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## Your Values Rank #1 in the College Search

Best toaster! Best scooter! Best college? Wait a minute.... Can you really rank colleges? How is the actual classroom experience or the faculty/student mentoring relationship evaluated? How is the growth of students from first year to commencement measured? These are important questions but in many rankings systems, these intangible but incredibly important factors are not considered.

This month the big dog of rankings was published again. Many schools, CTCL-member schools included, are highlighting their new positions. After all, even when a school believes that its value is difficult to quantify in rankings, it's hard not to become invested in something our culture has decided carries great weight. Still, since 1995, CTCL-member Reed College has opted out of the biggest rankings. [Here's why.](#)

I hope that you see any rankings list or guide book, including Colleges That Change Lives, as one tool of many in the college search. Dig deeper. Ask hard questions that reflect your (or your student's) needs and interests. See for yourself.

Don't let someone else's values run YOUR college search.

**Maria Furtado**  
*Executive Director, Colleges That Change Lives*

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### Three Important Elements of Fit

We tend to think that "more is better," but with 4,000+ colleges and universities in the U.S. alone, creating a short list of colleges to consider or -- eventually -- one to attend can be challenging!

College counselors and admission officers agree that students should look for schools that are a good "fit" for the students. Consider looking at a student's "fit" in three ways.

#### **Academic Fit**

This is more than evaluating the likelihood of



admission based on previous academic performance. A good academic fit takes into consideration the intended areas of study, preferences for teaching/learning styles, academic advising, career counseling, and the opportunities to build skills and gain experiences, even beyond the classroom (research or study abroad, for example).

### **Social Fit**

As a "home away from home," college should be a comfortable place to live, learn, work, and play for four years. What works well for one student may not for another, so consider factors like distance from home, campus size, extracurricular activities, dorm life, and even the dining options as part of the fit.

### **Financial Fit**

To understand and evaluate financial fit, students and their families should determine together how much they are able and willing to pay for a college education. Use each school's [net price calculator](#) to estimate the school's actual cost. Determine how important financial aid will be and research merit scholarship opportunities. Don't make decision to apply or not based on the "sticker price" alone. Equally, don't leave the discussion about how much cost is too much cost until the end of the process.

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## **Test Your Knowledge: College Trivia**

Which college marks the end of orientation and welcomes the new class with [Black Cat Week](#) -- a longstanding tradition of campus activities including a bonfire, field day, class competitions, and dance?

What university is the only one to offer a Ph.D. in [holocaust history and genocide](#) and undergraduate studies where students gain a sophisticated understanding of genocide, mass atrocities, crimes against humanity, and their prevention?

Which class will win the 120-year-old campus tradition known as [The Pull](#)?

What campus has a [50-year connection with Tokyo International University](#) and hosts more than 100 student exchanges with Asia each year?



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