

## **THINGS TO THINK ABOUT...**

### **YOUR INTERESTS AND TALENTS**

Choosing the college that's right for you involves being aware of what kind of environment in which you best perform. Match your abilities, interests, and needs to the colleges that can offer you an atmosphere in which to grow and learn.

Keep in mind the academic subjects and extracurricular activities that you do well in and most enjoy as you consider colleges. Your interests will most likely continue in college and you can explore them more in depth.

A few questions to ask yourself:

1. What are your interests?
2. What are your skills and abilities?
3. What is more important to you?
4. What classes do you most enjoy?
5. What major will help you obtain your chosen career?
6. What are the program requirements?

When you set out to buy a car, you don't just walk into a dealership and take the first model you see; you don't buy a particular car just because your friends own that model. No, you take time to investigate size, mileage, costs, options; you take a test drive; you shop around. Well, choosing a college entails the same process; there are some important factors you should consider when shopping around for the college of your choice.

Be realistic when you apply. It is recommended to narrow your college search to your "reach", "target", and "safety" schools. This gives you multiple opportunities for acceptance at your college choices in each of these categories. By applying to only one college, you may risk missing a deadline for other colleges if rejected by your first choice. We recommend that you send no more than 6 - 8 applications. More than this will indicate you have not done enough research and applied it to this decision-making process.

### **CHOOSING A MAJOR**

Do not worry if you are unsure of what field or major you want to study. A majority of colleges will allow you to begin as "undeclared," which will allow you to complete a majority of core classes. Even those who have chosen a major will often find their ideas change with time and exposure to a wide variety of new areas and subjects. The exposure to a solid

liberal arts program will give the student a chance to experience courses in English, Social Sciences, the Arts, Math, History, and Science. Most four-year colleges do not require a student to declare a major until late in the sophomore year.

## **COLLEGE SETTING**

Colleges, just like other groups of people working and living together, create their own atmosphere. Each college has a unique mood or environment that affects the performance and satisfaction of each student there.

Some characteristics that are important to consider:

- Size of college, Number of students
- Location, setting, and distance from home
- Available programs
- Type of college (2 or 4 year), religious affiliation
- An academic or social emphasis in residence halls and on the campus as a whole
- Student life and other activities
- Co-educational or single-sex facilities

The type of atmosphere a college offers can best be explored through a campus visit.

## **FINANCIAL COST**

Obviously, a major factor to be considered is the cost of attending a college. The total cost for a year, as computed by the college financial aid office, includes tuition, fees, room and board, books, supplies, transportation, and personal expenses. College costs can range drastically from school to school.

While cost is undoubtedly very important in the decision-making process, don't limit your choice of colleges to only those you think you can afford. Many of the more expensive private schools have solid financial aid programs, which may cover anywhere from 20% to 60% of the cost. A good plan would be to choose several colleges, including one you know you can afford and several for which you would need financial aid. Although financial aid may resemble a game of roulette, at times, limiting prospective colleges on a cost basis alone may exclude some excellent colleges from your list.

Financial Aid factors:

- Family Income
- Family Expenses
- Family Size
- Other family members in college
- Student Income