A3. College 101: Researching Colleges and Universities

Introduction
In the U.S. each state has a postsecondary education system that is generally composed of two-year or community colleges, public colleges and universities, and private or independent colleges and universities. In this lesson, students will research the systems of higher education in their state, and then conduct more detailed research on three different types of colleges. Students also will gain a basic understanding of college admission requirements and identify colleges or universities that interest them.

This lesson is best used as a follow-up to Lesson A 1. and/or Lesson A 2.

Learning Goals
• To understand the various systems of higher education.
• To find the college-admission requirements of selected colleges or universities.
• To learn how to use the Internet to conduct research colleges or universities.

Target Audience
Students in grades 7 through 11.

Timing
60–90 minutes, plus homework. Lesson can also be extended over two to three days.

Materials Needed
• Internet access for student research on institutions of higher education (see bibliography/website section for links).
• Pens, pencils, and paper.
• Hard copy resources (such as newspapers) from school library, if Internet is not available.
• Handout: Before They Were Stars crossword puzzle
• Handout: KWL Worksheet
• Handout: State University Facts
• Handout: Private University Facts
• Handout: Community College Facts
• (Optional) Individual Academic Action Plan (See Appendix B)
• (Optional) Preparing for College: A Guide For Families (Section C) (Teachers have found this presentation a helpful introduction to college for students.)

Activities
1. (optional) Warm-Up Activity (5 to 10 minutes)
   Distribute the handout Before They Were Stars crossword puzzle. Give students five to 10 minutes to complete this crossword puzzle, which identifies the colleges that selected celebrities attended. If time permits ask students what was most surprising about the answers?

2. Where Am I Going to College and How Will I Get There? (10–15 minutes)
   Distribute the handout KWL Worksheet. Have students generate a list of what they already know about going to college in the first column (What Do I Know) of the KWL worksheet. Give a two-minute time limit.

   Then ask each student to participate in a class exercise called Novel Ideas Only in which students contribute an idea or question that has not already been posed. Have a student recorder list what students already know on a large KWL worksheet drawn on the board or chart tablet. Have all students record on their individual KWL worksheets the ideas generated by the class during the exercise. Keep the classroom KWL worksheet for the end of the lesson to see if all questions have been answered and to correct any misinformation students might have recorded in the “K” column.
Using the second column of the KWL worksheet, have students identify what they want to learn about college. Again, use the Novel Ideas Only approach to list the want-to-learn questions on the class KWL worksheet.

3. Types of Institutions of Higher Education in the State and Basic Entrance Requirements for Those Colleges and Universities (30 minutes or homework)

- Most states have three systems of higher education: community colleges; public state universities or colleges; and private/ independent universities or colleges. Depending on students’ prior knowledge it may be necessary to briefly explain the differences between the three systems. Refer to Lesson C-1 Preparing for College (pp. 97–126) for more information.

- Distribute the worksheets State University Facts, Community College Facts and Private University Facts.

- As either an in-class assignment or as homework, have students conduct research on the Internet, using one or more of the websites listed below, to answer the questions on the worksheets.

- Ask students to pick one college or university in each system and answer questions on:
  - Number of students enrolled;
  - Degrees offered (associate’s, bachelor’s, master’s, doctorate, etc.);
  - Majors or certificates offered;
  - Cost of tuition and fees per year;
  - Percent of undergraduates receiving financial aid;
  - Estimated time to graduation;
  - The high school college-preparation classes required for admission;
  - College entrance exams required for admission (e.g., the SAT or ACT);
  - Average grade point average (GPA) of admitted students; and
  - Extracurricular activities (clubs, sports, organizations) available.

- Students also must identify at least two good reasons for anyone to attend this college. Students should also explain whether they are interested in attending this college.

4. What Have I Learned? (15 minutes)

Bring the class back together and have students write silently in the second or “L” column of the KWL at least three things they learned in their research activity. Then have students share with the class what they learned about the different colleges and universities of your state and their basic admission requirements. Employ “Novel Ideas Only” if desired.

- Lead a class discussion using the following questions:
  - Did you find all of the information you were looking for?
  - What unanswered questions do you have about any of the colleges?
  - How much of your “K” column was correct?
  - What kind of options do you have after you graduate from high school?
  - What can or should you do now to prepare for college?
  - What are some of the most appealing or interesting aspects of this or that college? Why? What’s not so appealing and why?

Alternative method: Have students form two-to-three-person teams. From a bag or hat, have each team pick a card with the abbreviation of a state, such as “CA,” “CT,” “TX,” etc. The team will then research colleges and universities in that state, using worksheets. After completing their research, each team picks the college or university it would most like to attend, and their top three reasons for attending the institution chosen. Then on a piece of construction paper that has been cut out in the shape of their state, the team must write reasons for attending that college and other basic information. As a class, each team puts its piece of the nation on a bulletin board, showcasing colleges around the nation.
5. **Optional Writing Assignments** *(homework)*

**Report of Information Essay:** Ask students to choose one college from among those researched and in three to five paragraphs explain some of the key facts learned. For example, *is the student population large or small? What majors are offered? What extra-curricular activities does it offer?* Then, explain what was learned by doing the research. *Why might a student want to attend this college?*

**Comparative Essay:** Ask students to choose two of the colleges that were researched. In a three-to-five-paragraph essay, analyze the similarities and differences between the two colleges selected, and which of the two colleges the student would like to attend. Discuss why the choice was made.

**Extensions**
- Create a “College Collage” which will enable students to begin envisioning themselves as college students. The instructions for the collage activity follow in Visualize Your Life as a College Student.
- Have students create their own Individual Academic Action Plan from Appendix B.

**References and Websites**
College search engines on the web:
- CollegeNET: www.collegenet.com
- The College Board: www.collegeboard.com
- ACT: www.act.org
- Xap Corporation: www.xap.com
- Peterson’s Guide to Colleges: www.petersons.com
- TheCollegePlace: www.thecollegeplace.com
- Historically Black Colleges: http://hbcuconnect.com/
- Post-Secondary Minority Institutions: http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/edlite-minority

**CURRICULUM AND SKILL STANDARDS**

**STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS**

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association
www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the work place; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

8. Students use a variety of technological and informational resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

12. Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information). Writing Type: Problem Solution Essay

**NATIONAL TECHNOLOGY STANDARDS FOR STUDENTS**

International Society for Technology in Education
http://cnets.iste.org/students/s_stands.html

Technology Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Tools: Students use technology resources for solving problems and making informed decisions. Students employ technology in the development of strategies for solving problems in the real world. Students use technology resources for solving problems and making informed decisions. Students employ technology in the development of strategies for solving problems in the real world.

**NOTES**
**KWL Worksheet: Where am I going to College? How will I get there?**

Use this worksheet to answer the questions: “Where am I going to college? How will I get there?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do I KNOW about college?</th>
<th>What do I WANT to know about college</th>
<th>What have I LEARNED about college?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Before they were stars...

ACROSS
2. This movie director attended USC before directing Boyz N the Hood and producing Hustle & Flow.

5. This announcer honed his craft at the Newhouse School of Communications at Syracuse University. You hear his voice during television broadcasts of today's biggest sporting events.

8. This actress holds dual citizenship from Australia and the U.S. She majored in voice production and theatre at Sydney's Australian Theatre for Young People.

11. This basketball player was criticized for missing a Toronto Raptors playoff game and possibly costing them a chance to advance to the championship series because he attended his college graduation at the University of North Carolina.

12. This actor earned his BFA from the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, California. He was nominated for best actor in the film Hotel Rwanda.

DOWN
1. Starred in the movie Crash alongside Terrace Howard. This former waitress got her BA in drama at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina.

3. In addition to starring in the films V is for Vendetta and Star Wars, this actress also holds a degree in Psychology from Harvard University.

4. This Matrix actor attended the catholic De La Salle College in Toronto, Canada.

6. This rap duo hails from Richmond. Both members attended UC Berkeley and took classes in the African American Studies department.

7. After making his big screen debut in Finding Forrester this actor headed off to Amherst College in Massachusetts where he played on the school football team.

9. Female musician who won a Grammy for best R&B song in 2005 (You Don't Know My Name) and also attended Columbia University during her earlier years.

10. This actor/musician attended United States International University in San Diego on a classical piano scholarship. He portrayed Ray Charles in the film, Ray. His real name is Erick Bishop.
Crossword Puzzle Solution
State University Facts

Find one public university or college in your state and answer the following questions:

1. Number of students enrolled: Undergraduate: _____________________________
   Graduate/Professional: _____________________________
2. Degrees Offered or Conferred: _____________________________
3. Majors or Certificates Offered (list no more than 10): _____________________________

4. Tuition and Fees per Year: _____________________________
5. Percent of Undergraduates Receiving Financial Aid: _____________________________
6. Estimated Time to Graduation: _____________________________
7. High School College-Preparation Courses Required for Admission: _____________________________

8. College-Entrance Exams Required for Admission: _____________________________
9. Average Grade Point Average (GPA) of Admitted Students: _____________________________
10. Extracurricular Activities Offered: _____________________________

Top Two Reasons for Attending this College or University:
1. _____________________________
2. _____________________________

Are you interested in attending this college when you graduate from high school? Why or why not? _____________________________

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Private University Facts

Find one private or independent university or college in your state and answer the following questions:

1. Number of students enrolled: Undergraduate:
   Graduate/Professional:

2. Degrees Offered or Conferred:

3. Majors or Certificates Offered (list no more than 10):

4. Tuition and Fees per Year:

5. Percent of Undergraduates Receiving Financial Aid:

6. Estimated Time to Graduation:

7. High School College-Preparation Courses Required for Admission:

8. College-Entrance Exams Required for Admission:

9. Average Grade Point Average (GPA) of Admitted Students:

10. Extracurricular Activities Offered:

Top Two Reasons for Attending this College or University:

1. 

2. 

Are you interested in attending this college when you graduate from high school? Why or why not?
Community College Facts
Find one community college in your state and answer the following questions:

1. Number of students enrolled: Undergraduate: ________________________________
   Graduate/Professional: ________________________________
2. Degrees Offered or Conferred: ________________________________
3. Majors or Certificates Offered (list no more than 10): ________________________________
4. Tuition and Fees per Year: ________________________________
5. Percent of Undergraduates Receiving Financial Aid: ________________________________
6. Estimated Time to Graduation: ________________________________
7. High School College-Preparation Courses Required for Admission: ________________________________
8. College-Entrance Exams Required for Admission: ________________________________
9. Average Grade Point Average (GPA) of Admitted Students: ________________________________
10. Extracurricular Activities Offered: ________________________________

Top Two Reasons for Attending this College or University:
1. ________________________________
2. ________________________________

Are you interested in attending this college when you graduate from high school? Why or why not? ________________________________

www.ecmcfoundation.org
Visualize Your Life as a College Student:
Extension #1 to College 101

Introduction
In College 101 students researched colleges and universities in their states. They learned about the differences between public universities, private colleges, and two-year (community/junior) colleges. They also began to identify college-admission requirements. In this activity, students will begin to explore college life and to envision themselves as college students.

Learning Goals
After this lesson, students should be able to:
• Develop a visual understanding of college life; and
• Envision themselves as college students.

Timing
30 minutes, plus homework.

Materials Needed
• College materials: flyers, brochures, pennants, information from a variety of universities
• Art supplies: pens, paper, scissors, glue stick, tape, magazines
• Poster board or construction paper for each student’s collage

Activities
1. Collect brochures and other promotional materials from eight to 10 of the colleges that students researched in College 101. The colleges and universities selected should encompass the range from large public universities to small private colleges to two-year community/junior colleges.

2. Divide students into groups of three or four students each and distribute different college promotional materials to each group. Have each student spend several minutes on the college materials, writing down brief answers about what life at the college is like. (If students struggle with their answers, ask them to review the college materials again, and ask: What do college students do?)

3. Ask students to share their responses with their small group. Then ask for volunteers to share their group’s responses with the entire class. Put their answers on the board, making sure the list includes:
   • Study and Learn
   • Broaden Knowledge about the World
   • Play Sports
   • Go to Sporting Events, Football Games, etc.
   • Meet People from Different Backgrounds
   • Make New Friends
   • Become Leaders
   • Work
   • Join Clubs
   • Travel Abroad
   • Attend, Organize, Participate in Cultural Events
   • Become Independent from Parents

4. Tell students, “Now imagine that it’s your first year of college. Choose three or four activities on the board that you think will be important to you.” Point out that there should be a balance between the activities, (for example, they should not spend their entire college career going to sporting events, cultural activities and joining clubs). These activities can also represent students’ vision of their lives as college students.

5. Once students have selected three or four activities, tell them that they now have a chance to represent these activities in a collage of their own creation.
6. **Homework assignment: When I Go To College, I Will...**

   a. Assign students to gather images from magazines, newspapers, or the Internet that visually represent the activities selected or that reflect their vision of student life. Ask them to select at least one image per activity. If students have limited access to printed materials or to the Internet, they may draw the images.

   Examples:  
   1) “Study and Learn” might be represented with a picture of a student in the library;  
   2) “Becoming Independent from Parents” might be represented with a picture of someone moving into (or out of) a home;  
   3) “Make New Friends” might be represented with a student surrounded by a group of other students.

   b. Have students use the images to create a collage.

   c. Have students write a one-page essay that completes the sentence: “When I go to college, I will...” The essay must explain what each image represents and why the student chose the images.

7. Once students are finished with their homework, invite them to share with the class their collages and short essays.

8. Encourage students to take their collages home, to share them with their families, and to keep the collage in a prominent place as a constant reminder of their own vision as a college student.

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**NOTES**
Introduction
In College 101 students researched colleges and universities in their states. They learned about the differences among public universities, private colleges, and two-year (community/junior) colleges. They also began to identify college-admission requirements. In this activity, students will learn the importance of keeping track of all their achievements in order to facilitate their educational journey when it comes to applying for college and scholarships.

Learning Goals
After this lesson, students should be able to:
• Develop an understanding for the importance of keeping track of their achievements during middle and high school; and
• Create a portfolio of accomplishments which will help them in the application process for colleges and scholarships.

Timing
30 minutes, plus homework.

Materials Needed
• My Portfolio Worksheet (Appendix C)

Activities
1. Explain the importance of being a well-rounded student. Talk about how colleges look beyond just grades and test scores to student achievements, both in and out of the classroom. Also talk about how scholarships are available for a wide variety of activities, awards, community service, future career and job interests, and through a student and/or parent work-place program. In this way, they will understand how vital it is to keep track of this information. Make sure to talk about your own experience and how keeping track or not keeping track of your accomplishments benefited you when it came time to apply to colleges and for scholarships.

2. Ask students what activities they think colleges want to see them involved in, as well as ones in which they are presently involved. These would include clubs, sports, community organizations and a variety of other activities.

3. Ask students what awards and honors they have received.

4. Talk to students about how volunteer work and community service are important, not only for giving back to their communities, but for developing and communicating their values and passions as individuals.

5. Talk about paid employment and how a job teaches time management, people skills, responsibility and a host of other skills.

6. Homework assignment: Building My Portfolio
   a. Have students fill out the portfolio worksheet in Appendix C for homework with what they have done and are currently doing. Make sure to emphasize that the purpose of this assignment is to show them how to keep track of their accomplishments and encourage them to participate in extra-curricular activities in a meaningful way. They should not be focused on the quantity of activities but rather on the amount of time and effort they devote to the chosen activity and how the activity positively affects them.
b. In class the next day, have the students break up into small groups and have each of them talk about what they are involved in and give at least two positive outcomes to their participation, then write their activities and positive experiences on the board. This exercise will broaden the scope of students’ knowledge concerning extra-curricular options. Encourage students to ask questions about your personal experiences with building a portfolio for college applications and scholarships. Make sure they understand the importance of keeping this kind of information up-to-date and readily available.