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[*Frequently Asked Questions*](http://diycollegerankings.com/frequently-asked-questions-about-finding-a-college/)

**[What are residential colleges?](http://diycollegerankings.com/faqs/what-are-residential-colleges/)**

Depending on the university, residential colleges can mean simply themed housing or dorms set aside for specific majors to a division of the university that groups students academic activities and living needs in one location such as the colleges of Cambridge and Oxford.

[The Collegiate Way](http://collegiateway.org/) defines residential colleges as "an internal system of residential colleges: permanent, cross-sectional, faculty-led societies." Some institutions require all students to join a house or a college, others make it optional or limited to a select group of students such as honors colleges.

The key element for the more traditional residential colleges is that faculty members are key participants in residential life and students are not limited to specific major. At [Rice](http://students.rice.edu/students/Colleges.asp) and [Yale](http://admissions.yale.edu/residential-colleges) students are randomly assigned to residential colleges. [The University of California Santa Cruz](http://housing.ucsc.edu/colleges/index.html) , [Murray State University](http://www.murraystate.edu/campus/ResidentialColleges/index.aspx), and [Harvard](https://college.harvard.edu/student-residential-life/residential-life/upperclass) allow students to indicate a preference for a college after admitted.

Other examples of institutions that offer students the chance to participate in a variation of a residential college.

* [Northwestern](http://www.northwestern.edu/living/housing-options/res-colleges/index.html)
* [Cornell University](http://www.westcampushousesystem.cornell.edu/)
* [University of Virginia](http://www.virginia.edu/housing/rescollege.php)
* [University of Mississippi](http://studenthousing.olemiss.edu/communities/)
* [University of California at San Diego](http://admissions.ucsd.edu/colleges/)
* [Truman State University](http://catalog.truman.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=1&poid=146&returnto=4)

