

3

SESSION 3: THE COLLEGE SEARCH

ACTIVITY #3: THE ULTIMATE TEST DRIVE—MAKING THE MOST OF THE CAMPUS VISIT

Opening Discussion:

To introduce this activity, ask students to consider the following: People who want to buy a car often spend a lot of time test-driving cars, but once they buy one and drive it off the lot, the car depreciates in value. The opposite is true of “test driving” a college: the time a student spends visiting a college can help him or her know if the school is a good match. Once the student enrolls in a college, the school never loses value. For students who may not have opportunities to visit college campuses, college fairs and visiting with college representatives who come to their high schools provide a reasonable substitute.

Activity/Handouts

The College Visit Checklist**The Campus Visit****College Comparison Worksheet**

Instructions

Review the College Visit Handout

1. Go over the “The Campus Visit” allowing time for questions and discussion.
2. Give each student the “College Visit Checklist” and talk about how the list can also be useful if a student attends a college fair.
3. Describe what occurs on a tour and in an information session.
4. Talk about how students can possibly use the campus visit as a time to have an interview, if the college requires or allows one.
5. Emphasize the importance of filling in the comparison worksheet as soon after a visit as possible and securing the name and contact information of someone in the admission office.
6. Give students the names of four schools nearby and ask them to find out when the schools schedule tours and information sessions. Students should use the available resources to find this information.
7. Describe the differences among reach, target and likely schools.

COLLEGE VISIT CHECKLIST

To help you find the right college, fill out one of these forms each time you visit a school.

DECIDE

COLLEGE NAME

CITY

STATE

SIZE

TUITION

ROOM & BOARD

FINANCIAL AID OPTIONS

ADMISSIONS CONTACT

NAME

EMAIL

PHONE

TO-DO CHECKLIST

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to professors | <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to students |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visit the library | <input type="checkbox"/> Visit student housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tour campus | <input type="checkbox"/> Read bulletin boards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sit in on a class | <input type="checkbox"/> Check out recreational facilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eat at a cafeteria | <input type="checkbox"/> Check out student activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to admissions office | <input type="checkbox"/> Tour the city around campus |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read the college newspaper | <input type="checkbox"/> Eat at an off-campus student hang-out |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check out computer labs | <input type="checkbox"/> Picture yourself living here |

RATE IT

On a scale of 1-5, five being the best, rate the following:

- People _____
- Social life _____
- Classrooms _____
- Dorms _____
- Town _____
- Campus _____
- Food _____

ASK A STUDENT

What is the best part about this college?

What is the worst part?

What is a typical day like?

What do the students do on the weekends?

How are classes structured?

Why did you choose this college?

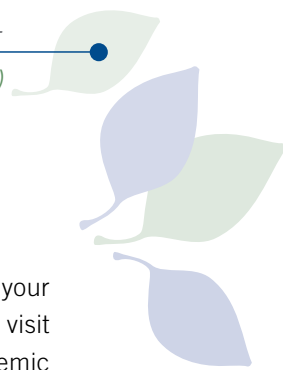
THE BEST PART ABOUT MY VISIT

THE WORST PART ABOUT MY VISIT

CAPTIP! Weather on the day of a college visit can affect your impression of a school. Don't let the rain keep you from a school you like. For more tips, go to www.Cappex.com/tips.

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THE CAMPUS VISIT

One of the most important parts of your college research is the campus visit. Visiting the colleges on your list will give you a firsthand impression of the students, faculty, staff, facilities, and programs. On a visit you can learn what the admission office is looking for in its applicants, gain a feeling for the academic and social atmosphere, see the study/living/recreation facilities, talk with students, and get a sense of the surrounding community.

WHEN TO VISIT

- Admission offices are open all year, but visiting when classes are in session is best. If you visit in the summer, you can certainly learn about admission and get a general tour of the campus, but it might be hard to get a good sense of the atmosphere of the college.
- The best time to visit? Spring Break of your junior year can be ideal. Even if you are not certain where you might eventually apply, if you can visit one large, one medium size, and one small school, you will be better prepared to make final decisions about where to apply.
- Once you have narrowed your list in the fall of the senior year, you may want to make return overnight visits to schools to which you will be applying. On these visits, plan to go to classes and interact with students.
- If at all possible, try to visit colleges before you apply. You may discover the school is not at all what you had thought it would be. However, attending accepted students visit programs at the colleges you have visited previously can help you narrow down your choices.
- SPECIAL VISITATION DAYS: Some colleges will offer spring programs for juniors and fall programs for seniors. Check online or contact the admission office since you may need to make a reservation.

HOW TO PLAN A VISIT

- A good campus visit takes two-four hours, including time to get a sense of the surrounding town or area. Don't try to visit more than two schools in one day.
- Figure out an itinerary: where you want to travel, how you will travel, how far one school is from another.
- Call the admission office at least two weeks ahead of time to schedule your visit. Admission offices have set times for tours and information.
- Think of all the things you want to do when you visit and ask what the admission office can help you with: talking with an admission officer, taking a tour, attending a class, meeting with a professor in an area that interests you, eating a meal on campus, talking with a coach or advisor of an extracurricular activity that interests you, etc.
- Research each college before you go visit so you'll have specific questions to ask.
- Contact students you might know at the school before you plan to visit.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU VISIT

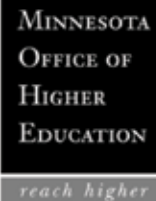
- Focus on people, place and programs in your visit.
- Talk to as many people as you can: students, dining hall workers, tour guides, faculty.
- Look at a campus newspaper and check out campus bulletin boards.
- Wander through snack bars and student centers and observe how students interact with each other.
- Keep track of all names of people you talk with, especially in the admission office.

- Go to the admission session and take the official tour. Listen to the tour guide, but don't jump to a conclusion about a particular school based solely on your experience with a tour guide.
- If you are meeting or interviewing with an admission staff member, be on time, be yourself, ask questions that deal with your particular needs, make sure you mention anything about your background or achievements that you want the admission office to know.

AFTER THE VISIT

- Fill out the college comparison worksheet before you get to another campus.
- Send a thank you note to any admission person you meet.
- Look ahead to fall of the senior year to plan a follow-up, overnight visit.





Campus Visit Checklist

When you visit a campus, it is important that you ask the right types of questions:

Look at Equipment and School Facilities

- Are the facilities and equipment up-to-date and operating?
- Is the equipment similar to what you will be using on the job?
- Is the library good for studying and research?
- Are the dorms quiet enough for studying?
- What is the cafeteria like?
- How large or small are the dorm rooms?
- What types of furniture are provided/allowed?
- Are there plenty of computer labs?
- Do students get free e-mail and Internet access?

Sit In on a Class or Two

- Do the instructors seem knowledgeable?
- Are the students participating in classroom activities?
- What kinds of work are the students doing?
- How large/small are the classes?

Talk with Current Students in the Program

- How long have they been in school?
- Do they like the program?
- Are they learning what they need to know to get a job?
- What is their opinion of the instructors?
- Do the instructors spend time with the students to be sure they understand the material?
- How much time is needed for studying and other work outside class?
- Are instructors available outside of class?
- Have they had any problems with the school, the instructors or the classes?
- What do they like most/least about the school/program?
- How do they spend their free time?

Talk with Instructors in the Program

- What are the academic requirements in the program?
- What kinds of courses are offered?
- How many students are in the program?
- How long does it take most students to complete the program?
- How long have they been teaching at the school?
- Do they teach full time or part time?
- What types of activities are they involved in that relate to the field of study?
- What types of background do they have in the field?

Talk with an Admissions Counselor

- What are the admissions requirements at this college?
- How do I apply and which forms do I fill out?
- When are the important deadlines for admissions?
- What are the housing requirements and parking rules?
- What types of extracurricular activities are available?
- What is the job placement rate of recent graduates?

Talk with a Financial Aid Counselor

- How much does it cost to attend the college (including tuition, room and board, fees, etc.)?
- What financial aid options are available?
- Are there any special financial aid services offered by the college?
- Which forms do I need to fill out and what are the deadlines?
- How is financial aid paid out? When will I receive it?
- Are there school-specific scholarships available? How do I apply?