

MAKING YOUR COLLEGE DECISION

Congratulations! You've been accepted to college. Now it's time to make a decision about which college you will attend.

Review your options.

You applied to colleges you thought would be a good fit for you academically, socially, and financially. Now is the time to consider what is most important to you as you weigh your options. Which college best matches your current needs? Use the worksheet on the next page to help you consider all the variables.

If possible, visit the colleges.

There is no substitute for spending time on campus and meeting current students and faculty members. Many colleges offer special visit days just for admitted students. If you aren't able to visit in person, check out virtual tours or talk to a current or former student at the college.

Consider all the costs.

The cost of college is more than just tuition. It also includes housing, transportation, and other costs for all of the years you will be in school. Use our *Comparing Costs and Financial Aid* worksheet to review your financial aid award letters and calculate your out-of-pocket cost — what you will actually pay. Calculate your total cost for all of the years you will be in college as well as your estimated loan repayment.

Look at the data.

Use the information at collegescorecard.ed.gov to learn more about student success at your college. This site provides data on graduation rates, median salary 10 years after graduating and the percentage of students who are paying down their debt (that is, they are not defaulting on their student loans).

Talk it through.

It can help to talk through your options with parents, a teacher or counselor at your school, a trusted adult or even a friend or sibling.

Know there is no right answer.

There are many colleges that might be a good fit for you. And your decisions might be different from what friends or family think. Know that if a college doesn't end up being a good fit, there are options to transfer or change colleges.

Follow up.

Once you have made a decision about where you plan to attend college, you need to notify the college. You may also need to complete additional paperwork to accept your financial aid package. You should also notify the colleges you will not attend.

COLLEGE					
GENERAL	Location (<i>city, state</i>)				
	Distance from home				
	Setting (<i>urban, rural, etc.</i>)				
	Total number of students				
	Student body diversity				
	Average weather/climate				
	Other characteristics (<i>religious, women only, etc.</i>)				

ACADEMICS	Degrees offered (A.A., B.A.)				
	Potential majors or programs				
	Student : faculty ratio				
	Average class size				
	Required classes				
	Regionally accredited?				
<i>Regional (not national) accreditation is preferable because there is greater likelihood that credits will transfer between institutions.</i>					

SOCIAL	Types of housing				
	Food options				
	Transportation options				
	Clubs or activities I'm interested in				
	Support services I might use				
	Other (<i>Greek life, athletics, sports facilities</i>)				

FINANCIAL	Out-of-pocket cost for 1 year				
	Estimated cost for all years				
	Estimated loan repayment				
<i>Use an online calculator like finaid.org/calculators/loanpayments.shtml</i>					

GRADS	<i>Find this information at collegescorecard.ed.gov</i>				
	Graduation rate				
	Average salary after 10 years				
	% paying down debt				

OTHER					

