

Types of Colleges and Universities – Quick Facts

Public vs. Private, Non-Profit vs. For-Profit, and Accreditation

Public vs. Private Institutions

Public Institutions	Private Institutions
Funded by state governments, tuition and donor support; tuition is often lower due to state funding	Funded by endowments, tuition and donor support; tuition is often higher, but more financial aid available
Different tuition rates for in-state, out-of-state and international students	One tuition (excluding financial aid and scholarships) for everyone
Generally offer a wide range of majors with programs ranging from traditional liberal arts to highly specialized technical fields	Generally offer smaller range of majors; may emphasize the liberal arts or the fine arts, while others may focus on specific areas (i.e. engineering or computer science)
Larger class sizes; especially in lower division courses	Smaller class sizes, with easier access to professors
Non-profit only	May be non-profit or for-profit

Non-Profit vs. For-Profit Institutions

Non-profit and for-profit institutions often offer an equal level of education, but are run with different goals in mind.

For information on IL Senator Dick Durbin's campaign to caution the public about the risks of attending for-profit schools:

<https://www.durbin.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/durbin-calls-on-illinois-education-professionals-to-raise-the-alarm-on-for-profit-colleges>

Non-Profit Institutions	For Profit (Proprietary) Institutions
Funded by state governments, tuition and/or endowments. Operate independently of owner structure with a focus on providing quality education	Operate as a business that sells education as their product. Has owner and stakeholders with a goal of making money
Tend to offer more traditional education in science, the arts and humanities, math and engineering	Tend to offer more skills-based and vocational programs, but may also offer more traditional programs as well
Generally offers campus life with student activities	May not offer as many amenities if geared toward non-traditional working adults and offering online education

What is Accreditation and why is it Important?

To become accredited, a school's faculty, resources, curriculum, and credibility are evaluated and a level of quality is assured. Look for schools whose accreditation agencies are backed by U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Visit <http://www.chea.org/> to find accredited institutions.

There are three types of accreditation: Regional, National and Programmatic.

- Regional accreditation is the highest standard of accreditation: Accredits the Institution and eases transfer.
- National Accreditation (faith-related or career-related institutions): Accredits the Institution.
- Programmatic Accreditation: Accredits specific programs, e.g., law, business, engineering, health professions.

Why is accreditation important?

- It assures academic quality, accountability, and encourages improvement in higher education.
- Regional accreditation eases of transfer of courses among colleges, universities and programs.
- Credits from non-accredited schools may not transfer to other schools.
- Institutions without accreditation cannot offer federal aid to students.
- Employers often require proof of accreditation when hiring or providing tuition assistance to employees.

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