

College Choice Guide

Making the final decision? Or just starting your college search? Here are some questions and tips to consider!

College Research Tips

Go to your local library. You can find college books and college guides that offer detailed school profiles, programs offered, tuition costs, campus culture and more.

Visit the universities' Web sites. This will allow you to learn more about the school's location, size, admission and financial aid information.

Call the school's alumni association. Schedule an interview with an alumnus of the school who can offer advice and share his/her collegiate experience, including activities in which you may be interested in participating.

Consult your counselor. Your school's guidance office can assist you with information on college preparation, career options and making your final school decision.

Surf the Internet. Internet sites such as www.fastweb.com provide a free college search. You can also find college blogs online to give you an inside look at campus life and activities.

Campus Visit Tips

Pick a regular day to visit. Have multiple dates and times. Avoid major events or holidays and ask for a guided tour. Arrange to speak to other students, faculty members, financial aid, admissions and career offices. Send a thank-you notes!

Pack smart. Pack more casual clothes for when you walk around campus and something more formal for an interview with the admissions office.

Stay in a dorm overnight. Sit in on a class to see how an it is conducted. Speak with current students and professors about what life on campus is like.

View other campus buildings. Check out residence hall rooms, cafeterias, computer labs, health and recreational facilities, the library, etc.

Record your experience. After your campus visits, make a list of the good and bad points about each school. Use the questions below to guide you in your college choice.

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College Choice Questions to Consider

Academics and Career Planning

Does the college offer the academic major that interests me? What's the reputation of the program you desire? Is the timeline for your program of study four years or more?

What is the average class size? What is the student-to-faculty ratio? Are most classes taught by professors or by a teaching assistant?

What kind of career planning services are available? How many graduates find jobs in their field of study? Does the school offer internships and research opportunities in your field of interest?

How easy is it to switch academic majors? Will it mean spending more time in school?

Finances

What is my actual cost? Other expenses beyond just the "sticker price" for tuition can include:

- + application and doc fees
- + add/drop a course fees
- + food and clothing expenses
- + student activity fees
- + transportation expenses (insurance, parking fees)

What is the average increase in tuition and other costs from year to year? View at least three years worth of data to chart past increases.

Student Life

Is the campus diverse? Will interaction with different people be the norm?

What student organizations are on campus? Does the school offer a variety of recreational activities, varsity and intramural sports? Are they ones you would want to join?

What's the social scene like? What is the campus like on the weekends? Do many students leave campus? What kinds of student activities are planned? When are they planned?

Do you need a car? Are jobs are close to campus? Do you need to drive to any classes? Is public transit accessible?

Housing and Campus Resources

What is the status on student housing? What is the cost? Is off-campus housing available? Is campus housing available for all four years? Are the dorms well kept or in poor condition?

Is the campus safe? What services does campus security provide? What is the surrounding neighborhood like?

What is the quality of campus resources? Are facilities up to date? Is wireless access available?

What meal options are available? What is served in the cafeteria? Are there after-hours options? Does the meal plan extend off campus? What about money/meals that go unused?