

## Sizing Yourself-Up Survey

WITH APOLOGIES TO SOCRATES, knowing thyself is easier said than done. Most high school students can analyze differential equations or a Shakespearean play with the greatest of ease, but when it comes to cataloging their own strengths, weaknesses, likes and dislikes, many draw a blank. But self-knowledge is crucial to the matching process at the heart of a successful college search. The survey below offers a simple way to get a handle on some crucial issues in college selection, and what sort of college may fit your preferences. **Beside each statement, rate your feelings on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 strongly agree, 1 strongly disagree and 5 not sure/don't have a strong feeling.**

**1. I enjoy participating in many activities.** Students at small colleges tend to have more opportunity to be involved in many activities. Fewer students means less competition for spots.

**2. I learn best by listening and writing what I hear.** Students who prefer lecture courses will find them at most large institutions.

**3. I would like to have a prominent place in my community.** Student council presidents and other would-be leaders take note: It is easier to be a big fish if you are swimming in a small pond.

**4. I would like to be in a place where I can be anonymous if I choose to be.** At a large university, the supply of new faces is never-ending. Students who have the initiative can always reinvent themselves.

**5. Individual attention by teachers is important to me.** Small colleges generally offer more one-on-one with faculty both in the classroom and the laboratory.

**6. I prefer devoting my time to one or two activities rather than many.** Students who are passionate about one activity say writing for the college newspaper will find higher quality at a bigger school.

**7. I can learn best when I speak out and ask questions.** Students who learn from interaction and participation would be well-advised to consider a small college.

**8. I want to attend a college that most people have heard of.** Big schools have more name recognition because they are bigger and have Division I athletic programs. Even the finest small colleges are relatively anonymous among the general public.

**9. I am undecided about what I will study.** Small colleges generally offer more guidance and support to students who are undecided. The exception: Students who are considering a preprofessional or highly specialized major.

**10. I am interested in a career-oriented major.** More large institutions offer business, engineering, nursing, etc., though some excellent small institutions do as well (depending on the field.)

**11. I want to earn a Ph.D. in my chosen field.** A higher percentage of students at selective small colleges earn a Ph.D. than those who attend large institutions of similar quality.

**12. I like to be on my own.** A higher percentage of students live off campus at larger schools, which are more likely to be in urban areas than their smaller counterparts.

**13. I prefer a college in a warm or hot climate.** Keep in mind that the Southeast and the Southwest have far different personalities (not to mention humidity levels.)

**14. I prefer a college in a cool or cold climate.** Consider the Midwest, where there are many fine schools which are notably less selective than those in the Northeast.

**15. I want to be near the mountains.** You're probably thinking Colorado or Vermont, but don't zero in too quickly. States from Maine to Georgia and Arkansas to Arizona have easy access to mountains.

**16. I want to be near a lake or ocean.** Oceans are only on the coasts, but keep in mind the Great Lakes, the Finger Lakes, etc. Think about whether you want to be on the water or, say, within a two-hour drive.

**17. I prefer to attend a college in a particular state or region.** Geographical blinders limit options. Even if you think you want a certain area of the country, consider at least one college located elsewhere.

**18. I prefer to attend a college close to home.** Unless you are planning to live with Mom and Dad, it may not matter whether your college is a two-hour drive or a two-hour plane ride.

**19. I want city life within walking distance of my campus.** Be sure to check out the neighborhood(s) surrounding your campus. Urban campuses even in the same city can be wildly different.

**20. I want city life within driving distance of my campus.** Unless you are a hardcore urban dweller, a suburban perch near a city may beat living within the thick of one. Does public transportation or a campus shuttle help students get around?

**21. I want my campus to be surrounded by natural beauty.** A campus view book will take you only so far. To really know if you'll fall in love with the campus, visiting it is a must.

**22. I like to be surrounded by free-thinkers and nonconformists.** Plenty of schools cater to students who buck the mainstream. Talk to your counselor or browse *The Fiske Guide* to find some.

**23. I like the idea of joining a fraternity or sorority.** Greek life is strongest at mainstream and conservative-leaning schools. Find out if there is a split between Greeks and non-Greeks.

**24. I like rubbing shoulders with people who are bright and talented.** This is perhaps the best reason to aim for a highly selective institution,

especially if you're the type who rises to the level of competition.

**25. I like being one of the smartest people in my class.** If so, maybe you should skip the highly selective rat race. Star students get the best that a college has to offer.

**26. I want to go to a prestigious college.** There is nothing wrong with wanting prestige. Think honestly about how badly you want a big name school and act accordingly.

**27. I want to go to college where I can get an excellent education.** Throw out the *U.S. News* rankings and think about which colleges will best meet your needs as a student.

**28. I want to try for an academic scholarship.** Students in this category should consider less selective alternatives. Scholarships are more likely if you rank high in the applicant pool.

**29. I want a diverse college.** All colleges pay lip service to diversity. To get the truth, see the campus for yourself and take a hard look at the student body statistics in the *Guide's* write-up.

**30. I want a college where students are serious about ideas.** Don't assume that a college necessarily attracts true intellectuals merely because it is highly selective. Some top schools are known for their intellectual climate, and others for their lack of it. n

*This checklist is adapted with permission from The Fiske Guide to Colleges 2002 (eighteenth edition), by Edward B. Fiske, Sourcebooks Inc., ISBN 1-57071-765-6, \$22.95, and can be ordered directly from COLLEGE BOUND's new service, COLLEGE BOUND Books, PO Box 6536, Evanston, IL 60204.*

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