



# Dr. Steven R. Antonoff

## Qualities That Will Make A College Right For You

This worksheet is from **College Match: A Blueprint for Choosing the Best School for You** by Steven R. Antonoff, Octameron Associates, Inc

Name \_\_\_\_\_

When you see numbers from 1 to 5 sandwiched between two statements, circle the number which best reflects your level of preference. Circle 1 if you have a strong preference for the quality listed on the left. Circle 5 if you have a strong preference for the quality listed on the right. Use 2, 3 or 4 to reflect varying levels of preference.

### Quality #1—Size

Colleges vary in size from under 100 to over 60,000 students. Think carefully about which size is best for you both academically and socially. The following considerations may help you:

Smaller colleges provide students with many benefits. First, they can be just as diverse, fun and interesting as larger schools. Students talk about the range of opportunities and the depth of their friendships at smaller schools. Second, classes are more intimate than those at large universities, which allows for greater interaction between student and professor. You'll have more opportunities to contribute in class and it's likely you'll really know your professors. By knowing your professors, you can benefit from their expertise and they can help you with any academic weak points. Further, they will be able to write you knowledgeable recommendations for jobs or graduate schools. Smaller colleges are best if you prefer discussion classes (where you are a participant) as opposed to lecture classes (where the teacher does most of the talking). You are also more likely to be able to register for the classes you desire.

In addition, smaller colleges tend to place greater emphasis on personal development. In other words, it's easier for students to learn about themselves: their interests, abilities, and possible career paths. The best preparation for someone who is unsure of his or her career direction is a liberal arts and sciences curriculum found at most small colleges. At smaller colleges, teaching is usually the top priority of faculty members -- research may be less important. This emphasis may mean more exciting classroom experiences (which often result in increased understanding and higher grades). At larger universities, in contrast, you may be taught by graduate students, not professors.

Smaller colleges provide greater opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities because you don't have to be a superstar to get involved. At smaller colleges, you experience less competition for the use of academic facilities such as library resources and specialized equipment. Also, you usually experience a great sense of community. Because it is difficult to get "lost," small colleges often facilitate the development of student confidence. Don't discount the advantages of being a significant fish in a small pond -- it can do wonders for your self-esteem and sense of accomplishment.

Larger colleges also present students with many benefits. You will notice great range and variety in the courses offered at large schools. You may be able to explore (and perhaps take classes in) two different fields of study -- for example, arts and sciences and engineering. Also, students who are very undecided about the subjects they want to study may feel that large universities (with many strong majors) will be the safest educational choice. Special advanced facilities and equipment are available at many large universities. At large universities, students invariably find more activities from which to choose. Significantly, nationally known and popular sports teams increases a school's name recognition. Further,

many students prefer the anonymity a large school offers. Additionally, some students prefer lecture classes to those that are more discussion-oriented.

Size considerations often cause students to limit the field of potential colleges too early in the process of choosing a college. Students who reject larger colleges should remember that some larger universities are more personal than others. Some large universities provide personal attention, such as individual academic advisors. Students from large high schools often say they don't want to attend a college smaller than their high school. Others feel they will miss a fun college life if they attend a smaller college. Remember, smaller colleges can be just as diverse and just as fun and they can provide good career preparation. Also remember, over 80% of private colleges in the U.S. -- and almost a quarter of public colleges -- have enrollments of under 2,500. So don't limit yourself based on false assumptions about size.

High desire for accessible teachers	1	2	3	4	5	Low desire for accessible teachers
I would likely get better grades in small classes.	1	2	3	4	5	I would likely get similar grades in small or large classes
More discussion-oriented classes	1	2	3	4	5	More lecture-oriented classes
I learn best discussing ideas/interacting with the instructor and other students.	1	2	3	4	5	I learn best by reading/listening/taking notes.
Desire for tutors/extra assistance	1	2	3	4	5	No desire for tutors/extra assistance
A close knit, family like environment	1	2	3	4	5	A place where I can blend in with the crowd.

**First, look at the following size distinctions:**

- Small size--under 3,000 students
- Medium size--between 3,000 and 10,000 students
- Large size--between 10,000 and 20,000 students
- Largest size--over 20,000 students

(Note: these size distinctions are arbitrary and intended merely to assist you in considering general size parameters.)

**Second, on the basis of the discussion and your circled responses above, check those sizes that you feel are best for you:**

\_\_\_ Small                      \_\_\_ Medium                      \_\_\_ Large                      \_\_\_ Largest

List comments/further thoughts about the size of your ideal college here:

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## Quality #2—Academic Environment

Academic environment includes your priority on academics, the academic pressure that is right for you, and learning resources you need.

Naturally, since college is an academic undertaking, classes and other "academic things" make up the bulk of your collegiate experience. Finding the appropriate level of academic challenge is important to your choice of colleges. Think about how much academic challenge is right for you. Do you want a college where you must work hard and study hard, or would you prefer one where you could earn respectable grades without knocking yourself out? Think carefully about how much time you want to spend on academic pursuits in college. If you truly enjoy talking about ideas and intellectual subjects, you may desire a more "academic" atmosphere in your college choice.

Also, think here about your response to academic pressure and to competition from others. Are you at home with a tremendous workload? Do you prioritize well? Can you discipline yourself? If your answers to these questions are yes, you should select a vigorous academic environment. If, however, you prefer to perform consistently at the top of your class, if you become distraught with a grade lower than an A, or if you don't work well under stress, you may respond better in a college with normal academic pressure.

### PRIORITY ON ACADEMICS

Very intellectual/scholarly emphasis	1	2	3	4	5	Balance between intellectual/social sides of campus life
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### ACADEMIC PRESSURE

Ready/able to handle the most vigorous academic environment	1	2	3	4	5	Ready/able to handle normal academic pressure
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### LEARNING RESOURCES

I need/want learning resources such as a learning center, tutors, extra time on tests, etc.	1	2	3	4	5	I have no need for these learning resources
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### OTHER ACADEMIC/CURRICULAR QUALITIES

In addition to offering certain concentrated areas of potential study (majors), colleges vary in terms of other academic qualities. Would you enjoy more freedom or more structure insofar as courses you are required to take? Would work experiences, internships or the availability of independent study enhance your academic success? Would you like a particularly strong study abroad experience? Do you want to prepare for the military? Many academic variables are listed below. Check *any* that you would like in your college.

- Internships/work experiences
- Considerable freedom in choosing courses
- Programs for students with learning style differences (LD, ADD, ADHD, etc.)
- Independent study options
- Applying what I learn to real world problems
- Preparation for the military
- More hands-on learning opportunities
- Counseling/psychological/medical services
- Courses geared to my specific academic/career interests
- Excellent study abroad programs
- Research opportunities
- Personalized academic advising
- Personalized career advising
- Writing center

Is there anything else related to the academic environment that is important to you? If so, describe it here:

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### Quality #3—Academic Offerings

This category refers to your potential college major and not your potential career. It's important for you to keep that distinction in mind. A major is a subject you enjoy and would like to study in college. Refer to a list of major fields at the end of this Worksheet. Do you enjoy English or history? Does math or communication sound interesting?

Notice the continuum below between "A liberal arts and sciences college is best" and "A college that will prepare me for a specific career after four years of college is best." Liberal arts and sciences is the term used to describe the most general and the most common form of undergraduate education in the U.S. It includes the humanities (English, languages, philosophy, music, art, etc.), the social sciences (psychology, history, political science, etc.) and the "hard" sciences (biology, mathematics, geology, etc.). The liberal arts and sciences often serve as a springboard for future study (for example, graduate school, law school, medical school or business school) and for the world of work. If you are uncertain as to a career, then you should select liberal arts and sciences. On the other hand, you may want to take more courses in an area of interest. Career oriented schools have classes that more directly relate to careers in such areas as engineering, business, physical therapy or architecture upon completion of your undergraduate degree.

It is perfectly OK not to know what your ultimate career will be. Most high school students do not know. In fact, coming to the wrong conclusion too early about a career is worse than not knowing. Most high school students have not been exposed to many career alternatives, making a final career decision premature. The undergraduate years can be a time of discovery about yourself and your career goals. If, however, you feel confident in your selection of a career goal and want a college that offers your particular program, enter the name of your program below.

A liberal arts and sciences college is best	1	2	3	4	5	A college that will prepare me for a specific career after four years of college is best
I want a broad based education so as to consider several careers	1	2	3	4	5	I would like to focus on classes that are relevant to my current career interests

What subjects would you like to learn more about? And/or which subjects will I consider as a major? (Some colleges allow you to have more than one major.) You might want to look at the list provided at the end of this worksheet.

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What career(s) have you considered? If none, say so.

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### Quality #4—Cost/Availability Of Financial Aid

Costs vary greatly from one college to another. Many students, however, make too many assumptions about cost too early in the process of choosing a college. There are many forms of financial aid available. While most aid is given (naturally) to those who can demonstrate need (by the results of a standardized financial aid analysis using forms such as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid), aid is also available for students who have achieved academic excellence or those with special abilities.

Perhaps no factor in college selection is as potentially limiting as cost. There are so many myths associated with cost. Students and families may believe that little money is available, that only poverty-stricken families receive aid or that students need to be super scholars to get money from colleges. The truth is that enormous resources are available for families who take the time to explore financial aid opportunities.

Below, indicate the extent to which cost/availability of aid is a consideration in your choice of a college. It is important that you talk this over with your family.

Cost is a major factor in choosing a college	1	2	3	4	5	Cost is a minor factor in choosing a college
I need to do a thorough search of financial aid options	1	2	3	4	5	No search of financial aid options is necessary
Cost will lead me to an in-state college . . . or to one that costs less . . . or where I can get a scholarship	1	2	3	4	5	Cost will not lead me in these directions

Comments about cost/financial aid in your college search:

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### Quality #5—Religion

The extent of religious influence varies from college to college. Some colleges are related to a particular denomination, but are not governed or influenced by the church; these schools tend to have very little religious influence. On the other hand, there are Christian colleges, for example, that have far closer relationships that extend to required religion classes and/or religious practices (such as chapel services).

Regardless of the extent of religious life, you might desire a college where many, if not most, of the students belong to your religion. Is this factor important to you in selecting a college?

Religious life is an important factor in choosing a college	1	2	3	4	5	Religious life is not a factor in choosing a college
I want a college where religious life is emphasized	1	2	3	4	5	No emphasis on religious life
I'd like to be at a college with many students who share my religious background	1	2	3	4	5	Having many students who share my religious background is not a significant college planning variable

Comments about religious influence:

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### Quality #6—Ethnicity

Hispanic/Latino, American Indian, Asian, and African-American students benefit in many ways by attending a college with a high number of students who belong to the same ethnic group. For example, for the African-American student, predominantly Black colleges offer students the opportunity to interact with Black role models, to develop a "network" of contacts that can be helpful in getting jobs, and to learn in a comfortable environment. Many respected leaders in government, education and the professions are graduates of these institutions. Similarly, students who might feel isolated on predominantly "white" campuses often benefit from the camaraderie and closeness that is possible by being with others who share their heritage.

Would the presence of other students who represent your heritage foster your sense of belonging? Would you feel like an outcast if you were one of only a few students representing your ethnic background? Would you like specialized programs for minority students?

It's important that I attend a college where there are many students who share my ethnic/racial heritage	1	2	3	4	5	It's unimportant that I attend a college where there are many students who share my heritage
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Comments about racial/ethnic issues in my choice of college:

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### Quality #7—Student Body Characteristics

Identifying the characteristics about students with whom you will feel most at home can be meaningful as you contemplate your college choices.

Think about the traits of the students attending a college that is a good match for you. Below, you will see a list of words and phrases that describe students. Look over the list. Keep in mind that most colleges enroll a wide variety of students. What you are doing here is highlighting the personality characteristics and the values of students at a college that is a good match for you.

**First, circle any quality that describes the types of student with whom you would enjoy going to school. In addition, list any other words/characteristics/qualities/personality traits that you would like to find in your future classmates.**

adventurous	aggressive	ambitious	artsy
athletic	balanced	career oriented	caring
compassionate	conservative	cosmopolitan	creative
diverse	down-to-earth	dress conscious	energetic
focused	friendly	fun	good values
idealistic	independent	innovative	lawful
interested in learning for the sake of learning	involved	laid back	interested in cultural activities
liberal	moral	motivated	nonjudgmental
open	opinionated	outdoorsy	patient
politically active	practical	realistic	respectful
risk taking	scholarly	sensitive	serious
social	spirited	spontaneous	supportive
tightly-knit	tolerant	traditional	unconventional
understanding			
_____	_____	_____	_____

**Second, if you circled more than 5 qualities, go back and put a check mark next to the 5 most important ones.**

Finally, take a look at the following continuum. Students at the colleges on the left side are traditional; in other words, they are like students you'd find on most campuses. Students at the colleges on the right side are more alternative, free spirited, and independent-minded. The distinction here is arbitrary (and involves generalizing) but your response can be helpful in thinking about broad categories of students at your ideal college. If you can't decide, or if this variable is unimportant, or if you could fit into either side, circle 3.

A more traditional student body is best for me      1      2      3      4      5      An alternative, free spirited, independent-minded student body is best for me

Comments about the students at your ideal college:

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### Quality #8—Coeducation Or Single Sex

This consideration is predominately for women, although there are some fine all-male colleges as well. Don't be too hasty here. Both women's and men's colleges offer special educational advantages and ought to be considered very carefully. For example, several studies have found that students at women's colleges become more academically involved in classes, are more likely to pursue advanced degrees, and show more intellectual self-esteem when compared with their counterparts in coeducational institutions. Further, a women's college gives women more opportunities for academic success in an environment where they don't need to compete with men for both classroom time and positions of campus leadership. Women's colleges are just as fun, just as interesting, and, in many ways, can be just as "real world" as coed schools.

What kind of school will you consider?

Coed

Women

Men

### Quality #9: Student Life

Colleges are unique in many ways. Some of these differences relate to student life. First, check any of the following that are important to you. Second, list *any* other factors that come to mind.

- Most students live on-campus
- Lots of spectator sports
- An environmentally active student body
- Going to athletic games is a big social event
- Lots of students participate in intramural sports
- Fraternities/sororities are available
- Specialized programs for women/gay/multicultural students
- Lots of weekend activities
- The food is good
- A safe campus
- A beautiful campus
- Ramps/easy access to buildings
- Many leadership opportunities available
- Nice residence halls/living spaces
- Where a sense of community exists
- Where I'm recognized for accomplishments outside of class
- Where I don't feel like a number
- Community service/volunteer opportunities
- Very spirited

Are there other characteristics of student life that will make your college experience a better one? If so, list them here:

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### Quality #10—Activities Available (including athletics)

You may desire a normal variety of activities or you may be looking for a college that offers some specific activity. You might want to continue a high school activity or you might want to develop new interests. Would you like to participate in sports? Which ones? At the varsity, club or intramural level? Do you want to be a leader and/or develop your leadership skills? Are you looking for theater or art or music involvements? Are there other clubs or organizations you would enjoy joining in such areas as religion, international students, outdoor/recreation, community service, ethnic/culture, political, or academic? List those activities of interest to you here:

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### Quality #11—Big Name School or Best Fit School?

Students vary in the priority they place on attending a well-known college or university. Students who want to attend a "name" college or university sometimes put that desire above other factors in choosing a college. These students may be less concerned with the overall fit of the college. "Fit" or "match" refers to all factors or qualities that a college possesses such as size, programs offered, characteristics of the students, quality of faculty, location, and so forth. In other words, "fit" takes a broad view of college planning criteria.

It's perfectly OK for an "A" student to want to attend an excellent quality college. But remember that dozens and dozens of colleges have superior professors, outstanding academic facilities, and a high percentage of graduates admitted to top graduate schools. And most colleges have excellent networking possibilities after graduation. Further, other factors beyond academic prestige are also important, such as your happiness and your success!

Thus, both name and fit may be important to you. But, given the separation between "name" and "fit" as described here, where would you put yourself on the following continuum? Remember, your position may change, but where would you rate yourself on this factor today?

The "name" or the "prestige" of a college is most important in my college search	1	2	3	4	5	The fit of the college (size, academic and social atmosphere, etc.) is most important in my college search
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### Quality #12—Admission Difficulty

Consider what you have learned about yourself. Being realistic is very important here. Consider the level of

difficulty of your courses, your curiosity, independence and organization. Also, think about how you compare with others in your own high school graduating class. What level of admission difficulty do you feel you fit into?

The most selective colleges are appropriate for me      1      2      3      4      5      Less selective colleges are appropriate for me

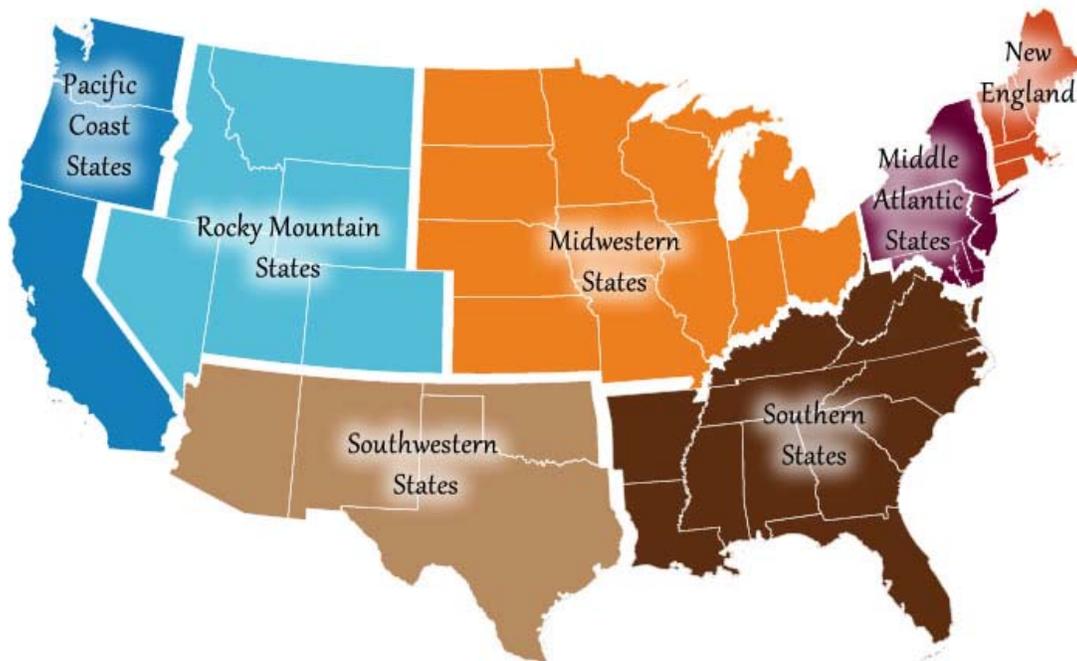
### Quality #13—Location

The first task here is to decide the relative weight of location in your college selection. Is location more important than other factors such as over-all quality of the college, its academic offerings, size or cost? Or is location relatively low on your college-choosing priority list? Do you want to attend school close to home? Will you want to come home often (even the least homesick come home occasionally)?

Location is the most important factor in choosing a college      1      2      3      4      5      Other factors are more important in choosing a college

I'd like a college close to home      1      2      3      4      5      Closeness to home is not particularly important to me

In thinking about the location of your college, look at the following map:



**REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY WHERE YOU WOULD PREFER TO GO TO COLLEGE.** Are some parts of the country more appealing than others? Give thought as well to the importance that you or your parents might attach to the ease and expense of traveling to the college. Do you have relatives or close friends in particular states that you would like to be near? (A relative or friend can be a valuable support system when you're away from home for the first time.) Do you prefer certain types of climates?

Do, however, keep in mind that you're choosing an academic environment where you will spend four years—you are not choosing a vacation site!

First, look at the map. Circle those regions of the country you will consider in choosing a college:

Pacific Coast  
New England  
Midwestern  
Middle Atlantic

Rocky Mountain  
Southwestern  
Southern

**SPECIFIC STATES IN WHICH YOU WOULD PREFER TO GO TO COLLEGE.** Indicate any states which you particularly like. Try not to think of particular colleges within a given state, but rather, of states that you would enjoy going to college in.

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### CLOSE TO A CITY?

Consider the following three possibilities:

1. A college in a major city. Being in a medium or large city allows you to take advantage of a number of amenities. If you enjoy major or professional sports teams, or cultural institutions such as art museums or the symphony, a city or suburban college may best satisfy your needs. Will you go crazy if you don't have at least one large shopping mall and several movie theaters within 15 minutes of your dorm? Then this option will be best.

2. A college near a large city, but not in it. These colleges are located on the outskirts of the city or in the suburbs. This option gives students access to a city, but yet a distinct campus "feel" that often includes large, grassy areas.

3. A college in a small town or a rural location. If, however, you prefer a more serene or relaxed college atmosphere, you may be able to study better in a tranquil location such as a rural college in a small college town. Such colleges may be one or two hours or more from a medium to large city. Typically, college towns show great support for college students and their activities. Store owners may call you by name and cash your check without identification. Most of the services (like pizza places, dry cleaners, etc.) in small towns cater to students. Furthermore, colleges further away from a city tend to go to great lengths to bring concerts, speakers, and other programs to the campus.

Which of these options sound appealing to you as you think about the kind of place in which you will be comfortable? Check any (or all):

- 1. In a major city
- 2. Near a large city, but not in it
- 3. In a small town or a rural location (or where the college is the focus of the town)

Any other location preferences? For example, close to outdoor/nature activities (hiking, streams, mountains, kayaking, etc.)? In the downtown of a huge city? Near a beach? If so, describe them here:

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### **Quality #14—Academic Success In College**

Look carefully at all the factors you've identified as being important to you as you consider colleges that would be right for you. Is there anything else a college could provide to help you accomplish your academic goals and do your best? Indicate any additional factors here. Include whether you have made the decision to go to college by yourself, and/or whether you'd like to consider taking a year off between high school and college.

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### **Quality #15—Fitting In/Being Comfortable In College**

Again, look carefully at the factors you have said are important in choosing your college. Are there any other qualities the college could provide which would lead to your overall comfort with your college? Think about this: If you were to visit a college tomorrow, is there anything else you would ask about or look for in addition to those factors you listed here? List any additional factors below.

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### **Summarizing What I'm Looking For**

You have considered 15 qualities or characteristics important to you in selecting a college. In the spaces below, summarize what you have discovered about the qualities you seek and their importance. More specifically, review your responses to each of the 15 qualities. Select the eight most important features of a college and write statements summarizing what you are looking for in a college. The examples may help you.

**Examples:**

1. I'm looking for a small college because I seek contact with professors and opportunities to get involved in lots of athletic activities. Size of the college is very important to me.
2. While not imperative, I would prefer a college with many Catholic students.
3. All locations are OK but my preference is for colleges in New England.
4. I'm looking for a liberal arts and sciences college since I'm still deciding on a career.
5. It is very important for me to have a balance between academics and social life. I don't want a pressure-cooker college!
6. I should pay particular attention to colleges which either cost less or where I might be eligible for some type of scholarship.
7. I'd like a college that cares about the environment.

When you are finished, you should share your responses to this Worksheet with your counselor, consultant, parent, or others that are helping you find a college that's good for you.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

### Possible Major Fields of Study

Accounting	Agricultural Studies
Anthropology	Archeology
Architecture/Environmental Design	Arts (fine, visual, performing, design, studio, photography, art history, etc.)
Astronomy/Planetary Science	Aviation
Biological Sciences	Business Administration and Management
Chemistry	Communications (graphics, advertising, illustration, media, etc.)
Computer Sciences/Information Science	Construction Trades
Criminology	Dance
Economics	Education/Teaching
Engineering (civil, electrical, chemical, mechanical, etc.)	English/Creative Writing
Environmental Studies	Ethnic/Cultural Studies (American Indian, African American, African, Hispanic/Latina/o, East Asian, German, etc.)
Fashion Design/Merchandising	Film/Television Studies/Media Studies
Finance	Geography
Geology/Earth Sciences	Government
Health Sciences/Allied Health (occupational therapy, physical therapy, dental assistant, nursing, etc.)	History
International Studies/International Relations	Jewish Studies
Journalism	Languages (Asian, French, Italian, Spanish, Slavic, etc.)
Literature	Marketing
Marine Biology	Mass Communications (media, broadcasting, cable, etc.)
Mathematics	Mechanics and repairs (of tools, equipment, and machines)
Military Science	Music
Philosophy	Physical Education
Physical Sciences	Physics
Political Science	Pre-Professional Studies (pre-engineering, pre-law, pre-med, pre-dental, pre-vet, etc.)
Protection Services (police, fire, etc.)	Psychology
Public Policy/Urban Studies	Religious Studies/Theology
Sociology	Speech Communication (interpersonal, group, rhetoric, etc.)
Theater/Drama	Tourism Industry (hotel administration, restaurant management, etc.)
Transportation (rail, air, water, truck, etc.)	Women's Studies