

Essay on a small college and a large university

[Sociology](#), [Population](#)



In the United States, majority of the students decide that they want to go to college right out of high school while some students delay a college education by taking a few years off. Nevertheless, the decision to apply and attend college is a big one. Most students consider a lot of factors while selecting their future college. Some of these factors include academics, selectivity, national rankings, cost of attendance, financial aid, location, private or public, student life, sports, student population, and school size. Based on my personal experience and interaction with other students, most students consider the size of the college as the significant determining factor in selecting a college.

The size of a college is mostly defined as the size of its student population. Typically, small colleges have a student body of less than 5000 students, large state universities have an enrollment of more than 25, 000 students, while medium-sized colleges have a student population that falls between 5000 - 25, 000 students. As there are two sides to everything, both large and small colleges have certain pros and cons. Thus, I will compare and contrast larger universities and small colleges based on my personal observations. As a tight-knit campus, a small college often offers a sense of belonging, support, and community. As a result, students usually meet the same people around campus and form connections easily. On the other hand, large universities provide ample opportunities to meet a large number of new and different people. Since small colleges have fewer students, there is less competition, students have more opportunity to shine, and become a big fish in a small pond. In comparison, thousands of students in a large university make the environment very competitive and stressful, and students are

usually like a small fish in a large pond.

Since academics is the fundamental focus in a school, both small colleges and large universities offer a variety of majors and degree programs.

However, large universities often offer a broad range of academic programs compared to a small college. Moreover, both small colleges and large universities have large lecture classes and small, discussion sections.

Generally, small colleges have small class sizes and a low faculty to student ratio, so students get more individualized attention from the professors. This also encourages increased one-on-one interaction between the students and the professors and a chance to form meaningful relationships between students and professors. On the other hand, large universities have larger classes at the undergraduate level, especially the introductory classes. The professors only lecture while the teaching assistants hold office hours and grade assignments and exams. Mostly, students have no direct contact with the professor and miss on the opportunity to make connections with the professors.

Moreover, since most large universities are research universities, faculty is usually concerned in publishing their research. In small colleges, the faculty is more focused on teaching which offers students a better opportunity to learn. In the same way, students at a small college often get better advising while in large universities, students might not get more time with the advisor due to the large number of students.

In terms of diversity, small colleges lack the cultural, social, and academic diversity of large universities. However, small colleges have clubs, organizations, extracurricular activities, and events, so students have the

opportunity to have an active campus life. But large universities offer a more diverse climate: athletics, Greek life, ethnic and cultural activities, vast alumni network, and big endowments. Also, due to large endowments, support from major corporations, and alumni donations, large universities have more funding than small colleges. Thus, compared to small colleges, large universities have state-of-the-art research facilities and well-stocked libraries. Furthermore, due to their location in large metropolises, large universities offer better cultural resources such as restaurants, coffee houses, cafés, bars, museums, and other attractions. This provides students more opportunities for professional, cultural, and social development. Similarly, school spirit and support for athletics is another major difference between small colleges and large universities. Most large universities, including the Big Ten schools, have NCAA Division I teams and their sporting events are broadcasted live on television. These sporting events are packed with excited fans that have big tailgating parties. On the other hand, small colleges lack the Division I tournaments but have athletic teams and sporting events which are well-attended by its student body.

Hence, attending college is a major life decision and depends on various factors, including the type of school, location, majors, diversity, academic support programs, cost, campus life, and the size of college. Mostly, potential students consider the size of the college as the main factor in choosing a college. There are advantages and disadvantages of both small colleges and large universities, but in the end, the decision whether a large university or a small college is better truly depends on a student's personality, personal preference, and career goals.