

GETTING STARTED

Just when you've started to get comfortable in high school, when you're finally an upperclassman, you have to make one of your biggest decisions yet: You have to choose that one school out of over 3,600 colleges and universities in the country as THE SCHOOL FOR YOU. So the first person you should probably have a sit-down, heart-to-heart conversation with is not your parent, your college counselor, or your best friend...it's you. You don't have to know what you're going to major in, or what you want to be when you grow up to start the college process, but you should have a general idea about who you are as an individual.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Answering the following questions will help you begin to match your interests and strengths with your choice of colleges. Don't exclude the input of your parents or others close to you as you think about your future, but do keep in mind that it is your future and that you are ultimately responsible for determining your direction. You may feel self-conscious when you first consider these questions. But an honest and thoughtful evaluation will help you prepare for statements that you will be asked to make about yourself in essays and interviews.

GOALS AND VALUES: Think about where you are now, and where you want to be in the future.

Do you have a main goal? What is it?

What values are the most important to you (for example, making a lot of money, becoming an expert in something, making new friends, exploring new subjects, becoming more independent, learning more about who you are, making a contribution to society, making contacts for future employment, being able to be creative and try new things, etc.)? What do you care about the most?

What kind of person would you like to become? Which of your unique gifts and strengths would you like to develop?

What events or experiences have shaped your growth and way of thinking?

EDUCATION: This is the whole reason you're going to college, right?

What is your learning style? What courses do you enjoy most and least?

What do you choose to learn on your own?

Would you prefer to learn by listening? Or learn by discussing?

What books have had an impact on you?

ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS: Fortunately, college is not just academics.

If you went home tonight and your homework was miraculously done for the rest of the week, how would you spend your free time?

What activities have you wanted to try but haven't yet?

How much do you genuinely like to read, discuss, and exchange ideas? What has been your most exciting intellectual experience in recent years?

THE WORLD AROUND YOU: Your environment says a great deal about you as a person.

When and where do you feel your best?

What current local/national/global issues are important to you?

Do you look for friends who are different from you or do you prefer to hang out with people who are similar to you?

YOUR PERSONALITY: Think about how you view yourself and how you think others view you.

How would someone who knows you well describe you? Best qualities? Shortcomings? What do you expect from yourself? How often do you meet these expectations?