

COLLEGE VISITS

Since there can be a number of "right" or "good" colleges for you out there, I strongly encourage you to visit those institutions that most appeal to you. College is much more than just an education; it is also where you will be living for the next four years. Please remember this when choosing a college. Recent studies, regarding student satisfaction with the educational experience, seem to indicate that social fit is indeed an essential ingredient. Proper insight can only be achieved by experiencing the campus in person. Please remember to call each admission or high school relations/outreach office at least two weeks in advance of your visit.

Obviously nothing takes the place of actually visiting a campus. However, if you do visit, please do not waste the opportunity by simply visiting with someone in the admission office and then just taking a tour of the campus. It is also important that you sit in on a class, talk to someone in the department of interest(s) and survey at least five students at random, if at all possible. When talking with current students, try to discern how they feel about the college and their academic program during the conversation. Attached are some handouts that may assist you in such efforts while visiting the colleges. If visiting is not possible, ask the Admission, Alumni Affairs or Development/Advancement offices for a list of current students or recently graduated alumni in your area that you can contact for more information.

College Visit Questions

It is extremely important that you research each college carefully. The more information you receive, the better your final decision. Here are some sample questions that you might ask during your campus visits, or when a college representative visits George:

- What kind of orientation program is offered to students?
- What are your best and/or most popular majors?
- What do students like (or dislike) most about your college?
- How many violent crimes have been reported on campus this past year?
- How extensive is campus security?
- Are there fraternities and sororities on campus? How many? Local or national?
- What percentage of the students are members on a fraternity or sorority?
- Does the Greek system dominate the campus social life of the institution?
- What are the major social events on campus?
- What is the average class size for freshmen classes?
- How many students are in your largest lecture class?
- Do graduate assistants teach any of the classes?
- Are tutoring services available?

Source: CollegeMasters, LLC, Rusty Haynes, CEO

Do you have a special study skills center or a learning resource center?
When do freshmen register for classes?
What percentage of the freshmen is unable to register for their first choice classes due to close outs?
What is the student retention rate for each of the four years?
What housing options are available to freshmen?
How many students are housed in each room?
What percentage of students live in the residence halls?
Do most students remain on campus during the weekends? What do they do?
What makes this college special? What are some of its unique features?
What cultural and recreational opportunities are available on campus?
What varsity and intramural sports are present?
What is the atmosphere of the surrounding community?
How well does the college relate to the local community?
What is the geographic diversity of the student body?
How is the advising system set up and who does the advising?
Do you have career planning and counseling services?
How many student orientations do you offer? When?

CAMPUS VISIT CHECKLIST

Use this form as a reminder when you travel to visit the colleges that you are considering. It will help to insure that you make the most of the relatively brief time that you spend on campus and give you peace of mind from worry over forgetting any important things you should investigate or do while there. Striving to accomplish as much of the checklist as possible will leave you well informed and better able to clearly understand a college's strengths and weaknesses.

- _____ Do not schedule a campus visit on Friday afternoons, weekends, the summer, or during a college break or holiday if at all possible.
- _____ Explore the campus on your own before visiting the admissions office.
- _____ Visit the admissions office and go through their formal process for prospective student information sessions, interviews, and tours. Get business cards from professional contacts you make.
- _____ Talk to students who don't work for the admissions office.
- _____ Sit in on freshman level classes, either with a friend who attends the college or arranged through the admissions office.
- _____ Arrange with the Admissions office to meet with a professor who teaches a subject that interests you. Get his or her business card for follow up questions.
- _____ Eat in a campus dining hall.
- _____ Spend the night in a dormitory on campus with a friend who attends the college or arranged through the admissions office.
- _____ If you have transportation, explore the community in which the college is located.
- _____ Seek out student publications such as the campus newspaper, alternative papers, journals, and literary magazines.
- _____ Scan campus bulletin boards and kiosks to get a glimpse of the interests of

students and faculty and the types of events that take place there.

COLLEGE VISIT GUIDELINES

Things one should definitely do (or not) when visiting a college campus:

- **Don't visit on a Friday afternoon, a weekend, the summer, or during a campus break or holiday** if at all possible. Don't visit Boston in September or April (warm) or Florida in December or January (cool/mild). All of these approaches will give you a skewed picture of campus life, do so only if you have no choice.
- **Explore a bit on your own before visiting the admissions office**; this gives you an objective point of view free of admission office spin.
- **Visit the admissions office and go through their formal process for prospective students.** You'll need to get the official word on the application process and the current picture on the selectivity level of candidate evaluation. It's also important to give them an opportunity to meet you, even if only for a group information session. Schedule a personal interview in advance if the college offers them. Also plan to take a formal tour, even if you've already looked around. Don't just drop in no matter what—calling ahead is often the only way the college will have a record that you've been there; this is often a consideration in candidate review.
- **Talk to students who don't work for the admissions office.** Often students who work with admissions are paid employees or get perks such as single rooms or tuition rebates in exchange for talking with prospective students and parents in person, in writing, or on the telephone, and for leading tours. They are usually very enthusiastic about their experience at the college and are rarely anyone but very good students.
- **Sit in on classes.** Contact admissions in advance about this—they often have pre-arranged opportunities with faculty in a wide variety of academic areas to allow students to sit in on freshman-level courses. If you don't sit in on at least one, you've skipped the most important part of your on-campus evaluation—the quality of the academic experience—and perhaps given up the opportunity to talk outside of class with a faculty member.
- **Eat in a campus dining hall.** Be sure to have at least one meal in a main dining facility. If you plan on residing at the college, you'll be eating 15 to 20 meals there; it's important that the offerings are to your liking (or at least digestible!). This is also an opportunity to talk with students who don't work for admissions.

- **Stay overnight on campus in a dormitory** if you can. Most colleges have some type of overnight program; call admissions regarding availability

CAMPUS ASSESSMENT

The following are merely suggestions intended to provide some guidelines for compiling an effective visit/campus assessment and should not be viewed as definitive or totally comprehensive.

Initial impressions:

- **Location.** Think of your experience in getting to the campus, and comment upon the neighboring vicinity. How easy is it to get to the campus? Is there anything there of interest?
- **Campus Look.** What are your initial impressions of its appearance upon arrival? Is it well kept, easy to get around? Is there construction taking place?
- **Feel.** What is your initial sense of the environment that one encounters upon arrival on campus? Describe the campus atmosphere, energy, and sense of community. Does it feel safe?
- **Students.** Do they look happy? Busy? Engaged with one another? Comfortable? Are they friendly and approachable?

Useful information gleaned in the course of your visit:

- **Academics.** What is most noteworthy of what you learned about the academic program during your visit? Unusual offerings, exceptional strengths, new programs. Note the level of demand in evidence.
- **Students.** What is most noteworthy of what you learned about the students here during your visit? What are they happiest about? Least happy about? Are they engaged in learning, or passively meandering their way to their degrees? Are they who you expected to encounter here? Where do they go from here?
- **College Life/Environment.** What is most noteworthy of what you learned about student life during your visit to campus? Popular pursuits and activities; unusual offerings, exceptional strengths, new developments; campus safety information. What do the campus and its environs have to offer?
- **Overall**

Did your visit experience mesh with the sense of the college that you had prior to visiting? If not, how was it different? How would you sum up the college in a brief comment? Can you see yourself making a good match with this place?