



# THE COLLEGE SEARCH: Finding The Right Fit

College&CareerPathways2026



## College comparison chart

As you investigate colleges, use this worksheet to keep track of schools in which you're most interested and to compare them to your wish list of ideal characteristics. In the second column, list all 12 factors in order of importance to you — 1 for most important, 12 for least important.

Factors to consider	my factor rank (1-12)	my wish list of college characteristics	college name	college name	college name
Type (technical, two-year, college, university)					
Major/academic program					
Size of school					
Location (setting/surroundings)					
Selectivity					
Academic atmosphere					
Student life/activities					
Diversity of student population					
Housing					
Facilities (library, theater, cafeteria, sports)					
Cost (college budget) and affordability					
Other					

# Types of Programs and Program Size

- Length —
  - Certificate or training
  - 2-year
  - 4-year
  - 5 year combined
- University
- Specialized or general
- Physical campus, hybrid or fully online



# What length, program size and learning environment fits you best?

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Would you rather:

- Attend a classes in person where you can make strong connections with your classmates and instructor, but have a strict class schedule.

**OR**

- Take mostly online courses where you have flexibility for timing and work, but might not make the same strong connections with classmates and the instructor.

# Majors/academic programs

- What do I want to learn more about?
- What subjects interest me?
- What programs of study fit my learning style or academic goals?
- What do I hope to do and how does that connect to my educational plan?
- What if I have no idea?



# Academic Focus

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Would you rather...

- Go to a school that encourages you to explore many classes and fields of study.

**OR**

- Go to a school that has you dive right into the details of your field of interest.

# Size of School

- Do I like a smaller campus where I am seen and known by most of my professors and students?
- Do I want to take a bus across campus or do I want to be able to roll out of bed and walk to class within 15 minutes?
- Do I like to be a big fish in a little pond or a little fish in a big pond?

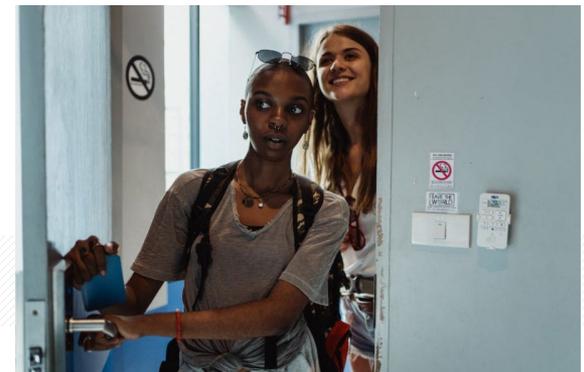


	# Undergraduate Students
<b>Small</b>	Under 5000
<b>Medium</b>	5000-15000
<b>Big</b>	More than 15000

# Location & Campus atmosphere

- Urban? Suburban? Rural?
- How much time and \$ do I want to spend on transportation to college?
- What type of “personality” does the campus have?
- Coed, single gender? Religious? Military?
- What sorts of supports & opportunities are available to students?

Suggestion: Check out Campus Tours or visit in-person



# Location & Campus atmosphere

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Would you rather...

- Go to a school where the campus is integrated into the city and there is less of a sense of campus community.

**OR**

- Go to a school that has a close-knit, strong campus community, but it is not very connected to the town.

# Location & Campus atmosphere

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Would you rather...

- Attend a school where most students live together in dorms, and you have opportunities to make many new friends.

**OR**

- Attend a school where most people live off campus, and you don't have to pay the school for housing and meals.

# Selectivity & Academics

- What chance do I have of getting in? Are there special program requirements?
- What range of selectivity should I consider, especially for an academic scholarship or merit aid?
- What additional feedback have school counselors, teachers, coaches, etc had?



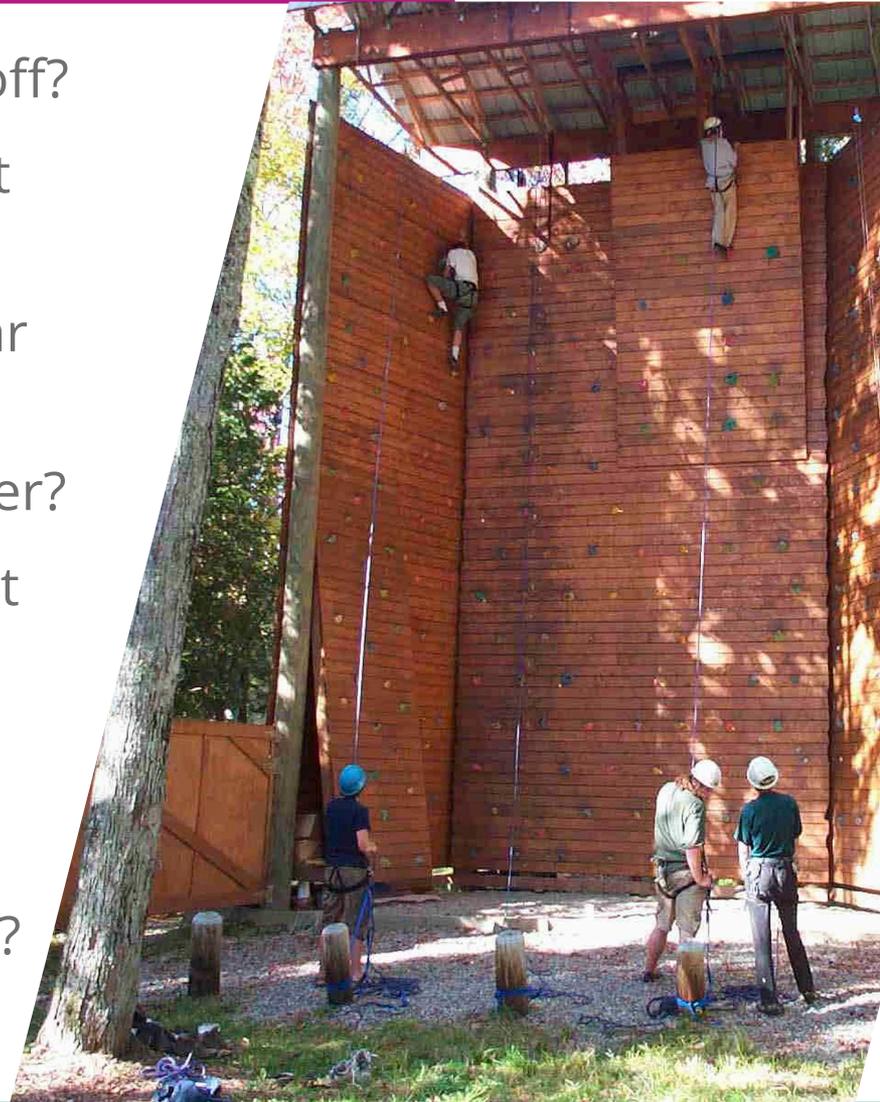
# Student life & diversity

- What housing and meal options are available?
- How diverse is the student body?
- What opportunities and activities are available?
- How do students spend their time?
- What do the students say?



# Housing and facilities

- Do most students live on campus or off?
- Is there on campus living requirement
- Are there multiple housing options including theme/club housing, 1st year programming options
- Are there places where students gather?
- Does the physical campus match what you are looking for? Green space, building design, campus layout, open use art and music spaces, athletic facilities, makers space
- What do current students have to say?



# Student life, housing and facilities

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Would you rather...

- Attend a school that has clubs for your favorite extra curriculars but isn't your dream school.

**OR**

- Attend your dream school that doesn't have your favorite clubs and activities.

# Student life, housing and facilities

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Would you rather...

- Attend a school in a place that looks and feels like Vermont.

**OR**

- Attend a school further away where the environment is totally different, and you could meet many kinds of people.

# Student life, housing and facilities

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Would you rather...

- Spend your Saturday at your college football game .

**OR**

- Hang out in a chill setting with your friends on the weekend.

# Costs & affordability

- What is the sticker price vs. actual cost?
- What are average debt and repayment rates?
- Know your starting point:  
Student Aid Index - SAI  
<https://studentaid.gov/aid-estimator/>
- Know the college's starting point and average awards for students with a similar profile
- NEBHEs tuition program enables students to enroll in out of state colleges at a discounted rate
- As with selectivity, consider applying to financial safety, match, and reach schools.

## College Hunch

A mobile app that lets you compare colleges' key stats, including net price.

# Costs & affordability

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Would you rather...

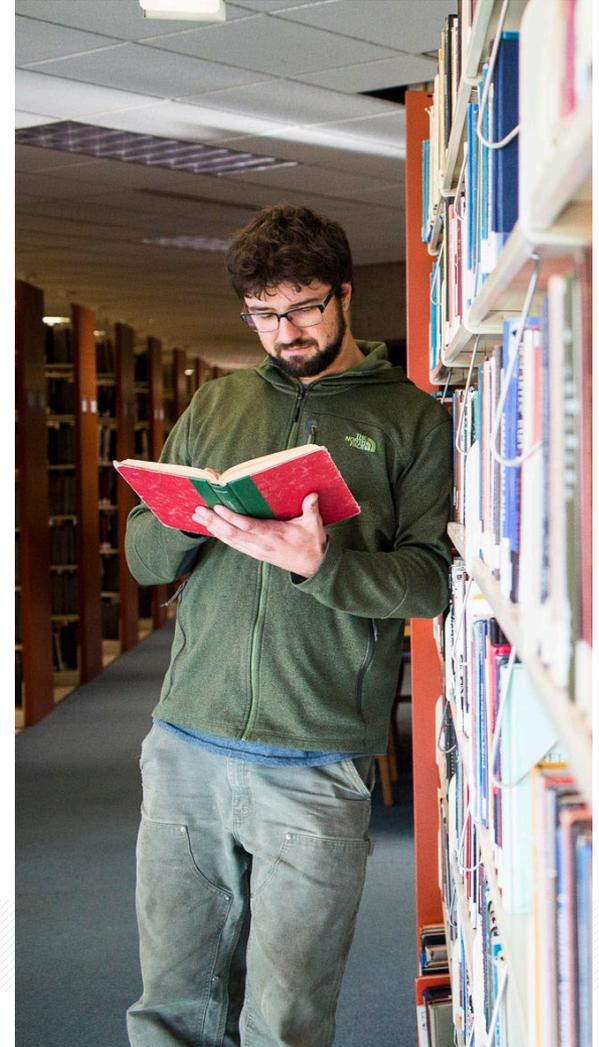
- Attend your dream school no matter the cost.

**OR**

- Attend your third-choice school if the price is right.

# Outcomes information

- How many first-year students return for their sophomore year?
- How many students graduate within 4 or 5 years?
- What are graduate school admission & job placement rates?



# Resources to use and refer to

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- College Search Engines
  - [Big Future](#)
  - [College Navigator](#)
- Costs & affordability
  - [College Scorecard](#)
  - [Consumer Financial Bureau Your Financial Path to Graduation](#)
- Campus Tours
- College Fairs
  - [NEACAC](#)
- School counselors



# Wisdom to take with you

- Be open to all options
- Know the cost before you commit
- Your preferences and goals may change as you explore options
- Know your strengths and weaknesses.
- Do your research!
- Gather a trusted group of academic and personal supports that you can consult when needed
- ***Be organized, follow through, explore and HAVE FUN!***



A group of people, including men and women, are standing in front of a building with horizontal siding. The image is overlaid with a teal color. The text is positioned over the top and middle sections of the image.

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