HOW TO USE ONLINE COLLEGE SEARCHING TOOLS TO DETERMINE COLLEGE FIT

HTTPS://COLLEGESCORECARD.ED.GOV/

☐ Limit the scope of your search by selecting preferences based on your pre-existing college criteria. Recommendations:
- By filtering for "Location," you will considerably narrow your options.
  - To take advantage of in-state tuition rates, filter for California.
- Select schools with 75% or greater graduation rate.
- In "Type of School," recommended to select "Public" and "Private Nonprofit".
- If student comes from a historically underrepresented racial background, consider choosing a "Specialized mission." Specifically consider:
  - Hispanic-Serving Institution
  - Historically Black College and University
  - Predominantly Black Institution
  - Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution

☐ Select schools to investigate. When researching schools, specifically pay attention to the following categories:
- **Cost (financial fit)**
  - What will be your average cost based on family income?
  - Estimated Family Contribution (EFC)
    - Financial aid system is informed by 2 pieces of information: total cost of attendance (TCA) and your estimated family contribution (EFC). The total aid you are eligible for is the different between TCA and EFC (TCA – EFC = total aid eligibility).
    - Net Price Calculator helps you estimate the likely financial aid offered at each school based on your family's financial situation.
- **Financial Aid & Debt (financial fit)**
  - Look for schools with students' median total debt less than $20,000 at the end of four years.
  - Can submit FAFSA as early as October 1
    - https://fafsa.ed.gov/
  - There is also state aid through Cal Grant
    - https://mygrantinfo.csac.ca.gov/logon.asp
  - Grants from institution and scholarships
- **Graduation & Retention (academic, social, financial fit)**
  - Biggest indicators of student success.
  - If a student drops out, it is most likely happening from 1st to 2nd year.
  - Community college particularly vulnerable to attrition.
- **Student Body (social fit)**
  - How much is racial diversity important to you?
  - How much is the familiar important to you?
- **Test Scores & Acceptance (academic fit)**
  - *These scores help you determine which colleges qualify for your safety, match, reach options.*

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- GPA also considered.
  - Schools calculate their own GPA based on student transcripts.

HTTP://WWW.COLLEGEDATA.COM/

☐ As you find schools that seem like a fit from CollegeScorecard, do further research on these schools by looking them up on CollegeData using the search toolbar and investigating the following factors:
- Admission (academic fit)
- Money Matters (financial fit)
- Academics (academic fit)
- Campus Life (social fit)
- Students (social fit)

☐ To get a sense of your chances of getting in to these schools, use the "Calculate Your Chances" tool found in the right margin of the college's profile (also found under the "Prepare & Apply" tab at the top of the page).
- The "Calculate Your Chances" tool tells you if the school is a reach, match (maybe), or safety (good bet) school.
- If you are already a member, go to "Log In" and enter your email address and password.
- If you are not already a member, go to "Sign Up" to create an account.

HTTPS://BIGFUTURE.COLLEGEBOARD.ORG/

☐ For comprehensive college search and financial aid support services, use College Board's website.
☐ Not sure where to start? Go to College Search Step-by-Step, an interactive guide.

HTTPS://WWW.CAPPEX.COM/GREENLIGHT/LANDING

☐ For blog articles that give first-generation college-bound students important insights to the college access process. For example:
- https://www.cappex.com/2021-fly-in-diversity-program-list
- https://www.cappex.com/articles/match-fit/need-blind-admission-colleges
- https://www.cappex.com/scholarships

ADDITIONAL VALUABLE INFORMATION:

- https://blog.prepscholar.com/colleges-that-offer-complete-financial-aid
- https://www.socialmobilityindex.org/
  The Social Mobility Index (SMI) measures the extent to which a college or university educates more economically disadvantaged students (with family incomes below the national median) at lower tuition and graduates them into good paying jobs.