Step 1- Identify your reasons for going to college

• Opportunity to expand knowledge of self and the world around you
• Opportunity to meet new and different people
• Increase earning potential
• You take control of what you want to study- and begin learning about your future career
• You’ll have opportunities to be a part of different organizations and activities

Where Should I go?

• Trade/Technical
  – Focus on a specific skill or talent

• Two-Year Community/Junior Colleges
  – Popular option for student unsure of area of study
  – Often a smart financial option for these students
  – Many students transfer into 4 year institutions

• Four-Year Colleges & Universities
  – Typically have more available
  – Research Opportunities are growing
  – Some require living on-campus for 1st year

Where do you fit in?

• Large Public Universities
• Large Private Universities
• Medium to Small Public Colleges
• Medium to Small Private Colleges

How to find the right fit? VISIT!

• Visit every school you can
• Take a campus tour
• Take an unofficial transcript with you
• Schedule a meeting with an admissions counselor
• Meet with general departments
• Ask current students questions about the school
• Sit in on an academic class and eat in a residence hall

Other Types of Schools

• Religious Schools
• Historically Black Colleges & Universities
• Same Gender Schools
• Technical
What should I consider when choosing a college? What’s Important to you?
• Academic Reputation and Programs
• Admissions requirements
• Selectivity
• Cost & Financial Aid
• Career Preparation & Opportunities
• Diversity/Student Profile
• Sophomore Retention Rates
• Campus Activities/Organizations
• Location
• Graduation Rates
• Size

How do I narrow my list of colleges?
• Research college websites
• Talk to High School Counselors & Teachers
• Attend College Presentations & Fairs
• Talk to admissions counselors, faculty, students, and alumni from a particular school
• Visit College Campuses
• Register for a tour and sit in classes
• Attend events (i.e. social, academic)

Sample Questions for Admissions Counselors
• What are your admissions requirements?
• How may I register for a campus tour?
• What are your retention and graduation rates?
• After I apply, when will I receive a decision?

Step 2: Follow a College Planning Timeline

Freshman Year
• Meet with high school counselor and select courses that meet college requirements
• Take challenging courses

Sophomore Year
• Research colleges and careers on the internet
• Utilize your summers

Junior Year
• Research admissions requirements
• Continue extra-curricular involvement -- seek leadership positions

Senior Year
• Fall-review admissions applications from your top schools
• Complete those applications by the deadline!
Step 3: The Admissions Process and Evaluation Measures

Types of Admissions Policies—Know your deadlines!
• Rolling
• Regular Notification
• Early Action
• Early Response
• Early Decision (You’re obligated to attend & should only apply to one E.D. school)

Elements of An Application
• High School Transcript
• Curriculum (Your Senior Year schedule matters)
• Testing
• Extracurricular Activities
• Essay(s) and short answer responses
• High School Counselor & Teacher Recommendation

Standardized Tests
PSAT
– Pre-SAT score prediction and diagnostic information
– In Junior year, used for National Merit qualification

• ACT
– More curriculum/knowledge based than SAT
– For in-state and many Midwest publics - may be all that is required
– At some colleges also used as a placement exam
– Writing Test portion is optional, check college’s requirements

• SAT
– More often required by selective privates
– Includes essay portion since March 2005
– Now on a 2400 point scale

• SAT Subject Tests (formally called SAT IIs)
– One-hour subject tests best taken as soon as you complete the appropriate course
– Only needed if applying to some selective schools

• Advanced Placement Exams
– Usually not “officially” considered in college admission process – but schools will see scores if you report them
– Used for credit by most (but not all) colleges and universities – often scores of 3-5, sometimes only 4-5. Visit this website to confirm required scores and college credit granted.
http://www.michigan.gov/mistudentaid/0,1607,7-128-38193_38211_40324-136960--,00.html
Resume/Extracurricular Activities (Recorded in Career Cruising EDP)
• Keep track of activities and accomplishments from freshman until senior year
• Look for leadership & deeper service opportunities in junior & senior years
• Include competition/honors on regional & national level
• Work experience
• Commitment in activities
• The longer the list does not guarantee the better the list. Quality opposed to Quantity!

The Essays
• Answer the question!
• If you recycle your essays—have more than one person proofread it
• Plagiarism is unacceptable
• Essays are an opportunity to learn more about you—treat them as you would an admissions interview

Teacher & Counselor Recommendations
• Ask for recommendations at least a month before you need it
• Ask teachers in classes where you’ve been most active/interested
• Get to know your counselor—their input is critical
• Get recommendations from employers, organizations, etc.
• Always send a thank you note

H.S. Counselors provide information about the educational environment:
• Strength of curriculum (availability of AP, IB, Honors)
• Average SAT I and/or ACT scores
• Percentage attending colleges
• Competitive grading system in high school
• Competitiveness of class
• Colleges and universities will consider other characteristics and attributes

Personal Background
• Alumni connection
• Cultural awareness/experiences
• First generation to go to college from family
• Low economic family background
• Personal disadvantage
• Professional diversity

Geographic Considerations
• In state resident
• From school with few or no previous applicants
Completing the Application Process

• Submit complete packet to high school counseling office
• Submit application online and request that transcripts & recommendations be sent to college/university
• Advantages of web applications
  – Clean, neat…no white out needed!
  – Ability to proof & correct
  – Speed of processing

Step 4: Making a Decision

* Rejoice in acceptances
  - Weigh financial aid/cost,
  - Final visits
  - Balance of challenge & support
  - Reserve your space as a freshman by paying your enrollment deposit by school’s deadline
  - Notify all the schools that you have been accepted to of your decision
* Accept disappointments and move on to Plan B

Financial Aid Basics
Four Types of Financial Aid
• Grants-$ that doesn’t have to be repaid
• Scholarships-$ that doesn’t have to be repaid
• Work Study-$ that is earned and used to pay tuition
• Loans-$ that has to be repaid

Start Now
• It’s never too early to start saving for college
• Research and apply for Private Scholarships!
• Talk with your parents and local bank about smart ways to budget and save for college
• Many banks and credit unions have youth savings programs and seminars
• Research your top Colleges Financial Aid Process
• Apply as early as possible for financial aid
• Schools have limited resources and once the money is gone---it’s gone

Important Websites

• FAFSA  www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov
  Completed after January 1st of the senior year

• CSS PROFILE https://profileonline.collegeboard.com
  Apply for non-federal student aid funds

• Scholarship information http://www.michigan.gov/mistudentaid