

## Crop Conundrum: Solved

Imagine navigating through an intricate maze of corn that towers several feet over your head. Disoriented and confused, you attempt to organize the countless paths in your head, but only grow frustrated. At any one spot in the maze, there could be four different paths to choose from, and only one of them leads the way out. Choosing the correct path combines the use of knowledge and some cautious risk-taking, just like the search for my best-fit college. The sheer number of factors to take into account during college selection can overwhelm any prospective student, especially the average student who is considering several different colleges. To simplify my selection process, I have narrowed my search down to merely two schools, University of Wisconsin-Madison and Northwestern University. Both schools possess great qualities and unique characteristics, but ultimately I must choose only one. Unquestionably, UW-Madison is by far superior to Northwestern due to its significantly lower tuition costs, much larger school and campus, exclusive yet not extremely restrictive selectivity, and broad range of health sciences majors offered at the school.

Significantly contributing to UW-Madison's excellence, cheaper tuition and ample campus size establish Madison as my ideal school. According to *WISCareers*, one year of tuition at Northwestern University costs an estimated \$36,756 (Northwestern University), substantially more expensive than Madison's \$8,020 tuition price (University of Wisconsin-Madison). When I combine tuition with room and board, book fees, and other estimated expenses, Northwestern basically costs nearly \$35,000 more than Madison costs for a single school year (Northwestern University). Although Northwestern's high price tag is most certainly linked to its quality private school status, my family and I simply cannot afford to pay such a sizable amount of money in the name of a school's reputation. To save myself from years of debt, I must find the best college for

the best price. Despite Madison's low cost of tuition, it still offers a massive school and campus that Northwestern cannot begin to compete with. In total, Madison enrolls 30,750 undergraduate students per year which greatly exceeds Northwestern's enrollment of 8,476 students (College QuickFinder: Compare). Furthermore, Madison covers 1050 acres (University of Wisconsin-Madison), more than four times the size of Northwestern's 250 acre campus (Northwestern University). Ideally, Madison's large school and campus will allow me to experience a totally new atmosphere. Having lived in a small town my entire life, I am seeking a college in a completely new environment where I can meet a variety of new people. Even though many students find a huge school like UW-Madison to be unfavorable since their education may not be as personal as at a smaller school like Northwestern, Madison maintains twenty-nine students in an average class size which is essentially about the same number of students in most of my high school classes. While Northwestern may hold a smaller average class size with 18 students (WISCareers), its small town-sized campus cannot offer me the drastically different surroundings Madison presents to me. UW-Madison's spacious campus in conjunction with its sharply cheaper tuition proves Madison a better college selection than Northwestern.

In addition to tuition cost and campus, elite yet feasible selectivity and wide ranging health sciences majors distinguish University of Wisconsin-Madison's dominance over Northwestern University. With an acceptance rate of less than 55%, both colleges are no doubt highly selective. The major difference between the schools' admissions difficulty lies in that Madison accepts 53% of applicants while Northwestern accepts an astonishingly limited 26% of applicants (College QuickFinder: Compare). Challenging but achievable, acceptance into Madison is a realistic goal and it will motivate me to study hard. On the other hand, Northwestern's acceptance rate is somewhat discouraging and I do not have a very strong chance

of acceptance into the school. Along with less restrictive selectivity than Northwestern, Madison also offers broad ranging health sciences majors, critical to having an edge on the competition in the health care field. With Madison's ten health sciences majors (University of Wisconsin-Madison) compared to Northwestern's six (Northwestern University), I have more freedom at UW than Northwestern to choose a health care major and switching my major in case I change my mind. Though I am still undecided to a certain degree as to which specific major I would like to pursue, the major I am most interested in is pharmaceutical sciences. While Madison offers this pharmacy program, Northwestern does not which completely rules it out as a college option should I definitely decide on a pharmacy major (University of Wisconsin-Madison). Clearly, UW-Madison dominates Northwestern as the best college for me on the basis of its exclusive but less limited selectivity and its wide assortment of health sciences majors offered.

As a result of its notably cheaper tuition, substantially larger campus and school, elite yet not too limited selectivity, and many varying health sciences majors, University of Wisconsin-Madison undeniably stands out over Northwestern University as my ideal college. With all expenses accounted for, Madison is priced about \$35,000 cheaper per year than Northwestern (Northwestern University), money that I can put into savings or use to pay off student loans. Plus, Madison's acceptance rate is twice that of Northwestern, all the while remaining a selective and reputable school (College QuickFinder: Compare). Unlike Northwestern's school and campus, UW-Madison's expansive campus, high student enrollment, and small average class sizes prove appealing to small-town students like me who wish to live in and experience new surroundings. On top of all else, Madison offers the pre-pharmacy major that I need to become a licensed pharmacist and since Northwestern does not offer this program, I must completely remove it from my list of potential colleges. Undoubtedly, Madison excels in all aspects I find to

be crucial for the college I will attend. Though I have made a decision between these two colleges, I must continue to learn about other colleges and opportunities in order to be confident with my final decision. Without careful organization of the information and consideration as to what is most important to me, I may become disoriented and overwhelmed with the numerous options I have. Regardless of the amount of paths I have to choose from, I must remember to stay calm, gather my thoughts, and devise a strategy to work my way through the corn maze of colleges. Maybe it is not as complicated as it seems.

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