

The College Planner

5 steps toward a sane, productive, even enjoyable college search process, plus practical tools, like a calendar with deadlines and a chart for comparing colleges, plus wisdom and guidance from sane, productive (and happy) people, brought to you by Wellesley College



Hello, smart, interesting person.

Here is a book that is designed to be useful to high school students who plan to apply to college. It was produced by Wellesley College, not because we expect you and everyone else to go to Wellesley College, but because we have a long history of caring about smart, interesting people (who happen to be women), and we know from our own experience that the college search process can feel overwhelming. We're here to make it feel that it's yours—that you have some control over it, that you can make it work for you.

We like to do that: make things work, and let great people move their lives (and the world in general) forward.

So: Hello. Glad you're here.
Let's get going.



Contents

Step 01: Start at the start **3**

Step 02: Get organized **7**

Step 03: Look closer **8**

Step 04: When you're ready to think about cost, be bold **10**

Step 05: Be yourself **14**

Resources for the search and application process **18**

Making the most of a college visit **20**

The people who brought you this book **22**

Facts (about us) **23**

The Calendar **24**

College Comparison Chart attached



COLLEGE IS WHERE YOU GLOW

Literally and figuratively. In places like
our Human-Computer Interaction Lab.

Step 01: Start at the start

The first thing to do when you're thinking about the future is to think about who you are right now. What's important to you? What are your interests? What are your needs?

When you're thinking about which colleges might be a good fit for you, you can ask more specific questions:

- What courses have I loved? Why did I love them?
- What motivates me as a student? Intellectual engagement? Creative expression? Solving concrete problems? The approval of my teachers and family members? Discovering strange and unexpected things? Challenging convention?
- What experience—a class, a service project, a creative project—has been so important to me that I want to be able to expand on it?
- What motivates me as a human being? What makes me want to get out of bed in the morning? What one activity brings me the most pleasure in life? Who's someone I admire? Do I want a life like theirs? How could that happen?

And you can start talking to people who know you well (friends, family, teachers, guidance counselors). You can go to college fairs. You can go to presentations by college representatives visiting your high school. You can look through college guidebooks, in print and online.

These are all potentially helpful resources, but none of them are definitive. In the end, the person who knows the most about you is you.

“A college is—potentially—
a community for life.

So think about the people
you want to spend your time
with, now and] in the future.
You’ll carry them with you,
wherever you go.

Think about learning to take
risks and make mistakes—
and look for a college that
creates safe spaces and
opportunities for its students
to do just that.

Wellesley changed my life.
It gave me a family of women—
my friends, my classmates—
who challenge and inspire me
every day.

It gave me the time and
space to reflect on who I am
and who I want to become.
Perhaps more than anything,
it encouraged me to work
hard, to dream big, and to
believe in bigger things. It
gave me the tools to continue
learning for the rest of my
life.”

Paulina Ponce de León '05

Consultant, Boston Consulting Group;
joint master's degree in business and
public policy, Harvard Business School
and Kennedy School for Government
at Harvard





"I WAS THE MOST OUTSPOKEN GIRL AT MY HIGH SCHOOL.

College for me was about finding kindred spirits—people who are interested in everything, and who want to stay up all night talking about it." Katie Joh '14, University of Michigan Law School

**“COLLEGE IS ABOUT OPENING
DOORS YOU DIDN'T EVEN KNOW
EXISTED IN HIGH SCHOOL.**

It's about being pushed to think about the world in new ways. And it's about challenging yourself to make a difference in the world while doing something you love.”

Heather Haines '08

Science & technology and engineering
department head, Newton North High School
Newton, Massachusetts



Step 02: Get organized

01

Bookmark your favorite electronic resources. (See page 18 for a short list of helpful sites.)

02

Note the standardized tests that are required by the colleges you're interested in. Consider the optimal time to take those tests. Free advice: Take the SAT and ACT with writing for the first time in your junior year. If your scores are strong, you've completed a task. If not, you've got time to take the tests again and aim for an improved score.

03

Get your technology in order. Adjust your spam filter so it will accept emails from your selected colleges. Maintain a separate email account (with an appropriate name) for correspondence with colleges.

04

Do the things that organized people do. Create a spreadsheet that includes two dates—the deadline and the completion date—for each activity in the search process: testing, financial aid, interview, application, recommendations. Back up your files and print a copy for your records. Open mail from colleges right away and note schedules for visit programs, information sessions, and so on.

05

Pay attention to application and financial aid deadlines. On page 24 of this book, you'll find a calendar with those very deadlines (and helpful suggestions) marked on it.

06

Try to visit at least some of the colleges you're considering. We talk in detail about visiting on page 20; and there's a handy College Comparison Chart attached to the end of the book.

Special note: It takes a little more effort, and a little more planning, to apply to highly selective colleges. (They might require specific tests or essays, for example.) We think it's worth the effort. The result can be a more affordable education, and an education that meets—or exceeds, or transforms—your goals, your aspirations, your dreams. True, we're biased, but our bias comes from experience.

Step 03: Look closer

There are more than 3,000 colleges in the United States. You probably shouldn't apply to all of them.

On the other hand, you shouldn't assume that only one of them (or a small subset of them, like, say, "only Ivy League colleges," or "only colleges ranked highly by a fairly arbitrary ranking system") will be perfect for you. If you can generate a list of 10–20 schools you're interested in, that should be a good start; you can narrow it down with the help of your guidance counselor.

How do you generate that list? You'll find a long list of factors to consider in the College Comparison Chart at the end of this book.

You can also ponder these somewhat counterintuitive ideas:

Geography is not destiny. Every state, every region in the country has outstanding colleges. Be expansive in your thinking. Broaden your (literal and figurative) horizons.

Start (but don't end!) a conversation about cost. In other words, start figuring out what your family can afford, but don't rule out

a college just because of its listed price. Nearly every college you'll consider will offer some form of financial aid. Most highly selective liberal arts colleges have a serious commitment to supporting families with demonstrated financial need. We're speaking from experience here. Many of our students pay less to attend Wellesley than they would pay to attend their state university. Our admission policy is need-blind for U.S. citizens and permanent residents. We admit students regardless of their financial situation. So: Start talking, learn more (hint: see Resources on page 18), and keep your options open.

The liberal arts are serious business. A liberal arts curriculum (or a liberal arts college) encourages you to explore a range of fields, make connections across disciplines, think critically, and practice the skills that any income-earning, change-making person needs to have in this young century of ours. Again, speaking from experience here, Wellesley graduates enter top-ranked graduate and

professional schools (medical, law, business, art); are highly sought after by companies and organizations around the world; and go on to take leadership positions in fields where women are traditionally underrepresented (government, science, technology, finance, etc., alas). They're prepared for what's next.

Your major is not your life. Many students change majors several times. The major you finally choose may be very different from the major you were certain you wanted in your first semester. And, thanks to the broad-minded, highly skilled liberal arts education you've received, the major you graduate with will be a launching pad for a wide range of jobs.

Women's colleges are excellent. We're just the tiniest bit biased here. And yet, speaking once again from experience, it just so happens that one of the most powerful global networks is made up of our alumnae. Who happen to be women. Not really a coincidence, actually.



Step 04: When you're ready to think about cost, be bold

Yes. Be bold. Apply to colleges based not on your family income but on your achievements and your aspirations.

Most selective private liberal arts colleges (which may have a higher sticker price) offer financial aid to support families with demonstrated financial need. The result is that many families pay less (often a great deal less) than the listed price of the college, less even than they would pay at a public or state institution.

Here's an overview of the financial aid process—and the results:

As you're starting the college application process, look at each college's website to see what forms are required to apply for financial aid. Use this planner to help you keep track of required forms and important deadlines. A late application can affect your eligibility for financial aid!

During your senior year, when you begin your applications, most colleges will require that you complete one or both of the following forms:

(1) the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (or FAFSA),

(2) the College Scholarship Services Financial Profile (or CSS PROFILE).

Your FAFSA application allows the government to estimate how much your family can afford to put toward the cost of college, while the CSS PROFILE helps colleges determine your eligibility for scholarships and grants specific to that institution.

Once the college has all of your application materials, they will put together a financial aid award (or package) for you. The award might include one or more of these items:

Need-based grants or scholarships.

This is money that's meant to directly meet your family's demonstrated financial need. It's given to you; it doesn't need to be repaid.

Merit grants or scholarships. This is money awarded to you based on your achievements, not necessarily on your financial need. However, not every college offers merit aid.

Loans. This is money loaned to you or your parents to help cover the cost of your education. It needs to be repaid (usually after you graduate), and rates and repayment schedules vary widely.



Many institutions offer loans; some (like Wellesley!) have eliminated or reduced packaged loans and increased grant aid for students with the greatest financial need.

Work-Study. The Federal Work-Study Program pays students to work 8–10 hours a week at a campus-based job. You work, you get involved on campus, you keep your paycheck.

In the end, thanks to financial aid, many students pay far less than the sticker price—the listed price of tuition, room and board, and fees. No matter what college you attend, you’re making an investment—of time, of money, of energy. It’s possible—very possible—to find a college that’s willing to make an investment in you.

The Net Price Calculator

To help families plan for college, the government requires colleges to offer a Net Price Calculator on their websites. Most colleges host it on their admission or financial aid pages. This tool gives you a rough estimate of the amount your family would pay if you attended a college.



A very simple
cost-estimating tool

MyinTuition

wellesley.edu/costestimator

If you’re interested in applying to Wellesley, and you are planning to apply for aid, **MyinTuition**, Wellesley’s eye-opening, quick college cost estimator, is a great place to start. Developed by one of our economics professors, it’s easy to use, asking only six simple questions. It’s designed to provide a specific estimate of the amount your family would pay if you attended Wellesley. Try it—you might be

amazed by
the results!

More than a dozen additional colleges and universities will be using this super helpful and easy tool starting in spring 2017.



Part of being bold is asking questions about financial aid.

Ask these 10 questions of every college you're considering:

01. Is the college need-blind or will applying for financial aid affect my chances of being admitted?
02. What percentage of students receive financial aid?
03. What's the amount of the average annual financial aid package?
04. What's the average loan debt of the college's graduates?
05. Does the college meet each student's full demonstrated need, or is there a gap between demonstrated need and the aid award?
06. What is *not* included in the cost of attendance?
07. Can I expect to receive a similar financial aid package for all four years, assuming my family's financial circumstances remain the same?
08. What if my family's financial circumstances change? Can I appeal for more financial aid?
09. What happens to my financial aid if I want to study abroad?
10. What is the policy on outside scholarships? Will the college reduce my financial aid?





Wellesley's answers to these financial aid questions

01. Wellesley is need-blind for U.S. citizens and permanent residents. We admit students based on their skills, abilities, and promise—not their financial situation.
02. Currently, more than 58% of Wellesley students receive aid.
03. The average annual Wellesley aid award—money that does not have to be repaid—is more than \$41,000.
04. The average student loan debt for *all four years* for Wellesley students graduating in 2015 was \$12,500. By contrast, the Institute for College Access & Success reported a national average of \$31,100 for that class. Wellesley is widely recognized as one of the top 10 colleges in the country for students graduating with the least amount of debt. Students with the highest financial need will have \$0 in packaged loans upon graduation. The maximum amount of packaged student loan debt for all four years is \$15,200. Students typically have 10 years to pay off loans in manageable monthly payments.
05. Wellesley meets 100% of demonstrated need for all admitted students.
06. Wellesley includes tuition, room, board, fees, books, and expenses (travel and personal items) in its cost of attendance. There are no hidden costs.
07. Wellesley is committed to providing aid for all four years. Our aid awards are consistent with level of need; accordingly, students must reapply for aid each year.
08. Yes, Wellesley routinely responds to changes in financial circumstances throughout the year.
09. If you study abroad at a Wellesley-approved program (there are over 160!), your financial aid goes with you.
10. At Wellesley you receive the fullest possible benefit of outside scholarships. We use outside aid to reduce your student contribution, student loans, and work-study before making any reduction to your Wellesley grant aid.



Step 05: Be yourself

Be yourself when you apply to college.

Colleges want the real you, not some artificially designed you who is valedictorian of everything, including other valedictorians. Do colleges (especially highly selective colleges) expect you to challenge yourself academically, explore your talents, be active in your community, and be engaged in the construction of an interesting life? Yes. But all that really means is that your high school profile should reflect who you are right now; it should be driven by your interests, your passions, your instincts.

A few practical suggestions from the good people at Wellesley's Office of Admission:

Anna: "When preparing your application, consider the soccer ball analogy. Just as a soccer ball is made of 32 faces (20 hexagonal and 12 pentagonal), you too have many facets of your life—intellectual pursuits, family, recreational interests, artistic passions, volunteer commitments—that shape who you are. Try to have each component of your college application—two essays, teacher recommendations, etc.—address different facets of your life to better enable admission officers to know you and your story."

Lucy: "Help your teachers and guidance counselors craft their letters of recommendation. For each school you're considering, provide them with a few sentences about why you're applying, what you hope to study, and why your current classroom performance makes you stand out. Don't rely just on your 'brag sheet.' You will list your extra-curriculars and awards in another part of the application; these letters should focus on your success in the classroom."

Lauren: "We're trying to make a good match, so show us who you really are and not who you think we want you to be. Do things that make you happy, and then tell us why they put a big smile on your face!"

Anna: "When I read a student's application, I ask myself: Who is she? What makes her interesting? Is she curious or adventurous? Does she seek out challenge? Is she willing to take risks? Will she be an active participant in our community? What will she bring to our community? What's her story?"

In short: Be the person you want to be. That's the person a college will want. That's the person the world needs.



WHAT SHAPES WHO YOU ARE?

Show us who you really are and not who you think we want you to be. Above, members of Yanvalou Drum and Dance Ensemble share their passion with the community,



“If your parents are always asking questions and wanting to talk about colleges and how your application or essay is coming along and they’re driving you crazy, agree to talk with them at a specific time each week rather than at a moment’s notice. If you keep your parents informed, they’ll be less anxious.

“If you’re an athlete, contact coaches in your junior year, especially if you play a spring sport. Coaches need time to see an athlete play (or review a video or go to showcase). Keep in mind that if you write to the coach in season, there may be a delay in responding. Be politely persistent.”

Anna Young, associate director,
Wellesley Office of Admission



“Think of the college process as a process of self-discovery, so that you can best explain why and how you have made certain choices throughout high school, like what activities you enjoy doing outside of the classroom and what academic subjects interest you. We love to see the joy and conviction behind what makes you YOU, and are excited about what you would be adding to a college community.

“Show us what makes you tick and how you’d be a fun classmate, roommate, and lifelong friend.”

Grace S. Cheng, director, Wellesley
Office of Admission



“Have fun! Try to avoid getting bogged down by the impending stress of taking tests, writing essays, or the process of ‘getting in.’ This should be an adventure, as you are in search of what will become your new home. How exciting!

“Reflect on the environment that you want to be in—where you can see yourself learning, growing, being challenged, making friends and memories, and uncovering the adult that you will become.

“Run your own race, as it can be easy to get caught up in the expectations of everyone else. Think about what is a good fit for you—not anyone else, and keep an open mind, as you never know what will resonate with you; the place you may have never heard of could capture your attention.”

Danielle Wells, associate director,
Wellesley Office of Admission



“There are many things you won’t know when you apply to colleges: which colleges will admit you; which will provide you with financial aid or other resources, making them the best values to you; and at which college you’re most likely to meet your future best friends. So my advice is to fall in love—a lot.

“Make sure that every college on your list has at least one thing about it that you’re thrilled about, and that motivates you. When you’re fully informed, and when you’re ready to make your final choice, you’ll have options that will make you happy, no matter what you decide.”

Joy St. John, dean of admission and
financial aid, Wellesley College

Resources for the search and application process

Here are a few of our favorite (meaning: most useful) online resources to explore in your sophomore year.

The Common Application commonapp.org

The Common Application is a standard application form used by many colleges (including Wellesley). You can fill it out and submit it here. Note that some colleges may require you to submit additional application materials specific to the college.

The Coalition Application coalitionforcollegeaccess.org

Wellesley is among the group of diverse public and private colleges and universities that came together to improve the college admission application process. They developed a free platform of online tools to streamline the experience of applying to college. It does not replace the Common Application; it simply provides applicants with an additional option.

The College Board collegeboard.com

The College Board oversees both the SAT tests and an important financial aid resource, the CSS PROFILE. At this site you can register for the SAT; and if you're planning to apply to colleges that require the CSS

PROFILE, you can submit it here. This site also contains excellent overviews of the financial aid process.

The College Board: Big Future bigfuture.collegeboard.com

A comprehensive guide to planning for college—and beyond. Includes extensive guidance about preparing for and conducting a college search, paying for college, applying to colleges, and thinking about careers.

ACT actstudent.org

Many colleges require that you take standardized tests. The two major tests are the ACT and the SAT; you can register for one or both. This site is where you register for the ACT tests. It also has helpful information about financial aid and career planning.

Fastweb fastweb.com

This free resource provides extensive information on the college search, as well as the most comprehensive listing of outside scholarships. It's smart to go to this site early, before fall deadlines hit.



SEARCHING IS LIKE SPRINGTIME.

Every day is not sun kissed and
flower strewn. But this one was.

Making the most of a college visit

Eight ways to seize the day if (ideally when) you visit a college

01

Start planning before spring vacation of your junior year.

Get your parents on board. Try to visit two colleges during spring vacation, two or three by August, and another two or three by September.

This is especially helpful if you play a fall sport, participate in a major activity like a play, or have weekend commitments. You don't want to create a logistical nightmare in the fall. And because senior grades are particularly important, you don't want to shortchange yourself by being over-committed.

When you're contacting a college, speak for yourself. Don't ask (or allow) your parents to speak for you. The college search and the application process provide great opportunities for you to show off your maturity and self-advocacy.

02

Do your homework. Before you visit a college, research it online; visit its website; read the materials it has sent; talk to friends about it; read student blogs. Browse the course catalog to see if it offers courses or majors that excite you.

03

Tour a maximum of two schools in one day.

Allow at least three hours for a tour and information session; add more time if you want to do more on campus. It often takes longer than you expect to find a school, parking, and the admission office.

04

Ask your tour guide the questions that really matter to you.

A few examples:

- Is it cool to be smart here?
- Tell me about two great professors you've had. Do they know who you are?
- What class has blown your mind?
- What do students do for fun?
- What's your favorite campus-wide event?
- What's the most active club?
- What matters most to students: personal enlightenment, money, family, social change—or something else?
- What issues do students get riled up about?
- How did you make your best friends here?
- What do you wish you'd known about the college before you came here?
- Tell me about an alumna/alumnus you wish you could be.

05

Explore campus on your own.

- Look at bulletin boards or other places where students post signs (trees, lampposts, chalked sidewalks). Is there a lot going on? The way students share information can tell you a lot about the character of the student body and the spirit of the campus.
- Pick up the college newspaper. Look at it later. How's the writing? What topics do students write about?
- Eat where the students eat, on or off campus. Consider the atmosphere and the quality of the food.
- Attend a class. Arrange well in advance with the admission office.
- Attend a game or practice if you want to play a sport. Arrange in advance to talk with the coach.

06

Write down your impressions—preferably during or immediately after a visit. If you're touring several colleges, it's easy to mix up details. Photos can help too.

07

Get feedback. What did your family members think? They may have noticed details that you missed.

By the way, visiting a campus with friends can be a bit of a distraction; it tends to be harder to focus on issues of specific interest to you.

Also, opinions of friends and family matter. But in the end, your opinion matters most. What kind of conversations do you want to have over breakfast? Who do you want to watch movies with at night? Who do you want in your professional network in 15 years?

08

Think of the college as a community. Is it a community you can contribute to?

A community that welcomes new ideas, new people? Is it, in the end, a community you want to belong to?

Visiting Wellesley

We'd love to meet you. For information about campus tours, information sessions, class visits, lunch visits, or overnight visits, please visit our website (wellesley.edu/admission) Or call the Admission Office (781-283-2270).

The people who brought you this book

Hi again. We're Wellesley. We're a women's college outside of Boston and Cambridge. Our students are fantastically diverse and unabashedly smart. Our faculty are outstanding, in ways that are quantifiable (research, publications, teaching) and unquantifiable (moral support, intellectual challenge, coffee). We fund hundreds of internships around the world, sponsor hundreds of high-level research opportunities, and offer access to a wide range of programs abroad. Our legendary alumnae network is a global power supply. Some of our alumnae are well-known (the founder of Zipcar, two secretaries of state, the Democratic Party's nominee for president, a MacArthur Fellowship—"Genius Grant"—recipient); most (about 80%) have earned advanced degrees; all are dedicated to helping Wellesley, women, past, present, and future.

Facts (about us)

2,300 women
50 states represented
83 countries of birth
7 to 1 student to faculty ratio
98% of tenured faculty hold a Ph.D. or the highest degree in their field
100% of classes are taught by professors
1,000+ courses
54+ majors
50% of juniors study abroad
75% of students participate in an internship
10,000 objects in the Davis Museum
13 Division III athletic teams
160 student-run organizations
250,000 college students in Boston and Cambridge
100% of demonstrated financial need met
58% of students receive aid
10 active alumnae on the “W” network for every student on campus
500 acres
1 lake

Being in touch

We’d love to hear from you—or, even better, to see you. Visit us online (**wellesley.edu**) or in person. Plan to be amazed.

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This book was produced by Wellesley College and Generation, Brooklyn, NY; Project Director: Jane Kyricos Widiger; Photographer: Yoon S. Byun

The Calendar

Deadlines, tips, dates

A friendly, very important general note

Pay serious attention to financial aid deadlines. Determine the financial aid deadlines for colleges on your list. If you apply late or miss a deadline, it could prevent you from receiving available funding. Having an incomplete application can also be problematic. Be sure you meet all deadlines and have all of the required information available when specified. OK. Enjoy!

March/April Junior Year

- Register for standardized tests. You may take the SATs or the ACT. If you take the ACT, Wellesley requires the ACT with Writing Test. Check with other colleges about their requirements.
- Register for AP or IB exams if applicable.

May Junior Year.

- Meet with your guidance counselor.
- Begin to speak with teachers about recommendations. If you've been in their classes this year, you will be fresher in their minds now than in the fall.
- Plan an interesting summer: Get a job or internship, do community service work, take community college courses, attend a summer program, plan college visits.

June Junior Year

- Tour and interview at colleges in which you have an interest.
- Narrow down your list of colleges; look at their application and requirements.
- Talk to your parents about how to finance your education. Learn about federal financial aid and national and local scholarships. Check deadlines. See tips, pages 10-13.)
- Begin your Common Application essay.

July/August Rising Senior

- Visit more colleges. Keep notes on the College Comparison Chart in this book to help you recall details later.
- Register for the CSS PROFILE (collegeboard.com).

September Senior Year

- Register for Oct. or Nov. SAT tests (collegeboard.com) or the Oct. or Dec. ACT (actstudent.org).
- Peruse the FAFSA website (fafsa.ed.gov), the starting point for the financial aid process. See what supporting documentation you will need and note relevant deadlines.

October Senior Year

- Finalize your list of colleges. Note all application and financial aid deadlines.
- Many colleges (including Wellesley) require a college-specific (short-answer) essay. Begin to work on

these; they must be submitted at the same time as your application.

- Inform guidance counselors and recommenders of deadlines for each college.
- Many Early Action and Early Decision applications are due. Wellesley's (binding) Early Decision I deadline is Nov. 1.
- Take SAT or ACT tests or register for Nov. or Dec. tests. (Note: There is no Nov. ACT test.)
- Finalize your requests for teacher recommendations. Give teachers ample time, as they may have *many* to write. Share information with them that will help them write about you. (See tips, page 14-17.)
- If applying for aid, mail FAFSA as soon as possible after Oct. 1.

November Senior Year

- Continue working on or complete college applications.
- Most colleges have applicant portals that allow you to view which of your application and financial aid credentials have arrived and which are missing. Check them regularly!
- Wellesley's (non-binding) Early Evaluation deadline is Dec. 15.

December Senior Year

- Early Action and Early Decision notifications mailed.
- Complete financial aid forms for each college.
- Wellesley's (binding) Early Decision II deadline is Jan. 1.

January Senior Year

- If applying for aid, make sure you have submitted your FAFSA.
- Continue to check your applicant portals.
- Wellesley's Regular Decision application deadline is Jan. 15.

February Senior Year

- Begin preparing for any AP or IB exams you plan to take in the spring.
- Make sure your midyear grades are sent to the colleges to which you have applied.
- College decision letters and financial aid awards begin to arrive.

March Senior Year

- Visit campuses to which you have been admitted.
- Mail your deposit by May 1. Notify the colleges you didn't choose by May 1.
- Send thank-you notes to the teachers and guidance counselor who helped you through the application process.

April/May Senior Year

- Finish preparation and take AP exams. Good luck!
- Don't give up in these last several weeks. Finish your high school career on a good academic note. College acceptances are contingent upon successful and strong completion of your senior program.

College Comparison Chart

The chart is designed to help you consider and compare different colleges. It lists a range of factors to think about. You can discover some of this information online or through print materials; you'll get a much more textured, detailed sense of the college if you visit. You can copy the blank chart for every college you're considering. We have provided some answers for Wellesley on the other side.

College: _____

The big picture

1. Number of students?
2. Undergraduates only, or undergrad and graduate students?
3. Location and setting?
4. Diversity: *ethnic, religious, political, economic, geographic*?

Admission statistics

1. Average SAT and ACT scores:
2. Selectivity: *percent of applicants admitted*?

Academic program

1. Course offerings: *breadth and depth*?
2. Core curriculum and distribution requirements: *how extensive*?
3. Typical class size?
4. Majors in your areas of interest?

Faculty

1. Student to faculty ratio?
2. Who teaches: *professors or teaching assistants*?

After college

1. Percent going to graduate school within 10 years?
2. Admit rate to law schools? Schools in medical professions?
3. Extent of alumnae/alumni networking?
4. Career counseling services?

Costs and financial aid

1. Tuition, room and board, fees?
2. Average yearly financial aid award?
3. Does the college admit students without regard for their ability to pay (often known as a "need-blind" admission policy)?
4. Does the college fully meet demonstrated need?
5. Percent receiving need-based financial aid?

Academic environment

1. Lectures? Discussion? Interactive?
2. Access to faculty? As advisors?
3. Social/academic balance?

Academic opportunities

1. Study abroad? Exchange programs?
2. Cross-registration with other colleges?
3. Special programs?
4. Research opportunities? Internships?

Facilities and services

1. Undergrad access to scientific and lab equipment?
2. Art facilities: *galleries, studios, labs, cinema*?
3. Scientific and lab equipment?
4. Music/theatre: *practice rooms, stages*?
5. Academic support: *tutoring*?
6. Other: *observatory, greenhouse, museum, etc.*?

Social life

1. Weekend activities?
2. On- and off-campus social activities?
3. School spirit and traditions?

Nonacademic opportunities

1. Clubs and organizations?
2. Leadership opportunities?
3. Community service opportunities?
4. Internships in nearby communities?
5. Varsity athletics? Club or recreational sports? Fitness facilities?

Housing, food, transportation

1. Public transportation to nearby cities? To home?
2. Percent of commuters?
3. Guaranteed housing for all four years?
4. Housing availability on and off campus?
5. Type of residence halls: *new or old, noisy or quiet, suites, doubles, singles*?
6. How safe is the campus? The surrounding area?
7. Health and support services?
8. Meal plan options?
9. Quality of food? (Seriously.)

The gut check

1. Does this feel right? Can I picture myself here?

The big picture

- 1. Number of students? 2,300
- 2. Undergraduates only, or undergrad and graduate students? undergrad only
- 3. Location and setting? suburban; 12 miles west of Boston
- 4. Diversity: ethnic, religious, political, economic, geographic? 46% students of color; 12% international; among the most diverse colleges in the country

Admission statistics

- 1. Mean SAT and ACT scores: Class of 2020: SAT Critical Reading: 702; Writing: 700; Math: 691; ACT composite: 31
- 2. Selectivity: percent of applicants admitted? 28% for the Class of 2020

Academic program

- 1. Course offerings: breadth and depth? more than 1,000 courses, 54+ majors
- 2. Core curriculum and distribution requirements: how extensive? choose from 7 of 8 areas
- 3. Typical class size? 12 to 24
 - Africana Studies
 - American Studies
 - Anthropology
 - Architecture
 - Art History
 - Asian American Studies
 - Astronomy
 - Astrophysics
 - Biological Chemistry
 - Biological Sciences
 - Chemical Physics
 - Chemistry
 - Chinese
 - Cinema and Media Studies
 - Classical Studies
 - Cognitive and Linguistic Sciences
 - Comparative Literature
 - Comparative Race and Ethnicity
 - Computer Science
 - East Asian Languages and Cultures
 - East Asian Studies
 - Economics
 - English
 - Environmental Studies
 - French
 - French Cultural Studies
 - Geosciences
 - German
 - German Studies
 - History
 - International Relations
 - Italian Studies
 - Japanese
 - Jewish Studies
 - Latin American Studies
 - Mathematics
 - Media Arts and Sciences
 - Medieval/Renaissance Studies
 - Middle Eastern Studies
 - Music
 - Neuroscience
 - Peace and Justice Studies
 - Philosophy
 - Physics
 - Political Science
 - Psychology
 - Religion
 - Russian
 - Russian Area Studies

- 4. Majors in your areas of interest?
 - Sociology
 - South Asia Studies
 - Spanish
 - Studio Art
 - Theatre Studies
 - Women's and Gender Studies

Faculty

- 1. Student to faculty ratio? 7 to 1
- 2. Who teaches: professors or teaching assistants? all professors, no TAs or grad students

After college

- 1. Percent going to graduate school within 10 years? 80%
- 2. Admit rate to law schools? Schools in medical professions? 80%; 70%
- 3. Extent of alumnae/alumni networking? huge, powerful, committed to helping
- 4. Career counseling services? extensive, lifelong, and free (!)

Costs and financial aid

- 1. Tuition, room and board, fees? \$66,984 for 2017-18
- 2. Average yearly financial aid award? \$41,000
- 3. Does the college admit students without regard for their ability to pay (often known as a "need-blind" admission policy)? yes; need-blind for U.S. citizens and permanent residents
- 4. Does the college fully meet demonstrated need? yes
- 5. Percent receiving need-based financial aid? 58%

Academic environment

- 1. Lectures? Discussion? Interactive?
- 2. Access to faculty? As advisors?
- 3. Social/academic balance?

Academic opportunities

- 1. Study abroad? Exchange programs?
- 2. Cross-registration with other colleges?
- 3. Special programs?
- 4. Research opportunities? Internships?

Facilities and services

- 1. Undergrad access to scientific and lab equipment?
- 2. Art facilities: galleries, studios, labs?
- 3. Scientific and lab equipment?
- 4. Music/theatre: practice rooms, stages?
- 5. Academic support: tutoring?
- 6. Other: observatory, greenhouse, museum, etc.?

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