



Beginning the Search

Steps to Follow

One of your tasks during your meetings with your college counselor is to create a college list that reflects the characteristics you are looking for in a college, such as size, location, and quality of academic or extracurricular programs, lifestyle, and so forth. You may come into your early meetings with some colleges already in mind. Your counselor will also make suggestions. You might also add names discovered through reading or conversations with relatives or classmates.

Your preliminary list may well include institutions unfamiliar to you. Research them nonetheless. They are there for a reason! *Never* let yourself be guided by name recognition alone. Perhaps, in your counselor's opinion, a college that might be unfamiliar to you actually fits your academic and/or extracurricular needs well, or a recent BB&N graduate with whom you have a good deal in common had a great experience there. It costs nothing to explore!

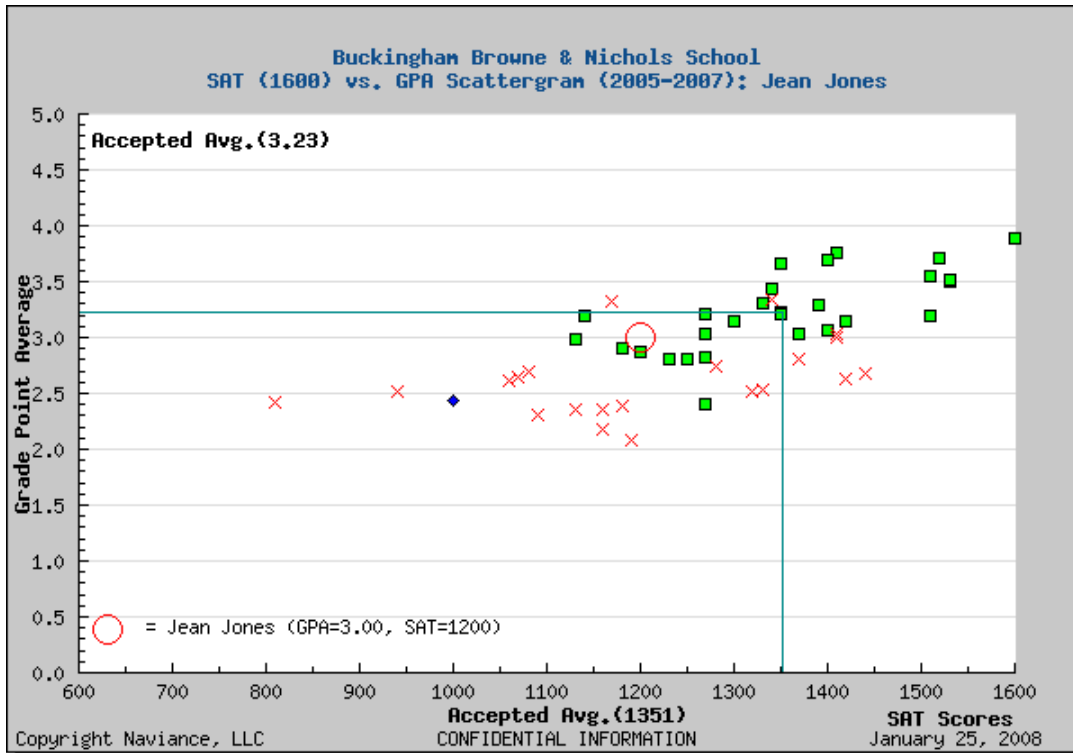
Researching colleges is among the most important tasks you will perform. The goal of your research is to develop a list of colleges that you know well. To that end, you will need to use several sources to determine what makes each college unique and why each one on the list is appealing to you. From this list you will choose institutions to visit during spring break and holidays, and over the summer and, ultimately, to apply to in the fall.

One of the most important tools you will use in the college counseling process is the Family Connection tool called Naviance. Naviance is a database where the college counselors keep all of the academic and college information for each student in your class. At the beginning of the college process, we provide you with a registration code for you Family Connection website. These are just some of the things you can do on the Family Connection site:

- Fill out the *Junior Questionnaire*.
- Search for colleges using the *College Search*, *College Lookup*, *College Match*, and *College Compare* tools.
- View your college list.
- Search for scholarships.
- Find college counseling forms and updates

You may also explore, with the help of your college counselor, our scattergrams, or graphs that display the admission statistics for all BB&N applicants to a particular college within a specified year or years. These graphs allow us to show a student or parent the anonymous grade point average and SAT scores for each student who has applied to a particular college from BB&N, and the decision rendered by the college. The scattergrams are great tools when searching for colleges that are within the appropriate admission range for a particular student. The Family Connection website is: <http://connection.naviance.com/bbns>

A sample scattergram:



MEETINGS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

You should use this section of the chapter as a checklist to keep track of your progress. It is important that you complete each part of this list since these steps will allow us to get to know you as well as possible. The better we know you, the more effectively we can counsel you on colleges that you might like, and programs that would be a good match for you.

Junior Questionnaire: Before choosing colleges to research, it is extremely important to take a personal inventory of your academic and non-academic experiences. The junior questionnaire is the best tool to practice writing about yourself and record your thoughts on these topics. The questionnaire is located in the Family Connection site on Naviance.

Parent Questionnaire: Parents can provide us with valuable insight into their child's performance at BB&N. Therefore, it is critical that all parents complete the parent questionnaire prior to the first family college counseling appointment. This form is available on the college counseling website at www.bbns.org.

First College Counseling Appointment: After completing and submitting the student questionnaire, you may schedule your first college counseling appointment. Your college counselor would like to meet with you individually so that he/she can get to know you better.

Family Appointment: After you have met once with your counselor, and your parents have completed their parent questionnaire, they are welcome to join you for a family appointment or meet with the college counselor alone.

Second College Counseling Appointment: At the second appointment, you and your counselor will discuss the specific colleges you have researched, and balance your research list with colleges from a variety of levels of selectivity and colleges that may meet the criteria you have identified but which you may not know much about. Please know that colleges and admissions criteria frequently change.

Additional College Counseling Appointments: It will be important to try and make regular and fairly frequent appointments with your college counselor during your junior and senior year. The first semester of senior year will be very busy with the process of finalizing your list, completing your applications and your essays. Your college counselor will help you through this process so be sure to keep in close contact with him/her.

RESEARCHING YOUR COLLEGES

Here are some tips to guide you through the process.

STEP I: INFORMING YOURSELF

READ (especially in catalogs or on the internet). TALK (to knowledgeable people).
THINK (what do you think). VISIT (college campuses).

STEP II: CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING A COLLEGE

These are criteria that can be used to evaluate and ultimately choose a college, though some may be more pertinent than others in your search.

1. STUDENT ENROLLMENT:

- ENROLLMENT – Small (1,000-3,000), medium (3,000-7,000), large (10,000-15,000). Freshman class size. % Undergraduate students.
- RETENTION - % of freshmen that eventually graduate or return for their sophomore year.
- BACKGROUND - Male/female ratio. % Commuter / resident. Geographic origin. % minority. % on financial aid.

2. LOCATION and SURROUNDINGS:

- LOCATION - New England, West Coast, Middle Atlantic states, the South, a foreign country. Distance from home. Travel costs and convenience.
- SETTING - Urban/Suburban/Rural. Weather. Nearest city or countryside. Recreational opportunities.
- FACILITIES - Library. Laboratories. Study and practice rooms. Student center. Athletic complex. Art studios. Theater. Bookstore. Food sources.

3. COLLEGE TYPE and PHILOSOPHY:

- TYPE - 2/4 year. Religious/public/private/historically Black. Coed/Single-sex. College/university.
- PURPOSE - Liberal arts. Technical/vocational institute. Conservatory. Art /design college. Pre-professional for business, education, engineering, fine arts. Degrees offered.
- PHILOSOPHY - Traditional/progressive. Deeply scholarly/career oriented. Comprehensive.
- CALENDAR - Semester/trimester/quarter/module. Inter-term program. Accelerated.

4. CURRICULUM:

- ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS - Proportion of study dedicated to core requirements/major/electives. Required freshman courses.

- **ACADEMIC OFFERINGS** – Majors/minors offered in your areas of interest. Breadth and depth of courses offered in your areas of interest. Interdisciplinary courses. Strong departments.
- **INDEPENDENT STUDY** - Individual tutorials. Seminars. Research opportunities.
- **SPECIAL STUDY PROGRAMS** - Field work. Internships. Exchange programs. Semester/year abroad study. Joint degree programs. Cooperative work/study plan. Pre-professional programs.
- **STANDARDS** - Accreditation. Degree requirements. Grading system. Grading/distribution. Honor system.
- **COURSE DESCRIPTION** - Introductory/advanced/specialized courses. Courses for majors/non-majors. Number of courses required for major/Course availability

5. **ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT:**

- **FACULTY** - % with Ph.D. Origin of degrees earned. Original faculty research/scholarship. Teaching course load. Expectations for teaching/scholarship/advising and other college service. Emphasis on undergraduate teaching and learning.
- **FACULTY-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS** - Faculty-student ratio. Advising. Accessibility for conferences, assistance. Departmental clubs, colloquia, committees with student representatives. Class size, average. Classes under 20 students, over 50 students. Opportunities for discussion/student presentation/exchange of ideas.
- **ACADEMIC DEMANDS** - Workload. Course expectations. Type of assignments. Academic pressure/competition.
- **INTELLECTUAL VITALITY** - Student attitude toward learning. Flexibility/structure for learning. Exchange of ideas. Interest in political, social, or world issues.
- **CAREER PREPARATION** - Pre-professional programs. Career advising and information programs. % who go on to graduate school. Graduate school and job placement.
- **INSTRUCTION** - What types of teaching/learning situations exist? If I know my field of interest, what courses and faculty are available in it? Do full professors teach undergraduates? Is there an advisor system?

6. **CAMPUS and STUDENT LIFE:**

- **TYPES OF STUDENTS** - Diversity and response to differences. Typical/offbeat student. Importance of money/material possessions/social appearances.
- **COMMUNITY TYPE** - Homogeneous. Pluralistic. Cohesive. Fragmented. School spirit. Controversial campus issues. Liberal/directive/restrictive social regulations. Political climate.
- **LIVING ARRANGEMENTS** - Predominantly large dorms/housing clusters/small houses. Availability of single rooms/doubles/suites/multiple rooms. System of housing allocation/roommate selection.

Centralized/decentralized dining. Alternate dining programs. Single sex/co-ed dorms. Housing guaranteed.

- **CAMPUS ACTIVITIES** - Activities related to your interests. Emphasis on social life, fraternities or sororities, sports, or other dominant interests. Clubs and organizations traditional/creative/competitive issue oriented. Presence of religious, ethnic or cultural groups. Cultural opportunities on campus or in community.

7. ADMISSIONS:

- **DEADLINES** - Application. Notification of decision. Deadline to reply to offer of admission.
- **APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS** - Fee. Information forms. Specific high school courses. Secondary school report. Recommendations. Interview. Common Application supplements.
- **SAT/ACT/SUBJECT TESTS** - What are the college's testing requirements?
- **ADMISSION SELECTIVITY** - % of applicants offered admission. Average SAT/ACT scores of freshmen. % of freshmen ranked in top 10% of high school class. Freshman class profile.
- **FINANCIAL** - Need blind or need considered?

8. COSTS and FINANCIAL AID:

- **COSTS** - Minimum-maximum total costs per year. Student budget for tuition and fees/room and board/books and personal expenses/travel costs. Admission and enrollment fees.
- **FAMILY RESOURCES** - What can your family pay toward college expenses? Your earnings and savings.
- **AWARDS** - % of students receiving aid. Range of awards. Average award.
- **FINANCIAL AID** - Based on need/merit/or funds available. Loan and job expectations. Off-campus work opportunities.
- **APPLICATION** - Which forms are required? Deadlines.

9. **LEGACIES:** Do I have a family history at the college from which I might benefit?

10. **INTANGIBLES:** Does the atmosphere of the institution appeal to me?

STEP III: RESEARCHING

Now that you have a better sense of possible questions to ask yourself about colleges, you need to begin the process of obtaining information for colleges on your preliminary list. *You* are the crucial factor in this step; not your parents, not the College Office. Researching colleges, as with your school work, takes time to do well. You will need to take notes, so always have a pen and paper handy. We suggest that you create a notebook devoted to college research that you bring to meetings with your college counselor. Here are possible avenues to explore:

1. General College Guides: Remember that these are someone else’s assessments and views of a given college; do not let one source make a decision for you. We recommend that you research each college in several sources, then move on to the next college. You should consider acquiring your own personal copies of at least one of these guides. A number of publications provide general information about America’s colleges. These include: The College Board’s College Handbook; Barron’s Profiles of American Colleges; Peterson’s 4 Year Colleges. Others provide a more subjective view, including: Edward B. Fiske’s The Fiske Guide to Colleges; and The Insider’s Guide to Colleges, from *The Yale Daily News*.

2. The Internet: The internet is an extremely useful source of information for anyone involved in the college search. You can search college databases, including the one found on Naviance, by location, size, major, and cost to find the right matches for you; you can request view books, and course catalogs; you can take a “virtual tour” of a campus; you can browse the curriculum

As technology continues to expand, we in the College Office will do our best to stay current with information we think can help you. Here is a short, and by no means complete, list of useful websites. When you begin to “surf,” stay alert for particularly great college sites; jot down the Internet address and let us know what you have found so that we can update our list. Have fun, but be wary of websites like College Confidential that regularly post inaccurate information.

Naviance	HTTP://CONNECTION.NAVIANCE.COM/BBNS
Peterson’s Guide	WWW.PETERSONS.COM
The College Board:	WWW.COLLEGEBOARD.COM
My Road	WWW.MYROAD.COM
CollegeNet	WWW.COLLEGENET.COM
MyCollegeGuide	WWW.MYCOLLEGEGUIDE.ORG
Common Application	WWW.COMMONAPP.ORG
Google University Search	WWW.GOOGLE.COM/OPTIONS/UNIVERSITIES.HTML
National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)	WWW.NACACNET.ORG

3. Admissions Officers at BB&N: Many colleges send representatives to BB&N in the fall to answer questions about their colleges. An up-to-date schedule of these visits will be available online in Naviance, and will also be posted outside the College Counseling Office and in the senior center. We will also announce the visits at class meeting each week.

4. Friends: You may have friends who are either in college or who have already gone through the college selection process. They are an excellent resource if used with care. Question them about their reasons for choosing certain colleges and avoiding others. See if those reasons fit *your* idea of preferred colleges; never cross a college off your list merely because a friend did not like it. **Think for yourself!**

5. Requesting Materials: You can often request materials directly from a college’s website. Admission officers will send appropriate materials and may also ask coaches, drama directors, orchestra conductors, and others to get in touch with you. The more information you provide, the more specific the response is likely to be.

6. Books about college admission you might enjoy:

The College Admission Mystique

Bill Mayher

Since its publication, many of the colleges discussed have become more selective. However, this is still a great introduction to the college process written by a veteran independent school college counselor.

Letting Go, A Parents’ Guide to Understanding the College Years

Karen Coburn and Madge Treeger

This book discusses the joys and challenges of parenting a college-age child.

The Gatekeepers: Inside the Admission Process at a Premier College

Jacques Steinberg

This book was written by a New York Times reporter who spent a year following an admission officer and several applicants through the admission process at Wesleyan University.

Looking Beyond the Ivy League and Colleges that Change Lives

Loren Pope

Pope discusses colleges that are less selective than some of their better-known peers but which provide excellent educational opportunities for a variety of students.

A WELL-ROUNDED LIST

The final goal of the college search is to create a balanced list of colleges that fall into four categories. The terms we use—likely, possible, reach and far reach—are relative, not absolute. In determining where a given college falls for a particular student, we use our best judgment based on experience with recent BB&N graduates and with trends we are seeing nationally and at that particular institution. If we believe certain colleges are unrealistic, we will tell you so. Changes in academic performance during the junior and senior year may well move certain colleges into a different category, and better standardized test scores taken in the senior year can also increase the likelihood of acceptance. We offer frank advice to help you evaluate your chances of admission at a particular college—not as a judgment of your performance during your time at BB&N or your potential as a college student. Ideally, your final list should be constructed so that, if things work out well, you will be admitted to most of the colleges on your college list. If they don't, you should still have at least two or three good choices. BB&N keeps extensive statistical data on college results and stays in close contact with admission offices to present students with as accurate an assessment of their competitiveness as possible.

Here are the definitions of the four major categories colleges fall into:

Likely: BB&N students with comparable test scores and grades are usually offered admission and an offer of admission is at least 70% certain. However, it is important that students apply to several “likely” colleges as the admission picture changes annually.

Possible: BB&N students with similar grades and test scores are sometimes admitted, sometimes waitlisted and occasionally denied. Chance of admission is roughly 50%.

Reach: BB&N students with similar grades and test scores are less likely to be admitted, except in cases where extenuating circumstances, such as strong coach support or active alumni connections, affect the decision. There is usually a 20 - 30% chance of being admitted.

Far Reach: BB&N students with similar grades and test scores have not been admitted in the past.

By the time you arrive at your final list of colleges we recommend that you have at least two colleges in the Likely category, and no more than three colleges in the Reach category. The majority of your colleges should be in the Possible category. It's also important to note that the most selective colleges in the country will be in the Reach category for almost all of BB&N's students regardless of how strong he or she is. In addition, because these colleges have so many qualified applicants, they're not concerned with whether a student can do the work, the majority of the applicants can do so quite successfully, rather they're trying to form a class of students who will bring unique talents to their colleges in addition to their stellar academic performance. Your counselor will be able to tell you why certain colleges fall in a particular category. **Remember that the selectivity of a college may have relatively little bearing on the quality of the education and experience that it can offer you!**