A POCKET GUIDE TO

Choosing a College

Questions to ask on your college visits

How to Use this Guide

Picking the college that is right for you is a big decision. You will need to ask many questions when deciding on a college. In addition, consider taking a campus tour, attending a class or two, eating a meal on campus, and looking through recent issues of the student newspaper.

To get a sense of how much you are likely to learn, grow, and develop at a given institution, there are some key questions to ask the people you'll meet—the tour guide, admissions staff, and currently enrolled students.

Some of the most important questions can be found in this guide.

Remember that...

...It's important to ask questions when visiting a college campus.

Supportive Campus Environment

Students perform better and are more satisfied when they feel their institution supports them academically and socially.

To discover how students feel about their relationships with others and what activities they are involved in, ask...

- How well do students get along with other students?
- Are students satisfied with their overall educational experience?
- How much time do students devote to co-curricular activities?
- To what extent does the school help students deal with their academic and social needs?

Personal and Social Development

- What health and counseling services are available?
- What types of career planning and job placement services are available?
- Do students exercise or participate in physical fitness programs?
- How do students meet others with similar interests (e.g., clubs, fraternities and sororities, intramural sports)?

Enriching Educational Experiences

Experiencing a wide variety of educational opportunities makes learning more useful and meaningful.

To explore more opportunities for learning, ask...

- What kinds of activities are students involved in outside of the classroom?
- What types of honors courses, learning communities, and other distinctive programs are offered?
- Do students interact with other students who have different social, political, or religious views or come from different racial and ethnic backgrounds?
- How many students study in other countries?
- Do students participate in activities that enhance their spirituality?
- What percentage of students do community service?
- Is a major senior-year project or experience required?

Student-Faculty Interaction

When students interact with faculty inside and outside of the classroom, their teachers become role models and mentors.

To find out how students and faculty interact in and out of class, ask...

- Are faculty members accessible and supportive?
- How many students work on research projects with faculty?
- Do students receive prompt feedback on academic performance?
- How often do students talk with faculty members about what they are learning in class?
- How often do students talk with advisors or faculty members about their career plans?
- Do students and faculty members work together on committees and projects outside of course work?

Active Learning

Students learn more when they are involved in their education, asked to think about what they are learning, and work with each other on assignments or projects.

To find out how actively students participate in the learning process inside and outside of the classroom, ask...

- How often do students discuss ideas in class?
- How often are topics from class discussed outside of the classroom?
- Do students work together on projects inside and outside of class?
- How often do students make class presentations?
- How many students participate in community-based projects in regular courses?
- Do students have opportunities to tutor or teach other students?
- How many students get practical, real-world experience through internships or off-campus field experiences?

Academics

Challenging intellectual and creative work is important to student learning. Colleges and universities emphasize the importance of academic effort and have high expectations of student performance.

To find out how challenging the academic programs are, ask...

- To what degree is studying and spending time on academic work emphasized?
- Do faculty members hold students to high standards?
- How much time do students spend on homework each week?
- What type of thinking do assignments require (e.g., analytical, critical)?
- How much writing is expected? How much reading is expected?
- Do class discussions and assignments include diverse perspectives?

The questions in this guide are based on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Each year NSSE collects information directly from students at hundreds of colleges and universities. Responses to the survey provide valuable information about what is actually going on in the lives of students and the quality of their college experiences.

Check to see if the college you are considering participates in NSSE. Detailed information on students' experiences may be available from the admissions or institutional research office. For a list of participating NSSE schools or for more information, please visit **nsse.iub.edu**.

Photography: McGill University, Northwestern College, Radford University, Robert Morris University, Saint Michael's College, San Francisco State University, Savannah College of Art and Design, University of Georgia, University of Michigan–Flint

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