

What do students prioritize in college selection?

While some make a comfort zone pick, others make selection on practicality or passions

by May Paddor

As May 1 approaches, many seniors are finalizing their decisions for where they plan to attend school next year.

Choosing where to invest for their futures is no easy task.

Post-high School Counseling Department Chair James Conroy said, "There's no perfect school out there. When you apply to one school, you have to be able to say that you could be happy to get into that school and nothing else and be happy with going there."

NT graduate and freshman at University of California Santa Barbara Tia Rotolo agreed, "Nothing is going to be a perfect match. You have to make the experiences perfect for you. The school isn't going to do that without you putting in the effort."

Some students chose schools that let them step out of their comfort zone.

"I'm going to the University of Hawaii at Manoa next year. I chose it mainly because of the location, and also because I felt like I wanted to do something a little different from the norm," said senior Sophia Compton.

Some students chose schools based on practicality.

Senior and future freshman at the University of Minnesota Twin-Cities Matt Cacioppo said, "They have strong programs and opportunities to get off campus and into the wider world in Minneapolis. They are also very affordable, so being able to graduate without debt was a huge plus."



Students have different priorities. From right to left: Rhodes College, University of Nebraska, New York University

Other students chose schools based on their passions.

Senior and Boston University-bound Josephine Olson said, "I chose this school because they have one of the top lightweight rowing teams in the country along with great academics, in an amazing city that offers many opportunities."

And some students focused on the specific programs schools had to offer.

"I'm going to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to study computer engineering. Illinois was actually my top choice due to its great facilities for computer engineering," said senior John Crawford.

But students don't have to go into the college process knowing where they want to go.

"My college search was all over the country and even a school in Scotland too," said Olson. "I created a list of things I was looking for in a school, such as offering American Sign Language, being in a city, etc."

Regardless of whether students know where they want to go before the process, nothing is set in stone.

"Where you want to go to school, or even what kind of school, might change from the time you start your search to the end, and that's ok," said Cacioppo.

There are other pressures when considering the college students want to go to.

Conroy said, "People of affluence, like many of our families, have a list of the same 75-80% of schools that are [considered] acceptable."

"You hear about the schools your friends are going and they're all such good schools that I feel like there's kind of this expectation that you're going to go to a school that people know of," said Rotolo.

If students aren't happy, they can always transfer during freshman year. According to the post-high school counseling, the New Trier transfer rate for is around 30%.

Rotolo and Joe Borusheck, NT graduate and freshman at the University of Pungent Sound, are both planning to transfer next year.

Borusheck felt that New Trier's college process was less focused on personal happiness.

"They put a lot of emphasis on what schools you can and cannot get into. In that sense, they make it harder for you to go to a school that you are really interested in. At least that was my experience."

In terms of approaching the decision of where to go, students have to focus on what they're there for.

Rotolo said, "Think about what you're studying and what you're passionate about because that's what you're going to end up loving about your education. Be open to the whole process and the opportunities with it."

But students should also take into account what the environment of the school is like.

"[Don't] pick a school that is the best school you can get into, because it might not be the right place for you," said Borusheck. "Visit, sit in on classes, maybe spend a night there to understand the social aspect of the school, and make a decision based on what seemed like the best fit."

As for students who haven't started applications, there a couple of things to consider on how you want

to approach the process.

There are a lot of options when it comes to college and students need to be able to filter through them.

"Really look into all of your options. Even if you think you only want a certain type of school, research a few schools outside of that category. You never know when you will come across a school you love," said Olson.

But that doesn't mean that students should feel obligated to apply to every school they like.

"I would not recommend overloading themselves by applying to too many colleges. I've heard stories of students who applied to over twenty colleges, and at that point you're just giving yourself more work without getting any extra benefit," said Crawford.

As for the applications themselves, students need to find time to complete them all.

"Start writing your application essays over the summer. Doing any kind of work over break is hard, but senior year is stressful enough without it. And if you feel stressed out by college, spend a week away from the college search process," said Cacioppo.

Finally, students need to focus on what really matters.

"Don't let what your peers are doing stress you out about schools or distract you from what you really want to do," said Compton. "Just try and focus on yourself."

Regardless of whether students are planning on applying to college soon, they can't give up.

"Don't shoot yourself in the foot by getting lazy and not doing your work," said Borusheck. "Just getting by and getting decent grades shuts you off from a lot of colleges. Grades aren't everything though. If you're passionate about something, follow that passion and you'll end up where you need to be."

An expensive means of distraction

New Apple AirPods are a sneaky way to play music in class

by MacClement Guthrie

After Apple released their new wireless earbuds, AirPods, students have been utilizing their discrete design to listen to music during class.

"You can't see them under my hair so its really easy to wear them" said one female student on the condition of anonymity.

The Apple AirPods make it "easier and less complicated" than traditional techniques. Before AirPods, students would "thread their headphones through their shirt or a sleeve," she said.

"I think we might be seeing a spike because the AirPods seem very popular these days and they're easy to hide under hair" said Todd Maxman, a social studies teacher. He agreed "it's been a problem with earbuds for quite some time."

At \$160 for a pair, it's a rather expensive means of distraction. "I just don't think enough people have access to them yet for it to be more widespread" said the anonymous female student.

"I use them during class sometimes," said José Chavez, a senior. "Usually in classes where I'm not doing directed work" he said.

He explained that it's good for silent work times "when I'm doing busy work that doesn't require my ears or attention."

A male student who described his AirPods usage as "in at least half my classes" speaking on the condition of anonymity, concurred. "It's easier now, but kids have always done it." He said teachers either don't care or are "totally oblivious."

Andy Horne, health teacher, said that while the temptation is always there, it hasn't been an issue in his classroom. "Most [students] are respectful in taking them out of their ears when class starts," he said.

"Like any piece of technology, there is a temptation for distraction during class or perhaps doing homework," he continued.

He explained that given his background as a health teacher, he is more concerned about the "noise level from some of the students and their understanding of potential long-term hearing loss."

While Maxman called the behavior "discouraging" he was thankful that "a gentle reminder about being present in class is usually enough for me to get students to unplug."

"I think as a society we're having difficulty with the constant distractions of our phones," a problem he admits he is not immune to. Just as phones aren't conducive to a productive learning environment

"listening to your tunes while someone is trying to teach, to connect with you is an action that cannot be interpreted as anything but insulting and disrespectful."

He added, "students might not intend disrespect," and that "there's a range of intentions behind student's behavior in this area."

"Depending on the lesson, you don't miss much" said the anonymous male of how AirPods affect the learning experience.

Maxman explained that teachers often spend a significant amount of time and energy planning lessons and that "placing barriers of any kind between authentic interactions is going to limit understanding of the material, at a minimum, and put limits on connections with fellow human beings, which I think is a bigger problem."

While technology continues to change the educational landscape, it can create problems such as plagiarism, and in this case, facilitates "checking out" of class, according to the anonymous female.

"Teachers spend a lot of time thinking about the emotional state of students," said Maxman. "Perhaps this is an area where students can pay a little more attention to how their behavior impacts their teachers on an emotional level."

Web filtering prompts frustrations & questions

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"The sites did get unblocked, but it wasn't necessarily due to our actions. It's ultimately something we don't have control over, but we do keep trying," said Yen.

The process of blocking and unblocking sites is more complicated than it seems. According to Yen, the technology department has frequent meetings with the Board of Education, and one of the talking points is web filtering.

In other words, the Board makes the decisions regarding what sites should be allowed on student Wi-Fi.

Chief Technology Officer Stephanie Helfand explained that the technology department considers several factors when adjusting their web filtering system.

"We look to our students, faculty, administrators, and staff to determine what sites and apps should or should not be available. These discussions encompass a variety of topics including internet safety, cyberbullying, a balance of internet access with the need to maintain an educational environment at school, and the modeling of a healthy, balanced life that is not dependent on screens, among other topics," said Helfand.

Williams explained that the web filtering software works in effect like an anti-virus program. The filter

continually updates to consider "new malicious and inappropriate sites" and configures the system to block this content.

"If necessary, the network security staff has the ability to make exception to these sites if the web filtering system presents a false positive," said Williams.

Sophomore Nick Crispino argued that the school gives students agency in many other ways, so there should be greater leeway in a digital context as well.

"New Trier gives us many freedoms that other schools do not have, such as the ability to move through the halls during free periods. Although there's the potential for distraction, I believe students should be tasked with learning responsibility, both in the classroom and out," said Crispino.

Ultimately, Helfand described the student's personal role in regulating themselves as responsible Internet users.

"We expect students to use technology for both academic and personal purposes when on campus. We know our students have unfiltered internet access across multiple devices on a personal level and a responsibility to exercise good judgment when engaging in these spaces," said Helfand.