

10 tips for College Visits

A campus visit is the **best way** to evaluate whether a college suits you

1 Learn about the college before you visit.

Read materials from the college and check out their website. If you are visiting more than one on a particular day, refresh your memory about that school just before you arrive. Be sure to spend at least a half day at each college.

2 Evaluate the environment of the campus.

Is the campus too big or too small for you? Do you like the nearby town or do you feel isolated? Consider how you would get around campus—particularly in the rain or snow.

3 Visit the admissions office and participate in the information session.

Ask questions that help you clarify the academic program at the school and the type of student who is most comfortable and successful there. You may choose to have a formal interview with an admissions staff member. Bring a resume of your grades and activities. Dress nicely, but not out of character.

4 Take the student-led tour of campus.

Take advantage of the opportunity to ask questions about campus life from a peer. Recognize, however, that tour guides are not necessarily typical of all students since they are often paid to formally represent the school.

5 Check out the dorms.

Find out about the dorm options available, such as all-freshman or coed floors. Arrange in advance to spend the night in a dorm, if possible. Picture yourself living in a dorm. Are you comfortable with where it is located on campus, such as the proximity to classes or the student center?

6 Arrange for campus meetings with department heads in the subject that interests you most.

Also meet with coaches in sports where you excel, as well as former graduates from your high school. Bring a resume that highlights your experience in your area of expertise. Ask about opportunities based on your skills and interests. Write down the names of any officials you meet with and send personal thank-you notes when you return home.

7 Sit in on classes and check out the library.

How is the rapport between students and faculty in the classroom? Look through the books and explore the technology available at the library. Look for quiet places to study.

8 Look into life beyond academics.

Check out the athletic facilities, theater, and student center. Read the notices posted in the dorms or on bulletin boards. Can you see yourself joining in?

9 Eat lunch in the student center and watch student interactions.

Talk with students all over campus about their impressions of the school. Look at the students themselves. Do you feel comfortable among them?

10 Write down your impressions of each college you visit.

After a while, the visions of different schools start to blur if you don't immediately stop to record your thoughts! Keep a list of pros and cons for comparison. Also consider taking some photos to help you keep track of the campuses you visit.

An IECA member educational consultant is a skilled professional who provides guidance to help students and families with the entire process of finding a college that is a good personal match: one that will foster the student's academic and social growth. Independent educational consultants can provide a student and family with individual attention, firsthand knowledge of hundreds of colleges, and the time to explore all of the options.

IECA⁺

Activity: Questions to Ask on a College Visit



Asking questions will help you decide if a college is a good fit. Below are sample questions to ask admissions directors, tour guides and students during college visits and at college fairs. Make a copy of this page for each college visit and bring a notebook in which to write down the answers or use the SUTC mobile app.

College/University: _____ Date: _____

I spoke with: _____

Questions to Ask Admissions Representatives

General Questions

- How diverse is the student body?
- What academic assistance resources are available?
- What kind of academic advising is available to help students choose classes and a major?
- Does the school help students find internships?
- What kinds of career services and employment resources are available?
- What percentage of students graduate in four years?
- What is the academic profile of the average admitted student? ACT/SAT score? GPA/class rank?
- What is the average class size? Are classes taught by teaching assistants (as opposed to professors)?

About Student Life

- What systems are in place for student safety?
- Are there safety escorts in the evening for students?
- How accessible is public transportation?
- Can students have cars on campus? Is parking free?
- Are there stores and restaurants within walking distance or close to public transportation?
- Is student housing guaranteed for all freshmen students? For all four years? What other housing options are available?
- Do fraternities, sororities or sports teams play a major role in campus life?
- What clubs and student activities are available on campus? How do you start a new club?

Financial Aid Questions

- What percentage of students receive financial aid?
- What is the size of the average aid package?
- What kinds of jobs or Work-Study are available on campus?
- How can students learn about scholarships, grants, Work-Study and other forms of financial aid?

Questions to Ask Students

General Questions

- What do you like best about the school, and what do you think could be improved?
- Is tutoring available?
- Has your adviser been helpful?
- Do you feel connected to your teachers, and are they accessible/supportive/helpful?
- Do you find the student body diverse?
- What is the climate for students of color (or any group to which you belong)?
- Is the career center helpful and how?
- Have you done an internship, and did the school help you find it?

About Student Life

- Do you feel safe on campus?
- How do you get to school?
- Is public transit convenient?
- Can students park on campus?
- Do you feel comfortable in the neighborhood?
- Do most students live in the dorms or commute?
- Do many students leave on weekends?
- Is campus busy or empty on weekends?
- What do students do on campus during the weekend?
- What do students do with their free time (e.g., study, explore the town, participate in clubs, socialize with friends)?
- How is the food on campus? Are there many different options?

Notes

Campus Visit Checklist

Visiting a college campus helps you get a sense of what a college — and life at that college — is like. This can help you decide whether the college is right for you.

GATHER INFORMATION

Find out what you need to do to apply, and see if the college's class and major offerings are what you want:

- Take part in a group information session at the admission office.
- Interview with an admission officer.
- Pick up financial aid forms.
- Sit in on a class that interests you. If classes aren't in session, just see what the classrooms are like.
- Meet a professor who teaches a subject that interests you.
- Talk to students about what they think of their classes and professors.
- Get the names and business cards of the people you meet so you can contact them later if you have questions.

EXPLORE THE CAMPUS

Get a feel for student life, and see if this college is a place where you will do well:

- Take a campus tour.
- Talk to current students about the college and life on campus.
- Check out the freshman dorms, and stay overnight with a student, if possible.
- Visit the dining hall, fitness center, library, career center, bookstore, and other campus facilities.
- Talk to the coaches of sports that you may want to play.
- Walk or drive around the community surrounding the campus.

CHECK OUT CAMPUS MEDIA

Tune in to learn what's happening on campus and what's on students' minds:

- Listen to the college radio station.
- Read the student newspaper.
- Scan bulletin boards to see what daily student life is like.
- Go to the career center and learn what services it offers.
- Browse the school's website and any campus blogs.
- Read other student publications, such as department newsletters, alternative newspapers, and literary reviews.

GET THE MOST OUT OF A CAMPUS VISIT IN **6 STEPS**

1 DECIDE WHERE AND HOW

See if your school arranges group trips to colleges or if you could get a group of friends together and visit the campus. A family trip is another option and allows you to involve your family in the process.

2 PREPARE FOR YOUR VISIT

Before you set out, get a map of the college campus and pick out places of interest. Call the college's admission office to schedule a guided tour of the campus.

3 TAKE YOUR OWN TOUR

Just wandering around the campus on your own or with friends can be the best way to get a feel for what a college is like.

4 EXPLORE THE FACILITIES

Find the spots on campus where students gather or ask a student where the best place to eat is to get a feel for the character of the college. Visit the library and check out the gym or theater. Ask an admission officer if you can tour a dorm and a classroom.

5 MAKE CONNECTIONS

Talk to current students. Ask the students at the next table or sitting nearby what they like best about the college.

6 TAKE NOTES

During your visit, write down some notes about your experience. What did you see that excited you? Are there aspects of the college that you don't like? If so, what are they?

Questions to Ask During Your Visit:

ASK TOUR GUIDES/STUDENTS

- What are the best reasons to go to this college?
- What's it like to go from high school to college?
- What do you do in your free time? On the weekends?
- What do you love about this college?
- What do you wish you could change about this college?
- Why did you choose this college?
- What is it like to live here?
- What does the college do to promote student involvement in campus groups, extracurricular activities, or volunteerism?

ASK PROFESSORS

- What are the best reasons to go to this college?
- Can a student be mentored by professors, graduate students, or upperclassmen?
- How are professors rated by the college? Does the college think mentoring and meetings for project guidance are important?
- How does the college help students have access to professors outside class? Do professors join students for lunch, help with community service groups, or guide student organizations?
- How many students do research or other kinds of projects for a semester or more?

ASK FINANCIAL AID OFFICE

- How much has your total college cost for each student risen in the past year?
- How much do your students usually end up owing when they graduate?
- What is the average income of graduates who had the same major that interests me?
- Will my costs go up when your tuition goes up, or can we use the same tuition rate I started with so I'll know the costs for four years?
- How many students usually graduate in the major that interests me? How long do these students usually take to get their degree? In what ways does the college help students graduate in four years?