

# getting started choosing an accredited institution



The United States offers an exciting variety of higher education institutions and there is one that's right for you.

There is no official ranking system for the 4,000+ colleges and universities in the U.S. When choosing a school, it is important to consider many factors, including size, location, price, academics, financial aid, and international student services. There are useful search engines below and professional EducationUSA advisers to help you 'find the right fit'.

#### COLLEGE SEARCH ENGINES:

[College Board](#)

[Peterson's Find-a-School Website](#)

[College Opportunities On-line \(COOL\)](#)

[Princeton Review](#)

[College View](#)

#### SEARCH BEYOND THE IVY LEAGUE – FIND THE RIGHT FIT FOR YOU

Don't confine yourself to the "Ivies". Investigate all options carefully to make sure you give yourself the best chance to find institutions that suit your needs and interests.

#### WHAT CAMPUS FEATURES AND OPPORTUNITIES ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU?

**TIP: Keep an open mind when using the search engines above to develop your list of 10-20 institutions.**

#### QUALITY:

U.S. colleges are known worldwide for the quality of their facilities, resources, and faculty. Accreditation systems ensure that institutions continue to maintain these standards. Learn more about institutional quality under [resources](#) or from EducationUSA.

#### CHOICE:

The U.S. education system features many types of institutions, academic and social environments, entry requirements, degree programs, and subjects in which you can specialize.

#### VALUE:

A U.S. degree offers excellent value for the money. A wide range of tuition fees and living costs, plus some financial help from colleges, make study in the United States affordable for hundreds of thousands of international students each year.

#### FLEXIBILITY:

U.S. universities and colleges offer flexibility in choice of courses, but more importantly there is also the option for students to move from one institution to another. Completing the first two years of a degree at one institution, usually a community college, and then moving to another, is very common.

*"I'd recommend to other students to not just to go for the Ivy League, because there's so much more that other universities can offer. My school was not equipped with the information and resources to assist me in applying and preparing to go abroad. This was only made possible with the support I received from EducationUSA/Fulbright." – JOEL SEMAKULA, EducationUSA UK student, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (August, 2008 – present)*



**IIE FUNDING FOR US STUDY ONLINE**  
[Links To External Financial Aid Resources](#)

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Financing your college education consists of four key elements, which are addressed under Lower Your Tuition Bill

– Funding for U.S. study. They are:

- Compiling Effective Applications
- Assessing Personal Funds
  - If students/families can pay \$15,000 or more per year, admission with partial aid is not difficult.

**KEEP IN MIND:** Talk to an EducationUSA adviser about the full range of opportunities that may be available to you.

- Identifying Sources of Financial Assistance
- Reducing Educational Costs

**TIP:** Find out about any opportunities to meet U.S. college representatives and have your questions answered, or use e-mail to correspond with college staff and students.

## THE APPLICATION PROCESS: A TIMETABLE AND CHECKLIST

Planning ahead will give you sufficient time to make successful applications to the colleges of your choice.

**12 TO 18 MONTHS PRIOR** to the academic year in which you hope to enroll, begin to consider, research, and do the following:

- What are your reasons for wanting to study in the United States?
- Which universities will meet your needs?
- Will you need financial assistance?
- Find out application and financial aid deadlines. This will affect when you take the standardized tests required for admission since test results must reach admissions offices no later than these deadlines. The tests should be taken in advance of submitting university application forms.
- Register to take standardized tests if required by the universities to which you are applying.
- Begin narrowing down your choices of schools to approximately 10 to 20 institutions.

**12 MONTHS PRIOR** to enrollment, complete the following (months indicated are estimates, based on fall enrollment):

### August

- Contact universities for application and financial aid forms and catalogs.
- Obtain test registration forms or register on the web to take the TOEFL, the ACT, and SAT I and SAT II, if necessary.



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## September–December

- Continue narrowing down your choice of schools. While some students apply to more, 5 to 10 well-researched choices are sufficient.
- Request official transcripts of your academic performance from your school(s).
- Request letters of recommendation from your teachers/professors.
- Submit completed application forms (for admission as well as financial aid, if available).
- Double check that transcripts and references have been sent.
- Take the necessary admissions tests.

## January–April

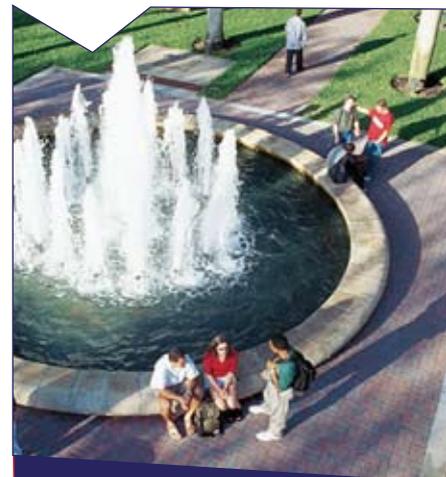
- University application deadlines must be met; note that these are for regular admission – early admission deadlines will be sooner.

## April–June

- Letters of acceptance or rejection arrive. Decide which university to attend, notify the admissions office of your decision, complete and return any forms they require.
- Send letters of regret to those universities you turn down.
- Organize finances: arrange to transfer funds to a U.S. bank; make sure you have funds for travel and expenses on arrival.
- Finalize arrangements for housing and medical insurance with your university.

## June–August

- Use information from your Form I-20 or DS-2019 to fill out the SEVIS Form I-901 and pay the \$200 required SEVIS fee (see [SEVIS information](#) for description of SEVIS form and fee).
- Upon receipt of your I-20 and SEVIS I-901 payment receipt, apply to your nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for a visa. This should be as far in advance of your departure date as possible (see [Visas](#)).
- Make travel arrangements.
- Contact the international student office at your university with details of your arrival plans, and confirm details of any orientation for new students held by the university.



## GETTING READY TO GO

Once you know that you are going to study in the United States, you will probably have many questions about visas, accommodation, health insurance, banking, how to study, and other "predeparture" information. See '[Predeparture Information](#)' and contact your EducationUSA adviser.

Most EducationUSA advising centers conduct predeparture orientation presentations in the summer, and some may also offer sessions mid-year. Contact your [nearest center](#) for their schedule and to reserve space for these popular events.



EducationUSA advisers in 170 countries provide accurate, unbiased information about all accredited U.S. higher education institutions. Find your EducationUSA center at: [www.educationUSA.state.gov/centers](http://www.educationUSA.state.gov/centers).

