Tips for selecting a college or university

The move from high school to college or university can be exciting, as well as a source of anxiety and concern. Young people may worry that they won't be accepted by their school of choice, or worse—that they'll make the wrong choice.



You can help your son or daughter with this important decision by helping establish the criteria by which to judge their options.

Tips on the Selection Criteria

The key criteria or issues to consider are:

- **The type of school.** Large or small, university or college.
- **Location**. Local community, home province or farther away.
- **Subject area, type of degree desired and school's reputation** in these areas.
- **Budget.** Consider costs of different types of schools and/or locations.
- **Relationship between proposed area of study, future aspirations and job opportunities.**

It's important that choices are not based on where friends are going to school. Nor should a choice be based on where parents went to school or which school they might like the teen to attend. To be successful, college or university selection should be based on the student's individual needs and preferences. To get a read on personal preferences, consider these questions:

- Does your teen want to live at home or away from home? Is this financially feasible?
- Is on-campus residence or off-campus accommodation preferred?
- Would they prefer a small town or in a large city?
- Does the college or university offer a variety of options in the area of study your teen is interested in?
- Can your teen meet the prerequisites the college or university has attached to the subjects they are interested in? (ie., do they have the right credits?)
- What is the average grade cut-off? Is your teen likely to make it? Your teen might want to include at least one lower cut-off college or university among their selections, in case of unexpected problems.

Financial criteria

If funds are short, this can be the key decision-maker. Look at the following:

- Tuition fees
- Residence fees
- Miscellaneous costs such as books and lab fees
- Cost of living in the college or university town
- Cost of travel home
- Bursaries or scholarships for which your teen might qualify
- Provincial or federal loan programs
- On campus employment opportunities or co-op courses

Co-op courses can be an excellent idea for students in some areas of study. They combine classes with paid work experience. This can help to meet financial needs and can increase the student's chances of getting a job after graduation.

Questions to ask the college or university

If possible, your teen should try to visit the campus. If this is impossible, they could meet with recruiters in their town, and have some questions ready. Some examples are:

- Are the classes large or small?
- How does the tutorial program work?

- Are support services available, such as counselling or tutors?
- What sports or physical activity facilities are available?
- What percentage of students who enter the college or university graduate from it?
- Your teen may also want to ask if there are current students who would be willing to talk with him or her.

Choosing an institution of higher education can be difficult. Financial considerations and desired field of study will inevitably dictate much of the decision making process. However, many other, more personal considerations can also help guide your teen to the right choice for them.