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Choosing Your College

Clara M. Brown tells high school graduates how to pick a college in this reprint from the National Magazine of Home Economics Student Clubs

DECIDING whether or not to go to college is a very important matter, especially in these days when joining the WAC or the WAVES or the Marines, or working in a war job may seem to be the most patriotic thing to do.

Probably those who decide in favor of college—and many of you should—realize that you are likely to be able to make a greater contribution later on than you could now, because the world will need women with a college education and specialized training.

Take plenty of time to choose your college. There are many things you need to find out and many questions that should be answered before you make your decision.

Even if you have liked home economics in high school, you may not yet be sure that you want to specialize in it in college. If you are still uncertain, choose a college where you can take some home economics in the first year along with academic work and do some exploring.

Is it better to go away to school even if there is a good college in your home community? It is likely to cost less money if you can live at home while attending college, and for many students that may be very important. But in most schools there are opportunities to earn part of your expenses if you need to do so.

Many girls need to get away from home for at least a year or two to prove to themselves that they can learn to live with people and to make their own decisions. Most well-run college dormitories provide an experience in group living which some girls need to have.

Is it better to go to a coeducational or to a woman's college? Life may be somewhat less upset for the duration of the war in the woman's college, since in many coeducational colleges practically every man left on the campus is in uniform and under military orders. But the war will end in a couple of years more, we hope; so do not let the present situation assume too much importance; and anyway, comparative peace and quiet is probably the last thing you are looking for in college.

Is it better to go to a small college or to a large university? That depends on the kind of person you are and your future plans. If you are not very sure of yourself and need a little more time to grow up, the small college may be the better choice, because you are not so likely to get lost in the shuffle.

If you are able to stand on your own feet and have a professional goal which cannot be attained through the offerings of the small college, you should probably consider enrolling in the larger institution. If you decide to go to a small college for the first year or two and then transfer, make sure you can do so without serious loss of credits.

Find out as much as you can about the kinds of opportunities there are in the world today for young women with a home economics education and, if possible, the new kinds of work that are likely to be open after the war.

If you decide to be a teacher, you will also need to consider whether you want to be able to teach in a vocational department. Many colleges prepare students to teach only general homemaking, and they must take additional work elsewhere to obtain the vocational certificate.

If you decide to be a dietitian, you will also need to consider whether you will be eligible for an internship in a good hospital when you graduate. The college must be on the approved list of the American Dietetic Association to insure your eligibility.

If you decide to prepare for some type of merchandising or advertising work, it will be almost necessary to go to a college in or near a large city, to one which has contacts with stores and other types of business in which you can gain the needed work experience.

If you are interested in welfare work, you should select a college in which you can take courses in social work as well as home economics and can get the needed field experience.

Perhaps you have no professional goal and want to take home economics to prepare to be an effective homemaker and mother, or you may even plan to go to college for only a year or two before you marry. If that is the case, you should be very careful to choose a college in which you will be permitted to enroll for courses in various aspects of home economics during the first two years and will not have to spend too much time taking courses whose chief value may be preparation for specialized professional courses which you'll never reach.

If I were choosing a college for this purpose, I think I should look for one in which I would have a chance to observe and help care for young children and a chance to study about house furnishing and management and home finance.

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