

Important Questions to Ask Yourself before Choosing a College

From Jay Brody at www.collegeapps.about.com

Even before you meet with your counselor and start thinking about particular colleges, you need to ask yourself what you're looking for in a school. Here are some basic questions to get you started choosing a college.

- Size** What size of school are you looking for? Big research university? Small liberal arts college?
- Setting** Do you want to go to college in a city? On a campus set off by itself? Or in the suburbs? Are off-campus activities and events important to you?
- Geographic Location** Do you want to stay close to home? Is weather important?
- Academic/ career focus** Do you need a pre-med program? An undergraduate business major? Should you choose a college that will help you place well in graduate programs?
- Learning Environment** Is the learning atmosphere collaborative or competitive? What is the teaching environment among the faculty? Ratio of students to faculty? Are faculty accessible? What are the opportunities for faculty-student collaborations?
- Cost** How much can your family afford to spend? Is it worth going to a less prestigious school if that means saving a lot of money? How much debt are you willing to take on? Does the learning experience at a particular school seem worth the cost?
- Reputation** Is reputation important to you? Do you need to go to a college with a strong "name brand"?
- Family Considerations** If your family is pushing you to go to a certain school (for example, where your parents went), is that something that's important to you? If your parents don't want you to leave home but you're ready to go, have you discussed the issue with them?
- Other Considerations** Are you going to play sports? Are you looking for somewhere with a particular foreign exchange program? Is it important to you to be part of a robust ethnic or religious community?