

# **College App UI Design Research Report**

Adam Milyak, Mark O'Black, Emma Engel, & Caroline Milliron  
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## **Executive Summary**

Usearch has been designed to assist high school students in their college search process. Students can use the Usearch app to view information about a potential college such as information on student aid, college reviews by college students, and reviews of different categories such as campus life, academic programs, and tuition. By providing students with some of the most important information about a college in one place, Usearch aims to alleviate any stress and frustration involved in the college search process.

## **Problem Statement**

The goal of Usearch is to provide high school students with a one-stop shop where they can learn a wide array of information about any given college. When researching information about a college, there is limited standardization as to where to find information. Trying to locate this information cannot only be time-consuming, but also frustrating and stressful. Usearch aims to remove the stress from the college search process and make it an enjoyable experience for high school students. Rather than having to navigate through multiple web pages on a university's website or speak with different departments at a school, students can simply search for a college and learn some of the most critical information that plays a role in the college decision process.

## **User Research Methods**

One research method that our group used was a competitor analysis. Specifically, we reviewed Niche to learn more about the information they present to users who research places to live, K-12 schools, colleges, and places to work. Some of the features that Niche offers in its college rankings/reviews include a report card of certain criteria (such as campus, food, academics, etc.), school rankings, admissions information, and a calculator that can be used to calculate a user's chance of being accepted to a designated college. Since our group was tasked with learning more about the high school demographic, we felt that some of these features would be extremely useful in their college search.

In addition to a competitor analysis, our group also conducted a survey with high school students to learn more about their experience with the college search process. This survey was conducted with 16 students in grades 9–12 at Nazareth College and Career Prep. In this survey, students were asked to rank what was most important when choosing a college, select any frustrations experienced in the college search process, and select potential ideas/implementations that could assist them in their college search.

process. Based on the results of the survey, we narrowed the scope of some of the features implemented in our app.

## **Results**

We received 16 responses to our survey of high school students regarding their experience with the college search process. Of these 16 responses, 69% were juniors or seniors in high school while 13% were sophomores. When ranking factors of importance, almost all participants ranked campus life, tuition, academic programs, and social/clubs activities as very important when researching colleges.

Participants expressed finding college test score information, lack of information on scholarships/grants, and locating information of cost of living on campus as the most challenging aspects of the college search. When asked about potential aids in the college search process, students were presented a list to choose from (multiple selections could be made as well as a write-in option). Below are the results:

- 10 students said information on job placement would be helpful
- 8 students said easily obtainable student aid information would be helpful
- 7 students said college reviews by college students would be helpful
- 4 students said information on college acceptance rates would be helpful

We also learned that participants in our survey are spending anywhere from 1-3 hours, 2-3 days a week on their college search.

## **Conclusions/Recommendations**

When designing Usearch, our group worked to keep the user experience simple and frustration free. After the startup screen, users are taken to a screen where they can simply search for a college, answer a set of questions so the app can learn more about what type of college they are looking for, or they can sign up and create a Usearch account. An account is not required to search for and view information about a college; however, users will need an account if they want to add reviews or receive college suggestions via email from Usearch.

As for the information displayed in the search results, our group decided to highlight some of the information that students who completed the survey said they struggled to find. For instance, the search results will have dedicated sections with basic information about admissions and acceptance rates, student aid information, job placement statistics, and college reviews by members of a given college. If a student wants to learn more about a particular section, such as student aid, they can click that section to expand it and view more specific information.

In addition, star ratings will be assigned to various categories (such as campus life and academic programs) based on college reviews left by others and data from resources such as the Department of Education and National Center for Education Statistics.

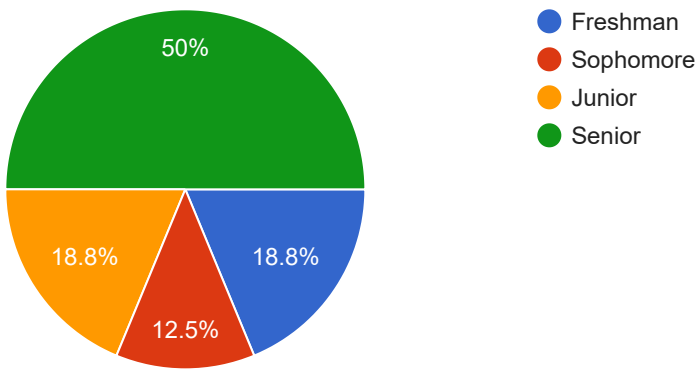


# College Search Questionnaire

16 responses

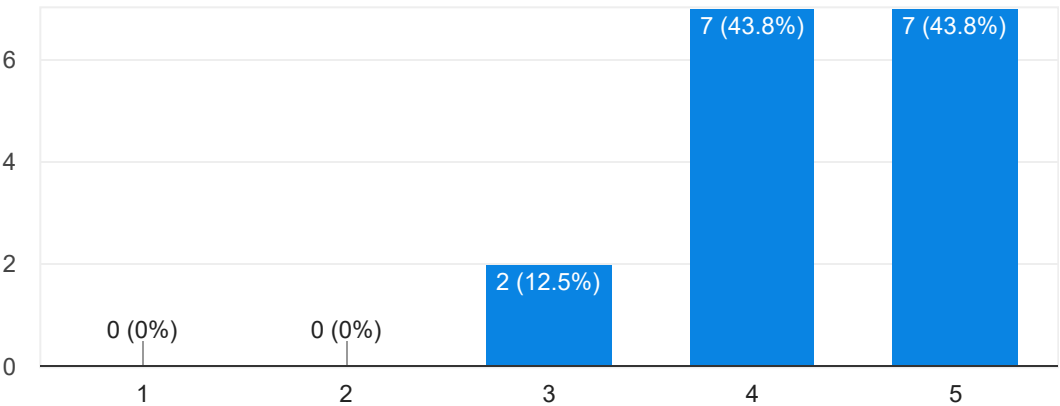
What grade level are you currently in?

16 responses



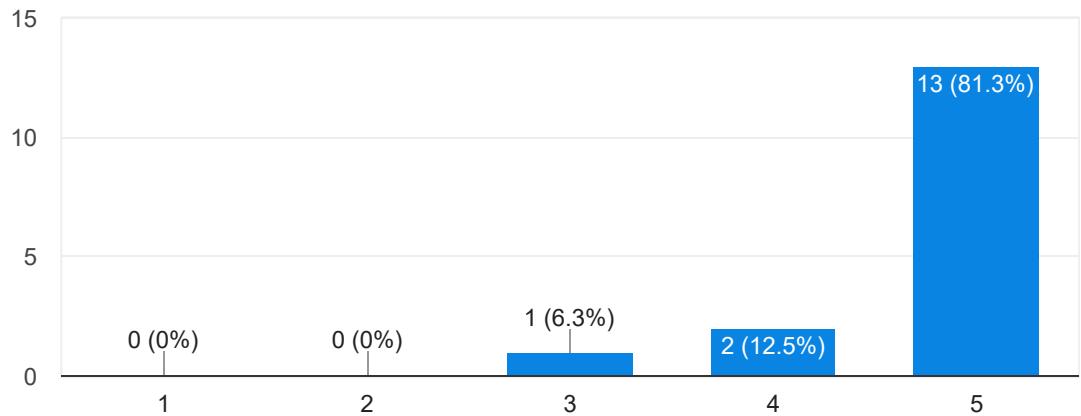
How important is campus life (dorms, gaming on campus, quality of food, etc.) when selecting/researching a college?

16 responses



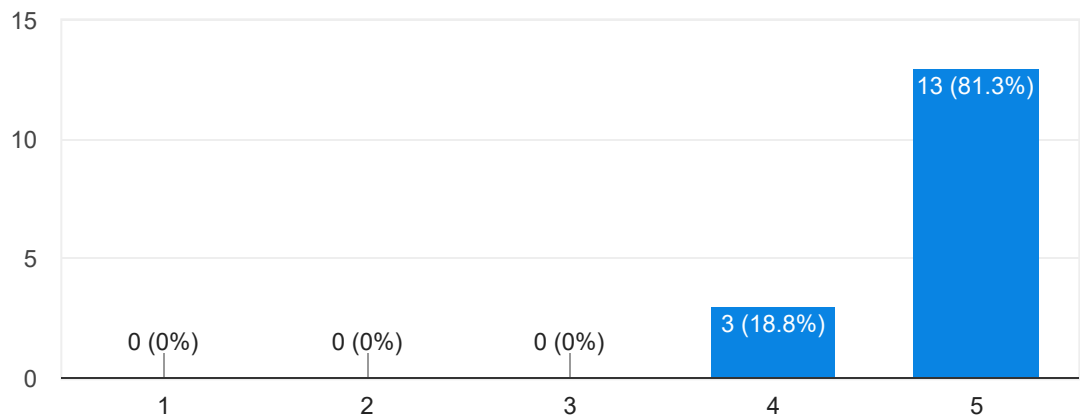
How important is the cost of tuition when selecting/researching a college?

16 responses



How important are academic programs offered at a potential university?

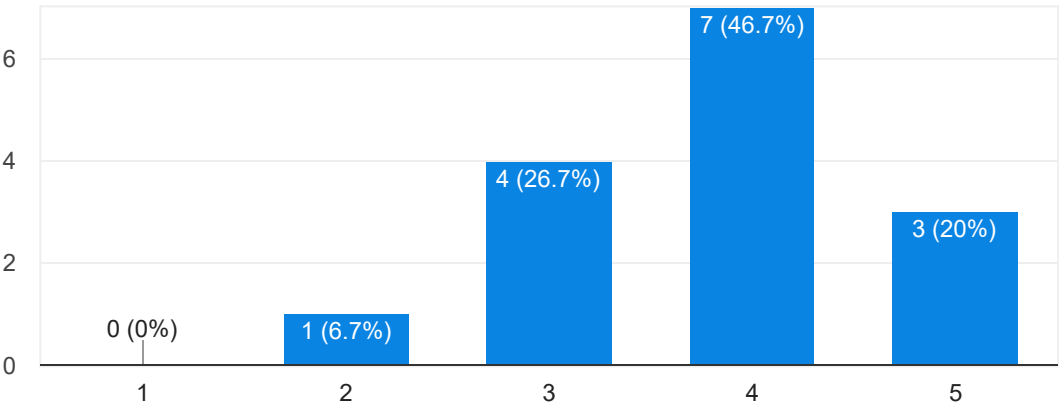
16 responses



How important are social activities/clubs when selecting/researching a

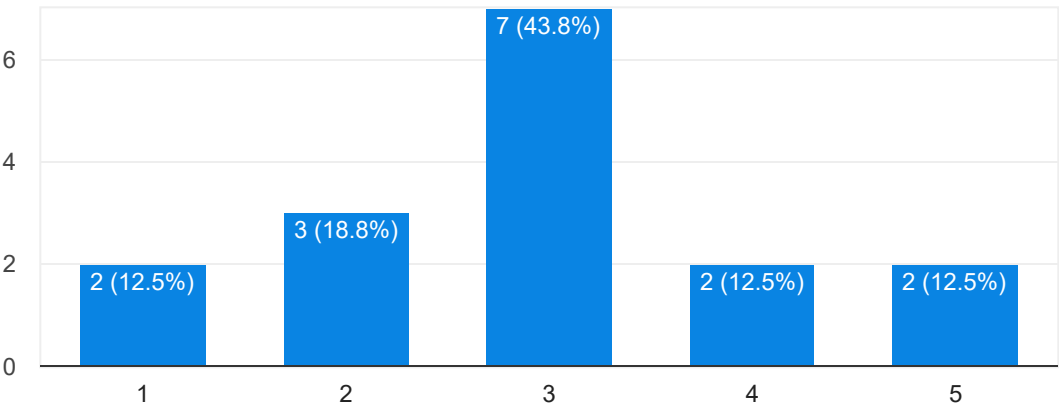
college?

15 responses



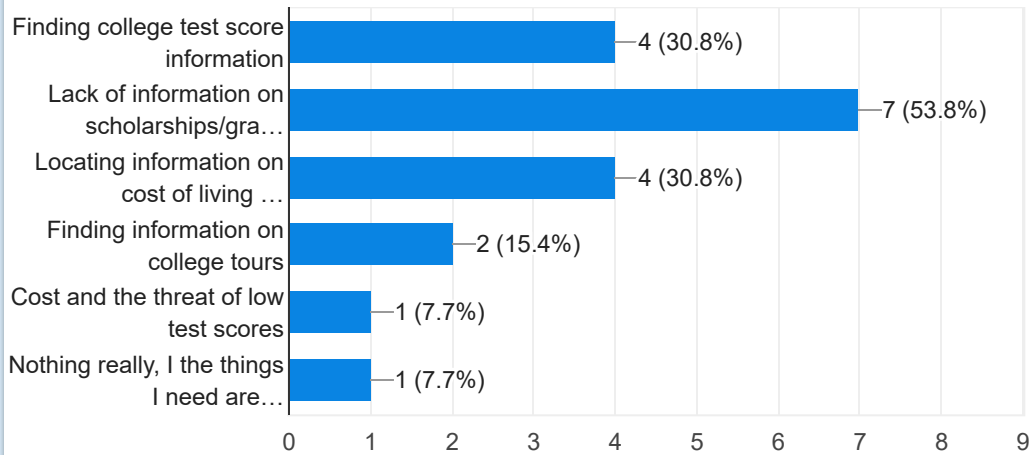
How important are athletics programs when selecting/researching a college?

16 responses



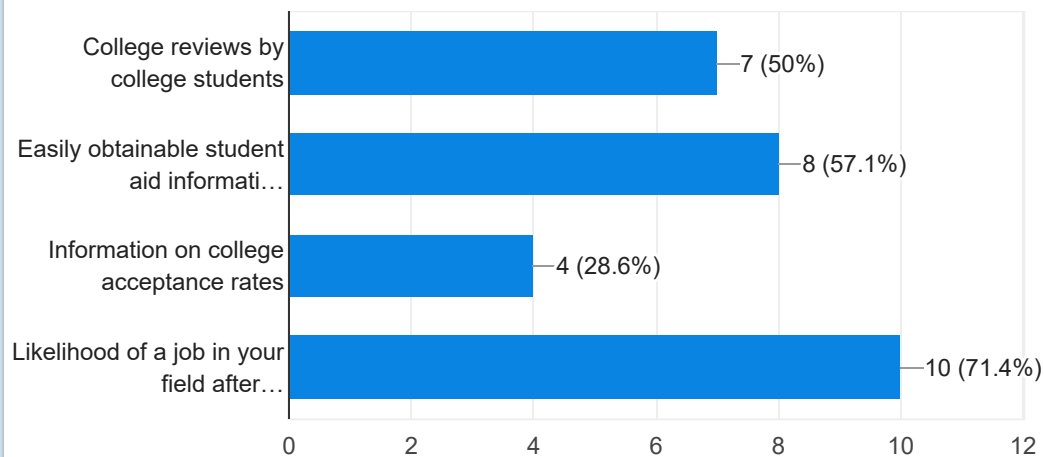
Select the challenges you have experienced when applying to college (select all that apply):

13 responses



What would aid you in the college application process (select all that apply):

14 responses



How much time per day do you dedicate to the college search process?

15 responses

27% of the week



30 minutes to 1 hour

I do about 1 hour every other day.

0

Not alot

2 hours or less averaging out

about 3 hours a day

Im not looking in college yet

at least 3

Not much because I'm busy with school work and other things.

2-3 hours 3 days a week

Not enough

2 hour every few days

Not a lot

5 times

What major(s) interest you? Please list all that apply.

15 responses

Education

English, Creative Writing, Scriptwriting, Screenwriting, Writing

Sports Marketing

Business

Science

Computer Science, Video game development, Video game design, Psychology

Health Science, Medical

animals

Business, physical education, sports medicine

THEATER and Baking/Pastries

psychology

Physicians assistant

sociology and psychology

Chemical Engineering

Accounting

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