

# the college workshop®

3104 E. Camelback Rd.  
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TO: Max Johnson

RE: Preliminary Search Results

DATE: June 22, 2016

FROM: Eden

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Dear Max: Based upon information supplied in your Personal and Academic Self-Assessment, the following is a preliminary list of schools for your perusal:

	School	Location	URL
1	Brown University	Providence, RI	brown.edu
2	Carnegie Mellon University	Pittsburgh, PA	cmu.edu
3	Dartmouth College	Hanover, NH	dartmouth.edu
4	Haverford College	Haverford, PA	haverford.edu
5	Johns Hopkins University	Baltimore, MD	jhu.edu
6	Lehigh University	Bethlehem, PA	lehigh.edu
7	Lewis & Clark College	Portland, OR	lclark.edu
8	Occidental College	Los Angeles, CA	oxy.edu
9	Pomona College	Claremont, CA	pomona.edu
10	Stanford University	Stanford, CA	stanford.edu
11	Swarthmore College	Swarthmore, PA	swarthmore.edu
12	Tulane University	New Orleans, LA	tulane.edu
13	University of Chicago	Chicago, IL	uchicago.edu
14	University of Denver	Denver, CO	du.edu
15	University of Puget Sound	Tacoma, WA	ups.edu
16	Vassar College	Poughkeepsie, NY	vassar.edu
17	Washington University	St. Louis, MO	wustl.edu
18	Wesleyan University	Middletown, CT	wesleyan.edu

## Major Criteria:

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- faculty quality
- intellectual/academic atmosphere
- faculty accessibility
- majors with depth, including strong STEM programs and facilities
- reputation/prestige
- social/scene atmosphere
- climate
- setting
- class size
- housing facilities
- overall emotional well-being
- overall size
- political leanings

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## How it breaks:

Safety	Possibility	Long Shot
Lewis & Clark College	Carnegie Mellon University	Brown University
University of Denver	Haverford College →	Dartmouth College
University of Puget Sound	Lehigh University	Johns Hopkins University
	Occidental College	Pomona College
	Tulane University	Stanford University
	Vassar →	Swarthmore College
	Wesleyan University →	Washington University
		University of Chicago

## Why your list breaks the way it does (a.k.a. Reality Check):

- A) Transcript: Your academic record is outstanding and gives you the right to compete for admission to the nation's most competitive colleges. Caveat: excellent grades and test scores only give an applicant the right to compete; they are no guarantee of admission. The reality is that there are more than 100,000 other equally or more academically-qualified students competing for admission to the nation's most competitive schools, each of whom brings his or her own unique background, experiences, activities, and accomplishments to the table for consideration.
- B) Standardized Tests: Your standardized scores are excellent, so they should not be a factor in the decision whether or not to admit you. In other words, your scores are in line with your grades and will send up no red flags.
- C) Co-curricular Activities: Your résumé is still a work in progress, but appears to be solid for the schools in your Safety and Possibility columns. Just be aware that at the nation's most competitive schools (those in your Long Shot column), which seek "movers, shakers, and/or risk-takers," you will be up against students who have founded community service organizations, started businesses, engaged in groundbreaking scientific research, published books, qualified for the Olympics, possess incredible musical talent, etc.
- D) College Admissions Trends: Almost across the board, acceptance rates have dropped, in many cases significantly, moving schools to higher levels of competitiveness. Also, due to a demographic shift that has resulted in a gender imbalance on most college campuses, the fact that you are male is a slight advantage – unless you are applying to a tech school or to a college within a university that traditionally attracts more males than females (e.g., engineering, computer science).

**THE RULES:** You are welcome to add schools to your list. ALL schools on your list must be researched thoroughly. Permitted research sources: anything published by the schools themselves, including their official websites, current faculty and staff (but not students or alumni). Contact me with questions and/or concerns.

I recommend that you choose a total of 7-10 colleges (this is in addition to any Arizona state schools) and that not all of your schools come from the Long Shot column. A good mix of schools would include at least one safety and three to four possibilities.

TO: Max Johnson

RE: Personal and Academic Self Assessment-Analysis

DATE: June 22, 2016

FROM: Eden

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Dear Max: I know that you are eager to see the results of your hours glued to the computer answering the questions in the Personal and Academic Self-Assessment (PASA), so, as promised, forthwith, henceforth, and following are the major criteria for researching your college choices as they emerged from your PASA:

1. Most comfortable academic/intellectual and overall learning environment: one that is very challenging and engaging, "relaxed but still difficult," and with:
  - bright, curious, highly motivated students who value education, enjoy learning for its own sake (vs. learning solely for the sake of their grades), and are not or hyper-competitive (i.e., they work hard and their presence causes you to work harder yourself, but they are willing to work together and do not obsess over grades, undermine each other, or cheat)
  - small, structured, lecture-oriented classes or classes in which the discussion is productive and interesting
  - an accessible, quality faculty comprised of professors that have a reputation for teaching well, being enthusiastic about their subjects/fields, and respecting their students
  - strong STEM majors and facilities
  - a range of other majors with depth and the curricular flexibility to explore your other academic interests (e.g., sociology and psychology)
2. Most comfortable physical environment: that in which you optimally function:
  - secure, attractive campus
  - a climate that is either sunny or with easy access to skiing
  - proximity/access to favorite activities/experiences
  - appealing atmosphere, ambiance, and surrounding scenery
3. Most comfortable social environment: that in which you maximize personal growth:
  - a diverse pond comprised of tolerant, intellectually curious, trustworthy, left-leaning students who work hard and are responsible, but also know how to enjoy themselves and aren't constantly stressing out about their grades or classes
  - small enough that you are not just a number, but large enough to provide plenty of people to get to know
  - mechanisms for getting involved in school and community and for encouraging a sense of community
  - an active social scene that revolves more around hanging out with friends than alcohol-soaked frat parties
  - extracurricular activities of interest to you

4. Based on the foregoing, I would urge you to focus your initial research on small and medium-sized suburban and small town residential colleges whose philosophies encourage learning for its own sake and the application of that knowledge toward understanding how the world around you works: an environment that is very challenging and engaging, but not hyper-competitive or cutthroat.

Please note that I did take your climate preferences very seriously, but there are only so many schools in warm, sunny climates that are otherwise good matches for you. None of the University of California schools made your final list because not only do I feel that they are too large for you, but also, they, like so many public colleges, are still suffering the fallout of the recession and have seen large classes get even larger and a drop in four-year graduation rates. At this time, I cannot recommend any of them.

Regardless of its size or location, I believe that every college to which you decide to apply should offer:

- an accessible, quality teaching faculty that has a reputation for mentoring students and teaching well
- extracurricular/social opportunities of interest to you
- a bright, open-minded, motivated student body
- a challenging, intellectually-rigorous curriculum with the flexibility to explore different fields

Be sure to review majors and course offerings for content vs. quantity. If a college has a core curriculum, be sure to check it out. Given how much you value trust, honesty, respect, and confidentiality, take a good look at the honor codes at those schools that have them.

Certainly, there are other considerations/criteria, but these emerge as the majors ones. Review them thoroughly, feel free to add others, prioritize - and get to work! Questions? Our friendly, ever helpful staff will be more than happy to return your calls!