

Factors to Consider When Choosing a College

It is critically important that you spend time determining what you are looking for from your “ideal” college. The goal is to devise a list of colleges that would provide the best “fit” for you by offering the educational and social experiences you are seeking. Some students prematurely limit their college options to schools that are familiar, popular, or have high status. Don’t feel pressured to find the “perfect” college – there are plenty of schools that can be good fits and make you happy. Here is a list of factors you might want to think about:

Type of School: 2 year or 4 year? Public or private? Religiously affiliated? Single sex or co-educational?

Selectivity: Are you a competitive applicant? What is the average SAT or ACT scores? Is this college a Reach, Target, or Safety school?

Location: Urban, suburban, or rural campus? Distance from nearest largest city? How far from home? When considering a college’s distance from Canandaigua, don’t forget out-of-state schools. For example, Cleveland OH is about 275 miles from Canandaigua and State College, PA (home of Penn State University) is only about 201 miles away. As a comparison, Albany, NY is approximately 208 miles from Canandaigua.

Size: How big is the student population? What about class size? How big is the campus? Who is teaching classed to undergraduates – professors or teaching assistants?

Mix of students: What kinds of students attend the college, from what parts of the country, and with what types of backgrounds and experiences? Do most students commute home on the weekends or do they stay on campus for social activities?

Academics: Does the college offer programs of study that interest you? Does the college offer a range of academic programs such that you will have alternatives if you change your major? Is the college (or your specific major) nationally accredited?

Cost: What is the cost of attendance (i.e., the total amount it should cost you to go to school, including tuition and fees, room and board, allowances for books and supplies, transportation, and personal and incidental expenses)? What kind of financial aid might you expect to receive? Although price is an important consideration, it should not be the only one – we recommend that you not eliminate a college from consideration too early based solely on the cost attendance. However you might investigate some SUNY schools in case the financial aid package from a private college prevents you from enrolling there.

Extracurricular Activities: What do students do when they are not in class? Does the college offer clubs and organizations, intercollegiate or recreational athletics, fraternities or sororities?

Facilities: What is the quality of the residence halls, library, laboratories, student center, computer labs, music and theater halls, and athletic facilities?