

**FIND THE**  
**Fit**

**Handbook for  
College Advisors**

**May 2017**



***Find the Fit Enhanced College Advising***

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## Welcome to *Find the Fit!*

*Find the Fit (FTF)* addresses common hurdles that students often encounter in their college search process and offers strategies to help students find their best college fit. *Find the Fit* was tested within the Upward Bound program, but could be integrated into other college access programs as well. The materials and activities are intended to be used with students at the start of the college application process. These materials can be accessed on the Council for Opportunity in Education's (COE's) *Find the Fit* webpage.

This Handbook is a quick reference guide for how projects can use the *Find the Fit* parent and student materials. It provides guidance on how you can incorporate the *Find the Fit* materials into your college advising practices.<sup>1</sup>

This Handbook presents the materials in an order that you may use them with students, but your specific advising activities may require a different order. The materials are presented under the following sections:

1. Understanding Key College Characteristics
2. Following a Plan
3. Thinking about Cost
4. Conducting the Search
5. Applying to Four or More Colleges

Each section starts with a list of the materials included in the section. Then, for each material, details are provided about the resource including: the *type* of resource it is (e.g., handout, discussion, activity); the estimated *length of time* for use; the *purpose*; guidance on *when to use* the material; instructions on how to customize or set up the material, if necessary; and *recommendations on using* with students.

Most of the materials are available as pdf files that can be printed and shared with students in their current form. However, two of the *Find the Fit* student materials—the Sample Cost, Outcomes and Opportunities (SCOOP) sheet and the Scholarships and Grants sheet—require customization before they are printed for use with students.

The appendices include supplemental materials, specifically: instructions on How to Implement a Text Messaging Program and a Resource Guide that combines various existing online college planning resources into a single reference.

<sup>1</sup> Please note: all statistics and links are accurate as of April 2017.

# FIND THE FIT

## Understanding Key College Characteristics

- Shuffle, Sort and Stack: Find Your Fit Activity
- Four Factors of Fit

**Shuffle, Sort and Stack:  
Find Your Fit Activity**

Each card contains a characteristic that you might consider when choosing a college.

Fold and separate the following cards along the perforation lines.

Read the characteristic on each card and place each card into one of three piles, indicating how much you care about the colleges you apply to having the characteristic printed on the card.

Definitely  
Want

Don't  
Care

Definitely  
Do NOT  
Want

You may use the circles on the next sheet to form your piles.

After you are done sorting the cards, turn them over and count how many you have from the following categories in each pile. Record the number in the table below.

	Definitely Want	Don't Care	Definitely Do NOT Want
Academic Match			
Personal Preferences			
Institutional Offerings			
Affordability			

**FIND THE FIT**

**Four Factors of Fit**

Consider all factors in your college search to find colleges that are the right fit for you.

Each college and university is unique – like you. Below are some questions to ask as you consider colleges.

**ACADEMIC MATCH**

**TEST SCORES AND GPA**  
How do your test scores and GPA compare to those of enrolled students?

**GRADUATION AND RETENTION RATES**  
Do most students return after their freshman year? Do most students graduate on time?

**MAJOR**  
Does the college offer a wide variety of majors? Does it offer the major(s) that interest you?

**INSTITUTIONAL OFFERINGS**

**RESOURCES**  
What does the college provide in terms of the latest technology, lab facilities, and libraries? What is the faculty/student ratio?

**CAMPUS SUPPORT SERVICES**  
What campus support services are available? Use the Discover Campus Support Services guide to learn about:

- First Year Supports and Advising
- Counseling Services
- Financial Aid
- Residential Life

**PERSONAL PREFERENCES**

**CAMPUS SIZE**  
How many students are at this school? Do you want a small or a big college?

**CAMPUS LOCATION**  
Is the campus in a rural, suburban, or urban setting?

**CAMPUS LIFE**  
What student activities are available at the college? Do you want to live on campus?

**AFFORDABILITY**

**ACTUAL COSTS**  
How much would you pay to go to the school? See the My SCOOP Sheet for examples of how the price paid might be lower than the sticker price.

**FINANCIAL AID**  
The average full-time college student in 2015-2016 received:

- \$14,460 to pay for college.
- \$8,395 of this came from grants.

**SCHOLARSHIPS**  
Are there state-specific scholarships available? Check out the Scholarships and Grants List for some examples.



**TARGET FOUR OR MORE COLLEGES**

**1 or more SAFETY**  
Colleges that will almost certainly admit you

**2 or more MATCH**  
Colleges that are likely to admit you

**1 or more STRETCH**  
Colleges that will consider you and might admit you

Applying to 2 four-year colleges instead of just 1 increases your chance of enrolling by **40%**

Applying to more than 2 four-year colleges increases your chances even more

# Shuffle, Sort and Stack: Find Your Fit Activity

## OVERVIEW

### Type:

Group/individual/one-on-one activity

### Length of Time:

Approximately 30 minutes

### Purpose:

The goal is to get students to consider a well-rounded set of college characteristics in their search for colleges.

This activity is a sorting game that gets students thinking about the four dimensions of fit and how they prioritize various college characteristics.

### When to Use:

Involve students in this activity once they have started planning for college, but toward the beginning of the search process before they start creating their college lists.

## RECOMMENDED USE

The activity contains 4 sheets of color-coded cards (32 cards in total); each color corresponds to one of the four dimensions of fit. Students should break these cards apart along the perforated lines, and shuffle the cards

Students should then sort the cards into one of three piles, using the Circles provided, indicating how much they care about their colleges having that particular feature. The three piles are:

- Definitely want (in a college)
- Don't care
- Definitely do not want (in a college)

Once students have sorted their cards into the three piles, you have a chance to help them reflect about how they are thinking about their best fit.

- Emphasize that *no way of sorting these cards is right or wrong*.
- The way they have sorted the cards can help them see whether they are emphasizing the factors of fit that are going to result in the college outcomes they care about the most.

The *Discussion Guide* on the next page gives some suggested questions and talking points to help students understand the *importance of considering a balanced set of college characteristics* when searching for colleges. This activity can also help introduce some of the strategies and activities that will come later in the *Find the Fit* program.

The way students sort the Shuffle, Sort, and Stack cards can help them see whether they are emphasizing factors of fit associated with college outcomes they care about most.

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Shuffle, Sort and Stack Discussion Guide

Below, are some questions and talking points that may help facilitate a discussion of the Shuffle, Sort, Stack activity.

#### Discussion Questions

##### *What do you want to get out of college?*

Begin the discussion by asking students to list the outcomes they want from college. Items like, “I want to graduate!” “I want to get a good job,” “I don’t want a lot of debt,” “I want to learn a lot,” and “I want to have fun,” will likely come up. You may want to list these on a board, have students write them down, or simply refer to them later.

##### *So how do you think you’ll get there? Which of your piles has the most cards in it?*

- **If their “don’t care” pile has the most cards**, you may want to prompt students to think about whether any of those items might be related to the outcomes they have listed. Particularly, if they have a lot of “academic match” items in their “don’t care” pile, prompt them to consider that, while these items may not be fun to think about, they may have a big impact on the amount they learn in college, the kinds of job they can get, or even whether they graduate at all.

In some cases, you may find that students put items in the “don’t care” pile because they are not familiar with these topics — not because they really feel that they will have no impact on their college experience. Students may be willing to share with each other why they put cards in a “want” or “don’t want” pile that others put in the “don’t care” pile.

- **If their “definitely want” pile has most of the cards**, ask students to try to pick two to four items that they think are actually most important in obtaining the outcomes they want. The fact is that, while it is good to care about lots of aspects of schools, focusing on everything can be overwhelming. They may have to make some trade-offs, and should think carefully about which items are absolutely essential.

Pay attention here to some of the cards that might reflect assumptions that *Find the Fit* will work to challenge. For example, if students feel that they need a college’s posted price to be affordable, ask if they are aware that the posted price is not necessarily the same as the amount they would ultimately pay. You will talk more about that when you introduce the SCOOP sheets.

**If their “definitely do not want” pile is largest**, ask students why they believe that the items they have put in that pile would get in the way of achieving the outcomes they want. Do they believe this based on what they know about themselves? Based on what others have told them? Are they making some assumptions that should perhaps be challenged?

Or, if a school has one or two of these traits, are there ways that they could learn to adapt to that challenge?

*Which factors of fit are students taking into consideration the most? Which color are most of the cards in your “don’t care” pile? Your “definitely want” pile?*

- **If students do not have many “academic match” cards in their “definitely want” pile (or have a lot of these cards in their “don’t care” pile), you have an opportunity to talk about the relationship between an academic match, college persistence and important outcomes.** For example, you may want to point out that academic match can have a huge impact on whether they stay in college, as well as the outcomes they experience when they are done. You will talk about this more when you look at the SCOOP sheets.
- **If students have a lot of personal preference cards in their “definitely want” pile, you have an opportunity to introduce them to the idea that they can probably grow and adapt in new circumstances.** These are often the types of things that students anchor on, because they help them feel that they understand what their lives will be at college. There is nothing wrong with that; some of these preferences can be very important in helping a student feel comfortable at college. You may want to encourage students to realize that many things that they may not see as perfect right now could be things they could learn from. You may also want to ask them if any of these items might change in importance during their time at college. For example, will being close to home remain important all the way through college? Are there any potential drawbacks to being in an urban environment?
- **If students have a lot of affordability cards in their “definitely want” piles, you have an opportunity to introduce some ideas about ways to make college affordable.** Do students understand that “posted price” may be different from the cost they actually pay? Do students anticipate that work-study jobs could help them offset high posted prices while also providing them with work experience during college? You will talk about this more when you look at the SCOOP sheets as well.
- **If students have a lot of institutional offerings in their “definitely want” piles, you have an opportunity to help students articulate the kinds of supports they should learn about during their search.** Do they know how to find out if schools have an Upward Bound program, other TRIO programs, or other student supports? How can they learn about alumni networks, tutoring, or writing centers? Collecting this information during their search can prepare students to access these services as soon as they get to college — which can do a lot to get them off on the right foot. You will talk more about this when you go over the Discover Campus Support Services handout. This discussion can help students prepare for their college search, or go back and fill in holes they may have in their current knowledge about target schools.

## **Emphasize with students that:**

- A natural tendency is to overemphasize things that are really vivid for us — like whether the college is close to or far from home or whether the college has a big sports program. Those things can definitely shape your college experience. However, other factors — particularly those items related to academics — will probably have more direct effects on college outcomes.
- Before you determine whether you care about something or do not, you should make sure you really understand how it might affect you and how it is related to other aspects of fit. Your sort may be different three months from now, as you learn more about these items. We will talk more about these factors in the *Find the Fit* program.
- Your college search should help you learn more about the things that matter most to you, so keep these things in mind as you gather information about colleges.

*This activity relates easily to the SCOOP sheets discussion (p. 17), where students can learn more about affordability, outcomes, and academic match.*

# Four Factors of Fit

## OVERVIEW

### Type:

Group exercise

### Length of Time:

Approximately 30 minutes

### Purpose:

The goals of this exercise are to:

- Reinforce the idea that there are multiple factors students should be considering in finding the best college for them,
- Introduce some questions, related to the various dimensions of fit, that they can ask as they consider colleges, and
- Encourage students to end up with at least four colleges on their application lists and apply to a range of safety, match, and stretch schools.

The handout outlines questions students should ask about each college they research to learn about the college in relation to all four fit factors: academic match, personal preferences, institutional offerings, and affordability.

### When to Use:

Introduce to students when they are beginning to learn about how to find colleges that are good fits.

## RECOMMENDED USE

Use this handout to guide students through questions to ask when searching for a college. During a group session:

- Have students take out this handout,
- Ask them to think about a college they are familiar with and to answer a few of the questions listed under each fit factor, and
- Ask them if they know where they might find the information when they do not know an answer.

Remind students that these are the kinds of questions they should ask about a college before adding it to their application lists.

Encourage students to apply to four or more colleges from across a range of selectivity levels because doing so increases their chances of being admitted to at least one good fit.

*Students may be eligible for college application fee waivers so application fees should not deter students from applying to multiple colleges.*

This handout highlights the variety of important factors to consider when looking at colleges. Also, it presents research showing that applying to 2 four-year colleges (rather than 1) increases chances of enrollment by 40% and applying to more than 2 colleges increases chances of enrollment even more.



## Following a Plan

- College Application Timeline Reminders
- My College Planner
- Text Message Reminders
- Parent Letter

**College Application Timeline Reminders**

**August-September: PREPARE TO APPLY**

- ❑ Take the SAT and ACT.
- ❑ Know your story – make a resume of your activities and achievements.
- ❑ Make a college list and use your **My College Search** sheet to compare the Fit Factors.
- ❑ Review your personalized **My SCOOP Sheet** to see how costs and outcomes may vary across colleges.
- ❑ Look for scholarship opportunities using the **Scholarships and Grants List** and apply for as many as you can.

**October-December: APPLY TO FOUR OR MORE**

- ❑ Consider colleges that might not be on your initial list. Complete the **Beyond the Familiar** video activity.
- ❑ Choose at least four colleges where you plan to apply – including at least 1 stretch, 2 match and 1 safety college.
- ❑ Write your application essays early.
- ❑ Retake the SAT and ACT if you need to – colleges will accept your best scores.
- ❑ Request letters of recommendation and send colleges your high school transcripts.
- ❑ Write down all of your application due dates and use your **My College Planner** to stay on track.
- ❑ Complete and submit your applications and use your **Fee Waivers!**

**January-March: FIND THE FUNDING**

- ❑ You can file the FAFSA as early as October 1st. Complete the FAFSA before March 15th.
- ❑ Check your state's current student aid deadline at the following website: <https://fafsa.ed.gov/deadlines.htm>
- ❑ Continue to apply for scholarships and grants.

**April-May: CHOOSE THE BEST FIT**

- ❑ Contact the colleges you are considering to **Discover Campus Support Services**.
- ❑ Compare the financial aid, net costs, and loans you would need for each of your college options.
- ❑ Consider the **Four Factors of Fit** and choose the best fit for you – academically, personally, and financially.

**June-August: CROSS THE FINISH LINE!**

- ❑ Register for your college's orientation.
- ❑ Find out if you need to take any placement tests before school starts.
- ❑ Contact your college's financial aid office to figure out how to pay your first term bill.

**FIND THE FIT**

**My College Planner**

\_\_\_\_\_

Student Name

\_\_\_\_\_

College Advisor

**Text Message Reminders**

**FIND THE FIT**

Where your child goes to college matters.

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We know that searching for and applying to colleges can be a stressful time for many students. Your child will receive some materials over the next year to explore colleges and find a good fit. These materials were developed to help Upward Bound students explore colleges and Find the Fit. These materials will help your child:

- ✓ **Explore factors of fit** to help them find the right college.
- ✓ **Follow a plan** to manage their college search and application process.
- ✓ **Think about cost and what they can afford** with the help of scholarships, grants, and loans – good colleges may be less expensive than they think!
- ✓ **Expand their college options** to help them achieve their goals.
- ✓ **Apply to four or more schools.**
- ✓ **Meet key application deadlines.**

We all want to see your child Find the Fit to succeed in college and beyond!

# College Application Timeline Reminders

## OVERVIEW

### Type:

Handout

### Length of Time:

Approximately 20 minutes

### Purpose:

The goal of this timeline is to remind students of upcoming key steps in enrolling in a college that is a good fit.

This timeline is a little different from timelines students may already have because it highlights the *Find the Fit* key steps:

- Prepare to apply
- Apply to four or more
- Find the funding
- Choose the best fit
- Cross the finish line

As students complete steps, they can check them off on the timeline.

### When to Use:

Introduce to students when you distribute the *Find the Fit* materials to remind them of steps they should be taking in preparing to apply to college.

## RECOMMENDED USE

During one of the times you are talking with students about the college application process, mention the timeline.

You can go through the timeline with students to make sure students understand each of the key milestones along the path to college enrollment.

*Encourage students to hang the timeline up in their homes in a place where they will frequently see it, perhaps on the refrigerator or in their room.*

The timeline highlights *Find the Fit* materials that can guide students through the key steps to prepare, apply, choose, and enroll in a good fit college.

# My College Planner

## OVERVIEW

### Type:

Group exercise

### Length of Time:

Approximately 30 minutes to introduce

### Purpose:

The goal of the My College Planner is to walk students through key steps necessary to successfully search for, apply to and enroll in college. The My College Planner is designed to help students stay on track to reach key milestones along the search process, meet important college application deadlines, and follow through on enrolling in college.

This may be similar to something you already use. However, some of the features may make this planner a great resource for your students, such as:

- Detailed monthly to-do lists,
- Reminders about when to use other *Find the Fit* materials,
- Calendar icons denoting key tasks and to be marked on students' own calendars (hard copy or digital).



The planner also includes phone icons to indicate there is a corresponding message in the *Find the Fit* text messaging program. If you do not plan to implement the text messaging program, there is an alternate version of the planner that does not contain the text message icons.

Students should continue to use this Planner throughout their senior year and into the summer before they enroll in college.

### When to Use:

Introduce to students when they are preparing to apply to college and encourage its use until students cross the finish line and enroll in college.

## RECOMMENDED USE

Advisors can introduce and go through the planner with students in a group, perhaps after reviewing the timeline.

Remind students about their planners at key time points:

- During the early fall of their senior year when they are preparing to apply to college,
- In January of their senior year when they are thinking about cost and aid,
- During the late spring of their senior year when they are choosing the best fit, and

The My College Planner can help students organize their college search and complete important steps to college enrollment. The planner is available in electronic format on the *Find the Fit* web page on the COE website.

- At your last meeting with students before they graduate from high school to remind them about steps they must complete over the summer to cross the finish line and enroll.

*Have students write down deadlines and then check off tasks once they are done.*

# Text Message Reminders

## OVERVIEW

### Type:

Individual reminders

### Length of Time:

Varies, depending on number of customized text messages you add to the preprogrammed reminders and how frequently you communicate with students through the platform.

### Purpose:

To remind students about important steps in planning, targeting, applying, selecting, and enrolling in college.

### When to Use:

As soon as possible, let students know that you will be sending them text messages as part of *Find the Fit*. It is recommended that you schedule the first message to go out in May of the students' junior year of high school.

The suggested preprogrammed messages are based on research showing that customized text message reminders can increase college matriculation. These messages can help students meet key milestones.

## RECOMMENDED USE

*Find the Fit* includes a series of text messages to send to students to remind them about key steps in the college search, application, and enrollment processes. The text messages focus on different topics, such as:

- Junior year and summer before senior year — resources and tips on searching for colleges that would be a great fit
- Senior year fall — application resources and deadline reminders automatically timed to be sent one week before each college's application due date
- Senior year spring — reminders and support for key steps in securing financial aid, such as completing the FAFSA and searching for scholarships
- Summer after high school graduation — key tasks for finalizing enrollment, from registering for orientation and placement tests to paying the first tuition bill

The *Find the Fit* text messages are designed to be programmed, in the web-based platform, to be sent at important time points, with automatically personalized content for each student. The messages prompt students to complete important milestones in the college application process and to make use of *Find the Fit* materials. Some of the messages are customized based on information specific to individual students. Examples of the text messages are provided in Table 1.<sup>2</sup> Variables for message customization are represented by italicized text in brackets (e.g. [student first name]).

Many of the texts prompt students to contact their advisors if they need additional help.

<sup>2</sup> The full set of *Find the Fit* messages is provided in Appendix 1.

**Table 1: Examples of *Find the Fit* Text Messages**

TIME FRAME	DATE	PURPOSE	CONTENT
Junior Year and Summer	June 18	Use college search tools	Have u started ur college search? Use tools like <a href="http://www.collegeconfidential.com">www.collegeconfidential.com</a> and <a href="http://www.collegegreenlight.com">www.collegegreenlight.com</a> to find colleges that match ur academic stats. Then add them to ur My College Search sheet! If u need help starting ur search, txt 'HELP' to connect with ur UB advisor!
Senior Year, Fall	Oct. 22	Finalize college application list	It's time to finalize ur college application list! Use ur My College Search and SCOOP sheets to help narrow down choices, and remember u can text 'HELP' to get advice from ur advisor.
Senior Year, Spring	Jan. 20	Reminder and link to complete FAFSA	Hi [ <i>student first name</i> ]! Have u completed ur FAFSA? Do it before March 15 to get the most financial aid possible! <a href="https://fafsa.ed.gov/">https://fafsa.ed.gov/</a> Txt 'HELP' if u need FAFSA help!
Summer after HS Graduation	July 6	Plan for first tuition payment	The [ <i>college name</i> ] tuition bill may be coming soon! Here's the info about tuition payments: [ <i>college tuition website</i> ] Need help understanding the bill? Txt 'HELP'

Please see Appendix 1 for more details on how to implement a text messaging program, including:

- Selecting a text messaging platform;
- Generating text message content;
- Gathering information for message customization; and
- Providing support to students.

# Parent Letter

## OVERVIEW

### Type:

Parent Handout

### Length of Time

NA

The letter introduces parents to *Find the Fit* and provides information on key steps in the college search, application and enrollment processes that are important to student success.

### Purpose:

The goal of the letter is to provide parents with an introduction to the key messages of *Find the Fit*:

- **Explore factors of fit** to help students find the right college.
- **Follow a plan** to manage their college search and application process.
- **Think about cost** and what they can afford with the help of scholarships, grants, and loans — good colleges may be less expensive than you think!
- **Expand their college options** to help them achieve their goals.
- **Apply to four or more schools.**
- **Meet key application deadlines.**

The *Find the Fit Timeline*, on the back of the letter, gives parents a concise list of the key milestones to help their children better navigate through the college search, application, and enrollment processes.

### When to Use:

Give out to parents when their children are preparing to apply to college.

## RECOMMENDED USE

Distribute the parent letter and timeline directly to parents, when possible. Let parents know their children also received a timeline in addition to other support materials.

*Encourage parents to hang the timeline up in their homes in a place where their children will frequently see it, perhaps on the refrigerator.*

# FIND THE FIT

## Thinking about Cost

### Activities, Exercises, and Handouts

- How Much Does College Cost Video
- SCOOP Sheet
- Scholarships and Grants



### Scholarships and Grants

You may be eligible for a number of scholarships and grants. Unlike loans, they don't need to be repaid!

Below are a sample of sites where you can look for state-specific and general scholarships. Keep track of deadlines! Check the following website for your state's current student aid deadline: <https://fita.ecd.gov/deadlines.htm>

State-Specific Search:

Name	Website

### Broader Searches

Name	Website
Scholarship experts	<a href="https://www.scholarshipexperts.com/">https://www.scholarshipexperts.com/</a>
Niche	<a href="http://colleges.niche.com/scholarships/">http://colleges.niche.com/scholarships/</a>
College Xpress	<a href="http://www.collegeexpress.com/scholarships/search">http://www.collegeexpress.com/scholarships/search</a>
FastWeb	<a href="http://scholarships.fastweb.com/y-high-school-seniors">http://scholarships.fastweb.com/y-high-school-seniors</a>
Sallie Mae	<a href="http://gs.salliemae.com/scholarship/default.aspx">http://gs.salliemae.com/scholarship/default.aspx</a>
Scholarships.com	<a href="https://www.scholarships.com/scholarship-search.aspx">https://www.scholarships.com/scholarship-search.aspx</a>
ScholarshipsAmerica, Dollars for Scholars	<a href="https://public.dollarsforscholars.org/index.php?action=userLogin">https://public.dollarsforscholars.org/index.php?action=userLogin</a>
CareerOneStop	<a href="http://www.careeronestop.org/scholarshipsearch/ScholarshipCategory.asp?">http://www.careeronestop.org/scholarshipsearch/ScholarshipCategory.asp?</a>
Peterson's	<a href="http://www.petersons.com/college-search/scholarship-search.aspx">http://www.petersons.com/college-search/scholarship-search.aspx</a>
FindTuition.com	<a href="http://www.findtuition.com/tp271/home.do">http://www.findtuition.com/tp271/home.do</a>
CollegeData	<a href="https://www.college-data.com/cv/search/scholar/scholar_search_tmp.php#">https://www.college-data.com/cv/search/scholar/scholar_search_tmp.php#</a>

These are just some sample sites to get you started. Make sure to search broadly for scholarship opportunities.

### My SCOOP – Sample Cost, Outcomes, and Opportunities Sheet for College

It may be cheaper than you think to attend a good college!  
Use the examples below to see some sample colleges you might consider and how much you could expect to pay.

Upward Bound Participant	Potential Matches Customized To Your Test Scores					
	University of Alabama at Birmingham	University of Alabama	Talladega College	Stetson University	Mississippi College	Host Institution
STATE	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Florida	Mississippi	Alabama
TYPE OF SCHOOL	Public (4-year)	Public (4-year)	Private (4-year)	Private (4-year)	Private (4-year)	Public (2-year)
SCHOOL SIZE	10,000 - 18,999	20,000 and above	1,000 - 4,999	1,000 - 4,999	5,000 - 9,999	1,000 - 4,999
MIDDLE 50% TEST SCORES						
ACT	21-27	22-30	open admission	25-28	20-26	open admission
SAT CRITICAL READING	500-630	500-620	open admission	530-630	460-610	open admission
SAT MATH	500-640	500-640	open admission	525-630	470-580	open admission
GRADUATION RATE	25% in 4yrs. 46% in 6yrs.	41% in 4yrs. 67% in 6yrs.	14% in 4yrs. 25% in 6yrs.	56% in 4yrs. 64% in 6yrs.	40% in 4yrs. 62% in 6yrs.	12% in 3yrs. 14% in 3yrs.
Cost						
Posted Cost of Attendance	\$21,153	\$23,939	\$19,048	\$48,972	\$24,853	\$12,880
Family Income: \$0 to \$30,000	\$12,457	\$15,605	\$13,031	\$17,819	\$10,940	\$5,169
Family Income: \$30,000 to \$48,000	\$14,208	\$16,784	\$13,334	\$18,950	\$12,896	\$6,487
Family Income: \$48,000 to \$65,000	\$16,444	\$19,328	\$13,635	\$20,629	\$14,700	\$9,016

**High posted cost does not necessarily equal high cost to you.**  
In general, colleges offer financial aid to students with financial need. Visit college websites and use college net price calculators to get a better sense of your individual net price and estimated financial aid award.

**Schools with better graduation rates are not necessarily more expensive!**

SOURCE: Posted Cost of Attendance and Net Price were estimated using U.S. Department of Education data.

# How Much Does College Cost Video

## OVERVIEW

### Type:

Group activity

### Length of Time:

10 minute video

### Purpose:

The goals of this video are to demonstrate in a fun way that students often do not have accurate conceptions of college costs and to serve as a springboard for a discussion about posted cost and net cost.

### When to Use:

Introduce to students when they are learning about what colleges might be good fits. Make sure you have enough time to go through the SCOOP sheet following the video (see page 17).

This video shows students can have very different estimates of the costs to go to college and may not be aware that the posted costs can be higher than their actual costs of attendance.

## RECOMMENDED USE

During a group session, focus on misconceptions about the costs of college. Start by asking your students how much they think college costs. Then show the video about how much other students think college costs.

**Find the *How Much Does College Cost* Video  
at <https://youtu.be/seEBbcNAohk>**

Follow the video with the SCOOP sheet discussion (see page 17).

# Sample Cost, Outcomes and Opportunities (SCOOP) Sheet

## OVERVIEW

### Type:

Group exercise

### Length of Time:

Approximately 45 minutes

### Purpose:

The goal of the SCOOP sheet is to encourage students to *broaden their search* by illustrating the different costs and outcomes for some colleges that align with their academic credentials.

The SCOOP sheets show an *illustrative list of schools that are customized to each student's college exam scores, GPA, AP/IB course-taking, and state of residence*.<sup>3</sup> For each school, the sheet shows student outcomes, sticker price, and estimated net costs by family income levels.

For some students this sheet will *challenge misperceptions* about the “real” cost of college at more selective institutions. The sheets also highlight key institutional outcomes that students should pay attention to when searching for colleges.

### When to Use:

Introduce to students when they are learning about what colleges might be good fits.

After introducing the sheets and their components, meet individually with students to answer any questions they have about the information that is displayed for sample colleges listed, and how they can find similar information for the colleges that interest them.

### Generating Customized SCOOP Sheets:

Follow the steps below to create customized SCOOP sheets for each of your students.

1. On the *Find the Fit* web page on the COE website, click on **SCOOP Sheet Generator**. This will take you to a web page from which you can download the **SCOOP Sheet Generator** and the **SCOOP Sheet Template**. Save the files in the same folder on your local computer or network drive. The Excel file, SCOOP Sheet Generator.xlsm, will allow you to create customized SCOOP sheets for your students. Below are instructions on how to create these customized SCOOP sheets.
2. Open the **SCOOP Sheet Generator** Excel file in the folder on your computer. If prompted, click “*Enable Editing*” and “*Enable Content*” in the yellow bar near the top of the screen.

<sup>3</sup> The selections customized to individual academic scores are colleges that a given student has a predicted 90% chance of admittance.

The SCOOP sheet highlights key institutional outcomes and potential differences between the posted cost and net cost at sample schools that a student is likely admissible.

3. In the “*roster*” worksheet, enter the following information for each of your students:
  - a. Name
  - b. Unweighted high school GPA (on a 4.0 scale)
  - c. One or more of the following college exam scores:
    - i. SAT Critical Reading + Mathematics score (range: 400–1600)
    - ii. ACT Composite Score (range: 1–36)
    - iii. PSAT Score (range: 40–160. Only necessary if the student has not yet taken the SAT or ACT.)
  - d. Whether the student has taken any Advanced Placement courses (enter ‘yes’ or ‘no’ for each student).
4. From the list in the middle, select the state (Column H) in which the postsecondary institution with which you are affiliated is located; if you are not affiliated with a postsecondary institution, simply select your state. Selecting a state will automatically narrow the list of postsecondary institutions on the right (Column K).
5. From the list on the right, select the postsecondary institution with which you are affiliated (Column K). If you are not affiliated with a postsecondary institution, select “none” from the list.
6. Click the “*Generate SCOOP Sheets*” button, located under the list of postsecondary institutions, to initiate the creation of your students’ SCOOP sheets. This may take a few moments.
7. The customized SCOOP sheets will be created and output to a Word document, **SCOOP Sheets for [Postsecondary Institution or State].docx**, within the folder where you have the generator and template saved. Note that, if you have previously created SCOOP sheets, the older files will be overwritten. .
8. Open the file and print the SCOOP sheets. You will now have an individual SCOOP sheet for each student you entered into the generator file.

Note: The SCOOP Sheet Generator randomly selects 5 colleges from among all possible academic matches for each student. Therefore, two students with the same GPA and test scores may see a different list of colleges on their SCOOP sheets.

To help students understand all of the information on the SCOOP sheets, you may want to:

- Distribute copies of the sample SCOOP sheet in this Handbook, or have students take out their own SCOOP sheets.
- Start a discussion drawing students’ attention to the top section of the sheet that shows key institutional characteristics.
  - Key institutional characteristics, including graduation rates, are shown on the top panel of the sample SCOOP sheet in Exhibit 1.
  - Make sure students understand that graduation from a 2-year institution would result in a different degree than graduation from a 4-year.
- Next discuss the “real” costs of various colleges. Discuss the differences between the posted cost and net cost with students. **Net cost is not the same as posted cost!**
  - Have students compare the sticker prices versus the net costs by, for example, focusing on the costs at the colleges circled in Exhibit 1.

- Explain that *only one-third of full-time college students pay the sticker price* because of various financial aid options like grants and tax-based aid.
- If you have not already, focus students on their own SCOOP sheets and explain that their sheets may include schools customized to their own academic qualifications.
- Review with students the differences among college graduation rates, a key indicator of college quality, and highlight for students that some colleges with high graduation rates have low net costs — **some colleges they might not think are affordable, could be.**
  - Encourage your students to look across the schools on their sheets and compare graduation rates and net costs at the various schools.

***Make sure that students know that the SCOOP sheets are customized just for them!***

## Exhibit 1. Sample SCOOP Sheet

**My SCOOP – Sample Cost, Outcomes, and Opportunities Sheet for College** **FIND THE FIT**

It may be cheaper than you think to attend a good college!

Use the examples below to see some sample colleges you might consider and how much you could expect to pay.

**Upward Bound Participant**

	Potential Matches Customized to Your Test Scores						
	University of Alabama at Birmingham	University of Alabama	Talladega College	Stetson University	Mississippi College	Host Institution	
STATE	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Florida	Mississippi	Alabama	
TYPE OF SCHOOL	Public (4-year)	Public (4-year)	Private (4-year)	Private (4-year)	Private (4-year)	Public (2-year)	
SCHOOL SIZE	10,000 - 19,999	20,000 and above	1,000 - 4,999	1,000 - 4,999	5,000 - 9,999	1,000 - 4,999	
MIDDLE 50% TEST SCORES							
ACT	21-27	22-30	open admission	25-28	20-26	open admission	
SAT CRITICAL READING	500-630	500-620	open admission	530-630	460-610	open admission	
SAT MATH	500-640	500-640	open admission	525-630	470-580	open admission	
GRADUATION RATE	25% in 4yrs, 48% in 6yrs	41% in 4yrs, 67% in 6yrs	14% in 4yrs, 25% in 6yrs	56% in 4yrs, 64% in 6yrs	40% in 4yrs, 62% in 6yrs	12% in 2yrs, 14% in 3yrs	
<b>Cost</b>							
	Posted Cost of Attendance	\$21,153	\$23,939	\$19,048	\$48,972	\$24,853	\$12,880
Estimated Average Cost	Family Income: \$0 to \$30,000	\$12,457	\$15,605	\$13,031	\$17,819	\$10,940	\$5,169
	Family Income: \$30,000 to \$48,000	\$14,208	\$16,784	\$13,334	\$18,950	\$12,896	\$6,487
	Family Income: \$48,000 to \$65,000	\$16,444	\$19,328	\$13,635	\$20,629	\$14,700	\$9,016

**High posted cost does not necessarily equal high cost to you.**  
In general, colleges offer financial aid to students with financial need. Visit college websites and use college net price calculators to get a better sense of your individual net price and estimated financial aid award.

**Schools with better graduation rates are not necessarily more expensive!**

SOURCE: Posted Cost of Attendance and Net Price were estimated using U.S. Department of Education data.



**Compare outcomes**  
Point out that not all colleges have the same graduation rates and ask students to compare outcomes across colleges.

Then examine different net costs based on the student's family income.

**Review with students.** Even though the sticker price may be higher, colleges with better outcomes won't always cost more.

Remember, the schools on the SCOOP sheets are not intended to direct students on where to apply—the colleges are intended to be instructional or illustrative examples useful in your discussions with students.

You may want to offer an opportunity for each student to meet individually with you to go over their own SCOOP sheet.

Encourage your students to research these same measures — net costs and graduation rates — for the specific schools they are interested in. (See the *My College Search* section on page 24).

After reviewing the SCOOP sheets with you and independently, students should realize that:

1. Net cost, or what they will end up paying, is not the same as sticker price.
2. College outcomes matter. Not all schools have the same retention and graduation rates.
3. Relationships between price and outcomes may or may not exist — some colleges that they think are not affordable, could actually be affordable.

# Scholarships and Grants

## OVERVIEW

### Type:

Handout

### Length of Time:

Approximately 10 minutes

This list highlights some of the many scholarship and grant opportunities available to your students. Have students search and apply early for the best chances of receiving scholarships and grants.

### Purpose:

The goal of this handout is to provide some state-specific scholarship sites and other more general websites to help students search for scholarships and grants.

This is just a beginning and students should be encouraged to search broadly for other possible funding opportunities.

### When to Use:

While students are learning about what colleges might be good fits and thinking about how they may find funding for the colleges that interest them.

## RECOMMENDED USE

### Creating Customized Scholarships and Grants Lists:

The pdf file, **Scholarships and Grants.pdf**, is a fillable template that will allow you to create your own state-specific scholarships and grants list. Below are instructions on how to use this template.

Create a state-specific scholarship sheet for your students by following the instructions below:

1. Download the scholarship sheet template, **Scholarships and Grants**, from the *Find the Fit* web page on the COE website.
2. Enter your state in the [State-Specific Search] field.
3. Identify general scholarships that are available in your state, or have your students identify some.
  - a. The following websites allow you to filter by state-specific scholarships:
    - i. <https://www.unigo.com/scholarships/by-state>
    - ii. <https://colleges.niche.com/scholarships/state/>
    - iii. <http://www.careerinfonet.org/scholarshipsearch/ScholarshipCategory.asp?>
  - b. Read over requested qualifications and try to avoid scholarships for which the criteria are too specific (e.g., graduation from a specific high school).
  - c. Conduct a Google search of “[your state] foundation scholarships” — foundations are a big source of funding!

4. Fill in the blank rows in the top table with the names and websites of state-specific general scholarships that you think might be a good match for your students.
5. Print the completed sheet.

During a group session, provide students with the Scholarships and Grants list and suggest some particular scholarships or grants to investigate on their own. Ask students to come up with other places where they might look for funding.



# Conducting the Search

- My College Search
- Breaking Beyond the Familiar Activity
- Discover Campus Support Services
- Start Your 2+2 Planning

**My College Search**

Start by filling in key information about yourself. Then collect information about the schools you are considering.

*Personal Information*

My Preference for Location and Size	Total SAT Score	Total ACT Score	High School GPA	Standardized Test Score	Family Income	Number of Hours I Expect to Enroll	What's Important to Me?

*Colleges of Interest*

College (Use Online Website or College Support Center)	Undergraduate Enrollment (% of capacity capacity)	Public/Private/Religious	Public/Non-Profit	Average GPA of Students	Net Price (Cost of Attendance)	Student Price (Tuition, Fees, Books, Room, Board)	Estimated Average Cost (2016-17)	# of New College Graduates (2015-16)	Community College/4-year/2-year/3-year	FA Assessment	Type of School (Public/Private/Religious)
1.										<input type="checkbox"/> Not a Good Fit <input type="checkbox"/> A Good Fit	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety <input type="checkbox"/> Academics <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity <input type="checkbox"/> Other
2.										<input type="checkbox"/> Not a Good Fit <input type="checkbox"/> A Good Fit	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety <input type="checkbox"/> Academics <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity <input type="checkbox"/> Other
3.										<input type="checkbox"/> Not a Good Fit <input type="checkbox"/> A Good Fit	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety <input type="checkbox"/> Academics <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity <input type="checkbox"/> Other
4.										<input type="checkbox"/> Not a Good Fit <input type="checkbox"/> A Good Fit	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety <input type="checkbox"/> Academics <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity <input type="checkbox"/> Other
5.										<input type="checkbox"/> Not a Good Fit <input type="checkbox"/> A Good Fit	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety <input type="checkbox"/> Academics <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity <input type="checkbox"/> Other
6.										<input type="checkbox"/> Not a Good Fit <input type="checkbox"/> A Good Fit	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety <input type="checkbox"/> Academics <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity <input type="checkbox"/> Other
7.										<input type="checkbox"/> Not a Good Fit <input type="checkbox"/> A Good Fit	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety <input type="checkbox"/> Academics <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity <input type="checkbox"/> Other

**Finalize Your College List.** Apply to four or more schools – that includes 1 safety, 2 match, and 1 stretch school.

**Break Beyond the Familiar**

What if you find a college that seems like a great fit for you, but it's unfamiliar? No one you know goes there or is applying. Your college advisor doesn't know anyone there. What do you do?

You can break beyond the familiar and handle these challenges. These challenges create opportunities to grow and develop skills that will help you your entire life. This activity will highlight your ability to overcome challenges that you might encounter in new environments.

If you have questions as you complete the activity, please ask your college advisor.

**1. Hearing Growth Stories: Who faces challenges? How do they grow?**

First, we'd like to invite you to hear from some recent grads about their experience adapting to college.

As you watch, think about the following questions:

- What experiences are common?
- How did students grow?
- Which do you identify with the most?

**2. Now tell your own story. What challenges have you overcome in the past?**

While you haven't gone to college yet, chances are that you have experienced new environments and challenges in the past. You grew or adapted in ways that helped you overcome them, just as these students did. In the spaces below, tell us about an experience like that.

What was the challenge you dealt with? How did it make you feel at first?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How did you overcome this challenge? Think about this in detail— Did you reach out to people for help? New skills you learned? New ways you learned to think about things?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What did you learn about yourself and your abilities that has helped you later? How can you apply this to your future at college?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Discover Campus Support Services**

Colleges want you to succeed! Many offer services, like the ones below, to help you.

Record the location and contact information of key campus support services on your **My College Search**.

**First Year Supports**

- Pre-enrollment/student orientation
- Student success courses
- First year seminars
- Summer bridge programs

**Academic Support & Advising**

- Learning communities
- Supplemental instruction
- Academic centers/labs
- Tutoring (writing, math, or foreign language)
- Information technology support
- Academic advising: Federal Student Support Services program

**Programs for Specific Student Populations**

- Racial/ethnic minorities
- Students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender
- Students with disabilities
- Men or women
- International students

**Career Planning**

- Career counseling services
- Internships
- Career development workshops

**Financial Aid**

- Federal work-study program
- Loan options
- Specialized grants (math and science) and scholarships

**Counseling Services**

- Mental health services (depression, coping with stress, or feelings of isolation)

**Residential Life**

- Residence hall programs
- Residential advisors

Use the strategies on the back to learn what services exist at colleges on your list.

**Start Your 2+2 Planning**

Starting at community college? It's not too early to be thinking about transferring to a four-year college. Take these steps to explore your college options.

**3 Steps to Get You Started**

1. Discover on-campus and online supports for transferring.
2. Explore requirements at four-year colleges you might attend.
3. Research the existing transfer options at the community college you are considering.

**1. Discover On-Campus and Online Supports for Transferring**

- **Transfer center:** If your community college has a transfer center, contact them to help you make a transfer plan.
- **Online transfer planning tools:** Check out online tools to help you plan for transferring.

**2. Explore Requirements at Four-Year Colleges You Might Attend**

- **Create a list of your target schools.** Identify four-year colleges that reflect your academic and career goals. Use your **My College Search** sheet to compare your target schools.
- **Figure out your target schools' specific requirements for transfer.** Some four-year colleges have special agreements with community colleges that make the transfer process easier. Check the four-year school websites to find out:
  - Which community college courses will be accepted for credit at the four-year college?
  - Which test scores does the four-year college need?
  - Are there unit requirements or specific application timelines for transfer students?
  - Does the four-year college guarantee admission if you earn an associate degree at your community college?

**Online Tools Spotlight**

- Check out these online tools to help you plan to transfer to a four-year college:
  - **Academy One:** <http://www.collegetransfer.net/>
  - **Transferology:** <https://www.transferology.com/>
  - **Grad Guru (mobile app):** <http://www.gradguru.org/>

**3. Research Your Community College's Existing Transfer Options**

- **State transfer (articulation) agreements.** Search online to see if your state may have general transfer agreements – sometimes called "articulation agreements" – between the community colleges and four-year colleges.
- **School-specific agreements.** Contact the transfer center to see if your community college has transfer agreements with any four-year colleges.
- **Ensure you start as a junior when you transfer.** Once enrolled, check with your community college academic advisor to determine which general education courses will be accepted at the four-year colleges.

# My College Search

## OVERVIEW

### Type:

Individual exercise

### Length of Time:

Approximately 20 minutes per college

### Purpose:

The goal of the My College Search sheet is to encourage students to record key factors highlighted by *Find the Fit*, consider if each college is a fit for them, and assess their chances for admittance. It is an easy-to-use template for students to record key factors about colleges they are interested in.

### When to Use:

When students start identifying target colleges.

Make sure you have already completed the *Shuffle, Sort, Stack* activity and discussed the *Four Factors of Fit* handout and the *SCOOP* sheets with students.

## RECOMMENDED USE

Once your students are starting to target colleges to include on their application lists, hold a group session to introduce this template.

Walk students through the example in the first row so that they understand each column.

Importantly, the sheet contains space for students to record information about college outcomes.

To fill in the sheet, students can go to a number of different college search engines such as:

- College Navigator,
- College Scorecard,
- Big Future, and
- lots of other places (you can find a list of websites in your Resource Guide, see Appendix 2).

You can find a PDF that is fillable electronically on the *Find the Fit* web page on the COE website.

By typing in their test scores, their locational preferences, and other factors, these search engines will give lists of colleges with net costs and graduation rates.

Discuss *how to assess whether or not a particular college is a fit* by comparing the college's characteristics to the student's desired characteristics and qualifications, which can be recorded at the top of the template (in the *Personal Information* section).

Students can use the My College Search sheet to record key college characteristics and outcomes, and compare across colleges and to their preferences.

Also talk about how to determine the *student's chances of admittance* by comparing the academic qualifications of the student body at the college to the student's personal information.

Encourage students to think back to the *Shuffle, Sort, and Stack* activity and research how potential colleges stack up to their other preferences.

If students are interested in some of the schools on their SCOOP sheets, please make sure they research the characteristics and do not simply copy over the information from their SCOOP sheets to their "My College Search Sheet." The SCOOP sheet information is not necessarily the most current data and is provided primarily to illustrate the need to look at net price and outcomes and to compare the two.

***Remember to encourage students to apply to 4 or more colleges, including 1 safety school, 2 match schools, and 1 stretch school.***

# Breaking Beyond the Familiar Activity

## OVERVIEW

### Type:

Group/individual activity

### Length of Time:

10 minute video and 45 minute activity

### Purpose:

The goal of this activity is to show students that they can grow and adapt to new surroundings, encouraging them to broaden their search from familiar institutions.

This activity includes a video, a short writing exercise and a discussion.

### When to Use:

When students start identifying target colleges.

This activity draws on existing research to highlight for students their capacity to overcome challenges in new environments. It may help them to think beyond what is immediately familiar to them in their college search and selection.

## RECOMMENDED USE

This exercise is inspired by a social-belonging intervention reported in a 2011 article published in Science magazine, “A Brief Social-Belonging Intervention Improves Academic and Health Outcomes of Minority Students” by Greg Walton and Geoff Cohen. It is based on a set of activity guidelines developed by Greg Walton, Shannon Brady, Joe Powers, and Geoff Cohen. They encourage others to customize their materials for specific contexts and challenges faced by their students.

This activity was adapted to help students overcome a concern that they will not succeed in new or unfamiliar environments. This sense can keep students from considering all the possible schools that could be a good fit for them, particularly those that might be outside their communities or less familiar to their friends and family.

To help students realize that they can succeed in new environments, and they should consider many different types of colleges, there is a three-part activity. The goal of this activity is to send two broad messages:

- If you feel concerned about going somewhere unfamiliar, you are not alone. Lots of people feel that way; and,
- Most students adapt and grow over time, so that even unfamiliar places and challenging new environments can come to feel like home. You should not rule out options just because they are unfamiliar — you can handle these environments too!

While the activity is designed for small groups, all parts can be done by students individually, with feedback from the advisor or other students.

The activity includes three parts.

1. **Hearing Growth Stories.** Everyone has concerns about going to college — it is an unfamiliar environment for everyone. If students feel concerned about going someplace new, they are not alone. However, over time, this gets better, as we grow and adapt to the challenges presented by new experiences. The videos include a handful of stories from college students, some of whom participated in the Upward Bound program, where they share their stories of doubt and explain how they adapted to college.

There are also some discussion questions in the activity guide to help transition from the videos to an activity you can do with your students (see page 28).

Find the *Breaking Beyond the Familiar* video here:

<https://youtu.be/wG6687TOnX0>

For more videos of individual students, go to the *Find the Fit* channel on YouTube.

2. **Tell your Own Story:** While current high school students have not already navigated the new situations that college presents, they have very often had to adjust to other new situations in their lives. For example, your students have transitioned from junior high to high school. They may have moved, or found themselves in a place where they did not know anyone, or even found a new class really challenging. You want them to realize that they have been able to handle new things in the past. Like the college students in the Growth Stories videos, they also managed the challenges of unfamiliar circumstances — and often, taking on those challenges is worth the work.
3. **Share your experiences.** When students have the opportunity to be not just the recipients of help, but to provide it to others, they feel even more empowered. So, sharing experiences with others is a key part of this activity. At the same time, it is possible that students may not already be able to see their own ability to grow in their past experiences. As students share their stories, you play a critical role in highlighting the key principles associated with growth mindsets. For more ideas about how you can do this, please see the Wrap-Up Ideas on page 31.

The *Activity Guide* on the next page provides step-by-step guidance to help you make the most out of this activity with students.

Students may engage in this activity on their own time. They received modified activity instructions in their kits. To make sure they get the most out of the activity, have a short discussion with any students completing the activity on their own and ask them:

- What was the challenge you dealt with?
- How did you overcome this challenge?
- What did you learn about yourself and your abilities that has helped you later?
- How can you apply this to your future at college?

## ACTIVITY GUIDE

### Breaking Beyond the Familiar Activity Guide

#### Materials:

- Screen to watch videos: compilation video available at <https://youtu.be/wG6687TOnX0>, with additional videos of students available on the *Find the Fit* channel on YouTube
- Handout/notebook, pens/pencils
- Writing prompts (sheets or cards)

#### Opening: 5 minutes

Distribute student handout (Break Beyond the Familiar) or notebooks, welcome students, etc.

#### Introduction and Framing: 5 minutes

What if, while you are searching for a college, you run across one that really excites you — it has the programs you want, you qualify academically, you have figured out that it is affordable and offers some great financial aid, and it is in a location that is interesting to you.

But...no one you know has ever gone there. Or it is not close to home. Or you get the sense the classes might be different from what you have taken before. Will you apply? And if you are accepted, will you seriously consider going?

The truth is that everyone has doubts like this about college, particularly those we are not familiar with:

- This is the first time living away from home, away from families and high school friends
- We are constantly meeting new people
- We meet people from different cultures, and we are not sure how to interact with them
- Life is not as structured as in high school — managing free time can be challenging
- There are tons of opportunities and groups, and we do not know if we will fit in
- We have to figure out a lot of unfamiliar things: how to navigate classes, get to know professors, deal with more challenging classes than we had in high school, and sometimes, handle disappointing grades

These kinds of experiences are normal in the transition to college. Everyone goes through them. However, we want to talk about how they get better with time.

You adjust to college — even one that is new and challenging. And it can be worth it for a school that is a great fit for you.

Today we are going to do an activity to help demonstrate that.

We will start by watching some videos from current college students, where they share their experiences of how they felt before going to college and how they adapted.

## **Part 1: Hearing Growth Stories – 20-25 minutes**

Possible discussion questions:

- What experiences, feelings or themes are common across several of these stories?
- What challenges did people face when they went to an unfamiliar environment? Which of these do you identify with the most? How did they handle that challenge?
- It seems like a lot of stories are about how they were concerned about \_\_\_\_\_. I know that for me, I felt that way but thought that everyone else had everything under control. Why do you think that sometimes students do not realize that other people are also coping with new things?
- Looking forward to the future, how do you expect it will be different to be an upperclassman at college than it will be to be a freshman?

## **Part 2: Telling Your Own Story – 20 minutes**

Since you are not at college yet, you cannot tell exactly this kind of story. But we want to ask you to think about ways that you have handled unfamiliar things in the past. And while it might not be obvious to you, it is very likely that you have — lots of times.

Maybe you were afraid about the transition from junior high to high school. Maybe you moved. Maybe you had a new class that made you nervous. Maybe you went somewhere you had never been before and did not know you could figure out how to get there or back.

We would like you to share this kind of story now. When did you take on something unfamiliar and succeed?

We will take 5-10 minutes for each of you to think about and make some notes on your story. Write in your notebook about the experiences and challenges you have experienced, and how you have overcome them. Really try to express your story — what dealing with the new situation was like for you and how you addressed it. How have you changed over time? Does the thought of taking on that challenge now feel different than it did then?

When everyone has had a chance to jot down some notes on their experiences, we will ask you to share your stories with us.

Writing prompt:

### **How have you managed new situations?**

Many students experience new things in life – living in a new place, going to a new school, taking a new class, trying a new sport or hobby, even finding something in a store you have never visited before.

While these can be challenging experiences, we find ways to adapt to the unfamiliar – and it is often worth the work!

Take a few minutes to write about the challenges you have experienced when you have been in an unfamiliar setting, and how you handled those challenges.

Notes for advisors:

- Write your own response in your notebook/handout for the first 7 minutes.
- Monitor and encourage all students to write.
- When students seem to have made some notes about their stories, you can call time.

### **Part 3: Sharing your experience with others – 5-7 minutes**

- Explain that the group is going to share their stories with others. An important aspect of this activity is that students realize that their stories can help others — they become the providers of the assistance, not the recipients!
- Try to get all students to tell their stories.

### **Discussion: 10 minutes**

Begin a discussion about what students heard in each other's stories.

Possible questions:

- What experiences, feelings or themes are common across your stories?
- How did people respond to the challenges they faced?
- How do these stories compare to the ones we watched from college students? [The point is that the ability to grow and adapt that students have is the same skill that will allow them to do this in college.]
- What would the student have lost if they had just given up in this situation? Are they glad that they did not give up?

### **Notes:**

Include everyone: go around the circle if necessary.

- Validate students' responses: Validate even if the response does not resonate with the key messages. Don't contradict. "That's great [that you haven't \_\_\_\_\_]. Some people do. Some people do not. It happens in different ways and at different times for different people."



These questions can also be asked as true/false questions, with raised hands to indicate students' beliefs.

Another way to elicit students' thoughts at the end of the activity is to ask:

- What advice would you give someone if they ran across a college that really excited them, but that was unfamiliar, maybe more academically challenging than their high school was, or far away?

# Discover Campus Support Services

## OVERVIEW

### Type:

Group exercise

### Length of Time:

Approximately 15 minutes

### Purpose:

The goal of this exercise is to reassure students about going someplace unfamiliar if it is a better fit, by getting them to write down where to get different types of supports on the campuses they are considering and, if possible, to contact the campus offices to access that support.

This handout describes the range of support services available on many college campuses and suggests ways for students to learn about the specific support services available at the colleges on their application lists.

### When to Use:

When students identify target colleges to help them fine-tune their application lists.

Many colleges offer numerous services to help students succeed in new environments. Students can use the strategies on this handout to learn about the support services offered at campuses they are considering.

## RECOMMENDED USE

During a group session, explain to students that expanding their application lists to include a broad set of institutions is important because it will give them the *highest chance of finding and being admitted to a school that is a great fit for them.*

Start by asking your students: ***What types of services do you think would best support students, like you, to be successful at college?***

Next, have them take out the Discover Campus Support Services handout and go through the common supports listed on the front page. ***Which of these support services have students not heard of before?***

Explain to students that there are many ways to learn about the support services available at college. Ask students: ***How have you learned or how do you think you could learn about these services?***

Finally, go over the four strategies for finding out about support services listed on the back page — if they have not already come up in the discussion—and encourage students to find and *write down the name of the people they will contact* from Admissions or Student Services at colleges on their lists on their *My College Search* handouts.

# Start Your 2+2 Planning

## OVERVIEW

### Type:

Small group exercise

### Length of Time:

Approximately 30 minutes to review with students planning to attend 2-year colleges.

### Purpose:

A 2-year college is where some students may start their postsecondary education. The goal of this handout is get students starting out at a 2-year school who want to complete a 4-year degree to start planning as soon as possible to make their goal achievable.

This handout gives students some general guidance about what it takes to transfer from a 2-year college to a 4-year college.

### When to Use:

When students identify target colleges.

Students planning to start out at a 2-year college and then transfer to a 4-year college should start planning early to make the transfer as easy as possible. This handout can guide students in their initial transfer planning.

## RECOMMENDED USE

Meet with students who are planning to enroll in a 2-year college to go through the three steps listed on the 2+2 Transfer Planning handout, answering questions as you go.

Encourage the students to *act on each of the three steps* before making a final decision about where to apply to college.

### Check out these Online Tools:

- Academy One: <http://www.collegetransfer.net/>
- Transferology: <https://www.transferology.com/>
- Grad Guru (mobile app): <http://www.gradguru.org/>



## Applying to Four or More Colleges

- The Common Application
- College Admission Application Fee Waivers

**The Common Application**

Many colleges accept the Common Application, so it may help you save time as you apply to four or more colleges.

For each college where you plan to apply:

1. Review the application instructions carefully for each college.
2. Check all deadlines and any required supplemental materials.



**Common Application**  
Check if the colleges on your list accept The Common Application.  
Website: [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)

For the full list of participating colleges, see:  
<http://www.commonapp.org/search/colleges>

**NACAC**  
National Association for  
College Admission Counseling

**Request for Admission  
Application Fee Waiver**  
SEND THIS FORM DIRECTLY TO THE POSTSECONDARY  
INSTITUTION/ORGANIZATION

TO: DEAN/DIRECTOR OF ADMISSION AT \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY \_\_\_\_\_

**STUDENT:** Print or type the information requested below. You must personally sign the Certification Statement.

**CERTIFICATION STATEMENT:** I certify that I understand and meet all eligibility requirements to request an admission application fee waiver.

STUDENT'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_ STUDENT'S SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

STUDENT'S ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

**AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:** Print or type the information requested below and check the indicator(s) of economic need. You must personally sign the Certification Statement.

**CERTIFICATION STATEMENT:** I certify that the student named on this form is currently enrolled in the 11th or 12th grade at this school and meets the indicator(s) of economic need checked below.

AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_ AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL'S SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL'S TITLE \_\_\_\_\_ AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL'S EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION OR ORGANIZATION \_\_\_\_\_ CEEB® OR PROGRAM \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

**ECONOMIC NEED:** The student must meet at least one of the following indicators of economic need. If no item is checked, the request will be denied.

- Student has received or is eligible to receive an ACT or SAT testing fee waiver.
- Student is enrolled in or eligible to participate in the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch program (FFRL).
- Student's annual family income falls within the income Eligibility Guidelines\* set by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.
- Student is enrolled in a federal, state or local program that aids students from low-income families (e.g., TRIO programs such as Upward Bound).
- Student's family receives public assistance.
- Student lives in federally subsidized public housing, a foster home or is homeless.
- Student is a ward of the state or an orphan.
- Other request from high school principal, high school counselor, financial aid officer, or community leader.

Given my knowledge of this student's family circumstances and after reviewing the eligibility guidelines, I believe that providing the application fee would present a hardship. Explanation:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\*To view USDA Income Eligibility Guidelines for the Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program or review FAQs related to this form visit <http://dx.doi.gov/NACAC/fee-waiver>.

# The Common Application

## OVERVIEW

### Type:

Handout

### Length of Time:

Not Applicable

### Purpose:

The goal of this handout is to introduce students to and remind them of the benefits of using the Common Application.

This handout makes sure students are aware that the application process can be streamlined for colleges that accept the Common Application.

### When to Use:

When students have identified their target colleges.

The Common Application can facilitate applying to multiple schools when multiple schools on a student's application list accept the Common Application.

## RECOMMENDED USE

Before students start filling out applications, remind them of the Common Application and discuss with students the fact that many colleges accept the Common Application.

Suggest students review the Common Application handout and visit the Common Application website to see if any colleges on their application lists or that they were interested in accept the Common Application.

While many colleges do accept the Common Application, some also require additional college-specific supplemental forms — students should *review the application instructions carefully for each college*.

# College Admission Application Fee Waivers

## OVERVIEW

### Type:

Handout

### Length of Time:

Not Applicable

### Purpose:

The goal of this handout is to remind students that they may be eligible for college application fee waivers.

The handout also provides guidance to facilitate the use of such waivers.

### When to Use:

When students have final application lists.

Over 150 colleges and universities nationwide will accept an admission application fee waiver from eligible students and your students may qualify. This handout reminds your students to use their fee waivers.

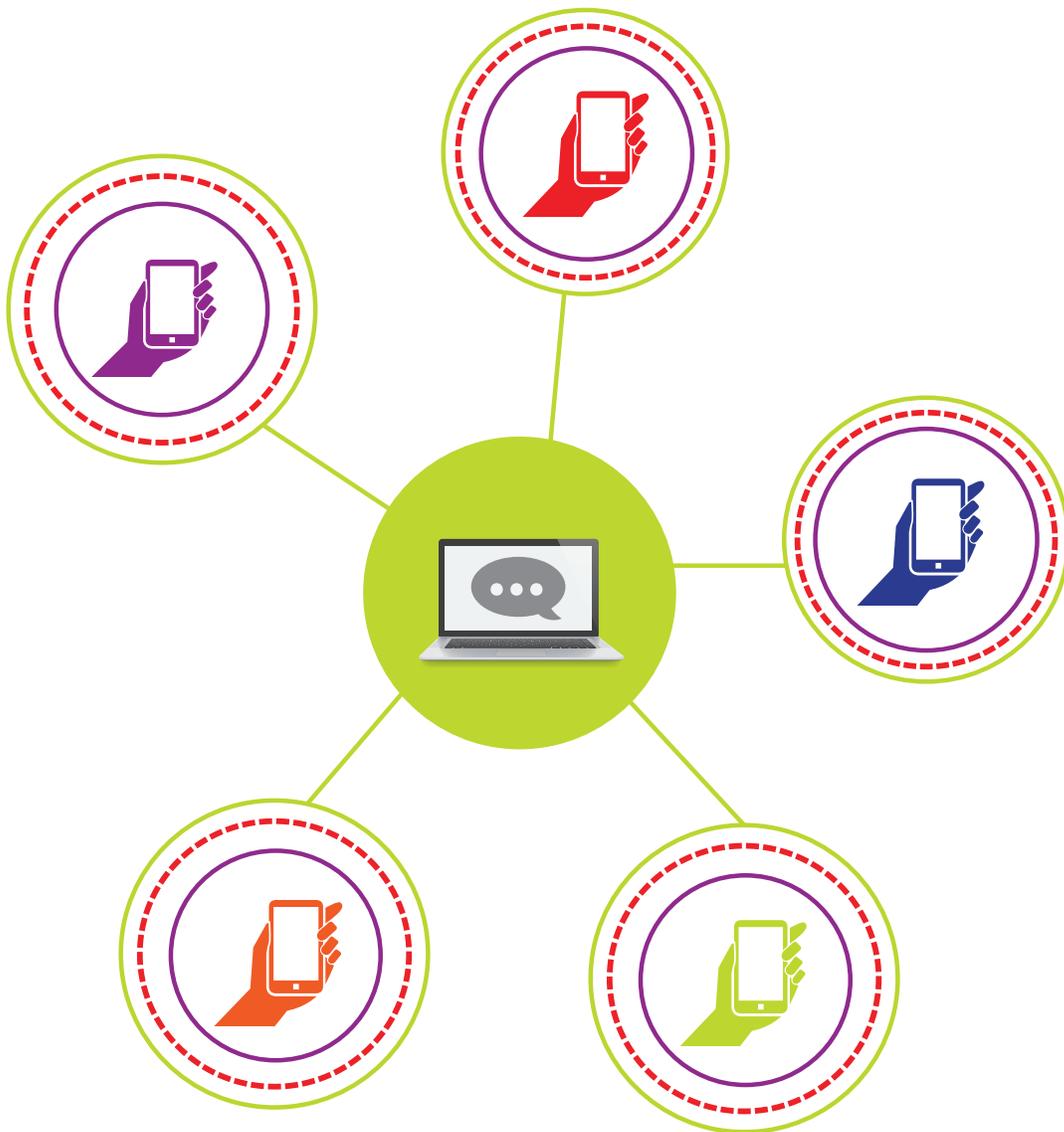
## RECOMMENDED USE

As soon as students have final application lists, talk with them about the process for requesting fee waivers and review the Fee Waivers handout with them.

**In Fall 2015, the average application fee was \$41!**  
**Students could save \$160 or more by requesting fee waivers.**



## Appendix 1: How to Implement a Text Messaging Program



# Contents

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## Implementing a successful text messaging program requires planning and careful execution.

The sections below provide guidance on key steps of implementing a text messaging program:

- Selecting a text messaging platform;
- Generating text message content;
- Gathering information for message customization; and
- Managing communication with students

### Selecting a Text Messaging Platform

The first step to implementing a successful text messaging program is selecting a technology platform that fits your budget and needs.

### Desired Capabilities of the Text Messaging Platform

Existing text messaging platforms vary in the features they offer and their costs. When considering a text messaging provider, think about your project's needs and budget. Here are key features to look for when searching for a text messaging platform.

1. **Two-way communication.** The platform is able to send and receive text messages. In platforms with two-way communication, student responses are typically sent to an online “inbox” that resembles familiar email services. The inbox, accessed through the online platform, stores the conversation between advisor and student. From the inbox, advisors can view and respond directly to student questions.
2. **Ability to preschedule message delivery.** The timing for the delivery of text messages can be programmed so that messages are sent automatically to multiple students on set dates and times, adjusting for time zones. Additionally, text messages can be anchored to be released before or after college-specific dates. For example, messages that remind students to register for new student orientation can be programmed for delivery two weeks before the college's orientation date.
3. **Message customization based on student and college information.** Text messages can be customized based on student background information stored within the platform's database. The database can link each student's mobile phone number with specific information (e.g., student name, college choice), and the system can automatically populate a message with personalized information.

Platforms allow different levels of customization—some are limited to just a few characteristics such as first name and college choice. Others allow for multiple pieces of information to be customized, including college-specific dates and websites. Some platforms allow for changes to student background information (e.g., college choice) to be immediately reflected in the student's set of future programmed messages.

4. **Automatic replies enabled by natural language processing.** Natural language processing allows the platform to send a set of automatic replies based on key words in student responses. For instance, a text message can ask students if they have completed their FAFSA. Students who respond “yes” (or variations such as “yeah,” “ya,” “yep”) automatically receive a message like “Great! That's a major step to take on the road to college.” Students who respond “no” automatically receive a message encouraging them

to complete the FAFSA soon and seek help if they need it. This automatic reply feature enabled by natural language processing allows even programmed messages to feel more personal and timely.

5. **Multiple login accounts.** You may want to have multiple login accounts so that students' personal contact information is visible only to the advisors who work directly with them.
6. **Ability to update student contact information.** Students' mobile phone numbers sometimes change. Some platforms allow advisors to update student phone numbers, enabling advisors to maintain contact with students.
7. **Secure storage of student data.** Student data, including student mobile phone numbers, background information, and conversations between the student and advisor, should be stored securely and transferred through password-protected sites.

## Generating Text Messaging Content

The *Find the Fit* text messages are modeled after text message content found to be effective in other college access interventions<sup>4</sup>. Below are the timing and wording of the *Find the Fit* messages, as well as some ideas for modifying the set of messages to meet your project's unique circumstances.

The *Find the Fit* messages are designed to solicit two-way communication between you and your students. To encourage students to ask questions and respond via text, the messages below often end with "txt HELP to get advice from your advisor." In addition to requiring the use of a two-way messaging provider, this necessitates that advisors check the system frequently to see if students have reached out for help. Another option is to include a cell phone number of an advisor in the messages so that students can text or call the advisor directly. To use this option, replace "txt HELP" with "txt [Advisor Cell Phone Number]" in the messages below. For example, the June 18th message would conclude "txt (123) 456-7890 to connect with ur UB advisor!"

Because there may be students for whom you do not have a college application list, it is important to have generic versions of the messages that can be substituted for customized ones. For instance, as shown in the *Find the Fit* message schedule below, on December 15, any students who did not provide a list of colleges received a basic message stating, "Hi [*student first name*], don't forget to apply to the colleges on ur list! Check college websites for their application due dates."

## Find the Fit Text Messages

The original text messages that were used in *Find the Fit* are included in Table 2. Because *Find the Fit* was implemented with Upward Bound programs, you will see references to "UB Advisors" in the messages. Feel free to edit the messages as necessary to make them relevant to your approach to serving students.

4 Benjamin L. Castleman and Lindsey C. Page, "Summer Nudging: Can Personalized Text Messages and Peer Mentor Outreach Increase College Going among Low-Income High School Graduates?" *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 115 (2015): 144–160.

Lindsey C. Page, Benjamin L. Castleman, and Katharine Meyer, *Customized Nudging to Improve FAFSA Completion and Income Verification*, 2016, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2854345>

**Table 2. Find the Fit Text Messages**

RECOMMENDED DATE <sup>5</sup>	PURPOSE	CONTENT
May 22	Introduction to <i>FTF</i> text messaging	Hi [ <i>student first name</i> ]! This is a msg from ur Upward Bound team. To help u find a good college fit, we'll send u texts each month. Want to make sure this is legit? Talk to ur Upward Bound advisor! Don't want these msgs? Reply cancel.
June 18	Use college search tools	Have u started ur college search? Use tools like <a href="http://www.collegeconfidential.com">www.collegeconfidential.com</a> and <a href="http://www.collegegreenlight.com">www.collegegreenlight.com</a> to find colleges that match ur academic stats. Then add them to ur My College Search sheet! If u need help starting ur search, txt 'HELP' to connect with ur UB advisor!
July 8	Reminder to use college search tools	Don't forget to search for colleges and fill out ur My College Search sheet! Use the tools we sent last month: <a href="http://www.collegeconfidential.com">www.collegeconfidential.com</a> and <a href="http://www.collegegreenlight.com">www.collegegreenlight.com</a> . Talk to ur advisor for help! Txt 'HELP' to get help from ur advisor.
July 22	Begin college application list	Hi [ <i>student first name</i> ]! Do u have a list of colleges on ur My College Search sheet? Use it to compare other Fit Factors and narrow down ur list. Txt 'HELP' to get help from ur advisor.
August 5	Compare college costs after financial aid	Have u used your SCOOP sheet to see how financial aid may lower the cost of college? It may be cheaper than you think! Txt 'HELP' to get help from ur advisor.
August 17	Research campus support services	Hi [ <i>student first name</i> ]! As u research colleges, look up what kinds of support they offer students. The Discover Campus Support sheet in ur folder tells u where to find this info. Some colleges may feel unfamiliar, but campus support services can help u succeed!
Sept. 9	Finalize college application list	It's time to finalize ur college application list! Use ur My College Search and SCOOP sheets to help narrow down choices, and remember u can text 'HELP' to get advice from ur advisor.
Sept. 21	Reminder to finalize application list	Have u finalized ur college application list? Remember to have 4 or more, including 1 Reach, 2 Match, and 1 Safety. Txt 'HELP' to get advice from ur advisor!

5 Research has shown messages sent Monday through Thursday are most impactful. Adjust the dates to avoid sending on Fridays and weekends.

RECOMMENDED DATE	PURPOSE	CONTENT
Oct. 22	Request students' college application list	Hi [ <i>student first name</i> ]! Which colleges are you applying to? Txt us the names of your 4 or more colleges, separating each college with a comma. Thx!
Oct. 27 (if no response to 10/22 message)	Second request for college application lists	Hi [ <i>student first name</i> ]! Which colleges are you applying to? Txt us the names of your 4 or more colleges, separating each college with a comma. Thx!
Nov. 11	Reminder to use application fee waivers	Remember — as an Upward Bound student, u can waive many college application fees! Use this form <a href="http://www.nacacnet.org/studentinfo/feewaiver/pages/default.aspx">http://www.nacacnet.org/studentinfo/feewaiver/pages/default.aspx</a> Txt 'HELP' if you have ?s about the fee waiver.
Nov. 18	Check if colleges accept Common Application	Do any of ur colleges accept the Common App? Check this list: <a href="http://www.commonapp.org">www.commonapp.org</a> Note your colleges' due dates and whether they require extra materials.
<i>One week before due date for each college on list</i>	Automatically timed application deadline reminders	Hi [ <i>student first name</i> ], just a reminder that the application for [college name] is due on [college due date]! Txt 'HELP' if u need help finishing the application!
Dec. 15 (if student did not provide list of colleges)	Generic application deadline reminder for students who did not provide an application list	Hi [ <i>student first name</i> ], don't forget to apply to the colleges on ur list! Check college websites for their application due dates. Txt 'HELP' if u need help finishing the applications!
Jan. 20	Reminder and link to complete FAFSA	Hi [ <i>student first name</i> ]! Have u completed ur FAFSA? Do it before March 15 to get the most financial aid possible! <a href="https://fafsa.ed.gov/">https://fafsa.ed.gov/</a> Txt 'HELP' if u need FAFSA help!
Feb. 15	Resources to search for scholarships	Have you started looking for scholarships to help pay for college? Here are some places to start: <a href="http://www.scholarshipexperts.com">www.scholarshipexperts.com</a> , or <a href="http://scholarships.fastweb.com/y-high-school-seniors">http://scholarships.fastweb.com/y-high-school-seniors</a>
Feb. 25 (if student did not respond 'Yes' to Jan. 20 FAFSA message)	Second reminder to complete FAFSA	Hi [ <i>student first name</i> ]! Have u completed ur FAFSA? Do it before March 15 to get the most financial aid possible! <a href="https://fafsa.ed.gov/">https://fafsa.ed.gov/</a> Txt 'HELP' if u need FAFSA help!

RECOMMENDED DATE	PURPOSE	CONTENT
March 15	Reminder to check college graduation rates	Have u checked the graduation rates at the colleges ur considering? Check out <a href="https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/">https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/</a> or <a href="http://www.imfirst.org/">http://www.imfirst.org/</a> . Keep these in mind as u make ur college choice!
April 5	Offer help interpreting financial aid award letter	Hi [ <i>student first name</i> ]! Do you have questions about your financial aid letters? Here r sites that help: <a href="https://www.salliemae.com/plan-for-college/financial-aid/financial-aid-award-letter/">https://www.salliemae.com/plan-for-college/financial-aid/financial-aid-award-letter/</a> & <a href="http://www.finaid.org/calculators/awardletter.phtml">www.finaid.org/calculators/awardletter.phtml</a>  Lots of people need help understanding their financial aid – txt ‘HELP’ if u need advice.
April 17	Request for students to indicate which college they plan to attend in the fall	Hi [ <i>student first name</i> ]! Which college are you going to attend this fall? If u need help choosing the best fit, text ‘HELP’ to set up a meeting with your advisor.
May 8 <i>(if student did not respond to 4/17 message)</i>	Second request for students’ enrollment choice	Hi [ <i>student first name</i> ]! Which college are you going to attend this fall? If u need help choosing the best fit, text ‘HELP’ to set up a meeting with your advisor.
June 5	Reminder to get in touch with campus support services	Have u found a key contact at ur college’s support services office? The Discover Campus Support sheet in ur Find the Fit folder tells u how to find this info.
June 20	Log into college’s web portal to check key enrollment steps and deadlines	Log on to the [ <i>college name</i> ] web portal to find key info for finalizing your enrollment: [ <i>enrollment website</i> ] Make sure to check when ur first tuition bill is due! Txt ‘HELP’ to get help.
June 20 <i>(if student did not provide college enrollment choice)</i>		Make sure u log on to ur college’s web portal to find key info for finalizing your enrollment. Make sure to check when ur first tuition bill is due! Txt ‘HELP’ to get help.
July 1	Register for orientation	Have you signed up for the [ <i>college name</i> ] orientation? Last one is [ <i>orientation date</i> ]. Register here: [ <i>orientation website</i> ] Txt ‘HELP’ to get help.

RECOMMENDED DATE	PURPOSE	CONTENT
<b>July 1</b> <i>(if student did not provide college enrollment choice)</i>		Make sure u sign up for ur college's orientation! Check their website or call the college to find out how. Txt 'HELP' to get help.
<b>July 6</b> <i>(summer messages were only sent to students whose projects were funded to provide assistance the summer after graduation from high school)</i>	Plan for first tuition payment	The [college name] tuition bill may be coming soon! Here's the info about tuition payments: [college tuition website] Need help understanding the bill? Txt 'HELP'
<b>July 6</b> <i>(if student did not provide college enrollment choice)</i>		Ur college tuition bill may be coming soon! Check their website for info about tuition payments. Need help understanding the bill? Txt 'HELP'
<b>July 15</b>	Register for placement tests	Hi [student first name]! Remember to register for the [college name] placement tests or get an exemption: [placement testing website]. Text 'HELP' if u have questions.
<b>July 15</b> <i>(if student did not provide college enrollment choice)</i>		Hi [student first name]! Remember to check to see if ur college requires a placement test before u start classes. Text 'HELP' if u have questions.
<b>July 22</b>	Check health insurance options	Hi [student first name]! [college name] will require you to have health insurance. Here's some info on health care options/costs: [college health insurance website]. Txt 'HELP' to get help.
<b>July 22</b> <i>(if student did not provide college enrollment choice)</i>		Hi [student first name]! Ur college will require you to have health insurance — check their website to see ur options. Txt 'HELP' to get help.

RECOMMENDED DATE	PURPOSE	CONTENT
July 26	Reminder to pay first tuition bill	Hi [student first name]! The [college name] tuition bill may be due soon! Check the website for info. If u need help understanding the bill, txt 'HELP'
July 26 (if student did not provide college enrollment choice)		Hi [student first name]! Ur tuition bill may be due soon! Check the website for info. If u need help understanding the bill, txt 'HELP'
August 20	Congratulations!	Hi [student first name]! Great job with the application process — good luck this fall!!

## Guidance for Creating Messages

Your project may choose to modify the *Find the Fit* messages or draft other text messages to fit your unique circumstances. In doing so, keep the following suggestions in mind.

- **Personalize the messages:** Take steps to make the messages feel personal, not automated. The introductory message can be used to greet students by name and let them know who is sending the messages.
- **Customize information:** Messages you create may require customized information. Consider whether the information necessary to customize the texts is readily available and the amount of time and effort required to gather the customized information. You might involve your students in gathering some of the information that will be used to customize the messages.
- **Include actionable information:** Create messages that allow students to take action immediately upon receiving the message, for example, by texting information back or filling out a required form through a link.
- **Keep messages short.** Text messages should be limited to 160 characters or less. This ensures that content will not be divided into multiple messages by students' phone providers. If messages are longer than 160 characters, break up the message into two parts at a place where it makes sense. When phone providers automatically break up the message, the message may be cut at a place that makes it hard to understand.
- **Shorten terms or links:** You can shorten the number of characters in a text by replacing words with abbreviations (e.g., HS for high school) or symbols (e.g., & for and). You can also shorten links to websites using tools such as bitly.com.
- **Provide access to additional support:** Text messages are a useful tool in advising; however, students may need additional in-person or text-based support in order to understand or take action related to the content of a message that you send. Make sure you have advisors available who are monitoring student responses and are prepared to answer questions and provide additional support.

- **Consider alternate modes for students to seek help.** Many of the *Find the Fit* messages conclude with a statement such as “txt ‘HELP’ to connect with ur advisor!” Advisors can monitor their message inbox and respond to the student’s question directly. However, there are other ways to encourage students to seek help when they need it:
  - Include your personal cell phone number in each message, allowing you to receive and respond to student messages without having to log into the text messaging platform.
  - Messages can also remind students to “talk to your advisor if you need help!” While this approach does not encourage students to instantly respond, it still serves as a basic reminder that support is available.
- **Let students know they can opt out.** You need to provide students with the option to opt out of receiving text messages. The first *Find the Fit* text message instructs students to reply “Cancel” if they would like to unsubscribe from the text reminders.

### Creating Variables for Customizing Messages

The text messaging platform can generate customized messages based on variables from data files that you provide. There are three data files necessary for the recommended *Find the Fit* messages:

- **Student Profile:** contains information unique to each student (e.g., name, colleges where they intended to apply);
- **Project Profile:** contains information about the college advising project or program; and
- **College Profile:** contains information unique to each college (e.g., college name, date applications are due).

The data files do not need to be complex; an Excel spreadsheet will work. The specific variables in each of these data files are presented in Table 3. As a reminder, these variables were necessary for *Find the Fit*’s implementation with Upward Bound programs, but you may need to add or remove variables depending on the structure of your college advising program and the requirements of your chosen text messaging provider.

**Table 3. Variables in Data Files Used to Personalize *Find the Fit***

VARIABLE NAME USED IN <i>FIND THE FIT</i>	DESCRIPTION
<b>STUDENT PROFILE</b>	
student ID	A unique ID that was assigned to each student
student first name	Student's first name
student last name	Student's last name
phone	Student's mobile phone number
project id	A unique ID assigned to each Upward Bound project
college ID1	College ID1 to college ID9 include the ID numbers of colleges where the student intends to apply. Each variable contained a single ID number. These variables were used to link to the college-specific information in the College Profile database.
college ID2	
college ID3	
college ID4	
college ID5	
college ID6	
college ID7	
college ID8	
college ID9	
college choice	ID of college where student intends to enroll
<b>PROJECT PROFILE</b>	
project id	A unique ID assigned to each Upward Bound project.
host name	Name of the Upward Bound host institution.
area code	Phone area code of Upward Bound host institution. This determined the area code of the phone number used to send the program messages.
city	City in which Upward Bound project is located.
state	State in which Upward Bound project is located.

VARIABLE NAME USED IN FIND THE FIT	DESCRIPTION
<b>PROJECT PROFILE</b>	
help category	Upward Bound project's preference for how students should contact advisors for help: 1. Text back 2. Text alternate phone number 3. Reach out to advisors
advisor cell	Advisor cell phone number
<b>COLLEGE PROFILE</b>	
college id	Unique college ID. When possible, this ID number was set using the IPEDS ID of the institution; however, this is not required. The only requirements are that college IDs are unique and internally consistent between the College Profile and Student Profile data files.
college name	Name of college
college abbrev	Standard abbreviation used for college. Using college abbreviations can help shorten the number of characters in a text (e.g., UC Berkeley for University of California, Berkeley)
state	State in which college is located
priority	A binary variable that indicates whether the college has a "priority" deadline, meaning that, while applications after the due date will be considered, students that apply prior to the due date are given priority consideration for admission and/or merit based aid.
college due date	Date on which college applications are due.
enrollment website	URL for web portal where students can log on to find information for finalizing their enrollment, tuition bill due dates, financial aid, etc.
orientation date	Last date for orientation at the college.
orientation website	URL for website where students can register for orientation.
placement test website	URL for website where students can register for placement tests or apply for an exemption.
college health insurance website	URL for website with information on health insurance options/cost.
college tuition website	URL for website containing information about tuition payments.
tuition due date	Date when tuition bill is due.

VARIABLE NAME USED IN <i>FIND THE FIT</i>	DESCRIPTION
<b>COLLEGE PROFILE</b>	
school priority due date	Date after which, while applications will be considered, students that apply prior to the date are given priority consideration for admission and/or merit based aid.

## Tips for Gathering Information for Data Files

Different messaging platforms will likely have different requirements for how data files are formatted. The *Find the Fit* program was implemented with the following data files and fields, but be sure to check with your platform to determine its specific data needs.

### Student Profile

**Student name:** If a student typically goes by a nickname or middle name, use this name in the file so that it is used in the text messages. This may help students feel as though the text messages are coming from someone they know rather than a robot.

**Student mobile phone number:** In order to administer a text messaging program, you will need to collect students' cell phone numbers, if you do not have them already.

**Application list:** Gather information about where students intend to apply and record it in the Student Profile data file. This will allow the platform provider to pull college-specific information from the College Profile data file. You can gather this information from students during a college advising session, or via a text message requesting that students text the names of all colleges on their application list.

**Enrollment college:** In the spring of senior year, gather information about where students intend to enroll in the fall and record this information in the Student Profile data file. You can gather this information from students in person or via a text message.

### College Profile

The College Profile data file contains college-specific information.

**Application information:** To provide personalized application reminders during the application process, the Student Profile data file contains IDs for the colleges where the students intend to apply. These IDs are used to link to the College Profile data file, which contains college names and application deadlines. The platform then can pull college name and application deadline variables to create custom-timed application reminders for each college on students' lists.

**Enrollment information:** To provide personalized information about enrollment steps, the Student Profile data file contains information about the college where students intended to enroll. This is used to link to the College Profile data file, which contains information about key enrollment steps and deadlines for each college. As shown in the

series of *Find the Fit* messages after June 20, enrollment reminders can include college-specific pieces of information such as: *enrollment website, orientation date, orientation website, college tuition website, placement test website, and college health insurance website.*

Finding college-specific information takes time. It may take 1-2 minutes per college to find a college's application deadline, and 5 to 15 minutes per college to locate information for enrollment steps (e.g., orientation dates, tuition due dates, placement tests, health insurance requirements).

You can find this information yourself, or you can make it an activity that involves your students by asking them to locate and enter the data into the Excel workbook.

Below are some tips to locate the important information.

- Try multiple strategies to find information (e.g., both searching directly on college webpages and using the college website search tool).
- If you look directly on college webpages, you will probably have to click on several links to find information.
- Look for key terms like “important dates and deadlines,” “timeline,” and “checklist.”
- As you locate the college-specific information, enter it into your College Profile data file.
- Text messages about enrollment, orientation, tuition, placement tests, and health insurance all go out very quickly after one another.
  - For some schools, this information is only available to students through password-protected college web portals.
  - If searching for information is taking significantly longer than the estimates we provide (i.e., 5-15 minutes), send the generic text message to that student instead.

Table 4 shows common places on college websites and search terms to use to look for information needed.

**Table 4. Common Sources for College Profile Information**

INFORMATION NEEDED	TEXT MESSAGE	WHERE ON WEBSITE	KEY SEARCH TERMS	WHEN STUDENTS SEND NECESSARY INFORMATION	WHEN TO SEND TEXT MESSAGE USING THIS INFORMATION
College Application Deadline <sup>6</sup>	Hi [ <i>student first name</i> ], just a reminder that the application for [ <i>college name</i> ] is due on [ <i>college due date</i> ]! Txt 'HELP' if u need help finishing the application!	Apply; Apply for undergraduate admission; Undergraduate Admissions; Admissions; Application; Undergrad.; Apply now;  How to Apply; Admission; Prospective Students	Apply; application; application deadline	Mid to late October of senior year	One week before college application deadlines
Enrollment Website	Log on to the [ <i>college name</i> ] web portal to find key info for finalizing your enrollment: [ <i>enrollment website</i> ] Make sure to check when ur first tuition bill is due! Txt 'HELP' to get help.	Newly Admitted Students; Admitted Students; Students; Admissions; Incoming Freshman; After Admission; New/Transfer Student Resources	Enrollment; Enroll	Mid-April to mid-May	June 20th
Orientation Date and Website <sup>7</sup>	Have you signed up for the [ <i>college name</i> ] orientation? Last one is [ <i>orientation date</i> ]. Register here: [ <i>orientation website</i> ] Txt 'HELP' to get help.	Students; New/ Transfer Student Resources; Incoming Freshman; After Admission	Orientation; New Student Orientation	Mid-April to mid-May	July 1st

INFORMATION NEEDED	TEXT MESSAGE	WHERE ON WEBSITE	KEY SEARCH TERMS	WHEN STUDENTS SEND NECESSARY INFORMATION	WHEN TO SEND TEXT MESSAGE USING THIS INFORMATION
Tuition Website	The [college name] tuition bill may be coming soon! Here's the info about tuition payments: [college tuition website] Need help understanding the bill? Txt 'HELP'	Cost, Tuition, and Financial Aid; Bursar; Financial Aid; Treasurer; Student Financial Services; Tuition & Aid; Student Account Information	Tuition; Financial Aid; Financial Assistance	Mid-April to mid-May	July 6th
Placement Test Website	Hi [student first name]! Remember to register for the [college name] placement tests or get an exemption: [placement test website]. Text 'HELP' if u have questions.	Admissions; Admission; New Students; Newly Admitted Students; Admitted Students	Placement test; Placement testing; Assessment	Mid-April to mid-May	July 15th
Health Insurance Website	Hi [student first name]! [college name] will require you to have health insurance. Here's some info on health care options/ costs: [college health insurance website]. Txt 'HELP' to get help.	Health and Wellness; Student Health Services; Health Services; Student Services	Health insurance; Health	Mid-April to mid-May	July 22nd

- 6 Some open-enrollment community colleges may have an application deadline that is just a few days before classes start. If this is the case, look up the priority financial aid deadline, and set the college application deadline as two weeks before that date.
- 7 Some community college may have online orientations.

## Managing Student Communications

Table 5 provides some strategies we recommend for providing support to students via texting and managing communications via the texting platform.

**Table 5: Strategies for Managing Student Communications**

Strategy 1	<b>Set aside time to become familiar with the text messaging platform.</b> Budget extra time to respond to students the first few times you use the platform. As with other online systems, the more you use the platform, the easier it will be to use.
Strategy 2	<b>Take advantage of the platform's management tools.</b> Spend the time upfront to develop a process for using the platform's management tools to track which messages you have read and responded to, and which messages you still need to respond to. This will ensure that no student questions go unanswered.
Strategy 3	<b>Create a message response bank.</b> Save time crafting responses to similar questions by creating your own message response bank in MS Word or Excel with messages you have already sent to students. You can copy and adapt messages from your response bank for future student inquiries.
Strategy 4	<b>Set daily or weekly calendar reminders to check the platform for new student messages.</b> Finding the time to routinely respond to student messages can be a challenge. Consider setting a daily or weekly reminder on your calendar (e.g., Google or Outlook) to check the text messaging platform. This will help you remember to read and respond to student messages in a timely manner.
Strategy 5	<b>Inform your students about the best times to reach you.</b> Establishing clear working hours with your students can ease the expectation to respond to students at any time of the day or on weekends. Let your students know what times of the day you are available to respond to messages. For example:  <i>Hi [Student Name]. As a reminder, the best times to reach me are Monday-Friday (9am-4 pm). If you text me outside of these hours, I will respond as soon as possible when I return to the office.</i>
Strategy 6	<b>Coordinate with staff who can serve as backup advisor in your absence.</b> If you are unable to respond to students for three or more days, ensure that there is another staff person who can read and respond to student messages in your absence.

**APPENDIX 2**

# **Resource Guide**

**May 2017**



***Find the Fit Enhanced College Advising***

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## Interest Inventories

NAME	WEBSITE	DETAILS	OVERALL ASSESSMENT
<b>Interest Profiler</b>	<a href="http://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip">http://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip</a>	The O*NET Interest Profiler is a self-assessment tool for youth and adults to explore various occupations. Students rate work-related activities using a Like/Dislike/Not Sure scale to discover their career interests (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional) and how these interests map to careers. The O*Net Interest Profiler includes a paper and web-based survey for students to complete.	This tool provides students a list of interest areas and possible jobs by levels of preparation needed in terms of education, training, and experience. The tool does not provide a list of relevant majors to pursue.
<b>Career Clusters Interest Survey</b>	<a href="http://www.iseek.org/careers/clusterSurvey">http://www.iseek.org/careers/clusterSurvey</a>	The career clusters survey asks students to rate the activities they enjoy, their personal qualities, and school subjects they like to determine which careers are a match based on selected interests.	The career cluster survey provides a ranked list of matching careers, but does not provide a description of the student's interests or relevant majors to pursue.
<b>The ACT Interest Inventory</b>	<a href="http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/act-profile.html">http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/act-profile.html</a>	Students can complete an ACT Interest Inventory online. However, the results are only available if the student also takes the ACT Exam and chooses to receive the Inventory results alongside the Exam results. The results provide scores which correspond to a "World-of-Work" Map to explore careers. The Map categorizes career options by types of activities involved in them (i.e., things, ideas, people, and data). Students can then explore occupations and academic courses in line with their personal preferences.	ACT provides scores of students' interest areas and relevant career fields and jobs described by the level of involvement with data, things, people, and ideas. ACT does not provide a list of relevant majors to pursue.
<b>Naviance</b>	<a href="http://www.naviance.com/">http://www.naviance.com/</a>	The Career Interest Profiler is an assessment to help students match their interests to a potential career.	This tool requires a school-specific registration code.

## Career and College Major Planning Tools

NAME	WEBSITE	DETAILS	OVERALL ASSESSMENT
<b>Big Future - College Board</b>	<a href="https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/explore-careers">https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/explore-careers</a> or <a href="http://bit.ly/1dr3G1p">http://bit.ly/1dr3G1p</a>	Big Future enables students to explore majors and careers that match their interests. For example, students first select their interests (working with children, nature, or the outdoors) to learn about possible majors and careers. They can use the tool to explore “new career ideas.” They can also explore how other peers made their choices about careers.	The tool allows students to understand how two distinct interests such as “art and psychology” can be linked to an exciting career. The “show me others” site allows students to watch videos and review tips.
<b>Mapping Your Future</b>	<a href="http://mappingyourfuture.org/PlanYourCareer/">http://mappingyourfuture.org/PlanYourCareer/</a>	Mapping Your Future is a resource to help students assess their skills and interests, develop a career plan, and research careers. For example, students can research careers by matching their interests (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional) to careers. Each listed job also has a description of tasks, interests, education, training and experience, knowledge, and skills.	Students can link interests to careers by interest area (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, or Conventional).
<b>Education Planner</b>	<a href="http://www.educationplanner.org/students/career-planning/find-careers/index.shtml">http://www.educationplanner.org/students/career-planning/find-careers/index.shtml</a>	Through interactive self-assessments such as the “Career Clusters activity,” students discover what they’re good at, where they can improve, and what careers are a good match.	Education Planner provides interactive self-assessments and quizzes to help students determine their interests and skills in an exciting way.
<b>How To Become</b>	<a href="http://www.learnhowtobecome.org/">http://www.learnhowtobecome.org/</a>	This interactive guide helps students to learn about career paths associated with various careers and to understand what it takes to land their perfect career, from picking the right school to climbing the company ladder.	This tool provides students with the steps (e.g., how to become a teacher), schools with the selected career of interest, salary information, projected job growth and resources to discover their career of choice.

## Career and College Major Planning Tools

NAME	WEBSITE	DETAILS	OVERALL ASSESSMENT
<b>RoadTrip Nation</b>	<a href="http://roadtripnation.com/wyr">http://roadtripnation.com/wyr</a>	This tool enables students to “define their own road in life” by learning through the pathways of others. Students define their road by answering a series of three questions. Based on the choices selected, the tool provides students with biographies of various leaders who share similar interests. RoadTrip Nation also provides detailed information on how to prepare for the job and what a day in the life looks like.	This tool provides a list of related work positions, leaders in the field, and relevant majors to pursue in college.

## College Search Tools

TOOL	WEBSITE	DETAILS				OVERALL ASSESSMENT
		SELECTED FIT FACTORS	IDENTIFYING "BEST FIT" COLLEGES	COMPARING FIT ACROSS COLLEGES	BUILDING & SAVING COLLEGE LISTS	
<b>Big Future</b>	<a href="https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search">https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search</a> or <a href="http://bit.ly/1ikkb69">http://bit.ly/1ikkb69</a>	<b>Academic Match</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test scores and levels of selectivity</li> <li>• Majors</li> <li>• Academic credit</li> </ul> <b>Personal Preferences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campus location</li> <li>• Campus life</li> <li>• Type of school (Public/Private)</li> </ul> <b>Institutional Offerings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity</li> </ul> <b>Cost &amp; Aid</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual costs</li> <li>• Financial Aid</li> </ul>	Yes	Yes	Yes	<p>Students can assess best-fit colleges on all four factors of fit.</p> <p>Students can also assess fit using the “Am I On Track” and “How Do I Stack Up” tools.</p>
<b>College Confidential</b>	<a href="http://www.collegeconfidential.com/college_search/">http://www.collegeconfidential.com/college_search/</a> or <a href="http://bit.ly/1vSn7Lj">http://bit.ly/1vSn7Lj</a>	<b>Academic Match</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test scores and selectivity</li> <li>• Graduation rates</li> <li>• Majors</li> </ul> <b>Personal Preferences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campus size</li> <li>• Campus location</li> <li>• Campus life</li> <li>• College type</li> </ul> <b>Institutional Offerings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campus Support Services (Counseling and Career services)</li> <li>• Diversity</li> </ul> <b>Cost &amp; Aid</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students select how much they can pay in tuition and fees.</li> </ul>	Yes	Yes	Yes	<p>Students can assess best-fit colleges on all four factors of fit.</p> <p>Students can rank the importance of each factor on a 3-point scale ranging from “Kinda to Must Have.” Students can also view the “% fit” for each college based on their select rankings and can click “Why?” which explains the reasoning for the % fit.</p>

## College Search Tools

TOOL	WEBSITE	DETAILS				OVERALL ASSESSMENT
		SELECTED FIT FACTORS	IDENTIFYING "BEST FIT" COLLEGES	COMPARING FIT ACROSS COLLEGES	BUILDING & SAVING COLLEGE LISTS	
<b>I'm First</b>	<a href="http://www.imfirst.org/">http://www.imfirst.org/</a>	<p><b>Academic Match</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test scores and level of selectivity</li> <li>• Graduation rates</li> <li>• Majors</li> </ul> <p><b>Personal Preferences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campus size</li> <li>• Campus location</li> <li>• College type</li> </ul> <p><b>Institutional Offerings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Support Services (Programs supporting first generation students)</li> </ul>	Yes	No	Yes	<p>Students can assess best fit colleges on three out of four factors of fit.</p> <p>Students can also collect information about college graduation rates and whether the college offers to fly in students for a college visit or to attend a specialized orientation. This tool does not include a comprehensive list of financial indicators of fit.</p>
<b>College Greenlight</b>	<a href="https://www.collegegreenlight.com/">https://www.collegegreenlight.com/</a>	<p><b>Academic Match</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test scores and level of selectivity</li> <li>• Majors</li> </ul> <p><b>Personal Preferences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campus size</li> <li>• Campus location</li> <li>• Campus life</li> <li>• College type</li> </ul> <p><b>Cost &amp; Aid</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tuition and fees</li> <li>• Estimated financial aid</li> <li>• Estimated Net Price</li> </ul>	Yes	Yes	Yes	<p>Students can assess best fit colleges on three out of four factors of fit.</p> <p>Schools are marked with a percentage fit on a 3-point scale, "Good, OK, or Not a good match." The tool also assesses of the students' chances for admittance based on test scores. Students can also rank order colleges within their college list.</p> <p>The tool requires advisors to join as well.</p>

## College Search Tools

TOOL	WEBSITE	DETAILS				OVERALL ASSESSMENT
		SELECTED FIT FACTORS	IDENTIFYING "BEST FIT" COLLEGES	COMPARING FIT ACROSS COLLEGES	BUILDING & SAVING COLLEGE LISTS	
<b>College Navigator</b>	<a href="http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/">http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/</a> or <a href="http://bit.ly/1mZJMBk">http://bit.ly/1mZJMBk</a>	<b>Academic Match</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test scores and level of selectivity</li> <li>• Majors</li> </ul> <b>Personal Preferences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campus location</li> <li>• Campus life</li> <li>• College type</li> </ul> <b>Institutional Offerings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campus Support Services (Weekend/evening courses and distance learning)</li> </ul> <b>Cost &amp; Aid</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students select how much they can pay in tuition and required fees</li> </ul>	Yes	Yes	Yes	<p>Students can assess best fit colleges on all four factors of fit.</p> <p>Students cannot save colleges to an online list.</p>
<b>College Data</b>	<a href="http://www.collegedata.com/cs/search/college/college_search_tmpl.jhtml">http://www.collegedata.com/cs/search/college/college_search_tmpl.jhtml</a>	<b>Academic Match</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test scores and selectivity</li> <li>• Majors</li> </ul> <b>Personal Preferences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campus size</li> <li>• Campus location</li> <li>• Campus life</li> <li>• College type</li> </ul> <b>Institutional Offerings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity</li> </ul> <b>Cost &amp; Aid</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial aid</li> </ul>	Yes	Yes	Yes	<p>Students can assess best fit colleges on all four factors of fit.</p> <p>Best fit colleges are scored on a 3-point scale as "Good bet, Maybe, or Reach." The "Academic Tracker" feature allows students to visualize their chances of being admitted in a scatter gram plot of accepted students' self-reported scores. Students can rank the order of colleges and add notes.</p> <p>Students cannot print or export their college list.</p>

## College Search Tools

TOOL	WEBSITE	DETAILS				OVERALL ASSESSMENT
		SELECTED FIT FACTORS	IDENTIFYING "BEST FIT" COLLEGES	COMPARING FIT ACROSS COLLEGES	BUILDING & SAVING COLLEGE LISTS	
<b>College Scorecard</b>	<a href="http://collegecost.ed.gov/scorecard/index.aspx">http://collegecost.ed.gov/scorecard/index.aspx</a>	<b>Academic Match</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduation rates</li> <li>• Majors</li> </ul> <b>Personal Preferences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campus size</li> <li>• Campus location</li> <li>• Campus life</li> <li>• College type</li> </ul> <b>Cost &amp; Aid</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual Costs</li> <li>• Financial aid</li> </ul>	No	No	No	<p>Student can assess best-fit colleges on three out of four factors of fit.</p> <p>This tool provides information on five key areas of college affordability and value: costs, graduation rate, loan default rate, median borrowing, and employment.</p>
<b>Cappex</b>	<a href="http://www.cappex.com/">http://www.cappex.com/</a>	<b>Academic Match</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test scores and level of selectivity</li> <li>• Majors</li> </ul> <b>Personal Preferences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campus size</li> <li>• Campus location</li> <li>• Campus life</li> <li>• College type</li> </ul> <b>Cost &amp; Aid</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tuition</li> </ul>	Yes	Yes	Yes	<p>Students can assess best fit colleges on three out of four factors of fit.</p>

## College Search Tools

TOOL	WEBSITE	DETAILS			OVERALL ASSESSMENT	
		SELECTED FIT FACTORS	IDENTIFYING "BEST FIT" COLLEGES	COMPARING FIT ACROSS COLLEGES		BUILDING & SAVING COLLEGE LISTS
<b>College Reality Check</b>	<a href="http://collegerealitycheck.com/en/">http://collegerealitycheck.com/en/</a> or <a href="http://bit.ly/2sUwz6i">http://bit.ly/2sUwz6i</a>	<b>Academic Match</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduation rates</li> <li>• Level of selectivity</li> </ul> <b>Personal Preferences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campus size</li> <li>• College type</li> </ul> <b>Cost &amp; Aid</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average net price</li> <li>• Debt at graduation</li> </ul>	No	Yes	No	<p>Students can assess best fit colleges on three out of four factors of fit.</p> <p>This tool compares selected fit factors for up to five colleges. Students also cannot save their colleges to an online list.</p>

## Virtual Campus Tour Tools

NAME	WEBSITE	DETAILS	OVERALL ASSESSMENT
<b>eCampustours</b>	<a href="https://www.ecampustours.com/">https://www.ecampustours.com/</a>	The database covers 1300 colleges and universities and provides 360 degree tours.	This tool provides 360-degree tours of over 1300 U.S. colleges and universities.
<b>YouVisit</b>	<a href="http://www.youvisit.com/education">http://www.youvisit.com/education</a>	YouVisit provides walking tours (sometimes with a student guide voiceover), panoramas, photos, videos, and direct links to college websites to schedule a visit. The database covers 150+ colleges and provides some tours in additional languages.	YouVisit provides 360-degree tours of a limited number of colleges. This tool also includes student guide voiceovers, videos, and direct links to college websites.
<b>CampusTours</b>	<a href="http://www.campustours.com/">http://www.campustours.com/</a>	This tool offers college maps.	This tool does not provide tours and only offers maps.
<b>YouTube EDU</b>	<a href="http://bit.ly/1h8uu95">http://bit.ly/1h8uu95</a>	YouTubeEDU provides user-generated videos offering prospective students a view of universities through sample lectures, student interviews, and other resources.	This tool does not exclusively provide tours but compiles many videos offering views of college life.

## College Application Planning Tools

NAME	WEBSITE	DETAILS				OVERALL ASSESSMENT
		TEXT MESSAGING PLATFORM	BUILT-IN ONLINE CALENDAR PROGRAMS WITH REMINDERS	PERSONALIZATION	COLLABORATION WITH ADVISOR	
<b>Big Future</b>	<a href="https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/make-a-plan">https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/make-a-plan</a>	No	Yes	Yes	No	The Big Future creates individualized plans customized by the student's high school grade level and comfort with the college application process.
<b>InsideTrack</b>	<a href="http://www.insidetrack.com/">http://www.insidetrack.com/</a>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	<p>InsideTrack is a mobile app that includes lists of tasks and their deadlines.</p> <p>Students can set up automatic reminders via text, mobile messages or email (tasks on the mission to-do list turn red when they are urgent or past due).</p> <p>The tool also provides students the option to interact with their advisors to stay on track.</p>

## College Application Planning Tools

NAME	WEBSITE	DETAILS				OVERALL ASSESSMENT
		TEXT MESSAGING PLATFORM	BUILT-IN ONLINE CALENDAR PROGRAMS WITH REMINDERS	PERSONALIZATION	COLLABORATION WITH ADVISOR	
<b>College Mapper</b>	<a href="https://www.collegemapper.com/">https://www.collegemapper.com/</a>	No	No	Yes	Yes	<p>College Mapper includes an extensive list of tasks that are personalized based on the student's profile (i.e., grade level, interest in art, athletics, attending a 2-year college, etc.).</p> <p>The tool automatically updates itself as tasks are completed. Counselors can view college lists, essays, etc. to track student progress. The tool also includes a forum through which students can ask counselors for guidance.</p>
<b>CollegeSnapps (mobile)</b>	<a href="http://www.collegesnapps.com/">http://www.collegesnapps.com/</a>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	<p>CollegeSnapps provides students with a high level of communication and personalization with their advisor through a chat messaging system.</p> <p>Students can also receive reminders for important tasks.</p> <p>Advisors also receive immediate warnings for at-risk students and can send individual or group text messages.</p>

## Transfer Planning Tools

NAME	WEBSITE	DETAILS			OVERALL ASSESSMENT
		INFORMATION ABOUT ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS	COURSE PLANNING FOR EFFECTIVE TRANSFER	RELATIVE NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	
<b>CollegeTransfer.Net</b>	<a href="http://www.collegetransfer.net/">http://www.collegetransfer.net/</a>	Yes	Yes	Extensive	<p>This comprehensive website provides students access to information on articulation agreements, and course equivalencies by preferred college setting, location, and type.</p> <p>While extensive, this tool does not have all community colleges and 4-year colleges.</p>
<b>Grad Guru (mobile)</b>	<a href="http://www.gradguru.org/">http://www.gradguru.org/</a>	No	No	Not able to fully assess	<p>Students can specify the community college they attend and receive a customized list of deadlines and tips to successfully graduate and transfer from community college.</p> <p>Students also receive information about articulation agreements based on their current community college.</p> <p>The service is currently available for 60 community colleges but will expand in future months.</p>

## Transfer Planning Tools

NAME	WEBSITE	DETAILS			OVERALL ASSESSMENT
		INFORMATION ABOUT ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS	COURSE PLANNING FOR EFFECTIVE TRANSFER	RELATIVE NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	
<b>Transferology</b>	<a href="http://www.transferology.com">http://www.transferology.com</a>	Yes	Yes	Extensive	<p>Students complete a 2-year transfer plan based on their community college and college of transfer.</p> <p>Students can organize courses by semester as well as keep track of grades, transfer and financial application deadlines, and other deadlines (e.g., scholarships).</p> <p>While extensive, this tool does not have all community colleges and 4-year colleges.</p>

## Financial Aid Planning Tools

TOOL	WEBSITE	DETAILS			OVERALL ASSESSMENT
		FEATURES	INCOME-BASED REPAYMENT (IBR) CALCULATOR	NET PRICE CALCULATOR	
<b>American Student Assistance (ASA)</b>	<a href="http://www.asa.org/about-us/default.aspx">http://www.asa.org/about-us/default.aspx</a>	<p>Includes information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student loan basics</li> <li>• Successful loan repayment</li> <li>• Loan repayment challenges</li> <li>• Managing default</li> <li>• Loan repayment schedules and options, including repayment calculators for different options</li> <li>• Financial wellness, including credit management and budget worksheets</li> <li>• Tools, including a debt/salary wizard and student loan portfolio</li> <li>• PDFs of forms needed to apply for loan deferment, discharge and forgiveness, and IBR in both English and Spanish.</li> </ul>	Yes	No	<p>This tool provides a variety of repayment and budget calculators, worksheets, and general financial education information.</p> <p>The site includes information on many parts of the loan process, from acquiring a loan and understanding a financial aid package to managing default.</p> <p>Free access to loan repayment counselors is also available.</p>

# Financial Aid Planning Tools

TOOL	WEBSITE	DETAILS			OVERALL ASSESSMENT
		FEATURES	INCOME-BASED REPAYMENT (IBR) CALCULATOR	NET PRICE CALCULATOR	
<b>FinAid</b>	<a href="http://www.finaid.org/">http://www.finaid.org/</a>	Includes information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loans</li> <li>• Savings</li> <li>• Scholarships</li> <li>• Military aid</li> <li>• Financial aid applications</li> <li>• Calculators, including future college costs predictors, expected family contributions, savings, and loan repayment</li> <li>• Financial aid and student loan worksheets and checklists</li> </ul>	Yes	Yes	This is a comprehensive website on the basics of financial aid and strategies to pay for college. The website provides a clear layout, information, and tools for both students and parents financing college education.

## Financial Aid Planning Tools

TOOL	WEBSITE	DETAILS			OVERALL ASSESSMENT
		FEATURES	INCOME-BASED REPAYMENT (IBR) CALCULATOR	NET PRICE CALCULATOR	
<b>Nerd Scholar</b>	<a href="http://www.nerdwallet.com/nerdscholar/">http://www.nerdwallet.com/nerdscholar/</a>	<p>Includes information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FAFSA, including a detailed tutorial on filling out your FAFSA</li> <li>• Student loans, including a student loan calculator</li> <li>• Personal finance, including budgeting and saving money</li> <li>• College, major, and career outcomes, including comparison tools</li> <li>• Scholarships, including a scholarship search engine</li> </ul>	Yes	No	<p>NerdScholar's comparison tool allows students to compare colleges based on employment rate, employment by industry, and average reported salary.</p> <p>Students can use the FAFSA tutorial alongside the FAFSA to explain each question.</p> <p>It also has a scholarship search engine, student loan information and calculators, personal finance tools, and blog posts to help students develop a comprehensive and informed financial plan for college.</p>
<b>College Abacus</b>	<a href="http://collegeabacus.org/">http://collegeabacus.org/</a>	<p>Net price calculator allows students to compare three colleges' net price estimates, including a breakdown of the expected type of aid (grants, scholarships, loans). Beyond net price, it compares colleges on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percent of students that default on their loans</li> <li>• Percent of students that graduate in four years</li> <li>• Average SAT/ACT scores</li> <li>• Student demographics</li> </ul>	No	Yes	<p>This tool allows students to enter financial, academic, and other relevant information to compare net-costs for three colleges of their choosing.</p> <p>Some colleges are not available in the comparison tool, but the website provides a link to the colleges' independent net price calculators when this occurs.</p>

## TRIO Student Support Services List

NAME	WEBSITE	DETAILS	OVERALL ASSESSMENT
<b>TRIO Student Support Services List</b>	<a href="https://www2.ed.gov/programs/triostudsupp/awards.html">https://www2.ed.gov/programs/triostudsupp/awards.html</a>	<p>This website provides a list—updated each year—of all the TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) projects located at colleges across the country. SSS projects are located at institutions of higher education and provide academic tutoring, advice on selecting postsecondary courses, assistance with information on student financial aid, and other services to increase college retention and graduation rates. Although not all colleges have SSS projects, many do. Students can search the file on this site by college name or state to determine which of the colleges they are considering have SSS projects.</p>	<p>Learning about and contacting TRIO Student Support Services projects at colleges students are considering can help students become aware of college-based resources that can help them with academic, financial, or other issues that arise when they are in college.</p>