



Personal College Inventory

This questionnaire is meant to get you thinking about different aspects of individual colleges and weighing them against each other as you continue to learn more about possible colleges. Don't worry if you aren't sure what choices appeal the most to you right now; it is OK to start broadly and then narrow down from there. After researching more, going on school visits, and speaking to students and alumni, you'll have a better sense of whether your choices are actually a good fit for you.

Feel free to select more than one option in each category, and where appropriate, rank your preferences.

1. Area of the Country.

Including geographic diversity in your list of colleges can help open up exciting new possibilities, and provide the opportunity to experience a location away from home.

- New England:** Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont
- Mideast:** Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania
- Great Lakes:** Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin
- Plains:** Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota
- Southeast:** Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia
- Southwest:** Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas
- Rocky Mountain:** Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Wyoming
- West:** Alaska, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, Washington

2. Climate.

The weather can have a lot to do with your mood, lifestyle, and other aspects important to your happiness and success in college. Think carefully about what you're equipped for: do you hate or love a certain type of weather so much that it will stop you from going outside or tempt you away from studying with other fun activities like skiing or going to the beach?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sunny | <input type="checkbox"/> Windy | <input type="checkbox"/> Temperate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rainy | <input type="checkbox"/> Hot and dry | <input type="checkbox"/> Cold |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Snowy | <input type="checkbox"/> Tropical | <input type="checkbox"/> Seasonal |

3. Type of Setting.

The setting of your college will determine what you do for fun outside of class, but also, to some extent, what opportunities for academic research, internships, and work there are as well.

- Major city (urban):** colleges in major cities are often surrounded by restaurants, bars, movie theaters, and other options for entertainment, most within easy access by public transportation. The city environment can provide an enriching experience; however, there may also be safety and crime concerns. Examples: Columbia, George Washington, Northeastern, NYU, University of Chicago, USC.
- Suburban:** suburban colleges are often found in residential neighborhoods on the outskirts of cities following a short commute. Life is slower-paced than in urban environments. Most suburban colleges are located close enough to the city to provide a weekend getaway while being far enough to avoid everyday distractions. Examples: Babson College, Emory, Lewis and Clark, SMU, Tulane.
- College town:** college towns revolve around the local university, and businesses and town residents are often affiliated with the university in some way. The population tends to be liberal and highly educated. Examples: Cornell, Michigan, Notre Dame, Williams.
- Rural:** rural colleges are dominated by the outdoors and offer many opportunities for hiking, bicycling, and enjoying nature. There may be a lack of access to cultural resources, shopping centers, and public transportation. Examples: Carleton, Erskine, Grinnell, Hampshire.

4. Size of School.

What size student body do you prefer?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> < 1000 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2000 - 5000 | <input type="checkbox"/> 10,000 - 20,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1000 - 2000 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5000 - 10,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> > 20,000 |

In general, schools with student bodies smaller than 5000 students tend to have smaller classroom sizes, more accessible professors, a tighter community, and more access to student activities and individualized instruction. However, course and major options may not be as varied, and students may feel limited in their social circle after a while.

Typically, schools with student bodies larger than 10,000 students tend to have a variety of course, major, and extracurricular activities options and a heavy focus on research. However, lectures may have as many as 2,000 students with limited access to professors and a fragmented community.

5. Type of School.

- ❑ **Private liberal arts colleges:** these colleges focus on teaching undergraduates rather than on research or graduate programs, and typically have small class sizes, a close community, and more student-faculty interaction. Examples: Amherst, Colorado College, Juniata, Kenyon, Middlebury, Oberlin, Occidental, Pomona, Vassar.
- ❑ **Ivy league colleges:** these colleges are viewed as some of the most prestigious, and are ranked among the best universities worldwide. They are heavily research and academia-focused, and are typically larger than private liberal arts colleges but smaller than public state universities. Examples: Brown, Cornell, Columbia, Dartmouth, Harvard, Princeton, University of Pennsylvania, Yale.
- ❑ **Private universities:** these universities typically focus on research and have large class sizes, a variety of different course and major options, and many resources. However, they may lack community and some students may feel anonymous within such a large school. Examples: Emory, University of Chicago, Duke, George Washington, Northwestern, Stanford, Miami.
- ❑ **Public universities:** these universities are typically large, and a substantial portion of the student body is made up of students who live in-state. These students often get substantial tuition discounts, making state universities an affordable option for many families. Examples: UC Berkeley, Indiana University, University of Massachusetts, University of Vermont, Michigan State University.
- ❑ **Technological institutes:** these universities focus primarily on science and engineering. Examples: Cal Tech, Cooper Union, Georgia Tech, Harvey Mudd, Lehigh, MIT, Texas A & M.
- ❑ **Military academies:** most military academies offer significant financial aid to its students as well as pathways for professional development in military careers. However, students must feel comfortable with the school's regiments and controlled structures. Examples: Air Force Academy, The Citadel, Merchant Marine Academy, Navy Academy, West Point.
- ❑ **Specialized art, music, architecture schools:** these schools focus primarily on music, performing arts, or design. Students often need to submit portfolios of work or audition as part of their applications. Examples: Art Center College of Design, Art Institute of Chicago, Berklee College of Music, Julliard, Parsons School of Art and Design, Rhode Island School of Design.
- ❑ **Single-sex colleges:** the majority of single sex colleges are set in a small, intimate community with more student-faculty interaction. Many are formally or informally affiliated with coed or historically single sex colleges, and offer inclusive social or extracurricular events. Examples: Barnard, Bryn Mawr, Deep Springs, Mt. Holyoke, Mills College, Morehouse, Wellesley.

6. Campus Atmosphere.

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intellectual | <input type="checkbox"/> Many fraternities/
sororities | <input type="checkbox"/> Politically-active |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tight-knit
community | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-conformist,
individualistic,
quirky | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious (indicate
type:_____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Technology-oriented | <input type="checkbox"/> Down to earth, not
pretentious | <input type="checkbox"/> Diverse student
body |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports-are-big school | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts-oriented | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Party school | | |

7. Academics.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> National academic
reputation | <input type="checkbox"/> Supportive,
available, involved
professors | <input type="checkbox"/> A particular
department,
program of study,
our course set (i.e.,
environmental
engineering,
architecture, writing,
business, etc) you'd
like to pursue
(indicate what:
_____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vast numbers of
majors and classes | <input type="checkbox"/> Focus on
undergraduate
teaching | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very competitive,
challenging academic
climate | <input type="checkbox"/> Large classes in
lecture halls with
small discussion
groups | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative, non-
pressured academic
climate | <input type="checkbox"/> Small classes | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good study abroad
programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Abundant internship
and research
opportunities | |

8. Campus Activities.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports | <input type="checkbox"/> Performing arts
organizations | <input type="checkbox"/> Other
extracurricular
activity (indicate
what:
_____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Journalism | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Research
opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Service | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internships | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious
organizations | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Political clubs | <input type="checkbox"/> Student government | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural clubs | | |

9. Financial Aid Availability.

- Very important to you
- Somewhat important to you
- Not important to you

It's a good idea to consider your family when you are choosing your schools. Make a copy of this worksheet for your parents and have them fill one out with their preferences for you, too. Then compare notes: did you know financial aid was a big concern for them? Did they know you want to go to a design school? Talk through your preferences and theirs, and try to come to some compromises about which schools you will or will not put on your school list. Bringing this worksheet to your guidance counselor is another good idea. Once you've worked through all of these categories, start researching schools to find which ones meet your criteria. Narrow your list down to 8-10 schools that really fit your needs and desires so that you can throw yourself into applications that make sense, instead of spreading yourself too thin among schools that aren't a great fit.

10. Ranking your preferences.

Now that you've marked off your preferences, go back and rank them in order of importance to you.

List out your most important college preferences below.

Area of the Country:

Climate:

Type of Setting:

Size of School:

Type of School:

Campus Atmosphere:

Academics:

Campus Activities:

Financial Aid: