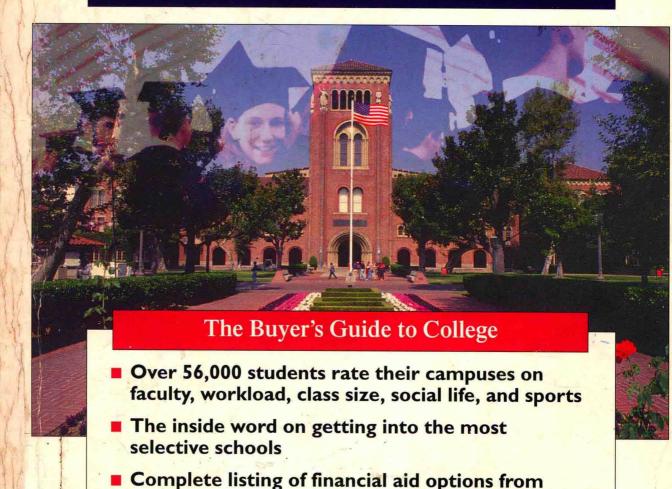
## THE PRINCETON REVIEW

STUDENT ADVANTAGE GUIDE TO

# THE BEST COLLEGES

1997 EDITION



Edward Custard, John Katzman, Tom Meltzer, and Zachary Knower

financial aid offices

### THE PRINCETON REVIEW

# STUDENT ADVANTAGE GUIDE TO THE BEST 310 COLLEGES

1997 EDITION

By Edward T. Custard John Katzman, Tom Meltzer, and Zachary Knower,

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# STUDENT ADVANTAGE GUIDE TO THE BEST 310 COLLEGES

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# **FOREWORD**

Every year, over two million high school graduates go to college. To make sure they end up at the *right* school, they spend several hundred million dollars on the admissions process. This money pays for countless admissions officers and counselors, a bunch of standardized tests (and preparation for them), and many books like—but not as good as—this one.

It's so expensive because most admissions professionals have a thing about being in control. As a group, colleges resist almost every attempt to standardize or otherwise simplify the process. Admissions officers want you to believe that every admissions decision that they render occurs within systems of weights, measures, and deliberations that are far too complex for you to comprehend. They shudder at the notion of having to respond to students and their parents in down-to-earth language that might reveal the arbitrary nature of a huge percentage of the admissions and denials that they issue during each cycle. That would be admitting that good luck and circumstance play a major part in many successful applications. So, in flight from public accountability, they make the process a lot more mysterious than it needs to be.

Even the most straightforward colleges hide the information you would want to know about the way they'll evaluate your application: What grades and SATs are they looking for? Do their reported SAT averages include minority students, athletes, and legacies (kids whose parents went to their school)? Exactly how much do extracurricular activities count? What percentage of the aid that they give out is loans and what percentage is in grants?

We couldn't get answers to these questions from many colleges. In fact, we couldn't get answers to any questions from some schools. Others who supplied this information to us for earlier editions of this guide have since decided that they never should have in the first place. After all, knowledge is power.

Colleges seem to have the time and money to create beautiful brochures (which generally show that all college classes are held under a tree on a beautiful day); why not just tell you what sort of students they're looking for, and what factors they'll use to consider your application?

Until the schools demystify the admissions process, this book is your best bet. It's not a phone book containing every fact about every college in the country. And it's not a memoir written by a few graduates in which they describe their favorite dining halls or professors. We've given you the facts you'll need to

apply to the few hundred best schools in the country. And enough information about them—which we gathered from hundreds of counselors and admissions officers and tens of thousands of students—to let you make a smart decision about going there.

One note: we don't talk a lot about majors. This is because most high school students really don't know what they want to major in—and the ones who do almost always change their minds by the beginning of junior year. Choosing a school by the reputation of a single department is often a terrible idea.

As complicated and difficult as the admissions process is, we think you'll love college itself—especially at the schools listed in this book.

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Good luck in your search.

—John Katzman

June 1996

# **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Ed owes an enormous debt to Edward T. Custard Sr., his father, an auto worker whose understanding of the importance of a college education is the main reason that his son is an author today. And special thanks to Jeanne Krier, whose public relations efforts on behalf of Best Colleges have helped it to become the best-seller of its kind.

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Special thanks to Richard Infield and the best programmer alive today, Irina Tabachnik. Their technical expertise and cheerful disposition made this book possible. And without Jefferson "Jake" Nichols none of the information on these pages would have made it out of our database and into this book.

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Some of the quantitative data in this book were compiled and supplied by Wintergreen/Orchard House, Inc. of New Orleans, Louisiana—a major college research and database publishing organization. We thank Don Beatty and Andrea Krasker at Wintergreen/Orchard House for their technical assistance and patience. For further information about Wintergreen/Orchard House's extensive college, financial aid, and vo-tech school databases, call 1-800-321-9479.

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# PART 1

# INTRODUCTION

MOITOUGGATHI



There was a void in the college guide market and we have filled it. No other book provides in-depth descriptions of schools and in-depth statistics about admissions, financial aid, and student body demographics. And, more important, no other college guide is based on the input of so many students.

More than 56,000 students at the 310 colleges included in this guide participated in the survey. Except at some extremely small schools (undergraduate enrollment below 1,000), we heard from at least 100 students on every one of the campuses described between these covers.

On our survey, we asked students to answer seventy multiple-choice questions on subjects ranging from the school's administration to their social lives and from the quality of food to the quality of teaching. We asked them to tell us what other schools they had applied to. Finally, we asked students for their comments.

The combination of the ratings and comments form the substance of our articles about the schools. We wanted you to hear from as many of your (potential) future classmates as possible, to get a real sense of how happy they are when they're in their classrooms and in their campus organizations; at their fraternity parties and at their student rallies; on their way to get extra help from a professor or on their way into town to blow off some steam; getting food from their meal plans; and getting the financial aid packages that determine whether they'll return for the following semester. The idea is, if you know about their responses in advance, you can figure out if you'd be happy at a school before you go there.

We also received completed surveys from over fifty independent college counselors. We asked them to recommend schools in their regions for inclusion in *Best Colleges*, and we used their recommendations to help formulate our list of the nation's best schools. We also asked for comments on these schools' academic departments, admissions and financial aid policies, and hospitality toward groups that fall into the "high risk" category regarding marginalization—that is, minorities and those with physical and learning disabilities. The counselors' comments on these subjects are incorporated into the text. Fresh counselor feedback is solicited annually.

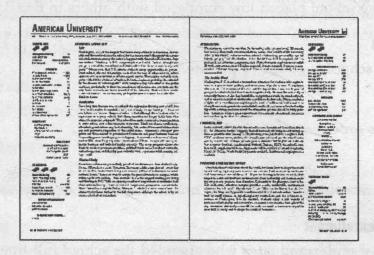
How did we get it done? The Princeton Review has offices in over fifty American cities. Every year over 60,000 students enroll in our SAT and graduate test preparation courses; those students are either on their way to college or have just graduated. Some of our teachers attend the featured schools; others have recently graduated and still live in the area; we even teach our courses on some of these campuses. Because of this, we already had in place the kind of army necessary to get a project this massive accomplished: All we had to do was mobilize it. Although some colleges didn't exactly welcome us with open arms, the students themselves were great, even at those schools where we showed up during finals week. Their insightful comments are what's most valuable about Best Colleges.

This book also contains several indexes. One is a compilation of entertaining quotations from students across the country that we just couldn't resist including. Another lists the top and bottom schools in various categories, based on the results of our student surveys. When you look at the bottom schools in a category, please remember that every school in this book is an excellent institution—that's why it's in a guide to the best colleges. A third index lists the names and business addresses of the independent college counselors who contributed to the creation of this book.

Finally, there is an Index of Programs for Students with Learning Disabilities that includes brief descriptions of the programs schools offer and the phone numbers of the offices to contact for information. If you are interested in programs for learning disabled students, we suggest you call the numbers provided because these programs vary widely from school to school.

# How This Book Is Organized

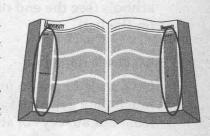
Each of the colleges and universities listed in this book has its own two-page spread. To make it easier to find information about the schools of your choice, we've used the same format for every school. Look at the sample pages below:



Each spread has nine major components. First, at the very top of the spread you will see the school's address, telephone and fax numbers for the admissions office, the telephone number for the financial aid office, and the school's web site and/or e-mail address. Second, there are two "sidebars" (the narrow columns on the outside of each page, which consist mainly of statistics) divided into the categories of Life, Academics, Admissions, and Financial Facts. Third, there are four headings in the main body text or "write-up" called Students Speak Out, Admissions, Financial Aid, and From the Admissions Office. Here's what each part contains:

#### The Sidebars

The sidebars contain various statistics culled either from our own surveys, from questionnaires sent to the schools, or from Wintergreen/Orchard House, Inc., a major college research and database publishing organization. Keep in mind that not every category will appear for every school, since in some cases the information is not reported or not applicable.



Here is what each heading tells you:

#### Quality of Life Rating

How happy students are with their lives outside the classroom. This rating is given on a scale of one to four arrows. One arrow is the equivalent of a grade of 60 to 69; two are equivalent to a grade of 70 to 79; three are equivalent to a grade of 80 to 89; and four are equivalent to a grade of 90 to 100. The ratings were determined using the results from our surveys. We weighed several factors, including students' overall happiness, the beauty, safety, and location of the campus, comfort of dorms, food quality, and ease in dealing with the administration. Note that even if a school's rating is in the low 60s, it does not mean that the quality of life is horrible—there are no "failing" schools. A low ranking just means that the school placed low compared with others in *Best 310 Colleges*.

#### Type of school

Whether the school is public or private.

#### Affiliation

Any religious order with which the school is affiliated.

#### **Environment**

Whether the campus is located in an urban, suburban, or rural setting.

#### FT undergrad enrollment

The number of undergraduates who attended the school full-time.

#### % male/% female through # countries represented

The demographic breakdown of the full-time undergraduate student body and what percent of the student body live on campus, belong to Greek organizations, spend their weekends on campus, and, finally, the number of countries represented by the student body.

#### What's Hot/What's Not

Summarizes the results of our survey. These lists show what the students we surveyed felt unusually strongly about, both positively and negatively, at their schools (see the end of the introduction for a more detailed explanation of items on the list).

#### **Academic Rating**

On a scale of one to four arrows, how hard students work at the school and how much they get back for their efforts. The ratings are determined based on results from our surveys of students and administrators. Factors weighed included how many hours students studied, how vigorously they did assigned readings and attended all classes, and the quality of students the school attracts; we also considered the student/teacher ratio, the students' assessments of their professors' abilities and helpfulness, and the students' assessment of the school's administration (in those areas where administrators directly affect the quality of education).

#### Calendar

The school's schedule of academic terms. A "semester" schedule has two long terms, usually starting in September and January. A "trimester" schedule has three terms, one usually before Christmas and two after. A "quarterly" schedule has four terms, which go by very quickly: the entire term, including exams, usually lasts only nine or ten weeks. A "4-1-4" schedule is like a semester schedule, but with a month-long term in between the fall and spring semesters. When a school's academic calendar doesn't match any of these traditional schedules we note that by saying "other." For schools that have "other" as their calendar it is best to call the admissions office for details.

#### Student/teacher ratio

The ratio of full-time faculty members to undergraduates.

#### % profs PhD/tenured

Percentage of professors who have a doctorate in their primary field of instruction and the percentage of professors who have been tenured at the institution.

#### **Profs interesting**

The average of the answers given in our survey in response to the question, "In general, how good are your instructors as teachers?"

#### Profs accessible

The average of the answers given in our survey in response to the question, "In general, how accessible are your instructors outside the classroom?"

#### Hours of study per day

The average number of hours studied per day outside of class as reported by students in our survey.

#### Most popular majors

The three most popular majors at the school.

#### % grads who pursue

The percentage of graduates who continue their education in law, business, medicine, or other graduate studies within a year of receiving their bachelor's degrees.

#### **Admissions Rating**

How competitive admission is at the school, on a scale of one to four arrows. This rating is determined by several factors, including the class rank of entering freshmen, test scores, and percentage of applicants accepted. By incorporating