

College Plaza

where college is a *verb*

*imagine ask study explore try struggle learn focus believe persist achieve
become*

College Research

There are over 3,800 two and four year colleges and universities across the country! Effective college research takes many forms: visits with college admissions representatives who visit your campus, college fairs, visits to college campuses, research via guidebooks and on college websites, conversations with staff and students who attend colleges that may be of interest to you.

We recommend that you research and consider several colleges/universities to ensure that you have more than one option when it comes time to making your final college decision. All important life decisions deserve thoughtful, deliberate consideration and the weighing of the pros and cons of more than one path.

As you begin this process, it is key that you:

1. **Take initiative:** It is up to you to learn about and follow-through with individual colleges.
2. **Maintain an open mind:** Commit to a spirit of exploration—the ‘best’ college for you might turn out to be one you have never even heard of!

As a place to begin, then, we provide below a brief summary of the central characteristics of the kinds of colleges and universities to which you will likely apply:

Community Colleges

*Public colleges that provide preparation for two year Associates degrees and other professional and technical certifications.

*Serve a very diverse student population from high school students to adults who have worked for years and have decided to attend college again, or for the first time.

*Typically provide a wide range of course offerings including technical and vocational programs such as auto mechanics, culinary arts, nursing, business and welding.

*Students can transfer many of their course credits at a community college to a college or university that offers four year Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degrees.

*Non-residential institutions—that is, students do not live on campus.

*An affordable option—costs are far lower than most four year colleges.

**Examples: Central New Mexico Community College, Santa Fe Community College*

Universities

*Large public or private institutions with a strong commitment to research that provide both undergraduate and graduate degrees.

*Universities have a designated 'undergraduate college' which traditionally serves students in the 18-22 age range who are working toward four year Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degrees in a wide range of majors from English to Chemistry to Fine Art.

*Graduate schools in universities provide students opportunity to earn Masters degrees and Doctoral level degrees such as an MD, law degree or PhD in Spanish Literature. *Provide some housing for students who wish to live in residence.

*Public in-state universities tend to cost less for in-state than out-of-state students.

**Examples: UNM and NM State are examples of public universities; Stanford University in California and University of San Francisco are examples of private universities.*

Liberal Arts Colleges

*Small, private colleges with a focus on undergraduate students.

*Provide students opportunity to major in a range of fields that result in a four year Bachelor of Art or Science degrees.

*Strong commitment to residential community as well as academic community—that is, dorm life, on-campus community and culture.

****Liberal Arts colleges are not, specifically, arts colleges!*** Students can major in the arts, but also a wide range of subjects from mathematics to political science to psychology to religious studies to biology.

*Often include programs for students to pursue graduate degrees as well: a 3-2 program, for example, where you work toward a bachelors degree in three years and then move to a nearby university for two years, the end of which time you earn a Bachelors and a Masters degree.

*In general, higher tuition costs, though financial aid and scholarship assistance often available.

***Examples: St. John's College, Colorado College*

Colleges with a particular focus: Polytechnic and Arts Institutes, Colleges with a mission to serve specific populations of students such as Tribal Colleges and Historically Black colleges, all women's colleges etc.

****Public or private colleges with a specific focus: the sciences or arts, for example.**

****The majority of students' studies will be in these specific fields.**

** A good opportunity for students who have a strong sense of what they wish to study and a desire to focus chiefly on that one area, rather than taking classes that might not directly connect to their academic and professional goals.

*Housing requirements and offerings vary depending on the institution.

*Tuition costs vary—some very high and others more affordable

***Examples: Haskell Indian Nations University, New Mexico Tech, Mount Holyoke College, Institute of American Indian Arts*

College Interest Survey

As you consider what kind of college might be best for you, take time to answer the following questions:

Name:

Date:

1. When I imagine college, I am most likely interested in studying:
2. When I imagine careers, I am most likely interested in:
3. When I imagine college, I hope to find a college with the following characteristics:
In New Mexico_____ A large university_____ (10,000 +)
Out of State_____ A smaller college_____ (under 3,000)
In the Southwest_____ A medium sized college_____ (3,000-10,000)
In the West_____ In a city_____ (Albuquerque or larger)
Back East_____ In a rural area_____
Open to any location_____ In a medium sized town/city_____ (Santa Fe sized, for example)

Tribal College_____
Historically Black College/University_____
All women's college_____

Additional characteristics:
4. I will be the first member of my family to attend college: yes___no___
5. My central questions and concerns about college include:
6. I have spoken to my parents about my college interests: yes___not yet___
7. I have been on the following college campuses:
8. I have registered for the ACT Yes___ No___

Preliminary College Research Guidelines

As you explore a variety of college/university possibilities, we recommend that you take brief notes on what you discover based on these questions:

1. Mission/Philosophy of the college/university: What is distinct about it? What sets it apart from other colleges and universities?
2. Location: Where is it? What is the city/town/rural community like? What is the relationship between the college community and the broader community?
3. Student Population: Where do the students come from? Breakdown across states, cultural, religious, first generation college-bound etc. International student population?
4. Academic programs offered: What degrees are offered? (There are different names for the same area of study—if you do not see what you are looking for, ask!) What are the core requirements to earn the degree of interest to you? Can you create or combine majors? When do you have to decide your major? What resources will allow you to pursue your graduate school goals?
5. Residential community: Do students live in dorms? What are they like? Are students grouped together or separated according to specific interest dorms, year in college (such as all freshmen together?) Does the college/university have 'living and learning' communities that allow you to room with students who have interests and goals similar to your own?
6. Extracurricular opportunities: What kinds of organizations, clubs and sports exist here? Which of these would be of specific interest to you? Is it a political campus? Is community service central? Are there funds available to start a club or pursue an internship of some kind?
7. Admissions requirements: Review the application. Are there essays required and if so, what are the questions? What kinds of teacher recommendations are required? What are the core expectations for grades and ACT/SAT scores? Is an interview required? Are there 'fly out' programs available in the fall and/or spring?
8. Costs and financial aid: What is the tuition? What financial aid and scholarship possibilities are available?
9. From your perspective: What are the advantages and disadvantages of this particular college or university? Can you see yourself at this particular school? Why or why not?