

# **The College Visit Guide**

Would you purchase a car without driving it? Of course not! Shopping for the right colleges is just as important. In this case, the equivalent of test driving a car is visiting a college! Although this is an expensive venture, it is worth it to prevent you from attending a college that is not a good fit for you. You need to work with your counselor to develop a list of colleges that meet your specifications (parents are encouraged to be part of this conversation with the counselor as well!) It is then time to make your plan to visit those colleges somewhere between January and April of your junior year. In the spring there will be an opportunity to meet with your counselor and other students to share your impressions and decide if there are other colleges that need to be added to your list. Any subsequent visits can then be done prior to the start of your senior year.

## **Preparing for the Visit**

Discuss *when* college visits can be accomplished with family. Fall holidays (Columbus & Veteran's Day) are good opportunities. Call the admissions office at each college and arrange a time and date for the visit. Most colleges have specific times that they offer tours and/or group information sessions. Allow yourself plenty of time to see everything you want to on campus, and also to locate your next college to visit. If you wish to meet with someone specific from a college, (coach, department head, or to visit a class), make that very clear when you speak with an admissions representative. Does the college require an interview for admission? It is best to save an interview for return visits to colleges you decide to apply to. If returning to the college a second time would be a hardship for you, you can interview on the first visit. You need to make arrangements at least six weeks in advance to schedule an interview with a college. Lastly, bring a copy of your transcript with you which will show the college admissions representatives your G.P.A., grades, and rank in class.

## **The Visit**

Be on Time!! Are there other places on campus you wish to visit that were not included on the tour? Do you have any questions about the college that cannot be answered from looking at their website? Take a break from your activities and observe where the college students are gathering. Which type of student is typical for this college? Do you see yourself among them?

Have an open discussion with your parents about financial resources and expectations. It is important that parents be a part of the college visit, but they should add their observations only after listening to the student's impressions first. Only the student can determine the right fit in a college, a place where they plan to spend several years of their life.

## **Questions for the Tour Guide:**

Do you get the classes you request at registration?	What is the surrounding community like?
What is the average class size for an introductory course?	
How many hours a week do you have to study?	Is there a lot of academic pressure here?
Are the professors available during office hours?	How is campus security?
What do you like the most about this college?	What other colleges did you apply to?
What are your major complaints about this college?	

## **After the Visit**

Write a thank you note to the college, especially if you had an interview. Visit with your counselor to discuss your visits and impressions.

**WHAT TO LOOK FOR and WHAT TO ASK**

**SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE**

1. Does social life revolve around the campus, or do most people leave on weekends?
2. Does the college provide social activities (concerts, movies, dances)?
3. Is there opportunity to attend social events off campus?  
Do many students take advantage of these opportunities?
4. Are opportunities and facilities for socializing readily available? Do the dorms have living rooms?  
Do the dorms have eating facilities? Is there a student center?  
Are there rules governing curfews, driving, drinking, smoking? Other?
5. Do clubs and organizations provide outlets for socializing?  
Are these activities predominantly traditional, exotic, issue-oriented, or artistic?
6. How important are fraternities/sororities to social life?
7. Are there social pressures? How important are money, possessions, and appearances?
8. Do the students seem friendly? Have they been helpful to you?
9. Does there seem to be a “typical” student? Is so, how would you characterize him/her?  
(Preppy, off-beat, nondescript, clean-cut, all-American, messy, grungy, etc.)  
How well is the atypical student accepted?  
Is there no typical student, but rather a great deal of diversity?
10. Is there school spirit?
11. How do you rate the overall school atmosphere?  
(unappealing) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (appealing)
12. How do you feel you would fit in?  
(not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (very well)

