

MCNEAL SAMS COLLEGE CONSULTING NEWS AND NOTES

JUNIOR CHECKLIST

- Schedule a meeting with your consultant. Check your email for instructions. If you're regretful about feeling behind or have been hesitant to reach out, put those feelings aside. Let's get going. We are here to help, not scold.
- Register for your first, or next, standardized test.
 - ACT: February
 - SAT: March
 Not sure which test to take, Reach out to your consultant.
- Plan to visit colleges this spring. Not sure where to go?
Meet with your consultant to discuss options.
- Explore options for what you will do this summer.



Need assistance with any of these items? Contact your consultant.

JANUARY MEANS IT'S TIME TO RESEARCH

Not sure how to research a college? Do you have interest in a particular campus, but you're not sure why? Researching colleges can be overwhelming, particularly as you begin your search. We recommend picking no more than three areas to focus on as you get started.

Consider choosing some of these categories as you explore college websites and other great resources like [Big Future](#), the Fiske Guide to Colleges descriptions (available on your [Custom College Plan](#) account), and the [College Scorecard](#) :

- Academics (classes, research opportunities, faculty who specialize in your interests)
- Food (it matters! Where can you eat, and what will be on your plate...most schools now post daily menus with nutrition information)
- Academic support (tutoring: how easy is it to arrange?)
- Social/political vibe on campus (check the opinions/editorial in the student newspaper)
- Study abroad (what programs/countries/formats are available to you?)
- Return on Your Investment (what do the graduates do upon graduation?)

You can make notes in your CustomCollegePlan account to keep track of what you've learned. Trust us: when it's time to write the "why I want to attend your school" essay, you'll be glad you did.

Overwhelmed? Contact your consultant to arrange a guided research session. We will help you set up a structure and define your criteria.

KINDNESS CORNER - HOW TO KEEP YOUR SANITY AND YOUR FAMILY INTACT

Is your dinner table becoming a college choice minefield? One of our families of juniors has the perfect solution. The family sets aside one hour per week to discuss college. They head to a nearby restaurant and cover everything that concerns them: the timeline, application details, what-to-think-about-and-when. When the hour is over, that's it for the week. **Period.** It keeps the application process from seeping into every other conversation and leaves room for the other elements of family life that are so important. Follow their lead and experience a sense of calm!

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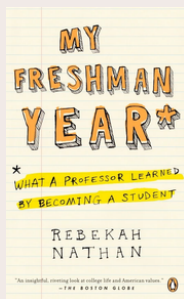
NEWS AND NOTES

TALK AROUND TOWN

Some items we have found interesting recently:

Article: [ACT vs SAT: How to Decide Which Test to Take](#) by Cole Claybourne

Podcast: [College Admissions Insider](#) by Bucknell University



Reading Recommendation: *My Freshman Year* by Rebekah Nathan

PLANNING A CAMPUS VISIT

Since visits are typically a family experience, we will spend a moment on them here.

Some students have firm ideas in mind for colleges they want to apply to. That is a fine way to structure some college visits. Some don't, so we also recommend some visits to genres of schools, something you can do as an add-on to a family vacation. Public universities, small liberal arts colleges, technical schools, faith-based colleges, as well as setting (urban, suburban, rural), and distance from home (or ease of travel) are factors you can explore, too. Many students are already familiar with "name brand" schools: our experience is often that these are generally easy to like, because they go into the visit already interested in the school. It can be harder to build the target and safer schools of a list, so we strongly encourage seeing a variety of schools. Everyone needs those foundation schools on their list!

In terms of timing, we ask that you make some general plans now. There are a couple of school breaks during the second half of the academic year (Great! College students will be on campus) and more time over the summer (Great! You and your child will likely have more flexibility over the summer).

Finally, we encourage family conversations now around paying for college. Whether or not you are applying for financial aid, you may have restrictions or hopes that are tied to financing your child's college education. We recommend sharing what those are now, rather than when decisions arrive.

Not sure where to visit or how to plan a college visit? Contact your consultant!

SPOTLIGHT ON SUMMER

It may be the early days of winter but it is not too early to begin planning your summer. The summer after your junior year is the perfect time to explore a potential career, develop your leadership skills, hone your expertise in a favorite area, earn some money, or share your talents with others. Whatever you choose is okay: it is just important to make this summer productive. And, don't forget, you will be spending some time with your college consultant working on your applications, too! Click on the images below to explore some fascinating options. Please note, the links below are not exhaustive lists of all the opportunities available. Ask your consultant for suggestions that make sense for you.

RESEARCH



CAREER EXPLORATION



THE ARTS



VOLUNTEER

