

COLLEGE VISITS

It is imperative that you visit the schools to which you are applying. What feels right for one student won't to another. The college tour (while it can be tedious) is a great source of information for you and your parents. Be prepared to take notes as you go because it is so easy to get information overload otherwise. Make a point of visiting somewhere on campus that the tour didn't take you and observe the students. Is this the kind of place you could see as home for the next four years?

The college interview is becoming rarer but students are encouraged to seek an interview if their academic history has not been wonderful. Let the admissions people get to meet you and hear your explanation of academic difficulties. The larger universities will not do this, but the smaller schools often will.

Below is a list of questions that might be helpful. It's not exhaustive but it will give you a start.

1. How much does it cost? Do they have a monthly payment plan? How much monthly money will a freshman need besides tuition, room and board?
2. How big is the school? What are the average SAT scores and GPA's for last year's freshman class? If this is your dream school and you don't make it, do you have a community college that you work with so you may be guaranteed admission next year?
3. Do freshmen have special programs to get them used to college and are they assigned advisors?
4. Does the school have a career center with testing for freshmen who are uncertain of their majors?
5. Are students required to live on campus? Do they have guaranteed housing for freshman year? Subsequent years?
6. Is there a campus transportation system? How often does it run? Cost? Can freshman have cars? Where do they park them?
7. Ask about the set-up of dorms. Where is the cafeteria? Other eating places? Are there group or private bathrooms? Who cleans them? Are dorms set up by gender (by room or by floor)? Are there quiet dorms? Single sex dorms? Are there fire alarms nearby, fire detectors in each room, fire extinguishers, etc? Are microwaves allowed or is there a central kitchen on each floor? A quiet study area?
8. Where is the library? What are its hours?

9. Where are there computer labs? Hours? Systems used? Is it a better idea to have your own computer? Is there specific software you will need?
10. What are your food choices? Are there meal plans? Do freshmen have to take a certain number of meals? Do you have dining dollars so that you can eat elsewhere on campus besides the cafeteria (maybe a Chick-Filet, etc.)?
11. Are all classes taught by professors or do they use teaching assistants? Size of freshman lecture classes? Labs? Are all professors required to have office hours?
12. What stores are around (Wal-Mart, Food Lion, etc.)? Is there transportation to these?
13. What banks are on campus? Do they have special deals for college students?
14. Is there an Honors' program? What are the requirements? Do you get in-state tuition (if college is in another state) if you are in the Honors' program? What are the other benefits?
15. Are there services for students with disabilities? Is there a center on campus or a coordinator for these services?
16. What sports and activities are on campus?
17. What companies come to the campus to hire graduates? Career Fairs?
18. Do you have a Greek system (sororities or fraternities)? How many students are involved in this?
19. What are the local cultural attractions and opportunities for students? Are there volunteer programs available in the community? Where are the Churches? What services are done on campus?
20. Do they have an active alumni association? How many alumni scholarships are given each year and what is the dollar amount? (This gives you some idea of how alums view their alma mater).
21. What are the statistics on safety?
22. How many students go on to graduate school? What schools are they accepted to?
23. What is your graduation rate? In 4 years? In 5 years? Longer?
24. What is your freshman retention rate? (In other words how many freshmen make it to sophomore year.)