

COLLEGE SELECTION TIPS FOR FAMILIES

Selecting the right college isn't easy. Like so many important things in life, planning is crucial. Stating that it pays to plan ahead for college, speaks to the heart of the matter figuratively and literally. Regardless of your location on the road to finding the right college, here are 4 Dos and 4 Don'ts for all of us.

What To Do

Start early

First, start setting money aside as soon as you can. Research your options, seek input from trusted financial advisors, and plan for a college specific financial review while your student is in the 9th grade. Second, initiate the hands-on part of the selection process as your student begins the 9th grade. Work with the school guidance counselor to make certain core academic courses will be completed and important college related deadlines are identified.

Plan to work together

This process works best when it's a family endeavor, and this is especially true when it comes to financial aid. Most college students share 2 characteristics. First, they are dependent students (supported by and declared as a dependent on someone's income tax). Second, they receive some form of financial aid (grants, scholarships, work-study, or loans). Financial aid applications require financial and tax information from the supporting family. This happens during the senior year. Plan for it.

Define an objective

Simply put, what is the reason for going to college? This sounds pretty basic, but is often missing. This objective is shared and held in common by the whole family, not just the student. Working to define this will help clarify vague notions and put everyone on the same page.

Seek the best overall fit

The right fit is balanced and realistic. It is, the right program, the right environment, and the right cost. Finding the right fit clears a path to achieving the shared objective. This process takes effort, but can significantly reduce transfers, changes in major, wasted credits, and a host of other issues that drive up costs and reduce satisfaction.

What Not To Do

Wait until the last minute

The opposite of starting early is waiting until everything starts piling up. Finding the right college is a process of thoughtful elimination, and this takes time. Whole options disappear without time to explore them. Remember, deadlines and timetables are imposed by others and not for you to move around. Don't wait. Start early and be proactive!

Ignore debt

Student loan debt is common and increasing. The best debt is no debt,

yet loans have their place. Consider loans as secondary, not primary tools. Look at debt in relation to credits. Plan to accumulate as many credits as possible before adding debt.

Focus on schools showing little interest

The odds favor finding the best fit academically, socially, and financially at an institution that is actually interested in having your student attend. Learn what schools desire in applicants beyond just grades and test scores. Seek ways to maximize your student's appeal by identifying and promoting their unique attributes. In the end, work for mutual selection, where you pick the school and the school likewise picks your student.

Start with a small list

Finding the right fit involves choice and choice requires options. If you start with one or two options, you will end up with just that. Start with the shared family objective, refine your search criteria, and build a list of at least 50 schools. Work the list down until you have a small group of final candidates. These are the target schools that receive your focus.

To learn more contact:

Jeff Lundell

College Assistance Plus of Southern Nevada

702-367-4625

jlundell@collegeassistanceplus.com

Copyright © All Right Reserved

