



A
POCKET
GUIDE TO

CHOOSING a COLLEGE

Questions to ask on your college visit

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Picking the right college is a big decision.

Go on campus tours. Sit in on classes. Eat in dining halls. Look through recent issues of student newspapers. Checkout the college Web site.

But most importantly, be prepared to ask a lot of questions when deciding on a college.

This guide offers key questions to ask of tour guides, admissions staff, faculty, and students about how much their college will support your learning and development.

REMEMBER...

...Ask questions that matter to your ability to learn, grow, and succeed in college.

ACADEMICS



Challenging intellectual and creative work is important to student learning. Better colleges and universities emphasize the importance of academic effort and have high expectations of their students.

To find out how challenging the academic programs are, ask...

- How much time do students spend studying each week?
- Do courses challenge students to do their best?
- How much writing is expected?
- How much reading is expected?
- Do class discussions and assignments include the perspectives of diverse groups of people?
- Are students expected to use numbers or statistics throughout their coursework?
- How often do students make course presentations?



LEARNING WITH PEERS

Students learn more when they share what they are learning with others, and work with each other on assignments or projects.

To find out how students collaborate in the learning process inside and outside of class, ask...

- How often do students work together on class projects and assignments?
- Do students help each other understand difficult material?
- How often do students work together to prepare for exams?
- How often do students interact with others who have different viewpoints or who come from different social or economic backgrounds?

EXPERIENCES WITH FACULTY

When students interact with faculty inside and outside of class, their teachers become role models and mentors.

To find out how well students and faculty interact, ask...

- Are faculty members accessible and supportive?
- Do faculty members clearly explain course goals and requirements?
- Do students receive prompt and detailed feedback on tests and assignments?
- How often do students talk with faculty members or advisors about their career plans?
- How often do students talk with faculty members outside class about what they are learning?
- How many students work on research projects with faculty?





RICH EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Experiencing a variety of educational opportunities makes learning more useful and meaningful.

To explore opportunities for learning, ask...

- How many courses include community-based service-learning projects?
- What types of honors courses, learning communities, and other distinctive programs are offered?
- How many students get practical, real-world experience through internships or off-campus field experiences?
- How many students study in other countries?
- What co-curricular activities are most common (performing arts, athletics, fraternities and sororities, guest speakers, etc.)?

CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT

Students perform better and are more satisfied when their institutions support them academically and socially.

To discover how students view the campus environment, ask ...

- Do students use learning support services (tutors, writing center)?
- How satisfied are students with academic advising?
- How well do student services staff (career planning, student activities, housing, etc.) interact with students?
- What healthcare, counseling, and other wellness opportunities are available?
- How well do students get along with each other?
- Are students satisfied with their overall educational experience?



The questions in this guide are based on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Each year NSSE collects information directly from students at hundreds of colleges and universities. Responses to the survey provide valuable information about the lives of students and the quality of their college experiences.

Check to see if the college you are considering participates in NSSE. If it does, detailed information on the student experience may be available from the admissions or institutional research office. For a list of participating NSSE schools or for more information, please visit nsse.iub.edu.

Images in order of appearance: Cover; Colgate University, University of Texas, Brownsville, Earlham College, University of Cincinnati, Allegheny College, Dalhousie University.



NSSE
national survey of
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