🎓 **BestCollegeList**

College lists built on official federal data — not AI guesses.

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**$59 COLLEGE STRATEGY PACKAGE · SAMPLE PREVIEW (FIRST HALF)**

# Your Digital College Counselor

## Jordan (sample)

INTENDED MAJOR

Computer Science / UX Design

ACADEMIC PROFILE

GPA 3.7 · SAT 1430 · Washington (home state)

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Source: U.S. Department of Education — College Scorecard (collegescorecard.ed.gov). Verify any figure yourself.

# Contents



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### A strategic read of your list — Jordan

**Prepared:** June 2026 · **Student:** Jordan · **Intended focus:** Computer Science + UX Design **Home state:** Washington · **Budget basis:** ~$95k household (net-price personalized)

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> *This is a fictional sample (made-up student "Jordan") showing the first half of a College Strategy Package counselor letter. Every admit rate, cost, and outcome figure is real, current data from the official U.S. Dept. of Education College Scorecard — only the student is invented. Your letter is written for your own child.*

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## 📦 What's in the $59 College Strategy Package — 3 reports

This sample is **report #2 of 3**. Your package includes all three:

1. **Starter List** — your full tiered school list with real admit odds + true after-aid cost for every school.
2. 🧭 **Digital College Counselor letter** *(this sample)* — the strategic read: what to drop/add, your odds, application plan, and a 90-day action list.
3. 💼 **Major & Career Analysis** — real federal earnings by major, school-by-school, so you weigh outcomes per dollar.

*Together they take you from "here's a list" to "here's exactly what to do, and why."*

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**How to read this letter.** This is your counselor's **strategic read** — the *judgment* part of college planning, not just the numbers.

- ✓ **Verified** items are facts pulled from **official federal data** — admit rates, costs, graduation and earnings outcomes. These are never written by AI.
- 🧭 **Analysis** items are my **informed opinion** — how I'd read your profile and what I'd do about it. This is advice, not data, and you are the one who decides.

*Informational guidance, not professional/licensed counseling. Where I'm uncertain, I say so.*

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## 🧭 First, what I'd want to know

You've got a strong, well-rounded profile — a **3.7 GPA and a 1430 SAT** put you in real contention across a wide range of schools, and your **Computer Science + UX Design** combination is genuinely in-demand. To sharpen this from "good list" to "smart strategy," here's what I'd still want:

1. **CS-primary or UX-primary?** This is the single biggest fork on your list — it changes *which admit pool you compete in* at several schools (UW's Allen School, UC EECS vs. L&S). More below.
2. **Are you applying Early?** With your profile, an Early Action card at a reach (Northeastern, CMU, Michigan) is your biggest available lever. Tell me your true #1.
3. **Your high school + a portfolio.** UX/design programs sometimes want a **portfolio** — even a small one (class projects, a redesigned app screen) materially helps. Do you have one started?
4. **Is 1430 your final SAT, or are you retesting?** You're in range at most of your list; a higher score would only help at the High Reaches.

> *Fill these in and the per-school strategy below gets materially sharper.*

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## 🧭 The big picture — how I built your list & the one decision that matters most

**First, how this list came together:** I built these **20 schools** *for* you — from your majors (CS + UX Design), your stats, your Washington home state, and your ~$95k household budget. I spanned the full range: a low-cost, high-odds **in-state Washington floor** (the UWs, WSU, Western) so you're secure, then strong-value targets and reaches, up to two dream schools worth a swing.

**Now the decision that shapes everything — your two majors pull in different directions:**

- **Computer Science** lives in engineering/science colleges — **stats-driven**, often a *separate, tougher* admit (UW's Allen School, UC EECS).
- **UX Design** lives in art/design or information schools — sometimes **portfolio-based**, a different application entirely.

Here's the insight most students miss: there's a field that **unifies them** — **Human-Computer Interaction (HCI)** (sometimes "informatics," "interaction design," "human-centered design"). It's literally the engineering of how software *feels* to use. Your CS+UX combination is almost custom-built for it, and several schools on your list are strong in it (UW Informatics, CMU HCI, Michigan, Georgia Tech). **My strong lean: present as an HCI/informatics applicant** — lead with CS for the odds and the pay, let UX be the *why* that makes your essays specific. Confirm that and the rest of the application snaps into focus.

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## 🧭 Who you are on paper

🧭 **My read:** a 3.7 GPA + 1430 SAT reads as a **solid, well-prepared applicant** — above the bar at your safeties and targets, in the mix at your reaches. You're not a 1550-perfect-stats case, and you don't need to be: your edge is **focus + fit**, not raw numbers. The students who win with your profile are the ones who tell a **clear, specific story** — and "I want to build software people actually love to use, where CS meets design" is a genuinely good one. Make that legible and your application outperforms your stats.

**The one honest gap:** "CS + design" can read as two unrelated interests. Your essays need to show they're **one** interest (HCI) — the through-line is what makes you memorable.

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## 🧭 Your high school in context

🧭 **Why it matters:** admissions officers read your transcript **against your school's profile** — a 3.7 with the most rigorous schedule *your school offered* reads as "took the hardest path available," which is exactly the signal selective colleges want. They judge rigor **relative to opportunity**.

> 📋 **The one step that adds real school-specific data:** ask your counselor for your school's **Naviance / SCOIR scattergram** (if your school uses it) — it plots where students *from your school, with your GPA and scores,* were admitted in past years. It's one of the most predictive school-specific signals there is, and I can't see it from federal data.

*(In a real order, this section shows your school's verified federal profile — enrollment, setting, student–teacher ratio — when you provide the school name.)*

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## 🧭 School-by-school — your Counselor's Take

*The ✓ Admit · Cost column is verified federal data; the 🧭 columns are my analysis. I've covered a representative spread across your tiers. (💰 = in-state WA public · † = out-of-state public, non-resident premium included.)*

| School (tier) | ✓ Admit · Net/yr | 🧭 Why it fits you | 🧭 The risk |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Northeastern** 🔵<br>Dream | 5% · $16,241 | Famous **co-op** program = paid real-world CS/UX experience; surprisingly low net cost for you | Admit rate now lottery-low |

| School (tier) | ✓ Admit · Net/yr | 🧭 Why it fits you | 🧭 The risk |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Carnegie Mellon** 🔵 Dream | 12% · $24,865 | The best **HCI** program in the country — your exact intersection; strong net cost | Brutally selective; CS/HCI tougher than 12% |
| **Georgia Tech** 🔴 High Reach | 14% · $37,514 | Elite CS + a real HCI/digital-media program at a public price | OOS public; CS admit runs tougher than 14% |
| **Michigan** 🔴 High Reach | 16% · $54,079 | Top CS + a strong UX/information school (UMSI) — a premier HCI home | OOS, near your budget ceiling |
| **UC San Diego** 🔴 High Reach | 27% · $49,399 | Strong CS + cognitive science (HCI roots); big research engine | OOS-to-UC is hard regardless of stats |
| **UW–Seattle** 🟠 Reach | 💰 39% · $14,328 | Your **best-value anchor** (Value 84) — elite CS *and* Informatics (HCI), Seattle tech | **Direct-to-CS (Allen School) is far tougher than 39%** — apply Informatics/CS, have a plan B |
| **UIUC** 🟠 Reach | 42% · $34,272 † | Top-5 CS at a public price; your stats are in range | OOS premium; CS is its own tougher admit |
| **Santa Clara** 🟠 Reach | 48% · $37,219 | Heart of Silicon Valley; **$109k** median earnings — strong CS outcomes | Private cost; smaller research scene |
| **Purdue** 🟠 Reach | 50% · $36,979 † | High-odds, strong CS powerhouse, in-range for you | OOS premium; less of a "design" culture |
| **UW–Bothell** 🟢 Safety | 💰 91% · $15,215 | In-state, in-budget, near-certain; real CS — a genuine floor | Smaller program depth than Seattle |
| **UW–Tacoma** 🟢 Safety | 💰 83% · $11,449 | Your **cheapest, highest-value safety** (Value 83) with real CS | Smaller, commuter-leaning campus |
| **Washington State** 🟢 Safety | 💰 87% · $18,426 | Cheap, safe in-state option with solid CS | Lower grad rate (60%) |

Source: U.S. Department of Education — College Scorecard (collegescorecard.ed.gov). Verify any figure yourself.

## 📊 Value Score — what you get back per dollar

> **How to read this.** The **Value Score (0–100)** is our composite of *return on cost* — affordability, median earnings 10 years out, and graduation rate, each ranked against every U.S. college. Same inputs → same score: transparent math, not an opinion. It does **not** factor in admission odds. Higher = more outcome per dollar.

| School (tier) | 📊 Value | ✓ Net cost/yr | ✓ Median earnings (10yr) | ✓ Grad rate | 🧭 What drives it |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **UW–Seattle** 🟠 Reach | **84/100** | $14,328 💰 | $78,466 | 85% | Elite CS earnings at in-state tuition — the most you get back per dollar |
| **UW–Tacoma** 🟢 Safety | **83/100** | $11,449 💰 | $78,466 | 63% | Same UW-system earnings at the lowest cost on your list |
| **Northeastern** 🔵 Dream | **83/100** | $16,241 | $92,538 | 91% | Co-op-driven earnings + a low net cost for your income |
| **Carnegie Mellon** 🔵 Dream | **70/100** | $24,865 | $114,862 | 94% | **Top earnings on your list ($115k)** at a strong net cost |
| **Washington State** 🟢 Safety | **69/100** | $18,426 💰 | $68,905 | 60% | Cheap in-state; earnings carry it despite a lower grad rate |
| **Georgia Tech** 🔴 High Reach | **61/100** | $37,514 † | $102,772 | 94% | Elite earnings + 94% grad rate offset the OOS price |
| **Santa Clara** 🟠 Reach | **60/100** | $37,219 | $109,183 | 88% | Silicon Valley earnings ($109k) justify the private cost |
| **UIUC** 🟠 Reach | **60/100** | $34,272 † | $81,054 | 85% | Top CS earnings at a public price — excellent value reach |

🧭 **My read:** Your three best values — **UW–Seattle (84)**, **UW–Tacoma (83)**, and **Northeastern (83)** — are where you get the most back per dollar; start there. Notice that **Carnegie Mellon (70)** posts the **highest earnings on your list ($115k)** but scores lower because you're paying more for it — still a fantastic outcome, just not a bargain. And your in-state UWs prove the point: **a cheap, high-earning public can out-value a famous private.** A high Value Score isn't an admissions bet — it's a money read.

Source: U.S. Department of Education — College Scorecard (collegescorecard.ed.gov). Verify any figure yourself.

YOU’RE SEEING ABOUT THE FIRST HALF

## Unlock the full College Strategy Package — $59

The rest of this report adds your estimated per-school admission odds, your full application strategy, your essay & narrative angles, the single highest-leverage lever + your 90-day action list, the counselor's personal shortlist, and the verified-facts appendix. Every figure stays grounded in official U.S. Dept. of Education data — only the student in this preview is fictional.

**Get the full report → $59**

Compare all tiers at **bestcollegelist.com/#pricing** · backed by a **7-day money-back guarantee** — read it, and if it’s not genuinely useful, full refund and you keep the report.