

## FINDING THE RIGHT COLLEGE

When you are picking a college, **keep in mind that there is not just one college that is right for you.**

**Remember too, that “college is a match to be made, not a prize to be won” and it is not primarily just about getting admitted.** There are a lot of good colleges in this country (as well as in Canada and abroad), and you could no doubt be successful and happy at a lot of different places. To help you make a good decision, consider the following factors:

**COST** What can you and your family afford? Will your decision be based on how much financial aid you will receive from a particular college? Discuss this issue with your parents/guardians BEFORE you put lots of energy into applying to a college that is not realistic for you to attend.

**PUBLIC OR PRIVATE** Public schools tend to cost less than private schools. But often private schools are able to give out more financial aid, so may end up being a better deal financially than a public school. Some public colleges are as hard to get into as selective private colleges, and some private schools are not selective.

**LOCATION** Do you want to go to college in a city, in a small town or in a rural setting? Do you want to be far from home or close by? On the east coast, in the Midwest, or another part of the country? Can you study if it is sunny every day? Do you love snow? Think about climate and geography.

**SIZE** Do you want a large institution or a small school where everyone knows everybody? Can you handle classes with more than 150 students or would you prefer a more personal approach? Consider too, whether you want to be a “big fish in a small pond” or a “small fish in a big ocean”?

**LEARNING ENVIRONMENT** How intense and competitive should the college be? Would you feel intimidated or stimulated in a competitive situation? Do you want a lot of structure, or will you do better in a looser, more alternative environment?

**AVAILABLE MAJORS** What academic areas sound interesting to you? What are your career goals? If, like many college freshmen, you have not made up your mind about a major, is the school big enough so that when you do pick a major, or if you change your mind about your major, lots of majors are offered?

**HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO YOU THAT THE SCHOOL OFFERS:** Independent study options? Intercollegiate athletics? Intramural athletics? Fraternities and sororities? Study abroad? On campus housing for students? Tutoring, career and personal counseling? Academic support? Job placement services?

**ADMISSIONS** Will you have met all course requirements and taken required admissions tests: ACT, SAT Reasoning Test, SAT subject tests? What is the application deadline? Will you apply early decision or early action? Will you need to write an essay? Are recommendations required? Will you need an interview?

### **MISTAKES TO AVOID IN CHOOSING A COLLEGE**

Don't let friends/parents unduly influence your decision. You are the one who will be living and studying at a particular college, so YOU need to make the decision. And don't go for glamour, prestige or a big name unless it has other factors that work for you as well.

### **VISIT YOUR POTENTIAL COLLEGE BEFORE MAKING A CHOICE**

Finally, before making your choice and sending in your deposit, if at all possible, visit the college. No matter how perfect it sounds on paper, seeing the college, getting a good look at students who go there, taking in the setting—this is very important in helping you make your decision!