

College Planning

Selecting a College – Finding the Right Fit

There are nearly 4,000 colleges and universities in this country, with a wide variety of features to serve diverse student interests. With so many choices you may wonder how to find a college that is a “good fit” for you. Although there is no right or wrong way to research colleges, many students find it helpful to visit a few schools that differ in size, location, academic programs, or selectivity so see which characteristics are important to them. Listed below are a number of criteria to consider in selecting a college:



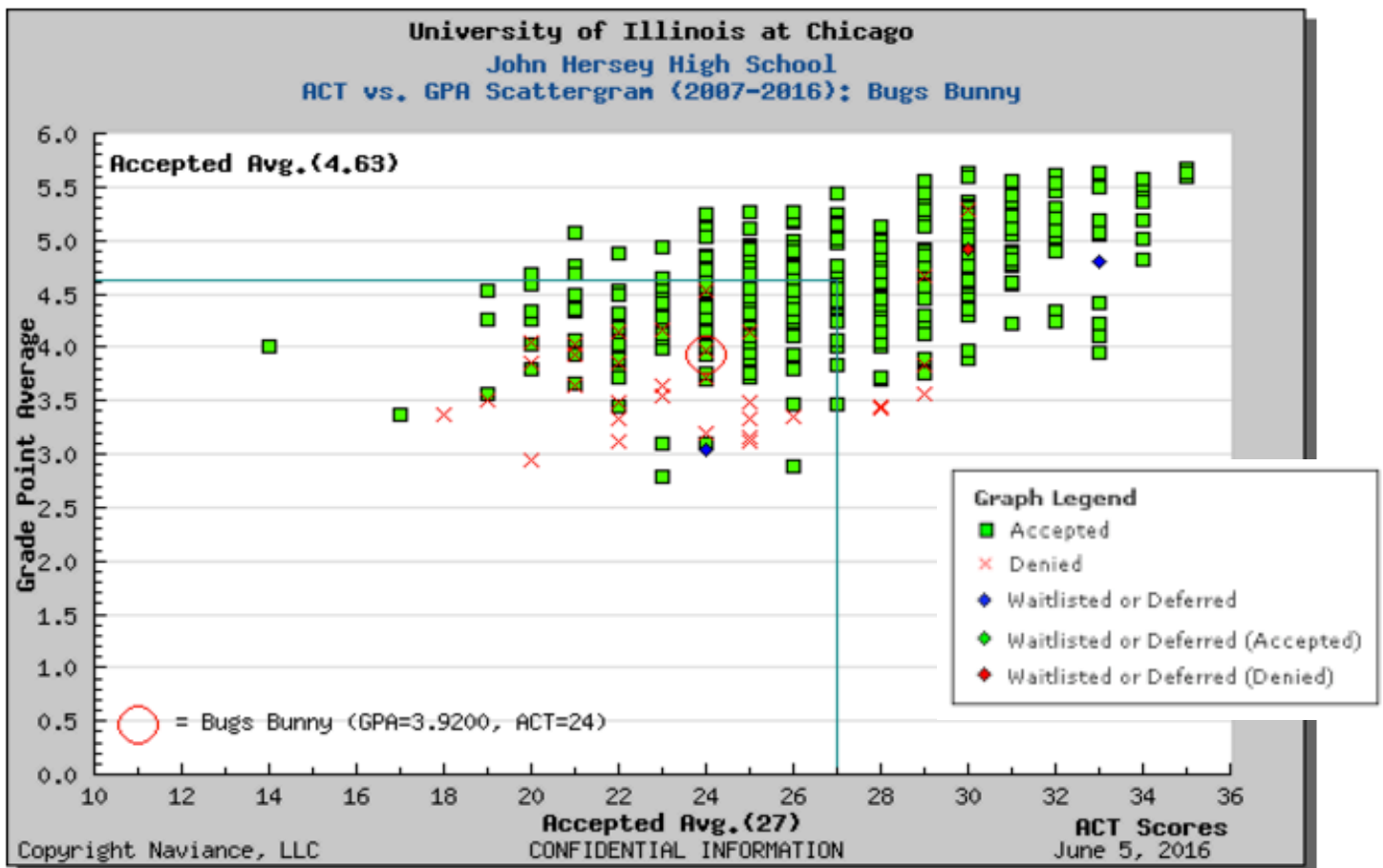
<p style="text-align: center;">PROGRAM</p> <p>Curriculum: Does the college offer the major that interests you? Is there a core curriculum required and what does it look like? What research or internship opportunities are available to you in your field of interest?</p> <p>Admissions: How selective is the school? Does your coursework match the school's requirements for admission? Is your GPA and ACT score typical of accepted students?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PEOPLE</p> <p>Student body: Do your personality and values mesh well with the other students?</p> <p>Fraternities and sororities: Is there a Greek system on campus? Are a high percentage of students in fraternities or sororities?</p> <p>Religious orientation: Is the institution affiliated with an organized religion? Does the academic and social life reflect this?</p> <p>Sports/Activities: Does the school have the sports or extra-curricular programs you are interested in? How easy is it to join?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">PLACE</p> <p>Size of the school: Would you like to attend a large, medium, or small school? What is best for you academically? Visit each type before narrowing your choice.</p> <p>Geographical location: Do you want to attend college in the Chicago land area, in Illinois, or out of state? What transportation is available?</p> <p>Size of the community: Is the campus setting urban, suburban or rural? What are the advantages/disadvantages for you?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PRICE</p> <p>Cost: What is the total cost of attendance for one year (tuition, room, board, books, travel, etc.)? What scholarships and financial aid are available? Can you afford this school?</p> <p>Remember, what you can afford is <u>not</u> based on the listed price but what you will pay after financial aid and scholarships. Families can estimate the true cost of a college by using the net price calculator on the school's website.</p>

College Admissions Selectivity

Many colleges now use a holistic approach to admissions, looking at factors such as extracurricular activities, letters of recommendation, interviews and essays. At other schools, your grade point average (GPA) and standardized test scores are the primary determinant of admission. As an applicant, you can use these factors to assess whether the school is a “good fit” academically. You want a school where you are challenged, not overwhelmed.

The standard for measuring college “fit” has been the use of the “mid 50%” range. This statistic reports the range of GPA and test scores (ACT or SAT) for the middle 50% of incoming freshmen. You should compare your credentials to the “mid 50%” averages for schools on your list. If you have not taken an ACT or SAT yet, it is possible to estimate an anticipated score based on the results of your PLAN or PSAT test scores. Depending on whether your GPA and scores are above, within or below the mid 50% range determines whether the school is a **safety**, **target**, or **reach** school. You should be sure to include safety schools that you want to attend on your college list.

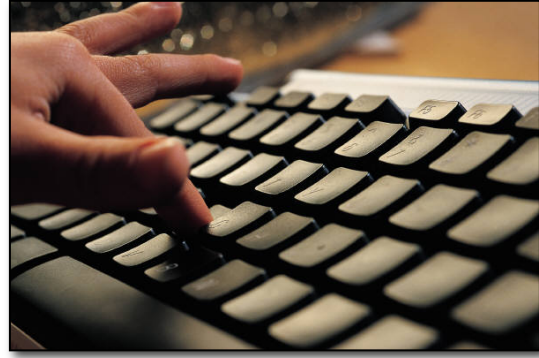
You can also use Naviance **Scattergrams** (sample below) to determine how selective a college is. These scattergrams analyze application data from JHHS student applications over the past 9 years. This allows you to compare your grades and test scores to past JHHS students who applied to a school. You can then assess whether a school is a safety, target, or reach school.



College Search

Online College Search Websites

Once you have a sense of what characteristics are important to you, online college search websites are a great way to find colleges that meet your criteria. The following are links to two popular college search websites:



Naviance - <http://connection.naviance.com/jhhs>

Login with your student GAPPS username and six-digit student ID number

Career Cruising - www.careercruising.com

Username: d214-(insert GAPPS username)

Password: six digit student ID number

Here are a few ways you can use Naviance to create your list of colleges:

College Lookup - Find in-depth information on admissions standards, financial aid, majors and student life at individual colleges you are researching. Link directly to college websites and in some cases take a virtual tour of campus.

College Search - This interactive survey allows you to develop a list of colleges based on what is important to you, such as college majors, location, religious affiliation, and favorite activities or sports. If you use Naviance to find colleges that meet your search criteria, you should save those schools under the "Colleges I'm Thinking About" section of your Naviance account.

College Match - Once you have several schools listed in "Colleges I'm Thinking About", this matching feature will identify other schools that may be similar to the ones you have chosen.

Scattergrams - This amazing tool allows you to see how your ACT and grade point average compares to other JHHS students who have been accepted or denied admission to a particular college.

Visit Schedule - Check out what college admissions officers are visiting JHHS and use these visits to learn more about schools of interest.

College Maps - Find schools of interest and see their location displayed on interactive maps. This is great for planning college visits!

Other college search resources:

College Websites

College websites are the most up-to-date place to find specific information on colleges. Look up admissions criteria, academic majors, cost, size, setting and more. Use the admissions blog to interact with current students.

Campus Visits

A campus visit is the best way to see what a college is like. Check the college's website for information about visiting the college. It is best to call the college 1-2 weeks before your visit to find out what types of tours, sessions and activities may be available to you. During your visit, try to meet with someone from the admissions office or attend an information session. Ask if they can arrange for you to meet with a professor or representative from the department in which you are interested. Take a tour of the campus, talk to students, have a meal in the cafeteria, and pick up copies of the student newspaper. Some colleges also can arrange for you to sit in on a class. If you want to stay overnight in a residence hall or view the dorms, ask if that can be arranged.

College Reps

Over 120 admissions representatives visit JHHS during the school year. This is a great way for you to meet in a small group with representatives from your colleges of interest. Rep visits occur between September-November and again in February-April. College visits are posted outside the College and Career Center (CCC), in Naviance, and in the daily announcements. You must obtain a pass from the CCC and get your teacher's permission to be excused from class. Turn in the completed pass to a CCC staff member when you meet with the admissions rep.

D214 Evening Programs

The college counselors of D214 plan a number of college night programs throughout the year. A few offered in past years include: "Ask The College" Night, Financial Aid Night, and a Student Athlete Night.

College Fairs

The college counselors of D214 host a College Fair each April with representatives from over 200 campuses across the US. This is a great way to begin your search. Also, the National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC) usually hosts a Chicago fair in the fall.

College and Career Center

The College and Career Center has a variety of college and career-related books, brochures, videos and online tools. The College Career Center staff is available to answer questions and help you with each step of the college search.

College Visits – Questions to Ask

General Information

- How many students at this school?
- What is your smallest class size? The largest?
- What percentage of tenured faculty members teach freshmen courses? Do graduate students or Teacher's Assistants teach undergraduates?
- Do faculty maintain office hours? How easy is it to see a professor for help?
- What academic support services are available? (Writing, language, math labs?)
- What percentage of students graduate in 4 years? 5 years?
- Is there a career center and what services does it offer?
- What percent of students go on to graduate school? What percent of students have jobs within 6 months of graduation?

Student Life

- What percent of your students live on campus? Live off campus? At home?
- What is there to do on campus on weekends? Do students stay on campus?
- Are your dorms co-ed? By floor or by wing? Are the bathrooms also co-ed?
- How are roommates chosen? Can I room with a friend?
- Is it possible to get by without a car? Is there public transportation?
- Does the school have my favorite extracurricular activity? Is it easy to join?
- Are there fraternities or sororities? What percent of students participate?
- Where are the cafeterias located? How is the cafeteria food? How many meals a week are in the meal plans? What about eating between meals?
- Are special diets available, such as vegetarian, vegan, or kosher diets?

Financial Aid

- What is the total estimated cost for next year including tuition, room, board, fees, books and travel?
- What are the financial aid application procedures and deadlines?
- Will applying for financial aid affect the admissions or wait list decisions?
- How do the financial aid procedures differ with early decision applications?
- What scholarships are available?
- Are there installment plans or other financing options?

Other questions

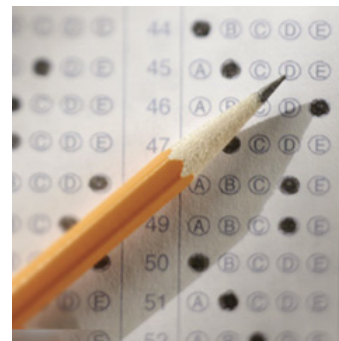
- What differentiates your school from similar schools?
- What personal qualities do students here tend to have?
- What are the key issues on campus?
- What steps is the school taking to make the campus safe?
- If you could change something about this school, what would you change?

College Comparison Worksheet

Comparative Criteria	CAMPUS 1	CAMPUS 2	CAMPUS 3
COLLEGE NAME			
LOCATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location & size of nearest city • Transportation required (Air, train, car) 			
ENVIRONMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting (urban, rural) • Co-ed, male, female • Enrollment • Religious affiliation 			
ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadlines • Tests required • Average test scores, GPA • Required application materials 			
SELECTIVITY RATING FOR YOU: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety, Good Fit, Reach 			
ACADEMICS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majors that interest you • Classes taught by professors or assistants? • Largest class size/Typical class size • Academic resources available • Percent of returning freshmen • Graduation rate 			
COLLEGE EXPENSES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition, room & board • Estimated total budget • Application fee & deposit 			
FINANCIAL AID <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadlines/Required forms • % of students receiving aid • Scholarships available 			
HOUSING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residence hall availability • Residence hall requirement • Room types and sizes • Food Plan • Percent of students living on campus 			
ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clubs, organizations • Varsity, club, intramural sports • Typical weekend activities 			
IMPRESSIONS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal reaction • Rank/Order of Preference 			

Standardized Testing: The ACT, SAT & More

Most colleges only require either the ACT or SAT for admissions purposes, but students may take additional standardized tests. Listed below are the tests students may take in high school to measure academic progress, submit with college applications or meet graduation requirements. These are listed in the order students might take the exams. Check with individual colleges as to which exams are required for admission.



PARCC

At present, all JHHS freshmen are required to take the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for Colleges and Careers. The PARCC test is based on Common Core State Standards and is designed to measure college career readiness. The PARCC has two sections administered in early and late spring, a performance-based assessment (PBA) and an End-of-Year Assessment (EOY). Both tests include language arts and mathematics. At this time, PARCC scores are not reported to colleges.

PSAT

The PSAT 8/9 is a Preliminary SAT test given to 8th or 9th graders. The PSAT 10 is a Preliminary SAT given to 10th graders. PSAT scores are NOT reported to colleges but are predictive of a student's expected SAT test range. There are two sections: an Evidence-based Reading/Writing section and a Math section. The PSAT 8/9 scores range from 120-720 for a maximum score of 1440. The PSAT 10 scores for each section range from 160- 760, adding up to a maximum score of 1520.

Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT)

The PSAT/NMSQT is an optional PSAT 10 offered only in October and is primarily taken by juniors. PSAT scores are NOT reported to colleges but are used to forecast a student's SAT score, prepare for the SAT and is also the first step in the National Merit Scholarship Program. The highest scoring juniors will be designated as National Merit semi-finalists, asked to take an SAT Reasoning Test and fill out an application in order to be considered for the National Merit scholarship.

SAT Subject Tests

SAT Subject Tests are 60 minute multiple choice exams that measure how well a student has mastered a particular high school subject. There are 20 subject tests to choose from and students may register for up to three on any given test date. The following link provides a list of colleges who will require or recommend the SAT Subject Tests as part of the college application:

<http://www.compassprep.com/subject-test-requirements-and-recommendations/>. It is recommended that students interested in applying to highly selective colleges take 2-3 SAT Subject Tests upon completion of a course in a subject that they do not plan to continue.

ACT Test

The ACT is curriculum-based achievement test and tests four subject areas: English, Mathematics, Reading, and Scientific Reasoning. Sub-scores ranging from 1-36 will be given in each of these four areas as well as an overall composite score. The ACT test also includes an optional writing test. The ACT is one of two standardized tests that can be submitted as part of the admissions process and is typically taken in spring of junior year.

SAT Test

The SAT test is an achievement test measuring knowledge in three content areas: Evidence-based Reading & Writing, Mathematics and an optional Essay. The scores for each test will range from 200-800 for a maximum of 1600 points. The three dimensions of the optional Essay section are scored from 2-8 and are reported separately. The SAT is one of two standardized tests that can be submitted as part of the admissions process and is typically taken in spring of junior year.

Advanced Placement (AP) Test

These are three-hour comprehensive examinations given in May, based on a college level course taken in high school. Students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses prepare and register for these exams within their AP classes. The most selective schools may consider AP scores in admissions decisions, but the scores are primarily used for college credit and/or placement into higher-level college courses. College websites generally contain information on which AP exams they will accept, the score required for college credit, and the college courses for which you will receive credit.

College Level Examination Program (CLEP)

These exams provide students of any age the opportunity to demonstrate college-level achievement in a single subject by taking a college level exam. CLEP tests are given on several college campuses each year, including Harper Community College. Depending on their CLEP score, the students may earn college credit like Advanced Placement (AP) exam.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

The TOEFL is a computer-based test used to measure the English proficiency of students who have been speaking English for less than 5 years. This test is used in the admission process in addition to the ACT or SAT requirement. For more information, go to <http://www.toefl.org/>.

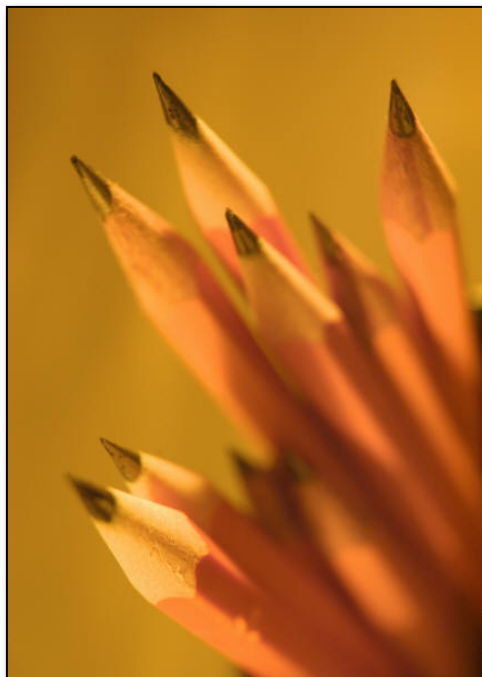
Should I take the ACT or SAT?

ALL colleges now accept either the SAT or the ACT as the primary test for admissions purposes. Starting in the spring of 2017, all JHHS juniors will take the state-funded SAT. Juniors often wonder if they should also take the ACT given they will have an SAT score. While not required, there are differences between the ACT and SAT tests and students may score better on one test than the other. For this reason, some students take and self-score the free sample ACT tests provided in the study guide provided on the ACT website: <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/test-preparation.html> or choose to take the ACT on a national test date.

The SAT/ACT Score Comparison chart on the next page can be used to determine equivalent scores between the two tests. For most students, we recommend taking the ACT and/or the SAT in the spring of their junior year. Additional tests may be taken in the summer or early fall, if needed. Refer to the Assessment Center page of the JHHS website for more information about standardized test dates, test registration and test preparation.

Test Prep

The best preparation for either the ACT or SAT is to take challenging high school core courses and to work hard to learn the material. A variety of test preparation materials (books, online, classes, etc.) are available if you desire further preparation, including free test preparation for the SAT on www.kahnacademy.org. Next fall, John Hersey High School will offer Test Preparation classes and they will be announced this summer. Please see the Hersey website for more information.



SAT/ACT Conversion

Concordance between ACT Composite Score and The new SAT total scores

New SAT Total Range	ACT Composite Score	New SAT Total
1600	36	1600
1560-1590	35	1570
1520-1550	34	1540
1490-1510	33	1500
1450-1480	32	1470
1420-1440	31	1430
1390-1410	30	1400
1350-1380	29	1360
1310-1340	28	1320
1280-1300	27	1290
1240-1270	26	1260
1200-1230	25	1220
1160-1190	24	1180
1130-1150	23	1140
1100-1120	22	1110
1060-1090	21	1070
1020-1050	20	1030
980-1010	19	990
940-970	18	950
900-930	17	910
860-890	16	870
810-850	15	830
760-800	14	780
720-750	13	740
630-710	12	680
560-620	11	590