

College Selection Tips

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It is highly recommended that early in the college selection process, the entire family visit schools to determine suitability. The criteria to be considered before submitting an application should include:

- Acceptance figures based on: average GPA, SAT/ACT scores, class rank
- Variety of career choices, in the event the student changes their major
- Size, location, Greeks, religious affiliation
- Percentage of freshmen who return for year two
- Percentage of freshmen who graduate in four years
- Percentage of financial need met
- Percentage of gift aid/self-help awarded
- On or off campus job opportunities
- Meal plans and dietary situations met
- Name recognition
- Student/teacher ratio
- Average class size, semester or trimester
- Percentage of professors who teach and percentage of teaching assistants
- 2 or 4-year college or university
- Availability of Co-ed dorms
- Freshman cars permitted
- Handicap accessibility
- Cost of the sheepskin

Additionally, families need to determine if the school uses a *need-blind* or *need-sensitive* admissions policy:

Need-blind is a practice where students are evaluated without any regard to family income or assets. **Need-sensitive** is a shameful policy used by a host of elite schools that has included Duke, Emory and Stanford. These schools will often admit a less than qualified rich kid in anticipation of a large contribution to their endowment fund. In essence, the wealthy family has bought an admission ticket to a school where their student might never have otherwise been accepted.

Families should begin to visit potential schools no later than the 10th grade. Colleges are always impressed when a 9th or 10th grader pays an official visit. By keeping in touch with officials you've met, such as department heads, admissions officials and believe it or not, the president of the university, students will have added points to both their GPA and SAT scores by establishing a rapport and keeping up a correspondence over the years. When the time comes to apply, administrators will be able to associate a face with the application. This helps a merely qualified student become more acceptable. However, before packing your bags and filling up the SUV with gas (ugh), make a checklist that includes the following:

- Confirm that every school you plan to visit will be in session.
- Ask plenty of questions and be an attentive listener.
- Bring a video camera or tape recorder for your notes.
- Find out who reads applications from your area, and if possible, try to meet with a reader and keep in touch with them.
- Student athletes should meet with a coach or two.
- Listen to the school radio station.
- Get a copy of the campus newspaper.
- If the student has Greek intentions, visit some frat or sorority houses.

- Check out a dorm unannounced.
- Introduce yourself to attending students and pick their brains.
- Have a snack in the cafeteria. After all, their food is what the student will consume for the next four years.

Students who have decided upon their course of study should make every effort to arrange a meeting with the head of that particular department and audit a class or two. This may require an overnight, giving the student a greater opportunity to check out some dorms.

Recommended college selection websites:

- For alternative criteria go to: www.fairtest.org or call 617-864-4810. They have a list of some 300 schools that apply non-traditional guidelines.
- Jesuit schools: www.ajcunet.edu
- Jewish affiliation: www.hillel.org
- Accredited Online and campus degree programs: www.overview.com/colleges/

For over 35 years, noted financial advisor, Reecy Aresty, has helped thousands of high school and college families to obtain the American Dream; a superior education at a cost far less than they ever dreamed possible. He is the author of the highly acclaimed admissions and financial aid manual, ***How To Pay For College Without Going Broke***. For further information on admissions and financial aid, please visit: www.paylessforcollege.com