

# College Options Glossary

## Type of School

**Public** - The university is owned and funded by the state, usually resulting in much lower tuition for in-state residents than those attending from out of state. For example, 2004 tuition and fees for an Alaskan resident at UAS amount to \$3,123, but for a non-resident they come to \$8,763.

**Private** - The university is owned privately, either with or without a religious affiliation. Tuition is almost always higher at private schools than it is at public schools, but the quality of instruction and individual attention make private schools the best options for some people. Private colleges and universities are typically smaller than public ones and they also have a reputation for being more selective.

**Religious Affiliation** - Many private colleges and universities are run and/or funded by a particular religious group. In some cases, the religious elements of the college are invisible, but in other cases they may have a significant impact on daily life. This impact can include: mandatory chapel attendance, curfews, dress codes, Theology requirements, or any number of other expectations. Most colleges with religious affiliations, however, are much more lenient.

**Single-sex** - Although most colleges in the country are co-ed, there are a few high-quality single-sex colleges remaining. These are often linked to a “sister school” so a men’s college and a women’s college can share resources, or a smaller single-sex school can benefit from the programs at a larger, co-ed university. For example, Saint Mary’s College is a women’s liberal arts college, but students are allowed and encouraged to take classes at the University of Notre Dame right across the street. Research has consistently shown that both genders (but women especially) develop leadership skills, confidence, and self-discipline much better in a single-sex learning environment.

**Co-ed** - There are many elements of gender relations to consider when attending a co-ed college. For example: what is the ratio of males:females? Are the dorms single-sex, divided by floor, or divided by section? Are the athletic opportunities equal for both sexes? Are the living facilities equal? Women should also look into the safety of the campus - the instances of date rapes or other violent crimes against women - and the services available to protect and help women.

**2-year college** - A 2-year college typically offers an Associate’s degree. Most 2-year colleges are non-residential, meaning that students must commute from their own residence off campus, although some housing assistance is typically available. These colleges are typically quite inexpensive, so many students choose to fulfill some basic requirements at a 2-year college before transferring to a 4-year institution in order to receive a bachelor’s degree.

**4-year college** - 4-year institutions are those that offer at least a bachelor’s degree, and possibly various graduate degrees. Some of these also have Associate’s programs.

**Research University** - Research universities are typically larger institutions where the focus is on graduate education and research. These universities often have top quality faculty, but very limited student-faculty interaction. Students interested in graduate work, research science, or colleges with national (or international) name recognition should probably consider attending a research-oriented university. For students who excel, these universities will offer many seniors the chance to do original, first hand research with leaders in the field. On the other hand, those who thrive on individual attention and interactions with professors would do better at a smaller institution.

**Liberal Arts College** - Liberal Arts Colleges tend to be rather small, focusing on quality instruction, student-faculty interaction, and fostering an environment of growth and learning for all. They typically give at least half of their degrees in liberal arts. While most liberal arts colleges offer a wide variety of majors including business, science, etc., they aim to produce well-rounded, educated graduates, so they typically have requirements in history, philosophy, literature, and science that all students are expected to meet. This is an ideal setting for students who truly enjoy learning but have no idea what they want to do.

**Art Institute** - For students who want to pursue fine arts, including animation, fashion, graphic design, interior design, dance, choreography, advertising, or art therapy the best option can be an academy that focuses on developing their talent. In addition to receiving instruction in their chosen field, students learn to expand their portfolio and market their skills, while also receiving a college education in the humanities and sciences.

**Vocational/Technical School** - These programs train students for a particular line of work. Students may earn an Associate's degree or simply a certification in a certain field. There are seldom any requirements to take classes outside of the student's major field of study, making vo-tech programs a cheaper option than traditional colleges. On the other hand, students are not exposed to the wide variety of possible majors and areas of interest as they would at a university. This is the quickest way for students to get into the job market with a decent paying job, but at the expense of being limited to the line of work they chose as a senior in high school.

**Service Academy** - The five service academies offer a chance for a high quality education at a well respected, demanding institution at no cost to the student, either for tuition or room and board, in exchange for accepting a commission in the military for five to eight years after graduation. Students are paid a small amount while at the academy, but all basic needs are paid for by the military. The three main service academies (Army, Navy, Air Force) have exceptional faculty, state of the art living and training facilities, and some of the best athletic programs in the country.

**Culinary School** - These are schools that have an emphasis on culinary arts and hotel/restaurant management in their curriculum. Often a culinary school is linked with an art institute or a national/international group of schools. Information about these schools can be found at [www.culinaryschools.com](http://www.culinaryschools.com).

## **Location of School**

There are a few things students need to take into consideration with regard to the location of a college. Students who value a wide range of cultural events, ample shopping opportunities, and a diverse population should probably be in or near a major city. Most colleges in cities consist of a large building or two, sometimes with a green area or commons around them but

not necessarily. Suburban or rural colleges typically have a much larger campus with many different buildings and ample green space for playing frisbee or lounging under trees. The cost of living is higher in cities, but in return you can be sure that there is something fun going on somewhere in town whenever you need it - not always an option in more rural areas where students are left to make their own fun. Likewise, the social scene in a city consists of people from all walks of life, while students at a more rural school will typically limit social interaction to campus or with other nearby colleges. Other concerns include safety, transportation, weather, part-time jobs, recreational opportunities, and special needs or interests.

## **Size of School**

There is a logical correlation between the size of a school and the amount of individual attention that can be offered to each student, and this factor can make a huge difference in a student's success at college. A larger school will have countless activities, clubs, and social groups that can energize a student who wants to be involved in a variety of social and cultural scenes; there will always be new people to meet and exciting things going on all over campus. On the other hand, some students do not handle their new-found freedom and new-found responsibility quite so well and they can get caught up in the various social gatherings. Smaller schools will have closer relationships between students and faculty or staff, so there is always someone to notice if something is going wrong. Faculty are able to take a real interest in the students from their first year on, whereas larger schools typically have very limited teacher-student interaction until junior year. Larger schools will have more majors and a wider variety of fields to choose from, but fewer mentors and role models to inspire students. Larger schools are typically more diverse, but there is also a value in smaller schools that draw a select group of students who have similar interests and values. Obviously there are trade-offs, so the important thing is to find a school that combines all that which a student is looking. For example, a large university may have a major that has very small classes and ample faculty-student interaction, or a small school may have world-class faculty in a student's chosen field.

## **Academics**

Most students change their majors several times while in college, often between drastically different fields of study. Liberal Arts majors may decide that they can't make any money with their degree, and they may switch to Business, while Business majors may decide that there is no real meaning in their studies, and they may switch to Liberal Arts. Some more intensive programs - Engineering, Nursing, Architecture, etc. - may require a four year commitment, so students will have a harder time catching up with those programs if they choose that option later on. One program of which all students should take advantage if possible is a semester or year of study abroad. Most majors can manage a year abroad, but some of the more time-intensive majors cannot permit the time away from their required courses unless the school offers those courses in another country.

Many colleges now offer transitional programs for first-year students, either during the summer before college starts or over the entirety of their first year. These programs can help students deal with the differences between high school and college by offering specialized academic counselors, smaller classes for freshmen only, and other services that help new

students feel a little less lost in the crowd. Anyone nervous about attending college should look for schools with this transition program.

## **Campus Life**

Regardless of the other elements present at a school, the students' comfort and their ability to *have fun* in their free time is a crucial factor in their success. In addition to having sports and clubs that appeal to them, it is also important that the environment as a whole is engaging. Those who love nature will not enjoy waking up every morning to a cement universe, those who enjoy the arts will not enjoy a school that stifles creativity and expression, etc. It is important that students consider these values before they choose a college because when they are stressed, homesick, or otherwise broken-hearted, their comfort level and attachment to the school will make a huge difference in helping them get through difficult times. Some students will feel like they belong because they attend Division 1 football or basketball games with their friends; others will identify with a fraternity or sorority, and still others will bond with an intramural ultimate Frisbee team or fellow physics majors. Their activities and values may well change and adapt during their time there, but these are still things worth considering as they evaluate different options. Additionally, students should evaluate the various options available to them if they do have trouble, such as on-campus health or counseling centers, programs for students with disabilities (including learning disabilities), tutoring or learning centers, etc.