

COLLEGE VISITS

DO NOT LEAVE THEM ALL UNTIL SENIOR YEAR!

Nothing can substitute seeing a college campus in person. The college search process comes alive in the college visit. You can get a good sense of the true vibe of a school when you are actually experiencing it for yourself. You gain a good sense of the student body by seeing the students as they make their way to and from classes or as they relax in common spaces or eat in the student dining hall. Do they seem happy or stressed? Are they friendly and even stop to brag about their school? Make sure to stop by the library; it is a great place to get a sense of both the academic and social tenor of the school. If you can, attend a class to see the classroom dynamic.

While it is certainly idea to visit campuses when they are “alive” with students, it is probably impossible to explore all of your possible choices within the confines of the academic year without missing too much school at Sacred Heart. So, try to book during our school vacations at colleges that are on a different break schedule, but utilize the summer also. Many colleges have summer programs so you can still get a general sense of their campus “in action.”

Start college visits early, possibly even the summer before your junior year or during school vacations in your junior year. There are also a number of school holidays in the first trimester of senior year for which college may be in session. Every year, some seniors miss too many days of school for college visits and grades suffer. Do not let this happen to you.

You may not be able to initially visit every college in which you are interested. Try to at least see enough types of different schools to make an informed decision about the type of school you like, and also visit schools between which you may be deciding once you get admit decisions.

INDIVIDUAL EXPEDITIONS

Many students may choose to visit campuses with friend or to stay with someone they know who attends a current college of interest to them. Or, they may only be able to visit the campus at a time/date when the college is on break and the Admission Office is closed. Regardless, it is important in the case of all campus visits that you register your visit with the Admissions Office. Many admission decisions are influenced by whether the student had visited the campus or not.

CONTACTING COLLEGES TO ARRANGE VISITS

As indicated above, it is important to have registered contact with colleges as many track your true interest based on this. In any initial contact made, try to get the name of the Admission Representative whose territory includes Sacred Heart. Additionally, within a week, write a follow-up thank you to anyone with whom you spent time – an admission rep, a tour guide, etc.

When attending a college-affiliated event, either on or off-campus, dress conservatively, and be on time. Be polite, engaging and interested. Approach representatives with poise, shaking hands and looking them in the eye. Do more talking than your parents. Avoid using your phone to text or check messages. However, it is appropriate to use your phone to take pictures of the campus so that you can use the photos to help you

remember different aspects of each college. You will find that as you visit multiple schools, it will become more and more difficult to remember specifics.

How to contact the college:

Call the Admissions Office – This should be done by **you**, not your parents!!!

1. Introduce yourself: "Hello, my name is Sally Student. I am a junior/senior at Sacred Heart, Greenwich and I would like to plan a visit to your college.
2. Do you have scheduled Information Sessions and Tours? Do I need to register for them?"
3. You may then ask: "Do you schedule private interviews? When would be an appropriate time to have one?"
4. You may get a recorded message with information so have a pencil ready.
5. Other questions you may want to ask **(some or all of this information may be on the college website, so check before asking!)**
 - "Where do I go when I arrive on campus?"
 - "Will there be students on campus, or is it a holiday?"
 - "Would you please add my name to your mailing list?"
 - "Is there a self-guided tour and map available?" (if the school is closed that day)
 - "What is the best way to get there from the airport?"
 - "Can you recommend a nearby hotel or inn?"
 - "I would like to schedule a meeting with a coach/music professor/English professor/theatre director/art professor. May I have the name and number of the appropriate contact?"
 - "May I sit in on a class?"
 - "May I spend the night on campus?"

TRY NOT TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THINGS YOU COULD EASILY DISCOVER FOR YOURSELF ON THE COLLEGE WEBSITE PRIOR TO YOUR VISIT.

OVERNIGHTS

School policies differ on overnights. Some colleges are very willing to have potential applicants spend the night in a dorm and will arrange this if you indicate an interest. Some colleges only have overnights for athletes or for accepted student who are making their final decision in the spring. Make sure to inquire about the policy and call to set up a possible visit well in advance of when you hope to go. **BE ON YOUR BEST BEHAVIOR.**

ATTENDING CLASSES

Visiting classes and lectures is a valuable way to assess the academic rigor of a school and the interest level of its students. When you call to schedule a visit, ask the Admissions Office if you are permitted to attend a class.

GROUP INFORMATION SESSIONS AND TOURS

College admission offices are great resources for organizing your visit and arranging for accommodations and transportation. Group information sessions are a wonderful way to get significant information about a

school. These presentations are usually about an hour long and are generally given by a member of the admission staff. Additionally, if possible, you should visit freshmen classes, explore the bookstore, tour the dorms, read the college newspaper (one published by students) and eat the food. ASK A LOT OF QUESTIONS. Allow enough time to really get a feel for the school. Visiting colleges should be fun. Be sure to visit a range of schools – large and small, urban and suburban, etc. In this way, you will have a solid basis of comparison to decide which schools are right for you. **You must see the schools yourself and formulate your own opinion. Do not rely on gossip.**

Things to look for and ask your tour guide during a visit:

- Ask your tour guide where else she/he applied and why she/he chose the school that she/he now attends.
- Look at the condition of the buildings and dorms.
- What kinds of living accommodations are available? Dorms? Foreign Language houses? Private apartments? Is on-campus housing required?
- Look at the students on campus and in your tour group. Would you be comfortable?
- Is there construction on campus? When will it be completed?
- Ask your guide what she/he would change about the school? What are its greatest shortcomings? What do students complain about?
- Which type of student is most happy here? Which ones are least happy?
- Are most classes lectures or seminars?
- What is the average class size? For freshmen? For upperclassmen?
- What percentage of the freshman class returns for sophomore year?
- What are the attitudes of the student body? Competitive, cooperative? Are students serious about studies?
- What research opportunities are available to undergraduates?
- Are the sports facilities restricted for varsity athletes?
- Are sports available for the average player?
- What do students do for fun?
- Is there parking on campus? Can you have a car? Do you need a car?
- Are first year students required to live on campus?
- Where are the dorms located in relation to the rest of the campus?
- Is there a career center available to students? Do they only work with seniors?
- What is the city/town/surrounding area like?
- What is provided by the school in terms of safety protocol and security systems and are there any safety issues on the campus?
- Do fraternities/sororities play a big role on campus? What percentage pledge/participate? When is rush? Are there alternatives to Greek life?
- What types of activities are available for freshmen involvement on campus?
- What types of meal plans are available?
- What type of transportation is necessary/available on campus?
- What kinds of medical facilities are available in case of emergency of illness?
- Who teaches you in most of your courses – graduate assistants or full professors?
- When do you have to declare your major? What are the most popular majors?
- What are the strongest departments in the college?
- What are the weekends like? Do most students remain on campus? What percentage would you estimate does so? Are there alternatives to the typical party scene?
- What kinds of cultural, sports, and literary events are offered on campus?

- What do students do after they graduate? Do they go on to postgraduate studies? What percentage is employed upon graduation?
- Is there an Honors Program?
- What is the process for selecting roommates as a freshman?
- What percent of the students receive financial aid? Are admissions need-blind?
- What support services are available to students? Learning Disability Services? General counseling? Post-Graduation planning? Free health care? Tutoring, if needed? Help finding off-campus employment during the school year and during the summer?
- What percent of students participate in a study abroad program?

AGAIN, TRY NOT TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THINGS THAT YOU CAN EASILY FIND THE ANSWERS TO ON THE COLLEGE WEBSITE. ALSO REMEMBER THAT YOUR DECISION SHOULDN'T REST ON THE QUALITY OF THE TOUR GUIDE; ONE PERSON MAY NOT REPRESENT THE ENTIRE CAMPUS.