

DECISION MAKING

A College for Maria

This exercise focuses on personal decision making. Our personal resources include time, money, and skills that we use to satisfy our wants. We use our personal resources to purchase goods and services. Goods are things we can touch, such as cars, houses, computers, and cell phones. Services are activities such as rock concerts, education, movies, insurance, loans, vacations, and health care. Of course, we cannot have all the goods and services we want because of scarcity. But we can have more goods and services if we choose wisely. By carefully considering the costs and benefits of our decisions, we can improve our lives.



Maria Delgado will graduate from high school this spring. She plans to attend college, but she does not know which college to attend. She is using a decision-making model in order to make a better choice. Let's work through Maria's decision using the five-step decision-making model.

STEP 1: Define the Problem

Maria must recognize the problem. She knows all colleges and universities are not alike, and she must choose the one that is right for her. She plans to major in marketing.

STEP 2: List the Alternatives

Maria has found three main alternatives. State U is a big university with 30,000 students, and it offers both undergraduate and graduate programs. Many undergraduate classes are very large; some have more than 300 students. The tuition is reasonable. The business school and the marketing program are highly ranked nationally. State U is located 150 miles from Maria's hometown.

Local Community College is a two-year college only a few miles away from Maria's house. Its classes are smaller than State U's, averaging about 40 students. There are marketing classes. While some faculty members are outstanding, Maria has heard that most do not have Ph.D.s like they do at State U. The tuition for LCC is low, and if she decides on LCC, Maria could keep her part-time job.

Private College, which has only 3,000 students, is located 200 miles from Maria's hometown in a neighboring state. The classes are small, and the students get a lot of individual attention and help. The college offers marketing courses. Its admission standards are high, but Maria is an outstanding student and thinks she has a good chance of being accepted. Tuition is expensive. Private College gives scholarships and loans, but the cost would still be higher than at State U.

STEP 3: Identify Your Criteria

Your criteria are personal goals you feel are important. Every person has different criteria. Maria's most important criteria are these:

- Low-cost tuition because her family is not wealthy.
- High quality education, particularly in marketing.
- Small class size and personal attention.
- Close location to home because she feels she would miss her friends.

STEP 4: Evaluate Your Alternatives

Maria must now evaluate her alternatives against her criteria. She has decided to use the decision-making grid below. She will use a "+" and "-" system to evaluate each alternative. One plus sign is positive and two plus signs are even better-very positive. A minus sign is negative. Complete the grid before going to Step 5.

	CRITERIA			
ALTERNATIVES	Low Cost	Quality Programs	Personal Attention	Close to Home
State U				
Local Community College				
Private College				

STEP 5: Make a Decision

Maria decided to attend Local Community College for two years. Cost is very important to her. By attending the community college while working part-time, she might even be able to save some money. She felt the private college had the best program for her, but it is too expensive and too far from home. The community college had the most pluses. Low cost and closeness to home were very important to her, and the community college did best on these criteria.

Questions

1. Why is the decision-making model important?
2. What might be some additional criteria that Maria did not consider that you feel are important in choosing a college?
3. Do you agree with Maria? Why or why not?