

Types of Schools

Your college choice may depend on ethnicity, gender, disability or financial constraints.

The key is finding the right school to fit your needs.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

HBCUs are institutions established before 1964 whose primary mission is the education of black students. Like all schools, there are pros and cons in attending an HBCU.

Pros include:

- A supportive environment and sense of community and tradition.
- Smaller average class size and more one-on-one attention from faculty members.
- Black faculty members and staff serve as role models in the community and on campus.

Cons include:

- Lower tuition for students mean a smaller operating budget for the school. The effects might include less money for student organizations or athletic programs.
- Financial challenges can sometimes make it difficult for HBCUs to keep up with other schools in technology and facilities or offer competitive salaries to their professors.
- Less available financial aid. Bigger universities usually have larger endowments and more aid.

Disability-Friendly Schools

If you have a disability, some questions you'll want to ask before selecting a college include:

- Is there access to all classrooms and science labs?
- What kinds of career services are available? Are they accessible and relevant to disabled students?
- What percentage of the buildings on campus are accessible to disabled students?
- Is there any financial aid available for students with disabilities?
- What percentage of the student population is disabled?
- Are there any varsity or intramural sports for disabled students?
- What kind of on-campus and off-campus transportation services does the university provide on weekdays and weekends?

Stats about Women's Colleges

- There are 72 women's colleges across the country.
- Graduates statistically are more likely to end up with higher paying jobs.
- More opportunities are available for leadership positions.
- More graduates from women's colleges continue toward doctorates in math, science and engineering than female graduates attending a co-ed college.
- Women's colleges tend to be cleaner, less vandalized and safer.

(Source: Women's College Coalition)

Know Your Colleges

Can't decide between a two-year or four-year college? Vocational or community? Here are the differences between them:

Vocational

Pro: Shorter programs mean preparation for a specific career.

Con: A broader academic education might mean more options in the future.

Community or Junior College

Pro: Can build up credits toward a university degree without the expensive tuition costs.

Con: Professors may be part-time instructors who won't be available to students outside of class.

Four-Year College or University

Pro: Broader curriculum encourages a variety of interests and is beneficial in the job market.

Con: Depending on the school you choose, a four-year college might be expensive.

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Personal Finance

Budgeting for College Applications

Before you're even admitted to a college or university, those application fees can really add up.

College Application Fees

You will almost always have to pay a non-refundable fee when you submit your admission application. Charges usually range from \$10 to \$60. Ask if you can save money by submitting your application online.

High-School Transcripts

High schools may charge small fees for sending transcripts. Cost per transcript usually ranges from \$2 to \$5.

Test Preparation

Educational Testing Service (ETS) supplies free sample tests and ACT provides free sample questions. Test prep classes (which can cost anywhere from \$650-\$800), study guides and CD-ROM packages are also available.

Standardized Test Fees

If you take a test multiple times in an effort to improve your score, you will have to pay multiple registration costs.

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT):

- Basic fee - \$23
- Late registration - \$15
- Changing your test date - \$15
- Additional reports - \$7
- Rush reporting service - \$10-\$15
- SAT II costs:
 - Writing - \$24
 - Language with Listening - \$21
 - All others - \$19

American College Testing (ACT):

- Basic fee - \$24
- Late registration - \$15
- Additional score reports - \$6.50
- Changing your test date - \$15
- Stand-by fee - \$30

Advanced Placement (AP) Tests:

- Basic fee - \$77

Ten Tips for Easy Student Banking

Many banks offer checking accounts and ATM cards to high school students. What should you know before opening an account?

1. Leave some time before school starts for comparison shopping among local banks.
2. Some neighborhood banks offer low-cost student accounts that can fit your needs.
3. Look for accounts with low required balances, unlimited check writing and low-cost access to nearby ATMs.
4. Ask whether your bank issues debit cards. Used in place of credit cards, they can help you control spending.
5. Study the bank's network of ATMs. Are there ample locations near you that are connected to this bank?
6. Ask if your bank offers a direct-deposit program through an automatic transfer of funds.
7. Find out the limit on the number of transactions allowed for your account, especially those concerning ATM machines.
8. Ask questions about overdraft protection and fees for bounced checks.
9. Review your bank statement and reconcile your balance every month. You can stay on top of any errors or fees that may appear on your statement.
10. Ask for an explanation on fees or charges you don't understand.

Additional College Costs

Before you head to college, you should know about these costs that probably aren't addressed in the school's brochure:

Course materials / laboratory use: Materials-intensive classes like art and classes involving a lab can saddle you with additional required costs.

ID card replacement: Hang onto your student ID and meal card to avoid paying replacement fees.

Late tuition payment: Penalties for late payment generally range from \$50 to \$100.

Service fees for registration changes: If you make changes to your schedule, such as withdrawing from a class, you may have to pay an extra fee.

Dorm damage: Your school reserves the right to bill you for wear and tear to its housing facilities.

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