ON RAMP 2 COLLEGE

Picking a College Doesn't Have to Be Hard Work!

Find the Right Match for you

Don't have a clue about which college to choose? Here are some questions to ask yourself.

We all have some picture in our head of what we think college should be. Maybe we created that picture from a book we read or a movie we saw. Maybe you remember the stories your parents shared or you visited a sibling or friend at school. Or maybe its your first time and you don't have a specific picture that comes to mind. In any case, you have to make a decision in the coming months that will ultimately affect what college you end up attending.

While it is not the end of the world if you end up at the wrong school. a mistake can be costly in time and tuition. College will be hard enough without feeling miserable because the school wasn't a good fit for you. But you're not alone in worrying about it. While there are lots of professionals out there that can help you find the right school, many of you may not have the finances to afford their expertise. What you do have is a knowledge of yourself that can help you narrow down your choices and identify a number of schools that are good matches.

But where do you start?

At the beginning ...

Great Expectations….

Do you imagine college as the start of independent life for you? Is it the first step in a long progression of academic degrees or is it the last stop? Are you looking to prepare for a career or are you looking for scholarly pursuit and personal growth?

What does a college degree mean to you? Is it a credential or proof of completion or a sign of status? Do you expect people to see you or treat you differently as a college graduate? Is this an investment in your future? Do you expect to make lots of money or are you planning on doing great things...a politician, Nobel prize winner, captain of industry, defense lawyer, teacher, nurse or actor? Do you expect to play professional sports or use your degree to open up doors of opportunity? Did your parents go to college or are you the first in your family?

As you complete the following sections consider your reasons for attending college and your expectations once there. They are important ones and will influence all of the choices you make. Although schools can be selective, ultimately the decision for which school you attend rests with you. Make that choice wisely.

Living Environment:

(Circle all of the choices that appeal to you)

Living at home Living in a dorm on campus Living in an apartment off campus

No roommate Roommate Multiple roommates

Big city Suburban location Small college town Rural

Temperate climate Warm climate Cold climate

New England Eastern Seaboard South Midwest West Coast

Traditional Campus Modern lay out Urban campus

Size:

Large university >10,000)* Small university (<10,000)

Small liberal Arts college(<2500) Medium sized college(<6,,000) Large College((>6000)

Student Faculty ratio: 1:8 1:20 1:40

Learning Environment:

Lecture Hall Classroom Small discussion Seminar

Liberal Arts Engineering Arts and Performance

Independent Research Interdisciplinary Studies Professional Studies

Study Abroad Opportunities Coop and internship programs

Certificate Programs Academically challenging/Competitive

Strong academic reputation Innovative programming

Flexible scheduling Online learning Correspondence work

Certificate studies Associate degree Bachelors Degree Pre professional

Performing Arts Fashion and Commercial Art programs

Social Atmosphere:

Religious affiliation Coed Single sex Military

Party School Strict Curfews Historically Black College/University

Hispanic Serving Universities Native American Serving Colleges/Universities

Fraternities and Sororities Large Athletic Programs (Division I)

Campus focused social life City focused social life Limited social life

*** University= more than one college, usually includes professional or graduate schools.**

Personal Attention:

Freshman Advisors Freshman Dorm Dorm advisors Tutoring available
Mentoring Peer counseling Religious chaplaincy Counseling Center
Campus drinking policy Campus security Locked dorms Gated campus
Escort programs at night Coed dorms Single sex dorms/entry Dorm mothers
Social clubs Community service projects Professors are accessible
Intercollegiate sports Varsity sports Intramural sports Club sports
Creative writing /Journalism activities Arts and theater Music/dance
Student Government Political Activism Pre professional clubs Lecture Series
Ethnic and cultural studies/organizations Gay/Lesbian Support

Cost:

Public College Private College Public /Out of State
Needs financial aid Money is not a problem
Planning to go to graduate or professional school
Needs to attend part time to work and support self
Not eligible for financial aid

On a Final Note

Analyzing your responses to these questions, will help you target in on schools that fit your needs. Once you factor in selectivity and majors offered, your list will get even smaller. There are many great schools out there to choose from. Use on-line resources such as the StuFund Knowledge Center search engines to learn more about schools that are looking for students like yourself. Visit college fairs hosted by your school as well as regional fairs. NACAC sponsors fairs all over the country. Check our calendar for dates. Talk to teachers, counselors, and peers. Ask lots of questions. You know yourself better than anyone else. You know whether you learn better in a small classroom or large lecture hall. You know whether you need the structure of home or the independence of living on your own. You know your study habits, social skills and interests. Do your research, start early and take advantage of all of the resources available.