

## The American Counseling Association's "*Counseling Corner*" Weekly Columns

### **Making The Most Of That College Visit**

from the American Counseling Association

The campus visit can be an important step in selecting a college or university. Whether the school(s) under consideration are local, or across the country, visiting the campus provides a first-hand opportunity to evaluate the school and its programs.

But to get the most out of the visit it's important to do more than simply follow the student tour guide around campus and then head back home.

A starting point, before visiting any college campus, is to decide if the school is right for the student on several levels. Does it offer the programs that meet the student's interests? Is it big enough, or small enough, to feel comfortable for the student? Is it affordable for the family? Info to answer these broad questions will be available thru the school's website.

If a school is of interest, use the website again to check out their campus visitation programs. Most schools ask prospective students to pre-register for tours, and may also allow them to register to sit in on a class, or to spend a night on campus.

It's important to take full advantage of your time on campus. The campus tour, always led by an upper-classman in love with the school, certainly offers a lot of information. But remember that he or she is being paid, and has been trained, to make the school sound good.

Make the most of the tour by paying attention and asking questions. It helps to have a list of questions ready ahead of time. And take notes. It's hard to remember all of what's seen and heard, especially if multiple schools are going to be visited. But also feel free to do some investigating beyond the tour.

Take time to talk to other students on campus. The campus student union building or campus coffee shop will always yield students or faculty willing to talk about their experiences at the school.

It's also a good idea to try to talk with staff and faculty in the major being considered. Many professors are happy to talk with a prospective student about their field and the school's offerings. Getting permission to sit in on a class in the major being considered is another way to learn more.

Choosing the right school can be a stressful decision for any family. But do some investigating with a thorough campus visit and that stress can be greatly reduced.

*Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org.*

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