BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL · COLLEGE & POST-SECONDARY

College Search Checklist

Steps for exploring, applying, and paying for college or other post-secondary education.

Student _____ Grade _____ Date started _____

Explore It's never too early to talk about interests

- [ ] Talk about the subjects, activities, and kinds of work your student enjoys
- [ ] Look up what careers of interest require: a degree, a certification, an apprenticeship, or on-the-job training
- [ ] Consider every path: four-year colleges, community college, transfer pathways, and Career Technical Education

Plan high school courses

- [ ] Choose courses that keep options open; ask a counselor what colleges of interest expect
- [ ] Ask about dual enrollment, AP, IB, or similar programs, and how colleges award credit for them
- [ ] Check whether each college requires, considers, or doesn't use admission tests

Build a college list

- [ ] Programs and majors your student wants
- [ ] Size, setting, and distance from home
- [ ] Admission requirements
- [ ] Support for students (advising, tutoring, disability services)
- [ ] Net price (cost after grants and scholarships), not just the published price
- [ ] Try each college's net price calculator
- [ ] For community colleges: transfer agreements and which credits count
- [ ] Visit in person or online; talk to current students

Applications Confirm every deadline with each college

College	Deadline	Requirements (essays, letters, tests, portfolio)	Submitted	Decision
			☐	
			☐	
			☐	
			☐	
			☐	
			☐	

Financial aid

- [ ] Submit the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). It's the main form for federal grants, work-study, and federal loans, and many states and colleges use it too.
- [ ] List the federal, state, and college aid deadlines. They can differ, so check each one.
- [ ] Find out whether any college asks for additional aid forms
- [ ] Search for scholarships from colleges, community groups, employers, and other organizations
- [ ] Compare offers side by side (see our Financial Aid Offer Comparison Worksheet)

Aid deadline	Date	Done
FAFSA		☐
State aid		☐
College 1:		☐
College 2:		☐
College 3:		☐
Scholarship:		☐

Questions to ask each college

- [ ] What does it cost per year after grants and scholarships?
- [ ] How do students get academic advising and support?
- [ ] How many students finish their program, and how long does it usually take?
- [ ] What help is there with internships and finding work?

Decide

- [ ] Compare net price, fit, and support at each college
- [ ] Note each college's reply deadline and deposit
- [ ] Complete every enrollment step after you accept

General information only, not legal, tax, or placement advice. Rules, dates, and requirements vary by state, district, school, and program. Always confirm details with each school, district, or official source.