

How Do Students Choose a College to Attend... and How Should You Make Your Choice?

US College Planning

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UCLA recently released a survey of 203,967 first-year students at 270 U.S. four-year colleges and universities discussing their reasons for choosing a college. Below are the results:

1. College has very good academic reputation (63.7 percent)
2. This college's graduates get good jobs (54.6 percent)
3. I was offered financial assistance (44.0 percent)
4. A visit to the campus (42.5 percent)
5. The cost of attending this college (40.6 percent)
6. College has a good reputation for its social activities (38.6 percent)
7. Wanted to go to a college about this size (38.1 percent)
8. College's grads get into top grad/professional schools (33.4 percent)
9. I wanted to live near home (18.9 percent)
10. Information from a website (18.5 percent)
11. Rankings in national magazines (18.2 percent)
12. Admitted early decision and/or early action (15.0 percent)
13. Parents wanted me to go to this school (14.3 percent)
14. Could not afford first choice (12.6 percent)
15. High school counselor advised me (9.5 percent)
16. Not offered aid by first choice (9.3 percent)
17. Athletic department recruited me (8.3 percent)
18. Attracted by religious affiliation/orientation of college (6.8 percent)
19. My relatives wanted me to come here (6.1 percent)
20. My teacher advised me (6.0 percent)
21. Private college counselor advised me (3.5 percent)
22. Ability to take online courses (2.7 percent)

It is not surprising that the most important factors in making this decision related to academics and financial aid. These are important factors each and every year.

And while there is nothing wrong with the top selections on this list, I'd like to add a bit of information to each of them.

1. "College has very good academic reputation." A strong reputation is great—but don't depend solely on it. Speak to current students and recent graduates and ask them about their experience. Did the academic environment live up to their expectations?

2. "This college's graduates get good jobs." This is an incredibly important factor in your decision—but make sure that the college in question has a track record of placing graduates *in*

your specific field in these jobs. Depending on the major you intend to pursue, a college's track record for job placement may be substantially better or worse than their overall average.

3. “I was offered financial assistance.” Virtually every school offers some form of financial aid—the real question is, have they offered *enough*? Contact us today and learn to maximize your aid award!

4. “A visit to the campus.” I highly recommend visiting a school before committing to it—but simply touring the campus isn't enough. Talk to current students and ask them about their experience, both academically and extra-curricular.

5. “The cost of attending this college.” Cost is always a factor—but don't focus on the “sticker price.” It is only after you have maximized your aid award from a number of different schools that you can truly determine which will cost you the least. Contact us today to learn more!

Choosing a college is an important decision. If you'd like to speak to an expert who can help you identify the best fit for you, give us a call today!