



COLLEGE VISIT TIPS AND CHECKLIST

A Note to Parents-

The following three pages can be given directly to your teen to work through independently, though best practice is to discuss the items before a college road trip or visit to find out what he/she (they used going forward) is thinking and establish roles and responsibilities for the visit.

This will likely be the first time your child takes the lead on a trip, conversing with adults, or otherwise advocating for themselves (especially in your presence), and preparation for both parties is key. There are few things more uncomfortable on a college visit than watching a parent ask multiple questions with a disengaged or embarrassed teen sitting or standing next to them, or quietly trying to fade into the background. There are few questions that must be asked and answered in the moment, so either check with your teen to see if they want to ask it, or jot it down for follow-up later. The most difficult role for many parents is to allow the natural and necessary shift of ownership of this process to the teen.

A fundamental guideline for the college search process is that this is **YOUR TEEN'S** process, not yours. Parents should absolutely provide support, information, guidance, and an occasional kick in the rear, but **your teen needs to lead the process in order to own the outcome.**

Best ways for a parent to contribute on a college visit are:

- showing up is a must- do not abdicate responsibility for helping your teen make such a big decision alone or without your informed input, so make time to attend every tour/visit prior to admission
- review the checklists and potential questions with your teen
- ensure they have completed preliminary online research, and if they haven't, sit down before the visit and do it together
- ask your teen questions about what interests them about the college, what information they are looking for during the visit/tour, and what you can do to help; BE PATIENT
- discuss roles before the visit, particularly if your teen isn't experienced speaking with adults or is used to you taking charge- gift your child the independence and faith to speak for themselves, but prepare, even role play, ahead of time
- be the primary notetaker- good idea for the teen to take notes as well, but the parent can/should pick up on items that the teen might miss or might not think important
- always allow and encourage your teen to voice their opinion first when debriefing a visit- your opinion, even if strong, should be tempered; focus on listening more than speaking
- ensure the debrief discussion and editing of the notes is complete soon after the visit- the campuses and specific information about each college will blur, especially if you are on a multi-campus trip
- most of all, enjoy this time together!

BEFORE THE VISIT:

- **Using the school's website, review/research these areas, as well as any other important to you:**
 - ☐ Admissions
 - ☐ Financial Aid
 - ☐ Campus Life
 - ☐ Extracurriculars
 - ☐ Majors and Minors
 - ☐ Housing
 - ☐ Meal options
 - ☐ Facilities
 - ☐ Curriculum requirements
 - ☐ Health Services
 - ☐ Career Counseling Services
 - ☐ Academic calendar
 - ☐
 - ☐
- **If attending a formal tour or visit day, review registration information, including date, time, location, parking, and agenda if available.**
 - ☐ Register for additional opportunities if available and interested, e.g., overnight stay with a current student, classroom visit, meet with an Academic Department Head and/or Financial Aid Representative, etc.
- **Review the school's social media channels such as Youtube, Instagram, and Facebook.**
- **If time allows, research the school using online forums such as College Confidential and Niche.**
- **Using the knowledge you have gained through research and talking with your parents and others, create a list of questions or items you'd like to know more about during your visit.**
- **Game plan with parent:**
 - ☐ Review logistics of the visit- date, time, location, parking, and agenda.
 - ☐ Discuss the research you've gathered, including highlights and possible areas of concern, and the list of questions you might ask or listen for during presentations and tour (if applicable).
 - ☐ Discuss roles and responsibilities, e.g., the student will take the lead in asking and answering questions, the parent can take notes and pay close attention to any red flags or areas of concern to the student or the parent. Taking pictures on the tour is a good idea to highlight or act as reminders to review later. A parent can do this, but discretely (cardinal rule- don't embarrass your kid!).

DURING THE VISIT:

■ **Carry a small notebook and take notes!** This is a great job for the parent, but the student can and should as well.

■ **Notes for presentation/s:**

- ☐ Names, roles, contact info (if available), and topics of each. Most welcome follow-up questions at the end of the presentation and/or via email after returning home.
- ☐ Answers to key questions or areas of concern brought up during the research before the visit.
- ☐ New questions or areas of concern you were unaware of prior to the visit.
- ☐ Financial aid details related to your family's situation, e.g., how to apply for, timeline, types of aid, availability, etc.
- ☐
- ☐

■ **Notes for campus tour:**

- ☐ Condition of academic facilities, particularly in area/s of interest.
- ☐ Any current construction- where, what, why.
- ☐ General layout of the campus and how easy or hard is it to get around, particularly seasonally and distances between housing, meal options, classes, and athletic facilities if applicable.
- ☐ Location/s and availability of cafeteria/s, health services, and career counseling services.
- ☐ Overall condition and mood of the campus.
- ☐ Availability, condition, and location of housing options for all four years.
- ☐
- ☐

AFTER THE VISIT:

- **On the way back to the car, share overall impressions.** You (the teen) should always go first. Listen and be open-minded (goes for the parent and the teen).
- **Back in the car, hotel, or home (if visit was local), continue the conversation while you review the notes, adding and editing as needed.** Highlight any action items, including follow-up questions or wanting to thank someone from the visit, and ensure the notes have captured important points, any concerns/lingering questions, and overall impressions. **DO THIS STEP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER THE VISIT!**
- **Determine how the visit impacted your desire to apply and add notes accordingly.** Whether you are eliminating the college from your list of options or moving it up to a top choice, write the reasons down in your notebook in case you change your mind or the colleges start to blur together (which they will do).
- **If a follow-up item can be completed easily-- low effort or less than 5 minutes-- DO IT IMMEDIATELY.** Don't delay and let the tasks pile up, particularly if you are on an extended college visit road trip.
- **If you are tracking tasks (highly recommended), add remaining tasks to your list or spreadsheet, and review any already listed for deadlines or relative importance.**

NOTES: