

MEMORANDUM

TO: Prof. Matt Ferguson, Dept. of Writing and Rhetoric, Oakland University
FROM: David Grocki, Report Group Leader DG
DATE: April 16, 2018
SUBJECT: Submission of Formal Report — Analyzing First-Year College Options

Included is the formal report you assigned January 3 to our Business Writing group.

By analyzing and comparing several in- and out-of-state institutions with medical colleges, we were able to construct a general set of recommendations for your daughters. These recommendations are based on three priority factors; academics, athletics, and tuition. There are many other factors involved in college planning, but these recommendations will help establish a framework in which to effectively navigate your family's options. Our report refers to the singular *teen* for clarity, but includes both in context.

Overall, these recommendations encourage feasibility, by which we mean *balance*. A student should always strive to be the best they can possibly be, but to aspire without a plan is something that must be avoided. College-bound students — including student-athletes — typically have high expectations; consequently, they may become too eager. Following these set of recommendations will allow your family to logically approach your daughters' college choices.

Your family should be prepared for hard decisions. For parents and child both, such a plan can be nerve-wracking. Expect anxiety and indecision, and perhaps even hostility. By listening effectively, however, and coming to well-formulated and, hopefully, unanimous decisions, your family will find a great deal of more stress had possibly been avoided.

Thank you for including our group in your family's college planning. The experience has been rewarding, and perhaps those planning a family of their own will find value in their research.

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ANALYZING FIRST-YEAR OPTIONS FOR YOUR COLLEGE-BOUND TEEN

INTRODUCTION

Choosing where to study after high school is one of the most important decisions your teen will ever make. Every year millions of students nationwide begin work toward a degree. According to the National Center for Education Statistics website (nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/), approximately 13.4 million students will have enrolled in an American four-year institution recently (“Fast Facts,” n.d.).

Sadly, many of these students will leave college without completing their studies, all for a variety of reasons. The National Student Clearinghouse website (<http://nscnews.org/>) reported the national six-year completion rate in 2016 to be 54.8% (“Cohort Outcomes,” 2016); while this report showed an upward trend from previous data, it is undoubtedly a telling number.

This is why analyzing college options, particularly first-year options, is critical to your teen’s collegiate success. Together, your family must identify key priorities and agree unanimously. Additionally, a potential student-athlete like your teen must carefully consider a target school’s athletic program. This task comes with its own unique problems and decisions.

Overall, this report seeks to maximize *feasibility*. Three key factors are foregrounded against three location types (in-state, out-of-state, junior colleges). A number of institutions are used within each topic as examples in order to frame the analysis. Our findings are supplemented by illustrations and information derived from secondary sources. These factors are:

- **Academics.** Your teen will be called upon to answer a fundamental question: *what do I want to do for a living?* Opportunities, however, may change; according to one study (Freedman, 2013), an estimated 20-50% of students enter college as “undecided,” and an estimated 75% change their majors at least once. Specifically, this report analyzes how pre-medicine (and physical therapy) programs might factor into college choices. Academics should be the most important factor in your teen’s decisions.
- **Athletics.** College sports can be a defining point in your teen’s life, and even lead to professional success in the field. However, how much athletics is feasible, and to what end? For example, is there an affordance of time, a maximum 20 hours per week per NCAA regulations (Ayers, et., 2012)? This report analyzes several athletics-related statistics.
- **Tuition.** A primary benefactor such as a parent might have the final say in school choice, but it is still important that your family become familiar with available options. This report will look at the differences in tuition between six in- and two out-of-state institutions.

ACADEMICS: WHAT TO DO AND WHERE?

Health and medicine is a compassionate career choice that presents many marketable opportunities. Presuming it leads to graduate studies, however, this field requires sacrifice and dedication. The Kaplan Test Prep website (www.kaptest.com/) states an average 39.3% of new medical school applications/matriculations were accepted in 2015 ("By the Numbers," n.d.). Therefore, medical students must prove their worth.

Fortunately, those serious about the major will find many reputable programs within a variety of universities and colleges across the nation. It might be useful to consider a pre-med major at an institution with its own medical school. In fact, there are several medical schools in Michigan alone.

In-State Institutions

Listed are six Michigan institutions with resident medical schools, compiled from the Michigan Academy of Family Physicians website (www.maafp.com/). **Figure 1** below shows the general location of each school.

1. University of Michigan Medical School, *Ann Arbor*
2. Wayne State University School of Medicine, *Detroit*
3. Michigan State University College of Human Medicine, *East Lansing*
4. Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine, *East Lansing*
5. Western Michigan University School of Medicine, *Kalamazoo*
6. Central Michigan University College of Medicine, *Mount Pleasant*
7. Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine, *Rochester*

Figure 1
Four-Year Michigan Institutions with Medical Colleges

All university logos used in this report are for educational purposes only



More details could be dredged from the schools listed; however, graduation rates are the best indicators of overall academic success. Also, many students complete their degrees after four years. Thus, our group believes six-year rates (or Federal Graduation Rates) are more representative of each institution's graduation numbers.

Only six-year graduation rates are used in this report. In-state institution first-year retention rates are excluded. **Table 1** on the following page compares in-state graduation rates.

Table 1
Six-Year Undergraduate Completion Rate per In-State Institution

INSTITUTION	GRAD (%)	ENTRY
University of Michigan	89.3	2010
Wayne State University	46.6	2011
Michigan State University	79.0	2011
Western Michigan University	52.7	2010
Central Michigan University	59.0	2010
Oakland University	46.0	2011
TOTAL AVERAGE RATE	62.1	--

(Source: University websites' retention and graduation rate sections)

Out-of-State Institutions

Though first-year college education marks a major milestone in any student's life, anxious questions are sure to be asked. This sentiment becomes more acute for students who attend an out-of-state school.

According to a 2014 *Washington Post* report, approximately 58% of high school graduates attend an institution within 100 miles from home ("Can't Wait to Leave," June 5, 2014). Because there are naturally far more institutions beyond what Michigan has to offer, your teen may become overwhelmed by the available choices.

Whether an in- or out-of-state non-commuting college, your teen must be able to live independently. Out-of-state colleges, specifically, require more careful planning; living arrangements, employment, financial management, and other factors are just as important as education. It's important for you to determine whether you are ready for this decision. Just as being college-bound is an important event in your teen's life, so too is the day they move out of your home.

Additionally, you must be conscious of your teen's motives; for example, choosing an out-of-state institution *only* because a close friend is attending is unwise, although a companion could certainly make the experience much more manageable. Siblings, in particular, could benefit significantly from each other's company away from home. However, it is imperative your family consider the responsibilities involved.

Fortunately, today's technology permits near constant contact with your teen, regardless of space and time. However, your teen must also learn to be independent. Too much supervision may undermine their confidence. It's important to talk to them and determine whether they themselves are ready to live outside the home for an extended period of time.

Ohio State University

The inclusion of Ohio State University (Columbus, OH) in this report is due to the high-profile institution being among your teen's primary college options. According to the OSU website, there is currently no minimum GPA requirement for undergraduate admissions, but PrepScholars.com, a college resource website, reports an average 3.72 GPA. Six-year graduation rates for OSU is 82.5% as of the 2011 cohort, with a first-year retention rate of 94.2% as of 2016.

OSU has its own medical school, currently ranked 26th in the U.S. for primary medical care education, according to a *U.S. News & World Report* profile ("Ohio State," n.d.).

Duke University

It would be remiss to ignore outside interest from any college. Because Duke University (Durham, NC), another high-profile school, has expressed such interest, its mention here is necessary. According to the CollegeFactual website (www.collegefactual.com), approximately 94.8% of undergraduate students complete studies within six years ("Duke Graduation Rate," n.d.). The school boasts a 97% first-year retention rate, making it one of the best schools in the country in this regards. Like the others, Duke has its own medical school.

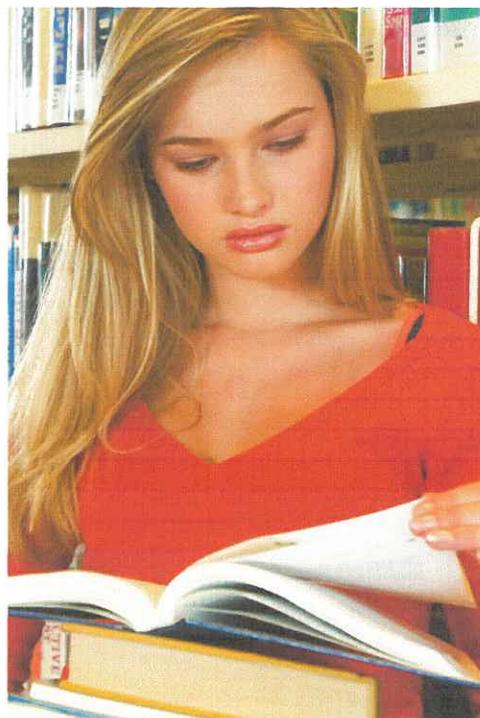
Medical Schools

This report is concerned primarily with first-year college options; therefore, it touches only briefly on in- and out-of-state graduate medical programs. Graduate medical school, however, is certainly inappropriate for those unenthusiastic about the field. Many long hours (and years) of study are required, and only the most eligible applicants are accepted. To pursue this path, personal sacrifices will have to be made in order to fulfill a very challenging curriculum.

The following numbers represent the average GPA for each in- and out-of-state institution's most recent medical school class:

1. University of Michigan — 3.78; Wayne State University — 3.65; Michigan State University (Osteopathic) — 3.63; Western Michigan University — 3.6; Central Michigan University — N/A; Oakland University — 3.76
2. Ohio State University — 3.71; Duke University — 3.85

(Source: University and other scholastic websites)



Source: Metrocreative Connection

Medical school can be a significant challenge for postgraduate students. Course loads are difficult, and all students are expected to devote most of their time to studying and researching. Your teen should expect minimal downtime if pursuing a postgraduate medical education.

ATHLETICS: ARE THEY FEASIBLE?

Athletics has been a fundamental component of character- and team-building, as well as strength conditioning, since ancient times. Sports participation can teach many life lessons, such as the importance of good sportsmanship, self-reliance, and the value of competitiveness. However, academics *must* be a student-athlete's topmost priority.

Many U.S. high schools have a fair number of student-athletes across a wide field of sports offered by their programs — but how many of these students continue their athletics on a collegiate level? According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association website (www.ncaa.org), there are over 460,000 students participating in college athletics annually across 24 official sports. 80% of these students will earn a bachelor's degree, while more than 35% will go on to complete a postgraduate program (“Student-Athletes,” n.d.).

The NCAA website provides several other conspicuous statistics:

- 172,900 Division I student-athletes encompass 351 institutions
- 87% of D1 student-athletes graduated in 2017
- Six percent of student-athletes competing in a high school sport move to NCAA

These facts highlight three main ideas: (1) there are very many student-athletes; (2) a large majority of these students graduate successfully; and (3) though six percent may seem unremarkable, six percent of over *7 million total* high school student-athletes *is* a remarkable number (“Student-Athletes,” n.d.).

In other words, these facts show athletics have many benefits for collegiate success. It is prudent, however, to consider the disadvantages. Athletics may be fulfilling, but active involvement is certainly to be exhausting. A 35% graduation rate for graduate student-athletes is a respectable number, but still significantly less than the undergraduate rate. This means most student-athletes put aside college athletics during postgraduate studies, highlighting the challenging curriculum involved.

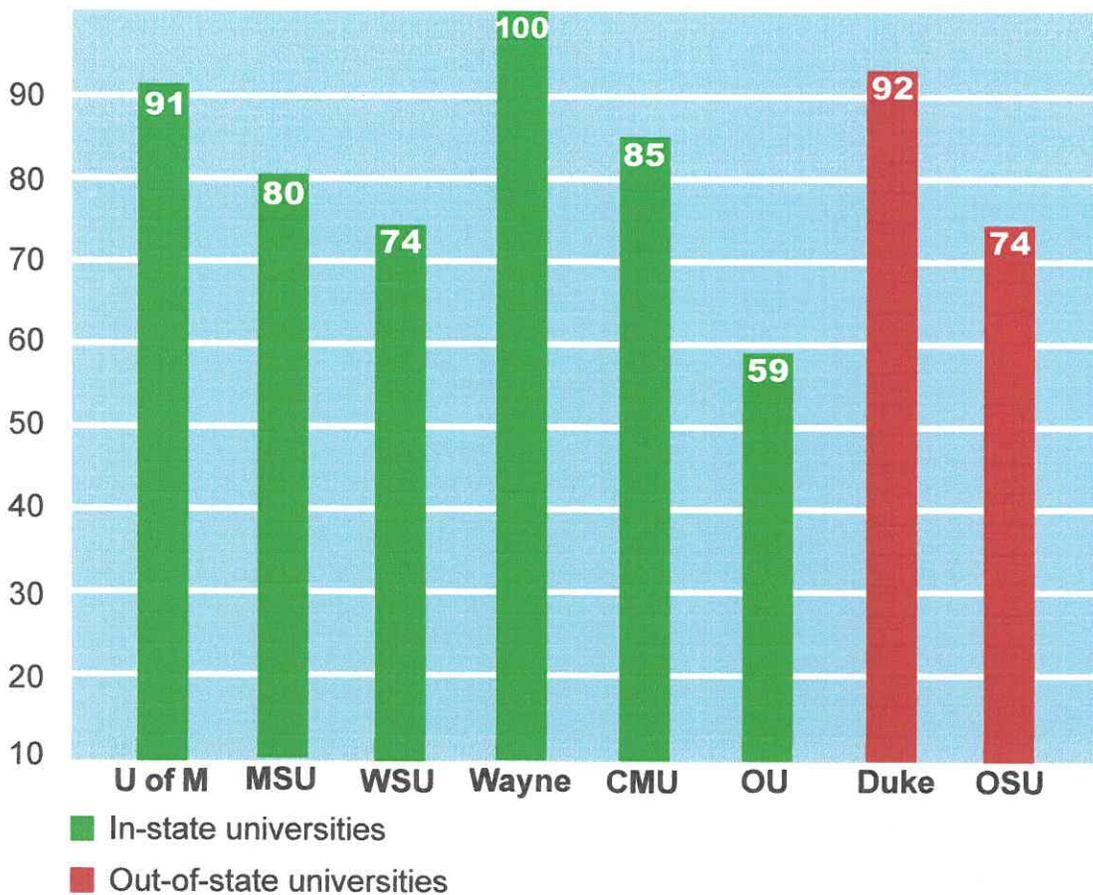
Regardless of studies, many general challenges presented by collegiate athletics are due in large part to time and health. Time management is a challenge, no matter who you are. Students in particular must manage their time precisely and effectively; falling behind in college is an obstacle difficult to overcome. While programs have policies and incentives in place to help student-athletes stay involved in their studies, such as the weekly 20-hour rule (Ayers, et. al, 2012) and state-of-the-art technology (NCAA, n.d.), a possible student-athlete like your teen must speak with their academic advisors to determine the best course of action. Although collegiate athletics may seem attractive for high school student-athletes, the best option is oftentimes the least desirable one. Again, academics must be your teen's top priority.

Health presents many other challenges, both on and off the field. Closely confined classrooms and living quarters are hotbeds for contagious bugs and other illnesses. In sports, student-athletes run a much greater risk due to the physicality involved. For women's running in particular, common factors like inadequate nutrition intake, bone stress injuries, and other female-specific dysfunctions (Kim & Nattiv, 2016) must be taken in consideration. Is the sport itself worth breaking a foot over, or worse? Would the circumstances warrant further participation? These are important scenarios your family must address before they actually happen.

In- and Out-of-State Athletics

All the examples provided in this report are Division I institutions. For brevity this report will side-step analyzing each individual program. Rather, it's worth examining each school's recent student-athlete graduation rate comparatively in regards to women's running programs. **Figure 2** below graphs this relationship; information comes mostly from Federal Graduation Rate (FGR) data provided by the NCAA website, with the exceptions of Wayne State and Ohio State universities.

Figure 2
Six-Year Student-Athlete (Running) Graduation Rate per Institution



The mean FGR average for women’s running student-athletes is approximately 82%. As can be seen from Figure 1, the in-state universities provided in this report fluctuate widely in regards to its graduation rate. The ramifications of any program must be considered, as well as how much time your teen will want to devote to the sport of running.

Throughout this report, the University of Michigan has demonstrated its value as a high-profile destination, both in athletics and academics. However, that Michigan has a high graduation rate for women runners does not infer the program should be an immediate choice. Alternately, Duke University and Ohio State University boast respectable overall numbers — but the question must be asked: is the cost of out-of-state living and tuition worth the “price of admission?” This report will turn next to tuition.

THE COST OF COLLEGE

Tuition is certainly foremost on every college-bound student’s mind, or at least should be. Your family should start comparing estimated tuition costs of each target university as they arise. As an example, this report will next analyze the tuition cost for each in- and out-of-state university. **Table 2** provides the latest estimated in- and out-of-state freshman tuition for each university discussed; all rates are based on full-time (at least 12 credit hours) semester figures.

Table 2*
Estimated Tuition Rate per In- and Out-of-State Institution per Semester (by \$K)

IN-STATE	TUITION
University of Michigan	8.2
Wayne State University	4.8
Michigan State University	7.3
Western Michigan University	6.0
Central Michigan University	5.0
Oakland University	5.1
OUT-OF-STATE	TUITION
Duke University	25.9
Ohio State University	14.8

There are many ways to alleviate the overall cost of college. These costs include, but are not limited to, books to transportation to leisure. Scholarships are extremely helpful, and eligible students may be able to apply for a Federal Pell Grant, which are usually awarded only to undergraduate students (“Pell,” n.d.). A student is not required to repay a Pell Grant (“Pell,” n.d.), unlike a federal student loan. There are numerous loan options, but a good place to start is the U.S. Department of Education. More information on these loans can be found at the Federal Student Aid website (<https://studentaid.ed.gov>).

(Source: University websites’ tuition sections)

***Rates do NOT include estimated textbook costs, room and board, and other related expenses.**

You and your spouse may incur the critical costs necessary for your teen to study in- or out-of-state. This practice is common — in fact, a University of Michigan study shows over 60% of all students aged 19-22 receive some form of financial aid from their parents, and this average approximates to about \$7,500 per year (“Study,” 2016). Parents may supplement these contributions with outside loans.

Of course, the issue of money is a complex and troublesome obstacle to navigate. Simply put, many students are unable to attend their target schools because the costs exceed their budget. It’s important to note that though a specific university’s tuition might seem excessive, a school typically provides financial services and employment opportunities to manage expenses. Many university applications are based solely on academic merit; however, it’s important that your teen speak with a high school guidance counselor or make an appointment (walk-in or phone, if options are available) with a university’s academic advisor.

This report has so far touched on three priority factors likely to influence a student’s first-year college choice. Several Michigan universities, all with their own medical schools, were identified and compared in terms of average GPA, tuition, and student-athlete graduation rates. Two out-of-state institutions were likewise identified and compared. Your family may form different conclusions from the data provided, but we now turn to the report’s last topic — junior colleges.

THE JUNIOR COLLEGE OPTION

A junior college, or community college, is as an educational institution that provides vocational training as well as undergraduate education (“Junior college,” 2018). According to Encyclopedia Britannica (<https://www.britannica.com>), these colleges typically provide nontraditional courses and are, more importantly, similar to public high schools. Our group felt it would be useful to frame the junior college option in order to provide a more thorough set of recommendations. A general knowledge of community college culture in terms of academics, athletics, and tuition is worth knowing.

The junior college option may meet resistance from your teen, particularly if they are above-average high school students. However, no student should feel their abilities and skill sets are being “sold short” by attending a junior college. Just because your teen *could* attend a four-year institution as a first-year college option does not necessarily mean they *should*.

In fact, the junior college option is beneficial in a variety of ways. For one, students have gone on to complete their studies at their desired four-year institution. Approximately 16% of first-time community college students (2010 cohort year) completed their studies at a four-year institution, according to the Community College Research Center website (<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu>). The decision to attend a junior college is a decision that your teen should ultimately make, but by analyzing the general academic and academic culture of a junior college, as well as its tuition, they will be better prepared to make those types of decisions.

Academics

As mentioned, a junior college has a wide variety of courses, many of them unconventional of a typical four-year institution. However, these courses are unimportant if your child plans on transferring; if so, primary studies should consist of general education requirements. Your family should speak with an advisor from a four-year institution to answer any questions about transfer possibilities. Many universities are accommodating; for example, Oakland University works closely with neighboring Oakland Community College.

Junior colleges are also beneficial in improving overall GPA; in other words, a high-profile four-year institution may be more willing to accept a successful junior college student. 58% of junior college students who transferred to a selective four-year institution graduated with a bachelor's degree, according to the CCRC ("Transfer," n.d.).

Athletics

The National Junior College Athletics Association has 25 official sports under its supervision ("NJCAA," n.d.), including women's running. While junior college sports can give your teen more time to hone their athletic abilities in order to compete for high-profile Division I NCAA teams, academics should still be first and foremost among their responsibilities. Many junior college student-athletes put in minimal efforts to remain academically eligible for sports participation (Forster, n.d.), but this is a dangerous route for your teen to take if they should wish to attend and compete for a high-profile four-year institution. Such as it is, expect your teen to be busy if they should elect this route.

Of course, just like with four-year institutions, athletics can be a very fulfilling and rewarding experience. Like academics, junior college sports can provide a stepping stone to help your teen gain experience before transferring to their primary target school.

Tuition

According to the CCRC website, a full-time student at a public two-year community college can expect about \$3,520 tuition for each academic year ("Transfer," n.d.). This is a significant decrease from a four-year institution average — less than half, in fact ("Transfer," n.d.). Nearly four out of 10 community college students pay nothing for tuition after taking grants in consideration ("Transfer," n.d.), and nearly 71% pay less than \$1,000 per academic year.

Though community colleges rank very low in terms of FAFSA application rates ("Transfer," n.d.), these institutions have seen an increase in Pell Grant recipients, almost doubling between 2007-2012 ("Transfer," n.d.).

RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

Discussed were three priority factors your family should consider foremost in your teen's college planning phase. These factors were framed against three primary locations, and illustrations were provided to compare relevant statistics. We now take the sum of these findings in order to construct a general set of recommendations.

Table 3 summarizes these ideas:

Table 3
General Recommendations Based on Report Findings

IN-STATE

We **DO** recommend:

- low-profile school athletics
- junior college/university for high-profile school transfer
- schools with medical programs

We **DO NOT** recommend:

- high-profile school athletics
- junior college for low-profile school transfer
- schools without medical programs

OUT-OF-STATE

We **DO** recommend:

- pre-transfer in-state jr. college/university
- schools with medical programs

We **DO NOT** recommend:

- School athletics
- schools without medical programs

Whether you incur all or part of tuition is ultimately your decision. However, your teen is encouraged to take advantage of any scholarship opportunities. One useful website is Scholarships.com, which provides a number of resources. Lastly, employment opportunities available around your teen's school of choice should factor into the final stages of your planning. It is never too early for your teen to learn the value of fiscal responsibility. Lastly, your teen should apply to as many colleges as possible. This will be a tedious task, but can open up many other opportunities.

Suffice to say, this report is largely incomplete; there are many other things your family should take in account. Quality of campus life, security, entertainment options, school clubs and events, etc., are all important, too. However, the general information provided here should give you more confidence in navigating this exciting new opportunity. By making careful, informed decisions, your teen can be more fully prepared for many interesting and valuable life experiences, and soon emerge as an empowered and responsible adult.

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