

COLLEGE BOUND

YOUR APPLICATION MENTORSM

Optimizing your College Visit

March, 2010

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The Results are in...

Seniors, you should hear from all your schools by April 1.

Seniors, please let us know your results and we are happy to sit down with you to help make your final decision. I'm keeping my fingers crossed for April 1 when all the decisions will be in.

Spring break is an ideal time to visit colleges and many of you already have your trips planned. Allow about 3 hours per school to do a tour and information session. If you don't have that much time, then spend time in a central meeting place, like the cafeteria or student center and ask students questions. The more you get students to speak openly about their experience, the better the feel you will have about the culture of the school.

AAA Trip Tik is a great online tool to help you map out your driving route. Click on "Starting Point" and click "Enter Location." In the drop down menu you can select "location type." Click on "Colleges/Universities" and you can create a driving route for your trip. [AAA Trip Planning Tool](#)

Below are some tips on how to make the most out of your visits at each stage of the process.

Diane has also written some tips on visiting schools for students with an LD who need extra support.

FRESHMAN/SOPHOMORES: UNDERSTANDING YOUR OPTIONS

The first stage is to help you determine which type of school is best for you in terms of size, location and curriculum. I recommend you visit 2-3 schools that are close to where you live including one large state school and one smaller liberal arts college. If you are on vacation, visit a school informally to get a

RATING SYSTEM FOR SCHOOLS

1. Top Choice
2. High Interest
3. Medium Interest
4. No Interest

TYPES OF SUPPORT SERVICES AVAILABLE

- Note-takers
- Distraction free/or distraction reduced testing
- Use of calculators
- Adaptive technology (Kurzweil, Inspiration)
- Extended time for assignments/tests
- Support groups
- Priority registration
- Professional vs. peer tutors
- Academic advising

TIPS FOR TRANSFER STUDENTS

[College Corner Blog on Transferring](#)

sense of schools in a different area. At this stage you are just trying to understand what is out there so you have some idea when you have to determine your needs.

JUNIORS: IMAGINING THE POSSIBILITIES

This is the time to explore schools that match your needs and also to adjust your needs as you gather more information. You should target schools that seem like they would be a good fit and focus on the following areas.

1. **Academics** How are the majority of classes taught? Are they lectures or class discussions? How intense is the work load? Is there a core curriculum that all students are required to take? How difficult is it to meet these required classes? Does the college have a strong program in your intended field of study? How much time do students spend studying?
2. **Student life** What are the students like? Do they seem like people you would be friends with? What do the students do for fun? Are they more artsy or athletic? More studious or more interested in partying? Are the fraternities and sororities? How much do they dominate the social scene? What percentage of kids stays on campus over the weekend? What percentages of kids participate in sports? Theater? The Newspaper? You fill in the blank for your passion.
3. **Campus** How does the campus make you feel? Can you see yourself here for the next four years? What are the dorms like? ? How easy is it to get to town or a nearby city? What amenities does the campus offer kids in terms of a gym, theaters, transportation to town or local attractions? What is nearby and are they things you enjoy doing?
4. **General Learning environment** What is the general feel of the campus in terms of learning and community? Are professors accessible? How so? What is the political climate, are all views accepted or does the campus lean more towards conservative or liberal views? Is the curriculum more focused on liberal arts, hands-on learning, pre-professional programs, etc.? How does this type of learning style match your own?
5. **Financial** How much does it cost for tuition, room and

board? What percentage of students receives aid? Is it needs based or merit based aid? Are there merit based scholarships available? How many students receive them and do you think you would qualify?

After your visit write down your overall impression of the school in about 2-3 sentences and determine if you want to keep it on your list. Also, make sure you sign in with admissions, so that they can note that you have visited the school.

SENIORS: REALITY CHECK

I've had several students tell me that they couldn't really imagine themselves at a school until they were accepted. Once they knew that they had a real option of going to a school they were able to decide if this is where they wanted to be for the next four years. Use spring break to visit schools to which you've been accepted.

You are in the driver's seat, so use this opportunity to look at schools with much more precision and focus. Your needs should be very clear by now and you will know what lingering questions still need to be answered.

If possible, focus again on the key areas specific to your needs.

1. **Academics** Sit in on a class, speak with a student or professor in your intended major to get a feel for what you want. Review a course catalog and see if there are classes that excite you.
2. **Student life** See if you can do an overnight. Go to a party or event. Do you feel comfortable with the kids? Sit in the cafeteria or student center and observe the interactions.
3. **Campus** Pretend you are a student and take the transportation available. Walk to town. Drive to the nearest city. Figure out where the stores are the you will be shopping at. Visit the the student center, the gym, the dorms, and any other common areas.
4. **Financial** How much does it cost for tuition, room and board? Is the cost within your budget. The numbers are

real now. Did you get any merit or financial aid? Take this opportunity to speak with financial aid and see if you can make it work.

5. **Learning Support** If you need learning support, make sure to visit the LD office and see how comfortable you feel there.

After your visit write down how the school made you feel and start to eliminate the possibilities. Create a Yes and No pile so you can narrow your choices.

TIPS FOR VISITING COLLEGES FOR STUDENTS WHO NEED EXTRA SUPPORT

by Diane

If possible, try to set up a meeting with the director of disability service to make sure that your needs can be met. Often there are different departments for physical disabilities, psychological disabilities, learning disabilities, and ADHD, so be sure to set up a meeting with the division that meets your personal needs.

If they say that they do not set up meetings with prospective students, ask if you can just stop by to see where their office is located and perhaps when you arrive you can ask if there is someone who can speak with you for a few minutes.

Sometimes, just speaking with the secretary can give you some sense of how they staff their program and the institution's commitment to the program. Below are some example questions that will help you optimize your visit.

1. Is there a fee for services? If so, how much is it?
2. How are accommodations granted? What documentation is required?
3. What accommodations and services are available?
4. How long has the program been in existence?
5. How many students are receiving services?
6. What is the application process for your program or services? (This varies widely from school to school)
7. Does your institution offer substitutions or waivers for foreign language or math courses? If so, what documentation is required? What is the process?
8. How often does the student meet with their advisor/counselor?
9. Is there informal coaching?

10. Do you offer study skills and/or learning strategies courses? Are they offered for credit?
11. Do you expect any changes in your support services in the near future.

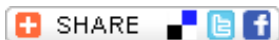
We are eager to hear about all of your visits.

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