

What to Look for When Considering a College

Rankings by publications such as U.S. News & World Report, Petersons, Kiplinger, Forbes, and others in the business of ranking colleges have a certain value. These lists are based on many factors such as acceptance rates, resources offered, graduation rates, student/professor ratios, and other notable features. That said, no national ranking can tell you which college or university is best for you. Your interests, personality, talents, and career goals should be a major factor in any decision.

There are many factors to examine when considering a college. A few of these are outlined below:

- **Strength in your area of interest** – some students know which major they are interested in pursuing. Others may only know which subjects they like the most. You should determine how strong the college is in those subjects of interest to you. There is a real difference between colleges in the number and backgrounds of professors, number and quality of course offerings, research opportunities, and internship possibilities, etc. Know how strong the college is in your areas of interest.
- **Teaching style** – each college has its own teaching style. What style is stressed by the colleges you are considering? Some put an emphasis on writing, some participative learning, some collaborative learning. Some are lecture oriented and others more small –class oriented. In which teaching style will you thrive?
- **Academic intensity** – it is one thing to get into a college. It is another to do well while attending the college. How many hours/week of academics are expected of students at the colleges you are considering? You will be amazed at the different expectations among colleges.
- **Student–body Personality** – what does the college look for in a student? Do they stress independent thinking or do they stress collaborative learning? Do they look for students who are committed to community learning, well rounded students or talented in specific areas? Learn what each college looks for and how well this matches your personality.
- **Social Activity Drivers** – what drives the social activity at the college? At some colleges fraternities/sororities are the drivers; at others intramural sports play a big role. At others, activity is centered around the big football or basketball game and at others, clubs or dorm life play a big role. In which environment do you feel most comfortable?

These are just a few of the factors to consider. There are many others. Just make sure you know the college and how well the college fits you. After all, you are about to spend four years of your life there.
