



TIPS ON TALKING WITH COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES

Many students and their parents hesitate to talk with a college representative because they feel they may have an obligation to a school after they visit, or they may feel uncomfortable, not knowing what to ask a representative. You should remember that, just as students are shopping for a college, representatives are also shopping. Signing up for more information or talking with a representative does not commit you to make an application to attend a particular college. In fact, sometimes representatives will recommend a different school to you, because the representative feels another college may better fit your needs.

Before talking with college representatives, you should know your grade point average, class rank, and test scores (PSAT, PLAN, AND ACT OR SAT). This information can help a college representative give more accurate information regarding your admission status.

The following suggested questions may assist you in obtaining useful information from college representatives:

- Ask if the representative is on the admissions staff. If not, ask what he/she does for the college.
- Does the college have a preference as to the ACT or SAT? If so, why?
- Is an admission essay required? If so, how much emphasis is placed on it?
- What factors are emphasized in the admission process? For example, how important is GPA, test scores, recommendations, essays, etc.
- Does the college give credit for Advanced Placement test scores? CLEP Scores? If so, what scores are needed?
- What is the academic profile of students attending the college? Average GPA, test scores, and courses.
- If you know what you wish to study, ask if that is offered at that school and how many students with that major are there at the college.
- Does your particular major have any specific requirements for admission in addition to the usual requirements for admission to the college, i.e. specific high school courses, portfolios, audition, or tests?
- If undecided about a major, ask what the strong majors are at the college.
- Ask what unusual programs they offer for students?
- Check out college costs. How much is tuition? Room and board? Other costs?
- Find out about financial aid. What percent of qualified students receive financial aid? Do they offer scholarships? What kind, and what does it take to qualify?
- What are residence hall policies?
- Is a housing spot guaranteed if you are accepted?
- Do students eat in the dorm or are there central eating facilities? What kind of meal plans are there?
- How large is the school? How large are freshmen classes? What is the average class size?
- Are freshmen taught by professors or graduate students?
- Are advisors assigned to students? If so, are they in the same field of study as the student?
- What percent of freshmen return for the second year? What is the major reason they leave?
- Are cars allowed on campus? If so, are there parking restrictions?
- What are the main social activities on campus? Do students tend to leave on weekends? What do students do in their spare time?

After you have narrowed your choices to several schools; try to visit those schools, to walk the campus and get some sense of each school. Talk to the financial aid staff, talk with admissions again, talk with students: if possible, visit a class and stay overnight.

Questions to ask college representatives

College representatives, as well as college students, admissions counselors, and faculty, genuinely enjoy talking to high school students. They like to share their ideas about their college, and they all appreciate students who have thought about the college and want to know more than is in the course catalog, in the viewbook, or on the Web site. They like thoughtful questions, and their answers can help you make a good college match. Ask questions of interest to you in the following categories:

Students

- How would you characterize the majority of students?
- From what economic background are the majority of students?
- Are there clubs, activities, or housing that are minority-related?
- What do students like most about the college? Like least?
- Has the student government made any real contribution to the school? How do you get into student government?
- What political, social, or academic issues concerned students last year? How did the administration react? What was the resolution?

Social life and campus activities

- What do students do for fun?
- What is the role of fraternities and sororities on campus? If I didn't want to join, could I have a satisfactory social life?
- What are the dominant social groups on campus? Do the groups get along with one another? Have there been any problems?
- What role do team sports play in the social life of the college? What happens on football or basketball weekends? If I didn't want to join in, would I find kindred spirits?
- Is there a good balance of academics, social life, and extracurricular activities?
- What were the social or cultural highlights last year?
- What is the role of the campus newspaper?
- Is there an alcohol problem and, if so, how is the college handling it? What is the incidence of binge drinking? Do students feel safe on campus?

Campus facilities

Housing and dining

- Is there something I should know about housing that would help me in my choice?
- What are the types of food plans? All you can eat? Vegetarian? Kosher?

Questions to ask college representatives (page 2)

Campus facilities (cont.)

Activity centers and athletic and recreational facilities

- What kinds of facilities does the student center have? Is it a magnet for student activities? Are there other hangouts?
- Do you think the college pays attention to its appearance? How would you rate the fitness center?

Health, career counseling, special student services, and security

- Is there a doctor, nurse, psychologist, or career counselor on campus? What is the waiting period for appointments?
- Is the office for special services adequate to the demand? How good is the security on campus?

Library

- What have been students' experiences with the library? Have there been complaints?
- Is the library well equipped with computers and copy machines?

The community off campus

- What is there to do in town? How would I get there?

Academics and faculty

- What is distinctive about education here? What is the educational philosophy of the college? Has it changed much in recent years?
- Is the honor code working? How widespread is cheating?
- What is the most popular major on campus? Why?
- Do you think that students are generally enthusiastic about their classes? Do people talk about their courses outside of class?
- How would you characterize the academic pressure and workload?
- Are there research possibilities with the faculty? In what areas?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the advising system?
- What is the quality of student and faculty relationships? Is the faculty interested in and accessible to students after class? Do faculty members participate in student activities?
- Are curriculum changes in the works? How will that affect my college years?
- Are any departments being cut back or discontinued? If so, why?
- Are any new programs scheduled for the next four years?

Source: Adapted from Campus Visits & College Interviews by Zola Dincin Schneider (College Board, 2002). This book has many more questions you might ask of college representatives, plus chapters on every aspect of the interview and campus visit.