

A GUIDE

TO BUILDING

a

PERFECT COLLEGE LIST

*Discover nearly three dozen
resources to find the right academic
and financial college fits.*

By Lynn O'Shaughnessy

 THE COLLEGE
SOLUTION

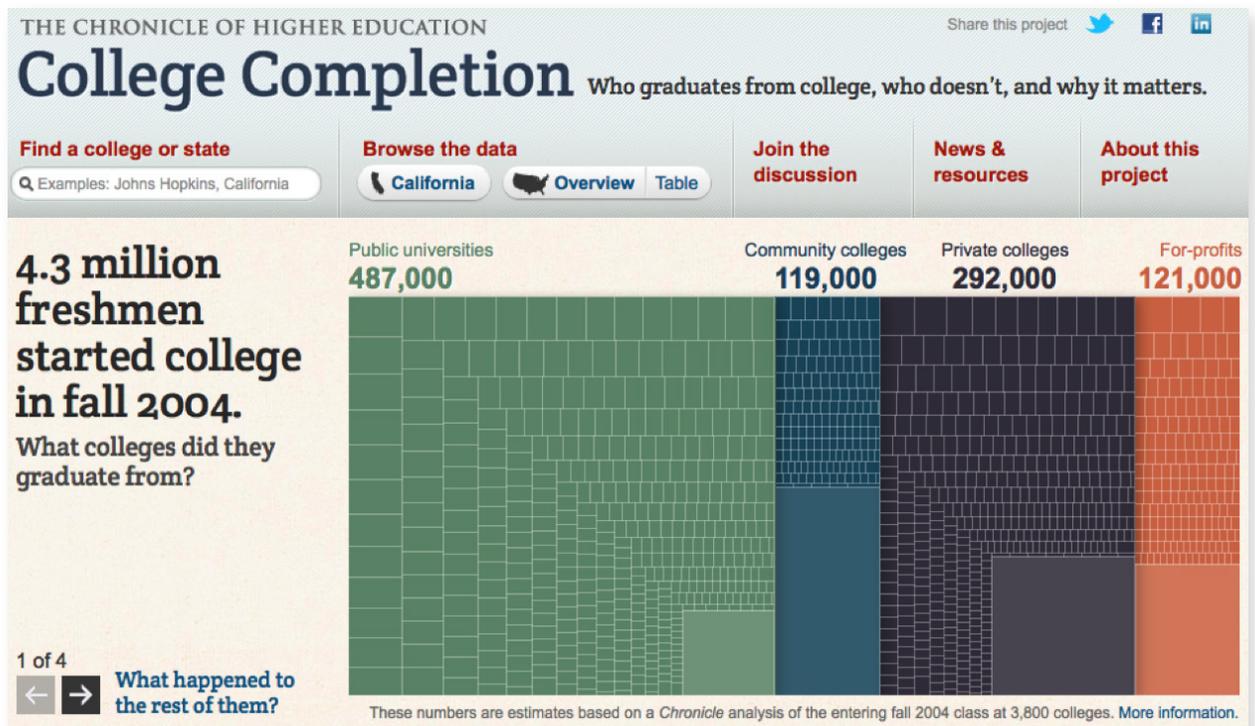
Many families are confused about where to search for good college matches. And that's why I created the guide.

What you'll find here are resources to help broaden your search for colleges and universities and to evaluate schools well before your child applies.

Students typically end up looking at a fairly narrow lineup of schools, which is not always a good strategy if you want to find good academic fits, as well as colleges that will be more affordable.

Some of the resources that you will find in this guide will help you locate schools that have majors that interest your child. Other resources will help you find and evaluate schools that might be better financial matches.

College Completion



With funding from the Gates Foundation, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* created the [College Completion](#) microsite within its website that includes a wide variety of graduation statistics for individual schools.

Showing 1–20 of 416 colleges		
College Location	Graduation rate (150%)	Graduation rate (100%)
United States Naval Academy Annapolis, Maryland	88.6%	88.1%
University of Virginia Charlottesville, Virginia	92.7%	84.5%
United States Military Academy West Point, New York	85.7%	83.4%
College of William and Mary Williamsburg, Virginia	89.7%	82.2%
United States Air Force Academy USAFPA, Colorado	81.5%	80.7%
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Chapel Hill, North Carolina	88.1%	74.9%
University of Michigan at Ann Arbor Ann Arbor, Michigan	89.7%	72.0%
College of New Jersey Ewing, New Jersey	86.2%	71.2%

On this free site, you can create custom peer groups to compare colleges and sort individual private and/or public schools by state and graduation rates.

To give you an idea of what you'll find, here is a screenshot of a partial list of public colleges and universities that I generated by sorting for the highest four-year grad rates, which is identified as "Graduation rate 100%" in the right-hand column. A second column refers to six-year grad rates, which the federal government (the source of these figures) expresses as 150% of the traditional grad rate.

Here is a screenshot of the private schools with the top four-year grad rates:

Showing 1–20 of 256 colleges		
College Location	Graduation rate (150%)	Graduation rate (100%)
Williams College Williamstown, Massachusetts	95.1%	91.0%
College of the Holy Cross Worcester, Massachusetts	93.3%	90.3%
Princeton University Princeton, New Jersey	95.7%	90.1%
University of Notre Dame Notre Dame, Indiana	96.0%	90.0%
Bucknell University Lewisburg, Pennsylvania	92.3%	89.7%
Vassar College Poughkeepsie, New York	93.3%	89.6%
Wesleyan University Middletown, Connecticut	94.4%	89.1%
Yale University New Haven, Connecticut	96.3%	88.9%
Georgetown University Washington, District of Columbia	92.5%	88.9%

Of course, the schools at the top of these lists will be elite institutions. Scrolling further down through the names on the lists that you generate will elicit many more ideas. You can also flip the lists and sort schools by ascending grad order.

College Completion also lets you create charts of schools in individual states.

Below is a screenshot of some public universities in California, which reveals poor four-year grad rates, as well as other statistics about the schools including how much money the university spends per student.

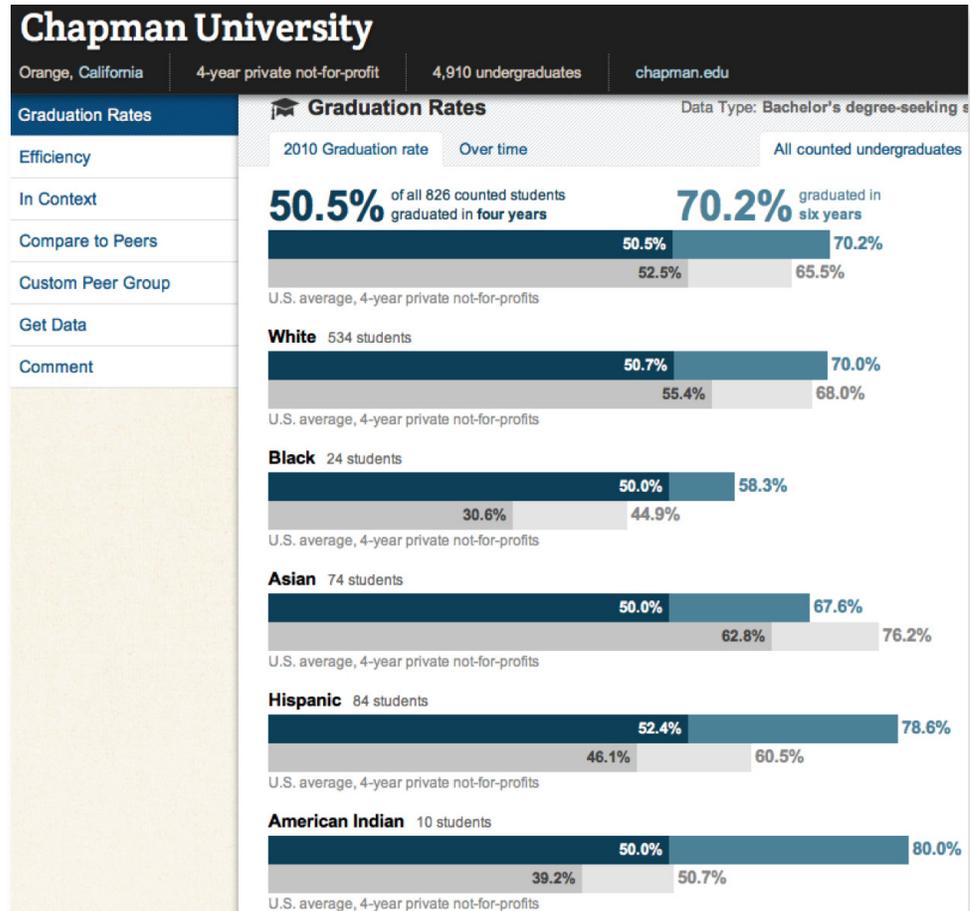
The only state school with an above average grad rate on this chart, compared with public institutions nationally, is **California Maritime Academy**, a specialized maritime school where students wear uniforms and spend a lot of class time on ships.

College	Grad. rate (6 year)	Grad. rate (4 year)	Completions per 100 students	Spending per completion	Student aid per recipient	Students with Pell Grants
California State University at Chico	61.8%	19.8%	20.8	\$48,761	\$7,832	31.4%
California Maritime Academy	61.1%	48.1%	15.3	\$200,262	\$8,736	30.5%
California State University-Channel Islands	58.4%	25.3%	24.5	\$106,230	\$7,470	28.4%
Sonoma State University	56.9%	31.2%	22.5	\$57,228	\$7,551	22.3%
California State Polytechnic University at Pomona	56.6%	19.5%	20.6	\$53,656	\$8,214	37.2%
California State University at Long Beach	54.0%	12.3%	24.7	\$37,780	\$8,130	35.5%
California State University at Fullerton	51.4%	16.5%	24.1	\$38,662	\$8,143	30.4%
California State University at Fresno	50.6%	16.9%	20.7	\$51,776	\$8,726	40.2%
California State University-Stanislaus	49.5%	23.4%	22.2	\$56,134	\$7,690	47.3%
San Francisco State University	48.0%	14.2%	24.7	\$42,284	\$8,122	33.2%

Families often fail to look at graduation rates when exploring schools even though failing to graduate in the traditional four years can be incredibly costly.

According to federal statistics, just 31% of full-time students attending four-year public colleges and universities graduate in four years while only 52.5% of students at private institutions manage to do this.

On College Completion, you can also check the grad rates of an individual school that's broken down by gender and ethnicity. Here is screenshot of four and six-year grad rates for [Chapman University](#) in Southern California, which has become a hot school despite a mediocre four-year grad rate:



You can watch this [introductory video](#) to learn more about how to use the valuable tools on College Completion.

College Results Online

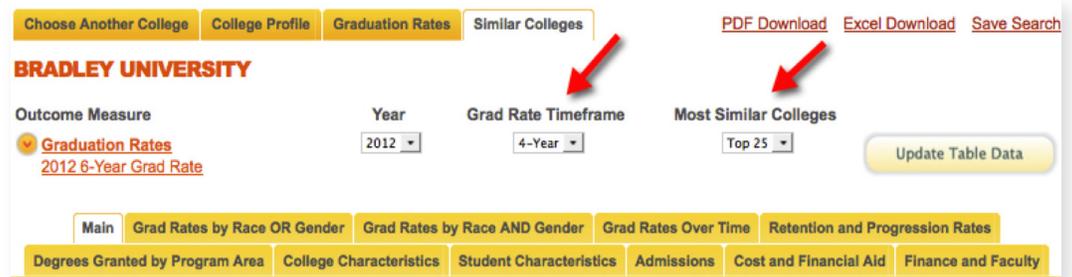
BRADLEY UNIVERSITY	
General Information	
Website	www.bradley.edu
Address	1501 W Bradley Ave
City	Peoria
State	IL
Zip	61625-0001
Locale	City: Midsize
College Characteristics	
Sector	Private not-for-profit
Carnegie Classification	Masters Large
Size: Number of Undergraduates	5067
Historically Black College or University (HBCU)	No
Hispanic Serving Institution	No
Athletic Conference	Missouri Valley Conference
Accrediting Agency	North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, The Learning Commission
Net Price Calculator Website	https://admissions.bradley.edu/ssl/estimator/?status=viewte
All Programs Exclusively Online (no physical campuses)	No
Admissions and Cost	
Average High School GPA Among College Freshmen	3.59
Median SAT Verbal	560 (25th - 75th percentile =
Median SAT Math	570 (25th - 75th percentile =
Median SAT Writing	N/A
Median ACT Composite	25 (25th - 75th percentile = 2

College Results Online, which is a creation of The Education Trust, provides similar information to what you'll find on College Completion. One of the features that I like on this site is the ability to find schools that are similar to each other. To create a list, you must first call up the profile of a school and then click the *Similar Colleges* button.

As an example, I am using **Bradley University** in Peoria, IL. On the left, you'll see a portion of the information College Results Online provides for Bradley and at the top you'll see a red arrow pointing to its *Similar Colleges* link.

When I clicked Bradley's *Similar Colleges* link, the site generated a list of peer institutions based on 12 institutional and student characteristics. You can adjust the grad time frame from six years down to four years, which is what I did. I also instructed the software to provide 25 similar schools rather than the 15-school default list.

Highlighted in yellow, you will also see the categories you can use to sort Bradley U's peer schools in addition to grad rates. I selected the *Admissions* category.

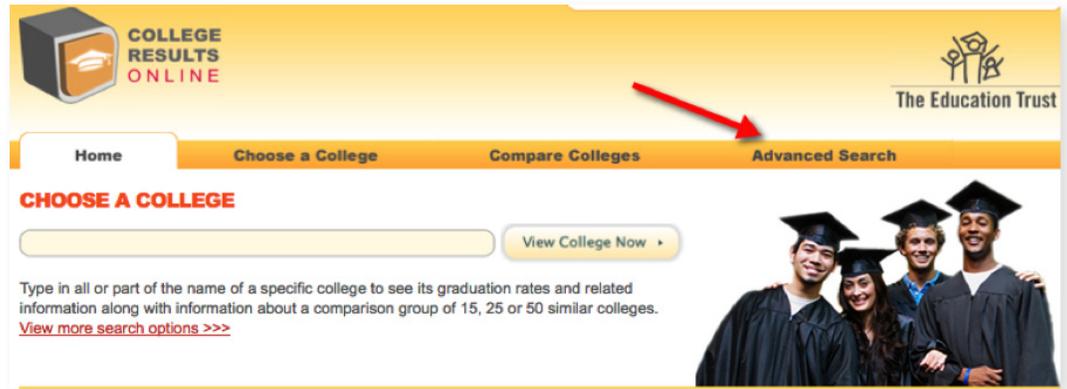


Here is the partial list of schools similar to Bradley U. generated with the above parameters. (One reason why Bradley has a lower four-year grad rate is because of its job coop program.) There are many more columns of statistics than what you can see here:

College	2012 4-Year Grad Rate	% Admitted	Open Admissions	Average High School GPA Among College Freshmen	Admissions Test Scores Policy	Estimated Median SAT / ACT
Xavier University	71.0%	70.2%	No	3.53	Required	1,125
Siena College	69.5%	48.5%	No	3.50	Required	1,140
Wabash College	69.4%	62.9%	No	3.64	Required	1,154
Point Loma Nazarene University	65.5%	52.4%	No	3.71	Required	1,140
Duquesne University	63.4%	70.1%	No	3.64	Required	1,125
Concordia College at Moorhead	62.9%	94.6%	No	3.59	Required	1,145
Seattle University	62.2%	70.5%	No	3.57	Required	1,155
Valparaiso University	61.7%	74.3%	No	3.63	Required	1,185
Calvin College	60.3%	75.4%	No	3.60	Required	1,185
Pacific Lutheran University	60.0%	76.6%	No	3.62	Required	1,095
Seattle Pacific University	56.3%	70.3%	No	3.60	Required	1,148
Bradley University	55.1%	70.2%	No	3.58	Required	1,145
University of San Francisco	54.2%	58.0%	No	3.52	Required	1,140
Augustana College	51.6%	79.7%	No	3.66	Required	1,165
Abilene Christian University	41.0%	64.4%	No	3.56	Required	1,145
Harding University	40.5%	72.2%	No	3.51	Required	1,145

COLLEGE RESULTS' ADVANCED SEARCH FEATURE

When hunting for schools, I'd also urge you to play around with the site's *Advanced Search* feature. (See below.) With this tool, you can direct the software to find schools based on your criteria. You'll find the tab in the upper right hand corner of the website:



You can learn more about how to use the *Advanced Search* function by reading one of my blog posts:

[Getting Ideas for a College List](#)



CollegeMeasures.org, which also received funding from the Gates Foundation, works with state agencies to provide ACTUAL salary data for new college grads at the university and academic major levels. Some states, such as Virginia and Colorado, include statistics for private schools, but others don't.

CollegeMeasures now has accurate data on overall salaries of new graduates with bachelor's degrees by schools and majors in six states. Here are the states with the corresponding links, where you can find this valuable salary information:

- [Arkansas](#) (The salary figures haven't been updated for Arkansas.)
- [Colorado](#)
- [Florida](#)
- [Tennessee](#)
- [Texas](#)
- [Virginia](#)

Minnesota will be the next state to join CollegeMeasures.

Taken as a whole, the data from the six states show that strong earnings are not automatically tied to the most prestigious campuses in a state.

In Colorado, for instance, look at the average first-year, median earnings of students who earned bachelor’s degrees in business administration. The business grads at the University of Colorado, Boulder, made far less during their first year in the workforce than biz grads at others schools that aren’t on the radar of most students.

AVERAGE FIRST-YEAR SALARIES OF COLORADO BIZ GRADS

Regis University	\$78,861
University of Denver	\$76,861
University of Colorado, Denver	\$51,876
Metro State University, Denver	\$51,876
Colorado Christian University	\$51,759
University of Colorado, Boulder	\$49,803
University of Northern Colorado	\$48,035

When looking at Texas data, I randomly picked a non-prestigious state school—Sam Houston State University—to compare to the University of Texas at Austin, the highly regarded flagship in the Lone Star State. I checked three majors and the Sam Houston grads were earning more in each category—biology, business, and journalism. Journalism grads at Sam Houston State University, for instance, were making \$32,079 a year versus \$30,361 at UT Austin.

If you looked at the Virginia data, you would discover that business majors at the University of Richmond, a private institution, were earning more than grads of all other Virginia schools including Virginia Tech and the University of Virginia.

This real data can serve as a powerful tool when trying to convince students or parents that there are more than a few dozen schools worth attending!

When families have real data to make decisions rather than relying on dubious college rankings, it will be easier for them to make far more intelligent decisions. I want to emphasize, however, that families should be looking at far more than beginning salaries when evaluating schools!

I recently talked to the [Mark Schneider](#), the creator of CollegeMeasures, a vice president at the American Institutes for Research and a distinguished professor emeritus at SUNY Stony Brook. He observed that one of the most notable aspects of all the data is that

graduates of regional state universities can earn the same or more than graduates of state flagships.

RESEARCHING SCHOOLS IN OTHER STATES

Even if you aren't interested in schools in the six states that have authenticated salary data, CollegeMeasures provides many other opportunities for families researching schools across the country. Below I share one of the research tools:

On CollegeMeasure's home page, I clicked on the *Four-Year College Data Tool*.



I was directed to a page (see below) that allows me to find statistics in a variety of ways:



I then clicked on *View Performance by College* and this is what I saw:

CollegeMeasures.org
4-YEAR COLLEGE DATA TOOL

College rankings, measure-by-measure

1 Select a Measure: -- SELECT --

2 Filter Colleges

Type of school: -- None --

State: -- None --

System: -- All --

Carnegie Classification: -- All --

Historically Black College/University

Hispanic-Serving Institution

Land Grant College/Institution

Flagship Campus

Open Admissions

In-State Tuition
Between -- Any -- and -- Any --

Out-of-State Tuition
Between -- Any -- and -- Any --

Show Report

In this section of CollegeMeasures, I can filter schools by individual states, groups of states or the entire country. You can also designate whether you want to look at private or public schools. You can drill down on the type of school you want including flagships or land grant schools, liberal arts colleges, schools of art, schools or engineering, faith-related colleges and seminaries, as well as master's-level institutions.

In the above search field, you will also be asked to *Select a Measure*. Here are the options from that drop-down menu:

- SELECT --
- Graduation rate - overall
 - White students' graduation rate
 - Black students' graduation rate
 - Hispanic students' graduation rate
 - Asian students' graduation rate
 - Pacific Islander students' graduation rate
 - American Indian & Alaska Native students' graduation rate
 - Nonresident alien students' graduation rate
 - 2 or more races students' graduation rate
 - Unknown students' graduation rate
- First-year Retention Rate
- Cost per student (FTE) - overall
 - Instruction cost per student (FTE)
 - Student services cost per student (FTE)
 - Academic support cost per student (FTE)
 - Operations & maintenance cost per student (FTE)
 - Institutional support cost per student (FTE)
- Cost of attrition - amount spent by each college
 - Cost of attrition - Federal Government Grants
 - Cost of attrition - State & Local Government Grants
 - Cost of attrition - Institution Grants
 - Cost of attrition - State Government Appropriated Subsidies
- Student loan default rate
- Ratio of student loan payments to earnings per recent graduates
 - Average Annual Student Loan Payments Per Recent Graduates
 - Median Starting Pay for Recent Graduates

To illustrate what you can find, I looked at private and public institutions in Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota and sorted them by their freshmen retention rates. (The higher the retention rate, the better.) Here are the schools at the top of the list that I generated:

First-year Retention Rate

100 results

College	Measure	State	City
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	96.2 %	Michigan	Ann Arbor
Carleton College	96.2 %	Minnesota	Northfield
St. Olaf College	94.2 %	Minnesota	Northfield
Macalester College	94.0 %	Minnesota	Saint Paul
University of Wisconsin-Madison	93.9 %	Wisconsin	Madison
Gustavus Adolphus College	93.0 %	Minnesota	Saint Peter
College of Saint Benedict	91.2 %	Minnesota	Saint Joseph
Michigan State University	90.6 %	Michigan	East Lansing
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities	90.1 %	Minnesota	Minneapolis
Kalamazoo College	90.1 %	Michigan	Kalamazoo
Marquette University	89.7 %	Wisconsin	Milwaukee
Hope College	89.4 %	Michigan	Holland
Saint Johns University	89.3 %	Minnesota	Collegeville
Lawrence University	89.2 %	Wisconsin	Appleton
University of St Thomas	87.8 %	Minnesota	Saint Paul
Calvin College	86.5 %	Michigan	Grand Rapids
Beloit College	85.9 %	Wisconsin	Beloit
Concordia College at Moorhead	85.0 %	Minnesota	Moorhead
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse	84.9 %	Wisconsin	La Crosse
Bethel University	84.8 %	Minnesota	Saint Paul

If you want to sort schools by pay, you would check the last category in the drop-down menu: *Median Starting Pay for Recent Graduates*. Since actual state data is not available for most states, CollegeMeasures uses PayScale.com figures, which are self-reported by individuals using the popular site.

In the example below, I ranked schools in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut by beginning grad salaries. Many of the schools at the top of the list specialize in engineering and No. 1 Molloy College specializes in health-related majors.

College	Measure	State
Molloy College	\$64,000	New York
Polytechnic Institute of New York University	\$61,000	New York
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute	\$59,500	New York
Stevens Institute of Technology	\$59,400	New Jersey
Felician College	\$58,700	New Jersey
Clarkson University	\$57,900	New York
SUNY Maritime College	\$57,300	New York
Princeton University	\$56,900	New Jersey
Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art	\$56,700	New York
Cornell University	\$55,800	New York
Manhattan College	\$53,900	New York
New Jersey Institute of Technology	\$53,400	New Jersey
Touro College	\$53,200	New York
Columbia University in the City of New York	\$52,800	New York
Charter Oak State College	\$52,300	Connecticut
Rochester Institute of Technology	\$52,200	New York
D'Youville College	\$51,400	New York
Yale University	\$50,700	Connecticut
SUNY at Binghamton	\$49,700	New York
Wesleyan University	\$49,200	Connecticut
Rutgers University-New Brunswick	\$49,200	New Jersey
CUNY Bernard M Baruch College	\$49,000	New York
Pace University-New York	\$48,800	New York
Colgate University	\$48,700	New York
University of Connecticut	\$48,500	Connecticut

2-YEAR COLLEGES & COLLEGEMEASURES

You can also use CollegeMeasures to research both public and private two-year colleges.



One of the performance figures to check out is the graduation and transfer rates to four-year institutions of full-time, degree-seeking students. When researching private and public two-year colleges, you can look at institutions individually or examine their performance within a state or nationally.

In the screenshot below, I checked the graduation/transfer rate of all two-year schools in California. Below are the schools that rose to the top:

Graduation + transfer rate - overall

115 results

College	Measure
De Anza College	72.7 %
Foothill College	68.8 %
American Academy of Dramatic Arts-West	59.2 %
Orange Coast College	54.2 %
Santa Barbara City College	53.8 %
Feather River Community College District	53.6 %
Ohlone College	52.1 %
Irvine Valley College	51.1 %
College of the Siskiyous	50.8 %
Cuesta College	50.7 %

Mark Schneider, the head of CollegeMeasures, also noted that the salaries of holders of associate degrees can be as high or higher than bachelor's degree holders for those who earn technology-related degrees.

Salary Surfer

[Salary Surfer](#) is another helpful website for individuals exploring the earnings capacity of graduates with two-year degrees and certificates.

The California Community College system created this website to allow visitors to see the median annual incomes for graduates of its system's two-year schools in 179 of the most widely enrolled programs.

The salary figures were compiled for graduates from the system's 112 colleges, who completed a certificate or an associate degree and did not obtain further schooling. The data shows the median earnings for community college graduates two years prior to earning the award, then two and five years after earning the degree or certificate.

Here is a screenshot of salaries in the Engineering and Industrial Technology area:

Engineering and Industrial Technology

Instructional programs in the mathematical and natural sciences utilizing the materials and forces of nature for the benefit of human beings. Instructional programs in technology that require the application of scientific and engineering knowledge, methods, and technical skills in support of engineers and other professionals.

Curriculum	Award Type	Median Annual Salary		
		2 Years Before	2 Years After	5 Years After
Aeronautical and Aviation Technology	Degree	\$27,516	\$34,836	\$61,273
Aeronautical and Aviation Technology	Certificate	\$20,685	\$41,818	\$45,935
Architectural Drafting	Degree	\$16,517	\$30,490	N/A
Architectural Drafting	Certificate	\$18,488	\$41,883	\$47,343
Automotive Collision Repair	Certificate	\$19,884	\$31,764	\$38,664
Automotive Technology	Degree	\$16,554	\$39,493	\$43,560
Automotive Technology	Certificate	\$18,466	\$33,658	\$36,478
Aviation Airframe Mechanics	Degree	\$14,514	\$37,171	N/A
Aviation Airframe Mechanics	Certificate	\$30,632	\$43,984	\$50,426
Aviation Powerplant Mechanics	Certificate	\$35,071	\$41,877	\$52,251
Carpentry	Certificate	\$38,596	\$32,897	\$42,559
Civil and Construction Management Technology	Degree	\$50,746	\$53,410	\$66,242

An analysis of data contained on Salary Surfer generated a surprising statistic. Nearly 45% of students, who graduated with an associate degree in California without receiving further education, were earning more than \$54,000 annually five years after graduation. That is the median wage of someone with a bachelor's degree living in California.

While the salaries that Californians with associate degrees earn will be different than those in many other states, it is a helpful resource to pinpoint potential employment pursuits that don't require a commitment of at least four years.

College Board

The screenshot shows the College Board website homepage. At the top, there is a dark blue navigation bar with links for SAT, AP, College Planning, College Search, Professional Development, Store, and More. A search bar is located on the right side of this bar. Below the navigation bar is a light gray bar with the College Board logo and links for About Us, Advocacy, Membership, News & Press, and Research. The main content area is divided into two columns. On the left, there is a login section with tabs for Student and Professional. It includes fields for Username and Password, Sign In and Sign Up buttons, and a link for Forgot username or password?. Below this is the College Search section, which has a search bar labeled 'Search by college name' and a magnifying glass icon. On the right, there is a large banner image of two students, a young man and a young woman, looking at something together. Overlaid on the right side of the banner is a blue box with the text 'Delivering Opportunity and the Redesigned SAT' and a right-pointing arrow. Below the banner, there is a dark blue section with the title 'The Redesigned SAT' and the text 'We're linking the SAT to classroom excellence.' A 'Read More' button is located at the bottom right of this section.

[The College Board](#) is a favorite resource of mine when I want to get a quick read on whether a school is stingy, financially awesome or somewhere in between. What families find on the College Board is equally relevant whether they are seeking schools that provide merit scholarships that are rewarded without regard to a family's finances.

HOW TO USE THE COLLEGE BOARD TOOL

Washington University in St. Louis
Saint Louis, MO

[+ Add to My College List](#) [See if you're on track](#) [Compare colleges](#)

At a Glance

- Deadlines
- Majors & Learning Environment
- Campus Life
- Applying
- Paying** (highlighted with a red arrow)
- For Transfer Students
- For International Students

A medium-sized, 4-year, private university. This coed college is located in a large city in a suburban setting and is primarily a residential

Step One

On the College Board's home page, type in the name of any school to call up its profile.

On the left-hand side of the school's profile click on the *Paying* tab. Here is

[Washington University's](#):

Cost of Attendance **How to Apply for Financial Aid** **Financial Aid By the Numbers** (highlighted with a red arrow)

Published Annual College Costs Before (Fall 2014 First Year Students)

In-State Costs **Out-Of-State Costs**

	On Campus	Off Campus	At Home
Tuition and fees	\$46,467	\$46,467	\$46,467
Room and board	\$14,377	\$13,811	\$4,111
Books and supplies	\$960	\$960	\$960
Estimated personal expenses	\$2,090	\$2,090	\$2,711
Transportation expenses	\$1,248	--	--
Estimated Total	\$65,142	\$63,328	\$54,148

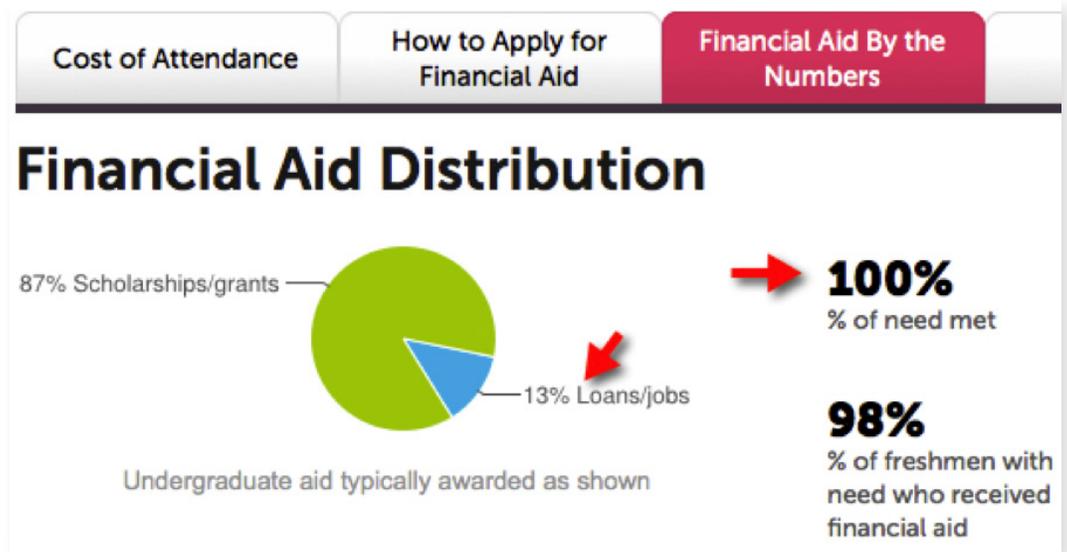
Step Two

After clicking the paying tab, you'll see the published price of the school, which will often be scary but is usually meaningless. Next click on *Financial Aid by the Numbers*.

Step Three

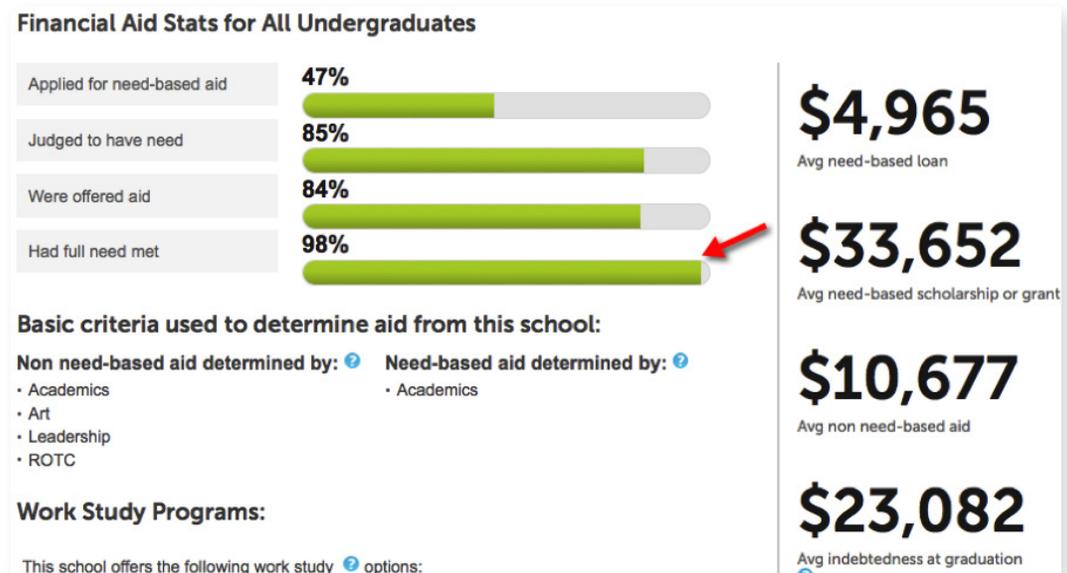
What you'll see after you click on the *Financial Aid By the Numbers* hyperlink are financial aid statistics including one that shows what percentage of demonstrated financial need this school typically meets. For students who require need-based aid, getting accepted into a school like Washington University that routinely meets 100% of need is the ultimate prize.

The pie chart illustrates how the school's typical financial aid package is broken down between free money (scholarships/grants) and loans/job. The job category refers to federal work-study positions. At Washington University, only 13% of the package is composed of loans and a work-study job, which is excellent.



Step Four

Scroll down on this page to discover more financial statistics for all undergrads.



You can see above that 47% of students applied for aid at this \$65,000 school. (Like many elite schools, there is a large concentration of high-income students here who can cover the cost without any assistance.)

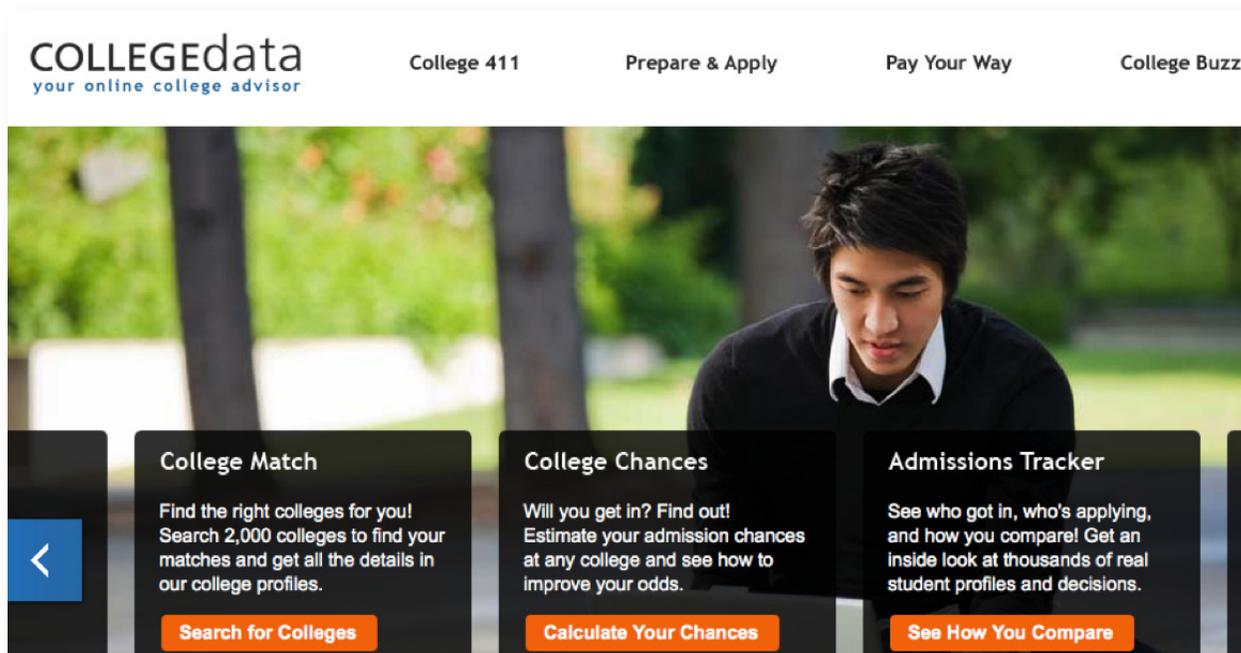
The statistic that I find most relevant is this one: *had full need met*. Ninety-eight percent of students who had financial need (as determined by a financial-aid methodology) had their full financial need met. That's excellent (although 100% would have been better) and only a few dozen colleges and universities can make the same claim.

On the right-hand side of this chart, you will also see the value of the average need-based package. For Washington U., it's \$33,652. As for the need-based loan, you can almost always assume that the school will insert the maximum federal Direct Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loans into the package. The maximum federal direct loan is \$5,500 for freshmen.

MERIT SCHOLARSHIPS

Even if a student will not qualify for need-based aid, this financial aid page can also be valuable. What is important for high-income families is this figure: *average non need-based aid*. That's higher-ed jargon for merit scholarships. In this case, the average merit award for high-income students is \$10,677. The College Board doesn't share how many students receive merit scholarships, which is a critical piece of information to know when assessing whether a child has a chance at a merit award.

[COLLEGEdata](#), however, provides this missing statistic, which you will learn about next.



[COLLEGEdata](#) provides tons of information about individual schools in such areas as financial aid, majors, admission factors and more.

Here is a link to my instructional video on how to use COLLEGEdata to find schools that are either generous with need-based aid or that provide a high percentage of students with merit scholarships:

[Finding College Money with COLLEGEdata.com](#)

The site has much of the same financial information that you'll find on the College Board, but it includes one important statistic that the College Board omits—the number of students who receive merit scholarships (non-need-based aid).

The College Board only shares what the average merit scholarship amount is and not how many students receive it. That number, however, is *important* for affluent children who want to know what the odds are of receiving a merit scholarship.

I am using [Rice University](#) to illustrate what you can find in the *Money Matters* section of a school's profile on COLLEGEdata. The layout is ugly, but the data is valuable. If you look at Rice's stats, you will see that 100% of financial-aid recipients have their full need met.

That’s excellent. The second arrow shows that 8.4% of the students at Rice, who happen to have no financial need, received a merit scholarship worth an average of \$20,132.

I used Rice in this example because it is a highly rated university in [U.S. News’ college rankings](#) and yet it provides merit scholarships. Most of the most highly rated institutions don’t provide these merit awards or limit them to a small group of students. The most prominent Southern universities—Vanderbilt, Tulane, Duke and Emory—provide merit scholarships to high-income students.

Freshmen	
Financial Aid Applicants	615 (63.0%) of freshmen
Found to Have Financial Need	413 (67.2%) of applicants
Received Financial Aid	412 (99.8%) of applicants with financial need
Need Fully Met	412 (100.0%) of aid recipients
Average Percent of Need Met	100%
Average Award	\$37,257
Need-Based Gift	Received by 411 (99.8%) of aid recipients, average amount \$35,132
Need-Based Self-Help	Received by 252 (61.2%) of aid recipients, average amount \$3,614
Merit-Based Gift	Received by 22 (5.3%) of aid recipients
Merit-Based Gift	82 (8.4%) of freshmen had no financial need and received merit aid, average amount \$20,132
All Undergraduates	
Financial Aid Applicants	2,076 (52.0%) of undergraduates
Found to Have Financial Need	1,626 (40.8%) of applicants
Received Financial Aid	1,625 (99.9%) of applicants with financial need
Need Fully Met	1,625 (100.0%) of aid recipients
Average Percent of Need Met	100%
Average Award	\$36,556
Need-Based Gift	Received by 1,619 (99.6%) of aid recipients, average amount \$34,565
Need-Based Self-Help	Received by 930 (57.2%) of aid recipients, average amount \$3,590
Merit-Based Gift	Received by 76 (4.7%) of aid recipients
Merit-Based Gift	575 (14.4%) of undergraduates had no financial need and received merit aid

BAIT-AND-SWITCH COLLEGES

You can also use COLLEGEdata to spot bait-and-switch schools. When parents look at colleges they assume that whatever financial aid they receive during their child’s freshman year will remain the same for four years as long as their financial situation doesn’t change.

In reality, however, many schools offer the best packages to high school seniors. Once the students have gotten settled in, these schools offer subsequent packages that are stingier. A college figures, “Hey, is this kid really going to leave if I shave a few thousand dollars from his package?”

An easy way to check an institution’s financial aid track record is to head to a school’s *Money Matters* section and compare the average percentage of financial need met for freshmen and the average percentage of need met for all undergrads.

I used New York University to illustrate the bait-and-switch practice. NYU has the reputation of being a stingy school. It's no surprise then that it practices bait-and-switch with its students. As you'll see in the screenshot below, financial support dropped for students after their freshmen year—from 73% of financial need met (that's terrible) down to 60% (even worse)! The average need-based grant dropped from \$26,202 to \$21,738.

You can also see from the chart below that NYU gives out very few merit scholarships to high-income students.

PROFILE OF 2012-13 FINANCIAL AID	
Freshmen	
Financial Aid Applicants	3,195 (62.4%) of freshmen
Found to Have Financial Need	2,506 (78.4%) of applicants
Received Financial Aid	2,426 (96.8%) of applicants with financial need
Need Fully Met	450 (18.5%) of aid recipients
Average Percent of Need Met	73%
Average Award	\$31,857
Need-Based Gift	Received by 2,270 (93.6%) of aid recipients, average amount \$26,202
Need-Based Self-Help	Received by 2,161 (89.1%) of aid recipients, average amount \$7,119
Merit-Based Gift	Received by 223 (9.2%) of aid recipients
Merit-Based Gift	136 (2.7%) of freshmen had no financial need and received merit aid, average amount \$9,083
All Undergraduates	
Financial Aid Applicants	12,820 (60.3%) of undergraduates
Found to Have Financial Need	11,124 (52.4%) of applicants
Received Financial Aid	10,835 (97.4%) of applicants with financial need
Need Fully Met	950 (8.8%) of aid recipients
Average Percent of Need Met	60%
Average Award	\$27,544
Need-Based Gift	Received by 10,374 (95.7%) of aid recipients, average amount \$21,738
Need-Based Self-Help	Received by 9,568 (88.3%) of aid recipients, average amount \$6,889
Merit-Based Gift	Received by 603 (5.6%) of aid recipients
Merit-Based Gift	1,067 (5.0%) of undergraduates had no financial need and received merit aid, average amount \$8,787

READING AN ADMISSION REP'S MIND

One of the ways students can increase their chances of getting accepted into a school is to know what admission factors a school really cares about.

COLLEGEdata provides an inside look by providing a chart that shows how each school rates the importance of 19 potential admission factors. A school must put each of these factors into one of the following four categories:

- Very important
- Important

- Considered
- Not considered

CollegeData pulls this information from each school’s Common Data Set. The Common Data Set is a document that was created as a way for schools to address the voracious appetites for higher-ed data from collegiate publishers like *U.S. News & World Report* and the College Board. Rather than answer every publisher’s annual questions on such areas as freshman admissions, financial aid, merit aid, college majors and acceptance rates, many schools complete this standardized form, which is about 30 pages long.

To find the admission-factor chart for any school, just call up the institution’s profile via the search box and then click the *Admission* hyperlink for the institution.

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

I picked the [University of Chicago](#) as an example because it highly values admission factors—talents/ability and character/personal qualities—that you usually don’t see rated as *very important* among intense research universities.

SELECTION OF STUDENTS				
Factor	Very Important	Important	Considered	Not Considered
Rigor of Secondary School Record	X			
Academic GPA		X		
Standardized Tests			X	
Class Rank		X		
Recommendations	X			
Essay	X			
Interview			X	
Level of Applicant's Interest			X	
Extracurricular Activities		X		
Volunteer Work		X		
Particular Talent/Ability	X			
Character/Personal Qualities	X			
First Generation to Attend College			X	
State Residency				X
Geographic Residence				X
Relation with Alumnus			X	
Religious Affiliation/Commitment				X
Ethnicity			X	
Work Experience			X	

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Look how different the [University of Michigan](#) rates the admission factors, which focuses almost entirely on grades and test scores.

SELECTION OF STUDENTS				
Factor	Very Important	Important	Considered	Not Considered
Rigor of Secondary School Record				X
Academic GPA	X			
Standardized Tests	X			
Class Rank				X
Recommendations				X
Essay			X	
Interview			X	
Level of Applicant's Interest				X
Extracurricular Activities				X
Volunteer Work				X
Particular Talent/Ability				X
Character/Personal Qualities				X
First Generation to Attend College				X
State Residency				X
Geographic Residence				X
Relation with Alumnus			X	
Religious Affiliation/Commitment				X
Ethnicity				X
Work Experience				X

Center for College Affordability and Productivity (Forbes College Rankings)



[The Center for College Affordability and Productivity](#), is an education think tank that generates [Forbes Magazine's annual college rankings](#). While these rankings exist in the shadows of *U.S. News* rankings, I think the *Forbes* rankings are a better measure of schools.

All college rankings, however, are flawed and should be used simply as a way to explore a wider group of schools. Using the rankings as tip sheets can be especially helpful when exploring liberal arts colleges and master's level universities since they don't have the visibility that many intense research universities enjoy.

On the center's website, you can look at *Forbes'* annual rankings going back to 2008. Below is the PDF to the latest rankings. You'll notice that *Forbes*, unlike *U.S. News*, ranks colleges and universities altogether.

2014 Ranking of America's Best Colleges

Here is the link to the [rankings methodology](#).

As you can see in the screenshot below of the 2014 rankings (the latest available), the site has also sliced and diced the magazine's rankings in a variety of helpful ways, including by region. On the website, you can download all of the lists as PDFs.

Forbes/CCAP Rankings by Control of Institution (Public/Private)

[America's Best Private Colleges](#) (pdf)

This list includes only private institutions classified as research universities, master's colleges and universities and baccalaureate colleges.

[America's Best Public Colleges](#) (pdf)

This list includes only public institutions classified as research universities, master's colleges and universities and baccalaureate colleges.

Forbes/CCAP Rankings by Carnegie Classification

[America's Best Research universities](#) (pdf)

This list includes only those institutions classified as research universities.

[America's Best Baccalaureate Colleges](#) (pdf)

This list includes only those institutions classified as baccalaureate colleges.

[America's Best Master's Colleges and Universities](#) (pdf)

This list includes only those institutions classified as master's colleges and universities.

Forbes/CCAP Rankings by Geographical Region

[America's Best Colleges in the Midwest](#) (pdf)

This list includes only those institutions in the Midwest.

[America's Best Colleges in the Northeast](#)(pdf)

This list includes only those institutions in the Northeast.

[America's Best Colleges in the South](#) (pdf)

This list includes only those institutions in the South.

[America's Best Colleges in the West](#) (pdf)

This list includes only those institutions in the West.

Forbes/CCAP Rankings of Special Interest Institutions

[America's Best Historically Black Colleges and Universities \(HBCU\)](#) (pdf)

This list includes only the Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the "America's Best Colleges" 650.

[America's Best Religiously Affiliated Colleges and Universities](#) (pdf)

This list includes only the religiously affiliated colleges and universities in the "America's Best Colleges" 650.

If you want to drill down further, check out the site's [Component Rankings](#).

This section will show you the scores for each of the components including freshmen retention rate, graduation rate, the predicted graduation rate and alumni receiving PhD's. You will also see a school's rank linked to new grads' salaries based on PayScale.com records. And you'll discover how the students ranked their professors via [RateMyProfessors](#) (RPM Rank).

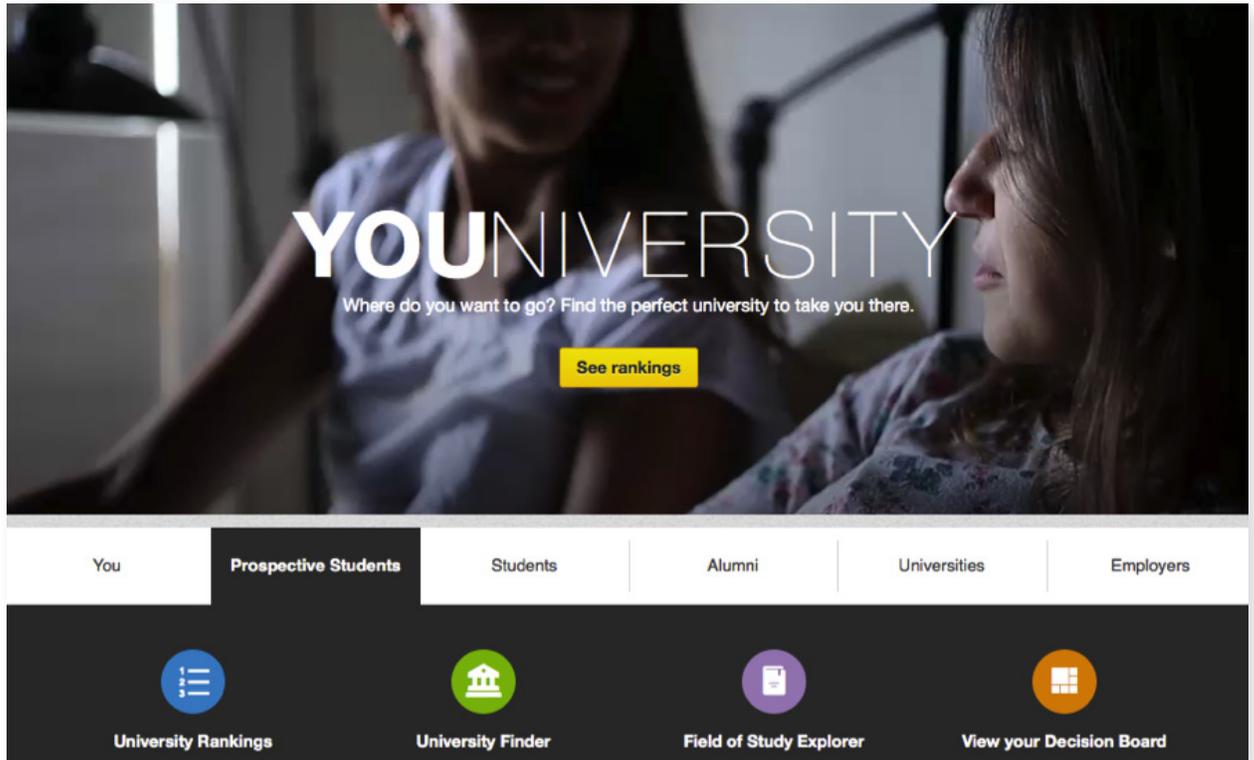
Here is a snapshot of some of the schools that I saw in the 2013 component breakdown:

Name	State	Overall 2013 Rank	RMP Rank	Actual Retention Rate Rank	Act. vs. Pred. Retention Rate Rank
Carleton College	MN	45	7	33	263
Carnegie Mellon University	PA	42	207	43	318
Carroll College	MT	269	94	448	132
Carroll University	WI	547	241	456	174
Carson-Newman College	TN	618	120	600-650	578
Carthage College	WI	570	274	487	427
Case Western Reserve University	OH	89	600-650	88	287
Catawba College	NC	590	235	583	338
Catholic University of America	DC	203	407	402	575

American Leaders Rank	Federal Student Debt Rank	Debt Default Rate Rank	Act. Vs. Pred. Proportion of Students Who Borrow Rank	Actual Graduation Rate Rank	Act. vs. Pred. Graduation Rate Rank	Student Awards Rank	Alumni Receiving PhDs Rank
77	78	16	600-650	12	328	16	6
70	131	31	271	125	595	65	41
369	351	79	428	424	190	412	344
392	600-650	279	207	430	355	560	520
339	484	600-650	380	496	473	560	394
596	593	319	561	363	479	243	433
123	311	15	232	222	600-650	72	28
403	447	524	588	452	443	560	600-650
194	328	106	365	209	354	273	239

Click on this [methodology link](#) to learn how the rankings are tabulated for each category. In the snapshot above, Carleton College, a liberal arts college in Minnesota, was ranked 7th among all 650 schools for its high professor ratings via RateMyProfessors (RMP). Case Western Reserve had the worst professor rating followed by Catholic University. Carnegie Mellon and Case Western Reserve, two major engineering schools, were ranked 9th and 35th respectively for the salaries their new grads were earning based on PayScale.com figures.

YOUiversity – LinkedIn



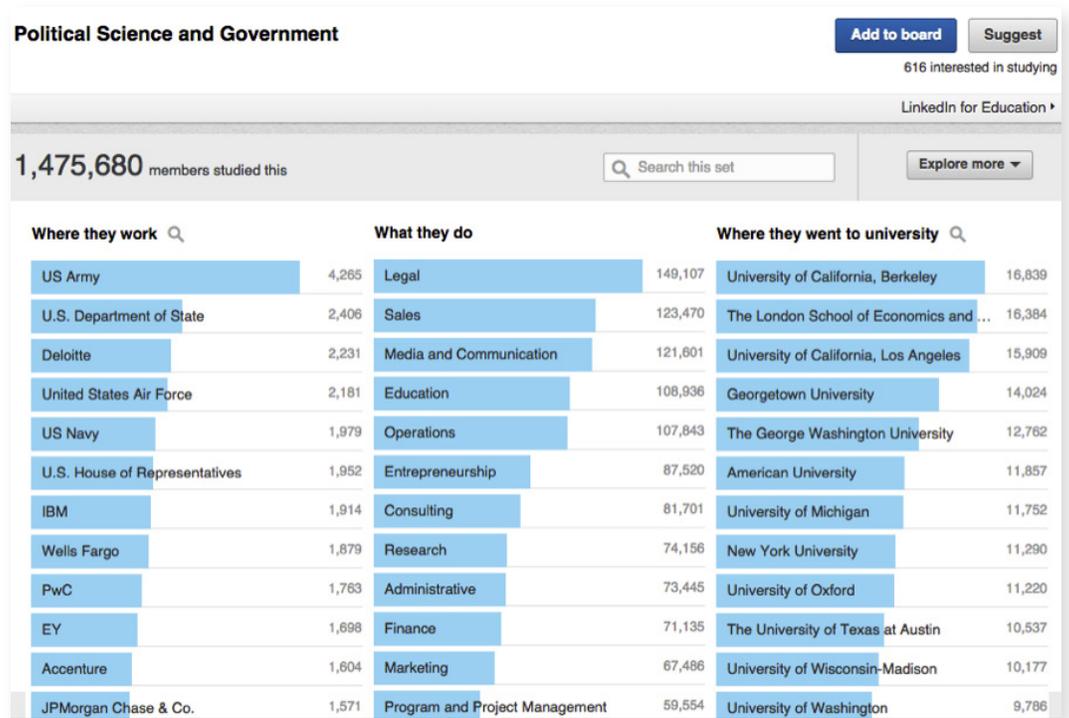
Through [YOUiversity](#), LinkedIn offers a variety of tools that can help develop a college list.

FIELD OF STUDY EXPLORER

One of the LinkedIn tools is called the [Field of Study Explorer](#). The tool allows parents and students to explore the range of careers that LinkedIn members have pursued based on what they studied in college.

The tool can give students ideas of careers that they might not even have considered when contemplating their potential majors.

Here is a screen capture of what I found when I typed political science into the tool. More than 1.4 million LinkedIn users majored in political science and you can see where they work, their occupations and where the largest percentage of them attended college.



LINKEDIN UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

LinkedIn has jumped into the [college ranking field](#), but so far its efforts are modest. LinkedIn’s ranking system is highlighting the schools that are most successful in graduating students who find “desirable” jobs within eight broad career categories. Within each of those eight categories, LinkedIn lists the top 25 institutions based on career outcomes of its graduates.

There are the fields that the [university rankings](#) focus on:

- Accounting
- Designers
- Finance
- Investment bankers
- Marketers
- Media
- Software developers
- Software developers at start-ups

Here is an explanation from LinkedIn about its university rankings and how it defines desirable jobs:

Ranking Universities Based on Career Outcomes

To learn more, read this *Inside Higher Ed* article about the LinkedIn's college rankings:

The New Rankings

Once again, I want to emphasize that you should only use college rankings to generate ideas!

College Navigator

[College Navigator](#) is a massive federal depository of information on thousands of colleges and universities that allows you to search for schools based on such criteria as location, majors and types of institutions.

To generate a list of schools in a particular major, head to the College Navigator's home page. Here's what you'll see:

The screenshot shows the College Navigator website. On the left side, there is a search interface with the following elements:

- Name of School:** A text input field with the placeholder "Type name of school here".
- States:** A dropdown menu with "No Preference" selected, and a "Use Map" button with a map icon.
- ZIP Code:** A text input field and a "Miles from" dropdown menu.
- Programs/Majors:** A section with "0 Items Selected" and a red-bordered button labeled "Browse for Programs".
- Level of Award:** Checkboxes for Certificate, Bachelor's, Associate's, and Advanced.
- Institution Type:** Checkboxes for Public, Private non-profit, Private for-profit, 4-year, 2-year, and < 2-year.
- MORE SEARCH OPTIONS:** A section with a "Show Results" button and "Guide Me" and "Clear Search" links.

The main content area features a large banner with the text "Find the right college for you" and a "Guide Me" button. Below the banner are several sections:

- Refine your search with More Search Options:** A list of options to select additional search criteria.
- College Affordability and Transparency Center:** A section with a graduation cap icon and a "GO" button.
- ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:** A section with a "GO" button.
- Financial Aid:** A section with a "GO" button.
- Careers:** A section with a "GO" button.

When you're on the site, look on the left-hand side and click on the rectangle that says *Browse for Programs*.

In this case, I typed in *nursing*, which produced lots of different nursing majors. You must click the *+add* button to include the majors in your search.

Based on my criteria, I ultimately obtained a list of 160 Midwestern schools that offer nursing programs. By clicking on each school's hyperlink, you will find lots of information about the institution. Here is the beginning of the list of the Midwestern nursing schools:

Sort by: Name City State		1-15 of 160 Results
i	Allen College Waterloo, Iowa	Add to Favorites
i	Alverno College Milwaukee, Wisconsin	Add to Favorites
i	Anderson University Anderson, Indiana	Add to Favorites
i	Andrews University Berrien Springs, Michigan	Add to Favorites
i	Ashland University Dwight Schar College of Nursing Mansfield, Ohio	Add to Favorites
i	Augsburg College Minneapolis, Minnesota	Add to Favorites
i	Avila University Kansas City, Missouri	Add to Favorites
i	Ball State University Muncie, Indiana	Add to Favorites
i	Barnes-Jewish College Goldfarb School of Nursing Saint Louis, Missouri	Add to Favorites
i	Bellin College Green Bay, Wisconsin	Add to Favorites

MORE SEARCH OPTIONS

Tuition & Fees
Maximum: State you live in:

Undergraduate Student Enrollment
Minimum: to Maximum:

Housing? Yes

Campus Setting
 Rural Suburban
 Town City

% of Applicants Admitted
Minimum: to Maximum:

Test Scores – 25th Percentile
SAT Critical Reading:
SAT Math:
ACT Composite:

Varsity Athletic Teams
 Men Women
No Preference:

Extended Learning Opportunities
 Distance learning only
 Weekend/evening
 Credit for life experience

Religious Affiliation
No Preference:

Specialized Mission
No Preference:

You can winnow down the list of schools further by using the options you'll see on the left:

WHAT ARE THE CHANCES OF GETTING MONEY?

I also like to use the federal College Navigator to discover how many students receive money from an individual school. The common perception is that you have to be a top student to receive an award from a college, but in reality at many schools, and particularly private colleges, everybody gets a tuition discount. Nearly 89% of students attending a private college or university, according to the latest annual report from the National Association of College and University Business Officers, are not paying full price. The average tuition discount is 53%, which is an historic high.

You can discover what percentage of students has received aid by clicking on the *Financial Aid* link when you pull up a school's profile. As an example, I am using [Beloit College](#), the liberal arts college in Wisconsin, where my son graduated in 2014 with a mathematics degree and a studio art minor.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT FINANCIAL AID, 2012-2013

Full-time Beginning Undergraduate Students

- Beginning students are those who are entering postsecondary education for the first time.

TYPE OF AID	NUMBER RECEIVING AID	PERCENT RECEIVING AID	TOTAL AMOUNT OF AID RECEIVED	AVERAGE AMOUNT OF AID RECEIVED
Any student financial aid ¹	299	96%	—	—
Grant or scholarship aid	296	95%	\$7,048,785	\$23,813
Federal grants	57	18%	\$264,202	\$4,635
Pell grants	57	18%	\$216,702	\$3,802
Other federal grants	42	14%	\$47,500	\$1,131
State/local government grant or scholarships	34	11%	\$82,353	\$2,422
Institutional grants or scholarships	296	95%	\$6,702,230	\$22,643
Student loan aid	192	62%	\$1,340,671	\$6,983
Federal student loans	191	61%	\$1,069,471	\$5,599
Other student loans	21	7%	\$271,200	\$12,914

¹ Includes students receiving Federal work study aid and aid from other sources not listed above.

As you can see in the above screenshot, 96% of freshmen received aid from some source while 95% received a grant or scholarship from Beloit. The average amount was more than \$22,600. So if a child is interested in attending Beloit there is almost no chance that he or she will be expected to pay full price.

Beloit, like many private colleges and universities, has to give nearly everyone a tuition discount to attract enough students. Now let's compare that with Northwestern University, which is just a two-hour drive away.

Northwestern is a well-known university with a high *U.S. News & World Report* ranking so it doesn't have to dispense as many discounts. In fact, only 63% of students receive aid at Northwestern and the school only gives scholarships/grants to 54% of its freshmen. It can do this because high-income families are willing to pay full price for this school.

FINANCIAL AID

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT FINANCIAL AID, 2012-2013

Full-time Beginning Undergraduate Students

- Beginning students are those who are entering postsecondary education for the first time.

TYPE OF AID	NUMBER RECEIVING AID	PERCENT RECEIVING AID	TOTAL AMOUNT OF AID RECEIVED	AVERAGE AMOUNT OF AID RECEIVED
Any student financial aid ¹	1,285	63%	—	—
Grant or scholarship aid	1,105	54%	\$35,463,402	\$32,094
Federal grants	286	14%	\$1,674,666	\$5,855
Pell grants	286	14%	\$1,177,299	\$4,116
Other federal grants	281	14%	\$497,367	\$1,770
State/local government grant or scholarships	122	6%	\$564,353	\$4,626
Institutional grants or scholarships	1,101	54%	\$33,224,383	\$30,177
Student loan aid	718	35%	\$4,164,550	\$5,800
Federal student loans	713	35%	\$3,469,440	\$4,866
Other student loans	46	2%	\$695,110	\$15,111

College Reality Check



College Reality Check is another site courtesy of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that allows families an easy way to simultaneously compare schools on such factors as net price, graduation rates, student loan default rate and estimated average monthly loan repayment obligations.

You can compare up to five schools at one time and I am sharing with you a couple of examples that illustrate the net prices of different schools. Net prices can vary dramatically among institutions.

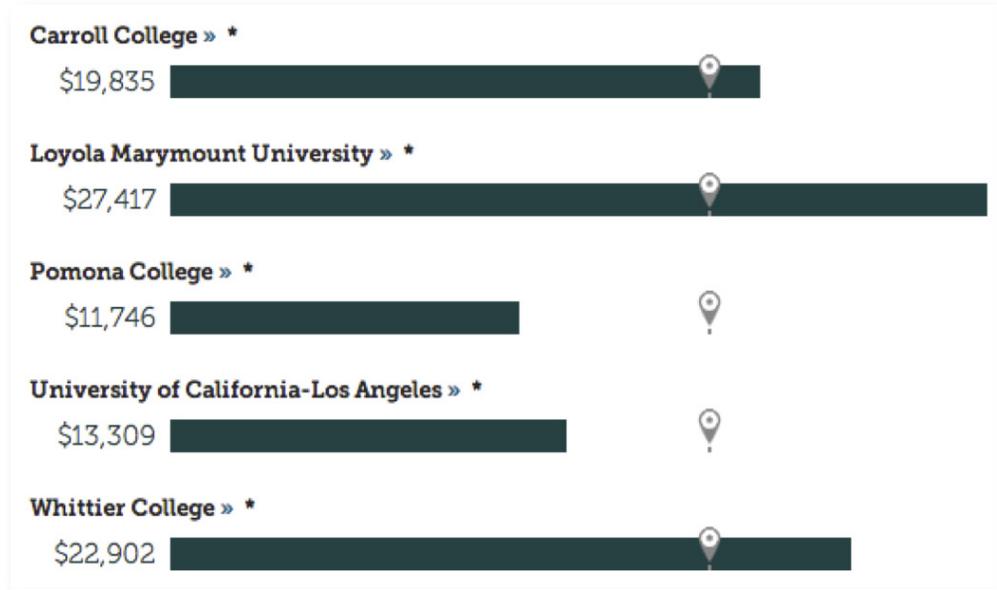
Keep in mind that the average net prices on this site, which come from the federal government, are for income ranges and the figures will be at least two years old. Unfortunately, the highest income range is only \$110,001 and above, which is not helpful because what a family with a household income of \$110,000 can afford will be quite different than what a millionaire can cover.

In the example on the following page, I obtained the average net price for families whose income ranges between \$48,001 and \$75,000. As you can see, the prices for students applying to these schools differ significantly.

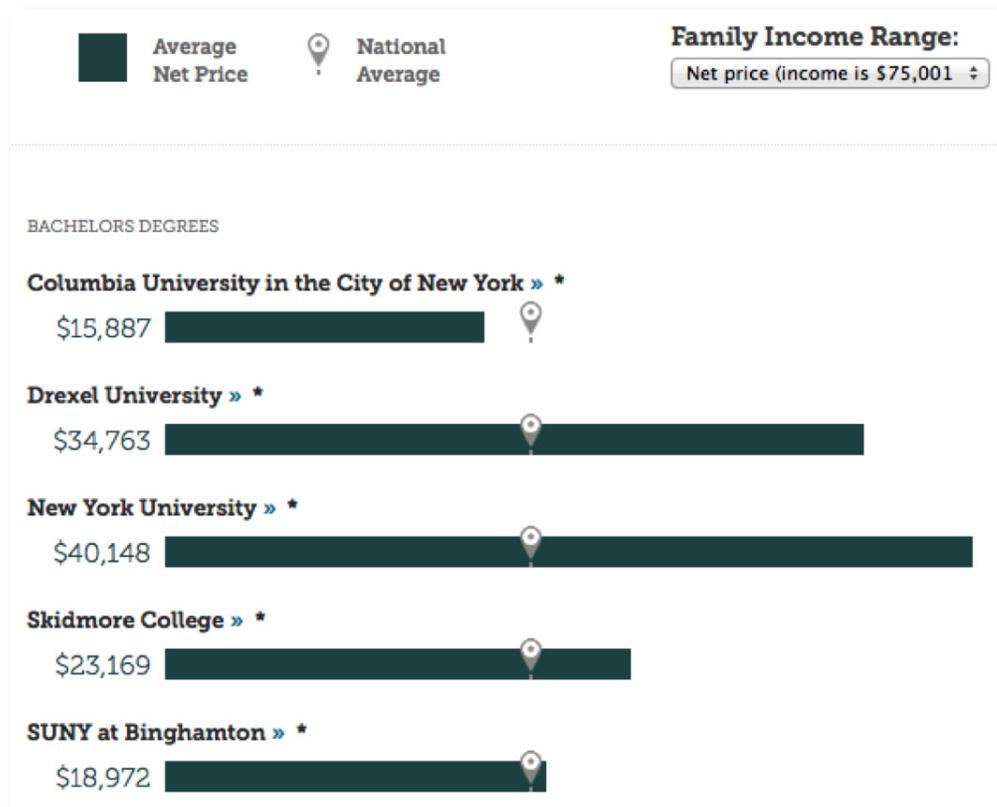
I included **Carroll College** in Helena, MT, to illustrate what I like to say in my online courses. Lesser-known schools in areas off the coasts are often less expensive. One of Carroll College's many selling points is its nursing school where students can graduate in four years unlike impacted nursing programs in state schools in California.

The example also shows that expensive schools with excellent financial aid (Pomona) can

be cheaper than state universities.

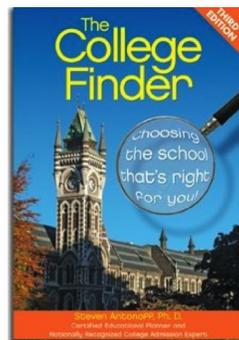
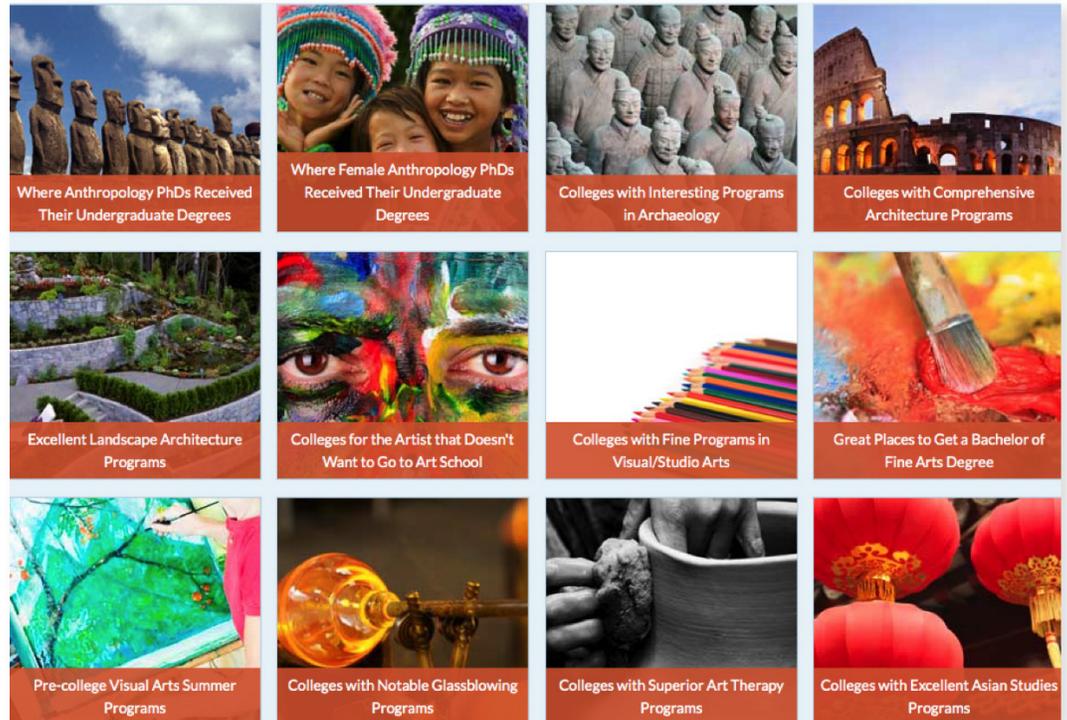


In my second example from schools on the East Coast, I assumed that the family's income was between \$75,001 and \$110,000. Once again you'll see that the prices differ significantly.



CollegeXpress

[CollegeXpress](#) is another worthwhile source for generating college ideas. You can get a flavor of the site's categories by looking at the screenshot below.

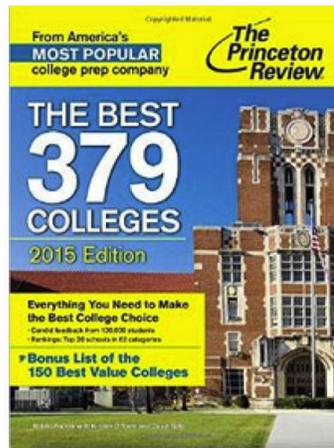


Most of the lists that you'll find on CollegeXpress came from a 520-page book entitled [The College Finder](#) by [Steven R. Antonoff](#), a highly regarded educational consultant from Denver, Colorado.

With the exception of a short narrative at the beginning of the book, *The College Finder* is strictly stuffed with lists. There are hundreds of lists of recommended schools in such categories as Colleges with Excellent Programs in Computer Science, Colleges with Strong Communications/Journalism Programs, Colleges for Budding Entrepreneurs, Colleges for Musicians Who Don't Want to Attend a Conservatory and Schools with Lots of Cooperative Education Options.

The lists are a product of Antonoff's research, the input of countless other higher education professionals and student user suggestions. No one pays to be on these lists.

Princeton Review's Best Colleges Guide



To get some sense of whether professors are doing a good job of educating students, I recommend focusing on a couple of overlooked statistics in the Princeton Review's annual best colleges guide.

Specifically, you should check out this pair of ratings that you will see on the left hand page of every institution's profile in the book:

- Professor interesting rating
- Professor accessible rating

The highest possible score for each of these professor ratings is 100. Students rate the professors at their own institutions. I want to emphasize that these ratings are not scientific. According to the Princeton Review, roughly 30,000 students were surveyed, which breaks down to about 120 respondents per campus.

One reason why I think these ratings are worth consulting is because of the pronounced patterns that I've always noticed over the years when reviewing the school scores in these guides. Here are the pronounced trends that I've:

- Professors at liberal arts colleges receive much higher marks than professors at universities (including the Ivy League schools).
- Professors at private universities receive better marks than professors at state universities.
- Professors at state flagships — most of the public institutions in the book are in this category — fare the worst.

I wrote the following post in 2014 on the Princeton Review professor ratings:

[**Where to Find the Best College Professors**](#)

Here is a link to the latest Princeton Review book:

[**The Best Colleges, 2015 Edition**](#)

Colleges That Change Lives



For many years, [Colleges That Change Lives](#) has been one of the biggest selling books in the college niche. This slim book is an excellent resource if you want to discover mostly little-known liberal arts colleges and to generate ideas for college lists.

Both of my children ended up attending schools—Beloit and Juniata colleges—that were featured in the book. Only 2% to 3% of college students attend liberal arts colleges, which I happen to think are special places.

The 40 schools featured in the book also maintain a [website](#) and conduct college fairs in majors cities throughout the year.

ScholarshipStats.com

Sport	Schools
Archery	9
Badminton	16
Baseball	1,667
Basketball	2,035
Beach Volleyball	42
Bowling	119
Cross Country	1,525
Cycling	10
Equestrian	74
Fencing	42
Field Hockey	271
Football	891
Golf	1,328
Gymnastics	93
Ice Hockey	160
Lacrosse	538
Rifle	32
Rodeo	73
Rowing	152
Rugby	19
Sailing	33
Skiing	42
Soccer	1,667
Softball	1,679
Sprint Football	8
Squash	35
Swimming & Diving	633
Synchronized Swimming	5
Tennis	1,198
Track & Field	1,118
Volleyball	1,781
Water Polo	111
Wrestling	340
Other Sports	17

[ScholarshipStats.com](#) is a spartan-looking website, but it's packed with athletic scholarship statistics for specific schools, as well as for each sport at large.

The average sports scholarship, according to ScholarshipsStats.com is less than \$7,000. High school athletes have about a 2% chance of earning a sports scholarship.

Here is a screenshot on the left of the college sports that offer scholarships along with the number of schools offering them.

When you click on any sport while you are on the website, you will see what schools offer each sport for men, women or both genders, as well as the roster size and the average scholarship amount.

Here is a screenshot of scholarship stats from a few of the schools that have lacrosse teams.

Schools with Varsity Lacrosse Programs	City	State	Division	Roster Size (1)		Average Athletic Scholarship (2)	
				Men	Women	Men	Women
				Birmingham Southern College	Birmingham	AL	NCAA III
Huntingdon College	Montgomery	AL	NCAA III	27	19	-	-
Hendrix College	Conway	AR	NCAA III	24	17	-	-
Cal State-Fresno	Fresno	CA	NCAA I	-	27	11,671	11,968
Chapman University	Orange	CA	NCAA III	-	23	-	-
Claremont McKenna - Harvey Mudd - Scripps	Claremont	CA	NCAA III	-	27	-	-
Dominican University of California	San Rafael	CA	NCAA II	32	-	4,206	4,318
Notre Dame de Namur University	Belmont	CA	NCAA II	20	-	2,192	2,625
Occidental College	Los Angeles	CA	NCAA III	-	20	-	-
Pomona College	Claremont	CA	NCAA III	-	21	-	-
Saint Mary's College of California	Moraga	CA	NCAA I	-	22	19,306	18,450
San Diego State University	San Diego	CA	NCAA I	-	40	14,573	11,844
Stanford University	Stanford	CA	NCAA I	-	31	24,078	25,040
University of California-Berkeley	Berkeley	CA	NCAA I	-	30	10,160	12,184
University of California-Davis	Davis	CA	NCAA I	-	24	11,248	10,483
University of Redlands	Redlands	CA	NCAA III	-	21	-	-

College Majors 101

COLLEGE MAJORS 101
WITHIN EVERY MAJOR...A UNIVERSE

EVERY MAJOR HAS ITS OWN CHANNEL

- MAJOR VIDEOS
- EMPLOYER EXAMPLES
- INDUSTRY PUBLICATIONS
- "GET RECRUITED" STUDENT AREA
- ACCREDITED SCHOOL LISTS
- STUDENT/PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Tuesday, Sept 09, 2014: Juniors and Seniors, NOW is the time to contact

Life Science Medical	Art / Design Performance	Liberal Arts	Engineering /Technology	Pre - Professional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organic/Urban Farming NEW Allied Health Athletic Training Biology Chemistry Environmental Science Fisheries and Wildlife NEW Food Science Forest Management NEW Marine Science NEW Nursing (RN/BSN) Pharmacy Pre - Dental Pre - Medical Pre - Veterinary Medicine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apparel/Textile Design Architecture Dance Film/Broadcast Fine/Studio Art Graphic Design Interior Design Industrial Design Landscape Architecture Music Theatre Urban Planning NEW Video Game Design Web Design/Digital Media NEW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arts Management NEW Education English/Writing History Non-Profit Management Journalism Language Studies Peace/Conflict Studies NEW Philosophy Political Science Social Science Women/Gender Studies Coming Soon! Human Service Mgmt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aerospace Engineering Astronomy NEW Biomedical Engineering Chemical Engineering NEW Computer Science NEW Civil Engineering NEW Electrical Engineering NEW Energy Science NEW Engineering NEW Industrial Engineering Imaging Science NEW Materials Science NEW Mathematics NEW Mechanical Engineering Coming Soon! Environmental Engineering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applied Science Aviation/Aeronautics Business/Finance Construction Management Emergency Management Family/Consumer Science NEW Hospitality Management Public Health NEW Recreation&Tourism Mgmt Sport Management Sports Turf/Golf Mgmt NEW Coming Soon! Forensic Science Entertainment Mgmt Military Science/ROTC

The goal of **College Majors 101** is to inform students about dozens of college majors so they can make informed college and career choices. College Majors 101 provides information in the following categories for each college major featured on the website:

- In-depth description of the major
- Employers which hire within the major
- Accredited schools that provide the major
- News articles pertinent to the major
- Publications related to the major
- Students competitions related to the major
- Relevant student associations
- Recruiting opportunities

COLLEGE MAJOR CHANNELS

Each college major has a channel that includes links to all the above information. Schools that pay can have their logo and link on the main page. This is what a section of the Environmental Science channel looks like.

Environmental Science

"Rocks for jocks" was the saying a while ago about geology. That was until they went searching for oil, or granite countertops became a must have for elegant homes. The college major of environmental science an the various facts within it will allow students to better understand how humans act with and upon their natural world. Waste Management, Power Generation, Recycling and many other industries hire environmental science graduates. It's an amazing field with endless possibilities.

Learn More About
Environmental Science

MORE

Student Associations

MORE

Accredited Schools

MORE

Get Recruited

MORE

Employers Within
Environmental Science

MORE

Environmental Science
Publications

MORE

Environmental Science
News

MORE

Student Competitions

MORE



Featured Environmental Science Programs

Choose Another Major:

Select One

Go



University of Northern
Colorado



Green Mountain College



University of Kentucky



The University of Texas



University of Illinois



Texas Tech University



West Virginia University



College of Environmental
Science and Forestry



University of Connecticut



University of Maryland



Juniata College



The University of Georgia

COLLEGE MAJOR VIDEOS

For each major, students can look at videos developed by colleges and universities that discuss what a major entails and/or focuses on activities of students in that major. On the urban planning channel, for instance, I found a video from Clemson University's Planning and Landscape Architecture program that discusses the projects that students are participating in the area.

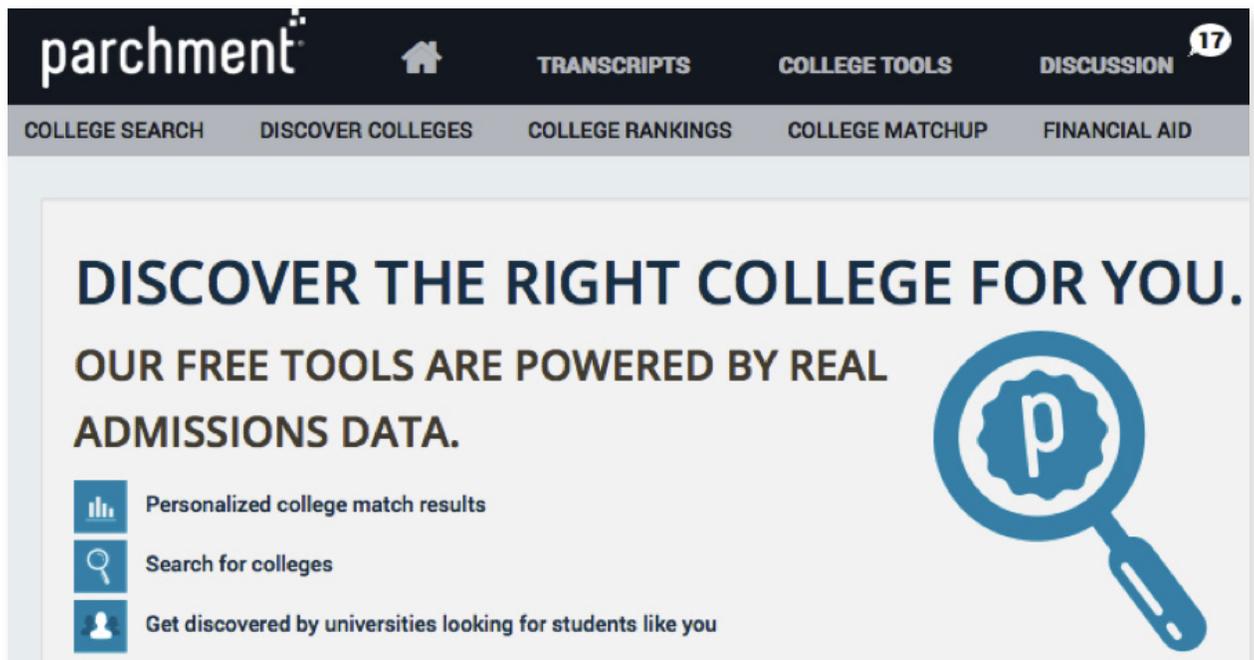
For another resource on college majors try: MyMajors.com. This website creates a college and career plan based on a student's individual academic aptitude and interests.

College Confidential

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the College Confidential website. On the left is the logo, which features a red graduation cap above the word "COLLEGE" in blue and "CONFIDENTIAL" in white on a red background. To the right of the logo is a search bar with the text "Search Entire Site" and a magnifying glass icon. Further right are links for "Log In" and "Sign Up". Below the navigation bar are four menu items: "DISCUSS & INTERACT" (Forum, Reviews & More), "FIND A COLLEGE" (Search For Your Best Fit), "READ & LEARN" (College Articles & Advice), and "FREE RESOURCES" (Tools for Students & Parents). The main content area features a large banner with a background image of a smiling young woman. The text on the banner reads "WELCOME TO the world's largest college forum". Below this, it says "Get Help Now:" followed by links for "Test Prep / Financial Aid / Admissions", "Essays / Majors / Parents / Ivy League", and "More Topics »". At the bottom of the banner are three yellow buttons: "GO TO THE FORUM", "SEARCH FOR COLLEGES", and "GET THE CAMPUSVIBE".

I suspect that [College Confidential](#) is a wildly popular site primarily for its feature called the Parent Forum. Teenagers and parents visit the site to post questions and comments about a wide variety of college issues. What's also attractive for visitors is the ability to share thoughts and questions about individual colleges and universities. The discussion boards dedicated to elite schools typically enjoy more visitor traffic. Keep in mind that while some of the information that you'll see in the forums is solid, some of it is just plain wrong.

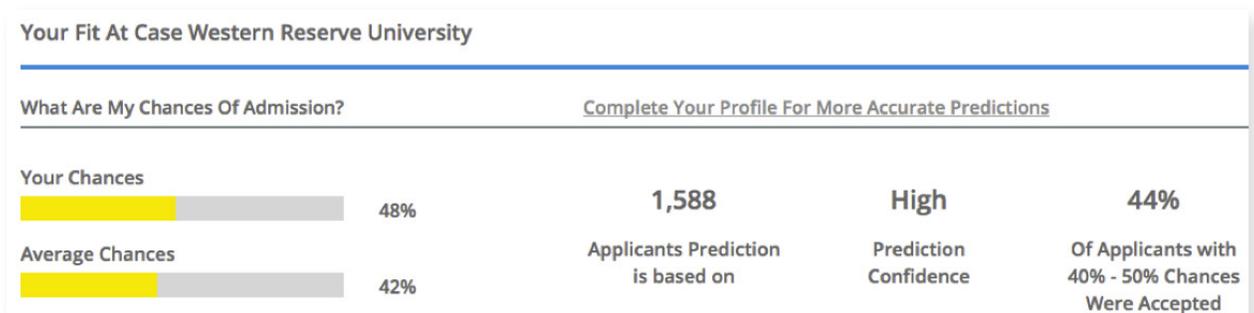
Parchment

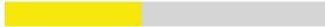


Parchment, which is an electronic transcript company, offers a [variety of college admission tools](#).

One of its tools estimates the admission chances a student has after answering questions regarding such things as his/her academic profiles, extracurricular activities, gender, ethnicity and athletic ability.

I completed a fake profile for a student with a 3.6 GPA (unweighted), an 1800 SAT and average activities and sought to find out what my chances were at Case Western University in Ohio. My chances were only slightly better than the average applicant.



What Are My Chances Of Admission?		Complete Your Profile For More Accurate Predictions		
Your Chances	 48%	1,588	High	44%
Average Chances	 42%	Applicants Prediction is based on	Prediction Confidence	Of Applicants with 40% - 50% Chances Were Accepted

The tool also generated a scatter plot so I could compare my SAT score and GPA with other applicants.

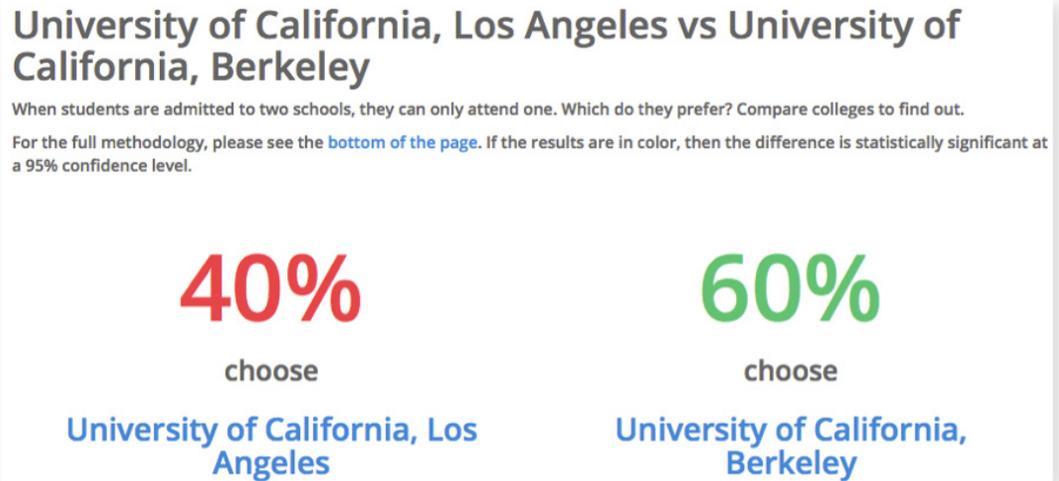


Another popular Parchment tool is its [yearly college rankings](#), which relies on a methodology similar to the one used to rank chess masters. Parchment examines where a student applies and where he/she ultimately decides to attend to determine which schools are more highly valued than others. You can find out more about the methodology, which relies on nearly 516,000 acceptances, [here](#).

While the popularity aspect of the tool does not impress me, you can use it to find schools that you might not have known existed. In addition, each ranked school is listed with three schools where students tend to also apply. You can see how schools are ranked altogether, as well as in these categories:

- National universities
- Liberal arts colleges
- Masters colleges

Parchment also offers its [College Matchup](#) tool that allows you to compare two schools to see which one was most popular among students accepted to both. It's probably more amusing than helpful.



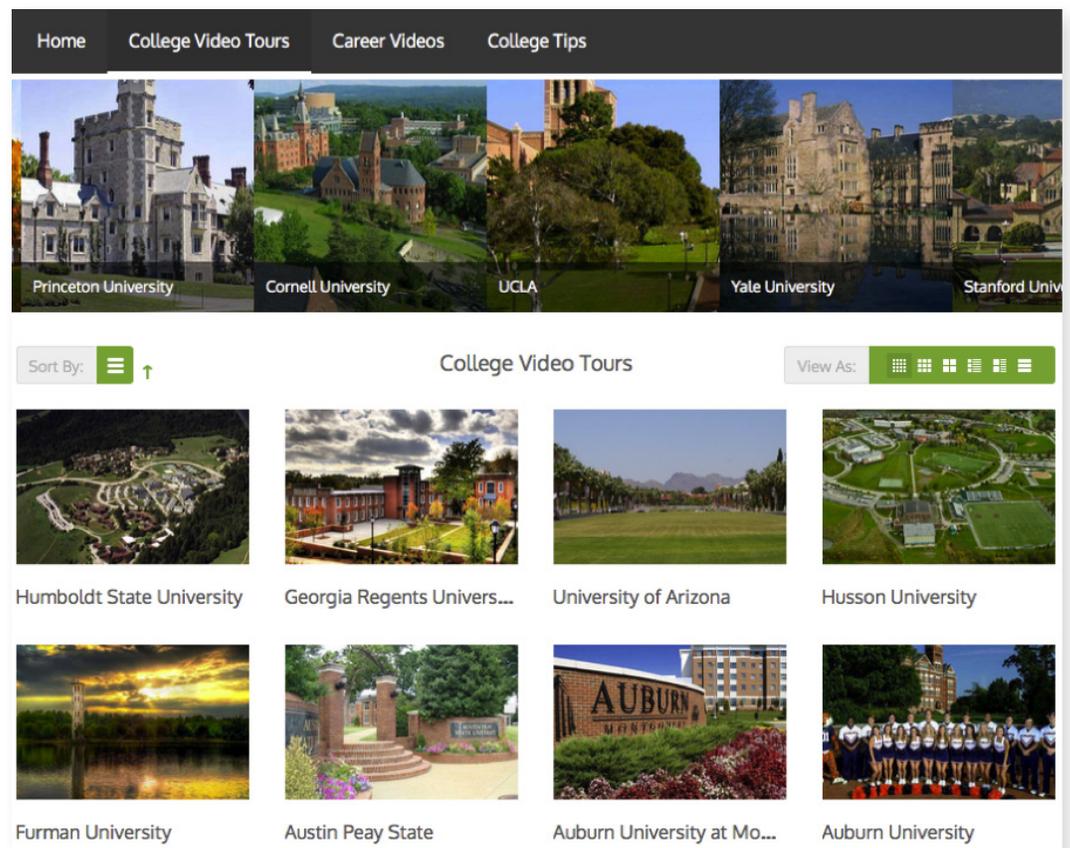
Virtual Campus Tours

Families can't always visit schools in advance of applying, but virtual tour sites can help you see what a school looks like without an in-person tour.

Here are links to four virtual tour websites that not only provide tours for the most prominent schools but also to those that are less known:

- Youiversitytv.com
- eCampusTours
- YouVisit
- CampusTours

This is a screenshot of the home page of YouiversityTV.com:



College App Map



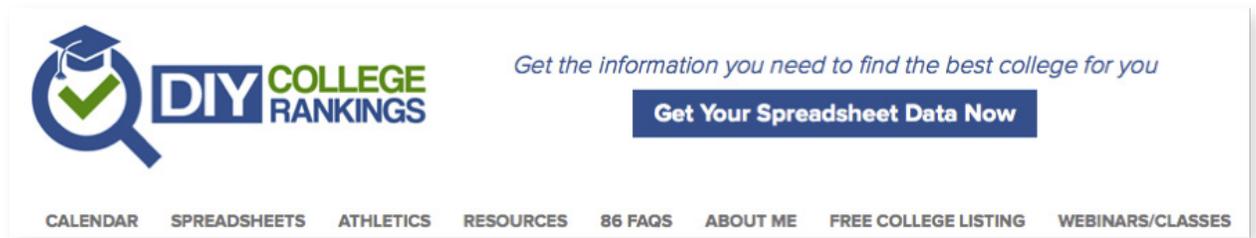
[College App Map](#) serves as a gateway for many websites/apps that received funding in a national competition from the Gates Foundation. The aim of all these startup resources is to help students through the steps they need to take to get to college and to succeed there.

The apps help students explore careers, choose a college, pay for college and succeed in school. The Gates Foundation funded these resources with the intention that they would help low-income students with college issues, but many of the apps can be valuable to students of all income levels.

Here is a post that I wrote when the app winners were originally announced.

[Try Out These 19 College Apps](#)

Do-It-Yourself College Rankings



DIY COLLEGE RANKINGS

Get the information you need to find the best college for you

Get Your Spreadsheet Data Now

CALENDAR SPREADSHEETS ATHLETICS RESOURCES 86 FAQs ABOUT ME FREE COLLEGE LISTING WEBINARS/CLASSES

This website belongs to Michelle Kretzschmar, who is a friend of mine. Michelle created a helpful spreadsheet that compensates for the limitations of most college data sources.

The [DIY College Rankings Spreadsheet](#) contains data from the U.S. Department of Education, and specifically something called the Integrated Post-secondary Education Data System (IPEDS), on over 1,500 schools. The spreadsheet includes over 200 variables, including graduation rates and percentage of students receiving grants from their schools.

You can also download for free the [50-50 List](#) of over 400 schools that accept at least 50% of students and have at least a 50% graduation rate, an excellent place to start searching for schools for B students. She also offers a class where she explains what you can get out of this search tool.

Niche (formerly College Prowler)

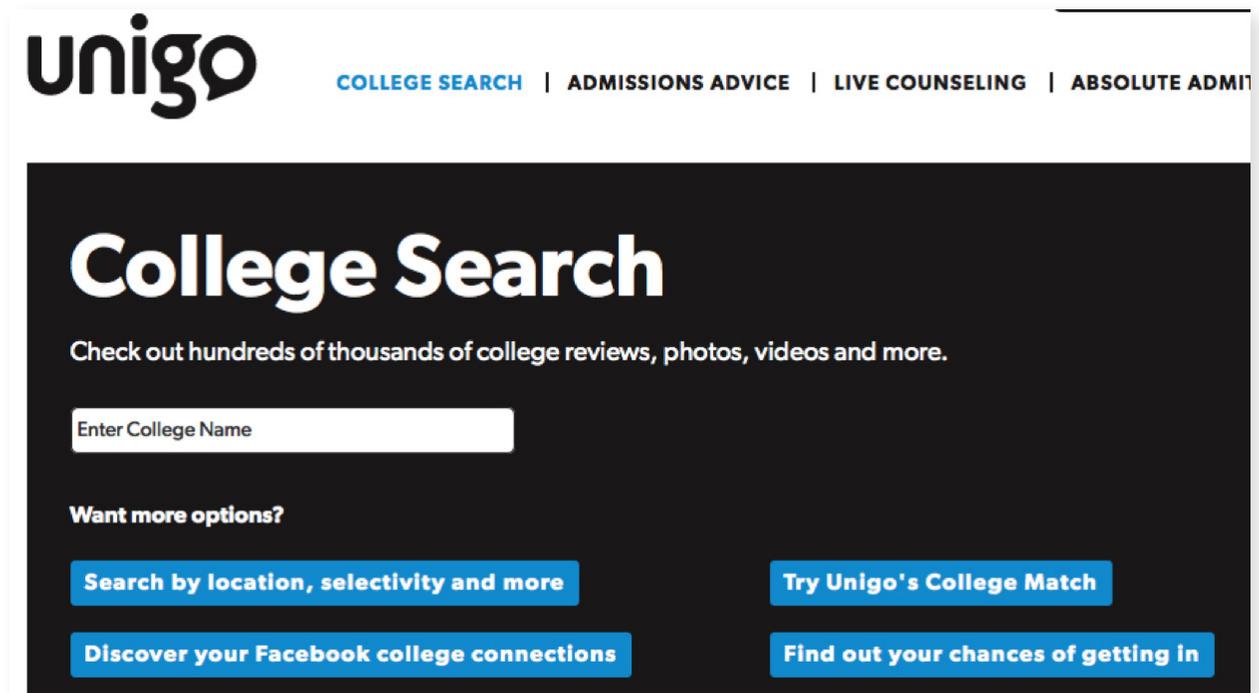
On this site, you can find more than a million student reviews of colleges. [Niche](#) has broken up the reviews by categories so you can check, for instance, what students think of such things as their school’s academics, campus, athletics, Greek life and the food. You can see some of the categories in the left-hand column of the University of Texas’ review.

Niche also tabulated student opinions to create lists of the best schools in a variety of categories. See the categories below:

Best Academics	Best Overall	Hardest to Get In
Best Administration	Best Parking	Hottest Girls
Best Athletics	Best Party Schools	Hottest Guys
Best Campus	Best Students	Largest Colleges
Best Campus Food	Best Students - Girls	Most Applicants
Best Dorms	Best Students - Guys	Most Diverse Campus
Best Greek Housing	Best Technology	Most Drug-Free Campus
Best Greek Life	Best Transportation	Most Expensive
Best Location	Best Weather	Safest Campus
Best Off-Campus Dining	Friendliest Students	Smartest Students
Best Off-Campus Housing		

Unigo

Unigo is another source for student reviews. The reviews can be unvarnished and quite illuminating. There will be far more reviews from students attending the most popular schools. For instance, New York University recently had 401 student reviews while Vanderbilt University had 280 reviews and Illinois Wesleyan University had zero.



The screenshot shows the Unigo website's 'College Search' page. At the top left is the 'unigo' logo. To its right is a navigation menu with links for 'COLLEGE SEARCH', 'ADMISSIONS ADVICE', 'LIVE COUNSELING', and 'ABSOLUTE ADMIT'. The main heading is 'College Search' in large white text on a dark background. Below the heading is a sub-heading: 'Check out hundreds of thousands of college reviews, photos, videos and more.' There is a white search input field with the placeholder text 'Enter College Name'. Below the search field is the text 'Want more options?'. There are four blue buttons arranged in a 2x2 grid: 'Search by location, selectivity and more', 'Try Unigo's College Match', 'Discover your Facebook college connections', and 'Find out your chances of getting in'.

School websites/blogs

You can learn a lot just by poking around school websites. Don't just stop at the pages intended for prospective students. Dig deeper and visit the web homes of academic departments. Take a look at the course listings to see what is actually offered each semester.

Make sure you stop by a school's Institutional Research page where you can find all sorts of interesting data. Few do as good a job as [St. Olaf College](#) in Minnesota that shares graduation outcomes, its [Collegiate Learning Assessment scores](#), its results from the [National Survey of Student Engagement](#) and more.



Also look for student blogs, as well as those from people with knowledge of the school. Creators of unauthorized blogs can be much more candid. For instance, [Dartblog](#) is an excellent resource if you want to research what is really happening at Dartmouth.

In the link to the post below, Dartblog sums up problems that have plagued Dartmouth for years regarding its animal house reputation:

[All Eyes On the Dean of the College](#)

College search engines

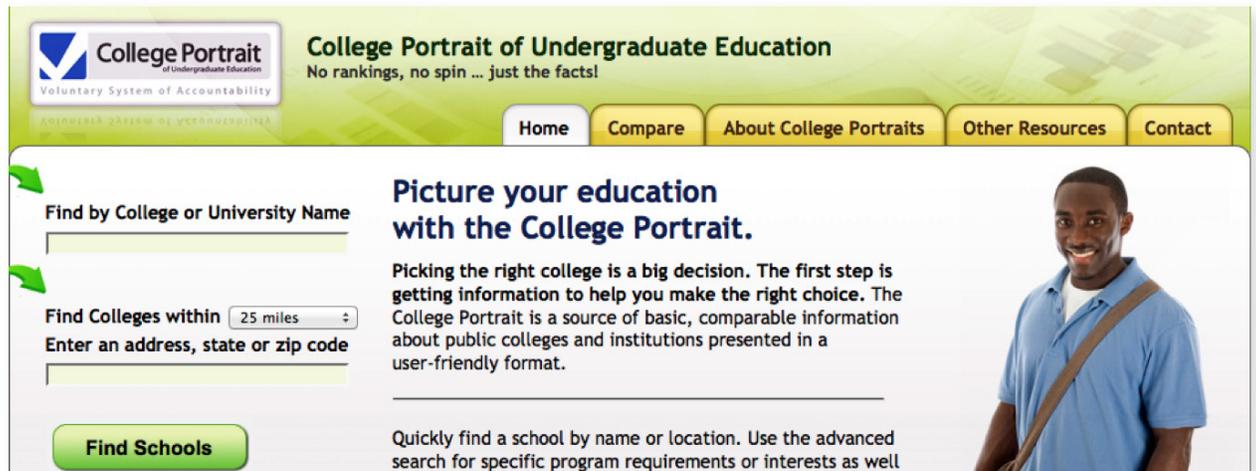
There are plenty of higher-ed search engines when looking for schools. They include:

- [Noodle](#)
- [Student Advisor](#)
- [Princeton Review](#)
- [CollegeView](#)
- [Petersons](#)

Michelle Kretzschmar at DIY College Rankings did a comparison of college search engines here:

[Comparison of Top 11 College Search Engines](#)

College Portrait of Undergraduate Education



The screenshot shows the homepage of the College Portrait website. At the top left is the logo for College Portrait, which includes the text "College Portrait of Undergraduate Education" and "Voluntary System of Accountability". To the right of the logo is the main heading "College Portrait of Undergraduate Education" and the tagline "No rankings, no spin ... just the facts!". Below the heading is a navigation menu with buttons for "Home", "Compare", "About College Portraits", "Other Resources", and "Contact". The main content area features a search form on the left with two input fields: "Find by College or University Name" and "Find Colleges within [25 miles] Enter an address, state or zip code". A green "Find Schools" button is positioned below the search form. To the right of the search form is a large heading "Picture your education with the College Portrait." followed by a paragraph of text: "Picking the right college is a big decision. The first step is getting information to help you make the right choice. The College Portrait is a source of basic, comparable information about public colleges and institutions presented in a user-friendly format." Below this text is a photograph of a smiling young man in a blue polo shirt with a brown shoulder bag. At the bottom of the main content area, there is a short paragraph: "Quickly find a school by name or location. Use the advanced search for specific program requirements or interests as well".

You'll find information on more than 275 public universities and colleges on this site.

[College Portrait](#) provides basic information about schools and also shares data from the [National Survey of Student Engagement](#).

U-CAN: University and College Accountability Network



U-CAN is a similar consumer site for roughly 850 private institutions that's sponsored by the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

Call up a school's profile and you'll see data on admissions, enrollment, academics, student demographics, graduation rates, most common fields of study, transfer of credit policy, faculty information, class size, tuition and fee trends, price of attendance, financial aid, campus housing, student life and campus safety.

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