



College Visit FAQs

WHEN DO YOU RECOMMEND THAT FAMILIES BEGIN COLLEGE VISITS?

Our basic recommendation is to take a trip when possible, but you shouldn't feel obligated. If convenient and financially possible, trips do make the process specific and concrete. Trips should be a sampler of types of schools (big, small, urban, rural) etc. and can be close to home. For example, you could visit UC Davis, UC Santa Cruz, USF, SF State, Santa Clara, St Mary's, Mills or drive to Stockton to see University of the Pacific.

At this stage, we want you to be as open-minded as possible. We want you to look and visit. Ask questions. Many people will be giving you their opinions. This is a time to start forming a framework for making your own judgements. Keep your eyes and ears open. You may not know what you are looking for until you actually see it.

HOW DO I PLAN FOR A COLLEGE VISIT?

- Call or visit the website in advance to find out about appointments and tours. Smaller colleges will probably arrange individual appointments and larger colleges will have set times for tours and group sessions. Some colleges will provide overnight lodging on campus, so ask if you are interested.
- If you would like to sit in on a class or talk to a coach or professor, let the Admissions Office know.
- If you are visiting other colleges, be sure to plan enough time between visits to get to your appointments on time and to absorb what you see.

WHAT DO I DO BEFORE I GO?

- Read over information (brochures, catalogs and/or websites) about the college so that you are prepared and knowledgeable when you visit.
- Prepare questions. Remember that the purpose of this visit is for you to get information and a feeling for the college. Ask questions that you want to ask – there are no right questions to ask.
- Get directions! The Admissions Office would be happy to provide them for you.

WHAT DO I DO WHEN I GET THERE?

- Relax and take in as much as you can.
- Take a tour.

- Have a meal in the dining hall and/or Student Center. This is the place to acquire the best impressions of student life.
- Locate a campus newspaper and read it.
- Check out bulletin boards. What are people posting and what is advertised?
- Try to see a dorm room.
- Ask your guide personal questions – such as why they chose the school or what they do not like.
- Spend time in the library. Is this a place where people study or socialize?
- Eavesdrop on conversations.

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR?

If this is possible, try *not* to ask exactly the two questions you want to ask: 1) Do I want to go here? 2) Can I get in here?

It is too soon to be asking those questions! Instead, try to keep your eyes and minds open – a really hard thing to do. Use the trip to get some ideas. For example, look for things you can do that you have not been able to do in high school.

Please remember that when we give you suggestions about colleges, we are not telling you that we think you should apply to them but that we think you should take a look at them. Read guides, go to websites, discover other schools that might be similar, etc. Applications come much later.

We think it is useful for students to spend some time exploring the campus without their parents/guardians. Separate from each other and explore on your own.

WHAT KINDS OF QUESTIONS SHOULD I ASK?

Social Climate

- What do people do on the weekends?
- What social and cultural activities are offered on campus? What facilities are there for socializing? Is there a social center or student union?
- What clubs, organizations, events, and groups are evident and popular on campus?
- Are the students friendly? Are they positive about their school?
- What is the political climate? What issues are students talking about?
- To what extent does the school provide help for academic and social needs?
- What percentage of students do community service?
- Do students of different backgrounds interact regularly?

Academic/Intellectual Climate

- To what degree is studying and spending time on academic work emphasized?
- How competitive or intense is the learning environment?
- What are the course requirements?
- How accessible are special programs (i.e. cooperative programs, study abroad, research)?
- How often do students discuss ideas in class?
- Do students work together on projects?
- Are faculty members accessible and supportive?

- Who will teach me?
- How is technology used in the classroom?
- How big are freshmen classes?
- How helpful are professors in career planning and job placement? What services are offered by the career placement office?
- Can non-majors and undergraduates participate in theater productions, use art studios, and do research?
- Do you feel that this would be an intellectual “fit?”

Campus life

- What do you like or dislike about the physical campus?
- What are the living accommodations like? Is there a variety of housing from which to choose (i.e. single sex/coed, suites, single rooms, “quiet” dorms, off campus apartments)?
- Where does one find a “community” (ie. clubs, residential communities, Greek system, learning communities)?
- What percentage of students are on campus on the weekend?
- What is the difference between where freshmen and upperclassmen live?
- What would you do when you go off campus?

SHOULD I SIGN UP FOR AN INTERVIEW?

This will depend a great deal on the individual campus and their policy about interviews. You should email or call the Admissions Offices and ask to set an interview. When you do, find out about their policy. Are interviews strictly informational or are they used to make decisions? Many schools, including most large universities and some small schools, don't even offer interviews.

Anticipating being interviewed can be nerve-racking to say the least. It is important to know this: **the interview is not as important to the admissions process as most people seem to think.** Most of the time the interviewer is more concerned about making a good impression than evaluating you. They want you to like their school and they want you to apply. In our experience, when it does count, the interview almost always works in your favor. Try to use it as an opportunity to learn more about the school you are applying to, not as an obstacle to overcome.

DO I NEED AN ON-CAMPUS INTERVIEW?

If you can make an appointment for one, do it. If not, don't worry about it. There will be many opportunities in the fall and winter to get an interview with an admissions representative or alumni. Many students visit campuses and are not able to schedule an interview. Many students apply to colleges without visiting the campus for a variety of reasons.

HOW SHOULD I PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW?

We think you should just do your best to keep your cool and be yourself. Have a conversation with your interviewer. Get to know them. Ask questions. A little nervousness can work in your favor. You can actually tell them you're nervous if that helps. If you feel more comfortable being a little prepared, think about what you might say about a few things like: specific questions you have about the college, things you like about Urban, your favorite academic subject, an important extracurricular activity, your project, a

book you've read and liked. Being yourself is the key. Interviewers are not impressed by coached kids. It can be very irritating to talk to a seventeen year old who acts as if he/she has all of the answers.