

Narrowing Your Search for a Good College

Selecting a college is one of the most important decisions you will make in your young adult life. Listed below are several questions you should consider when visiting campuses and narrowing your choices of schools to apply to. Pick and choose those items that are most important to you and add your own questions as necessary. Be sure to get the name of the college representative/tour guide and ask yourself what sets the school apart from others you are considering.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- How large is the school?
- Where is the school located in relation to the community? Is it in the heart of the city/town (like USC) or is it a rural area? Look at surrounding businesses and places for possible part-time employment or job shadowing/internships.
- What area/state does most of the freshmen class represent?
- What is the school's minority population? Are there any special support programs?

ADMISSIONS

- What are the school's admissions requirements? Note that some schools only review SAT/ACT and GPA. Ask about the weight of extracurricular activities, references, essays. Does the school accept weighted GPA?
- Does the school have an admissions deadline or participate in rolling admissions?
- What is the average SAT/ACT score and GPA for entering freshmen?

ACADEMICS

- Does the school offer your major or program?
- Is the institution accredited? What is the school's academic reputation?
- What is the graduation and job placement rate? How many students attend graduate school?
- What is the average class size and the teacher/student ratio?
- Are most of the classes taught by a professor or a teaching/graduate assistant?
- What is the advisement process? How often do students meet with advisors?
- How many credit hours on average does a freshman take?
- Are there academic support services available? Is there a TRIO Program? Does the campus offer tutoring services, a writing center, and/or math lab?
- Are there opportunities for study abroad, internships, co-ops? What are the requirements?

CAMPUS LIFE

- Are freshmen required to live on campus? What percentage of students lives on campus?
- Are the dorms furnished? May students have appliances (microwaves, hot plates, etc.)?
- What is the roommate selection process? Are the dorms co-ed?
- Does the campus and community present a safe living environment?
- Are there courtesy/security escorts after dark? Look for call boxes around the campus and to see if the campus is well lit.
- What is the campus/dorm policy on drinking and curfew?
- Are freshmen required to have a meal plan?
- What campus organizations and activities are available for students? Ask about fraternities and sororities, religious organizations/services, volunteer opportunities, and professional/academic organizations.
- What are the school's technological resources (# of computer labs, software packages)?
- What is the quality of available student support services (counseling center, health center)?

FINANCIAL AID

- What is the cost of tuition, room, board, and fees? What is the tuition increase from last year or semester?
- What scholarships are available for freshmen? Are students automatically considered for them upon admission or are there special applications/deadlines?
- What percentage of students receives financial aid and what is the average financial aid package?
- What is the estimated cost of a student's personal expenses per semester?

