

Top 5 Reasons to Make a Campus Visit

Campus visits are often time-consuming, expensive, and, let's face it, intimidating. However, they're also a very important part of the college search process. After all, this is where you're going to *live* for the next four years. And sure, you've seen lots of photos on the brochures, but you wouldn't buy a house without visiting it in person, would you?

If you're still not convinced, consider the following five reasons you should consider making a campus visit. And remember: if possible, visit the school while classes are still in session. That way you'll get the most accurate picture of what your life will be like, should you decide to enroll.

Facts vs. feelings. Bottom line: You need to feel comfortable on campus, and no brochure, slideshow, or virtual tour can give you the corporeal sense of "I belong here" like a college visit. Walk around. Talk to your gut. Your subconscious will have a lot to say on the matter, so make sure you listen.

See if you fit in. Do the other students look/sound/act/feel like you? Can you imagine yourself talking to them, eating with them, attending a class, throwing a party? These are people who will surround you in the coming years, so make sure you feel at home among them.

Get answers. Not just canned FAQs from a website. Not cold, clinical facts and figures from an admissions officer. Real answers, from the food service workers, the professors, and the students—you know, the people you'll be spending the next four years of your life with. They're living your future reality. Ask them what it's like.

See what's popular. Sure, the college website boasts "12,000,000 clubs and activities," and your favorites are on there—but is it actually a club-club, or is it four people meeting in a basement? Does Division I football mean huge tailgating parties every weekend, or is this the sort of school where soccer takes precedence? Visiting campus means seeing posters, bulletin boards, and practice fields with your very own eyes. So if that underwater knitting club is a deal breaker for you, make sure it's not just two students sitting in a bathtub.

Demonstrate "interest." Maybe you're the type of student who seeks the gold star . . . or maybe you aren't. Either way, if you're interested in attending a college, it is definitely to your advantage to get your name on their visitation records. Colleges want to improve their yield, meaning that the more students who accept admissions offers, the better. Therefore, the more interested you appear, the more likely (it would seem) you would be to accept an offer of admission . . . which means that the school might be more likely to offer *you* admission than, say, an equivalent student who did *not* tour the campus.