

Campus Visit Tips

It is never too early to start looking for the “perfect” college for you; making a campus visit is probably the most important component of the college search process. It is probably the last component, as you can (and should) do a lot of the initial “leg work” without leaving your home and school.

Consider the factors that will ultimately make your decision—while a college on the beach sounds wonderful, the “real world” issues such as distance from home, size, cost, and field of study will probably be most important to you. Resources in your school counseling office and library can help you “narrow the field” by determining which meet the criteria you have established. Another means of learning more about different schools is by attending a college fair or the presentations of visiting college admission representatives.

As you might guess, all of this takes time. That’s why it is important to start evaluating schools, and yourself, early. Many students make the mistake of waiting until their senior year to really start thinking about what they are going to do after high school. For those who plan or hope to attend college, this may be too late, as many schools have specific admission requirements, early deadlines, or other prerequisites that students need to know about in order to be prepared to meet them. (Some issues, like academic preparation, are addressed as early as in your eighth grade year, when classes are selected for your freshman year—algebra and biology are college preparatory courses, general mathematics and general science are not.

Spending time your junior year learning more about yourself, what you want, and what schools meet your needs, should enable you to narrow your focus to three to five schools. Once these are identified, it will be time to actually make campus visits, and the summer before your senior year is the perfect time. Save your “college visit day” during your senior year for a second, confirming visit to your top-choice school.

One very important thing to be aware of is timing your visit; the absolute worst time to go is any time classes are not in session. Just imagine visiting your own high school on a day two weeks before school starts...the doors are unlocked, and the principal and secretaries are there, but there are no students, no teachers, no activities—it’s basically just a building. A college campus is no different—your impression of it may not be very valid if you visit on a Saturday, Sunday or during a college vacation time.

Finally, make sure to plan your campus visit. Simple showing upon campus for a visit is as impractical as a trip to the grocery store without a list. You may get most of the items you need, but you are certain to have forgotten something. Contacting the admissions office or the campus visit center prior to your trip will insure its success—the next page lists activities you might want to consider. HAVE FUN!

--Meet with an admissions officer.

- Verify admission requirements (tests and high school preparation).
- Discuss your chances for success.
- Obtain a school calendar and a catalog, if you don't already have them.
- Determine college costs.
- Ask about financial aid opportunities, as well as deadlines, forms required, etc.
- Meet with faculty in the academic area of interest to you.
- Ask questions about academic requirements/offerings.
- Attend a class to get an idea of typical size, teaching style, academic atmosphere.
- Ask about the placement record for graduates in the field you might study.
- Identify career planning services for undergraduates.
- Tour the campus. (Be sure to check out the dorms, dining hall, library, etc.)
- Talk to students about the general academic environment and the study commitment necessary for success.
- Find out what student activities (clubs, organizations, intramural, etc.) are available.
- Inquire about campus like and social activities.
- Investigate transportation options.