

Selecting a College

Selecting the right college to meet your abilities and ambitions is one of the most important decisions you will make as a young adult. For those of you who have already made a decision concerning which college you will attend, your attention will need to be focused on being admitted to that institution. For those of you who have not made this important decision, your attention will need to be focused on narrowing your choice of colleges to a workable list. In most instances there is a wide selection of colleges available which will meet your needs. However, each of these colleges is a reflection of its educational philosophy combined with the make-up of the size of its student body. Therefore, selecting the college which is just right for you can be an overwhelming task unless you study the differences between colleges and set priorities which are important to you.

Factors which are usually considered in selecting a college include the following:

1. **Size** - Size of colleges range from very small (500 students) to very large (35,000 students or larger).
2. **Location** - Some students prefer to attend college in the same city or close to home while others would be able to adjust and function as well or better farther away.
3. **Kind** - Colleges are either privately or publicly financed. Private colleges may be church related, and this factor will often influence a student's selection.
4. **Cost** - This includes tuition, fees, room and board, and travel expenses. Tuition at state-supported schools is substantially lower than that of private schools. Also, students who wish to attend out-of-state public schools are assessed out-of-state tuition fees, which in most cases will equate with tuition in a private school.
5. **Admission Requirements** - In addition to presenting acceptable scores on entrance exams, some colleges require a particular class rank as well as a certain number of units in high school preparatory courses, essays, recommendations, and interviews.
6. **Curriculum and Degrees Offered** - A major consideration for choosing a college should be the availability of adequate programs of instruction in the area you intend to major.
7. **Honors Program** - Distinctive academic activities may be available to students who meet certain requirements.
8. **Physical Facilities** - Colleges should have appropriate classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and residence halls.
9. **Financial Aid** - In most instances, financial aid is available to bridge the gap between the cost of education at that institution and the expected contribution by the family. Some families may qualify for financial aid at private schools, which places the cost in line with that of public colleges. (See section on financial aid.)
10. **Transfer of Credits** - Credits earned at your institution of choice should be recognized by other colleges if you decide to transfer.
11. **Extra-Curricular Activities** - The college should offer a variety of activities which are of interest to you, e.g., student government, social organizations, athletic or intramural activities, etc.
12. **Family Tradition** - Your family may have strong ties to a particular college.

From the previous list, set and define priorities.

Step 1: Select four or five characteristics which are the most important to you.

Example:	Curriculum offered:	Strong and highly rated program available in intended major.
	Cost:	Tuition, fees, room and board no more than \$9,000 per year.
	Location:	No more than three to four hours commuting time.
	Size:	Enrollment 10,000 or fewer students.

Step 2: Narrow your choices to colleges which meet your criteria. Determine the colleges' admissions standards
— to make a "good match." Consult college catalogues, The College Handbook, Compendium of Texas Colleges, and Barron's Profile of American Colleges. In addition use computer resources, such as COIN and the internet, found in the library.

Step 3: Attend College Night programs to talk with representatives and obtain first hand information about the colleges they represent.

Step 4: Talk with your parents about your possible choices and the means for financing.

Step 5: After you have narrowed your list, plan a visit to the college campus for you and your parents. To arrange such a visit call or write the Office of Admission, secure an appointment with them, and ask to have an appointment arranged for you with an advisor in your major and with the offices of financial aid and housing.

Step 6: Talk with students currently enrolled as well as with ex-students and graduates.

Step 7: Throughout this time of decision, feel free to consult with your counselor concerning any questions you may have. You are encouraged to arrange a conference with your counselor at a time when your parents may attend also.