



College Month Lesson 4: How to Choose a College

Lesson Description

The purpose of this lesson is to help your student understand how to choose a college.

Introduction Questions

- 👉 Do you have a college in mind? Why did you choose it?
- 👉 What kind of factors seem important to you?
- 👉 What are you looking for in a college?



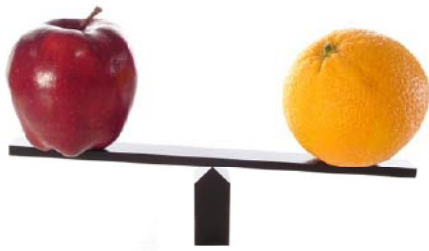
Activities

1. Read together *"How to Choose a College?"*
2. After reading the article, work with your student in answering the questions on the worksheet.
3. If you went to college, talk about your own experiences of choosing a college.

Questions

- 👉 What was surprising in the article you read?
- 👉 What are the most important factors to you in choosing a college?





How to Choose a College Article and Worksheet

Instructions:

Read the article "How to Choose a College"

After reading the article, answer the following questions. Be specific about your answers.

Location

Do I want to live in a big city, or rural area? Is there one particular city I would like to be in? Why?

Size

Would I prefer a big school with more students, or a small school? Why?

Major offering

What kind of major do I think I might want to pursue? Why?

Activities

What kind of activities do I want to participate in? (Religious groups, drama/theater, Sororities/Fraternities, music performance, etc.)

School type

What type of college am I interested in attending? It can be a combination of the below types. Read the descriptions and explain your answer.

Liberal Arts: Liberal arts colleges offer a broad base of courses in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. Most are private and focus mainly on undergraduate students. Classes tend to be small and personal attention is available.

4- Year University: Generally, a university is bigger than a college and offers more majors and research facilities.

Community or Junior College: Community colleges offer a degree after the completion of two years of full-time study. They frequently offer technical programs that prepare you for immediate entry into the job market.

Agricultural, Technical, and Specialized Colleges: Have you made a clear decision about what you want to do with your life? Specialized colleges emphasize preparation for specific careers. Examples include Art/music, Bible, Business, Health Science, Seminary/rabbinical, and Teaching.

Public vs. Private: On the one hand, public colleges are usually less expensive, particularly for in-state residents. They get most of their money from the state or local government. Private colleges rely on tuition, fees, endowments, and other private sources. On the other hand, private colleges are usually smaller and can offer more personalized attention (and some believe, more prestige).

Social Atmosphere

What kind of environment would I like to see on campus? Small, close knit, or large and diverse? Social atmosphere? Studios environment? Explain.

Sports

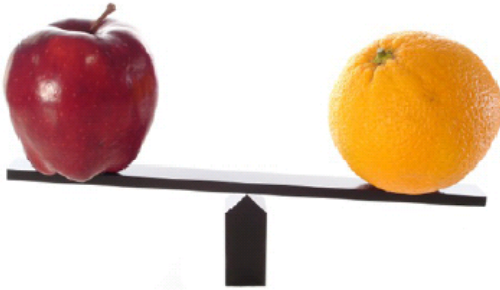
Is there a particular sport or sports I am interested in playing?

College Choice

Is there one particular college I already have in mind? What is it and why?

How to Choose a College

By Robert Bardwell, Secondary Level VP, ASCA and President, NACAC



As a high school student, the most common questions you get from family members, friends and even your school counselor are "Where are you going to college?" and "What are you going to study?" With over 7000 post-secondary options available today in the United States alone, it's no wonder that some students find themselves confused, overwhelmed or just plain uninterested in picking a college. Unfortunately, if you don't take the college search seriously, then it's possible that you will make a poor choice which could have long lasting effects.

Finding the perfect college is no easy task. For those who have no idea of where to begin, doing some career research online, completing a career interest assessment or having a conversation with a career counselor would be a good place to start. If you can pinpoint either a specific major or general interest area, you can start to think about what types of college programs you will need in order to achieve your goal. If that's not possible, then the search must go on, but using other priorities.

Here are some criteria that can be used to help narrow down the field to a manageable number:

Location - Many dream of going to school in Hawaii or even in a big city. Other students may want to stay close to home or go somewhere warm. Like with any real-estate, location can make a huge difference.

Size - Does a big school with more students than many cities or a small school with fewer students than in some high schools feel like a good fit? The size of the school may also indicate the number of activities or options available to students.

Major offerings - Selecting a school with a certain major may be the most important part of the search. For others who are not sure or don't have a clue, this might be one area to leave off the search list, at least for now.

Selectivity - Some colleges admit less than ten percent of the applicants while others accept 100%. Knowing how difficult it is to get in will also give an idea of how challenging it will be as an enrolled student.

School type - Two-year college vs. four-year college? Public vs. private? Coed vs. single sex? Religious affiliation? Hispanic serving or historically black? These are all considerations that students may want in a school. If so, some choices could greatly alter the search list.

Activities - Study abroad? Greek life? Marching Band? Co-ops? These are just some of the opportunities available for college students (and there are dozens of others) so if these types of opportunities are of interest then they should be considered when narrowing down the list.

Sports - For some athletes, playing a sport in college can be a full time job and means possible scholarship money. For others, the idea of being in a huge football stadium cheering on the team is the motivation for going to a larger school. For those who are not interested in competitive sports then consider looking for schools with an intramural program.

Remember: everyone's search criteria will be different. Which criteria end up at the top of the list is dependent upon what is most important to the individual doing the search. Only you can decide that, but perhaps in consultation with those who know you best - your family, your school counselor and even your friends.

If you are still stuck, then you should visit a campus or two first to see what college life has to offer. Most colleges offer daily information sessions and tours of campus which will give you an idea of what life will be like as a student. Sit in on a class, see a dorm room, visit the library and athletic facilities or just hang out in the student center. Visiting on Saturdays, vacations or during the summer can still give you a good idea about the feel for the campus, but nothing compares to a campus visit when a majority of students are around. This may require a day out of school so you want to check your school policy to see how it will affect your attendance for that day.

"Unfortunately, if you don't take the college search seriously, then it's possible that you will make a poor choice which could have long lasting effects."

When do you start your college search? There is no right or wrong time to start, however you do not want to wait until the last minute as you may have to settle for a less than desirable application list. Most students start to begin to search no later than the sophomore year and continue to refine and narrow the list into the junior year. After the list is finalized, then the college visits can begin. If the visits end up causing you to scratch some colleges off the list, then it may be necessary to go back and add some additional schools to visit. In the end you want an application list of roughly three to seven schools, depending upon the individual and criteria which you have established for your college search.

Remember that choosing a college is a major decision and for most high school students, it is the first big choice they have to make in their young lives. Some will handle this process easily and others will procrastinate to the bitter end. Whatever your pace, make sure to take the time to do your research and investigate your options. In the end you will make a better decision as a result.

"When do you start your college search? There is no right or wrong time to start, however you do not want to wait until the last minute as you may have to settle for a less than desirable application list."