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<Moffat notes: I attended a workshop in June 2008 with the author. Acceptance rates look a bit high and could give you a false feeling of security. Example: Fordham is actually 42% admit rate, not 50%. Always compare your stats with the college's GPA and SAT range on www.collegeboard.com!>

Colleges in the Big City

Below are thumbnail sketches of the major institutions in the following cities: Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington DC, Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego. With the most popular options becoming more selective, students would be well-advised to look at schools that are not household names, but that may provide an excellent education in an exciting location. (Note: Enrollment refers to total enrollment, graduate and undergraduate.)

Boston Area

Bentley College – Like a bigger, slightly less-selective Babson. Specializes in business and is located on the outskirts of Boston with shuttles to Harvard Square. Noted for its Center for Entrepreneurship. Enrollment: 4,500. Out-of-state: 50%. Accepted: 40%.

Babson College – Boston-area school that is devoted exclusively to business. Offers highly touted Entrepreneurial Studies program. Men outnumber women by almost 2–1. One of the few conservative outposts in liberal Massachusetts. Enrollment: 3,400. Accepted: 35%.

Boston College – Enjoys booming national popularity among all faiths because of athletic teams and prime Boston location. Enrollment is 80 percent Catholic. Campus is self-contained and less urban than that of Boston University. Enrollment: 14,000. Accepted: 30%.

Boston University – The city is BU’s campus. Back Bay neighborhood is the promised land for hordes of students nationwide seeking a funky, artsy, youth-oriented place that is less in-your-face than New York City. Enrollment: 30,000. Accepted: 55%

Emerson College – On Boston Common, in the heart of the theater district and within walking distance of city’s major attractions. Specializes in theater, film, creative writing, and communications. Enrollment: 4,000. Out-of-state: 60%. Accepted: 50%.

Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering – Every accepted student gets a full-tuition scholarship. Graduated its first class in 2006. Located near Wellesley on the outskirts of Boston. Enrollment: 300. Out-of-state: 90%. Accepted: 25%.

Harvard University – Gets periodic slings and arrows for not paying enough attention to undergraduates, some of which is carping from people who didn’t get in. It takes moxie to keep your self-image in the midst of all those geniuses, but most Harvard admits can handle it. Enrollment: 19,000. Accepted: 10%.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology – If you’re a science genius, come to MIT to find out how little you really know. Technology is a given, but MIT also prides itself on leading programs in economics, political science and management. Enrollment: 10,000. Accepted: 15%.

Northeastern University – Long synonymous with pre-professional education and hands-on experience through cooperative education, Northeastern has shed its blue-collar image and is on the way to becoming a “hot” college. Enrollment: 20,000. Accepted: 45%.

Simmons College – Women’s college in Boston’s Back Bay with 2,000 undergraduates and a coed graduate school. Liberal arts, communications, nursing. Enrollment: 4,800. Out-of-state: 40%. Accepted: 65%.

Suffolk University – Urban campus in Boston’s Beacon Hill, lots of coop/internship possibilities. Housing available through second year. Enrollment: 5,000. Out-of-state: 25%. Accepted: 80%.

Tufts University – Best-known for international relations, Tufts is also strong in engineering and health-related fields. In the Experimental College, students can take off-the-wall courses for credit. Enrollment: 8,900. Accepted: 30%.

Wellesley College – There is no better recipe for popularity than a postcard-perfect campus on the outskirts of Boston. That formula keeps Wellesley at the head of the class—along with superb programs in economics and the natural sciences. Enrollment: 2,300. Accepted: 35%.

Wentworth Institute of Technology – Located in Boston’s Back Bay neighborhood, strong in architecture, computer science, and engineering. Coop program is exceptionally strong, but student life is extremely limited. Enrollment: 4,000. Out-of-state: 40%. Accepted: 60%.

New York

Barnard College – With applications running double what they were ten years ago, Barnard has eclipsed Wellesley as the nation’s most popular women’s college. Barnard women are a little more artsy and a little more City-ish than their female counterparts at Columbia College. Enrollment: 2,300. Accepted: 27%.

Columbia University – Enjoying off-the-charts popularity due to its location in upper Manhattan. Unlike NYU, it has a campus. Renowned core curriculum gives substance and coherence to freshman and sophomore years. Enrollment: 24,000. Accepted: 12%.

Cooper Union – As college costs skyrocket, so does the popularity of Cooper Union’s free education in art, architecture, and engineering. Expect Ivy-level competition to get in. Instead of a conventional campus, Cooper has the East Village. Enrollment: 1,000. Accepted: 13%.

Eugene Lang College – Smack in the middle of Greenwich Village, Lang is the ultimate in bohemian funkiness. Offers little sense of community and virtually no campus life—New York City is Lang’s campus. Part of New School University. Enrollment: 1,000. Accepted: 60%.

Fordham University – Fordham is riding the wave of euphoria for colleges in New York. There is no better location than Lincoln Center, where the performing arts programs are housed. The Bronx campus is adjacent to the New York Botanical Garden and the Bronx Zoo. Enrollment: 15,000. Accepted: 50%.

Kean University – A public institution and one of the least expensive options in the New York area. Wooded campus is across the street from New Jersey transit and a 20-minute ride from Manhattan.

Strong in education and the arts; about 15 percent of students live on campus. Enrollment: 13,000. Out-of-state: 2%. Accepted: 65%.

Manhattan College – Actually located in upscale Riverdale in the Bronx. Four years of campus housing guaranteed on its attractive, wooded campus. Manhattan is Catholic-affiliated and offers a small engineering program in addition to business and arts and sciences. Enrollment: 3,000. Out-of-state: 15%. Accepted: 50%.

New York University – Don't count on getting into NYU just because Big Sis' did. From back-up school to the hottest place in higher education, NYU's rise has been breath-taking. The siren song of Greenwich Village has lured applicants by the thousands. Enrollment: 40,000. Accepted: 35%.

Pratt Institute – Largest stand-alone arts-oriented school in the country, offering everything from architecture to film. Located near downtown Brooklyn. Much more international than other arts-oriented schools. Enrollment: 3,500. Accepted: 45%.

St. John's University – Located in the further reaches of Queens, slowly transitioning from an urban commuter school to a residential university. Can now accommodate about 2,100 (16%) of its full-time undergraduates in university housing. Enrollment: 20,000. Out-of-state: 13%. Accepted: 60%.

Sarah Lawrence College – Favored outpost of the New York City–esque avant garde. Located in affluent Bronxville, half an hour from the city. Still overwhelmingly female. Students design their own curriculums with the help of a faculty don. Enrollment: 1,500. Accepted: 45%.

Stevens Institute of Technology – Hill-top campus overlooks lower Manhattan. Demanding, with a fuller commitment to the liberal arts than most technical institutes. Enrollment: 2,000. Out-of-state: 35%. Accepted: 50%.

Wagner College – Small college on Staten Island with views of lower Manhattan. Internships and the performing arts are its calling cards. Enrollment: 2,000. Out-of-state: 56%. Accepted: 60%.

Philadelphia

Arcadia University – Formerly Beaver College. Located in suburban Philadelphia, best known for its extensive study abroad programs. Seventy-five percent of first-year students have an abroad experience. Heavily female. Enrollment: 2,500. Out-of-state: 30%. Accepted: 80%.

Bryn Mawr College – The most intellectual of the women's colleges. Politics range from liberal to radical. Still benefits from proximity to Haverford, but the relationship is not as strong as it once was. Enrollment: 1,600. Accepted: 45%.

Drexel University – A street-wise, no non-sense technical university in the heart of Philadelphia. Internships and coops abound. Only 25 percent of the students live on campus. Enrollment: 14,000. Accepted: 80%.

Haverford College – Secluded Quaker enclave in Philadelphia’s affluent Main Line suburbs. Old-fashioned honor code governs all facets of life. With only eleven hundred students, the most intimate of the elite small colleges. Enrollment: 1,100. Accepted: 25%.

Swarthmore College – Don’t mistake Swarthmore for a miniature version of an Ivy League school. Swat is more intellectual (and liberal) than its counterparts in Cambridge and New Haven. Enrollment: 1,500. Accepted: 22%.

Temple University – Despite its underdog image, Temple is booming. Applications have more than doubled in the past 10 years. Tough neighborhood is improving. Strong emphasis on co-op, internships. Enrollment: 25,000. Out-of-state: 20%. Accepted: 60%.

University of Pennsylvania – Though an Ivy League institution in name, Penn has more in common with places like Georgetown and Northwestern—where the liberal arts share center stage with pre-professional programs. Enrollment: 19,000. Accepted: 20%.

University of the Arts – In Center City Philadelphia, offers full complement of visual and performing arts. University housing guaranteed for first-year students. Enrollment: 2,000. Out-of-state: 60%. Accepted: 50%.

Villanova University – Villanova is Philadelphia’s counterpart to Boston College. As at BC, about 80 percent of the students are Roman Catholic (compared to a figure of about 50 percent at Georgetown). Enrollment: 8,000. Accepted: 50%.

Widener University (PA) -- Small university on the outskirts of Philadelphia near Swarthmore; programs include business, engineering, and hospitality management. Enrollment: 6,000. Out-of-state: 45%. Accepted: 80%.

Baltimore

Goucher College – This is not your Grandmother’s Goucher. Once a staid women’s college, Goucher has added men and a more progressive ambience, similar to places like Skidmore and Sarah Lawrence. One the outskirts of Baltimore. Enrollment: 2,200. Accepted: 65%.

Johns Hopkins University –While future doctors stampede the Hopkins admissions gate, humanists and social scientists can waltz in with much less difficulty. Located in downtown Baltimore. Enrollment: 5,500. Accepted: 35%.

Morgan State University – Next to Howard and Hampton, one of the best-known historically black universities in the Middle Atlantic states. Known for business and strong sports teams. Located in Baltimore.

Loyola College – In residential Baltimore about five miles from the Inner Harbor. Business heads the list of most popular majors. Undergraduates account for about half the student population. Small engineering program along with more typical fare. Enrollment: 6,000. Out-of-state: 70%. Accepted: 70%.

Towson University – Medium-sized state university on the northern outskirts of Baltimore. Has grown from a teacher's college to a significant regional university strong in business, communications, and education. Enrollment: 15,000. Out-of-state: 20%. Accepted: 65%.

University of Maryland/Baltimore County – Between DC and Baltimore, feels like a private university. Specializes in learning communities that break down the university into smaller units. Enrollment: 12,000. Out-of-state: 10%. Accepted: 70%.

Washington, DC

American University – If the odds are against you at Georgetown and you can't see yourself on GW's non-campus, welcome to American University. American has a nice campus in a nice neighborhood and easy access to the Metro. Enrollment: 11,000. Accepted: 50%.

Catholic University – About 80 percent of the students are of the Catholic faith, as opposed to about 50 percent at nearby Georgetown. CUA has a Metro stop right on campus. Enrollment: 6,100. Accepted: 80%.

George Washington University – Ten years ago, GW was a back-up school with an 80 percent acceptance rate maligned for its lack of unity. A few tens of thousands of applications later, the university accepts less than half who apply and is still not much for school spirit. Enrollment: 15,500. Accepted: 40%.

George Mason University – Capitalizing, so to speak, on proximity to Washington, D.C. Leading center of conservative, political, and economic thought. Now challenging UVA and Virginia Tech in many fields. A university shuttle bus goes to the DC Metro. Enrollment: 30,000. Out-of-state: 10%. Accepted: 50%.

Georgetown University – For everyone who wants to be a master of the political universe, this is the place. In all the excitement over D.C., students tend to forget the Roman-Catholic affiliation, which adds a conservative tinge to the campus. Enrollment: 13,500. Accepted: 20%.

Howard University – Pioneer of the Afrocentric approach to learning across the curriculum. Has recently weathered financial difficulties that forced cuts in administration and staff. Location in Washington, D.C., is ideal for politics and economics. Enrollment: 10,500. Accepted: 55%.

University of Maryland/ College Park – The name says Maryland, but the location says Washington, DC. Students can jump on the Metro just like at any other DC institution. Savvy students will look to the honors and living/learning communities. Enrollment: 30,000. Accepted: 50%.

Atlanta

Agnes Scott College – Combines the tree-lined seclusion of Decatur with the bustle of Atlanta. More money in the bank than most Ivy League schools and enrollment is up 50 percent since 1990. Enrollment: 900. Accepted: 50%.

Emory University – Often compared to Duke and Vanderbilt, Emory may be most similar to Wash U. in St. Louis. Both have suburban locations in major cities and both tout business and premed as major draws. In suburban Atlanta. Enrollment: 10,000. Accepted: 35%.

Georgia Institute of Technology – The nation's top public technical institute. Ma Tech is a leader in every imaginable engineering field. Undergrads often suffer from large classes and the research orientation of the faculty. Atlanta and big-time sports teams offer plenty of excitement. Enrollment: 15,000. Accepted: 65%.

Morehouse College – Along with sister school Spelman, the most selective of the historically black schools. Alumni list reads like a Who's Who of the black community. Best known for business and popular 3-2 engineering program with Georgia Tech. Enrollment: 3,000. Accepted: 75%

Oglethorpe University – Strategically located in Atlanta's inner suburbs, with a picturesque gothic campus that gives a traditional college feel. Interdisciplinary core curriculum gives shape to the curriculum. Enrollment: 1,000. Out-of-state: 40%. Accepted: 65%.

Spelman College – Sister school to Morehouse. Unusually strong in the natural sciences with particular emphasis on undergraduate research. Wooded Atlanta campus provides easy access to urban attractions. Enrollment: 2,100. Accepted: 40%.

Chicago

DePaul University. Gets the nod over Loyola as the best Catholic university in Chicago. Lincoln Park location is like New York's Greenwich Village or Upper West Side without all the headaches. Almost half non-Catholic. Enrollment and selectivity rising. Enrollment: 23,000. Accepted: 70%.

Lake Forest College. The only small, selective private college in the Chicago area. A quick train ride from Chicago. Students can baby-sit for corporate CEOs at night and get internships at their corporations during the day. Enrollment: 1,500. Accepted: 60%.

Loyola University of Chicago – Main campus located on Chicago's North Shore about 8 miles from downtown, but the business school occupied prime real estate in downtown. Strong in business and health-related fields. Enrollment: 13,000. Out-of-state: 50%. Accepted: 77%.

Northwestern University – The most selective university in the Midwest, but with more school spirit than its Eastern counterparts. More career-oriented than its nearby rival University of Chicago and than all of the Ivies but Penn. Enrollment: 16,000. Accepted: 30%.

University of Chicago – Periodically, the news media reports that students at the University of Chicago are finally loosening up and having some fun. Don't believe it. This place is for true intellectuals. Social climbers should apply elsewhere. Enrollment: 12,000. Accepted: 40%.

University of Illinois /Chicago – New high-rise dorm means that UIC can house most first-year students who want to live on-campus. Located in the shadow of the Sears Tower. Has architecture, engineering. Enrollment: 25,000. Out-of-state: 5%. Accepted: 60%.

Wheaton College – The premier evangelical Christian school in the country. All students sign a pledge to abstain from vices ranging from alcohol to “occult practices.” School motto: “For Christ and His Kingdom.” Enrollment: 2,700. Accepted: 55%.

Minneapolis/St. Paul

Macalester College – U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan ’61 typifies one of Mac’s hallmarks: an internationalist view of the world. Carleton has a slightly bigger national reputation, but Mac has St. Paul, a progressive capital city. Enrollment: 1,800. Accepted: 45%.

University of Minnesota/Twin Cities – Not quite as highly rated as U. of Wisconsin or U. of Michigan, but not quite as expensive, either. Strong in the standard preprofessional areas, plus forestry and Scandinavian studies. The Twin Cities are among the nation’s most livable. Enrollment: 35,000. Accepted: 70%.

Denver

Regis University – Small Jesuit university in residential Denver with about 1,500 undergraduates. Business accounts for about half of enrollment. Enrollment: 4,500. Out-of-state: 15%. Accepted: 80%.

University of Colorado/Denver – Once a downtown commuter school, now serving 18-year-olds as well. All first-year students required to live in new Campus Village. Best known for arts, business, and health professions. Enrollment: 12,000. Out-of-state: 5%. Accepted: 75%.

University of Denver – Middle-sized university known equally for business and skiing. Laid-back atmosphere prevails. Campus in residential Denver is pleasant, but not inspiring. Students tend to be outdoorsy and environmentally conscious. Enrollment: 7,500. Accepted: 80%.

Seattle

Seattle University – Located a stone’s throw from downtown within walking distance of Seattle’s waterfront. Jesuit. A campus more like Columbia’s than NYU’s. Enrollment: 5,000. Out-of-state: 35%. Accepted: 65%.

University of Puget Sound – One of a trio of colleges in the Pacific Northwest (along with Whitman and Willamette) that deserve more national exposure. Tacoma campus features easy access to Puget Sound and Mount Rainier. Best known for Asian studies and study-abroad programs. Enrollment: 2,700. Accepted: 70%.

University of Washington University of Washington. The Pacific Northwest's leading research university and the toughest for out-of-state admission. Strong across the board in preprofessional areas. In-staters constitute 90 percent of the student body. Sprawling Seattle campus is an urban oasis. Enrollment: 39,000. Accepted: 67%.

Portland

Lewis and Clark College – The West Coast's leader in international and study abroad programs, located in suburban Portland. Politically liberal, but not so far out as cross-town neighbor Reed. With Mount Hood visible in the distance, a wealth of outdoor possibilities. Enrollment: 2,900. Accepted: 60%.

Portland State University – In downtown Portland, transitioning from commuter institution. As big as University of Oregon and Oregon State. Enrollment: 20,000. Out-of-state: 10%. Accepted: 85%.

Reed College – Legendary as a countercultural mecca and also for intense introspection. Combines far-out students with traditional academics, including a senior thesis that would earn a master's degree at many schools. Enrollment: 1,300. Accepted: 45%.

University of Portland – Small Catholic-affiliated university on a bluff overlooking Portland and the Willamette River. Noted for its Center for Entrepreneurship. Enrollment: 3,200. Out-of-state: 60%. Accepted: 85%.

San Francisco

Mills College – Remembered for the firestorm of protest that torpedoed a 1990 Board of Trustees proposal to go coed. Problems remain, but enrollment has inched upward since the decision to stay all-female. UC–Berkeley and San Francisco are both within easy reach of Oakland campus. Enrollment: 1,500. Accepted: 75%.

Santa Clara University – Gorgeous Silicon Valley campus is within easy reach of San Francisco. Large endowment also contributes to an air of prosperity. About 60 percent of the student body is Catholic. Enrollment: 6,000. Accepted: 60%.

Stanford University – If you're looking for an Eastern version of Stanford, try Duke (with a touch of MIT mixed in). Stanford's big-time athletics, pre-professional aura, and laid-back atmosphere stand in marked contrast to the Ivy League. Enrollment: 15,000. Accepted: 12%.

University of California–Berkeley – Perpetually struggling to cope with budget cuts, tuition increases, and overcrowding. Self-starters will find unparalleled opportunities, more passive types will get lost in the herd. Enrollment: 34,000. Accepted: 25%.

University of San Francisco – Talk about prime real estate: USF is next-door to the legendary Haight-Ashbury district, down the street from Golden Gate park, and within five miles of the Pacific Ocean. Approximately half the students are Catholic. Enrollment: 8,500. Accepted: 70%.

Los Angeles

California Institute of Technology – If you're armed with stratospheric SAT scores and a burning desire to study math, science, or engineering, you may have a chance for admission to Caltech. Easy informality of the campus contrasts with larger, more bureaucratic technical schools. Enrollment: 2,100. Accepted: 20%.

Chapman University – Has parlayed its Orange County location into burgeoning popularity in film, TV, and the performing arts. Near the beach and Disneyland. Enrollment: 4,000. Out-of-state: 22%. Accepted: 55%.

Claremont McKenna College – The second-most selective liberal-arts college on the West Coast. Dedicated to business and politics. More regional (and more conservative) than Pomona, but rapidly acquiring a national reputation. Enrollment: 1,100. Accepted: 20%.

Harvey Mudd College – Churns out future science Ph.Ds in droves. Rivals Caltech for sheer brainpower and offers more exposure to the liberal arts, and a balanced campus life, through the other Claremont Colleges. Enrollment: 750. Accepted: 35%.

Loyola Marymount University – There are four Loyolas and five Marymounts in American higher education, but only one has an academic dean who used to be a Hollywood producer. Located near the heart of Los Angeles, a mile from the beach. Enrollment: 7,000. Out-of-state: 25%. Accepted: 55%.

Occidental College – Oxy is a diverse, urban, streetwise cousin to the more up-scale and suburban Claremont Colleges. Getting much more selective. Oxy's innovative diplomacy and world affairs program features internships in Washington and at the U.N. Enrollment: 1,800. Accepted: 40%.

Pepperdine University. With apologies to Wellesley and Furman, Pepperdine has the most beautiful campus in America. Small wonder its popularity is soaring. Students must come to Pepperdine ready to embrace an evangelical Christian emphasis. Enrollment: 7,500. Accepted: 35%.

Pitzer College – Offers a haven for the otherwise-minded without the hard edge of nonconformity at places like Evergreen and Bard. Traditional strengths in the social and behavioral sciences. Enrollment: 1,000. Accepted: 35%.

Pomona College – Long considered the premier liberal arts college in the West. Offers three-times the resources of stand-alone competitors because of access to the other Claremont Colleges. Enrollment: 1,500. Accepted: 20%.

Scripps College – Inside its courtyards, Scripps is an intimate women's college. Step across the street and you'll find a coed environment. One of the most selective women's colleges in the country. Enrollment: 900. Accepted: 45%.

University of California–Los Angeles – Cloistered away in exclusive Beverly Hills, UCLA is a world unto itself. The beach, the mountains, and chic Hollywood hangouts are all in easy reach. Enrollment: 37,000. Accepted: 25%.

University of Southern California – USC’s old handle: “The University of Spoiled Children.” USC’s new handle: highly selective West Coast university with preeminent programs in arts and media. Enrollment: 29,000. Accepted: 25%.

Whittier College – Less selective than Occidental and the Claremont Colleges, Whittier lures top students with an arsenal of merit scholarships. Beware the sneaky October 15 deadline for the best of them. Enrollment: 1,500. Accepted: 60%.

San Diego

University of California–San Diego. Applications doubled in the ‘90s at this seaside paradise. UCSD rivals better-known Berkeley and UCLA as the Cal campus of choice for top students. Six undergraduate colleges offer varying educational approaches. Enrollment: 25,000. Out-of-state: 3%. Accepted: 40%.

University of San Diego. New kid on the block with a beautiful seaside location and burgeoning popularity. Now accepts less than half who apply. Features liberal arts, business, education, nursing, and a small engineering program. Enrollment: 7,000. Out-of-state: 40%. Accepted: 50%.

Rising Stars: New Options for Competitive Times

The following are up-and-coming institutions outside the cities listed above. Look for these on the hot colleges list of 2018. They may not be household names – yet – but all are on the rise because of an exciting location, strong programs, or both. [Note: Enrollment refers to total enrollment, graduate and undergraduate.]

Belmont University (TN) – Has leveraged its Nashville location to emerge as a go-to place in the southeast for students interested in the music industry, especially the business side. Affiliated with the Southern Baptists. Enrollment: 3,000. Out-of-state: 59%. Accepted: 78%.

Bryant University (RI) – On the northwest outskirts of Providence, specializes in business. 500-acre campus on former estate of the man who invented Tupperware. Enrollment: 3,500. Out-of-state: 80%. Accepted: 60%.

California State Polytechnic Institute /San Luis Obispo (CA) -- Most selective institution in Cal State system, fifteen minutes from the beach in central California. Emphasizes hands-on learning. Enrollment: 20,000. Out-of-state: 4%. Accepted: 50%.

Chatham University (PA) – Tiny women’s college in residential Pittsburgh, close to Carnegie Mellon and Pitt. Emphasis on global studies, internships, women’s leadership. Enrollment: 500. Out-of-state: 20%. Accepted: 60%.

Duquesne University (PA) – Adjacent to downtown Pittsburgh, features business, education, health professions. Catholic affiliated. Neighborhood still a bit dodgy. Enrollment: 10,000. Out-of-state: 20%. Accepted: 80%.

Elon University (NC) – Set in a small town between Durham and Greensboro, Elon has come from nowhere to be a destination of choice in the upper South. Enrollment: 5,000. Out-of-state: 70%. Accepted: 40%.

Endicott College (MA) – Set on a beautiful shoreline campus about an hour north of Boston. With only 1,700 undergraduates, Endicott offers a variety of pre-professional programs ranging from Hospitality and Tourism to Sport Science. Learn-by-doing emphasis means every student gets an internship. Enrollment: 2,000. Out-of-state: 50%. Accepted: 44%.

Flagler College (FL) – In a beach-side tourist town about 30 miles south of Jacksonville. Has the usual business/liberal arts offerings plus popular program in sports management. Enrollment: 2,000. Out of-state: 30%. Accepted: 30%.

Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering (MA) – Every accepted student gets a full-tuition scholarship. Graduated its first class in 2006. Located near Wellesley on the outskirts of Boston. Enrollment: 300. Out-of-state: 90%. Accepted: 25%.

Fairfield University (CT) – Catholic university on Connecticut’s gold coast, 90 minutes by train from Manhattan. Strong in business, communications, and liberal arts. Enrollment: 4,500. Out-of-state: 75%. Accepted: 75%.

Humboldt State University (CA) – Located minutes from the beach amid the redwoods of northern California. More personal than the typical UC with a whiff of the alternative. Enrollment: 8,000. Out-of-state: 5%. Accepted: 75%.

Hawaii Pacific University (HI) – With a main campus in downtown Honolulu and a marine science campus near the mountains and the shore, HPU combines urban life with the lush Hawaiian outdoors. Enrollment: 8,000. Out-of-state: 30%. Accepted: 80%.

Hood College (MD) – In a small Maryland city about an hour by car from D.C. and Baltimore. A women's college until 2003, now about 30% men. Enrollment: 1,200. Out-of-state: 20%. Accepted: 50%.

St. Mary's College of Maryland (MD) – Public, honors, liberal arts college in small town on the western shore of Chesapeake Bay. A smaller William & Mary. Feels remote despite its proximity to DC and Baltimore. Enrollment: 2,000. Out-of-State: 20%. Accepted: 70%.

Sonoma State University (CA) – Little known out-of-state, but with tuition a third of that at the UCs. Compare to William & Mary. Located 50 miles north of San Francisco, near wine country and the Pacific. Enrollment: 7,000. Out-of-state: 1%. Accepted: 60%.

SUNY Geneseo (NY) – Leading small university among the SUNYs, offers the feel of a private institution. South of Rochester, strong in liberal arts and business. Enrollment: 5,000. Out-of-state: 1%. Accepted: 40%.

SUNY New Paltz (NY) – Near Poughkeepsie in the scenic Hudson Valley, borders small-town historic district. Business, Communications, Education. Enrollment: 6,000. Out-of-state: 3%. Accepted: 45%.

SUNY Purchase (NY) – Wooded campus in Westchester County (suburban NYC). Strong in visual and performing arts, highest out-of-state percentage in SUNY system. Enrollment: 3,000. Out-of-state: 20%. Accepted: 30%.

SUNY Stony Brook (NY) – Strategically located 90 minutes from New York City, Stony Brook has gained popularity in recent years. The natural sciences, engineering, and health fields are drawing cards. Enrollment: 16,000. Out-of-state: 4%. Accepted; 50%.

University of Maine (ME) – Less national than UVM or UNH, but also less expensive. Rural campus. Strong in engineering and marine science. Enrollment: 8,000. Out-of-state: 15%. Accepted: 80%.

University of Pittsburgh (PA) – Located a few miles from downtown, Pitt is adjacent to Carnegie Mellon at the cultural hub of Pittsburgh. Strong in business, engineering, and health professions. Enrollment: 20,000. Out-of-state: 15%. Accepted: 50%.

University of Rhode Island (RI) – A smallish alternative to UMass and UConn. With Boston, Providence, and vacation hot-spot Newport within easy reach, there is plenty to do. Enrollment: 15,000. Out-of-state: 40%. Accepted: 75%.

University of Texas/Dallas (TX) – Has spruced up its dorms and put on a full-court press to attract top students in science and technology. Located in a northern suburb near Plano. Lots of scholarships. Enrollment: 10,000. Out-of-state: 10%. Accepted: 55%.

University of Tulsa (OK) – Notable for its small, high-quality engineering and business programs, and for the personal attention it gives students. Enrollment: 5,000. Out-of-state: 25%. Accepted: 75%.

Westminster College (UT) – One of a number of Westminsters in the U.S., but the only one in a major city (Salt Lake City). Not Mormon. Ski slopes are close at hand. Business program has impressive facilities and aviation is also available. Enrollment: 2,500. Out-of-state: 10%. Accepted: 90%.

Westmont College (CA) – In Santa Barbara, the West Coast's most appealing evangelical Christian college. Compare to Wheaton (IL), though smaller. Enrollment: 1,500. Out-of-state: 35%. Accepted: 75%.

The following lists were culled mainly from the College Finder section of The Fiske Guide to Getting into the Right College, 2007.

Merit Scholarships at Highly Selective Universities

Boston College, Presidential Scholarship—Full tuition

Deadline: November 1

Boston University, Trustee Scholarship—Full costs

Deadline: December 1

University of Chicago, College Honor Scholarship—Full tuition.

Deadline: January 1

Duke University, Angier B. Duke Scholarship—Full tuition and summer stipend.

Deadline: January 1

Emory University, Emory Scholars—Up to full costs.

Deadline: November 1

University of North Carolina, Morehead-Cain Scholarship—Full costs and summer stipend.

Deadline: November . (Nomination required where applicable.)

Vanderbilt University, Harold Stirling Scholarship—Full tuition and summer stipend.

Deadline: January 1

University of Virginia, Jefferson Scholarships—Full costs and enrichment activities.

Deadline: January 1

Wake Forest University, Reynolds Scholarship—Full expenses and summer stipend.

Deadline: December 1

Washington & Lee University, Honor Scholarships—Full tuition.

Deadline: December 15

Washington University (MO), Danforth Scholarship—Full tuition, by nomination only.

Deadline: October 15.

The Budget Ivy League

University of Arizona. Best value for out-of-staters in the desert Southwest. Known for astronomy, engineering, and a top-notch honors program. Sunny Tucson is a haven for sun-worshippers and outdoor enthusiasts. Top-ranked hoops team always a national championship contender.

University of California–Berkeley. Makes this list because it is still cheap for in-staters and retains tremendous prestige. Struggling to cope with budget cuts, tuition increases, and overcrowding. Self-starters will find unparalleled opportunities, more passive types will get lost in the herd.

University of California–Los Angeles. Ditto what we said about Berkeley. Cloistered away in exclusive Beverly Hills, UCLA is the more conservative of the two. The beach, the mountains, and chic Hollywood hangouts are all in easy reach. One of the world's best places to study the arts, film, or television.

University of Florida. It should come as no surprise that UF is a world leader in citrus science. Throw in communications, engineering, and Latin American studies to the list of renowned programs. Among Deep South public universities, only the University of Georgia rivals UF in overall quality.

Florida State University. With an assist from its football program, FSU's popularity has burgeoned in recent years. Not that there weren't some quality programs to begin with. The motion picture school is among the best around, and business and the arts are also strong. So long as the football team beats the hated Gators, all is well.

Georgia Institute of Technology. The nation's top public technical institute. Ga Tech is a leader in every imaginable engineering field. Undergrads often suffer from large classes and the research orientation of the faculty. Atlanta and big-time sports teams offer plenty of excitement.

University of Georgia. What a difference free tuition makes. The Hope Scholarship gives a free ride to in-staters with a 3.0 GPA, and top in-state students now choose UGA over highly selective private universities. Business and journalism head the list of sought-after programs. College town of Athens features music scene that spawned R.E.M. and the B-52s.

University of Illinois–Urbana-Champaign. Half a step behind Michigan, neck-in-neck with Wisconsin among top Midwestern public universities. Strengths include business, engineering, architecture, and the natural sciences. Only 10 percent of the student body from out-of-state.

University of Iowa. A bargain compared to other Big Ten schools such as Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois. Iowa is world-famous for its creative writing program and writers' workshop. Other areas of strength include health sciences, business, and the arts. Future scientists should check out the Research Scholars Program.

University of Kansas. Memo to out-of-staters: Lawrence is not flat as a pancake and does not resemble Dorothy's home in *The Wizard of Oz*. University of Kansas has a gorgeous campus and is one of the premier college bargains in the United States. Strong programs in a full slate of professional schools.

Miami University (OH). Rather than disappear into the black hole of Ohio State, top students in the Buckeye state come here to feel as if they are going to an elite private university. MU has a niche like William & Mary's in Virginia—though MU is twice as big. Miami's top draw is business, and its tenor is conservative.

University of Minnesota—Twin Cities. Not quite as highly rated as U. of Wisconsin or U. of Michigan, but not quite as expensive, either. Strong in the standard preprofessional areas, plus forestry and Scandinavian studies. Housing shortage limits campus cohesiveness. The Twin Cities are among the nation's most livable.

College of New Jersey. Once known as Trenton State University, now a perennial in the “best buys” category. A former teachers' college that has remade itself into a selective university stressing the liberal arts, business, and accounting. Beautiful suburban campus with the feel of a private school.

University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill. Close on the heels of UVA as the South's most prestigious state university. With more than 80 percent of the spots in each class reserved for in-staters, admission is next to impossible for out-of-staters who aren't 6'9” with a 43-inch vertical jump. Chapel Hill is a quintessential college town.

University of Oregon. UO may be the best deal in public higher education on the West Coast. Less expensive than the UC system and less selective than the University of Washington, UO is a university of manageable size in a great location. The liberal arts are more than just a slogan, and programs in business and communication are strong.

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Includes almost fifty thousand students on six campuses. Rutgers College is the most selective, followed by Douglass (all women) and Livingston. Ninety percent of the students are homegrown Garden Staters.

SUNY—Binghamton University. If one hundred thousand screaming fans on a Saturday afternoon tickles your fancy, head two hundred miles southwest to Penn State. Binghamton has become the premier public university in the northeast because of its outstanding academic programs, such the Binghamton Scholars and Discovery Initiative, and its commitment to undergraduates.

SUNY—Geneseo. Smallish university (fifty-six hundred) with strong programs in business and the liberal arts. Began as a teacher's college and its female-to-male ratio is still two to one. Much excitement revolves around the men's hockey team. Similar in scale to William & Mary and Mary Washington in Virginia, smaller than Miami of Ohio.

University of Texas—Austin. Though the price tag is going up, UT is still one of the cheapest major universities in the nation. The UT challenge: to avoid getting lost in the sea of fifty thousand faces. Top programs include business, engineering, and Latin American studies. Liberal arts majors should check out the Plan II honors program.

Truman State University. Truman changed its name to emphasize that it has more in common with private institutions than non-descript regional publics. Truman is looking for a public-ivy niche like Miami of Ohio and William & Mary. New residential college program will increase co-curricular learning.

University of Virginia. Competition for out-of-state admission now at the Ivy League level. Mr. Jefferson's university remains one of America's most beautiful. Combines an aristocratic flavor with Wahoo support of ACC athletic teams. Strong fraternity system rules campus social life.

University of Washington. The Pacific Northwest's leading research university and the toughest for out-of-state admission. Strong across the board in preprofessional areas. In-staters constitute 90 percent of the student body. Sprawling Seattle campus is an urban oasis.

College of William and Mary. Founded in 1693, William and Mary is the original public ivy. History, government, and international studies are among the strongest departments. With seventy-five hundred students, W&M is really a medium-sized university that is larger than University of Richmond and Mary Washington.

University of Wisconsin–Madison. UW draws nearly 40 percent of its students from out-of-state, the highest proportion among leading Midwestern public universities. Why brave the cold? Reasons include top programs in an array of professional fields and several innovative living-learning programs.

Small-College Bargains

Berea College. Absolutely tuition-free for students willing to work ten hours per week on campus. The hitch: only needy students can attend this private institution. Christian orientation fosters a strong sense of community and mission work. Most students come from Kentucky and adjacent states.

Cooper Union. In the heart of Manhattan, a small private school (nine hundred) specializing in art, architecture, and engineering. Founded by a philanthropist as a tuition-free school. Campus consists of East Greenwich Village. At 13 percent, acceptance rate is lower than at most Ivy League schools.

The Evergreen State College. There's no mistaking Evergreen for a typical public college. Never mind the way-out garb favored by its students. Evergreen's inter-disciplinary, team-taught curriculum is truly unique. To find anything remotely like Evergreen, you'll need to travel east to places like Hampshire or Sarah Lawrence.

Keene State College. Middle-sized (forty-six hundred) institution in the hills of southern New Hampshire. Primary offerings include liberal arts, education, and management. A taste of small-town New England.

University of Maine–Farmington. Small public liberal arts college (two thousand) tucked away in central Maine. Seldom discovered by out-of-staters. Programs in education and health-related fields in addition to the liberal arts. Enrollment approximately two-thirds women.

Mary Washington College. Mary Washington could easily be mistaken for one of Virginia's elite private colleges. MWC offers just as much history and tradition—but at a much lower price. Once a women's college, still over two-thirds female. On the selectivity chart, MWC ranks behind only UVA and William and Mary among Virginia public universities.

University of Minnesota–Morris. If you’ve ever taken a wrong turn on the way to Duluth, you might have stumbled upon one of the best public liberal arts colleges in the country. Morris combines superb students, small classes, dedicated faculty, and an isolated prairie location.

New College of Florida. Elite liberal arts education at a bargain price. New College is the South’s most liberal institution of higher learning—apologies to Guilford. With an enrollment of six hundred, New College is about one-third the size of a typical liberal arts college.

University of North Carolina–Asheville. The “other” UNC happens to be one of the best educational bargains in the country. At just over three thousand students, UNCA is about half the size of fellow public liberal arts college William & Mary and one thousand students smaller than Mary Washington. Picturesque mountain location in a resort city.

College of the Ozarks. A Missouri version of Berea. No tuition at this private institution, but family income must be low (approximately thirty thousand dollars) to qualify for admission. Work requirements include fifteen hours a week, plus additional hours during school vacations. Conservative in outlook and requires attendance at religious services.

St. Mary’s College of Maryland. Often mistaken for a Catholic-affiliated school. Founded as a seminary for women, now a highly selective public college that is rapidly growing in popularity. Small student body (seventeen hundred) makes for close student-faculty relations. Strategically located one hour from both Washington, D.C., and Baltimore.

Small Colleges and Universities Strong in Engineering

Alfred University
Bucknell University
Butler University
Calvin College
Clarkson University
Dartmouth College
Gettysburg College
Lafayette College
Lehigh University
Loyola University (MD)
University of the Pacific
Rice University
Smith College
Spelman College
Swarthmore College
Trinity College (CT)
Trinity University (TX)
University of Tulsa
Tuskegee University
Union College

Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities

Accommodation for students with learning disabilities is among the fastest-growing—and most controversial—academic areas in higher education. A generation ago, few colleges paid much attention to LD students. But that changed in the 1990s with the sudden discovery that a significant segment of the population may suffer problems that qualify as learning disabilities. Services have multiplied on virtually all campuses. But so, too, has the concern that some students are trying to use questionable LD classification to get special treatment.

No one denies that many students do suffer from learning disabilities. The diagnosis must be made by a certified professional—usually a physician, psychologist, or learning specialist. Students are judged to be LD if their performance on particular types of tasks shows a pattern of being lower than their intelligence would suggest. These students suffer impaired performance not because of an inability to comprehend, but because of breakdowns in their ability to perceive and process information.

A learning disability should not be confused with low achievement. Every student has strengths and weaknesses. Some work harder than others and do better as a result. But recently, some families have begun to press for LD classification with dubious evidence. Why? With increasing competition for good grades and admission to college, an LD diagnosis is an easy way to explain mediocre grades. More to the point, certified LD status allows students extra time on the PSAT and SAT. In the past ten years, applications to the Educational Testing Service for extra time have doubled, with most of the requests coming from affluent families who know how to use the system to their benefit.

Despite the doubts, students with legitimate disabilities will find high-quality services at many colleges. Virtually all major institutions, from Harvard to the local community college, provide support for the learning disabled. Assistance may include printed notes of lectures, tapes, or extended time on exams. Our first list includes major universities offering particularly strong services; the smaller schools in the second list all devote major emphasis to LD students.

Our advice for LD students? Check out the support services yourself at each college on your list. If possible, pay a visit to the LD support office or have a phone conversation with one of the administrators. Since many such programs depend on the expertise of one or two people, the quality of the services can change abruptly with changes in staff.

Major Universities with Strong Support for Students with Learning Disabilities

Adelphi University
American University
University of Arizona
University of California–Berkeley
Clark University
University of Colorado–Boulder
University of Denver

DePaul University
University of Georgia
Hofstra University
Purdue University
Rochester Institute of Technology
Syracuse University
University of Vermont
University of Virginia

Small Colleges with Strong Support Services for Learning Disabled Students

Bard College
Curry College
Landmark College
Loras College
Lynn University
Marist College
Mercyhurst College
Mitchell College
Muskingum College
University of New England
St. Thomas Aquinas College (NY)
Southern Vermont College
Westminster College (MO)
West Virginia Wesleyan College

Film/Television

When it comes to glamour, few professions can match the film and television industry. But if you're among the thousands who dream of making it big in Hollywood, be prepared to hustle. Getting a toehold in film or broadcasting is no easy task and making it big is even harder.

There is no primrose path to a career in film or broadcasting. As a seventeen- or eighteen-year-old high school graduate, your best bet is to get a well-rounded education. The liberal arts are especially crucial if you are interested in the creative elements of film production. The technical stuff can be learned anytime, but no film course can teach you imagination, creativity, how to write, or how to tell a story. Many film-industry insiders advise students to wait until the graduate level for specialized film training. A good liberal arts college with a critical mass of people interested in film is often the best preparation.

The main advantage of undergraduate film school is the chance to rub shoulders with other aspiring actors, writers, directors, producers, and cinematographers. If intense competition and single-minded focus bring out your best, film school is definitely worth considering. Some programs are part of a college of communications or journalism; others are linked to theater arts. A school or college of broadcasting or film and TV is often (though not always) more comprehensive than a department of film. Among major university film schools, three stand out: University of Southern California's School of Cinema-Television (George Lucas, Ron Howard); UCLA's School of Theater, Film, and Television (Francis Ford Coppola, Tim Robbins); and New York University's Film and Television Department (Billy Crystal, Spike Lee, Martin Scorsese, Oliver Stone). More unusual is tiny Columbia College in Hollywood, one of the few undergraduate colleges in the nation devoted entirely to media arts.

Making your mark in the film industry takes talent, hard work, and a high tolerance for rejection. Though the dream of being the next Steven Spielberg dies hard, a more realistic approach is to consider the many opportunities outside the world of big-budget feature films. As long as the role of media in our society continues to expand, so, too, will opportunities in broadcast- and film-related professions.

Major Universities Strong in Film/Television

Arizona State University
Boston University
University of California—Los Angeles
University of Cincinnati
Drexel University
University of Florida
Ithaca College
University of Kansas
Memphis State University
University of Michigan
New York University
Northwestern University
Pennsylvania State University

University of Southern California
Syracuse University
University of Texas–Austin
Wayne State University

Small Colleges and Universities Strong in Film/Television

Bard College
Beloit College
Brown University
California Institute of the Arts
Chapman University
Columbia College (CA)
Columbia College (IL)
Emerson College
The Evergreen State College
Hampshire College
Hofstra University
Hollins University
Occidental College
Quinnipiac University
Pitzer College
Pomona College
Sarah Lawrence College
School of Visual Arts
SUNY–Purchase
Wesleyan University