

Here are 10 tips to prepare you for the college search experience:

- 1. Observe yourself.** There is a college for everyone! In order to find one that suits your style, you first need to know more about yourself. Look at how you learn, the way you conduct your social life, even what you do to recharge your batteries. This will help you focus on schools that may be a good match.
- 2. Become familiar with your internal guidance system.** All humans are born with an internal guidance system, also known as intuition or a "gut feel," that helps us make good decisions. It's simple to use: Take a moment and just sit quietly and pay attention to your feelings. Your instincts are always talking to you through subtle signals. It can help to point you in the right direction.
- 3. Use your imagination.** Another element to help craft your search, is your imagination. What do you imagine college will be like? What sorts of clubs or organizations do you think you might join? How do you imagine the faculty will compare with your high school teachers? Will the school be urban or rural, large or small? Utilize your imagination to guide you.
- 4. Look for the cultural match.** Every college, like every community and every family, has its own culture, and you should look for a college whose cultural values are consistent with your own. For example, some colleges uphold tradition, but others reject the very notion. Some are religious at their core; others are firmly secular. As you evaluate a school's website and printed material, look for signals that reveal those values. As you tune into this concept of culture, you will quickly begin to sort schools into "Yes" and "No" groups.
- 5. Take charge by setting priorities.** The college search is a long journey, but if you take one step at a time, you won't feel overwhelmed. Enjoy the satisfaction of crossing things off your list. Let the experiences build on themselves.
- 6. Get help exploring your options.** You can't do this alone. Ask for help, early and often. You can ask your guidance counselor at your high school to help you think through your choices, your family to love and support you, even college admissions officers to answer your questions. Make these people part of your team.
- 7. Avoid regret.** In a recent survey, a shocking 79% of college students admitted to making college decisions based on the advice of friends. It probably isn't a good idea to allow yourself to be swayed by their opinions or information. Others may discourage you for their own reasons, and their negativity can knock you off course. Rely on your team of advisors, and make your own informed decisions.
- 8. Confront your fears as you go.** You may feel that you aren't smart, ambitious, athletic, involved, or creative enough. Notice your fears as they surface, and face them straight on. Remember that no one is perfect, and perfection is not expected. Keep thinking that there is a college out there ideally suited to you and that you have the ability to find it.
- 9. Consider setting goals for yourself.** The goals you set should be a bit of stretch, but not so much that you can't achieve them. Finding balance probably starts with setting realistic goals for yourself.
- 10. Be proud of who you are.** You are utterly unique-there is a need for each one of us in this world. Regardless of your grades or standardized test scores or looks or talents or family situation...you have the ability to contribute to society. Look for a college that will respect, honor, and want you!

Adapted from Professors' Guide LLC.