

STEP 2

Consider college characteristics



Do you think you know your needs and wishes well enough now to begin relating them to specific college characteristics? The criteria students typically consider in choosing a college include:

- Type of academic program (university, college, community college, vocational-technical school, or specialized institute)
- Majors available
- Cost
- Opportunities for financial aid
- Size of enrollment
- Admission selectivity
- Control or affiliation (public, private-independent, or private-church related)
- Type of community
- Minority representation
- Sex ratio
- Types of housing available
- Specialized programs for students with disabilities
- Campus activities
- Athletic program

Other criteria may include such features as a good reputation in a particular field or accreditation by a special organization.

Often, when students say they are planning for college, they merely mean they expect to continue their formal education at some sort of postsecondary institution. That institution may be a college or university, a junior college, a community college, a vocational-technical school, or a specialized institute.

Actually, a college is an institution of higher education that offers a curriculum leading to a four-year bachelor of arts or bachelor of science degree. A university usually has a liberal arts college as well as several specialized colleges and graduate programs in such fields as business, engineering, education, agriculture, law, and medicine.

Junior colleges are generally transfer institutions that provide courses to parallel the freshman and sophomore offerings at

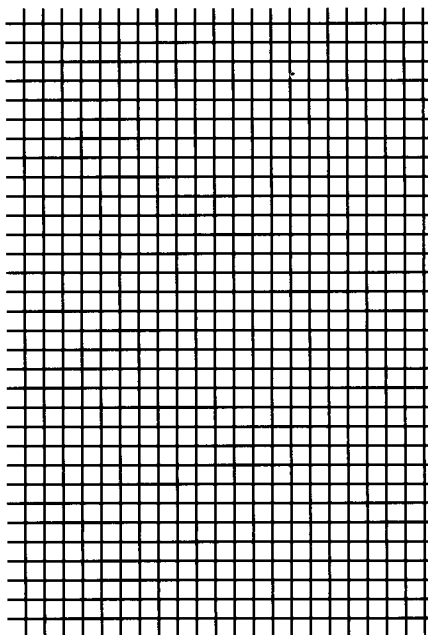
Admission Policies

Admission policy	Typical ACT Composite Score averages*	Typical SAT Total Score (V + M) averages*
Open - All high school graduates are accepted until the school's enrollment capacity is reached.	17-20	660-820
Liberal - Many freshman who are accepted are in the lower half of their high school graduating class.	18-21	710-890
Traditional - The majority of those freshmen who are accepted are in the top 50 percent of their high school graduating class.	20-23	770-920
Selective - The majority of those freshmen who are accepted are in the top 25 percent of their high school graduating class.	22-27	830-1040
Highly selective - The majority of those freshmen who are accepted are in the top 10 percent of their high school graduating class.	27-31	1100-1400
* Remember, an average test score only means that about half of the students score higher and about half score lower.		

four-year colleges and universities. In addition to transfer programs, community colleges may offer associate degree programs and career-oriented programs for students primarily concerned with finding a job.

Vocational-technical schools are similar to some community colleges in that they offer career-oriented programs that may last from a few months to a couple of years. Specialized institutes usually offer an intensive program in one very specific skill area.

Since going to college involves the investment of a lot of time and money, it makes sense to examine college characteristics carefully. In choosing a college, you may very likely consider first the type of academic program and the availability of the major--or majors--you're most interested in. How you rank other factors will largely depend on your personal preferences and needs. Take a few minutes to pin down those characteristics that matter the most to you. Then rank the characteristics in order of importance.

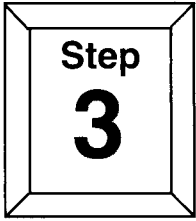


Was cost among those criteria you ranked as significant? It's true that you must be able to afford the school you eventually attend. But affording a school can mean receiving financial assistance. Don't automatically pass over any institution that, at first, appears too expensive. We'll say more about financial aid later.

Size is certainly a legitimate concern. While some schools enroll fewer than 100 students, others count their student body by the thousands. In general, size may influence:

- the degree of specialization (Large schools may offer more areas of specialized study.)
- the number of courses to choose from in each area (Again, large schools may have more.)
- the number of students per class (Small schools may have smaller classes.)
- the amount of personal attention a student may receive (Students at small schools may have more contact with faculty.)
- opportunities for extracurricular involvement (Although large schools may provide a greater range of opportunities, small schools may give students a better chance for participation.)
- atmosphere (Students at large schools may have more privacy and freedom; students at small schools may be less likely to be lost in the shuffle.)
- culture (Large schools may attract faculty and students from a wider range of backgrounds.)
- facilities (Large schools may have bigger, more specialized libraries and laboratories.)
- opportunities for postgraduate study (Large schools may be more likely to have graduate departments and advanced degree programs.)

Your chance for admission may also be something you've been thinking about. Knowing the entrance standards of a college will give you some idea of how likely you are to get in. Some common admission policies are explained in the box at the top of this page.



List Colleges You Are Considering And Collect Information

Sources of information:

- College catalogs and information bulletins
- College representatives
- Parents, students, and alumni
- School counselors and teachers
- Directories and computerized information systems
- Professionals in the field
- College planning section of your ACT score report

