

When you talk with college representatives at a College Fair or when you visit, it is important to have some specific questions in mind which pertain to your personal interests and situation. It helps to know what you want to know, perhaps highlighting pertinent questions below.

1. **First** know if a college or university meets your most **general criteria**. Is it
 - a. A 2 or 4 year school?
 - b. A liberal arts, technological, or business institution?
 - c. Coeducational or single gender?
 - d. In the city, country, small city, suburb, or small town?
 - e. The size you want? How many undergraduate students are there?
 - f. A public, private, or religiously affiliated institution?
 - g. A residential or commuter school, or a combination?

Usually there will be a number of schools that meet all your particular desires in the areas above. Then you can pay attention to the details listed below.

2. Next, check out the **academic opportunities**. Does it meet your current interests and offer possibilities for you to change your mind?
 - a. Does this school have your **specific major** or one similar? (*Sometimes similar majors with the different goals can get you to the same goal.*) How competitive is it to be admitted to that major? (e.g. nursing)
 - b. Can one have a **double major**, an **interdisciplinary major**, or both a **major** and a **minor**? Can one **self-design a major**?
 - c. If you are *still deciding* (a common situation at this stage), find out what this school does to help you figure out what you want to do. How soon do you have to “declare” a major?
 - d. Are there specific **core course requirements** (aka “gen. eds”). What leeway is there to focus on strengths and avoid weaknesses?
 - e. How does this school **advise freshmen**? What help will you get to make this transition?
 - f. What is the **average class size**? How likely are you to have classes in a large lecture format?
 - g. What is the **faculty-student working relationship** like? Are professors accessible?
 - h. Can undergraduates ever work with professors on **research**?
 - i. Is there a **learning center** available for help with study, writing, or math skills if you might need that?
 - j. Do seniors have to do a concluding **major project, thesis or comprehensive exams**?
 - k. Are programs and opportunities available for **study abroad**?
 - l. What kind of school calendar is offered? Semester, trimester, 4-1-4, 4-4-1, or other variations?
3. **Non-Academic Opportunities**
 - a. **Sports**- which are played here and at what level? Are there intramural opportunities??
 - b. **Clubs and Organizations**- Is what you would like offered here?
 - c. **The Arts**- If you are NOT majoring in music, drama, or visual art but would like to participate, is that possible at this school?

- d. **Fraternities and Sororities**- Whether you do or do not want this, what is the situation on campus?
 - e. **Residential life**- What are the social opportunities on campus: speakers, music, film, dances, etc. Is this a “suitcase school” and does that fit you or not?
 - f. **Surrounding area**- What does this offer, whether for cultural events or outdoor activities? How accessible is it? How safe?
4. **Career Preparation**
- a. Is there a **career counseling center**? Can you use it even after graduation?
 - b. What is the school’s track record for placing graduates in jobs or graduate or professional school?
 - c. If you are interested in **ROTC**, does this school have a program or a link to one at a nearby school?
 - d. What role does this college play in helping you find **internships** or **cooperative work programs**?
5. **\$\$\$\$\$\$** *There is danger in sorting your schools merely by sticker price: often need-based or merit aid might make a school affordable for you. Ask a few pertinent questions:*
- a. Will you be required to live on campus or could you choose to live off-campus and not pay the room and board fees? (N.B. *This is not always less expensive, but you might want to know the policy.*)
 - b. Is this institution **need-blind**? (*That is, will they decide whether or not to admit you before they look to see if you need money?*)
 - c. Will this school meet your “**full demonstrated need**” (according to the FAFSA and Profile financial aid forms) or will they leave a **gap** for you to will with other funds?
 - d. Will the financial aid award remain the same for all four years, providing your family circumstances stay the same? (Or will they bait you, hook you, and then diminish the award?)
 - e. Are **merit** scholarships given out based on your abilities in certain areas rather than on your financial need? How do you apply for those- merely by applying, or with special applications?
 - f. Are there plenty of **jobs** available on campus or in the immediate area if you want or need to work while in college during the academic year?
6. **Admission**- Will I measure up? What do I need to do?
- a. How many years of certain subject areas are required or recommended? Ask about **math** level required, **sciences** needed, years of the same **foreign language**, or years of **social studies**?
 - b. When the Admissions Committee looks at applications, what things are most important to this school?
 - c. What kind of **standardized test scores** are the norm for this school? How important are they in the admissions process?
 - d. What kind of **GPA** is the average? Will they recalculate your GPA on their own basis from your transcript?
 - e. If you had certain reasons for having a weak performance at some point in your high school career, will they take that into account?
 - f. Is there anything you can do in the remaining years of high school to increase your chances for admission?

“College is a match to be made, not a prize to be won.”

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