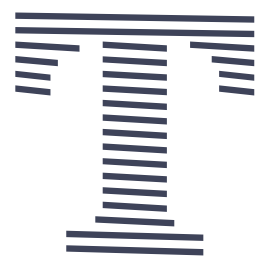


Which
school is
best for
me?

11 types of colleges and universities in the USA.

By Ross Jennings



There are approximately 2,500 universities in the USA. Of these, about 650 are public institutions, and 1,850 are private. There are also approximately 1,200 community and technical colleges in the US. So many choices!

Many international students focus on ranking in making a choice

of college or university. Ranking is important, so it certainly is a factor. In relying on rankings, however, students miss many other factors which might be even more important. The following lists major types of colleges and universities in the US, and gives an idea about the advantages and disadvantages of each.

1. Elite private universities (“Ivy League”)

These are the top names everyone knows about. They are very difficult to get into, especially as an undergraduate. The brightest of the bright go there. They are very expensive, but worth the cost for most people.

Examples	Harvard, Yale, Stanford, Princeton, MIT, Pennsylvania
Tuition	\$35,000 - \$40,000. Scholarships often available.
Students	15,000 - 20,000
Advantages	World famous, the best of the best, bright students and faculty, job advantages, small class size, proud parents
Disadvantages	Expensive, high pressure to perform academically and fit in socially, very selective admission

2. Near-elite private universities

These private universities are also highly ranked and internationally recognized. They are like the “elites”, just not quite as highly ranked.

Examples	Brown, Rice, Emory, Washington, Duke, Cornell
Tuition	\$35,000 - \$40,000. Scholarships are sometimes available.
Students	5,000 to 20,000
Advantages	Great schools, highly ranked, excellent students and faculty, small class size
Disadvantages	Expensive, much social and academic competition, very selective admission

3. Great private universities

These schools are comparable to elite public universities in ranking. Some are small and not too well known outside the US; others are very large and have a great international reputation.

Examples	USC, NYU, Boston College, Wake Forest, Georgetown
Tuition	\$35,000 - \$40,000
Students	10,000 – 40,000
Advantages	Excellent schools, some have great international alumni networks (USC, NYU)
Disadvantages	Not quite Harvard or Columbia, can be a bit snobby, expensive, class size varies from big (USC, NYU) to small (Boston College)

4. Elite public universities

The top public universities are great schools, and also big. The best of them have world class research and great facilities, but also large class sizes, particularly in lower division undergraduate sections.

Examples	UC Berkeley, Michigan, UCLA, Virginia, Georgia Tech
Tuition	\$30,000 - \$35,000
Students	40,000 – 50,000
Advantages	Great reputation, wide social variety, excellent research opportunities, a little less expensive than privates
Disadvantages	Large classes, somewhat impersonal, teachers sometimes more interested in research than teaching

5. Great public universities

These excellent schools are ranked slightly lower than the elite publics, but are well respected and offer similar experiences. They are great education factories.

Examples	Washington, Ohio State, Wisconsin, Florida, Texas, Rutgers
Tuition	\$25,000
Students	40,000 – 50,000
Advantages	Good rankings, less expensive than elite publics or privates
Disadvantages	Not quite Berkeley, large classes, can sometimes be a bit impersonal

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6. Liberal arts colleges

These are high quality traditional colleges which emphasize personal development and a broad range of subjects more than narrow specialties, although many of them have top engineering, business or professional schools. Students at these schools usually form close friendships with students and teachers. Some are women-only colleges (W).

Examples	Williams, Amherst, Swarthmore (W), Wellesley (W), Trinity
Tuition	\$40,000
Students	4,000 – 8,000
Advantages	Great environments to learn about yourself, others and the universe, very supportive, students build strong relationships
Disadvantages	College names not well known outside the US, expensive

7. Catholic universities

Catholic schools are often run by Jesuits, a teaching order of priests with a noble mission of personal and spiritual development. Non-Catholics are most welcome. Most Catholic universities have excellent professional schools in law, engineering, business, nursing and/or other fields. There is much personal attention.

Examples	Notre Dame, Georgetown, Seattle, Gonzaga, USF, Santa Clara
Tuition	\$25,000 - \$40,000
Students	5,000 – 20,000
Advantages	Great professional and personal development opportunities, much emphasis on positive traditional values
Disadvantages	Somewhat expensive, not all are well known

8. Solid public universities

These are solid public universities that may have excellent professional schools in majors such as engineering, nursing or computer science. Generally they are relatively easy to get into, and accordingly cater to students of varied abilities.

Examples	San Francisco State, Washington State, SUNY Buffalo, Oklahoma
Tuition	\$15,000 - \$25,000
Students	20,000 – 40,000
Advantages	Admission is relatively easy, tuition is reasonable, and good students can usually find excellent educational opportunities
Disadvantages	Overall quality of students mixed, rating not high, little prestige

9. Smaller private colleges

These schools vary a great deal in quality, cost and importance of religion. Some of them offer great experiences, possibly equal to top liberal arts colleges. Others are not as good. Some of these schools have a very strong religious element, and some do not. It is good to talk to students at these schools before committing to them.

Examples	Pacific Lutheran, Pepperdine, Iona, Whitman, St. Johns, Whittier
Tuition	\$25,000 - \$35,000
Students	1,000 – 8,000
Advantages	Students may get a great educational and personal experience, admission easier, classes smaller, scholarship sometimes available
Disadvantages	No international reputation, tuition not cheap, quality can vary a lot

10. Specialty universities

These schools cater to particular skills, typically design or art, hospitality, fashion or technology. Students may receive very practical, industry-based training. Meaningful internships are often required, for which international students can sometimes be paid. These schools often have good job placement services.

Examples	Pratt Institute (design/art), Embry Riddle (aviation), Johnson & Wales (hospitality), Fashion Institute of Technology (fashion)
Tuition	\$25,000 - \$35,000
Students	500 – 10,000
Advantages	Strong job-related training, good internships (often paid), good job placement (although primarily for American citizens)
Disadvantages	Schools may not be well known abroad, little ability to change major

11. Community colleges

Almost half of all undergraduate (first four years) students in the US study at a community college. There are three very good reasons for this: 1) better chance to get into a top university as a "2+2" transfer student, 2) lower cost, and 3) easier admission. "2+2" means 2 years at a community college and 2 years at a university.

Examples	Green River Community College (WA), Citrus College (LA)
Tuition	\$6,000 - \$9,500
Students	5,000 – 20,000
Advantages	"2+2" transfer to top US universities, lower cost, easier admission
Disadvantages	Must transfer after two years, not as well known abroad

