



HOW IS TECHNOLOGY ADDRESSING THE COLLEGE ACCESS CHALLENGE?

A REVIEW OF THE LANDSCAPE,
OPPORTUNITIES AND GAPS

A report by The Get Schooled Foundation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last decade, it has become increasingly apparent that the American economy demands that workers earn a postsecondary degree or credential. According to a 2013 report released by the Center for Education and the Workforce, most of the 55 million jobs created over the next six years will require some type of post-secondary education.¹

Ensuring that American young people are prepared for and succeed in postsecondary education is a priority for leaders in education, philanthropy and government. However, the gaps in preparation seem too great to address with the relatively minimal resources available. Estimates suggest a significant “counseling gap”: fewer than 15% of high-need high school students receive the type of personal guidance that allows them to get on a path to college success.

How do we address the gap between what our economy needs and what is currently possible? And what role can technology play in closing that gap? With funding from the Kresge Foundation, Get Schooled, a national non-profit that engages and inspires young people to succeed in their education, conducted a scan of current digital tools that aim to support high school students from the college preparation and application progress through college completion.

As outlined in the report, Get Schooled found that while there are hundreds of websites and mobile apps aimed at supporting students throughout the college preparation and application process, there are key gaps, especially for low income students:

▶ **There are few sites that target the needs of younger students:** There is a growing foundation of evidence that stresses the importance of early preparation, yet

the vast majority of sites are centered around the college application and financial planning process for high school juniors and seniors. Few websites are aimed at supporting the work of middle school students and high school freshmen and sophomore students.

▶ **There are few sites that offer end-to-end assistance throughout the college process:** Most sites offer help for just one slice of the college application process. The most effective end-to-end tools, like Naviance or College Greenlight, require an adult in the student’s life to guide the student through the process and/or a school-based subscription. Despite the fact that hundreds of thousands of students have no effective adult advocate guiding them through the college process, there are few, if any, end-to-end tools that empower and support students directly during the college application process.

▶ **The most well-designed sites have not yet found their audience:** Because of initiatives like the College Knowledge Challenge, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, there are a number of up and coming sites that begin to address the gaps outlined above. Unfortunately, these sites often do not have a marketing or distribution strategy that ensures that the tools will connect with the students who need them most.

Based on these findings, Get Schooled has made several recommendations for those interested in tapping into the potential of technology to close the postsecondary attainment gap:

INVEST IN TOOLS THAT BEGIN WITH THE UNDERSERVED STUDENT IN MIND: Too often, college preparation tools and sites are not developed from the perspective of what a low-income student needs (or can afford) in order to successfully navigate the college application process. The most effective

¹ Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements through 2020, Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce: June 2013, <http://cew.georgetown.edu/recovery2020/>

tools are those that understand the interest, needs and connectivity of today's high school student.

SEEK OUT OPPORTUNITIES TO FUND TOOLS WHERE THERE ARE KEY GAPS: There is a great need for tools that help middle school students and high school freshmen and sophomores begin the path to college and support college students to stay on the completion path. Identifying, designing and developing tools in these two areas of the process should be a high priority in the short term.

ENSURE THAT A DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY IS PART OF THE OVERALL DEVELOPMENT PLAN: Funding high quality tools is important, but not sufficient. Unless funders and developers create and implement distribution strategies that place these tools in the hands of those who need it most, these tools will not fulfill their promise.

As the focus grows on ensuring more students are prepared for, access and complete a postsecondary degree or certificate, it will be critical to understand where and how technology can help close the 'counseling gap' alluded to earlier that is a significant barrier in students' postsecondary success.

The mere existence of these tools does not answer the fundamental question of how technology can best make up for the dearth of counselors and other knowledgeable, caring adults. To ensure that technology is effectively deployed to help meet the country's ambitious college completion goals, the college access and success field must better understand:

- Where and how technology can allow our best counselors to reach and affect more students
- Which students can successfully navigate the process largely using technology-based support
- Which 'milestones' in the process can be effectively serviced by technology, allowing counselors to use their time for the most complex steps in the process



The mere existence of these tools does not answer the fundamental question of how technology can best make up for the dearth of counselors and other knowledgeable, caring adults.

BACKGROUND

As the U.S. economy slowly recovers from the Great Recession, reality has set in: there are few career options for young people who possess only a high school degree. According to a 2013 report released by the Center for Education and the Workforce, most of the 55 million jobs created over the next six years will require some type of post-secondary education.

The American Dream now requires some education after high school.

At the same time, preparing for and paying for college has become increasingly complicated. Several factors are increasingly critical to a successful higher education experience for students: choosing a college that is a good 'match;' making good financial decisions to pay for college; and having access to academic, guidance and social supports in the high school-to-college transition.

There are many non-profit college access organizations offering personalized support and hands-on assistance to young people making their way through high school and into college. Unfortunately, the assistance need is much greater than the current capacity. Estimates suggest fewer than 15% of high-need high school students receive aid from one or more of these college access organizations.

With the high levels of unmet college counseling demand for students, education and policy leaders are increasingly viewing the use of digital tools as a potential solution. Technology has the potential to cost effectively reach hundreds of thousands of students who need assistance the most with personalized, up-to-date information and guidance. More specifically, technology applications and tools should allow students to:

- ▶ Access content that raises their awareness and knowledge of the college going process in a format and style that is meaningful to them.
- ▶ Find peers and near-peers that they can connect to that can share valuable insight and guidance and help students envision themselves succeeding in the college setting.

- ▶ Ease the sheer complexity of the process by offering easy-organizing tools to track dates and deadlines.
- ▶ Facilitate connection and collaboration across the many stakeholders in the college preparation and success process including parents, students, counselors, teachers, professors, admissions officers, etc.
- ▶ Identify the best-fit college by comparing and contrasting multiple colleges across key data points including graduation rates, job placement rates, cultural characteristics, financial aid availability.
- ▶ Find personalized information about college preparation and access based on age, location and interests.

While technology can close critical information gaps for students, it should also be used to give the field impact data that allows stakeholders to better understand the type of student supports and interventions that are most (and least) successful.

Given the promise of technology in this space, it's not surprising that in the last five years, hundreds of millions of dollars have been poured into the ed tech space to fund a wide range of education tools and applications, including tools targeting the college admission process. But are these new tools meeting the need of the sector? Are they able to substantively increase the number of young people with a postsecondary degree or certificate? Which tools are best positioned to contribute in a meaningful way? Where are there gaps?

This report aims to elevate and highlight web-based tools that are best positioned to aid all students (including those with the greatest need) in preparing for, applying to, paying for, and succeeding in college.

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There is a growing foundation of evidence that stresses the importance of early preparation, yet the vast majority of sites are centered around the college application and financial planning process for high school juniors and seniors.

APPROACH

Along the high school-college success continuum, there are milestones that research shows students must reach in order to be successful. We know from studies of other sectors like healthcare and civic engagement that delivering the right support at the right time can help individuals overcome challenges to achieving goals.

The digital tools evaluated in this report have been grouped into overarching milestones for college access and success. These include:

▶ **PREPARATION:** There are several predictors of effective college preparation. These include: enrolling in college preparatory courses; preparing for (and understanding the purpose of) the Accuplacer exam; accessing academic assistance when needed (in high school or college); and seeking out peer support. Digital tools in this space assist with one or more areas of the preparation process, including tutorial support for rigorous high school classes.

▶ **ADMISSIONS:** Key steps in a successful admission process include: applying for at least three colleges; preparing for, registering and taking the SAT or ACT tests; finding the right college ‘match;’ and enrolling in college right out of high school. Digital tools in this space assist with one more aspects of the admissions process.

▶ **FINANCIAL PLANNING:** Fear and anxiety around paying for college increasingly affect the decisions students make surrounding the colleges they apply for and enroll in. These decisions do not necessarily lead students to the college that is the best academic ‘match.’ To ensure students identify and receive all the financial aid available to them and understand the net cost of college, it is critical that students are aware of all aid available to them from federal, state, institutional, and private sources. Digital tools in this space assist with one or more of these areas.

▶ **COLLEGE SUCCESS:** As more students enroll in college, attention is now turning to ensuring these students have the supports they need to complete college. This includes academic, financial and social supports in the first year of college. Digital tools in this space assist with the unique needs of the beginning college student.

The tools described here have been assessed according to their relevance and effectiveness for underserved students using the analytical framework laid out in a 2013 study² by Stanford economics professor Caroline Hoxby. To figure out whether low-income, high-achieving students would choose different colleges if they were better informed, Hoxby and Sarah Turner of the University of Virginia devised and tested new recruiting tools, dubbed Expanding College Opportunities, to inform students about their college-going opportunities. The study helped to identify three primary characteristics of the best web-based tools designed to expand college opportunities for high-achieving, low-income students:

● **COST:** The tool should be accessible to all students by offering it free or at very low cost so that they can be used with every high-achieving student in the U.S.



● **QUALITY OF USER EXPERIENCE:** The tool offers customized/personalized information by intensively using ‘big data’ so that every student sees customized information.

● **QUALITY OF INFORMATION:** The most effective sites do not promote a specific path or college. Rather, they help students understand all options available to them by promoting multiple paths.

² <http://siepr.stanford.edu/?q=/system/files/shared/pubs/papers/12-014paper.pdf>

In addition, this report has assessed whether or not the tool is available via mobile³, has been designed for the specific needs of traditionally underserved students as well as the tool's relative volume of users (determined based on years of existence and current volume). The tools have been evaluated against each of these criterion using the following scale:

- Little evidence that it meets the criteria
- Some evidence that it meets the criteria
- Growing track record that it meets the criteria
- Established track record it meets the criteria
- Strong track record that it meets the criteria

A full list of sites reviewed and assessed can be found at the end of this report. We've highlighted tools we believe are the "best in class" () and "rising stars" ().

Get Schooled recognizes that this is a dynamic field—with tools entering the field on an ongoing basis and tools continuously growing (and weakening) in relevancy and reach. Thus, the table includes an accurate snapshot of the field in 2013.

KEY FINDINGS

Get Schooled reviewed close to 200 technology applications aimed at supporting students through the college application process. At first glance, the sheer number of tools is overwhelming. But as Get Schooled categorized and analyzed the existing suite of tools, we quickly realized that the current universe of available tools is limited in its scope and reach. The highest quality technology applications, games and supports that have been developed do not necessarily connect with the highest-need students, diminishing their overall effectiveness and scalability.

³ Few low-income high school students have access to the Internet at home. Most rely on school and the library to access the Internet, thus limiting the time they are able to spend on the computer. Increasingly, mobile devices are closing the digital divide for these young people, and many are using their phones to access Internet sites. Sites catering to low-income students must be optimized for mobile if they are to be effective.

More specifically, our research revealed **six major findings on scope and reach:**

- 1** While there are hundreds of educational tools available on the Internet, **there is no 'go-to' site that incorporates all the different milestones necessary to help students prepare for and complete the college application process.** Many sites specialize in just one or two components along the continuum.
- 2** **There are significant gaps in the availability of tools for younger high school students and college-age students.** While most tools are clustered around the admissions process (see figure 1), there are few tools targeted to younger students (middle school students and high school freshmen and sophomores), even though growing evidence has indicated that engaging students in the college process at an earlier age increases the likelihood that a student will apply to and enroll in college. There are also few tools aimed at supporting students once they are in college, despite growing recognition that many students face significant challenges once they are in college.

"The most well-designed sites have not yet found their audience."

- 3** There are **a glut of tools around the college admission and financing** elements of the process. This report finds that there are countless web-based tools available to help students find the right college match, apply for scholarships, and complete the college application process. These tools are of uneven quality and some are actually lead generators for for-profit or less-selective non-profit universities.

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Improving college access and completion rates is an important goal that cannot be achieved unless more students have access to the support and guidance they need from high school through college and beyond.

- 4 While there are a number of sites that aim to connect students with college scholarships, **few sites do a good job at explaining the financial aid space** in an easy-to-understand way. For example, only one scholarship site, Find Tuition, matches students with state grant aid opportunities as well as private scholarships.
- 5 Most tools are designed with an implicit assumption that a student is interested in going to college and has a general idea of the steps to get there. There are **few, if any, effective tools directed to students with little to no college knowledge** that can help them gain an understanding of where to start in the college preparation and application process regardless of their age. The most effective end-to-end tools, like Naviance or College Greenlight, require an adult account (fee-based) in the student's life to guide the student through the process. There were no direct-to-student end-to-end solutions that Get Schooled found that were free and did not require adult guidance.
- 6 There is also a **dearth of high quality, free, leveled academic support** for aspiring high school students (Khan Academy remains best in class in this space). And while there are a number of preparation/tutoring sites that focus on STEM subjects, there are few that strengthen writing and vocabulary skills, two areas where many low-income students struggle.

The sites and digital tools available also vary considerably in quality. Some sites are very effective at supporting students through the process, while others simply push out an overwhelming amount of information. The most effective tools share the following four characteristics:

- ▶ **INTERACTIVITY** - dynamic functionality that gives more in depth information than a static website. Interactive sites allow students to participate by playing games, watching and commenting on videos, using their mobile phones, etc.
- ▶ **PERSONALIZATION/CUSTOMIZATION** - prompts that require students to answer a series of customizable messages so responses are simultaneously updated on a personal dashboard, triggering reminders or alerts.
- ▶ **CONNECTING COUNSELORS AND STUDENTS** - e.g., web-based dashboards that allow counselors to monitor

student progress through the application process.

- ▶ **INFORMATION IN REAL-TIME** - more than simply up-to-date, information can be updated in real-time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As noted by the findings in the Hoxby/Turner study, highly effective digital tools have the potential to address significant barriers in college preparation, application and success for low-income and first generation students. The field of tools is still relatively young, however, and currently only a handful meet the characteristics outlined in the Hoxby/Turner study. Of those that do, it can be difficult or next-to-impossible to ensure that a young person is connected with the tool that is right for him or her.

To leverage the scale and measurable potential of technology, funders, developers and education leaders should consider the following:

- **INVEST IN TOOLS THAT BEGIN WITH THE UNDERSERVED STUDENT IN MIND:** Too often tools and sites begin with the information they want or need to share rather than what a low-income student might need to know about the college process. The most effective tools are those that understand the interest, needs and connectivity of today's high school student.
- **SEEK OUT OPPORTUNITIES TO FUND TOOLS WHERE THERE ARE KEY GAPS:** There is a great need for tools that help middle school students and high school freshmen and sophomores get on the path to college and for college students to stay on that path. Identifying, designing and developing tools in these two areas of the process should be a high priority in the short term.
- **ENSURE THAT A DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY IS PART OF THE OVERALL DEVELOPMENT PLAN:** Funding high quality tools is important, but not sufficient. Unless funders and developers develop strategies to ensure those tools are put in the hands of those who need it most, those tools will not fulfill their promise.

CONCLUSION

Improving college access and completion rates is an important goal that cannot be achieved unless more students have access to the support and guidance they need from high school through college and beyond. While an in-person, knowledgeable counselor is preferred for every student, there is such a significant gap between the availability of such resources and what is currently needed that many question whether it is possible to scale that model given current constraints.

“Most of the 55 million jobs created over the next six years will require some type of post-secondary education.”


Technology can and should play a role in reaching more students with the information and support they need, and the tools highlighted in this report demonstrate an important step in closing the ‘counseling gap.’

The mere existence of these tools, though, does not answer the fundamental question of how technology can best make up for the dearth of counselors and other knowledgeable, caring adults. Thus, to ensure that technology is effectively deployed to meet the country’s ambitious college completion goals, the field must better understand:

- ▶ Where and how technology can allow our best counselors to reach and affect more students
- ▶ Which students can successfully navigate the process largely using technology-based support
- ▶ Which ‘milestones’ in the process can be effectively serviced by technology, allowing counselors to use their time for the most complex steps in the process

PREPARATION TOOLS

Name	Description	Mobile Optimized	Cost	Tailored to Needs of Underserved Students	Quality of User Experience	Quality of Information	Relative User Volume
CK 12	The site breaks down text books and test prep content to make it more accessible to students of all ages. The K-12 educational materials are free, aligned to state curriculum standards, and fully customizable to meet student and teacher needs. FlexBook allows users to produce and customize content. CK 12 also has modules that offer SAT prep, tutoring (peer-to-peer), and academic games.	No	Free	Yes			
Cramster	Homework help for high school and college students. Students can access help via discussion boards and through personalized online help. Given predominance of user-generated content, quality is highly variable. Acquired in 2010 by Chegg.	No	Primarily paid with some no-cost content available	No			
Envictus	Envictus is a for-profit company that has developed a web-based platform that allows each user to track and monitor the college application process. At the core is an interactive program designed for 6-12th graders that teaches students about their postsecondary options and guides them through their educational career. Students cannot sign up individually; it must be done through the district or the school.	Some content mobile optimized	Cost to school or district that purchases the software	No			
GeoGebra	Interactive geometry, algebra, statistics and calculus software all developed via open source. The intended audience for the available tools is international and is applicable to both students and teachers. All materials and tools are available at no cost.	No but apps are available	Free	No			
iCivics	Non-profit organization that promotes civics education and encourages students to become active citizens. iCivics has produced 16 educational video games as well as teaching materials. Students can use the games on their own or as part of a classroom lesson.	Some	Free and paid	No			


















Name	Description	Mobile Optimized	Cost	Tailored to Needs of Underserved Students	Quality of User Experience	Quality of Information	Relative User Volume
Homework	A mobile app that allows students to keep track of their homework assignments and exam schedules. A simple straightforward app. Effectiveness dependent on user input. Almost 10,000 users have rated Homework and given it an average score of 4.6/5.	Yes	Free but with ads on pages	No			
InstaEDU	A relatively new, fee-for-service, online tutoring service. This online tutoring tool connects high school and college students to tutors over the internet - offering video and chat features. InstaEDU allows users to review their tutors. The reviews are displayed publicly so students can browse tutor profiles and easily decide which tutor is good for them. Students can also easily add their own feedback by rating their tutors after every session.	No	Cost to students who use the service (\$24 per hour)	No			
Khan Academy 	Website with thousands of videos offering micro lessons on a variety of subjects for all ages. Students are now able to take an assessment to allow all content to be personalized to their specific needs. All materials are available at no cost. The site also has specific tools and resources available for teachers and parents to support a student's learning.	App is available	Free	No			
Math Planet	Online math community where students can study math for free. Content is in the form of written lessons and short videos. Students can learn key elements of school math courses in Pre-algebra, Algebra 1, Algebra 2 and Geometry and have prepared practice tests for the SAT and ACT. All material is focused on US high school math.	Yes	Free	No			
Open Study	Online study forum. Students can use it on their own or teachers/professors can make it a formal part of their class of study. The interface is very chat-like and you can see answers to questions in real time.	No	Free	No			

Name	Description	Mobile Optimized	Cost	Tailored to Needs of Underserved Students	Quality of User Experience	Quality of Information	Relative User Volume
Power My Learning	Nonprofit aimed at improving academic outcomes by providing universal access to academic assistance, lessons, test prep, etc. Free online platform for K-12 students, teachers, and parents. Academic games, activities by subject, reports for students and teachers.	No	Free	Yes			
SAT Word Slam	Vocabulary learning and testing app. The app uses rhyming poems, humor, and mnemonic (memory) clues to teach hundreds of SAT words. The Teach Me side: short, relatively funny poems that teach the definitions and use the words in context. The Test Me side: 20-question tests with three types of questions: Fill-in-the-blank, Definitions, and Finish-the-Poem.	Yes	App costs \$3.99 to download; some content available for free	Yes			
School Helper	Mobile app that allows students to track their progress and have a clear picture of their performance. Students can use it for managing academic schedules, grades, homework, etc. Close to 2,000 users have rated the app and given it an average score of 4.4/5.	Yes	Free	No			
Tutor.com	Popular, online, live and on demand tutoring service. Offers one-to-one learning solutions for students and professionals. It has held close to 10 million tutoring sessions since launch, offering help for all ages including homework, tutoring, peer coaching, professional development, training and career help.	Yes	Students charged \$40 per hour	No			
Yaphie	Beta launched in 2013. Only 500 users have registered. Aims to provide services to help kids get into college from the moment they start high school.	Yes	Free	No			
Zombie College 	Released in fall 2013, this game aims to teach students about how to prepare for college using short bursts of highly addicting game play (involving zombies). Popular with 9-12th graders in beta testing. Winner of the College Knowledge Challenge.	Yes	Free	Yes			



















ADMISSION TOOLS

Name	Description	Mobile Optimized	Cost	Tailored to Needs of Underserved Students	Quality of User Experience	Quality of Information	Relative User Volume
Apply 4 Admissions	A website that aims to be a clearinghouse of all college application information. Launched in 2001. The site is packed with information, though navigation is difficult; the average student may find it difficult to access the information s/he needs.	No	Free	No			
Apply Kit	Organizational tool that a student can use to organize his/her college search and application process. It reminds students of upcoming deadlines and allows parents and counselors opportunity to collaborate online. There is also a relatively straight forward college-search function. While there is a great deal of potential, this is a relatively new tool that is still under development.	Yes	Mix of free and paid	No			
Applyful 	Web-based platform for students to collaborate on the college application process. It includes an organizational tool, college search function, and connections to community. Tool is still under development. Winner of the College Knowledge Challenge.	No	Free	Yes			
Café College	A site tailor-made to San Antonio area students using the Know How 2 Go template. Offers quizzes, tools and information to help middle and high school students plan for college. It also directs students to a physical location in San Antonio where they can get in-person assistance.	No	Free	Yes			
Cappex 	One stop shop for college going process support and decision making. Great tool for researching colleges and comparing and contrasting options. The user can adjust his/her requirements (tuition, major, distance from home, etc.) and find the colleges that match their specifications. The What Are My Chances® Calculator instantly tells students their chances of getting into their favorite schools.	Yes	Free	No			

Name	Description	Mobile Optimized	Cost	Tailored to Needs of Underserved Students	Quality of User Experience	Quality of Information	Relative User Volume
College Application Wizard	A personalized way to navigate college admission and financial aid applications. The site is most useful once a student has chosen which schools s/he will apply to. The site helps the student manage the application process against the college-specific calendar and requirements.	Some	Some content is free, full site accessible for \$12.95 fee	No			
College Board 	In addition to information about their own products (AP, SAT), the College Board site includes Big Future, a site designed to encourage low-income students to go to college, an academic tracker to help students ensure that they meet minimum requirements for applying to their preferred colleges (such as adequate courses in each subject and appropriate standardized tests), along with a college search and a scholarship search.	No	Free	The Big Future section of the site tailored to needs of underserved students			
College Confidential	A comprehensive site that offers students information about college admissions, financing and discussion boards on a host of college-related topics. More than 500,000 students a month visit the site. The site is owned by Hobson's, a for-profit international publishing/media company.	No	Free	No			
College Greenlight 	Service of Cappex. Used as a collaboration tool between student and counselor. Designed specifically for the needs of first-generation and underrepresented students to help them attend their dream college. The platform allows counselors and community based organizations to provide support to their students through the college search and application process. Features include "best fit" college lists, customized college profiles and a rich scholarship database. Most effective when used in partnership with a counselor.	No	Free for students; schools purchase a subscription	Yes			














Name	Description	Mobile Optimized	Cost	Tailored to Needs of Underserved Students	Quality of User Experience	Quality of Information	Relative User Volume
College Mapper 	A step-by-step process designed to help students navigate the college application process. The personalized to-do-list guides a student through every step of college admissions. Strong collection of videos to help students navigate the process.	No	Free	No			
College On Track	A site aimed at allowing students, their families and other stakeholders in the college application process to collaborate and track progress. It also helps students track college entrance requirements, as well as assist with college selection.	No	Cost to schools and counselors Free for individual students	No			
College Prowler	College reviews by other college students. The reviews are helpful and offer insight on everything from academics to social life. Also includes a "Chance Me" tool that allows students to assess the likelihood of getting into a particular school.	No	Free	No			
College Reality Check 	Interactive digital tool launched in 2013 created by the Chronicle of Higher Ed that allows users to compare up to five colleges from their database along several key metrics including: college graduation rates, amount a graduate might earn, monthly repayment rate for loans, and net price.	No	Free	No			
College Week Live	An online college fair which features more than 450 colleges and universities. The platform hosts virtual events throughout the year, including monthly college fairs, study abroad day, international day, STEM/health science day, transfer day, etc. Good resource for students not able to visit colleges, though not all content is student friendly. It boasts more than 100,000 site visits per month.	App available	Free	Yes			













Name	Description	Mobile Optimized	Cost	Tailored to Needs of Underserved Students	Quality of User Experience	Quality of Information	Relative User Volume
Cash Course	Tools, calculators and information to help students make informed financial decisions throughout the college years and beyond.	No	Free	Yes			
Grockit/ Kaplan Test Prep	Long-standing Test Prep company largely focused on a bricks and mortar approach. Kaplan Test Prep recently acquired Grockit, which offers a dynamic, digital and collaborative approach to test prep.	No	\$30/month	No			
Know How 2 Go	A campaign, website and set of tools designed and launched by the Ad Council, Lumina Foundation and ACE. The site is aimed specifically at students who have little knowledge about the college access process. The site includes check lists for students by grade and inspirational videos.	No	Free	Yes			
Mapping Your Future	A non-profit underwritten by a group of student loan guaranty agencies. Students can access information about college choices, financial aid, careers, and financial literacy options. The site has a lot of information but can be difficult to navigate for students who are less familiar with the college going process.	No	Free	No			
My College Options	My College Options is a FREE college planning service, offering assistance to students, parents, high schools, counselors, and teachers nationwide. It is designed to assist high school students as they explore a wide range of post-secondary opportunities, with a special emphasis on the college search process. Site includes digital tools and games that assist in test prep, college majors search and financial aid.	No	Free	No			







Name	Description	Mobile Optimized	Cost	Tailored to Needs of Underserved Students	Quality of User Experience	Quality of Information	Relative User Volume
Mytonomy 	A college and career planning site that provides information to students through video storytelling, mostly from other students. The site aims to help high school & college students navigate the next steps in their educational and career development. Supported by a catalog of common questions, invited advice givers (both students and educators) post their video addressing the subject.	Yes	Free	Yes			
Naviance 	Designed largely for college counselors, Naviance organizes the college application process. Reminders for deadlines, recommendations, transcripts, etc. are included. School counselor can assign tasks and communicate through the mobile app. The website also allows students to plan high school courses and guides students through the college application process. Naviance is now used in more than 5,500 schools.	Mobile App	Cost to districts	Yes			
NextStepU	NextStepU is a resource for high school students, parents and school counselors that helps them find information about future planning.	No	Free	No			
New Futuro	Helps Latinos prepare, apply and pay for college. Launched in 2012 and still building an audience, it is one of the few sites tailored specifically for the needs of the Latino student. The site includes written materials about entrance exams, FAFSAs, and college essays on its bilingual website.	No	Free	Yes			
Parchment 	A secure digital transmission of transcripts. Allows students to create electronic transcripts to share their education credentials. Also includes a tool for predicting college admission results using the data collected from previously submitted transcripts.	No	Fee-based	No			

Name	Description	Mobile Optimized	Cost	Tailored to Needs of Underserved Students	Quality of User Experience	Quality of Information	Relative User Volume
Petersons	Founded nearly fifty years ago, Peterson's has been the go-to guidebook for information about colleges for generations. It's online site offers college information, a scholarship search, an essay editing service, and a book store where you can purchase the more in-depth guides.	No	Mix of free and paid	No			
Prep Me	Individualizes test prep for ACT, SAT and PSAT based on an assessment of student's current skill level and how much time the student has to prepare. It is owned by Hobson's, a global media/publishing company.	Yes	\$300 (average)	No			
Unigo 	A student-generated online college guide that allows users to share photos, videos, documents and reviews of their college. Also offers live video sessions with a student or counselor about college-related topics. These counseling sessions are available for a fee to high schools and districts.	No	Basic level free; \$99 for 1:1 session with admission counselor	No			
Zinch	A division of Chegg, Zinch attempts to connect students with colleges and vice versa. Students create a profile; colleges browse the profile and contact students who most interest them and encourage them to apply. Zinch has aimed to strike a balance between providing information to prospective students and marketing these students to schools and private companies.	No	Free	No			

FINANCIAL PLANNING / SCHOLARSHIP TOOLS








Name	Description	Mobile Optimized	Cost	Tailored to Needs of Underserved Students	Quality of User Experience	Quality of Information	Relative User Volume
College Abacus 	Site still under development. Once fully developed, students will be able to compare their projected financial aid packages across schools and identify schools within their personal budget. Site is useful throughout the college application process as students decide which schools to apply to and after financial packages are awarded. College Knowledge Challenge Winner.	Yes	Free	Yes			
College Up	Developed by USA Funds and launched in 2011, College Up aims to demystify how to pay for higher education for both traditional and non-traditional students with a heavy emphasis on tools and guidance for completing the FAFSA. Includes quizzes like "Who is Your Parent," which helps users answer a key FAFSA question.	No	Free	Yes			
FAFSA4Caster	A tool developed by the US Department of Education that helps a student understand their options for paying for college. The information is helpful although the website requires students to provide a lot of personal and family financial information.	No	Free	Yes			
Fastweb	One of the largest, most frequently used scholarship search providers with one of the most comprehensive databases available. In addition to scholarships, it offers members information on financial aid, jobs and internships. There are also some additional tools to help users manage the scholarship application process. Owned by Monster, the site supports their services by offering student data to advertising partners.	No	Free	No			

Name	Description	Mobile Optimized	Cost	Tailored to Needs of Underserved Students	Quality of User Experience	Quality of Information	Relative User Volume
Find Tuition	A scholarship search base that includes national and state grants. This site also offers the ability to track the scholarship application process, akin to an online checklist. The database is not perfect, but does include state grants which most other scholarship sites do not.	No	Free	No			
My College Dollars	In 2012, MTV, Get Schooled and the College Board launched “My College Dollars,” a Facebook application that utilizes information from a user’s Facebook profile — including age, gender and state — to connect students with targeted financial aid opportunities. More than 200,000 students have used the app since it launched. The search engine draws from the College Board scholarship database.	Yes	Free	Yes			
Sallie Mae	The recently updated Sallie Mae site includes a searchable scholarship database and newly designed apps that help middle school and high school students prepare financially and academically for college. Sallie Mae also administers UPromise, which allows users to ‘earn while they shop’, enabling some to rack up as much as \$1,000 a year to offset college tuition or current loans.	Site is not, but apps are	Free	No			
Scholarships.com	One of the most popular scholarship search sites. In addition to scholarship information, it has information about financial aid, college prep and scholarships. The site’s search engine is driven by an algorithm designed to tee up the scholarships that best fit a student’s profile and rates the relevancy of each listed scholarship. Like Fastweb, the site supports its services by offering student data to advertising partners.	No	Free	No			

Name	Description	Mobile Optimized	Cost	Tailored to Needs of Underserved Students	Quality of User Experience	Quality of Information	Relative User Volume
Scholly	Launched in 2013, Scholly is a mobile app designed to help students find scholarships for college or graduate school. It is powered by an adaptive matching engine to improve the scholarship match.	Mobile app	App costs \$0.99 to download	Yes			
Scholarship-Experts	A search service that claims to be the "most accurate scholarship search service on the internet." Its focus is to find the best matches for each student based on the information the student gives. Students can also easily download or print scholarship applications.	No	Free	No			

COLLEGE SUCCESS TOOLS

Name	Description	Mobile Optimized	Cost	Tailored to Needs of Underserved Students	Quality of User Experience	Quality of Information	Relative User Volume
Beyond 12	A non-profit focused on college success through a personalized student coaching service that is largely online (staffed by recent college grads). Beyond 12 currently supports 24,000 college students. College Knowledge Challenge winner.	Yes	Free	Yes			
College Snapps 	A recently launched mobile guide for students to use to get to and through college. Features include interactive mobile messages that offer reminders of key dates, etc. Still relatively untested. Will be in 14 colleges in fall 2013.	Yes	Free	Yes			
Degree Planner	A GPA calculator/degree tracker that helps students set and meet academic goals. It allows students to track what they need to take to get their degree. It still has a relatively small user base, but is highly rated among current users.	App	Basic app is free, upgrade is \$1.99	No			
Grad Guru	A free app that helps students get through college with school deadlines, advice and a way to earn rewards for doing the right things. Designed specifically for the needs of community college students, it is organized around "evidence-based tips" that help students know the steps they need to take to get through school faster and ultimately transfer to a four year institution.	No	Free	Yes			
MyEdu 	Found in 2008, MyEdu allows students to create social profiles completely based on education and professional life, and then links them to potential employers. It forms relationships with universities and colleges and then colleges make the service available to their students.	Yes	Free	No			

Name	Description	Mobile Optimized	Cost	Tailored to Needs of Underserved Students	Quality of User Experience	Quality of Information	Relative User Volume
Mytonomy 	A free college and career planning site that provides information to students through video storytelling, mostly from other students. The aim of Mytonomy is to help high school and college students figure out the next step in their education and career.	Yes	Free	Yes			
Persistence Plus	A site under development. Motivates students to college completion through a mobile platform that aims to facilitate positive peer academic pressure by enabling students to easily share academic goals and their progress towards them with friends, and compare their own academic habits to aggregate norms. Expects to have advertisers underwrite cost of the program.	Yes	Free to students	No			
Proven	Allows users to build resumes, search for jobs and apply to jobs from their smart phones.	Yes	Free	Yes	