

How Do I Start Choosing Colleges?

Sophomore year isn't too early to begin planning for the college choices you'll be making your senior year! Here are some considerations you might want to start thinking about in preparation for this big choice that's coming up.

Geographic Location:

Envision all the places you have traveled to. Where would you like to spend more time? Think about distance from home and what is comfortable for you. Next time you travel (yes, anywhere!) find out what colleges are nearby and stop for a tour just to see what college campuses are like.

Size:

Colleges generally fall into three categories: Small (under 2000), Medium (2000 – 12,000), Large (over 12,000). Are you more comfortable in a small environment or a large environment? Keep in mind that large universities will have large, lecture-style classes where personal attention can be more difficult to receive. Are you one of the people who thrive under this situation or who struggle?

Majors:

A college major is an area of study that a student chooses to focus his/her attention on during college. Imagine arriving at college and discovering that creative writing, your intended major, is not offered at your college! Do your research on majors that interest you and which colleges offer them. Most colleges do not require you choose a major when you apply and 'undecided' is a perfectly acceptable option as an entering college freshman. 'Undecided' means that you need more time while in college to choose a major. It gives you a chance to take classes in a variety of subjects to discover your interests.

Before making a decision about what you want to major in, the best way to begin is to consider the subjects you enjoy in high school. Are you a strong math student? A good writer? Enjoy languages? After all, college majors should work well with your academic strengths -something you are seriously interested in learning more about. Don't worry about whether a specific major relates directly to a career (unless there's a career out there that you've already selected!). Just get to know the options.

By the way, you don't have to major in anything specific to go to medical school, law school or business school! You could be a philosophy or English or Physics major (or anything else you can find) and still go on to become a doctor, lawyer, business person - just to name a few careers. Start asking the adults in your life what they do (as a career) and what they majored in. You might also ask where they went to college for more feedback!

There are exceptions - nursing and engineering students in particular find they are better off starting right away. But if you aren't sure, then don't box yourself in. Start general with your major choice and get specific later on in college!

Athletic Programs/Activities:

Consider the activities you involved in at Sullivan and whether you envision continuing them in college. What new activities might you want to pursue? (for example, debate, TV/radio, drama, journalism, social justice). All colleges proudly advertise the activities they offer.

Cost:

Try not to worry too much about the cost of college yet, but know that talking about the cost of college with your parents is important. Private schools tend to be more costly, while public schools are generally less expensive. Having a general idea of the importance of cost to your family will be very helpful as you become more serious about choosing colleges to apply to as a senior.