

Finding a Good Fit

Choosing a college (whether a 4-year, 2-year, vocational/technical, or junior college) can provide you with an exciting opportunity for self-assessment and goal setting. It is time to explore possibilities, make compromises, and set priorities. It is also a wonderful time for students and parents to have fun and enjoy working together!

Perhaps the most important thing to bear in mind is that no one college or post-graduate institution is the only one for you. What may be an excellent choice for your best friend or older sibling, may not suit your needs as an individual. Begin by considering you. Explore what kind of person you are and what you would like to be and do in the future.

Working early in this process avoids later panic. Even seemingly complicated processes can be broken down into small steps which can be taken one at a time.

Factors in Selecting a College

It is important to narrow your college choices to a list of schools which interest you the most. Some factors you may want to consider are:

- Availability of your major
- Size of the classes
- Quality of the faculty
- Diversity
- Flexibility and availability of interdepartmental study or transfer
- Availability of courses through registration
- Availability of faculty and facilities to undergraduate student
- Success of graduates pursuing graduate studies and employment opportunities
- Instructional facilities and equipment
- Academic structure and core requirement
- Type of sports programs available
- Advising programs
- Programs to meet special needs
- Composition and interrelationships of the student body
- Availability of extracurricular activities
- Selectivity and admissions requirements
- Size of the school
- Location of the school
- Living arrangements and facilities
- Cost of the institution
- Availability of financial aid & scholarships
- Kind of college (i.e. church-affiliated, liberal, conservative, private, etc.)
- Campus/community safety and security

- Relationship of the school and the community
- Climate and geographical considerations
- Aesthetic components of the school
- Prestige and name recognition
- School calendar

College Information/Resources

COUNSELING OFFICE: The Counseling Office has numerous current resources. However, if you would like your own copies, most larger bookstores have a good selection of general information books about college. The Counseling Office has both subjective and objective view books to help you find your good fit.

POST SECONDARY RESEARCH course at New Vista: This course is offered 2 quarters per year for Juniors and Seniors and is taught by the counselor. The class teaches students how to research colleges/post secondary schools, find several good fits based on interest, strengths, and path, fill out college applications, and explore scholarships and financial aid.

COLLEGE REP VISITS: Representatives from different post secondary schools across the country visit New Vista. Students are able to sign up ahead of time with the counselor to attend these meetings.

PRIVATE ENTERPRISES: Aspects of the college planning process have created opportunities for private individuals and organizations to offer services for a fee. These enterprises include private counselors and consultants, scholarship searches, athletic placement services, planning seminars, application processing agencies, essay writing assistance, and test preparation courses. While most can provide quality information and service, there are still situations that deliver very little for the money. Be sure to check how the quality of their offerings may differ from what is already available to you through school and other sources at no cost. If you do decide to utilize a private resource, be sure to ask for references, and investigate their promised outcomes.

There are many different types of institutions represented among the approximately 3,000 colleges and universities in the United States. Students would do well to choose a “type” of institution before narrowing a choice down to specific institutions.

Schools may be publicly controlled or independent and privately controlled. Usually, publicly controlled schools are larger, less selective for state residents (but more so for out-of-state residents), and less expensive for state residents than private schools. However, a few state universities are highly selective and competitive (e.g. University of California, Michigan, Illinois). Independent, privately controlled schools are usually smaller and more expensive than public institutions.

- **Liberal Arts College:**
Offers a general program of four-year study wherein the student takes courses in a wide variety of subjects such as history, literature, foreign languages, math, philosophy, social sciences, natural sciences, and art. The student majors in one of these areas and graduates with a bachelor's degree. The curriculum gives the student a sound basic education with the intention of developing general knowledge and reasoning ability, as opposed to training for a new career. Many New Vista students choose to attend Liberal Arts College because many of these schools offer a learning environment that aligns with a New Vista education.
- **University:**
Offers an academic organization that grants undergraduate and graduate degrees in a variety of fields and that supports at least two degree-granting professional schools. A university is comprised of a number of "Schools" or "Colleges" each of which encompasses several general fields of study. Universities generally offer a broad range of both undergraduate and graduate degree programs, are larger than other types of colleges, and typically offer more majors and have more research facilities than liberal arts colleges.
- **Engineering or Technological Colleges:**
These are independent professional schools that provide four-year training programs in the fields of engineering and the physical sciences. They are often known as Institutes of Technology or Polytechnic Institutes.
- **Professional Degree-Granting Schools:**
These schools offer a combination of liberal arts training and intensive training in a variety of specialized fields (e.g.: Eastman School of Music, Rhode Island School of Design, etc.).
- **Technical/Trade Schools:**
These schools are subject-specific. They offer certificate programs as well as four-year degrees in many different subject areas such as art, auto repair, nursing, medical assisting, and computer maintenance. Students usually study one subject in-depth, thereby developing a trade upon graduation. Technical schools that teach very specific skills are included under this subject title.
- **Community/Junior College:**
These colleges award associate degrees at the completion of two years of full-time study. Many of these colleges offer general education programs that are the equivalent of the first two years of a bachelor's degree program and are often used as a stepping stone to a four-year college or university. They also frequently offer technical programs of study that prepare students for immediate entry into the job market and result in "terminal" degrees. The majority of two-year public colleges have open admissions policies.
<http://www.cccs.edu/AboutCCCS/ourcc.html>
- **Military Service Academies:**
There are many alternatives to going to college. One of the many post-secondary choices is a career in the armed services. There are five branches of the U.S. Military: Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard. Each of the military branches involves the armed defense of our country and requires a specified period of commitment.
- **Non-military Services:**
The NOAA Corps (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned

Corps: <http://www.noaa corps.noaa.gov/>) where duties and areas of operations can range from launching a weather balloon at the South Pole, conducting hydrographic or fishery surveys in Alaska, maintaining buoys in the tropical Pacific, flying snow surveys and into hurricanes. and the PHSCC Corps (Public Health Service Commissioned Corps:

<http://www.usphs.gov/>) which is an elite team of more than 6,000 full-time, well-trained, highly qualified public health professionals dedicated to delivering the Nation's public health promotion and disease prevention programs and advancing public health science.

- Gap-Year Programs:

A Gap Year is a great opportunity to do something unique between high school and college and is a time for a person to grow both as an individual and as a student. Benefits include travel, exposure to new cultures, and a chance to gain experience for your college admissions application or professional resume. It is also a chance to do some serious good in the world. For general ideas about Gap Year possibilities, see the following websites: <http://www.gapyear.com/> ; <http://www.nextstepmagazine.com/nextstep/gap-year.aspx> ; <http://www.interimprograms.com/>

- Service Opportunities:

There are many opportunities both national and international to give back to the community and work towards making the world a better place. Check out <http://www.americorps.gov/>; <http://www.volunteerinternational.org/>; SCI - Service Civil International (<http://www.sci-ivs.org/>); <http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org/about/ccs-or-peace-corps.aspx>