


 The logo for SWE NEXT, with 'SWE' in blue and 'NEXT' in large, bold, blue and yellow letters.


How did you approach your college search and decide where to apply and ultimately attend?

Welcome to the SWEet Wisdom column!

The beginning of the school year likely marks the beginning of college applications and decisions for many of you. To best prepare you for this process, we've asked some experienced female engineers to offer some wisdom on the process. Best of luck to everyone as you begin this exciting journey! Happy reading!

Danielle Schroeder

M.S. in Civil Engineering, Drexel University
Associate Engineer, Pennoni

I approached the college search in two main steps. Late into my junior year, I decided that I wanted to study Civil Engineering, so my first step was to research schools that have that major. I also wanted to stay relatively local, so that also helped me to narrow down my search. After that, my second step was to use that curated list to schedule campus visits. I was able to get a better idea if a school would be a good fit for me through talking with the current students, visiting the dorms, and learning more about the unique programs each school offers. I ultimately choose to attend Drexel University for their elite co-op program, the professors and current students I met, and the vast opportunities that the school offered (like joining Drexel SWE).



Cynthia Reid

B.S. in Mechanical Engineering, Pennsylvania State University
Staff Engineer, Product Support Engineering, LORD Corporation

I had, unlike most of you, never heard of engineering before my Junior year in high school. Luckily, a physics teacher connected me with a summer program in engineering where I decided I would pursue some type of engineering. I am the third of five children. We were the first generation to attend college. We were not very well off, so we needed to go to state schools, and as locally as possible for the greatest affordability. I talked to my guidance department, and they advised that I look at University of Pittsburgh and Penn State since they both had large engineering schools and were fairly close by. At University of Pittsburgh, I would have had to attend a branch campus for two years, then transfer to the main campus, at which time I would have been one class behind in math. I also decided not to apply at Penn State Erie even though it was close, because their engineering programs were only the first two years, at the time. That left me with Penn State main, to which I applied and was accepted (thank goodness!) Their large engineering school was just what I needed to allow me the opportunity and the time to learn more about the different fields and pick the best one - MECHANICAL!!



Laney Casella

B.S. in Biomedical Engineering, University of Akron

Graduate Student in Biomedical Engineering, University of California, Davis

A good first place to start is to figure out what you want geographically. If you'd like to commute or stay close to home, that will give you a focused starting point. Then you can start searching for which school has the best program that aligns with your interests. Among those, you can start thinking about finances.

Private schools will have higher tuition than public schools, but there is always the possibility of financial aid and/or scholarships. If you aren't geographically limited, a good place to start is to look at the US News reports of top programs (in biomedical engineering, for example) in the country. Once you have your top schools picked out, check out the college or department you're most interested in. What kinds of opportunities does it offer? Are the current students involved in service projects, research, or industry internships? My final decision was based on finances and program opportunities, and I think that decision served me well!



Do you have a question for our women engineers at SWE? We'd love to hear from you! Send your questions to swenext@swe.org. We'll answer you, and your question may become a future SWEet Wisdom column!



130 East Randolph Street, Suite 3500

Chicago, IL 60601

www.swe.org | #BeThatEngineer