

Making the most of your time on a college tour

Seven tips to share with your students who are visiting colleges this summer

By Kelli O'Connor



According to *U.S. News and World Report*, school counselors are a vital piece of the college-readiness puzzle for high school students. As they progress through high school and start looking at colleges, the information you provide will assist them as they prepare for the next step in their education. That is why we have compiled some words of wisdom from admissions offices across the country for you to share with your students and parents as they prepare for the college visit.

1 Do your homework

It seems a bit simple, but not all students are prepared once they reach campus. "Not having an idea of what you are looking for wastes time," says Tayrn Hamill, part of the admissions team at Lynn University. "The majority of students say they are 'undecided' but that is not always the case. They have to take the time to ask themselves important questions like what type of classroom do I learn best in [large or small]? Do I want to go away to school? What would be my dream job? All of these things prepare them to find that perfect fit at a college or university," concludes Hamill.

2 Mark your calendars

Call to schedule tours early. Most colleges prefer to provide personalized visits to potential students rather than the large group tours. Advanced knowledge of the students' visit, potential majors they are considering and any extracurricular activities they would be interested in will aid the colleges in putting forth the most useful material, tours, students to talk to and faculty to meet. Also, encourage students to schedule a visit while the school is in session — many parents and students head out

to visit campuses during school breaks when their high school is out of session.

3 Schedule a meeting — when you are ready

"If a student has decided on a major, I would recommend asking to meet with an advisor within that program," commented Ashley Witt, a recruiter at Southeast Community College. Witt, however, also believes "if a student is considering two or three majors, I would wait to visit with faculty."

4 Ask questions

Witt says, "students should ask about campus activities, residence life and services available on campus. Tutoring, career advising, accommodations, academic advising and career services" are all benefits provided by colleges. Students should have questions about the items that they will take advantage of once they are enrolled. Also, encourage students to speak up. Hamill believes "students should try to figure out what their deal breakers are and ask questions based on those...students need to ask the questions, not default to Mom and Dad."

5 Talk finances

College is a major expense, and exploring every avenue available to assist with that expense is no small task. "Students should ask about any renewable scholarship opportunities and institutional grants that are available from the school," noted Joe Campos, Director of Admissions at Johnson & Wales University. "They must visit with the financial aid or planning department during their campus tour so that they are aware of the location, services and individuals who would be avail-

able to assist [them]," concluded Campos.

6 Be honest

Justin Roy, Vice President of Marketing at William Peace University believes the one question students should ask themselves is — "is this a place that feels like home to me? No matter what I say, or a student shows someone, it's all about that singular connection. If the answer is yes, then keep engaged! If they aren't feeling it, let us admissions counselors know. We're here to counsel, not sell."

7 Put down the phone!

Witt remarked, "Students should not be on their phones while on tour. I cannot tell you how many students come into my office and sit at my desk and fiddle with their phones. It is not only distracting to me, but obviously they can't listen and text at the same time."

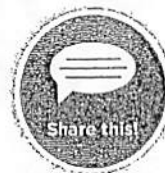
Roy agrees and adds advice for students: "Try not to stay glued to your phone. The occasional stop for a photo, or a tweet, or letting your friends know what's going on... sure. But, never looking up and making eye contact, or trying to engage with your tour guide (who's probably a student)? It can make us believe you're not really interested."

In the end, students should find a campus where they feel comfortable, where the faculty is encouraging, where the finances make sense for their family, and where they can see themselves for the next four years.

Kelli O'Connor is a freelance writer based in Rochester, N.Y.

TOURING

Ask these questions on a campus tour



What are the most important questions to ask on a campus tour? Here are some you should ask:

- ▶ Is there a core curriculum? How restrictive or broad is it?
- ▶ Is study abroad encouraged?
- ▶ What are the most popular majors?
- ▶ How accessible are the faculty and staff? How well do they get to know students?
- ▶ Is there guaranteed housing for freshmen? Where do upperclassmen live?
- ▶ Are there laundry and kitchen facilities?
- ▶ Do many students go home on weekends, leaving the campus deserted?
- ▶ If they stay on campus, how do students spend their leisure time?
- ▶ How accessible are the athletic and recreational facilities for non-intercollegiate athletics?
- ▶ What is the average financial aid package for the freshman year? For the remaining school years?
- ▶ What is the placement record for jobs and/or graduate school in my chosen field?
- ▶ Are campus buildings new? If not, are the older buildings in good shape? How well are the grounds maintained?
- ▶ How appealing are the residence facilities? Is there an adequate number? Are they well lit? Are there safety features such as fire escapes, limited entry, etc.?
- ▶ Is the main eating facility inviting, clean and well managed? What are the hours and food choices?
- ▶ Are there modern computer labs and equipment?
- ▶ Where is the campus clinic located and is it well staffed and equipped?
- ▶ Is public transportation available and where is the nearest airport and/or train station located?

— Lou Ann Benigni-Lynch