Opportunities to visit campus in person are limited, but your college search can still get started. Yes, things are looking a little different than anyone expected. But still THIS IS THE RIGHT TIME TO THINK ABOUT WHAT COMES AFTER HIGH SCHOOL. Colleges are offering new ways for you to learn more about them online. So get going with your search — virtually.
DETERMINE AN APPROPRIATE COLLEGE SEARCH TIMELINE

There are many helpful timelines to keep you on track in your college search process. Visit our website for links to a few of our favorites: mnprivatecolleges.org/beginning.

But remember, college search plans are just suggestions and you should always adapt any plan or timeline to fit you and your family.
**STEP 2**

**DO A LITTLE SELF-REFLECTION**

To get a better idea of what is important to you in a college, ask yourself some questions or, if you’re a parent of a high school student, ask your teen some questions to get your student thinking about what really matters.

Here are some questions to get you started; you can also visit our website for links to more resources: [www.mnprivatecolleges.org/beginning](http://www.mnprivatecolleges.org/beginning), and go to “connect with people in the know.”

- **What are some things I do well?**
- **What are some things that challenge me?**
- **Do I learn best when I’m academically comfortable or academically challenged?**
- **What are the classes I enjoy the most and why?**
If I could do any job for a day, what would it be?

What sort of balance am I looking for between studying and having a social life?

In which type of college setting am I most/least comfortable?

Why do I want to go to college?

How close to home do I want to be?

What sort of balance am I looking for between studying and having a social life?

Are college athletics important to me and, if so, am I more interested in being a participant or spectator?
Now that you have a better sense of what you’re looking for in a college, it is time to start looking for schools that fit you academically, socially, and culturally.

Talk to friends, family members, teachers, coaches and guidance counselors to start compiling a list of schools to explore.

Just remember, there are a lot of great schools out there, but this is about you — what do you want in a college and which one will meet your goals.

Don’t rule out colleges because you think they may be too expensive.

It is important to know that the listed or “sticker” prices are rarely what families pay. That’s thanks to grants and scholarships—money students are not asked to pay back. So a college with a higher listed price could cost less than a college with a lower listed price. Want to get a better idea of what you might pay? Try out a college’s net price calculator. You can find links to our colleges’ calculators at mnprivatecolleges.org/calculators.
STEP 4
NAVIGATE COLLEGE WEBSITES

With your list of colleges in hand, you are ready to start wading through college websites. College websites offer a wealth of information, but it helps to know where to go.

To answer your general questions about the school, the “About” section is a good start. To find out what programs of study they offer, visit “Academics,” and to find out what students do outside of class, visit “Student Life.” If you’re ready to find out more about applying or other information about enrolling, then check out the “Admissions” and “Financial Aid” pages.

TIP: Print a copy of these questions for each school you’re exploring.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER ABOUT EACH COLLEGE

- How big (or small) is this school?
- What is the average class size?
- Do most students graduate on time? If not, why not?
- What does the college promote on social media and on the news pages?
- What jobs do graduates in that major now have?
- Does the school offer any tutoring programs or have a writing center?
- What student clubs, organizations and athletics do they offer?
- How do students spend their free time, on and off campus?
- Does it have the major or area I want to study?
- Do students mostly live on campus or off campus?
STEP 5
VISIT COLLEGES—STARTING VIRTUALLY

Colleges are offering a variety of virtual options, including online self-guided tours (interactive, video, photo galleries) as well as virtual one-on-one visits with admissions staff or group virtual information sessions.

Links and more options are at mnprivatecolleges.org/explore

And don’t worry: college will open up again for in-person college visits. Think about how you will use those to attend a special event, sit in on a class or just take a tour. Small personalized visits will be the first opportunity for coming to campus; see what’s possible by visiting college admission pages.

RECORD YOUR THOUGHTS AND IMPRESSIONS

Keep track of what you’re noting and thinking about these virtual visits—whether it is a question triggered by an Instagram post to something you saw on the virtual tour.

DIG DEEPER

- Talk to current students
- Learn more about profs in a field you are already passionate about
- Are there extracurricular activities, sports or fine arts you’re interested in? Where are they happening, and can you find out more?
- Visit colleges’ social media pages