

TOP 12

COLLEGE VISIT TIPS FROM THE PDS COLLEGE COUNSELING TEAM

1 **Agree beforehand on roles that parents/guardians and students will play during the visit.**

This dynamic will differ with each family. While parents or guardians might speak with financial aid representatives, students may spend time exploring the campus center or student union. Whatever works for your family is best, but this is something that should be discussed before you set foot on campus. And, remember that students should be talking to admissions representatives more than their parents or guardians.

If you're virtual: Discuss different sections of a college website that each family member can explore. For example, parents or guardians can explore financial aid and the career center to learn about internship opportunities and job or graduate school placement while the student explores the admission page of the website.

Get the full names of the admissions representatives with whom you speak.

This includes the name of the person giving your information session, something that many students overlook. This is helpful in case you want to follow up with questions, updates or a thank you note later. Along with this, you can always feel free to ask to speak with the admissions representative for PDS. This may not be possible; but, if it is, say hello and introduce yourself!

If you're virtual: The admission representative will likely share their contact information with you at some point during the presentation; if not, you can ask them for it via the chat feature during the Q&A portion.

3 **Always sign in.**

Many schools track visits to gauge students' interest in them. Depending on the school, your contact with the admissions office can make a difference in your admissions decision later.

If you're virtual: It is likely that you will not have to take an additional step to sign in during a virtual visit. Colleges and universities will use your registration information to track your attendance.

Talk to various people who work and study there: faculty, students and admissions reps, to name a few!

Know who to ask for what. An older admission representative probably will not know everything about the current social scene on campus and a tour guide will not be able to provide detailed admissions stats. Remember that your research into each college is best developed through interaction with a number of different sources.

If you're virtual: Every college website has a search feature on its homepage; use this to explore different departments and organizations and look for contact information for members of the campus community. To speak with students, you can reach out to the admission office to ask for a current student's contact information.

5 **Get your information from a variety of sources.**

Rather than dismissing a school simply because of something negative you may have read or heard, use that piece of information to guide future research. Don't ignore such comments; rather, let them drive some of the questions you ask while on campus so you can research and find out the truth for yourself. Similarly, try to resist letting a "bad" tour guide experience make you take a school off of your list before conducting future research.

If you're virtual: Email the admission representative for PDS (your college counselor can help you with this!) to clarify any misleading information you may have about the school. This is where speaking to a variety of people can help.

6 **Remember that classes and dorm rooms can vary a lot, even within the same school.**

If allowed, sit in on classes and explore residence halls — these are great ways to learn more about the campus and the groups who live there. Just be sure to get a sense of the range of housing and course options available at a school before you cast judgment.

If you're virtual: While not always the case, many schools now have virtual ways to sit in on classes and explore residence halls. Again, your best resource will be the school's admission office.

7 **If not all students live on campus, ask where they live and explore those areas.**

Check out the neighborhoods where most off-campus apartments are located and speak with students there.

If you're virtual: Ask any current students you come into contact with about the off-campus housing scene. This is one item where you may have to wait until you can visit the campus to get a full sense of the lay of the land.

8 **Pick up a copy of student newspapers, read bulletin boards and eat a meal in the dining hall.**

Find ways of getting a deeper understanding of the campus culture and student life there. Don't be shy to ask students in cafes about their experiences on campus, in and outside of the classroom.

If you're virtual: Follow colleges and universities that are of interest on social media! You will find that many student organizations have their own accounts that will highlight what they're doing and issues of importance to the community. Many admission offices also have helpful social media accounts, even teaming up with current students to highlight "a day in the life" on that campus.

Take some time to visit places on the campus of particular interest to you.

Visit the academic departments in which you are interested and talk to professors, if possible. Student musicians should visit the music department. Student-athletes should visit facilities and try to talk to the coach of the sport they would like to play. Interested in research? Visit a lab space.

If you're virtual: Search for specific departments, programs, clubs, etc. on the school's website and on social media.

Check out nearby points of interest such as towns, shopping centers and parks.

The area around a college can be filled with bookstores, cafes, galleries, museums and historical sites. These can be just as relevant to your college experience as those resources located on campus.

If you're virtual: College and admission office visit pages often have suggestions of things to do in the area. A simple web search for "what to do in X town" may also be useful.

Leave yourself lots of time.

You'll be in a new area, maybe navigating unfamiliar parking or public transit, finding different buildings, dealing with possible crowds and more. Reduce stress on the day of the visits by leaving a lot more time in the schedule than you think you need.

If you're virtual: Technical difficulties are always a possibility when attending virtual events. Logging in early is a good way to ensure that you don't miss anything.

At the end of the visit, reflect and record your thoughts.

Keep a record of each college visit. You may think you'll remember everything, but after visiting a few campuses, the details may run together. Budget time to record your thoughts after each visit and save them in a central place.

If you're virtual: When watching a virtual program, it is even easier to take notes about what you hear and your impressions. When questions arise, be sure to jot them down to ask later. Afterward, you can reflect on the program and see if your feelings about the school changed.



PRINCETON DAY SCHOOL
650 Great Road, Princeton, NJ 08540
609-924-6700 / pds.org / CEEB Code: 311265

Paul Stellato
Head of School

Christian Rhodes
Acting Head of Upper School

COLLEGE COUNSELING OFFICE

Sarah Graham
Director
sgraham@pds.org

Allison Anderson
Associate Director
aanderson@pds.org

Darling Cerna
Assistant Director
dcerna@pds.org

Ryan Jannos
Associate Director
rjannos@pds.org