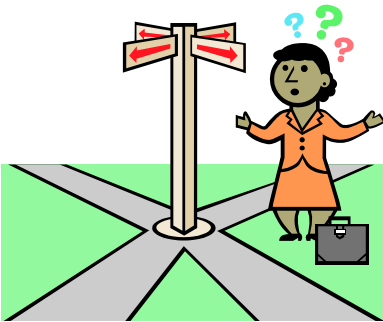


Choosing a College

Spring is just around the corner and we wanted to send you some information about a topic that might be just around the corner for you and your family. We have included some information here about choosing a college and financing your education. The resources listed below are just a few of the many available to you. There are a seemingly endless number of college-related websites and books. We thought these might help you start your search. Just remember, there are plenty of people available to help you if you feel overwhelmed or just don't know where to start. Take advantage of what's available to you! We wish you the best of luck!



Choosing a college is a big decision. Luckily, countless others have had to make the same decision, so there are many resources available to help you. Often, it helps to start with some of the basics:

Do you know what degree you want? If yes, consider yourself one of the lucky few! This will narrow your search considerably. Look for schools that have strong programs in your field of interest. Depending on what your field is, this may be a 2-year tech school or a 4-year university.

If you aren't sure of your interests, or you have a broad array of interests, look for schools that offer a variety of programs, and consider some of the other factors that are listed below.

The college you choose will be your next home for 2, 4, or more years! Make a list of what's important to you. Try to figure out what your priorities are, and look for them in the different schools. Some things you may want to consider:

Location: Do you want to stay close to home, or take off for somewhere completely new and different?

Size: Do you prefer to get lost in the crowd, or do you want to know everyone on campus?

Environment: Do you like city living, or a rural campus in the countryside or mountains?

Teacher-student ratio: How important is one-on-one contact with your professors?

Student body: How important is diversity? Would you like to go to an exclusively women's college?

Campus life: Do you want to join a fraternity or sorority? What sort of leisure activities are available, both on and off campus?

Religious affiliation: How important is your faith to your life? Would you prefer to go to a religiously affiliated school or a secular school?

Housing options: Do you want to live on campus or off? Does the school provide or require a particular type of housing arrangement?

Eligibility: Try to be realistic. If you're interested in a school that has little chance of accepting you, make sure you have "safety" schools. On the other hand, don't underestimate your abilities!



Try talking to other people who have already gone to college—parents, friends of the family, or your teachers. They won't be able to tell you what school is right for you, but they will be able to share their experiences and possibly open your eyes to different aspects of the college experience you may not have considered. Even those who did not complete college will likely have valuable input.

Talk to guidance counselors. It's their job to guide you! They should have information on different colleges, and may be able to help you figure out your talents and what field you may want to enter.



Once you have an idea of some of the things you want in a college, you'll want to make a list of schools that fit your needs. One handy tool, called the Counselor-O-Matic, is available at The Princeton Review website (www.princetonreview.com). It asks you specific questions about your academic record and what you're looking for in a college, then produces a list of colleges that may be right for you.

There are a variety of college guides, such as Peterson's Four-Year Colleges, Peterson's Two-Year Colleges, Barron's Profiles of American Colleges, or The College Board College Handbook, to name a few. Your school or local library will likely have these, as well as other guides.

Financial Aid

Unfortunately, sometimes one of the hardest parts of going to college is figuring out how to pay for it. Luckily, there are scholarships, grants, and loans to help you and your family foot the bill.

The following websites can help you find out more about financial aid and other college-related issues:

<http://studentaid.ed.gov/>

Government website providing information on preparing for your post-high school life, choosing the right college for you, applying to college, funding your education, attending college, and repaying any loans you take out.

<http://www.finaid.org>

Information about financing your education from a variety of sources, including scholarships, loans, savings accounts, military aid, and more.

<http://www.fastweb.com>

A scholarship search site. You can create a profile, and Fastweb will match you to potential eligible scholarships, providing information on the amount of the scholarship, the deadline, and what you need to do to apply.

<http://www.collegeboard.com>

The College Board website provides SAT registration, information on preparing for the SATs, and information for both students and parents on planning for college, as well as choosing, applying, and paying for college.

<http://www.princetonreview.com>

The Princeton Review is probably best known for their test-prep courses and books. Their website also provides information about individual schools, includes a financial aid & scholarship search, and provides the Counselor-O-Matic, as described above.

Naturally, there are also many books about finding financial aid. Among them are The Complete Idiot's Guide to Financial Aid for College, How to Go to College Almost for Free (covers scholarships only), College Financial Aid for Dummies, and Paying for College Without Going Broke.



Good luck, and have a wonderful spring!

THE TEEN HEALTH STUDY