February 2010

Wandering the Web -- College Planning Resources: Hands On Research Solutions

Africa S. Hands MA, MLIS

Jack G. Montgomery
Western Kentucky University, jack.montgomery@wku.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Wandering the Web — College Planning Resources: Hands On Research Solutions

by **Africa S. Hands, MA, MLIS**

Column Editor: **Jack G. Montgomery** (Coordinator, Collection Services, Western Kentucky University) <jack.montgomery@wku.edu>

*Column Editor's Note: I met **Ms Hands** at a recent meeting of the **Kentucky Library Association**. She presented an impressive poster session on the topic of College Planning Resources. As I listened, I realized that this information would be valuable to any reference librarian in any library setting, so I asked her to provide the following items in this column. — JM*

As information centers, libraries are equipped to help its young patrons make important educational decisions. From accreditation to campus security to campus information aids there are numerous, valuable resources available online for college-bound students and their parents. The following is a sampling of college-planning Websites, many sponsored by the federal government, that offer a wealth of information on preparing for what is often a challenging time for students and families.

Campus Security Data Analysis Cutting Tool — *http://ope.ed.gov/security/* — Provided by the Office of Postsecondary Education of the **U.S. Department of Education**, this Website provides customized reports related to campus crime data. Data represent alleged criminal offenses reported to campus security or local police authorities. Users may search for one institution or receive aggregated data from group campuses. Results may be downloaded and represent data from the last three years.

Career Voyages — *http://www.careervoyages.gov/* — A collaboration between the **U.S. Department of Education** and the **U.S. Department of Labor**, **Career Voyages** provides information on in-demand occupations with special attention to the knowledge, skills, and education requirements needed to attain the job. It also serves as a resource for parents who are helping students make career and education decisions. The Career Clusters guides provide education study plans with appropriate courses to meet various career goals.

College.gov — *www.college.gov* — A Website built by the **U.S. Dept. of Education** in collaboration with students. In addition to being a go-to source for college planning information and resources, *College.gov* provides inspiration and encouragement to all students through its inclusion of current student profiles, questions answered by current students, and videos. There are also resources for parents and teachers working with college-bound students.

College Confidential — *http://www.collegeconfidential.com* — A recommended resource for straight talk on college admissions and college life. Users may register to participate in an active online community, with discussion forums for prospective students and parents, and network with other college-bound students and admissions representatives. Receive advice on topics such as early decision, test scores, and application concerns. The site also features campus visit reports wherein students rate campuses after a visit and upload photos and videos.

College Is Possible — *http://www.collegeispossible.org* — This resource from the **American Council on Education** is for middle and high school students from underserved communities, their parents, and educators serving this population. Intended to bridge colleges and their local K-12 community, the Website features a *Jump Start Your Education* publication with practical tools to facilitate and encourage college exploration. Resources include a campus scorecard, major and career exploration guides based on the concept of multiple intelligence, financial aid glossary, course planning guides, diverse student profiles, and a booklet for parents with advice on supporting the college-bound student.

College Matching Wizard — *https://studentaid2.ed.gov/gotocollege/CollegeFinder/wizard_intro1.asp* — A search tool providing step-by-step guidance through the college selection process, matching students with colleges based on eight criteria (type, location, setting, size, academics, cost, campus life, and student body). The wizard includes detailed college profiles, is updated regularly, and prospective students may apply to colleges online. This site is provided by the **U.S. Dept. of Education** with links to the Wizard appearing on the official **FAFSA** Website.

College Navigator — *http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator* — A consumer information tool that provides a direct link to nearly 7,000 colleges and universities in the U.S. Provided by the **U.S. Dept. of Education**, the **College Navigator** offers students and parents an extensive amount of campus information. The site features detailed college profiles with data provided college and university institutional research departments. Users may search for colleges based on major, degree programs, and location; compare colleges; and download data to **Excel**.

College Planning at Smart Money — *http://www.smartmoney.com/personal-finance/college-planning/* — The online version of this popular personal finance magazine offers a wealth of advice on the financial aspects of college planning. Articles are geared toward parents with advice on student lending, investing for college, and making college affordable. Consumer action articles discuss credit cards, saving for college, and college financial planning for divorced families.

Common App — *http://www.commonapp.org* — A membership organization of 391 institutions that provides a common, standardized college admissions application for first-year and transfer students. Users may submit online or print applications, supplemental materials, and fees (or fee waivers) to any of the member colleges and universities. Most members are private institutions. The Website includes links to fee waivers, financial aid information, and English fluency tests.

FAFSA — *http://www.fafsa.ed.gov* — The official Website for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Entering and continuing students apply for and renew financial aid electronically. The site links to the **FAFSA4caster** which provides an early estimate of financial aid eligibility and helps families prepare sooner for college and the financial aid process.

HEATH Resource Center — *http://www.heath.gwu.edu/* — An online clearinghouse on postsecondary education for students with disabilities, this site serves as an information exchange focused on support services, policies, procedures, and schools. The modules address key concerns of entering students including accommodations, transitioning to college, financial aid opportunities, and self-advocacy. There are modules for faculty members, a toolkit for advisors, and an extensive list of related websites.

U. S. Department of Education Database of Accredited Postsecondary Institutions and Programs — *http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/* — This database contains accreditation information on colleges and universities and academic programs. Access accrediting data by searching for institution or accrediting agency. Results include current accreditation status, date, and accrediting agency. Data is provided by accrediting agencies and state approval agencies.