



VISITING SCHOOLS

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In order for you to select the proper school to attend, the campus visit is one very important thing you can do. While there is a great deal of information online, and in books and catalogs, nothing can replace actually walking the grounds of a campus. All colleges look good online or in the literature they produce, but until you get a chance to check out the facilities, the dorms, and the student life, you will never know if a particular school is the right place for you. Assembled below is some information on official and unofficial visits to assist you in your efforts.

Unofficial Visit/Campus Visits (you pay to see the school)

- **What visiting opportunities exist?** Many schools will offer the basic tour where you show up and go on a guided tour with a current student and see the various academic buildings, dorms, recreational facilities, and maybe the cafeteria. Some schools offer extended visit programs. If need be, the coach may be able to arrange for you to stay with a current team member. Whatever tour you choose you should call ahead to make sure the tour(s) are running and have room in them for you and your family as some are limited in space.
- **Timing.** When you take your visit can have a big impact on how you feel about a certain school. Touring the University of Minnesota in February will be much different than touring it in September. It would be a shame to get a negative impression of a school because you were trying to navigate around campus in 6 inches of snow when it was 20 degrees out. If you sense that you are going to be looking at colder weather schools, it may be a good idea to start in the summer or early in the fall of your senior year or even the spring of your junior year if you have time.
- **Take notes.** Your visit may take place many months before you need to decide what school you are going to attend, so it would be a good idea to take notes about your visit.
- **Ask questions.** The only stupid question is the one that is not asked. Don't be afraid to ask questions on your tour or to anyone that you bump into on the way. Most students will be pretty helpful as well and will give you a candid rundown on what they think of the school.
- **Greek Life.** Does the school have fraternities and sororities and could you imagine being a part of this or not participating. While not all schools have these, the one's that do can be very different for students that do not participate in Greek life.
- **What support programs exist?** College is a difficult adjustment partly because there is no one around to push you or make sure that your work and studies are on track. In High School, you had class every day with the same teachers and had work that was probably due and checked every week. In college, you will have less contact

with your professors and the work you are required to do will not only be harder but spaced out more. An entire class in a semester may consist of 1 paper and 2 tests and this is an easy way to fall behind quickly. It's important not to get lost academically at college and you should look into what support programs are in place to keep students "on-track" so to speak.

➤ **What is the department for your major like?** While there are many schools that will appear strong to you or have good reputations, it is your job to investigate just how strong they may be. While the overall academic strength of a school is important, you need to look further at the specific programs and departments that are of particular interest to you. Some schools are known as great Liberal Arts schools, some schools are known as great engineering schools, and others may be known for their business programs.

➤ **What makes this school unique?** Is there anything that makes this particular school unique? Do they have any majors that are not offered at other schools? Do they have a 5-year MBA program, do they have any science or chemistry equipment that other schools don't have, and do they have a radio or TV station. Bates College owns a 550-acre conservation area that is used for biology and geology students to conduct experiments. Penn State University offers Kinesiology 004, Principles of fly tying and fly-fishing for trout, which takes advantage of the many rivers located near the campus. Students attending the University of Denver will find a class in Casino Operations which deals with the business aspects of careers in gaming. Students attending Texas Christian University can sign up for the Sociology of Wedding which teaches them both the ceremonial aspect of weddings as well as the business aspects of wedding planning.

➤ **The living situation.** Without a doubt, you will spend the majority of your time at school either in your dorm room or in whatever housing options your school has for you. Housing on campuses has changed in the last several years to accommodate changing expectations of students. New condos, townhouses, and apartments have been added or remodeled at many schools throughout the country. Dorm life in some cases can either be a major source of frustration or a major source of enjoyment depending on your situation and your lifestyle and in some cases you will have little control over where you live.

➤ **Meet with the coach.** If you are planning to play athletics, it would be good to sit down with the coach and find out more about the program, even if you are not being actively recruited. Ask the coach what their needs are for next year and what their current recruiting efforts have brought them. Ask them what is expected of athletes in terms of seasonal time commitments and so on. Ask them to see the various facilities you will be using as well.

➤ **Meet with the players.** It's a good idea to meet with one or two players on a team and many coaches will arrange this ahead of time. Even though the coach may have hand picked whom you meet with, you will still get more candid answers and information from the player than you will from the coach. Ask the players what the program is like in terms of games and practices. The coach may not tell you that you run at 6AM in the winter but the player sure will. Ask them what the team needs are and how the coach uses his or her players and what practices are like. It's important

to try and meet as many players on the team to see what they are like not as athletes, but as people.

➤ **Eat the food.** If you want to know what the food will be like, don't just look at it, EAT IT. Remember, you have to eat campus food 3 times a day for 3 or 4 years. Cafeteria food has come a long way over the years and many schools are placing a renewed emphasis on serving not on quality food but catering to different eating habits.

➤ **Drive around town.** You should check out the area the school is in. What is around town such as movie theatres, grocery stores, banks, bowling alleys, video rental stores and so on? How close is the airport or the train station or the bus station? How safe does the area look. Where do you go for a haircut?

➤ **Who are the students?** Where are the students from, are they commuters or mostly residents, are they from the state the school is in or from all over the country, do many go home on weekends leaving the campus quiet and lifeless, are they mostly from private schools or public schools, what is the ratio of men to women, how are they dressed, do they look like you, are the students from wealthier families or middle-class families?

➤ **See what is being planned.** Schools are constantly changing. You should find out what new programs are being added or changed, and what new facilities are being added or redone.. Schools will add or drop classes and majors as they see fit as well, so if you are entering a school to study international marketing or chemical engineering, it would be nice to know that those majors will be there for 4 more years.

➤ **Ask questions specific to you.** Every person has particular things they enjoy or want to pursue and the school you select should be able to fulfill some of this. You should find out if the school has specific things that are important to you. Such as; does the school have a radio station, does the school have updated computer facilities, does the school have intramural sports you can participate in, does the school have tennis courts you can use, does the school have programs abroad, does the school have any internship programs, does the school have any special majors, does the school have a church or synagogue, are there many companies in the area that recruit students?

➤ The tour will be standard almost every time and have a set time limit and a set course. It is your job to find out what is available that pertains to you specifically. If you are not an athlete and the tour spends an hour showing you the expansive athletic facilities that does not do much good. If you are a theatre major and the tour does not highlight the theatre, it is your job to check that out on your own. You should never leave a school wondering if you missed anything. Monmouth College in New Jersey has over 25 clubs ranging from art, marketing, dance, psychology, anthropology, pre-law and more. But it's your job to find out more on these programs

➤ Going to a summer camp at school's you are interested in is a great way to meet that coach, see the campus, and get to know some of the players. It also allows that coach to see you play.

Official Visit (Paid for by school)

Although you are always welcome to visit college campuses at your own expense, you are limited to only five official visits in which the college pays for part or all of your expenses. Completion of the SAT or ACT and a high school transcript are prerequisites to an official visit, and you may only go on an official visit after the first day of senior classes in high school. Usually an official visit consists of an overnight trip to campus where you will have a member of the soccer team as your host. While you are on campus, you will meet members of the team, learn more about the soccer program and be better acquainted with the coaching staff. In addition, the coaches and the team may bring you to a sporting event and classes so you can get a better feeling for the student body and the academic environment at the school. In fact, you may meet other recruited athletes who are on their official visits as well. An official visit is truly a genuine way to see what it would be like to be a student-athlete in college.

Most importantly, talk to people and take advantage of every opportunity to visit a classroom, a sporting event, a lecture, etc. You will be spending most of your time with players on the team, so you will be able to see what a typical day is like for a collegiate student-athlete. Ask the players on the team what they think about the coach. What do the players think of the coach's coaching style? Academically, you should tell the coaching staff and the players what your interests are. If you like art history, there may be a great art history seminar that you can attend. Perhaps there is a member of the team who is majoring in art history and can talk to you about the department. Talk to the players on the team. If you like the school, these players may just end up being your upperclassmen teammates in college and important figures in your life when you need advice and support.