

Upgrade Program- San Antonio Education Partnership

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Name of Key Area	Career & College Exploration
Title	Selecting the Right College
Goal	The goal of this worksheet is to help individuals make an informed choice on the college that is best suited for them.
Advisor & Date	Micaela Rios, Spring 2019

With so many colleges and options available, how do you decide which college is the best fit for you?

To begin with, we suggest first assessing your situation. Take some time to answer the following questions.

- *How many credit hours do you have of college level coursework?*
- *What is your current GPA and completion rate?*
- *What was your last semester in college like?*
- *What do you want to study?*
- *How will you finance your education?*
- *What are your short term educational goals? Your long term educational goals?*
- *When will you take courses?*
- *Do you plan on attending full-time or part-time?*
- *Have you prepared your support system, employer, and colleagues?*
- *How soon do you want to re-enroll?*

Now that you have assessed your situation, it is time to start exploring the different options. Please know cafécollege or Upgrade is available to support you as you review this information. As you narrow down your list of options, consider these criteria:

1. **Academics**- Choose a college that offers that academic program you are looking for. This is likely one of the best criteria to start with because it will really help to filter your list. Once you know what you want to study, look at the “degree plan” to review what courses will be included in your program of study. Degree plans are often available on the college’s website.
2. **Affordability**- Look at the total cost of attendance, including tuition and fees, materials, travel costs, etc. Calculate what your total cost is. Most of this information should be available on your school’s website. Contacting an admissions counselor might also help.
3. **Accreditation**- Colleges are either regionally accredited or nationally accredited. Academic programs within each college have their own form of accreditation. Colleges can also be for profit or not-for-profit. Please keep in mind that credits from a nationally accredited university do not transfer to a regionally accredited schools. In Texas, the regional accreditation body is the Southern Association of Colleges and Universities.
4. **Flexibility**- Learn about which college offers the flexibility you are looking for, including transferring of credit, prior learning, online/hybrid/in person courses, accessible hours, etc.

We highly suggest visiting the campuses! This will help give you a better sense of which college might actually be a better fit for you. When visiting the campus make sure to get the business card of an admissions counselor. They want to help!

Want to take courses 100% online?

Unfortunately, there are no national search engine tools for online programs that is completely neutral. Many of these websites have “sponsored” search engines, meaning that a college or university has paid to have their organization advertised. This does not mean that there will not be great colleges listed on some of these websites, just please be aware and make an informed decision. In Texas, the State Higher Education Coordinating Board does have a search engine for all public universities who have online programs.

<http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/apps/programinventory/DESearchForm.cfm>

Locally, in the San Antonio area, these are schools that are regionally accredited and not for profit, and offer a brick and mortar location in town:

Private Universities

Trinity University

St. Mary’s University

Our Lady of the Lake University

University of the Incarnate Word- School of Professional Studies

Wayland Baptist University

IDEA-U: Southern New Hampshire University

Texas Lutheran University

Public Universities

University of Texas at San Antonio

Texas A&M University- San Antonio

University of Texas Health

Texas State University

University of Houston- Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management

Public Community Colleges

San Antonio College

St. Philip’s College

Northwest Vista College

Northeast Lake View College

Palo Alto College

Keep in mind that these do not include online programs, like say, Western Governor’s University. Also, San Antonio has other institutions that are for-profit. This means that these institutions may be more costly, and while not all for-profits are created equally, we simply recommend that you weigh the pros and cons for national and regional accreditation and for-profit versus not-for-profit.

If you want to research a school by major, start here: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search>.

Below, you will also find a comparison too as you explore your options. Colleges are not always a one size fit all. It’s like trying on shoes: find which one will fit your needs best. You will need to do some research. Remember you are welcomed to talk to your advisor.

College Comparison Checklist

	College 1	College 2	College 3
Name of College			
Location			
How much time will I spend commuting?			
What is the total cost of attendance? Include tuition, fees, materials, transportation, etc.			
What would I major in?			
Does the college offer courses during the times that I am available?			
Does the college have the support that I will need? I.e. learning center, tutoring hours, advising when I am available, childcare, etc.			
Does the college accept credit for work/life experience, DSST exams, CLEP exams/ portfolios/ etc?			
When are the application deadlines?			
When are the financial aid priority deadlines?			
How many of my previous credit hours will transfer?			
How long would it take to complete my degree?			

