

Published December 7th, 2022

What is a good college

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Doing College and Beyond College and Graduate School Admissions Services 970 Dewing Avenue, Suite 202, Lafayette, 925.385.0562 (office) 925.330.8801 (mobile) www.doingcollege.com Elizabeth@doingcollege.com Elizabeth LaScala, PhD, brings decades of admissions expertise to personally guide each student through applying to well-matched colleges, making each step more manageable and less stressful. She has placed hundreds of students in the most prestigious colleges and universities in the US. Elizabeth attends conferences, visits campuses and makes personal contacts with admissions networks to stay current on the evolving nature of college admissions. She and her professional team offer resume development, test preparation, academic tutoring, value analysis, merit and need-based scholarship search and more.

an academic direction early enough to graduate in four years. We know that many students are uncertain about what they want to do, but these days many colleges seem almost to "prey upon" the undeclared entry. It's one thing to welcome them but what are you doing to help the undeclared set a direction once they arrive and use their general education coursework in a way that will work for a variety of possible majors.

A good college is somewhere a student feels connected and comfortable on campus and in the surrounding community. A good college for a given student must include academic, cultural and social factors.

A good college has strong networking capabilities like access to internships, as well as resume and interview preparation. It also has a career center that provides an alumni system that fosters post graduate life including job searches, career changes and professional opportunities.

A good college example: To share a little first-hand mom experience, this is something I saw clearly with one of my daughters who attended a good college. To test her academic direction, she applied to several internships. The career services center provided information and assisted with identifying internship opportunities in both the public and private sector. The center provided resume and cover letter reviews, videotaped interviews, and even told her when she fiddled with her hair too much. And, perhaps most importantly, she could see her mannerisms and hear how well she responded to questions. She's now on

If you did a survey and asked people what characteristics define a good college, you might get 100 different answers. If there is so much variation just in what constitutes a good college, we know there is even more variation in what constitutes a best fit for a particular student. But starting with features of a good college is a great way to begin. For this reason, I start my college search process with a set of characteristics in mind that I know constitute a good college in general. These I share with you below.

A good college graduates its students within four years and with as little debt as possible. It is a no brainer to assume that students and their parents are interested in the four-year college plan rather than a five- or six-year plan! Thus, it is important to know what the college's four-year graduation rate is. (Be aware that many sources only publish a six-year graduation rate). A good college will graduate at least two-thirds of an entering class in four years. Also, a good college admissions office considers the true full financial need of its students and uses need-based aid and merit-based aid to make an education more affordable. In addition, the college makes it as easy as possible for students to keep their merit aid. This can be done by making realistic requirements for academic achievement, such as a maintaining a 3.0 GPA in contrast to a 3.5 GPA. A conscientious college will also increase aid as it increases tuition and fees.

A good college educates to the student's interests and abilities. We measure this not only by curricular offerings but by analyzing a college's learning support resources; these resources should be available not just for those students with learning challenges, but for all students - for example, athletes with rigorous practice schedules, and students whose major includes some coursework that may be especially difficult for them. Not all students who want to be finance majors are naturals at linear algebra, nor are all pre-med hopefuls whizzes at organic chemistry. A good school offers support to all students to help to ensure their academic success.

A good college helps a student test their academic direction early enough to change course, as many students do. The reality is that 70-80% of students change their major at least once while in college. Internships and shadowing opportunities are great ways to test if the major they are pursuing will lead to a job after graduation that they will enjoy.

A good college helps the undeclared student select

her second job with a very good salary in New York City - not bad for one of those liberal arts and sciences majors we hear about who struggle with entry level income. I attribute this mostly to her taking the initiative to use resources available to her and the strong support she had and still has from her alma mater.

The consideration of this set of parameters that define a good college gives you a head start in determining where you would have the greatest opportunity for a happy and productive undergraduate experience.

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[back](#)

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