

# College Comparisons, Part 1

**SUBMITTED BY:** Kathryn McGinn

**SUBJECT(S):** Career Development

**GRADE LEVEL(S):** 9, 10, 11, 12

## ≡ OVERVIEW:

Students will read an article about how college rankings are formulated and consider what role college rank will play in their own decision-making processes. Students will research public and private universities and colleges and make comparisons.

## ≡ NBEA STANDARD(S):

- Career Development, VI. Lifelong Learning

## ≡ RELATED ARTICLES:

- [“Zina Kumok’s Guide to Smart Student-loan Liftoff”](#)
- [“Who Knew the Job of a Prosecutor Looks Nothing Like “Law & Order?””](#)
- [“Three Critical Steps to Help You Choose a College”](#)
- [“The Search Is On: How to Pick the Right College”](#)
- [“The Rising Costs of a U.S. College Education”](#)
- [“The College Investment: Will It Pay Off?”](#)
- [“One House, Three Seniors and Lots of College Essays”](#)
- [“Is It Time to Take a Second Look at Community College?”](#)
- [“Graduates Define Success”](#)
- [“College Students Going Hungry? Sara Goldrick-Rab Shares This and Other Campus Realities”](#)
- [“College Admission: Will the Summer Program Help You?”](#)

- “Career Spotlight: Studying to Be a Veterinary Technician”
- “Career Spotlight: Motion Capture Is an Industry on the Move”
- “Anthony David Williams Was President of His College Freshman Class — Why Did He Transfer?”
- “Admission Experts Share 7 Tips for College Applicants”
- “A Recent High School Grad Reflects on the Clamor Over College Admissions”
- “A Massive College Admissions Cheating Scandal Gets People Talking”
- “A Gap Year Could Be Your Path to Making Smarter Decisions”
- “‘Creating a Fair Playing Field’: What’s Behind the SAT Redesign”

### **Common Core Standard(s):**

- ELA CCR 7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- ELA CCR 8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
- ELA CCR Reading 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- ELA CCR Reading 10: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.
- EL CCR Speaking and Listening 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- ELA CCR Speaking and Listening 4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

### **Objectives/Purposes:**

- Students will read and analyze an article.
- Students will understand the differences between public and private universities and colleges and two- and four-year colleges.
- Students will think about their future plans.

### **Knowledge@Wharton Article:**

- “An Unbiased Way to Rank Schools: Some Changes in the Lineup”

### Other Resources/Materials:

- College Research Chart ([Handout A](#))
- College guidebooks and/or access to the Internet (I was able to check out a big stack of college guidebooks from the library: they were a couple years outdated, but still recent enough to serve as useful resources. If your library doesn't have these guidebooks, perhaps borrow them from your school guidance/college counselors.)

### Activities:

1. Hand out “An Unbiased Way...” and read aloud. Discuss the following questions:

- How do organizations such as *U.S. News and World Report* calculate college rank? On which criteria do they focus?
- How do Metrick and his colleagues calculate college rank? Why do they believe their method of ranking is more accurate?
- How big a role will college rank play in your decision making process?

(10 mins)

2. Explain that today we're going to begin thinking about how to choose a college. One of the first steps to choosing a college is understanding what types of colleges/universities exist. Share these basic definitions (from [education.com](http://education.com)):

### Four-year Institutions

A four-year institution is a postsecondary institution that offers at least a bachelor's degree upon successful completion of established graduation requirements. Most commonly, four-year institutions in the United States are colleges and universities that offer undergraduate programs.

### Community College

A Community College is the traditional term for a two-year post-secondary academic institution. Community colleges typically offer two-year programs that culminate in a certificate or an associate's degree. Alternatively, community college programs can help students work toward the completion of a bachelor's degree or similar four-year post-secondary academic institution.

### **Public Institution**

Educational institution that receives majority of funding from tax dollars and is governed by elected or appointed board or council who control programs and activities. In the case of state-supported colleges and universities, students who live in the same state pay much lower tuition than those who attend from other states.

### **Private School or Institution**

Independent school supported by private funds and not controlled by public officials. IDEA regulations require that a child with a disability who is placed in or referred to a private school or facility by a public agency is provided with special education and related services in accordance with an IEP and at no cost to the parents.

### **University**

Institution for higher learning with teaching and research facilities constituting graduate school and professional schools that award master's degrees and doctorates and an undergraduate division that awards bachelor's degrees. A university may exist without having any college connected with it, may consist of but 1 college, or it may comprise an assemblage of colleges established in any place.

### **College**

College is any post-secondary educational institution, including junior colleges and community colleges, that offers a general or liberal arts education. Traditionally, a college grants associate's, bachelor's, master's, doctor's, or first-professional degree. A college education in the United States is becoming increasingly more important for individuals to have career flexibility.

*(5 mins)*

3. Break students into groups of 2-3. Each group must research a different type of school:
  1. Two-year Institution
  2. Public University

3. Private University
4. Private College

Give students access to college guidebooks, and have them complete Handout A based on the choice of four schools that fit within their category.

Students should look for information as it relates to:

- Admissions Competitiveness
- Cost
- Size
- Housing
- Faculty
- Academic Programs
- Facilities
- Miscellaneous

After students have researched four schools, they should write a paragraph on the back of the handout, discussing what characteristics their four schools have in common. They should be prepared to share their findings with the class in the next lesson.

*(15 mins)*

### **Tying It All Together:**

Ask students to write about their future plans: do they want to attend college? Why/why not? What colleges are they interested in? If students are attending college next year, have them write about which college they chose and why. If students don't know what they want to do, have them brainstorm a list of questions that they have about college. Have students share with a peer and then share with the class.

*(10 mins)*

### **Practice Outside of the Classroom:**

- Use the Internet to research different colleges and start thinking about what does or does not appeal to you.

- Talk to college students or graduates whom you know and ask about their experiences in college. What do they see as pros/cons of college in their own lives?

### **What Worked and What I Would Do Differently:**

Students enjoyed the chance to look through the college guidebooks. For many, it was a new experience, as they have only researched colleges on the Internet. That said, if you have access to a computer lab, this activity could be done by visiting individual college websites, which may provide more detailed information. Though the purpose of this activity is to provide an overview, so the concise, consistent format of entries in the college guidebooks was particularly helpful.

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