

# SENIOR PLANNING POINTERS

Congratulations on the completion of your junior year! Below, you will find some pointers that have been designed to help you work through the college search and application process.

**College List** Developing an appropriate list of schools is at the heart of any successful college planning process. Follow these three steps:

1. Identify the criteria that you are looking for. For example: “I’m looking for a four-year college located within 200 miles of Lake George that offers a marketing major. I want it to have fewer than 3,000 students, admit 50% or more of applicants, and meet at least 75% of my demonstrated financial need.”

2. Identify schools that match your criteria Using online resources, produce a list of colleges that offer what you’re looking for. Numerous websites provide search tools that will generate a list of colleges based on the criteria you select, for example, the College Board’s **Big Future website** ([www.bigfuture.org](http://www.bigfuture.org)). Using this site, you can save searches (if you log into your Collegeboard account), research schools that match your criteria, and much more. (Entering the criteria in #1 above produces a list of [22 colleges](#) to explore.)

3. Research these colleges With each of your colleges, demonstrate interest: build a relationship with the admissions counselor who reads applications, join their mailing list, open the emails they send you. Get to know as many campuses on your list as possible. Visit campuses or if visits aren’t possible, [take virtual visits online](#). Visit their websites. Learn about their admissions policies and application procedures, including their SAT/ACT policies, which may have been updated for the Class of 2023. The more you can learn about your schools, the better able you will be to compare their strengths and weaknesses. Create a chart or table that organizes the information so you can quickly compare colleges to each other. Use [www.collegeresults.org](http://www.collegeresults.org), which creates tables for you. Identify similar colleges and research them, too. Begin to be aware of preferences you have between colleges. Take into account cost and financial aid information. Use a [“net price calculator”](#) to estimate *your* cost of attendance for different colleges.

**Try to narrow down your list of colleges to between five and ten schools by the end of September. This will allow you to focus your time and energy early in senior year on applying so your applications can be ready to submit in October/November. (If you are considering applying [Early Decision](#), application deadlines can be as early as November 1<sup>st</sup>.)**

**The Common Application** Depending on your list of colleges, filing your applications using Common Application may be a huge help. Visit [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org) to learn more. Getting familiar with the Common Application over the summer is a great idea that will save you time in the fall. You can create an account and begin filling out your Common Application on August 1<sup>st</sup>. If you want to begin sooner, [read more about “rolling over” a Common App account](#).

**Recommendations** Most colleges want a recommendation from your school counselor (email [main\\_office@kingsschool.info](mailto:main_office@kingsschool.info) on this topic). Many colleges and scholarship organizations also require teacher recommendations as a part of their application. Identify two teachers who would provide the most favorable recommendations on your behalf. Take into account what they know about the quality of your work, your work ethic, and your personality. Personally ask each writer if they would provide a recommendation for you. **Plan ahead** by asking them at least 3-4 weeks before you need the letter, and be sure to send them a thank you note once the recommendation is finished.

**Resumé** Make sure you have updated your resumé to include any junior year information. Your resumé can also be included in college and scholarship applications and given to those whom you've asked to write a recommendation (see above).

**Begin Developing your College Essay** Review the [essay prompts you'll find on the Common Application](#) and start generating ideas. [Use this article](#) to reflect on how you might use the essay to share information about yourself. For a taste of what essays for competitive colleges can look like, read real essays that John Hopkins University says worked, [here](#).

**Register for the SAT or ACT, if appropriate** At this point, colleges have announced any changes to their entrance testing requirements. Be sure to check the admissions office website of each college you are considering to view their requirements for Class of 2023 applicants. Keep in mind that Test Optional is different from Test Blind and having strong scores can be helpful in a test-optional admissions environment. If you plan to sit for an SAT or ACT this fall, determine your fall testing timeline and register ASAP. Upcoming SAT test dates include Oct 1. You can register for these dates through your College Board account at [sat.org](http://sat.org). ACT test date and registration information can be found [here](#). Students who use **testing accommodations** (extended time, etc) should be sure to include their SAT SSD number or ACT accommodations request form.

I **highly recommend** using the planning and informational resources available through <http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org> to learn about additional steps and issues related to your college search.

Document created by Steve Preuss, Lake George High School Guidance Counselor  
Modified for the King's School by Sarah Olson