

Five Things to Think About When Picking a College

By Dr. Uma Gupta, CEO, Global Cube Consulting

Before you select a college or university, you must have a clear idea as to what you are looking for in a college or university. You may not know exactly what you wish to study or your career goals and that is okay. I will discuss five simple things you must consider even before you browse through the web pages of colleges and universities:

Urban or rural?

If you are an urban bird, don't select a school in an isolated rural environment or vice versa. This just prolongs the time it takes to adjust to college life.

Small or large?

If you like a small intimate setting, selecting a university with 52,000 students is not a good idea. Focus on colleges with a small student body.

Career-focused or life-focused?

Some colleges and universities are interested in preparing you to deal with life – they believe a career will follow. Others focus on a career – and don't pay attention to your all-round development. True, no school will admit this! Of course, some are focused on both. If you can find such a college, go for it!

Does anyone look like me?

If it is important for you to have class mates from your cultural, ethnic, or economic background find a college that has a diverse student population.

Residential or non-residential?

Is living on campus important to you or do you want to live on your own? Some colleges have strict residential requirements and hence you should pay attention to this.

These are just a few things to consider before you put your pen or mouse to a college application!

College Application Checklist

Before you put your college applications in the mailbox, here's a quick checklist to make sure you haven't left anything out.

The General Application Don't leave anything blank unless the application tells you to. Make sure all information is accurate and legible. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call the university's admissions office. Did you wait until the last minute? Submit your application online.

Transcripts Make sure these are sealed. Delivery usually takes 4-7 days, so if you haven't done it, order them immediately. Your school may charge a fee for sending transcripts, usually \$2-\$5 per transcript.

SAT/ACT Scores When you took the test, you had the option of sending your scores to the schools of your choosing. If you need to send scores to additional schools, contact the test board immediately. Delivery takes 3-4 week.

Letters of Recommendation Many colleges require these to be sealed – ask the admissions office. Make sure you have the number of recommendations required in the application.

Essays Double-check spelling. Make sure your name and social security number are on every page, as well as the essay's title or number. If you've recycled an essay, make sure you've matched the correct university with the right essay.

Work Samples/Portfolios If required, be sure you've included your name, social security number and the project name on every item. Don't send the original – make a copy.

Last-minute tips: Pay attention to the details, keep an eye on the deadline, and make sure you have the right amount of postage.