

A guidebook that goes beyond the “*brand-name*” institutions,

Colleges of Distinction

reveals the colleges and universities that utilize key characteristics to provide an environment that will challenge students and help them succeed throughout their undergraduate experience and the rest of their lives.

While each college offers unique experiences, Colleges of Distinction share crucial characteristics, including:

- Bright and motivated students
- Engaging classrooms that provide an atmosphere to learn and grow
- Vibrant campuses and communities
- Well-rounded, successful citizens who are active in their communities

Each college included in the Guidebook was selected based on four criteria created by a panel of high school college counselors, college admission professionals and college administrators.

Going beyond the typical criteria utilized to develop popular college rankings, Colleges of Distinction evaluates a student’s entire undergraduate experience.

The Four Key Areas of Distinction

Engaged Students	Great Teaching	Vibrant Communities	Successful Outcomes
While GPAs and board scores are important, Colleges of Distinction look for students who will be engaged both in and out of the classroom.	Professors who teach at Colleges of Distinction are committed to seeing students succeed. They are experts in their fields and are dedicated to teaching by challenging their students.	Colleges of Distinction provide an exciting living and learning environment both on and off campus. They offer clubs and organizations to satisfy every interest, plenty of cultural and social opportunities, and avenues for leadership, character, and spiritual development.	Colleges of Distinction have a long record of graduating satisfied, productive alumni, who go on to make their mark in many fields including business, medicine, law, education, and public service.

The first edition of *Colleges of Distinction* includes more than 240 colleges and universities across the country!

Each school receives a two-page profile in *Colleges of Distinction* containing background and contact information, the school’s unique approach to the four criteria, and fast facts, including location, student and faculty profiles, and athletic and academic programs.

Focusing on 4 Distinctions

Engaged Students

What are “engaged students”?

Engaged students are encouraged to make the most of their entire educational experiences. What student enjoys endless memorization, boring lecture halls, and constant standardized testing?

Instead, students at a College of Distinction are empowered. To talk. To write. To think. To debate. To explore the world through study abroad. To test-drive careers with internships. To work on community service projects. To design their own research.

In short, they have every opportunity to take an active part in their learning.

Great Teaching

What is “great teaching”?

It’s getting to really know students by name and working to engage each one to the fullest. Great teaching is also about developing new and exciting academic programs, learning centers, and other cutting-edge educational opportunities.

These colleges encourage an atmosphere of exciting thought and action, led by professors who care about helping students learn to think for themselves. At the Colleges of Distinction, academic innovation goes hand-in-hand with personalized learning.

Vibrant Communities

What are “vibrant communities”?

A vibrant community doesn’t stop when classes conclude. Whether a student wants to build, dance, plan, explore, or just play ball, these schools offer activities and events that help students continue learning after the books are closed.

Most of these schools are highly residential, encouraging students to live on or near campus so that they can take advantage of all the school has to offer. That means great social opportunities and the chance to make lifelong friends.

Speakers, seminars, unique films and artistic events—you name it, these schools have it. Each is different; each has a unique focus. And each has a lot to offer.

Successful Outcomes

What are “successful outcomes”?

Employers and graduate schools love the alumni of the Colleges of Distinction. That’s because these schools produce students who can think, write, speak, and reason.

But success is more than just getting a job. The alumni of these schools are also good citizens and responsible family members. They take from their college years a sense of something bigger than themselves, something that makes them “successful” in every sense of the word.