



5 Things Students Wish They'd Known to Look for Before Choosing a College

1. Level of Accreditation

Accreditation is the process colleges and universities go through to validate their academic quality. A degree from a highly-accredited institution is more respected by employers, and other universities require certain levels of accreditation to transfer previously-earned credits.

So, what level of accreditation should you be looking for in a college? **Regionally-accredited** institutions have a higher level of accreditation than nationally-accredited institutions. On the degree program level, you should look for secondary accreditation (e.g. an ACBSP-accredited business program), which distinguishes a specific degree program.

Fact: JBU's Online Undergraduate program is regionally-accredited, and most of its majors also have secondary accreditation.

2. Presence of Hidden Fees

Don't be fooled by a "too-good-to-be-true" sticker price. Some institutions promise low tuition costs but charge enormous fees—course fees, technology fees, student success fees, graduation fees, etc. According to an article by [The New York Times](#), the average fee at four-year public colleges was almost \$1,700 in 2015-16. Make sure you do your research on fees so you won't be surprised by your bill.

Fact: JBU's Online Undergraduate program has zero hidden fees. You can accurately estimate your cost of tuition per semester by visiting our [tuition page](#).

3. Values Alignment

Whether private, public, faith-based, or non-religious, every university has a certain "DNA" that defines how they instruct and serve students. You can get a quality degree from any of these types of institutions, but you may find that the experience you get from a college that aligns with your values is more rewarding. Take some time to research the values of a university and how they're practiced.

Fact: JBU is a non-profit, private Christian university whose mission is to provide a Christ-centered education that prepares people to honor God and serve others by developing their intellectual, spiritual and professional lives.



4. Research University vs. Liberal Arts University

Your decision between attending a research university or liberal arts university will impact your college experience significantly. Here are a few differences:

Research Universities	Liberal Arts Universities
Academics	
Provide several focused degree options and more opportunities to participate in research	Provide a broader, well-rounded education in a student's area of interest
Class Sizes	
Class sizes tend to be larger, sometimes consisting of hundreds of students	Class sizes tend to be smaller
Faculty	
Faculty's primary focus is research, which means they spend less time teaching (often leaving that to graduate assistants)	Faculty devote most their time to teaching

So which one should you choose? There is no right answer that applies to everyone. You will want to decide what is important for your college experience.

Fact: John Brown University is a liberal arts college focused on teaching. There is approximately one faculty member for every 14 students in the online program.

5. Non-Traditional Credit Options

At some schools, you can receive credit for more than traditional classroom learning. Earning credit by examination may reduce your overall tuition cost and shorten your time to graduation. Colleges will sometimes offer credit for non-traditional learning experiences for anything from SCUBA certifications to military training. Take advantage of credit you may have already earned by checking to see if your prospective schools offer non-traditional credit options.

Fact: JBU's Online Undergraduate program offers credit for non-traditional learning including CLEP Exams, DSST Exams, military and police training, first aid and CPR certifications, and [more](#).