

College Navigator is a more user-friendly way to access the IPEDS data. Students can build a list of schools to compare side-by-side, export their search results into a spreadsheet for later viewing, and even save their search results for reference. The College Navigator provides an extensive breadth of straightforward, mostly accurate information on colleges.

- Tuition and Cost of Attendance
- Accreditation information,
- Financial aid statistics,
- Graduation and transfer rates,
- Tuition
- Number of undergraduates
- Athletic Offerings
- Majors/Degree Offerings

The College Navigator also links to most schools' net price calculators. (To use this – students will need documents including student and parental completed tax forms and W-2s). **Even though you are only allowed to compare four schools at a time, it does have an exported spreadsheet that not only contains the necessary information but exports additional important details as needed.**

2. COLLEGE SCORECARD: SCORECARD is a newer tool introduced by former President Obama in 2015. It gives students access to extensive federal data on the student-debt and attendance cost data for more than 7,000 U.S. Higher-Ed institutions. This data allows students to compare schools based on on-time graduation rates, school size, and salary after attending college, among other factors. **The College Scorecard is different from the College Navigator in that it's focused on student outcomes after college to determine the value of a particular institution.**

3. **COMMON DATA SET: There are many ways to report data, which is why the Common Data Set was established. Publishers of data agreed to create a common set of definitions to use in their data reporting. This makes comparisons of data from college to college more accurate. Each spring the CDS survey is sent to colleges to collect data on their admitted freshman class. It includes:

- Percentage of classes by size
- Percentage of students who were accepted Early Decision versus Regular Decision
- Average GPA of the freshman class
- GPA-breakdown of freshman by high school GPA
- Percent of freshman by SAT/ACT score ranges
- Percent of freshman by class rank
- Percent of students who join a sorority or fraternity
- The percentage of students who have their institutionally defined financial aid needs met. (This has a significant bearing on college affordability. Some schools guarantee 100 percent of students need to be met, which means that if you get in, the university will make sure you're financially able to attend.)
- Information on aid to foreign students
- Transfer credits: This is important for students who plan to start at a two-year institution before moving on to a four-year university. You can search for transfer-friendly schools at the College Board, but to find out if a particular school accepts credits from another, you'll likely have to visit both schools' websites and follow up with admissions counselors.

****Although the vast majority of colleges and universities make their standard data set available, not all do. In that case, typing the college name followed by the words "common data set" should locate the information.**



4. CollegeData 411: 411 is similar to the College Navigator in providing statistics and matching capabilities, but CollegeData 411 lists more of its criteria in a table for comparison purposes. It also includes information on Financial Aid and the Application Process as well as sections on Campus Life, Careers and Majors. This college search tool allows you to get data on:

- Average student debt
- % of students receiving merit awards
- Freshman satisfaction rate.
- Graduation rates for four, five and six years
- % of parents borrowing PLUS loans
- Student/Professor Ratio

There is also a **College Chances Calculator**. This tool compares Class Rank, GPA, Test Scores (ACT/SAT), Number of Honors Courses, Community Service Hours against the data pool of accepted applicants, giving prospective students an indication of their chances of being admitted.

5. CAPPEX: This site allows you to fill out a student profile so that you can be matched with schools that align with your preferences. You can search for schools and save to your list and compare them, search for scholarships, plan campus visits, read student reviews, and gauge your chances of getting into a particular school. It is a more visually attractive site (versus COLLEGEdata) and spells out tuition expenses, but the **downside is that it has many ads and popups**. The scholarship search has a nice feature that tells you how much competition you will have if you apply for the scholarship. Cappex also links directly to the application for schools on your list of favorites so you can check out what materials you'll need to apply. **There is a newer feature called "Campus Vibe," which allows students who have visited a college to post photos and share videos.**

6. BIG FUTURE: Developed by The College Board, Big Future has a left column of search filters, including test scores, selectivity, location, housing, and majors. When you select one filter, such as the type of school, you will find a more advanced search tool that narrows down your selection by a variety of options that are widely searched. You are then asked how important each advanced filter is to you; your results depend on your answers and narrow down the almost 4,000 colleges in its database. Unfortunately, you can only compare three schools at a time with limited criteria. The individual school profiles include information on the GPAs, class rank, graduation, and retention rates.

BOTTOM LINE: College Data and Cappex sites are better at providing more meaningful comparative data such as graduation rates, the financial need met, and merit aid. **BUT, Big Future is colorful and easy-to-use and a solid introduction for a student and parent just being introduced to the college process. So it is an excellent place to start your research!**

7. COLLEGE XPRESS: XPRESS is a user-friendly site with a lot of resources for students with particular interests as well as a college search and scholarship search engine. It provides lists and rankings, summer programs, and many college profiles. It also has a great blog to help with the entire application process.

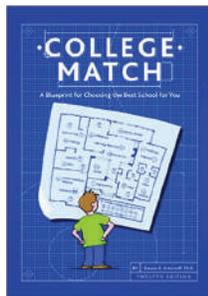
8. COLLEGE CONFIDENTIAL: Aside from its college search feature, **this site has an incredibly popular student forum. This resource is packed with questions by real students seeking clarification on any number of college-related topics from their peers or professionals.** There are also many additional free resources, including articles related to college admissions, paying for college, and other college-related topics.



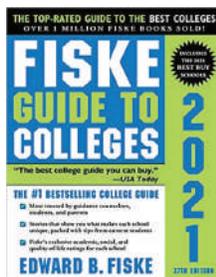
9. COLLEGE INSIGHT: Funded by the Institute for College Access and Success, students can browse and compare information about affordability, diversity, and student success, and tailor customized comparisons that can be printed.

10. COLLEGE NICHE: NICHE has a criteria-based college search feature and genuine current student reviews. The at-a-glance college comparison screen is a letter-grade report card on the school generated by students. There is also scholarship information and a college chances calculator basing your grades and test scores against what the site has compiled for comparison data (supposedly from admitted students).

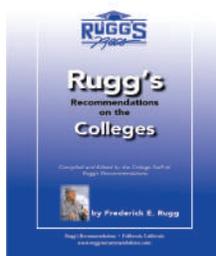
Here Are Some Informative Resources In Print:



COLLEGE MATCH: This valuable book by veteran colleague Steven Antonoff is the official “go-to” resource for most independent counselors. By combining easy-to-use worksheets with loads of practical advice, College Match gives students a comprehensive set of materials that systematically aids in the process of choosing colleges.



FISKE GUIDE TO COLLEGES: The Fiske Guide to Colleges is compiled and written by former New York Times education editor Edward Fiske. It allows users to take a deep dive into the 320 American colleges that Fiske deems the best and most interesting each year. You can also purchase a 12-month subscription to the online portal, which offers in-depth profiles of Fiske’s picks, deadline trackers, and tools to help students discover the right schools for them. This book/internet tool does a nice job of rounding out the quantitative data putting a qualitative spin on the colleges culture/personalities.



RUGG'S RECOMMENDATIONS: Rugg's gives you some idea of how good a certain major program is at a particular college. So if you are looking for a top physics program with a strong art program, Ruggs is the go-to book because it focuses on the major not the school. The latest edition is also available for download on Rugg's site.

ENJOY THE JOURNEY. STAY INFORMED!

