

## Finding a College that “Fits”

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Samantha Smith was a stand-out academically and socially in high school. To her parents’ surprise, she returned home after her first semester at a large out-of-state University 15 pounds lighter, depressed and demoralized, and with only a 2.8 GPA.

During an emotional conversation between Samantha and her parents, Samantha divulged that she had wanted to please them by attending their alma mater. She didn’t know just how overwhelmed and unimportant she would feel in a large university environment.

Samantha moved back home for the second semester of her freshman year. She attended one of the local community colleges while she researched Universities and researched herself. For her sophomore year, Samantha transferred to a small liberal arts college in the mid west where she felt comfortable and valued.

Samantha says now that her big mistake was in giving greater consideration to her parents’ dreams and expectations than to her own. She had never considered a school other than her parents’ alma mater. She acknowledges that it would have saved time and considerable emotional anguish if she had known to explore colleges that matched her unique needs and interests.

Every potential college student would benefit from asking “What kind of college fits me?” To answer that question, students need to ask themselves some of these questions:

1. What do I prefer socially? To be involved in large groups with lots going on or in smaller groups with more restricted activities?
2. Do I react quickly in most situations or do I need to take quite a bit of time to think things through carefully?
3. Do I operate better with a lot of structure or with a minimum of structure?
4. Do I have a lot of restless energy or is my energy focused?
5. Am I an early adapter or do I resist change?
6. Do I need more personal attention or am I fine with a minimum of feed back?
7. Do I tend to be more competitive or collaborative?

Just as each person has a unique personality, so do colleges and universities.

When researching colleges and universities, here are some factors you should consider:

- Range of academic majors offered along with emphasis in your proposed major
- Extracurricular possibilities
- Amount of personal attention you’ll receive
- Student body
- Financing

Check out the following websites for helpful information in selecting colleges:

<http://www.careersandcolleges.com/cnc/infoColleges.do>

<http://search-college.edu-info.com>

<http://www.educationplanner.com/ugchannel/code/searches/srchCrit1.asp?sponsor=2859>

Once you have decided on a college that seems to fit the student, pay a visit to that college. If travel costs are an issue, ask for a dvd from the college admissions office. Talk to currently enrolled students and alumni.

Prospective college students and their parents will benefit from finding the college that best supports the student's emotional, learning, and social styles. As Samantha's situation illustrates, this college-student fit has a huge bearing on a young adult's sense of self-confidence and on their success in college and life.

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