

COLLEGE TOURS AND VISITS

Students typically begin visiting colleges in the spring of their junior year. If you plan to travel with your family, check with your counselor to see what schools might be included on your itinerary. Even if a college is not on your list of choices, a tour of its campus can be worthwhile. Visiting a variety of colleges will help you develop a sense of the differences in atmosphere from one campus to another. You can get a feel for the flavor of a place by having a wider range of experiences for comparison. By beginning the visits early you will have a real context from which to approach college guidance during your senior year. Summer visits provide an opportunity to see colleges without the pressure and stress that school year visits entail. There are drawbacks to summer visits. The campus will not have the same population that is there during the regular academic year. Many colleges have summer sessions for adults, senior citizens, and high school students. Other colleges close down for the summer, and a tour can be a somber experience with few people on campus. By the fall seniors have a better idea of what they want in higher education and what types of schools seem more appropriate to their needs.

THE COLLEGE VISIT

Make an appointment by calling the admissions office. You do not need to speak with an admissions officer to make an appointment; the office secretary usually arranges visits.

WHEN YOU VISIT A CAMPUS

1. Take a tour — check facilities, including dormitories. Don't expect a college dorm to be like home. Check on social life and campus activities and facilities. What is the surrounding community like?
2. Talk to students, a very useful source of information about a college; but, remember that students' personal opinions must be considered with care. Don't judge a school solely by the one student tour guide. Meet with lots of other students.
3. Visit a class; talk with a faculty member if possible. If appropriate, meet with coaches.
4. Have a meal on campus. Check out different residence hall dining facilities. Visit the coffee shop, snack bar, or pub as a place to meet students.
5. Read the campus newspaper as a means of finding out what the issues are on the campus during your visit...check the bulletin boards in the student union or cafeteria.
6. ASK QUESTIONS!! Especially about academic courses and faculty. Read the college catalog before you visit so that you can ask meaningful questions. Good questions can impress the interviewer with the fact that you have already researched the college as an appropriate "match" for you.
7. The sunshine factor. Try not to let the weather affect your judgment, i.e., sun and rain.
8. Other campus exploration areas: what are the students like? How involved are they in academics? What is the stand on the three D's: drinking, drugs and dating? Are fraternities/sororities significant or necessary? What are the students' interests, backgrounds, goals? What do students do in their free time?
9. Ask about dining options (vegetarian, low calorie, kosher, etc.), dorms, activity centers, athletic facilities, health, personal counseling and career services, special student services (physical handicaps, learning disabled support systems, tutoring), computer access and whether all buildings are wired.

10. The soul of a college is the quality of its academic courses and faculty. Before you visit, read the catalog. Then when you get to campus check out the validity of what you have read. Examine academic pressure and work load. Attend a few classes. Would you be comfortable in that setting?

SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK COLLEGE STUDENTS

About the College:

- Has the college lived up to expectations?
- Has anything been a major disappointment?
- Was anything surprising to you?
- Is the evaluation in the subjective guides fair, accurate, and up-to-date?
- What is distinctive about the college? What are its strengths? Weaknesses?
- Are there any particular tensions on campus?
- How is the relationship with the local community?
- Does the college represent the type of diversity you are looking for?
- Is there anything special you should see before you leave?
- If you were to do it all over again, would you still choose this college?

About Housing

- What is the housing system?
- Is it quiet enough to study in the dorms?
- Which dorms are good places to live?
- Is housing guaranteed for any or all four years?
- Are freshman required to live on campus?
- Can students have cars on campus?

About Activities

- How difficult is it to make the - team? (Fill in your sport.)
- How do I get involved in the newspaper? Orchestra? Choral group? Radio station? Drama group? (Insert your special interest.)
- How can I get involved in intramural sports?
- What were some social or academic issues that concerned students last year? How did the administration react? What was the result?
- How easy is it to start your own activity?

About Academics and Faculty

- Are classes taught by professors or by teaching assistants?
- How many hours a week do students typically study?
- How easy is it for freshmen to get the classes they want? Sophomores?
- What is the course registration process?
- What happens if I want to drop a course?
- How large are freshman classes?
- Does class size vary based on year and/or subject?
- Is there good rapport with faculty? How accessible are the professors? Do they have office hours?

COLLEGE VISITS TO YOUR HIGH SCHOOL

Take advantage of college visits to Weston and other college fairs that are held in the Boston area. Many admissions representatives visit Weston each year. Check the calendar in the Guidance Office (or the web site) to find out when representatives from the colleges in which you are interested might be visiting.

When you are meeting with a representative. Remember these two things:

1. Ask questions to get something out of the meeting.
2. Do not take the meeting lightly - the representative you meet at the school may be a member of the admissions committee who reviews your folder for a decision.