



Narrowing your College Choices



Thinking about this now will make your senior year less stressful. Visit our Career Center for help with career and college search programs, meet with college reps that visit our school (Missouri Western will be here January 23rd), and use the college planning resources at EducationQuest in Rockbrook Village or at educationquest.org. Answer these questions to help you determine the type of college that might best meet your needs:

What do you want to study? Take assessment tests that will help you match your interests, strengths, and personality with future career choices. Visit our Career Center and ask for help using Naviance to find your career and link to schools that offer the appropriate education for that career.

What kind of college culture do you prefer? Are you interested in a small or large campus? Private or public? Academic or vocational?

Do you want to study in-state or out-of-state? Just keep in mind that public schools in another state will charge much higher tuition for most non-resident students. For help with minimizing out-of-state tuition in our region, check out the Midwest Student Exchange Program at <http://msepmhhec.org>.

What's the overall cost? It's more than just tuition, room, and board. Consider the cost of books, fees, transportation, recreation, clothing, and miscellaneous items. However, don't limit your search to colleges you think you can afford until you complete the admissions and financial aid processes. Expensive schools may actually be cheaper than you think after grants and scholarships are awarded.

How can I compare schools? See EducationQuest's *College Prep Handbook* (copies still available in Counseling) to compare Nebraska schools or go to www.EducationQuest.org to find their College Profiles tool to search for details about schools across the nation that fit your requirements. If you have schools in mind outside of our region, you could also try a website like www.Petersons.com to get information and compare those schools.

Junior Visit Days: Once you've narrowed your choices, schedule campus visits. Many colleges offer Open House events that are focused on juniors during the spring semester. Take a look at the websites of your favorite schools to find their Open House dates or come to the counseling office for help. Try to visit while college classes are still in session instead of waiting for the summer. We often post information about upcoming events at regional colleges on the windows of the counseling office. Be sure to check out the section across from the Trading Post that says Junior Information. See the *College Prep Handbook* for a list of questions you can ask during your visits. Here are some examples of visit events at nearby schools:

UNO: Their **Junior BE a MAV Day** is typically in April and you can register for this or any events by going to www.unomaha.edu/admissions/visit and click on Plan Your Visit to find Open Houses.

UNL: In March and April, they typically hold **Junior** events each week, but for now, you can pick one of their other events. Try a **Red Letter Day** on February 10th or 17th or select days in March and April by going to <http://admissions.unl.edu/visit> where you will find all of their on-campus visit options.

Iowa State: I don't think they have a special event for juniors, but they do have **Experience Iowa State** visit days several times a month starting on February 17th and running until April 18th. Start at www.admissions.iastate.edu/visit to find all of your options and to schedule a visit.

Wayne State: This campus has a **Just Juniors Day** on March 19th, but they also have open house events called **Fridays@WSC** every couple of weeks from January 29th through April 17th. To register for any of these events or an individual visit, start at www.WSC.edu/admission/visit_campus and click on the appropriate button to "Reserve your spot now."

Iowa Western CC: Check out this campus over in Council Bluffs during one of their **Reiver Fever Visits**. They are scheduled for January 16th through May. Register online at www.iwcc.edu/Future_Student/visit.asp or request a personalized campus visit.

The Congressional Awards: You may have heard about this program recently and wondered what it is. It is a recognition program of our U.S. Congress with awards available to all 14 to 23 year old students who are active in volunteering, personal development, physical fitness, and exploring. It is a way for you to get recognition for your efforts and earn various certificates or medals that look great on your resume. However, it is for future accomplishments that meet goals that you set for yourself. You must have your efforts reviewed by an Advisor who is an adult of your choice, with some limits. One drawback is that there is a \$15 fee to get registered, so don't sign up if you are not determined to succeed. See www.congressionalaward.org for more details.

