

Your College Web Site Due Diligence ©

What and How to gather the most important information about a college before a student visits and definitely before applying ~ Eric Goodhart

It seems like we can do very little without the World Wide Web these days. A big benefit though, is that it has made the college search process easier...or should. But it has also made it more complicated than ever before. The reason for such a contradiction is that every college wants as many applications as possible and college websites can be misleading and/or confusing.

There are some colleges that care more about receiving your application than if you are qualified or not. College ranking formulas devised by US New, Time, Newsweek, et al place a value on the colleges' number of applications received, applications rejected and % of admitted applicants that matriculate. In other words, the lower % of acceptances, the higher the ranking.

One way a college attracts students is through marketing techniques designed by [professional consultants](#) who have tested teenagers' reactions to certain visual stimuli to determine their "hot buttons". I have seen this done at one of the Boston enrollment consultant firms. Colleges have learned what attracts a student to a college and ultimately to apply.

The **AAA** Method© of researching a college will cut through the fluff and get to what is really important in less than one hour. This is one of the best ways to start the college evaluation process and minimize the chances of being rejected and winding up in the "circular file" during the Admission Committee's selection process every fall and winter.

Create a folder on your desk top for each college on your list. Be open to colleges you may not know about...yet. If you have PDF capability place the [FAQ's into the folder](#). You do not want to ask questions that are already answered on website. (Use the folders to save the info below.)

A [Admissions Link](#) ~ Right click and print all information for college file.

1. Identify your [regional representative](#). (Public universities may not have one.) In any case print out the page listing all admissions counselors.
2. Create an actual account on [CommonApp.org](#). (mostly private schools). Copy the short answer essay and supplemental questions on a Word doc and put in folder.
3. Print out and the statistics of the most recent [freshman class profile](#). Compare those statistics with your own by end of junior year. (Common Data Set)
4. Go to [Financial Aid Page](#) and find out if they offer [merit scholarships](#). See how they list the cost of attendance and note the criteria for merit scholarships.

Academics Link ~ you must give serious thought to majors now.

1. Learn how [Departments and Programs](#) are organized.
2. Go to [Departmental Major](#) of interest. (i.e. [International Studies](#))
3. After printing pertinent pages, go to [Dept. Chair page](#) and [read bios](#) of the faculty that you may be working closely with if you go there.
4. Copy the [requirements for Major](#) and place in folder on your desktop.
5. Copy Department FAQ pages if seen.
6. Determine if the college has a Student Advisory Board. If it does contact your regional admissions rep to find out how you can ask questions of members of that liaison group. What you must find out from them is how much respect and encouragement does the faculty give to [critical thinking](#) and honest debate.

If you are reading this while online you will have noticed that most all of the above hyperlinks connect to [Rhodes College's](#) website. I chose to use this College because, to their credit, it is a particularly good website with clear and easy to find information. At many other colleges, unfortunately, you will not find all this important information as easily. But don't give up!

Now, the third and very important last **A** is NOT Athletics it is the...

Advising Link ~ this is vital to your success in college and beyond.

1. Admissions and Academic pages are easy to find, advising may not be, which could tell you something about the emphasis placed on advising. You may often find it through the "Student Life" links.
2. Advising is in two parts. The first is [academic advising](#) and the second is [career advising](#); research both carefully.
3. I strongly advise you to visit the Career Services office on your tour and ask questions. Questions such as "I am very much interested in International Relations; are there any recent graduates that have invited both student and prospective student inquiries?" Ask about positions held and with what companies and organizations.
4. Finally, if you are interested in a profession that will require going on immediately to graduate school, ask how the [faculty provides support](#).

Once you accomplish the above, you are free to roam. Above all, think critically; ask good questions and get answers!

For help please contact Eric Goodhart at (978) 820-1295 or email at help@smartcollegeplanning.org