

The National College Planning Summit

A Guide to Help Students Choose and Get Into Their Dream College – the Best College for Them.

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1. Can you tell us about the Princeton Review and the History of the College Guide?

- a. The Princeton Review was founded in 1981 to help students master the SAT, the ACT, SATSubject tests, AP tests & Graduate testing exams.
- b. It helps students master the tests and be savvy around the College Admissions Process.
- c. It helps families be fearless around Financial Aid.

2. How did you choose the 380 colleges out of all the four year colleges in the US?

- a. We based the narrative and 62 “Top 20 Rankings” 100 % from student surveys.
- b. We surveyed students about Academics and everything that effects their quality of life in the classroom and outside of the classroom.
 - i. Is the food good?
 - ii. Are the beds comfortable?
 - iii. What’s the social life like on campus?
 - iv. Are diverse kids interacting with others?
- c. Colleges That Create Futures was created because of the results of our annual survey of students and parents - “What are your college hopes and worries?”
“What do you consider the biggest benefit of earning a college degree?”
 - i. 51,000 answered “Greater potential for a better job and a secure income once they graduate.”
- d. Families are looking at college as an ROI– Return on Investment.
- e. 10 years ago, no one ever asked that question.

3. The first thing I noticed when I opened the book is that the 380 Colleges are not “ranked” in order of 1-380. Instead there are 62 different “Top 20 Lists.” Why is the book organized like that?

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- a. We don't believe in hierarchical ranking lists from 1 to 380. It doesn't do any good and is not valuable for the student.
- b. There are lots of different ranking lists based on student opinion. But we capped it to the Top 20 Schools and we have the flip side as well.
 - i. Our "party" list has the opposite "stone cold sober" list. (scotch & soda on one list - hold the scotch on the other)

4. Does the College Administration have input into the rankings?

- a. It all comes from the students –however, to get to the students we generally reach out to the University to get Princeton Review's message on that campus.
- b. The surveys are done online - many students used the Princeton Review when they were in High School and want to participate in the survey.

5. How do you choose the 380 schools?

- a. They are the top 14-15% academically.
- b. We are looking for schools that are doing exceptional work inside and outside the classroom and making a student be a fully educated person.
- c. We don't want to write just about the "Ivy League schools."
- d. We have a wide cross section of different schools throughout the country and what students are saying about each of those schools.
 - i. For example – Swarthmore was voted "Best Professors" category –these are accolades given by their students. The students rate their experience at their college and then we compare the answers of Swarthmore students with all the other 379 schools.
- e. There are different ways to evaluate schools. Here are some examples:
 - i. Vanderbilt was voted "Happiest Students." Students are happy with their academic experience and happy with their location in the center of Nashville.
 - ii. Most conservative - Thomas Aquinas College
 - iii. Clemson was a double winner. "Students Pack the Stadiums" and "Best Career Services."
 - 1. Clemson has exceptional Internship opportunities, both paid and unpaid.
 - 2. Students get to complement their academics in the classroom with outside the classroom work.
 - 3. At Clemson you can experience this from your Freshman year to your Senior year.
 - 4. Plus they have a massive network of active alumni - not only for first time careers but throughout your lifetime.
- f. When choosing a college, students & parents need to be thinking about a wide range of areas and priorities.

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- g. Another great example is “Greatest Financial Aid” – The top school was Princeton.
 - i. One of the biggest mistakes families make is crossing off an expensive school based on sticker price because they think it is too expensive.
 - ii. Students think, “I’ll never get into that school and I’ll never be able to afford that school.” What they don’t know is that a school you think could be much too expensive could have a phenomenal Financial Aid Package.
 - iii. It is an understandable but flawed approach when thinking about how to approach College Admissions.
 - iv. Schools with an expensive sticker price also give out a great deal of Financial Aid in the form of Grants & Scholarships that make it actually affordable for the average student.
 - v. Some of these schools happen to be very competitive; only 6-7% of students were accepted into Princeton - but once you’re in, they meet your need 100 percent.
- h. Other categories are: Best Campus Food; Students Most Engaged in Community Service.

6. What is the difference between College Ratings vs College Rankings?

- a. There are 9 different ratings that we generate for each school in the book.
 - i. We don’t do hierarchical ranking lists, we do 62 “Top 20” rankings.
 - ii. Not every one of the schools in the Best 380 will appear on every ranking list - some of them don’t appear on any list.
- b. There is a full narrative profile on each school, based on the student opinion, but we do generate a ratings score for each of the schools in the book.
- c. Here are some of the ratings:
 - i. Admissions selectivity rating (this information comes from the college itself)
 - ii. Financial aid rating
 - iii. Professor’s interesting rating
 - iv. Professor’s accessible rating
 - v. Students rate their experience and we’ll generate that for each school and you can compare the ratings from school to school.

7. Do college administrators have anything to do with the ratings?

- a. The majority of ratings are student opinion, however, student admission selectivity is not.
 - 1. It is based on the competitiveness of the incoming class.
 - 2. Mean SAT or ACT scores.
 - 3. Graduating from the top 10, 25 or 50 % of your high school class.

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4. Quantitative data is supplied by school administrators. Some of the quantitative scores are from the Common Data Set.

8. Let's talk about Financial Aid and the cost of college. What is the cost of college today?

- a. The Cost of Attendance includes: Tuition, Room & Board, Fees, Books
 - i. The average cost for 1 year at a Public University is \$18,000.
 - ii. The average cost for 1 year at a Private University is \$41,000.
 - iii. Many schools have an expensive sticker price but offer Financial Aid to students who perform well in High School.

9. How do we determine –“Is college worth it?”

- a. We've been hearing this question more in the last 2 years than over the last 20 years. Tuition has increased 2-3 times the rate of inflation every year. I don't think it is a good idea to avoid college because of the expense. Here is what we say.
 - i. People with college degrees will earn, at minimum, one million dollars more than those people that do not have a degree.
 - ii. They are better employed & have better rates of employment.
 - iii. They are more nimble in the amount of careers they can move into.
 - iv. That is powerful – Students need to make sure they are choosing the college for the right reason and return on investment.

10. Standardized Tests - How important are they?

- a. Standardized Tests are the second most important thing for the majority of the 4000 colleges.
 - i. The first is always your High School GPA and challenging yourself in High School. (AP courses, etc.)
 1. What were the opportunities you had to challenge yourself in High School and did you take advantage of them?
- b. 800 schools are “Test Optional” – students don't have to report scores for admissions. However, many of the optional schools will ask for SAT scores later to qualify for scholarships.

11. How is the SAT changing?

- a. The last time it changed was 10 years ago.
- b. The new SAT will have a maximum score of 1600.
 - i. The Writing section is optional.
 - ii. It is going from 5 answer choices to 4.

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- iii. Simplifying the vocabulary - many of them will be content based rather than memorization.
- c. The SAT is no longer the most popular standardized test.
 - i. The ACT is more popular than the SAT.
 - ii. The new SAT is becoming more like the ACT and feels more like a high school exam.

12. Should students be preparing for the SAT?

- a. Yes, the last current SAT test is Jan 2016. First new SAT will be in March 2016.
- b. Princeton Review is already teaching for the new SAT.

13. What other information in the book can the students use to help them with their college list?

- a. Each school has a 2 page profile: Academics; Student Body; Campus Life; Student Quotes. On the side bars you can find the Mean SAT and GPA, and also “Other Students who considered this school (School A) also considered these Schools (Schools B, C & D)”
 - i. This helps you widen your lens and identify the college culture.

14. What about visiting the school in person?

- a. Visiting is very important - When you're visiting the campus, your job is to be as vigilant as possible and talk to as many people as possible - current students, administration & faculty.
- b. Do your homework before you get on campus!
 - i. Research Academics.
 - ii. Campus Culture.
 - iii. Financial Aid - What are the real college costs?
 - iv. Career Services.
 - 1. If you are on campus and the Career Center is not being talked about on the tour, you need to ask about the resources they have.
 - 2. Students need to know about career services before they decide to attend that school.
- c. Another resource students can use is the “200 Colleges That Pay You Back.”
 - i. This lists the top 200 schools that are making it affordable for students.
 - ii. These schools are making it affordable - average student loan debt for public and private schools is \$29,000.

15. Are there other schools not in the book that are also good schools?

- a. Absolutely! www.princetonreview.com has student survey information for another 400 schools and data on over 2,000 schools.

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16. Let's talk about Colleges That Create Futures - how did you decide to address this subject?

- a. Families want to know the ROI (Return on Investment) for college.
- b. They are willing to make the sacrifice but need to know that the sacrifice is going to pay off.
- c. This book identifies what else these schools are doing, besides academics, to help their students.
 - i. What is the career center like?
 - ii. What distinctive programs can I find at this college that I can't find at other schools?

17. We hear so much that all the jobs are in the STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) - Are there Liberal Arts colleges in this book or programs for Liberal Arts majors?

- a. Yes, the majority of students are Liberal Arts majors and the most popular major is still Psychology.
- b. Social Science majors do many things well.
 - i. They are exceptional writers.
 - ii. They work well collaboratively.
 - iii. They are likely to be good speakers and presenters.
- c. Liberal Arts students have a distinct place in the workforce.
- d. What is really beneficial is out of the classroom experience - particularly if the internships are cooperative experiences.
- e. Students come in with real life experience - it gives students another perspective and can lead to an awesome job after graduation.
- f. At Princeton Review, we ask, "Are the schools providing those resources for students? Are they actively making career services and the resources part of my first year experience and not just during Senior year?"
- g. It is the school's responsibility to say, "Our job is to furnish these opportunities and make them accessible."
- h. The common denominator of these 50 schools is that they get the students working and experiencing life outside of the classroom starting in their Freshman year.
- i. We tried to focus on distinct programs in the book - they are not all uniform in the exact service they are providing.
 - i. For example - Hunter College has programs for student & faculty doing collaborative research. This opportunity does not exist at many schools.

18. I noticed that schools are not ranked in this book. Why not?

- a. We didn't want to create a hierarchical list.

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- b. The schools are all unique and different because of their offerings in those distinctive programs.
- c. It would be a disservice to create a 1 - 50 list.

19. How did you choose these schools?

- a. We started with a list of hundreds of schools and whittled down our list.
- b. It is based on our opinion as well as thousands of student surveys.
- c. We also did over 200 interviews with faculty, administration and recent alumni talking about their experience and how that propelled them into their own career.
- d. We profile each distinctive program.
 - i. For example -College of Charleston –has exceptional outside of the classroom experience. They are "mining" their home city for student opportunities and they have a massive alumni network.

20. Should I be looking at both books as well as www.princetonreview.com?

- a. That's a great way to start crafting your college list.
- b. As you do more research, you become more confident in the college process and more savvy about what is going on at that particular school.
- c. Our website is a great resource for Testing, Admissions and Financial Aid.
- d. You can follow Princeton Review on Twitter and Instagram.

21. Do you have any final thoughts for parents and students

- a. Students your job is to be awesome in High School. Do your best academically and perform well on the SAT/ACT & AP exams.
- b. Parents –Your job is to be fearless around Financial Aid!
- c. When Students and Parents come together – you will conquer the college process and it is going to be exciting!