

# My Priority Factors:

## What Matters Most to Me?

Before you decide where to apply, it's important to consider what priority factors are most important to you. In other words, what do you need to have in a college?

You should never choose a college just based on its name, location, or reputation.

Think of buying a car. You wouldn't buy one based on the name alone. You would ask yourself: Is it safe? How many people does it seat? How many miles per gallon does it get? What features does it offer? What color do I want?

Below are some of the most common factors students consider when they decide where they want to apply with a list of specific questions to consider. As you read, think about which factors stand out to you as the most important.

**try it** Now it's your turn to use what you've learned.  
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FACTOR	QUESTIONS TO ANSWER
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How far away from home is this school?</li> <li>• How will you travel to and from this school?</li> <li>• What is around the school? Is it rural? In a city? A suburb?</li> <li>• Will you need a car to get around?</li> </ul>
Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How big is the student body?</li> <li>• What is the average class size? The student/faculty ratio?</li> <li>• How big is the campus? Can you walk from one end to the other?</li> </ul>
Financial Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the average financial aid package?</li> <li>• What percent of students with need were awarded aid or need-based scholarships? What percent had their need fully met?</li> <li>• What is the average student loan debt on graduation?</li> </ul>
Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the racial breakdown of the study body?</li> <li>• How diverse is the faculty at the school?</li> <li>• What is the male/female ratio?</li> </ul>
Academics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What programs of study are offered that interest you?</li> <li>• What are the graduation requirements and required courses?</li> <li>• What is the first-to-second year retention rate?</li> <li>• What is the graduation rate? For underrepresented students?</li> </ul>
Supports for First-Generation College Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the school offer specific supports (student centers, clubs, mentoring, etc.) for first-generation college students?</li> <li>• What percent of the student body is awarded Pell grants?</li> <li>• What is the graduation rate for first-generation college students?</li> </ul>
Programs Offered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the school offer study abroad programs?</li> <li>• What clubs/extracurricular activities are offered that you might want to be involved in?</li> <li>• Does the school offer career services for students and alumni?</li> </ul>
Campus Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What percent of the student body lives on campus?</li> <li>• Is the social scene focused on the Greek system (fraternities and sororities)?</li> <li>• What varsity and club sports are offered? What division do varsity teams play in?</li> </ul>

**ON THE SPOT:**  
Find answers to these questions by reading the college profiles in this book and at [ImFirst.org](http://ImFirst.org). Still can't find what you're looking for? Call the college directly.