

## Tips for a Successful College Visit

College visits are important. Before you commit years of your life and thousands of dollars to a school, be sure you're choosing a place that is a good match for your personality and interests. You can't get the "feel" of a school from any website or guidebook, so be sure to visit the campus. There is no substitute for stepping onto a campus lawn. Websites cannot give students the confidence that "yes, I can fit in here," or "no, I definitely do not belong here." Do use the website to get an idea of what questions you want to ask, places you want to see and things you want to do! Below are a few tips for getting the most out of your tour:

- 1. Remember, This is Your Show** You, the person applying and going to college, should be in the driver seat during this process. This is your job, not your parents'! You should be the one to contact your schools and make campus visit arrangements. The HIES school calendar provides numerous opportunities for college visits: Fall, Winter and Spring Breaks, President's Day Weekend and Summer. While the first preference is to tour a college when classes are in session, it's OK to visit when students are on break. You'll learn a lot just by seeing the campus and may decide you want to return when class is in session. Now, call the admission office or go online to schedule your visit...and don't forget to wear comfy shoes!
- 2. Explore on Your Own** Of course you should take the official campus tour, but be sure to allow time to poke around on your own. The trained tour guides will show you a school's selling points. But the oldest and most impressive buildings don't give you the entire picture of a college. Nor does the one dorm room that was staged for visitors. Try to walk the extra mile and get the complete picture of the campus.
- 3. Read the Bulletin Boards and Student Newspaper** When you visit the student center, academic buildings, residence halls and even the restroom, take a few minutes to read the bulletin boards and the student newspaper. They provide a quick and easy way to see what's happening on campus. The ads for lectures, clubs, recitals and plays can give you a good sense of the types of activities going on outside of the classrooms.
- 4. Eat in the Dining Hall** You can get a good feel for student life by eating in the dining hall. Try to sit with students if you can, but even if you're with your parents, you can observe the bustling activity around you. Do the students seem happy? stressed? Also, is the food good? Are there adequate healthy options? Many admissions offices will give prospective students coupons for free meals in the dining halls.
- 5. Attend the Information Session and Visit a Class in Your Area of Interest or Major** The Admission Office will often offer an information session before or after the tour. Do this! If you already know what you want to study in college, a class visit makes a lot of sense. You'll get to observe other students in your field and see how engaged they are in classroom discussion. Try to stay after class for a few minutes and chat with the students to get their impressions of their professors and major. Be sure to call the admission office in advance to schedule a classroom visit ~ most colleges don't allow visitors to drop in on class unannounced.
- 6. Schedule a Conference With a Professor, Coach or Student Leader** If you've decided on a possible major, arrange a conference with a professor in that field. This will give you an opportunity to see if the faculty's interests match your own. You can also learn a lot about a sports team or a student led club or organization.
- 7. Talk to Lots of Students** Your campus tour guide has been trained to market the school. Try to find students who aren't part of the admission effort. These impromptu conversations can often provide you with information about college life that isn't part of the admissions script. Few university officials will tell you if their students spend all weekend drinking or studying, but a group of random students might.
- 8. Sleep Over** If it's at all possible, spend a night at the college. A few schools encourage overnight visits for seniors, though others may not provide this opportunity. It would be wise to be in touch with HIES alumni or other Atlanta area students to schedule an overnight visit. Nothing will give you a better sense of student life than a night in a residence hall. Your student host can provide a wealth of information, and you're likely to chat with many other students on the hallway. You'll also get a good sense of the school's personality. What exactly are most of the students doing at 1:30 a.m.?
- 9. Take Pictures and Notes** If you're visiting several schools, be sure to document your tours. The details may seem distinct at the time of the visit, but by the third or fourth tour, schools will start to blur together in your mind. Don't write down just facts and figures. Try to record your feelings during the visit ~ you want to end up at a school that feels like home.