

SELECTING A COLLEGE — ENGAGEMENT MATTERS

A COLLEGE PLANNING CHECKLIST



The **Gallup-Purdue Index**, a recent survey of 30,000 U.S. college graduates, found that those who have achieved great jobs and great lives were more likely to be personally engaged with a faculty member, have participated in an internship, been involved in extracurricular activities and have graduated with minimal student debt. These findings held true regardless of the type of four-year institution — public or private non-profit college; a highly selective institution or a less selective institution; or a top 100-ranked school in *U.S. News & World Report* vs. other schools.

As you visit schools in search of the right fit, take these questions along, expect answers, and make an informed choice that will lead to a great job and a great life.

Remember: This is only the first step. Students who actively engage in their college experience are more likely to see a return on their investment.

FACULTY ENGAGEMENT

- What kind of mentorship opportunities does the college/university offer, e.g., with faculty, graduate students or upperclassmen?
- What's the percentage of students involved in long-term projects, e.g., research opportunities for undergraduate students or semester-long projects?
- How are faculty members evaluated by the college/university? Is mentoring/direct interaction to support students one of the elements of evaluation?
- How does the college/university support faculty-student interaction outside the classroom, e.g., a faculty member joining a group of students for lunch, service learning, and faculty advising of student organizations?

ASK ABOUT FACTORS THAT ARE IMPORTANT FOR YOUR COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

- Professors will excite me about learning.
- Instructors will care about me as a person.
- Mentors will encourage me to pursue my goals.
- Projects may take a semester or more to complete.
- Internships are available to apply what I learned in class.
- Extracurricular activities are available to connect me with students with similar interests and with opportunities to try something new.

Answers here will place the focus on the quality of your learning experience, those intangibles that can define your four years at college. You also will get a sense of the university's emphasis in preparing your leadership and critical-thinking skills. The Gallup-Purdue Index showed that graduates with at least one professor who excited them about learning, cared about them as a person and was a mentor, have more than double the odds of being engaged at work after graduation and thriving in their lives. Make sure you are proactive in pursuing high-impact opportunities, and that the school you choose is committed to your success in these ways.

63%

OF COLLEGE STUDENTS HAD **AT LEAST ONE PROFESSOR** WHO EXCITED THEM ABOUT LEARNING

GALLUP-PURDUE INDEX

HIGH-IMPACT EXPERIENCES

- What internships/co-ops does the college/university offer to students, e.g., work arrangements where students can apply directly what they are learning in the classroom?
- What percentage of students are involved in internship/co-op programs?
- Are scholarships or stipends available to support study-abroad programs?
- What does the college/university do to promote all students' active involvement in campus organizations, extracurricular activities and volunteerism?

These answers align with the university's mission for preparing you for your dream career or putting you on the path to an advanced degree. Answers also highlight the university's focus on career services, placement initiatives and counseling. If job placement is a priority at the school, companies are likely to be regular campus visitors, seeking the best and brightest to join their team after graduation. According to the Gallup-Purdue Index, graduates who had experiential and deep learning, such as a job/internship or long-term school project, and who were involved in extracurricular activities and organizations, had double the odds of being engaged at work and having a great sense of well-being.

\$2.3M vs. \$1.3M

LIFETIME EARNINGS POTENTIAL FOR COLLEGE BACHELOR'S DEGREE VS. HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

LUMINA FOUNDATION

"Our survey clearly indicated that it wasn't so much where you go to college as much as it is how you go to college — what you extract from the campus experience. It also was clear that students whom faculty had engaged and, in turn, took the initiative to engage with faculty were more likely to experience higher well-being and satisfaction in their work and life."

— MITCH DANIELS, PRESIDENT, PURDUE UNIVERSITY



AFFORDABILITY

- How much has your total Cost of Attendance (COA) risen in the past year?
- What is the average debt of your students who borrow?
- What is the average starting salary of graduates in the major in which I'm interested?
- Do you plan a tuition freeze? Do you have a guaranteed tuition rate for four years so I'll know the costs for my college career?
- What is the four-year graduation rate for my major? Average time to degree? How does the institution facilitate students graduating in four years?

Many colleges and universities could be a great educational fit for you, but financial fit and return on your investment are fundamental to college choice. It's critical to factor in total cost of attendance for four years — make sure that your short list of colleges clearly display all costs, including room and board, books and other expenses. Tuition is only one part of the college cost. Check if there are differential fees for the major in which you are interested. Using the Net Price Calculator (see below), consider the total you may have to borrow. A good rule of thumb is that total borrowing for your degree should not exceed your expected first-year salary after graduation. Time is money, both in college costs and delayed earning power. So the ability to graduate in four years is important. Also, make sure you research and meet deadlines for scholarship and need-based aid consideration. Missing deadlines and priority dates may mean you miss out on money.



INVEST WISELY

The College Board's Net Price Calculator helps you determine how to borrow responsibly and compare actual costs

<http://netpricecalculator.collegeboard.org>

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Purdue University, in partnership with Gallup and Lumina Foundation, released the inaugural Gallup-Purdue Index in May 2014. Find the full report at www.gallup.com

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