



College Planning: A DCI Parent's Guide to Supporting Your Student

The role of a parent in helping their student design a postsecondary plan is crucial! Here are a few tips from DCI's College and Career Readiness Team that will help you be a resource to your student as they navigate life after DCI!

Talk to your student.

Having conversations with your student about why they want to go to college and what questions they might have can provide you with important information about their dreams, goals, and fears. These conversations can also lead to discussions about how your relationship might change or evolve as they become young adults. Getting clarity on what's next for your student can put you in a position to be a valuable resource during their college years.

Visit colleges together.

A surprising number of students will apply to a college or university without ever visiting the campus. College tours help prospective students and families get a sense of the campus culture, location, and surrounding community. They are able to get important information from current students and staff as well as have the opportunity to ask additional questions that will help them decide if that school is a right fit for them.

Create a calendar.

Include college tour dates, important deadlines, events, and anything else that needs to be completed. This will help you and your student stay on track with getting everything done and keep you accountable.

Help your student create and finalize a college list.

Parents can offer a perspective that will help students determine to which colleges they should apply. This is where understanding college match vs. college fit is important.

- College match refers to the GPA, class rank, and test scores between a student and the prospective college. It focuses more on the academic achievements of a student and how they measure against the average enrolled student at that university.



- College fit refers to what the student is looking for in a college, such as school culture, environment, support services, size, location, majors, etc. It takes into consideration things like the student's personality, learning style, professional goals, and academic needs.

Both factors are essential to drafting a well-balanced college list, so students and parents should consider them equally before making a final decision.

Understand the cost of college.

COLLEGE IS NOT FREE! It is important that you and your student understand how much a college costs to avoid having a financial burden that is not manageable. Below are a few terms to keep in mind:

- Financial Aid: money that helps students pay for college.
- Cost of attendance: the full cost of attending the school. It includes tuition, room and board (if staying on campus), and other fees.
- Scholarships: free money that is given to students on the basis of academic or other achievements.
- Grants: free money that is given to students, usually based on financial need.
- Loans: money that is borrowed and needs to be repaid.
- Award Letter/Package or Financial Aid Award/Package: the official document from a school that lists the total financial aid that a student is receiving for an academic year.

It is important to understand that some costs may need to come out of pocket. This is why securing as much financial aid as possible is crucial to limiting student debt!

Complete the FAFSA

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a way that students can receive financial aid for college. The application will require some information from parents, such as contact information, demographic information, and tax documents. Make sure that you gather all the necessary financial documents that your student will need to complete the form.



Encourage your student to apply early.

If your student really likes a particular school and it is both a good match and fit for them, they might consider applying early. Applying to schools early gives students an advantage because:

- they receive an admissions decision sooner, which can limit the amount of stress in waiting for a decision *and* it gives students more time to prepare for college.
- it saves time and money by limiting the number of applications students submit.
- they receive financial aid packages sooner and have more time to plan for college costs.

There are two main ways to apply early:

- Early Action (EA): students apply early and will receive an early response to their application around January/February. However, they do not have to commit to the college until the normal reply date that falls around May 1.
- Early Decision (ED): students apply to their first-choice college. ED plans are binding and a student who is accepted **must** attend the college.

Before applying early, students should research colleges extensively and be sure that the college is their first choice. They should also ensure that the school is a good fit and match. However, students should still prepare other applications in the event that they do not get accepted.

Encourage your student to take IB exams.

DCI students have an opportunity to earn college credits by taking IB exams during senior year. These exams are unique to IB schools and assess their work against the courses they take. The exams are FREE for DCI students and are valued at \$150 per exam! Each exam that a student passes can give them college credit, which can shorten the total time spent in school and the amount of money spent for college!

Make an appointment with us!

We are happy to help you and your student navigate options and solidify plans. Feel free to contact us at college.career@dcinternationalschool.org!