

You've Been Accepted to Multiple Colleges...How Do You Choose?

When you think about it, college is one of the most important decisions you will make. During those undergraduate years, you will learn not only what to think, but how to think. You will be encouraged to question many things during college, including your faith. And questioning your faith is not necessarily a bad thing--- it's a normal part of your development as a person. Think of it as unpacking your faith. By examining the validity of your belief in God against other philosophical and viewpoints, hopefully you will be able to re-pack your faith with your sources of truth (Bible, historical records, etc). And, by the way, going through this process does in fact make it your own faith. But you need to know that the context of the college you attend will most likely impact what you will do with your faith. (Website: The Christian College Dynamic. <http://www.christianconnector.com/eis4.html>)

Your Gut*

Visit the school, even if you have before. What does it feel like? How do professors and students interact? What is the campus like? The neighborhood? Are you comfortable with the setting?

Questions to consider:	College 1:	College 2:
Is the school located in a region that is habitable according to your terms?		
Is it too far from family members?		
Can you live here for the next 4-6 years?		
Is everything easily accessible?		
If food is a factor, are there restaurants able to cater to your diet?		
What kinds of employment opportunities are there?		
Do you like the campus?		
Is the atmosphere comforting?		

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Questions to consider:	College 1:	College 2:
What types of facilities are available to the students?		
Do they have a computer lab that is easily accessible?		
What services are offered to students?		
Do students seem satisfied with the school (remember that some grumbling is normal for students!)?		
Do you plan to live in this region after graduation?		
<p>Reputation and Fit* What is the school's reputation? Demographics? Who attends the program and what do they do afterwards? Information on the program, the faculty members, the graduate students, course offerings, degree requirements, and job placement can sway your decision in attending a school. Make sure you do as much research as possible on the school.</p>		
Questions to consider:	College 1:	College 2:
What is the reputation of the school?		
How many students actually graduate and receive a degree?		
How long does it take to complete the degree?		
How many students get a job in their field after they graduate?		
Did the school have any law suits or mishaps?		

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What is the program's philosophy?		
What is the reputation of the faculty members? Are they well known in their field?		
What are the rules and regulations of the school, the program, and the faculty?		
What is the curriculum of your major? What are the degree requirements?		
<p>God's Plan for Your Life God has a plan for you, but for you to figure it out, you must be in prayer about your future and dive into His Word to "hear" His voice. Questions to consider:</p>		
Questions to consider:	College 1:	College 2:
Does this college have a group I can join that will foster my faith (example: a Baptist Student Union, Campus Christian Fellowship, etc.)?		
If I am far from home, are there churches nearby that I feel I can connect with?		
Do I know other Christians at this school who I can ask about the school's environment?		
After praying about this college, do I have a sense of peace about it?		

Only you can make the final decision. Decide what you can and cannot live with -- and go from there. Then, once you arrive at your new school and settle in, remember these key pieces of advice to keep your faith strong (<http://www.christianconnector.com/eis4.html>).

- Study God's Word, the Bible. Passages such as Joshua 1:8 serve as an example to us, "Do not let this book of the law depart from your mouth: meditate on it day and night..." and II Timothy 2:15 encourages us to "Study to show thyself approved unto God..."
- Be intentional about developing your personal relationship with Christ.
- Keep closely tied to your church and immerse yourself into Bible studies with other students.
- Stay involved in Christian clubs at your school or in the community.

*Questions in Chart under Your Gut and Reputation and Fit were copied from <http://gradschool.about.com/od/admissionsadvice/a/Acceptance.htm>

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How To Choose a College That's Right For You

by Martha O'Connell (02-21-07)

1. Start with who you are & why you are going.

You need to examine yourself and your reasons for going to college before you start your search. Why, really, are you going? What are your abilities and strengths? What are your weaknesses? What do you want out of life — something tangible or intangible?

Are you socially self-sufficient or do you need warm, familial support? Talk with your family, friends and high-school counselors as you ask these questions. The people who know you best can help you the most with these important issues.

2. Size matters: Your college does not have to be bigger than your high school.

Most good liberal arts colleges have a population of fewer than 4,000 for a reason; college is a time to explore, and a smaller community is more conducive to internal exploration. It is not the number of people, but the people themselves and the kind of community in which you will learn that really matters. Many large universities have established "honors colleges" within the larger university for these same reasons.

3. A name-brand college will not guarantee your success.

Think about the people in your life who are happy and successful and find out where (and if) they went to college. Ask the same about "famous" people. You will likely find that success in life has less to do with the choice of college than with the experiences and opportunities encountered while in college, coupled with personal qualities and traits.

Employers and graduate schools are looking for outstanding skills and experience, not college pedigree. As you search for colleges, ask about student outcomes; you will find many colleges that outperform the Ivies and "name brands," even though you may have never heard of them!

4. You don't need to pick a major to pick a college.

Very few high-school students have enough information or experience to choose a major. You need the variety and depth of college coursework to determine your interest and aptitude. Most college students change their minds two or three times before they settle on a major, and they can still graduate in four years! Being undecided is a good thing and will leave you open to more academic experiences.

5. Don't be scared by the stories.

If you only pay attention to the headlines, you might start to believe that "no one is getting in anywhere!" The truth is that the majority of the colleges and universities in this country admit more students than they reject. If you're worried about your chances of getting admitted — and you're willing to investigate beyond the very narrow band of highly selective colleges — you'll find that you have many options that will lead to a great fit for you.

Be informed about your academic profile and compare it to the profile of the most recently admitted and enrolled class for the colleges you are investigating. Check the college admission Web site for this information and contact them if you can't find it. Ask your high-school counselor for additional advice and guidance as it applies to your school.

6. You can afford to go to college.

If you make the assumption that you cannot afford college based on the "sticker price" of tuition, you will miss out. It is difficult to talk about money, but if you investigate all the options and ask for help and advice, you will find affordable choices. Online resources, as well as financial aid workshops sponsored by high schools in local communities, are widely available to get you started. College and university financial aid Web sites offer useful information and links as well. Investigate early and ask for help.

7. You don't have to go to college right away, and it's never too late.

There is no such thing as the perfect time to start college. Some students benefit from a year off to work, study or travel, and these experiences allow

them to be better, more engaged students. Some students choose to apply to college and gain admission and then defer their entrance, while others wait to apply until after they have had an alternative experience.

Either way, admissions officers will be anxious to learn about your experience during your time off, and they'll ask you to write about it as part of your admissions process. High-school and college admission counselors can provide resources for investigating alternatives that may be right for you. You could apply for an internship, study abroad, or participate in a community service project.

8. The most important factor in choosing a college is fit.

Choosing a college because your friends are going there or because of where it ranks on a list does not take into account who you are and who you will become. College is a match to be made, not a prize to be won. Finding a good fit requires time and thoughtfulness.

Visiting college Web sites and learning about what events take place, who visits as guest speakers, and how to get in touch with current students and faculty is a good way to supplement a campus visit — or to decide if you want to spend the time and money on a visit. Check a school's Web site to find the admissions officer assigned to your region of the country. Send them an e-mail to ask about getting in touch with students from your area or identifying a few with interests similar to yours.

When you visit, try to build in time to sit in on classes, eat in the dining hall and hang around in the student center or other high-traffic areas. That will help you imagine yourself as part of the community. Talk to a few students and ask if they would make the same college choice if they had to do it again. Go back to the first item in this list as you consider the information you've collected about the colleges. You will have great options!

Full article located at
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7506102>