

## COLLEGE PLANNING MISTAKES TO AVOID

1. **Failure to plan adequately.** The biggest mistake! Successful plans should incorporate the seven standard sequential elements of college planning: Self-Awareness, High School Preparation, Career and Program Preparation, College Exploration, College Admission, Scholarships and Financial Aid, and High School to College Transition.
2. **Putting your parents solely in charge.** When you go away to college, your parents stay home. Your future is what's at stake. It is vital you, at least, share ownership of the process.
3. **Failure to develop a positive relationship with your counselor.** Your HS counselor has access to your files, writes a college's "Counselor's Report" for you, and is your HS contact for colleges. Get to know him/her and be sure s/he has an updated copy of your resume in case colleges ask questions about you.
4. **Failure to contact a college's admissions representative.** Each college assigns a rep to your high school. That person is vital in determining your admission and merit scholarship success, in that s/he is often your link to the admissions committee. Keep in contact during and after you meet the person.
5. **Considering a college solely for its reputation.** Selecting a college solely for its reputation often results in your being dissatisfied with the college, transferring or quitting. A college's "fit" and "feel" are probably the most important factors to consider in selecting a college.
6. **Automatically ruling out private colleges because of cost.** You probably won't pay the sticker price, given scholarships and other incentives frequently offered by private (smaller) colleges. Such additional benefits will often narrow or eliminate the cost difference between public and private colleges.
7. **Visiting a college without an appointment.** Always contact the admissions office prior to your visit and ask them to schedule a guided tour and an appointment with a faculty or staff member who is knowledgeable about the academic field(s) and opportunities you wish to pursue. Prepare questions in advance.
8. **Applying to a college you haven't visited and carefully researched.** Your comfort level is vital in determining whether you stay, and succeed, at any college. Each college has a different "fit" and "feel". Be sure both are positive for you, otherwise you are better off not considering the college.
9. **Missing application deadlines.** Meeting deadlines shows your level of interest in the college and your ability to organize yourself, both vital qualities to colleges. Missing deadlines will frequently result in your losing out on a college's admissions and scholarship opportunities, regardless of your credentials.
10. **Lying or exaggerating.** Colleges are adamant about applicants' honesty and will customarily verify, usually with your counselor, what they consider lies or exaggerations on your written application or verbal interview statements.
11. **Submitting a messy or incomplete application.** This creates a negative impression with the admissions office.
12. **Ignoring letters of recommendation requested by the college.** They provide insights about you not given elsewhere in your application. When requesting recommendation, it is helpful to give your recommender a copy of your updated resume, reasons why you are interested in the college(s), a stamped, self-addressed (to the college) envelope, unless it is submitted online, and a deadline for submitting the recommendation.
13. **You're not searching for scholarships or your parents not applying for financial aid.** Myths: 1. Financial aid is only for the poor. 2. Financial aid is not available to families earning more than \$100,000. 3. You must have a high GPA to get a scholarship. There are offsets in the federal financial aid formula such as: number of children in college, parents' marital status, home equity, retirement accounts, special family circumstances and business expenses (other than retained earnings). Parents should handle the financial aid process, while the student should be responsible for the scholarship search.