

How To CHOOSE A COLLEGE THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

CTCL

COLLEGES THAT CHANGE LIVES

Changing lives. One student at a time.

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WHO ARE YOU, AND WHY ARE YOU GOING TO COLLEGE?

Start by examining yourself and your reasons for going to college. Why, really, are you going? What are your abilities and strengths? What are your weaknesses? What do you want out of life? Are you socially self-sufficient or do you prefer 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.

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 many students find a smaller community more conducive to internal exploration. What really matters, however, is not the number of people, but the people themselves and the kind of community in which you will learn. Many large universities have established smaller “honors colleges” for these reasons.

A NAME-BRAND COLLEGE WILL NOT GUARANTEE SUCCESS

Think about the people in your life who are happy and successful. Find out whether they went to college, and if so, where they attended. Often you'll find that success in life has less to do with one's choice of a college than with personal qualities and traits and the experience and the opportunities one has in college. Employers and graduate schools are looking for outstanding skills and experience, not college pedigree. As you search for colleges, ask about student outcomes and you will find many colleges you may have never heard of that outperform the Ivies and Name Brands! Visit the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) website (http://nsse.iub.edu/html/students_parents.cfm) for more information and as an alternative to rankings and lists.

YOU DON'T NEED TO PICK A MAJOR YET

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

DON'T BE SCARED BY THE STORIES

If you pay attention to the headlines when it comes to college admissions, you might believe that no one is getting in anywhere! The truth is, the majority of the colleges and universities in this country admit more students than they reject. If you are worried about your chance for admission and are willing to explore beyond the very narrow band of highly selective colleges, you will find many options that could be a great fit for you. Compare your academic profile to those of recently admitted and enrolled students at any college you're considering. (Most colleges provide this information on their website, but contact the school if you can't find it.) Ask your high school counselor for additional advice and guidance as it applies to your record and school.

YOU CAN AFFORD TO GO TO COLLEGE

If you assume that you cannot afford college based on the “sticker price,” you will miss out. It may be difficult for you 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 your community are widely available to get you started. College and university financial aid websites offer useful information and links as well. Investigate early and ask for help.

THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR 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 introspection. Visiting a college's website, learning about campus events and guest speakers, and getting in touch with current students and faculty are good ways to supplement a campus visit—or to decide if you even want to spend the time and money on a visit. Check college websites to identify the admission officer assigned to your region of the country and email him or her. Ask if you can get in touch with students from your area or students with interests similar to yours. When you visit, take the time to sit in on classes, eat in the dining hall, and hang around in the student center or other high-traffic areas. Imagine yourself as part of the community. Talk to students, and ask if they would make the same college choice if they had to do it again.

COLLEGES THAT CHANGE LIVES

Colleges That Change Lives, Inc. (CTCL) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement and support of a student-centered college search process. Our goal is to help each student find a college that cultivates a lifelong love of learning and that provides the foundation for a successful and fulfilling life beyond college. CTCL was founded as a result of a book of the same name, *Colleges That Change Lives*, researched and written by former *New York Times* education editor Loren Pope.

In following Mr. Pope's ideals, we believe that the criteria most college-bound students and their parents and counselors use, such as name and prestige, does not acknowledge the importance of understanding an individual student's needs and how they "fit" with the mission and identity of a college community.

The current record number of college-bound students, coupled with narrowly focused media stories about college admissions, have led the public and even the high school counseling community to believe that college choices are severely limited. CTCL aims to correct this misconception by presenting accurate information about college accessibility at sessions around the country and by providing college counseling information and resources through the CTCL website (ctcl.org) and other outreach efforts.

Colleges That Change Lives is recognized by the IRS as a non-profit, charitable 501(c)(3) organization and your donations are tax-deductible. Contact us at ctcl.org for information about how to contribute and support our mission.

Alloy Education is proud to support the mission of Colleges That Change Lives. For over 25 years, Alloy Education has served education and provided students with options for life after high school. Through its websites and magazines—*Private Colleges & Universities* and *Careers And Colleges*—Alloy Education helps students and parents find information on the right college and how to pay for it. With over \$550,000 in scholarships already awarded, Alloy Education looks to continue to help students' dreams come true.

For your chance to win the Alloy Education \$10,000 scholarship visit www.collegeXpress.com/ctcl

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