

Things to do on a college visit

First, if at all possible, plan to visit while classes are in session. You'll get the best feel for the campus by seeing the school in full swing. And don't limit your college visit to the formal tour and information session. Spend some time on your own exploring campus. Here are some ideas:

- Speak with a professor or department chair and/or request a tour of department facilities and/or labs in an area of interest. Check out the department bulletin boards for displays of department research projects, internship or performance opportunities, etc. (You should call the admissions office ahead of time to find out how to request an appointment or special tour.)
- Sit in on a class. Most colleges have online schedules you can consult to find a lecture that interests you. Be a careful observer: Are students and the professor interacting? How engaged do the students seem? But also beware: sitting in on a class can sometimes be misleading since you are jumping into the class *in medias res* (you won't have all the background information; perhaps it's a "lecture" day as opposed to a "discussion" day).
- If you are eligible for special academic accommodations, schedule an appointment with Student Support Services to learn about available services and how to arrange accommodations
- Eat in the student union/center. Watch the students' interactions. Do students of different races interact, or is there segregation? Do students look happy and relaxed? Above all, can you see yourself eating with these students?
- Visit the bookstore.
- Walk through the library. Are there many students there? Are they working alone or in small groups? Are they working at all?
- Explore athletic facilities of interest and arrange a meeting with a coach.
- Explore the surrounding town.
- Try to visit a dorm. Are there separate dorms for freshmen? Are there sub-free dorms?
- Visit the campus Hillel or other religious life center.
- Visit the Multicultural Outreach Center.
- Ask for a business card from faculty and administrators who meet with you individually and write each one a thank you note. E-mail is fine.
- Finally, if you're serious about a school, ask the admissions office to arrange an overnight visit in a dorm. It's the best way to get a feel for what life at the school is really like.

Questions to ask on a college tour and beyond

You've travelled a long way to visit this school, so don't be shy! Explore the campus culture by asking your tour guide and other current students their opinions about the school. If something matters to you, it's worth asking about, and you'll find that most students are happy to share their views. Here's a list of possible topics:

- How many hours do you typically study each day?
- How many papers do you write each semester, on average? How much feedback do you get from faculty on your papers?
- How difficult is it to get into the classes you want? Have you ever been shut out of a class?
- What's the largest class you've had here? The smallest? Are any of your classes small discussion sessions where students work together on group assignments?
- How are your professors? How much do you get to interact with professors in class?
- Do you ever talk to your professors outside of class about their disciplines or the ideas being presented in class?
- Do students discuss class work together outside of the classroom?
- How is the academic advising and personal counseling? How was your advisor assigned? Who advises freshmen?
- Is there an orientation program for freshmen? Did it address your concerns?
- How often do you leave campus during the semester?
- How are the dorms? Are some quieter than others? Which are the best for freshmen, and why? Do the dorms have organized activities and informal learning opportunities?

- Are there programs and activities that help students from different backgrounds meet and work together? Do students interact with people of different backgrounds on campus?
- What do you do for fun on a weekend night? A weekday night?
- What are some of the social, cultural, and extracurricular events on campus? Do faculty members attend these events?
- What are the "hot" issues on campus right now?
- What would you change about your college if you could? What would you absolutely not change?

You can also ask the admissions office to connect you with current students who may have concerns similar to yours. For example, if you are from a suburban or urban area and you're considering a rural college, you could ask to speak with someone who made the transition successfully. Current college students remember being in your shoes very well and are usually extremely eager to talk to prospective students about their own experiences, from applying to college to their experiences at college so far.

Common questions

1. What are the admissions requirements?
2. What are the application deadlines for admission?
3. How can I arrange a campus visit?
4. How long should I expect to wait for an answer once I submit my application?
5. What are the most popular majors?
6. How much does it cost each year?
7. What financial aid options are available?
8. What is the average class size?
9. When must I choose a major?
10. What student services are offered? (Tutoring, career counseling, study workshops)
11. What types of housing is available?
12. How are roommates selected?
13. Can I live alone?
14. Will housing be guaranteed for four years?
15. What clubs and activities are available?
16. What sports are available?
17. What is the graduation rate?
18. Is the campus safe?
19. What are recent grads doing now?
20. What is the school known for?