



DEERFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

Township High School District 113

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“What I Wish I Knew” College Search Tips

- 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.
- 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' counselor to a vast array of programs for both the students and the parents during the junior and senior years. We are here to help.
- Attend college fairs in the area, especially the Allstate Fair hosted by the Glenbrook schools, the CLC fair in March or the national fair at Navy Pier each fall. Have your child introduce himself/herself 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.
- 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 go out on 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- The importance of thorough campus visits cannot be stressed enough. There is so much to see and to assess. And most importantly, do not rush from school to school if you can avoid

it. Take your time on each campus. Have a meal in the dorm. Grab a newspaper. Look for activity or club flyers all over campus. People-watch in the Student Union. Go see the rec center. Talk to students and college officials. Take photos as well. And go where the tour did not take you. If you can, meet with DHS alumni on that campus. Take them out for a meal or coffee-they will tell you what the admissions office won't about the school.

- Attend the school's reception programs in our area. Get to know the admissions representative from each school 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. In fact, they would expect to see your child at their reception and events if the colleges are far from Chicago.
- Find summer programs at the schools your child is interested in. Many more schools are offering summer programs for high school students. It is a great way to see if your child likes the campus and the facilities. 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.
- Try to contain your college conversations to one weekend day a week. 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.
- Make sure that Naviance stays updated with any new schools that come on to the list. This will help with scholarship opportunities as well as notices about a representative from the college coming to DHS or the Chicago area.
- Have your child choose to apply to at least one school on rolling admissions so that you all do not have to wait until late March for at least 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.
- Pick up a copy of the Fiske Guide, The Insider's Guide and a book called Colleges That Change Lives. To a much lesser extent, rely less on the ratings magazines because the school will be what your child makes of it.
- Use of DHS resources like a student and parent meeting with one of the college counselors, parent AM meetings with the college counselors, student meetings with the college representatives who come to DHS and use of other resources like Naviance (Supermatch and Scattergram are fantastic features). Have your child attend the many, many workshops

and programs that we offer at DHS, go on to individual schools' websites and take virtual tours, use the net cost calculator on each school's website etc.

- Talking to DHS grads at various campuses, especially seeing them on campus or talking with 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 DHS alum willing to host your child for a night.
- 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 cost evaluator on each college's website to get a sense of costs.
- 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.
- The concept of fit is extremely important. 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?
- Make a second visit during senior year if at all possible just 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. 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? Transportation is an important factor, especially in cost and time. The most important question: is the school a good fit, academically and socially?
- There is no "one" right place-this is not like trying to find a needle in a haystack. 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.
- Enjoy 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.