a handwritten thank-you note as soon as possible after the interview

**Sample College Interview Questions**

- How do you like Portledge? What has been positive about your experience? What would you change if you could about your high school experience? (Be careful not to fall into a trap of giving a negative answer to this question or any other…)
- What is your role in the school community? How would others describe you?
- What is the most significant contribution you have made to your school?
- What are you looking for in a college? Why are you interested in this college or why do you think you are a good match for this college?
  - Be specific; do not suggest that prestige, rankings, or location alone are drivers in your interest. Do not describe the school to them – they are the experts. Instead focus on your own interests and how you can maximize them at the college. Think about where your interests and the college’s offerings intersect and focus on those areas of commonality.
- What are some of your future personal and career goals? Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
- Tell me about an assignment you found intellectually stimulating.
- What are you involved in? What is your most meaningful extracurricular activity?
- How will you take what you’ve done in high school and apply it in a college setting?
- What is your favorite subject? Book? Movie? Cultural Experience?
- What are you thinking about studying in college?
- How are you different from your peers?
- How have you spent your summers?
- What is a current event about which you feel strongly or find interesting, and why?
- What famous or historical person or people would you like to meet or have over for a dinner party?
• Describe something that has made you feel outraged or inspired.
• Have you ever thought of not going to college? What would you do?
• How do you spend your free time? What’s “fun” for you?
• Do you have any questions for me? (Be prepared for this one; it is asked in EVERY interview!)

**Sample Questions for the Interviewer**
• How would you describe the students here? Is there any kind of student who would not be comfortable here?
• What is the political climate on campus? How active are the students in current events?
• Can you describe the school spirit on campus? Are on campus events well attended?
• What is the role of Greek life on campus?
• How do first year students get involved in activities?
• Can you tell me more about the _____________ program? (drama, community service, club athletics, etc.) Ask questions that suggest your interests “I read you have a debate team. What schools do you compete against? How do they usually place?”

**Sample Thank-You Notes for After an Interview**

**Dear Ms. Admissions officer,**

Thank you so much for taking the time to interview me on campus last week. The tour/ overnight/ class visit gave me a great sense of the student body, facilities, and overall environment at COLLEGEFORME. However, your insights about the English Department, particularly the creative writing program and the guest writers, confirmed and solidified my interest in studying at COLLEGEFORME. I am definitely going to pick up that Donna Tartt book you suggested.

Thank you again,

WANTSTOGOTO COLLEGEFORME

**For an Alumni Interviewer**

**Dear Mr. Classof1980,**

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to talk to me about COLLEGEFORME yesterday. Your insights about COLLEGEFORME gave me a true sense of all the school has to offer. I loved hearing about your experiences on campus. I also appreciate the career advice you gave me; I will definitely pursue internships while I am in college so that I am well qualified for employment after I graduate. COLLEGEFORME is my top choice and I would love to go there. Thank you again for your time, support and guidance.

Sincerely,

WANTSTOGOTO COLLEGEFORME
Questions for the Tour Guide:

• What do you like best (or least) about being a student here?
• What are your favorite campus traditions?
• How large are your classes?
• Do you meet regularly with an advisor?
• Who teaches you? Is it easy for you to get help from professors?
• Where do you study? Is the library a good place to work or study?
• Do students talk much about grades?
• What are the biggest current issues on campus this year or semester?
• Is this a safe campus? Are there escort vans, safety patrols, or emergency phones?
• What is your relationship with your teachers outside of the classroom?
• How accepting of diversity are the students on campus? How would you describe the campus culture?
• What are the most popular extracurricular activities here? What do students do purely for fun?
• Do you discuss national politics and issues very often? Are students politically active and aware?
• Where can I get a copy of the campus newspaper? Where do most students hang out?
• When do you declare your major? What are the most popular majors here?
• Tell me about the housing. Are some dorms better than others? Do many students live off campus? Why? Is housing guaranteed for all four years?
• Do students study hard? What is the attitude towards working hard?
• Is there a career service on campus? Is it available to alumni?
• What has been the biggest issue recently in campus politics?
• What impact do fraternities and sororities have (if there are any on campus)? Athletics? What are weekends like here? Do many students head home for the weekend?
• Are the arts supported here? Are they accessible?
• Where do students come from? Is this a diverse community?
• Why did you choose this school? Where else did you apply?
• What kinds of kids do you think are happiest here? Which ones are least happy?
• What would you change about the school?

Do not ask the tour guide overly personal information or what their academic credentials were when they applied!
The Increasing Importance of Demonstrated Interest
As application numbers increase, admissions offices have worked hard to figure out how to keep their acceptance rates low while still enrolling the correct number of students. One way they do this is to take into account certain activities that enrolled students typically participate in and use this information when deciding who to admit. Additionally, an admissions officer may be able to more effectively advocate for a candidate with whom they have had positive and appropriate interactions. Over the last few years some schools that we could consider “likely” schools have turned into “less likely” schools if a student does not demonstrate significant interest in that campus. Below are a number of ways that students can demonstrate interest in a college.

Join the Mailing List
Colleges send important information about local events, interviews, on-campus programs and application details to those on their mailing list. Some schools will ask students to create an account and then track how frequently students visit their website.

Open Emails!
Always open all emails sent from the college! Colleges can and do track this information. Once in a while, click on the links you find within the emails – your active digital interactions are tracked!

College Fairs
Be sure to fill out inquiry cards and try to talk to the people manning the booths at colleges you are interested in. This is another contact that is tracked by the admissions office.

Contact the Admissions Representative
Most admissions officers are open to contact from students, particularly emails with appropriate, genuine, and well-thought-out questions. Avoid asking questions to which the answers can easily be found on the college’s website. Admissions officers receive a lot of email from students. Distinguish yourself by being thoughtful. And be sure to proofread all emails before you press Send!

Attend a Local Event
There are many local events on Long Island and in NYC for interested students. Making the effort to attend is another opportunity to indicate your interest and to potentially interact with the admissions officer you met at Portledge, at a College Fair, on campus, or with whom you’ve been emailing. Some events are large and it may be hard to get quality time with the admissions officer on site but colleges definitely track who attends.

Attend the Portledge School Visit
As already noted, making a connection with an admissions officer while they are at Portledge can be enormously helpful to you in the admissions process. Be sure to at least fill out an inquiry card and try to say hello even if you cannot miss class to attend the session.

Interview
Many colleges offer interviews, either on campus or with alumni representatives. Although the interview may not always be evaluative, it is another way to learn more about the school and to demonstrate your interest. Arrive to the interview prepared to ask thoughtful questions (more on this above). Be certain to send a thank-you note that includes specific information about your conversation. Sample thank-you notes can be found above.
Visit Campus
This is the basic and expected way that a student should demonstrate interest in a particular college. Be certain to “sign in” to get credit for visiting campus. Pay particular attention to the schools in your Likely category as they will be looking carefully for signs of your true interest in attending.

Supplements and Optional Written Statements
Many schools require students to complete a writing supplement in addition to the Common Application. Often the question asks students to describe why they are interested in the school. It is critical to be specific in these supplemental responses. If the school has an “Optional” statement, you can demonstrate your commitment to the school by completing that statement.

**COLLEGE VISIT IDEAS BY GEOGRAPHY**

**Long Island / New York City**
- Columbia, Barnard
- NYU, Eugene Lang
- CUNY Hunter, Pratt
- Sarah Lawrence, SUNY Purchase
- Wagner College
- Adelphi, Hofstra, LIU Post
- Fordham, Pace
- Marymount, Manhattanville
- Stony Brook

**Hudson Valley**
- Vassar, Marist
- Bard, SUNY New Paltz
- Union, Skidmore

**Upstate NY**
- Cornell, Ithaca, SUNY Binghamton
- University Rochester, Hobart & William Smith
- Hamilton, Colgate
- Clarkson, Rochester Institute Technology
- Syracuse, RPI
- SUNYs

**Connecticut**
- Trinity, University of Hartford
- Connecticut College, Wesleyan University
- Quinnipiac, UConn
- Sacred Heart University, Fairfield University
- Yale, University New Haven

**New Jersey**
- Monmouth, Drew
- Princeton, Rutgers

**Rocky Mountains**
- U Colorado at Boulder
- University of Denver, Colorado College

**New England**
- Clark University, Holy Cross (MA)
- Amherst College, UMass (MA)
- Smith, Mount Holyoke, Hampshire (MA)
- Assumption, Worcester Polytech (MA)
- Williams, Bennington (MA & VT)
- Colby, Bowdoin, Bates (ME)
- University of Maine, University Southern Maine
- University of New Hampshire
- New England College, St Michael’s
- Dartmouth, Middlebury (NH & VT)
- University of Vermont, Champlain (VT)

**Pennsylvania**
- UPenn, Drexel, Temple
- Haverford, Bryn Mawr
- Villanova, Swarthmore
- Juniata, Ursinus
- Franklin & Marshall, Gettysburg
- Allegheny, Dickinson
- Muhlenberg, Susquehanna
- Lehigh, Lafayette, Bucknell

**Boston/ Providence**
- Boston University, Northeastern University
- Harvard, Tufts
- MIT, Emerson College
- Emmanuel, Simmons
- Brandeis, Boston College
- Wellesley, Simmons (both women only)
- Babson, Bentley
- Stonehill, Wheaton, Wheelock
- Brown, Providence College, RISD
- Salve Regina, Roger Williams, Bryant
**South**
Davidson, Wake Forest (NC)
Guilford, Duke (NC)
UNC, Elon (NC)
High Point (NC)
Lynchburg, Roanoke (VA)
Washington & Lee, UVA (VA)
College of William & Mary (VA)
University of Richmond, James Madison (VA)
University South Carolina, Clemson (SC)
Furman, College Charleston (SC)
Emory, GA Tech (GA)
Vanderbilt, Rhodes College, Sewanee: University of the South (TN)
Tulane (LA)
University of FL, FL State, U No Florida (FL)
U Tampa, U Miami (FL)
Eckerd College, Rollins College (FL)
Morehouse / Spelman (HBCUs)

**Potomac & Chesapeake**
University of Delaware, Johns Hopkins
U Maryland, Loyola
Goucher, St. John’s
Howard (HBCU)
American, U Mary Washington
Georgetown, George Washington, Catholic
University of America
Washington College, St Mary’s College

**Southern California**
UC San Diego, Loyola Marymount University
University of Southern California, UCLA
Occidental, Cal Tech
Whittier, Cal Arts
Claremont Colleges
Chapman, UC Irvine
UC Riverside, University Redlands

**Northern California**
Stanford, Cal Berkeley
UC Santa Cruz, Santa Clara University
University of San Francisco, Cal College of Arts
University of the Pacific, Santa Clara University

**Pacific Northwest**
University Puget Sound, Evergreen State
University of Portland, Reed College
Lewis & Clark, Whitman
University of Oregon
University of Washington
Willamette University

**Western PA / Midwest**
Penn State, Duquesne (PA)
Pitt and Carnegie Mellon U (PA)
Miami U of Ohio, Denison (OH)
Wittenberg University, Ohio Wesleyan U (OH)
Case Western Reserve, Oberlin (OH)
College of Wooster, Kenyon (OH)
Antioch, Earlham (IN)

**Texas / Southwest**
U Arizona, Arizona State
U Texas, Austin
SMU, TCU, Baylor
Rice University
Trinity University

**Midwest**
Macalester, Carleton, St. Olaf (MN)
University of Wisconsin, Beloit (WI)
University of Michigan, Kalamazoo (MI)
Northwestern, Lake Forest College (Chicago)
University of Chicago, DePaul, Loyola (Chicago)
Marquette University, Lawrence University (WI)
Washington University (St. Louis)
Grinnell, U Iowa, Cornell College (IA)
COLLEGE VISIT JOURNAL
Answer the following questions before you leave for your tour. After you get home, you’ll answer the same questions on the next page.

College Preference

Describe your ideal college in three to five words.

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5.

How confident are you in the type of college you want to attend?

• Very Confident
• Somewhat Confident
• Less Confident

What are three to five things your future college must have? (Athletics, public transportation, Greek life, etc.)

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5.

How confident are you in your major of study?

• Very Confident
• Somewhat Confident
• Less Confident

What size college do you want to attend? (Check all that apply)

• Small (under 5,000 students)
• Medium (5,000-15,000 students)
• Large (15,000-30,000 students)
• Huge (more than 30,000 students)

What type of school do you want to attend? (Check all that apply)

• Private
• Public
• Liberal Arts
• Religiously Affiliated
• Undecided

In which campus setting do you see yourself? (Check all that apply)

• Urban
• Suburban
• Rural
• College Town
Now that you’ve experienced a variety of colleges, how has your perspective changed? Answer the following questions and compare them to your pre-tour beliefs.

**College Reflections**

Describe your ideal college in three to five words.

6.  

8.  

10. 

7.  

9. 

How confident are you in the type of college you want to attend?

- Very Confident
- Somewhat Confident
- Less Confident

What are three to five things your future college must have? (Athletics, public transportation, Greek life, etc.)

6.  

8.  

10. 

7.  

9. 

How confident are you in your major of study?

- Very Confident
- Somewhat Confident
- Less Confident

What size college do you want to attend? *(Check all that apply)*

- Small (under 5,000 students)
- Medium (5,000-15,000 students)
- Large (15,000-30,000 students)
- Huge (more than 30,000 students)

What type of school do you want to attend? *(Check all that apply)*

- Private
- Public
- Liberal Arts
- Religiously Affiliated
- Undecided

In which campus setting do you see yourself? *(Check all that apply)*

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural
- College Town
COLLEGE VISIT JOURNAL

College Observations

College/University Name: Location:

Contact Name: Email:

The Details

School Environment

• Urban
• Suburban

• Rural
• College Town

Number of undergrad students:

Describe the campus — What things stick out to you?

What do you love about this college?

What do you wish you could change about this college?

Can you imagine yourself at this college?

The Ratings (Use the 1-10 Scale)

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<th>The People</th>
<th>Social Life</th>
<th>Academics</th>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>City/Town</th>
<th>Campus</th>
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Additional notes:

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_____________________________________________________________________________________