



Your priorities for college selection will likely be different from your friend's priorities. However, there are some things that all students should consider. Read through the sample list of criteria provided here. If something is important to you, make sure you include it in your own list. Here is a good list to start with!

SELECTION CRITERIA

CURRICULUM

- ◀ ▶ What do you want to study?
- ◀ ▶ Do you have a specific subject in mind, like art or music, or do you want a more general education?
- ◀ ▶ Do you want a range of potential majors and study programs?
- ◀ ▶ Are you interested in a career that requires professional certification, and does the school provide that necessary training?

- ◀ ▶ Do you want to take advantage of special programs like study abroad and internships?

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

- ◀ ▶ How much contact do you want with your professors?
- ◀ ▶ How much does it matter to you whether professors or graduate students teach your courses?
- ◀ ▶ How involved do you want to be in research and learning outside of the classroom?

SIZE

- ◀ ▶ How large or small a school do you want?
- ◀ ▶ Do you prefer large lectures with hundreds of students or small classes with lots of student participation?
- ◀ ▶ Do you want to be on a big campus with many

majors, an impressive library, and lots to do?

- ◀ ▶ Or would you prefer a small college where you know everyone's name?

ADMISSION

- ◀ ▶ What does the school require for admission?
- ◀ ▶ What does the school look for in prospective students?

- ◀ ▶ What are your chances of being accepted?

Facilities

- ◀ ▶ What would you like to see on or near your college campus?
- ◀ ▶ Are restaurants, shops, and health clubs important to you?
- ◀ ▶ What about laundry rooms?
- ◀ ▶ Where's the computer lab(s)?
- ◀ ▶ Where's the library and research facilities?
- ◀ ▶ What about transportation on and around campus?

CAMPUS LIFE

- ◀ ▶ How is life outside the classroom?
- ◀ ▶ What special interest groups, activities, and fraternities/sororities do you want to be involved?
- ◀ ▶ Are they active in campus life?
- ◀ ▶ What about Campus Security?
- ◀ ▶ What is the local community like?
- ◀ ▶ How safe is the campus and surrounding neighborhood?
- ◀ ▶ Athletics -- Does the school offer intramural and varsity sports?
- ◀ ▶ How are the sports facilities?

LOCATION

- ◀ ▶ Which part of the country would you like to experience?
- ◀ ▶ Do you want a city or small town setting?
- ◀ ▶ Do you want to stay close to home, so you can visit frequently?

HOUSING AND RESOURCES

If you plan to live on campus, make sure you check out the quality of the dorm life. Do not forget to check on the meal plan options.

- ◀ ▶ Does the campus provide for special dietary needs in the dining halls?

RETENTION & GRADUATE RATES

- ◀ ▶ Retention rate is the percentage of students who stay for four years.
- ◀ ▶ Graduation rate is the percent who actually graduate within four years.
- ◀ ▶ Both rates tell you whether students are satisfied with their experience at the school and get the support they need.


COST

- ◀ ▶ How much can you afford?
- ◀ ▶ What kinds of financial aid does the school offer?

OTHERS

- ◀ ▶ In addition to these and others you come up with, you might also want to consider several other questions.
- ◀ ▶ What percentage of applicants is accepted? What are the average test scores and grade point average of the students?
- ◀ ▶ What services are offered for job placement or career guidance?





SELECTION CRITERIA

CAMPUS VISIT TIPS

The only way to truly get a feel for a college campus is to actually visit.

If you haven't taken the time to narrow your choices, campus visits can be challenging because you:

- ◀ ▶ May not have time to get to all the campuses.
- ◀ ▶ You may not be able to afford a visit to each campus, and you won't be able to distinguish the campuses when you have too many to choose from. Your best bet is to narrow your choices and visit your top 3-6 schools.

GOALS OF A CAMPUS VISIT

- ◀ ▶ Meet with an admissions staff member and any other important staff or faculty (financial aid officer, faculty member, etc.).
- ◀ ▶ Get a feeling for the academic and social atmosphere.
- ◀ ▶ See the facilities to be used for study, living, recreation, etc.
- ◀ ▶ Talk with students currently attending the school.
- ◀ ▶ Check out the surrounding community in which the college is located.

IN ORDER TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR CAMPUS VISIT, YOU SHOULD SPEND SOME TIME PLANNING YOUR STAY.

- ◀ ▶ Make arrangements for a visit well in advance (preferably two or three weeks ahead of time). Many students like to just "show up" on campus when the time is good for them. If you haven't taken the time to notify someone that you are visiting, you will probably not get to see and do all you hoped to do.
- ◀ ▶ Inform the college of your special areas of

interest (academic area, extracurricular interests) so the admission staff can plan a more meaningful visit for you.

- ◀ ▶ Review the publications (view book, catalog, and web site) before you attend the visit. That information will help you develop a list of questions and issues you would like to discuss.
- ◀ ▶ Plan to spend at least half a day (a full day is preferable) at each college.

IN ADDITION TO A TOUR OF CAMPUS, YOU SHOULD TRY TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- ◀ ▶ Attend a class to get an idea of typical size, teaching style, and academic atmosphere.
- ◀ ▶ Meet with the Financial Aid staff.
- ◀ ▶ Obtain a school calendar and catalog, if available.
- ◀ ▶ Browse through the library and other facilities you will use (recreation facility, dorms, dining halls, bookstore, etc.).
- ◀ ▶ Engage students (other than the tour guide) in conversation.
- ◀ ▶ Spend some time in the student center or student union to get a feel for the campus community.
- ◀ ▶ Spend some time in the outside community--eat at a restaurant, do some shopping, tour the surrounding neighborhoods.
- ◀ ▶ Read the school and local newspapers and browse the bulletin boards around campus.
- ◀ ▶ Keep notes on your visit and discuss your impressions with your parents and/or counselor.

DETERMINING QUALITY

WHAT IS ACCREDITATION?

One way to help determine overall quality of a college or university is to make sure it is accredited. The goal of accreditation is to ensure that education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality. Because there is no centralized authority exercising control over colleges and universities in the United States, institutions can vary widely in the character and quality of their programs. Therefore, accreditation is one way to protect the quality of education at various colleges and universities.

TYPES OF EDUCATIONAL ACCREDITATION

Institutional: Overall, the institution is meeting its objectives.

Specialized / Programmatic: Normally applies to programs, departments, or schools that are parts of an institution.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ACCREDITATION

You should always make sure that the school you are interested in is accredited by a recognized accrediting agency. It is one way to ensure that you'll get what you pay for. To check regional and national accrediting agencies that are recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education, visit: <http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation>

