

#1 Tip from College Representatives: Visit!

A Planning Checklist and Questions to Ask...

Every college visit should have at least two dimensions--formal and informal--notes Janet Schneider, director of college counseling at the University School of Nashville (TN). To cover both dimensions, begin your planning with the following checklist. And to make sure you get to see everything you need to, don't forget to call the college ahead of time and schedule your visit! Scroll down for a list of questions to ask.

Formal

- Take a campus tour
- Have an interview with admission officer
- Participate in group information session at the admission office
- Sit in on a class (or two!)
- Talk to a professor (or two) in your chosen major(s)
- Talk to a coach in your chosen sport
- Talk to a student or counselor in the career center
- Spend the night in the dorm with a current student

Informal

- Read the student newspaper--even the ads
- Try to find other student publications--department newsletters, 'alternative' newspapers, literary reviews
- Eat in the cafeteria
- Ask a student why he/she chose this college
- Visit the library
- Read the bulletin boards in the student union and academic departments
- Ask a student what he/she likes and dislikes about the college
- Browse in the college bookstore
- Eavesdrop on students to hear what they're talking--or complaining--about
- Surf the Net in the student computer center
- Walk or drive around the community surrounding the campus
- Ask a student what he/she does on weekends
- Listen to the college's radio station
- Try to see a dorm that you didn't see on the tour
- See if you can imagine yourself at this college

➤ Manage your absences wisely! ➤

Questions to Ask...

When you talk to students, ask...

1. How many hours a week do you study? Is that typical here?
2. Are faculty members interested in students and accessible outside of class?
3. Do many students go home on weekends?
4. Are the athletic facilities open to all students or only to athletes?
5. Is it possible to study in your dorm room?
6. Is the food good?
7. Are campus jobs readily available?
8. Is there easy access to computers? Where are they located?
9. What's the library like as a place to study? To do research?
10. What do you like most about this college? Least?
11. How easy is it to get the classes you want?
12. If you could change something about this school, what would it be?

If you attend a class, ask yourself...

1. Are students prepared for the class? Do they seem interested in the material?
2. Do I feel that the students are learning—either new facts or new ways of thinking about a subject?
3. Is there time for questions and discussion? Do students participate?
4. Am I intellectually challenged by what is taking place in the class?
5. Is there good rapport between professors and students?

As you tour the campus, ask yourself...

1. Are the buildings in good repair? The grounds well-kept?
2. Were the residence halls pleasant and quiet enough to study in? Are there laundry and kitchen facilities?
3. What are the dining options? What is the food like?
4. Are computers and lab equipment up-to-date and plentiful?
5. What's the surrounding town/city like?

In an interview or information session, you could ask...

1. Does the college have academic programs that fit my interests?
2. Where are computer terminals located? Will I have to pay extra for computer time?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the college's advising system?
4. How many students will there be in courses I'm likely to take in my first year? Are those courses taught by professors or graduate assistants?
5. What kinds of campus jobs are available for first-year students?
6. Will there be any new programs or facilities in the next two years?
7. What are the college's recent graduates doing now?

After the visit, write down your impressions...

1. Were the people you met friendly? Did they answer your questions fully and candidly?
2. What do you think of the quality of instruction and the academic atmosphere?
3. Were the students the kind of people you'd like to get to know?
4. Did you like the social atmosphere?
5. Would you like to spend more time there?