**How to use online college searching tools to determine college fit**

<https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/>

* + - * + Limit the scope of your search by selecting preferences based on your pre-existing college criteria. Recommendations:

By filtering for “Location,” you will considerably narrow your options.

To take advantage of in-state tuition rates, filter for California.

Select schools with 75% or greater graduation rate.

Next:

In “Type of School,” recommended to select “Public” and “Private Nonprofit”.

If student comes from a historically underrepresented racial background, consider choosing a “Specialized mission.” Specifically consider:

Hispanic-Serving Institution

Historically Black College and University

Predominantly Black Institution

Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution

* + - * + Select schools to investigate. When researching schools, specifically pay attention to the following categories:

**Cost (financial fit)**

What will be your average cost based on family income?

Estimated Family Contribution (EFC)

Financial aid system is informed by 2 pieces of information: total cost of attendance (TCA) and your estimated family contribution (EFC). The total aid you are eligible for is the different between TCA and EFC (TCA – EFC = total aid).

Net Price Calculator helps you estimate the likely financial aid given for specific schools.

**Financial Aid & Debt (financial fit)**

Look for schools with students’ median total debt less than $20,000 at the end of four years.

Can submit FAFSA as early as October 1

<https://fafsa.ed.gov/>

There is also state aid through Cal Grant

<https://mygrantinfo.csac.ca.gov/logon.asp>

Grants from institution

**Graduation & Retention (academic, social, financial fit)**

Biggest indicators of student success.

If a student drops out, it is most likely happening from 1st to 2nd year.

Community college particularly vulnerable to attrition.

**Student Body (social fit)**

How much is racial diversity important to you?

How much is the familiar important to you?

**Test Scores & Acceptance (academic fit)**

*These scores help you determine which colleges qualify for your safety, match, reach options.*

GPA also considered.

Schools calculate their own GPA based on student transcripts.

<http://www.collegedata.com/>

* + - * + As you find schools that seem like a fit from CollegeScorecard, do further research on these schools by looking them up on CollegeData using the search toolbar and investigating the following factors:

Admission (academic fit)

Money Matters (financial fit)

Academics (academic fit)

Campus Life (social fit)

Students (social fit)

* + - * + To get a sense of your chances of getting in to these schools, use the “Calculate Your Chances” tool found in the right margin of the college’s profile (also found under the “Prepare & Apply” tab at the top of the page).

The “Calculate Your Chances” tool tells you if the school is a reach, match (maybe), or safety (good bet) school.

If you are already a member, go to “Log In” and enter your email address and password.

If you are not already a member, go to “Sign Up” to create an account.

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>

* + - * + For comprehensive college search and financial aid support services, use College Board’s website.
        + Not sure where to start? Go to [College Search Step-by-Step](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/how-to-find-your-college-fit/college-search-step-by-step), an interactive guide.

<https://www.collegegreenlight.com/>

* + - * + For blog articles that give first-generation college bound students important insights to the college access process. For example:

<http://blog.collegegreenlight.com/blog/whats-happening-to-fly-in-programs-in-2020/>

<http://blog.collegegreenlight.com/blog/100percentmeetneed2019/>

<https://www.collegegreenlight.com/scholarships/-s/>