



TEN WAYS TO “TEST DRIVE” A COLLEGE

A campus visit is the best way to evaluate whether a college suits you



1. Learn about the college before you visit.

Read materials from the college and check out their Web site. If you are visiting more than one on a particular day, refresh your memory about that school just before you arrive. Be sure to spend at least a half day at each college.

2. Evaluate the environment of the campus.

Is the campus too big or too small for you? Do you like the nearby town or do you feel isolated? Consider how you would get around campus—particularly in the rain or snow.

3. Visit the admissions office and participate in the information session.

Ask questions that help you clarify the academic program at the school and the type of student who is most comfortable and successful there. You may choose to have a formal interview with an admissions staff member. Bring a resume of your grades and activities. Dress nicely, but not out of character.

4. Take the student-led tour of campus.

Take advantage of the opportunity to ask questions about campus life from a peer. Recognize, however, that tour guides are not necessarily typical of all students since they formally represent the school.

5. Check out the dorms.

Find out about the dorm options available, such as all-freshman or coed. Arrange in advance to spend the night in a dorm, if possible. Picture yourself living in a dorm. Are you comfortable with where it is located on campus, such as the proximity to classes or the campus center?

6. Arrange for campus meetings with department heads in the subjects that interest you.

Also meet with coaches in sports where you excel, and former graduates from your high school. Bring a resume that highlights your experience in your area of expertise. Ask about opportunities based on your skills and interests. Write down the names of any officials you meet with and send personal thank-you notes when you return home.

7. Sit in on classes and check out the library.

How is the rapport between students and faculty in the classroom? Look through the books at the library in your area of interest. Look for quiet places to study.

8. Look into life beyond academics.

Check out the athletic facilities, theater, and student center. Read the notices posted in the dorms or on bulletin boards. Can you see yourself joining in?

9. Have lunch in the student center and watch student interactions.

Talk with students all over campus about their impressions of the school. Look at the students themselves. Do you feel comfortable among them?

10. Write down your impressions of each college you visit.

After a while, the visions of different schools start to blur if you don't immediately stop to record your thoughts! Keep a list of pros and cons for comparison.

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INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS ASSOCIATION

3251 Old Lee Highway, Suite 510

Fairfax, Virginia 22030

703-591-4850 • www.IECAonline.com • info@IECAonline.com