

Are you starting your college application wish list? Or have you applied and been accepted by 2, 3, 10, 15? How will you pick? How will you decide? This visual guide from the National Honor Societies might help!

Choose the College that's Best for YOU

With 4,000+ colleges and universities in the U.S., how do you find the one that's right for you? Here are some things you'll want to consider:

INSTITUTIONAL ELEMENTS

TYPE PUBLIC OR PRIVATE

SIZE




LARGE MEDIUM SMALL

LOCATION



RURAL URBAN SUBURBAN INTERNATIONAL


PROGRAMS



Available majors and academic opportunities (study abroad, internships, cooperative degree programs, etc.)


FOCUS

- Transfer institution offering agreements/guaranteed admission with 4-year schools
- Specialized
 - » Professional/industry-focused (culinary, art, aeronautics)
 - » Historically Black Colleges and Universities
 - » Hispanic-Serving Institutions
 - » Tribal Colleges
 - » Religious/Faith-based
- Research intensive vs. teaching focused




ACADEMIC CHARACTERISTICS

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT




Large vs. small. What is the student-to-faculty ratio? (Be sure to ask how the ratio is determined.)

SPECIAL PROGRAMS




Cooperative degree programs, such as combined bachelor's/master's programs, guaranteed admission programs from community college to a 4-year school.

STUDENT SATISFACTION




Retention and graduation rates. How many students return for their sophomore year? How many students graduate in 4 years? 6 years?

NEXT STEPS



How many students go on to grad school? Can the school help me find a job? Where are the school's alumni working?

SUPPORT MECHANISMS



Find out about


- First-year experience programs, freshman seminar classes
- Academic advising and facilities, such as Math Labs, Writing Centers, Disability Support Services, and support for "undeclared majors"

RESOURCES

- » College Scorecard, from the U.S. Department of Education → <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov>
- » NHS college admission planning webinar series, for NHS members and parents → www.nhs.us/webinar
- » NHS Virtual College Fair → www.nhs.us/virtualcollegefair
- » NHS Scholar Dollars, a scholarship search tool for National Honor Society (NHS) members → www.nhs.us/scholardollars

HOW TO GET TO KNOW A SCHOOL

VISIT



- Walk around to get a sense of the climate and culture of the school
- Talk to students and faculty
- Eat in the cafeteria
- Spend the night in a residence hall
- Does it "feel like home"?

IF YOU CAN'T VISIT IN PERSON



- Take a virtual tour
- Visit the school's website
- Subscribe to a school's blogs
- Engage in a virtual chat
- Talk to students who attended your high school and now attend that college or university
- Check out the NHS Virtual College Fair: www.nhs.us/virtualcollegefair

To show you're truly interested in a school, make sure you cite any and all of your engagement experiences when applying. Many schools now look for "demonstrated interest" on an application.

CAMPUS FACTORS


THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE



Learn about clubs, leadership opportunities, campus culture and tradition, religious resources, wellness programs, and campus safety.

FINANCIAL ASPECTS

MONEY MATTERS




Factor in federal, state, and institutional or merit aid.

THE REAL BOTTOM LINE


Use a school's "net price calculator." Every college/university is required by the federal government to provide this on its website to help you figure out how much you will really pay for the school, factoring in any aid and awards.

YOU DECIDE! Your college experience is yours.


Time to shine
Go somewhere where you can thrive and grow.



Friendly competition
The best place for you may not be the same as the best place for your friends.



Attention, parents...
The best place for you may not be the one your mom or dad thinks is best. While finances must be considered, the ultimate choice should be a joint decision.




Remember to have fun as you explore. Then, pick a college or YUniversity that is truly yours!

ABOUT THAT MAJOR

Your major doesn't necessarily dictate who you will be or what you will do.

Actor Matthew McConaughey
Pre-law (University of Texas at Austin)



Comedian/host Conan O'Brien
History and American literature (Harvard)



Actress Brooke Shields
Romance languages (Princeton)



Basketball legend Michael Jordan
Geography (University of North Carolina)



Source: BuzzFeed

About 80% of college students change their major at least once.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

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