

CAMPUS VISITS

We strongly recommend campus visits and interviews, if at all possible. Not only do such visits increase your familiarity with the colleges, help determine the fit and provide more information for decision-making, they demonstrate your interest in that particular college. Demonstrated interest continues to be a major factor as colleges consider applicants. A campus visit usually includes a student-led tour (approximately one hour), an information session led by an admissions officer (also an hour) and, if possible, an interview with an admissions officer or student.

When possible, **plan to visit colleges when students are on campus.** Most colleges finish classes in May and return for fall terms by the end of August. Spring vacations are at different times for different colleges; be sure you know when they are as you plan your trip. Visits during the summer or other vacation periods, while helpful, are not as useful.

The actual planning of the trip can be time-consuming. First, visit the websites of each college you hope to visit and jot down the times of the tours and information sessions. You may need to reserve a spot at some campuses. Then use an online planner such as Google Maps, MapQuest, or a smartphone app to plot the route you will take. This will help you estimate times and distances between colleges. You can often find the names of nearby hotels and motels on the college's websites. Tours and information sessions are usually offered Monday through Friday and sometimes on Saturdays in the busy season. Since tours are not offered on Sundays, you can take a self-directed walking tour; maps are often provided near the door to the admissions office. Typically Sundays are days when students sleep in or go to the library to work, so the campus can seem quiet at these times; keep this in mind for Sunday visits.

Do some research on the college before you visit (and ALWAYS before you interview). Read a guide book and look through their website. Doing so will make your visit more meaningful and may identify some good questions that you could ask during the tour or information session.

When you actually visit a college campus...

Be sure to allow enough time for your interview, a tour, an information session and some time to walk around on your own. You should probably plan to visit no more than two colleges in one day. Remember to always sign in at the admissions office so that there is an official record of your visit. Dress respectfully and be on time.

On the tour be sure to ask the guide some questions about his/her academic interests and campus life.

- What did you do last weekend? What extracurricular activities are the most popular? Do the students support the athletic teams?
- What is the intellectual life like on campus? How much time do you spend studying each week?

- Do you find your professors are accessible outside of class?
- How are tests and exams administered? Does an honor code come into play here?
- Where else did you apply? What made you choose this college?
- What is the best thing you didn't expect about this college? If you could change one thing here, what would it be?

If you join a group information session, it's best to ask questions of a general nature rather than one focusing on your own particular interests. You may approach an admissions officer with a specific question once the session has ended. Pick up the college newspaper or other publications. As you walk around the campus, look at the bulletin boards. If time allows, you might also want to sit in on some classes and try to meet professors in departments that interest you; check with the admissions office about how to do this.

Try not to let the weather or an uninspiring tour guide influence your impressions. A rainy day can make a beautiful campus seem gloomy and a tour guide with a dull personality does not mean that all students are dull. Look around at the other students and be sure to speak to some after the tour is over.

It's important for you to get a sense of what the student body is like. Most students are happy to answer questions if you stop them around campus. Ask them what they like about their college, what are some of its weaknesses and what they consider to be most important about their college life. Try to get a sense of the social atmosphere, the general intellectual level, and how you might fit in. Often the campus newspaper highlights social issues on campus, giving you a good idea of what the dominant concerns are within the student body.

Many colleges allow overnight visits. This can be a good opportunity to see the college firsthand. If this sounds appealing to you, these visits are arranged through the admissions office.

Take notes on what you learned about each college; ask us for a copy of our **Campus Visit Forms**. Your reactions, impressions, points of interest, and other details will contribute to your future decision so it's important to keep track of them. You might refer to your notes when writing supplementary essays about why you are applying to a specific college.

If time and money prevent you from visiting...

Use the Internet to find out as much as possible about the colleges in which you are interested. Be sure to read sections about academics, student life, and college news and events to get a good sense of what is happening on campus. Keeping in mind that college websites are marketing pieces, you might also look at websites that post college newspapers such as www.greekspot.com/collegenews.

Be sure to attend any college fair that is convenient for you, making contact with the representatives from the colleges that interest you. College representatives travel extensively to visit high schools in their region, so **make a point of meeting with individual representatives when they come to your school or area.** If you can't attend the meeting, see if you can sign up as someone who wanted to attend and/or consider contacting the rep by email. You can check the college's admissions website for their travel schedules or call their office. These sessions can be very informative and productive if you come prepared with questions.

Most of all when visiting colleges, have fun, try to imagine yourself as a student on each campus and learn as much as you can about each college. Your goal is to determine which ones will be a good fit for you—where you can be successful and happy.