

## **“What I Wish I Knew” College Advice**

Try to get a sense of what criteria is most important to your student, but do not limit yourself to those criterion. Your child may think he/she wants a big school until they see how spread out it is or want a small school, but realize it is not much larger than their high school. Look at a variety of types, sizes and locations of schools before narrowing down the choices too early in the search process.

### **Criteria**

You do not need to hire a private college counselor.

We have amazing resources at DHS, from our two outstanding college counselors to your students' school counselor to a vast array of programs for students and parents during the junior and senior years. We highly encourage Juniors to attend a Junior Group held in the Spring. Registration is required.

### **College Counselors**

Make sure that the “Colleges Considering” list in MAIA stays updated with any new schools that your child is interested in.

### **Resources**

Have your child attend the many, many workshops and programs that we offer at DHS, go to individual schools' websites and take virtual tours or use Campustours.com, use the net price calculator on each school's website, etc.

### **College Fairs**

Students can pre-register for most fairs with StriveScan, saving time at the fair by not having to fill out information cards. Students should introduce themselves to the admissions representative. Occasionally send that person an email with a question or two as a way to stay in touch. This admissions representative is likely to be the one making the admissions decision.

Attend college fairs in the area, especially the College of Lake County Fair on March 14, Niles West Fair on March 19, Glenbrook North Fair on April 11 and the National Fair at McCormick Place each fall.

### **MAIA Learning**

Use DHS resources: A student and parent meeting with one of the college counselors, student meetings with the college representatives who visit DHS and use of other resources like MAIA (College Search and Compare Me are fantastic features).

### **Tours**

The college or university's tour guide absolutely makes a difference so if you have a choice, choose the perkier, happiest, most gregarious one to tour with. That student will set the tone for the whole school. You can also (quietly) change groups if you are assigned to a tour guide who might not be so perky.

## Majors

Choosing a school for a particular major is certainly an important consideration, but we know many students change their majors once on campus so it is important for the schools to have a wide range of majors available or several majors that the student would consider pursuing. More colleges are offering “Undecided Programs” in order to help the student decide what major they want to pursue.

There is an application organizer on the CCRC webpage of the DHS website.

## Organize

Ask your student to create an organizational system for themselves that identifies important dates and deadlines and allows for all of the materials to be maintained in one location.

Pick up a copy of the Fiske Guide, The Insider’s Guide and a book entitled Colleges That Change Lives.

## Books

To a much lesser extent, rely less on the magazine ratings because the school will be what your child makes of it. Another really good read is “Where You Go Is Not Who You’ll Be” by Frank Bruni.

The importance of thorough campus visits cannot be stressed enough. There is so much to see and to assess. Most importantly, do not rush from school to school if you can avoid it. Take your time on each campus.

- Schedule your visit in advance
- Visit each school’s website for more information on registration.
- Ask to sit in on a class
- Students should record their impressions using the college visit checklist on [cappex.com](http://cappex.com)
  - Have a meal & visit dorms

## Campus Visits

**Campustours.com - Virtual Tours**

- Grab a school newspaper
- Look for activity/club flyers
- People-watch in the Student Union
- Go see the Rec center
- Talk to students & college officials
- Take photos
- Go where the tour did not take you
- Meet with DHS alumni. Take them out for a meal or coffee - they will tell you what the admissions office won’t.

Make a second visit during senior year if possible to confirm the choice. You will see things the second time that you did not see the first time. Even better if this second visit can be an overnight social experience in the residence hall. This visit will allow your child to get a feel for the social life on campus, see what their dining hall is like and eat the food, check out the offering of activities, see if the school offers activities that meets their interest(s), see the Rec center, etc.

## 2nd Visit

This will also help your student with the travel experience - how do they get there on their own if they choose to attend the school?

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Transportation is an important factor, especially in cost and time. The most important question:

**Is the school a good FIT, academically and socially?**

## Transportation

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Talk to DHS grads at various campuses, especially students who are not paid by the admissions office. If there is an opportunity for a social visit, please have your child take advantage of this opportunity. It really makes a difference and could certainly factor into the decision-making process. Smaller colleges will absolutely facilitate this opportunity. For larger schools, you will most likely need to find a DHS alum willing to host your child for a night.

### **DHS Grads**

In fact, they would expect to see your child at their reception and events if the colleges are far from Chicago.

Attend the college’s reception program in our area. Students should get to know the admissions representative from each college as they will be the one reading your child’s application and possibly making a recommendation for admission. And this tip helps with schools who “take attendance”. They will be able to gauge your child’s interest in the school once they start attending their hosted events in the Chicago area.

### **Reception Programs**

Find summer programs at the schools your child is interested in. Some schools offer summer programs for high school students. It is a great way to see if your child likes the campus and the facilities.

### **Summer Programs**

Think about having your student attend a summer program at the college as a way to solidify their interest in the school or to take it off the list. See individual college websites for their summer offerings.

### **CCRC Newsletters**

The CCRC publishes newsletters for second semester juniors monthly, first semester seniors weekly and second semester seniors bi-monthly.

This is how all important information about the college process is communicated to your family. You will receive an email with the link, but they are also available on the CCRC website on the Junior and Senior pages. Read them to stay updated.

Try to contain your college conversations to one weekend day a week.

### **College Conversations**

It gets overwhelming and irritating for all of you to constantly have the college conversation day in and day out over the dinner table. It just gets to be too much. It is a lengthy process and more of a marathon that requires some pacing.

### **Applying**

Have your child choose to apply to at least one school on rolling admissions so you all do not have to wait until late March for one admissions decision. But make sure it is a school your child is really interested in. It doesn’t help to apply to a school just to get an admissions decision with no intention of attending.

## Costs

Be mindful of four year costs of the school including transportation costs for four years upfront and the inevitable tuition increases. There is probably nothing harder than having your child fall in love with a school that you cannot afford. You won't always know the financial aid package until the spring so you can hope for the best, but you just won't know. Use the net price calculator on each college's website to get a sense of costs.

## Big Fish

Consider choosing a school where your student can be the "big fish" in a small pond; where they are possibly more likely to get merit aid or earlier research opportunities.

The concept of fit is extremely important.

**Do not choose a college for the name.**

## Fit

Can your child see themselves succeeding and fitting in on that campus? Does the school offer them everything or most of the things they were looking for?

There is no "one" right place - this is not like trying to find a needle in a haystack.

## The Right One "The Cinderella Slipper"

Your student will most likely be happy at many colleges, so do not put so much pressure on yourself to find the one right place.

- It takes A's to get into a "good" college
- A public university will cost me less than a private one
- My SAT/ACT scores will make or break my admissions chances
- The more selective a school is, the better it is
- The higher the college's ranking in the US news and World Report, the better it is

## Stress Inducing Myths

- If I don't get into a Name Brand college, I will have no future

## "What I Wish I Knew" College Advice

Enjoy and embrace the experience. It is a wonderful opportunity to spend time with your child, getting to know what they are dreaming of for themselves. You will learn so much about your child through this search process. Have fun.

## Enjoy