Self-assessment has helped you identify what you want in a university. Now it's time to go out and find it. It's time to do some research. This week, we're going to discuss where to look, what to look for, and how to understand and use what you find. There are three primary goals for this week. First is learning how to balance your research to find both what you want and what is realistic. Second is creating a physical school list document that's going to guide the rest of your process. And third is using all of this information to create an application plan. I love this part of the process. There is so much excitement when a student discovers a perfect fit at a school that he or she has never heard of. It's just as exciting when a student comes to me with actual reasons why they want to apply to a school that they've always had on their list. When it changes from, I want to apply here to, I want to apply here because. Research is the first step in deciding the schools to which you will apply. Choosing your schools changes the idea of applying to a U.S. university into a reality. Each school that you choose will soon have a name, a personality, and a process that goes along with it. And hopefully, you're going to attend and graduate from one of those schools. Other than an acceptance letter, what could be more exciting? Now, with 4,000 colleges and university options in the U.S., finding what you want is actually going to be easier than you think. You're likely to find many, many universities that are a good fit for you. But you're not going to be able to apply to all of them. The challenge is matching what you want with what is realistic. As you take the first step in shrinking the 4,000 college and university options down to the handful of best fit universities for you, there are a few things to keep in mind. First, research can be confusing. And confusion can lead to frustration. The most common answer that you're going to receive when you ask a question about admission is, it depends. Why? Because every American university has their own process. Also, because every educational system throughout the world is a little bit different. Also, each one of you is a unique individual. So when you take differences in the U.S. university processes, differences in educational systems, and differences in each applicant, that all adds up to, it depends. Understanding, and more importantly, embracing the idea that it depends is going to save you a lot of time and frustration in the future. But you can use this idea of it depends as guidance when doing your research. Never assume that one university is the same as another university. And don't just research. Research your process. What you need to do to apply to a school and what you need to do to be accepted. And, most importantly, take your time when researching schools. Which brings us to the second thing to keep in mind. Those of you who have identified some very specific features that you want in a school will narrow your school options down very quickly. Those of you that are still exploring what you want need time to explore. Regardless of which group you're in, you have questions that need answers. And finding those questions takes time. Furthermore, you're all trying to get to know these universities. You can't get to know something or someone without spending time to do so. How much time? Well, a guideline that I learned from a fantastic college counselor is that students should spend ten hours of research on each school that they are going to apply to. Not ten hours in total, ten hours for each school. Now this is just a guideline. Some of you will need less time than that, some of you will need more time than that. But you will all need time to do your research correctly. When you're finished and you look at your list, ask yourself, how well do I know these schools? The third piece to remember is that much of the information you find is going to be written for U.S. students or at best, international students as a group. You're rarely going to find information that is addressing you or your needs
specifically. This doesn't mean that universities don't care about you. It just means that there's too many educational system and too many students to give that kind of specific information. So finding answers to many of your important questions is going to take some extra time and some extra research. Be prepared. Sometimes you're going to have to use information that's intended for U.S. students as a guideline for your own research. It might not be exactly the same, but it will be good enough to guide you through the process. As you find information about the universities, pay attention to whether the information is intended for U.S. students, international students or all students. You're going to find that some of the information is similar. But much of the information is different, and some is really different. You might even find that the international process and requirements are different, depending on where you're from. So make sure you read carefully. Remember, this research is not homework. This is your future. There is no grade for doing this type of research. Just the feeling of excitement when you find what you want. [BLANK_AUDIO]