



Presented By: Notre Dame – Bishop Gibbons

Guidance Department

STEP-BY-STEP TO COLLEGE WORKSHOPS FOR STUDENTS

National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)

## THE CAMPUS VISIT

One of the most important parts of your college research is the campus visit. Visiting the colleges on your list will give you a firsthand impression of the students, faculty, staff, facilities, and programs. On a visit you can learn what the admissions office is looking for in its applicants, gain a feeling for the academic and social atmosphere, see the study/living/recreation facilities, talk with students, and get a sense of the surrounding community. A campus visit is also a way to show a college that you are interested in them, often a first step in building a relationship with a college admission office. This personal contact can go a long way at some schools regarding their admission decision.

### **WHEN TO VISIT**

- Admissions offices are open all year, but **visiting when classes are in session is best**. If you visit in the summer, you can certainly learn about admissions and get a general tour of the campus, but it might be hard to get a good sense of the atmosphere of the college.
- The best time to visit? Spring Break of your junior year can be ideal. **Even if you are not certain where you might eventually apply, if you can visit one large, one medium size, and one small school, you will be better prepared to make final decisions about where to apply.**
- Once you have narrowed your list in the fall of the senior year, you may want to make return overnight visits to schools to which you will be applying. On these college visits, plan to go to classes and interact with students.
- If at all possible, try to visit colleges before you apply. You may discover the school is not at all what you had thought it would be based on the on-line research you had done. However, attending accepted students visit programs at the colleges you have visited previously can help you narrow down your choices.
- **SPECIAL VISITATION DAYS:** Some colleges will offer spring programs for juniors and fall programs for seniors. Check online or contact the admissions office since you may need to make a reservation.

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## ***HOW TO PLAN A VISIT***

- A good campus visit takes 2-4 hours, including time to get a sense of the surrounding town or area. Don't try to visit more than two schools in one day.
- Figure out an itinerary: where you want to travel, how you will travel, how far one school is from another
- Call the admissions office at least two weeks ahead of time to schedule your visit. Admissions offices have set times for tours and information.
- Think of all the things you want to do when you visit and ask what the admissions office can help you with: talking with an admissions officer, taking a tour, attending a class, meeting with a professor in an area that interests you, eating a meal on campus, talking with a coach or advisor of an extracurricular activity that interests you, etc.
- Research each college before you go visit so you'll have specific questions to ask. Spend time finding out things you couldn't learn just looking online.
- Contact students you might know at the school before you plan to visit.

## ***WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU VISIT***

- Focus on people, place and programs in your visit.
- Take pictures as well as notes.
- Talk to as many people as you can: students, dining hall workers, tour guides, and faculty.
- Look at a campus newspaper and check out campus bulletin boards.
- Wander through snack bars and student centers and observe how Students interact with each other.
- Investigate the surrounding area; transportation and hotels.
- Keep track of all names of people you talk with, especially in the admissions office.
- Go to the admissions session and take the official tour. Listen to the tour guide, but don't jump to a conclusion about a particular school based solely on your experience with a tour guide.
- If you are meeting or interviewing with an admissions staff member, be on time, be yourself, ask questions that deal with your particular needs, make sure you mention anything about your background or achievements that you want the admissions office to know.

## ***AFTER THE VISIT***

- Fill out the **college comparison** worksheet before you get to another campus.
- Send a thank you note to any admissions person you meet.

## **BEFORE YOUR VISIT**

You are **encouraged** to schedule your college visits when ND-BG is **not in session**. However, if you must miss school, the high school should be notified by the following procedure:

- A parent must report the absence to the Attendance office at 518-393-3131.
- Upon returning from your visit, you must bring proof of the visit back to the main office.

**Note:** *An absence for the purpose of visiting a college will count as an excused educational absence.*

You might consider the following:

- Discuss interviewing techniques with your counselor, if appropriate.
- Take a list of your activities or a resume with you in case asked for this information.
- Bring an unofficial copy of your transcript. This can be obtained from the guidance department.
- If you are a Fine Arts student, develop a portfolio.

**Discuss what you would like to see or learn at the school. You probably will develop a list that looks something like this:**

<i>Art galleries</i>	<i>Dining Rooms / Meal Plans</i>	<i>Residence Halls</i>
<i>Athletic facilities</i>	<i>Fraternity and sorority houses</i>	<i>Science laboratories</i>
<i>Book Store</i>	<i>Health Services</i>	<i>School newspaper office</i>
<i>Career/Placement Center</i>	<i>Library</i>	<i>Security</i>
<i>Classrooms and lecture halls</i>	<i>Music practice rooms</i>	<i>Student center</i>
<i>Computer facilities</i>	<i>Neighborhood surroundings</i>	<i>Theatrical facilities</i>
<i>Counseling and tutorial services</i>	<i>Radio and TV stations</i>	<i>Town or City adjacent to campus</i>
<i>Department Chairperson</i>	<i>Religious centers</i>	<i>Transportation</i>

Parents/guardians and students generally have different needs while visiting campuses. Parents generally are concerned about the overall welfare of their teens and therefore want to check out the health services, counseling, support services, the career placement services, and financial aid services. Finding out how these services function and how a student would connect with these services is invaluable knowledge.

**Parents should identify a contact person on the campus** for future reference.

## **QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT WANT TO ASK**

## ***Admission Officers, Students, or Professors***

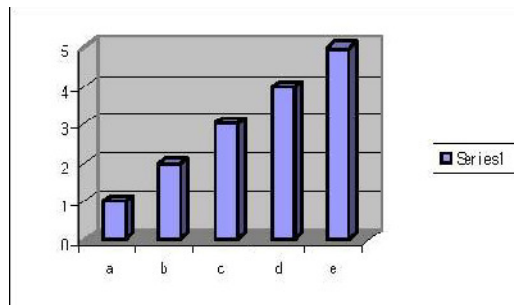
- What is unique about your institution?
- What types of students are happiest at this college?
- What type of student usually succeeds here?
- What departments are considered to be the strongest? Weakest? Average?
- What are the most popular majors? Why?
- What percent of courses are taught by professors and what percentage by teaching assistants?
- What percentage of students graduates in four years? Five years?
- What percentage of students is from outside the college's immediate vicinity?
- What percentage of faculty/staff is Black, Hispanic, Jewish, or Asian?
- What fraction of the students leaves campus for the weekend?
- Where do students live after their first year: in residence halls, in fraternity/sorority houses, or off campus?
- What intramural sports are available?
- What support services are available to students?
- Are computers available to undergraduates?
- When does the academic calendar begin and end?
- Is a personal interview on campus required?
- Is there a benefit to applying EA, ED, or priority?
- What percent of applicants are accepted early?
- When will I get a response to my application?
- How are the applications evaluated?

- Which test scores are preferred?
- Do you super-score the ACT?
- Is the Act writing score evaluated?
- What do students on campus brag about?
- How active is the social life?
- What are student and campus traditions?
- How safe is this campus?
- What do students complain about most?
- What types of services exist for personal and career counseling?
- What type of advisement system is used here?
- Who teaches introductory courses – professors or grad students?
- What opportunities exist for independent study and study abroad?
- What is considered a typical freshmen year schedule of courses?
- Why would this be a good college for me to study my intended major?
- What if I am unsure about my major? Is this a good place to explore?
- What are typical course requirements – exams, papers, projects, etc.?
- What type of student seems the happiest here?
- What are students' attitudes towards the college?
- After graduation what do typical graduates of my chosen major do?
- Is the campus comfortable with ethnic/racial/religious diversity?
- What are some of the important college regulations for all students?

## YOUR CAMPUS EVALUATION

Before you make your visit, you should devise some form of an objective evaluation sheet where you list each factor you have decided is a priority to investigate, leaving space for additional comments. Both you and your parent can rate the school after your visit. A numerical scale 1-5 is an easy way to do this.

- 1 - No way
- 2 - Eh
- 3 - Others are probably better
- 4 - I can see myself here
- 5 - OMG!



Colleges are complex institutions. It really isn't possible to know everything about a college after a brief visit, and even students who have been there for several years might have a hard time giving you an accurate character reference for their college. But visits are the best way to gather clues about a college, especially if you investigate in a rational and systematic manner.

Many colleges may seem similar until you look more carefully at individual aspects. The "College Evaluation Checklist" will help you determine the character and distinctiveness of a specific college and be an aid in comparing colleges. In some parts of the list you may be checking more than one item. You might use the categories as a basis for discussion with your parents and friends.

The "College Comparison Worksheet" can be used after your college visits to compare and contrast items noted on the "College Evaluation Checklist." Use this handy reference to make side-by-side comparisons of your top schools or create your own. Both the worksheet and checklist are also available on the ND-BG Guidance webpage.

## DURING A VISIT

### Some areas to examine carefully:

1. **Surroundings and atmosphere.** Does the campus seem peaceful or overly isolated? Is it active enough or too rushed? How does it feel to you? Do the members of the faculty seem to be friendly and helpful in the attitudes and relationships with students? How do students relate to each other? Does the student body as a whole seem to be happy? Do the students seem to have any particular pattern or unusual mode of dress?

2. **Facilities and buildings.** Does the college have a good, up-to-date library? Do the reading and reference rooms provide study conditions that appeal to you? Do the laboratory facilities appear to be adequate and are they arranged to assure a reasonable degree of safety? Does the college have a good student social room, union center, or commons that serves as a major center of student activities? What leisure time facilities are available? What is the condition of the health, housing, and dining facilities? Do the classroom buildings appeal to you? Check age, state of repair, and safety of buildings, along with location in reference to residence halls, fraternities and sororities, off-campus housing, library, religious facilities and student center or union.

3. **Departments of interest.** What opportunities exist in your intended field of study? What are the requirements? What scholarships are available to entering students? Does the college have adequate instructional equipment for the department or major in which you are especially interested? Do freshmen have an opportunity to take some of their courses with full professors?

4. **Student life.** Visit residence halls, student union or center, eating places on and off campus, if possible. Have a meal on campus. Read bulletin boards, posters and campus newspapers for insight on the happenings. What types of entertainment are offered? What provisions does the college make for acquainting freshmen students with the college before and after arrival? What percentage of the students belong to fraternities and sororities? How are these organizations controlled?

5. **Classes.** Sit in on one or more classes, if possible. Observe both the instructor's approach and the student's response. How would you fit in? What is the typical size of classes for freshmen? Do teaching assistants (TA's) or professors teach most freshmen classes?

6. **Extra-curricular activities.** Look into the operations and existence of fraternities, sororities, service clubs, organized sports, informal sports, school paper and magazines and social events that are of interest to you. If the college is not coeducational, what arrangements are made for students to meet members of the opposite sex at dances, parties, or other social functions?

7. **College Costs.** What is the average total cost per year for students, exclusive of travel to and from home? What does the typical student of this college spend for books each year? What is the total of all fees required? Can the payment of college costs be handled on the monthly or other deferred payment plan? What scholarships are available to entering students?

At the end of your visit, you need to be able to answer these questions for yourself before leaving the campus:

a) "Do I feel comfortable here?"

b) "Will I be academically challenged?"

c) "Will I have the opportunity for a variety of social and academic/career-oriented experiences?"



## HELPFUL INFORMATION TO GATHER

### **Housing**

- Possibility of doubling or tripling
- Number (and percent) of students living on campus
- Do a majority of students stay on campus on weekends?
- Co-ed dorms; by floors; by wing
- Microwaves; hot pads; irons; refrigerators
- Laundry facilities
- Telephone in each room; voice mail; restrictions; high-speed internet; wireless
- Policies regarding drinking, smoking, pets, etc...
- Residential Assistant opportunities; Sophomore, Junior, or Senior year

### **Meal Plan**

- Plan options
- Number of dining rooms; hours open
- Snack bars

### **Security**

- Campus lighting
- Courtesy vans; how often? How late?
- Operated by campus security staff or by students

### **Transportation**

- Buses and trains; how far away? Can students walk to the station?
- Cars on campus for freshmen; parking permit; fees
- Local mass transportation

### **Weather**

- Average temperatures during school year
- Average snowfall

### **Academics**

- Semesters vs. trimesters vs. quarters
- Average number of courses
- Average size of classes
- Courses taught by professors vs. teaching assistants
- How often do students meet with their advisors?
- Extra help and tutors
- Computer facilities
- What kind of school work are the students doing?; papers, written exams, projects, portfolios, etc.

### **Library**

- Hours
- Consortium with other college library systems.

**Athletics**

- NCAA-Division I, II, III, NAIA or Independent
- School spirit – spectator sports
- Intramural sports participation
- Sports facilities; pool, skating rink, racquetball courts, weight rooms, etc. for all students

**Recreation**

- Student center activities
- On-campus plays, shows, concerts; can non-majors participate?
- Off-campus facilities; how far away?
- Distance from skiing, boating, etc....

**Shopping**

- Groceries
- Malls

**Fraternities & Sororities**

- Number of each
- On-campus; off-campus houses
- Percent of student population who join

**Work Study & Internships**

- On-campus work-study jobs; number of hours/week; hourly pay rate
- Internships in campus offices
- Internships available in local companies; who is eligible; number of weeks long
- Career Placement office on-campus; effectiveness

**Study Abroad**

- Availability; what countries & universities
- Who can participate?
- Length of opportunities
- Costs

**Religion**

- Mandatory courses or services
- Opportunity to attend services on-campus; off-campus; how far?

**Clubs & Organizations**

- Students encouraged to join; percent of students participating?
- How many on-campus clubs and organizations do you have?

**Other Things to Make Notes About**

- General campus layout and attitude of present students.
- Ask tour guide to which other schools he/she applied. Why did he/she select this school?
- Will tour guide's knowledge, friendliness and enthusiasm (or lack of) influence me a great deal about me possibly being a student at that school for the next few years?

# College Visit Checklist

To help you find the right college, fill out one of these forms each time you visit a school.

College Name

City

State

Size

Tuition

Room & Board

Financial Aid Options

## Admissions Contact

Name

Email

Phone

## To-Do Checklist

- Talk to professors
- Visit the library
- Tour campus
- Sit in on a class
- Eat at a cafeteria
- Talk to admissions office
- Read the college newspaper
- Check out computer labs
- Talk to students
- Visit student housing
- Read bulletin boards
- Check out recreational facilities
- Check out student activities
- Tour the city around campus
- Eat at an off-campus student hang-out
- Picture yourself living here

## Rate It

On a scale of 1-5, five being the best, rate the following:

People \_\_\_\_\_

Social life \_\_\_\_\_

Classrooms \_\_\_\_\_

Residence Halls \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_

Campus \_\_\_\_\_

Food \_\_\_\_\_

## Ask a Student

What is the best part about this college?

What is the worst part?

What is a typical day like?

What do the students do on the weekends?

How are classes structured?

Why did you choose this college?

## The best part about my visit

## The worst part about my visit

Decide

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## College Comparison Worksheet

<b>COLLEGE NAME</b>	1	2	3
<b>LOCATION</b> -distance from home -on or off campus living			
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b> -type of school (2yr-4yr) -school setting (urban or rural)			
<b>ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS</b> -deadline -test required -GPA required -letters of rec / essay			
<b>ACADEMICS</b> -majors and minors -popular programs -typical class size			
<b>COLLEGE EXPENSES</b> -tuition , room and board -application fee (waiver) -estimated total budget			
<b>FINANCIAL AID</b> -priority deadline -required forms -scholarships			
<b>HOUSING</b> -residence hall requirement -food plan			
<b>Facilities</b> -academic services -recreational -other			
<b>ACTIVITIES</b> -athletics -clubs, organizations -other			
<b>CAMPUS VISITS</b> -special opportunities -open house			
<b>OTHER</b> -campus safety -support services -accreditation -other			