College Research Tips

- **Consult your school counselor.** Your high school guidance counselor can assist you with information on career options, college preparation and choosing a college.

- **Visit the college and university web sites.** This will allow you to learn more about the school's size, location, admissions policies and cost and financial aid information.

- **Go to your local library.** You can find college books and college guides that offer detailed school profiles, programs offered, tuition costs, campus culture and more. Just be sure you are looking at a recent publication.

- **Online College Search.** Fastweb has a free comprehensive college search at [http://colleges.fastweb.com](http://colleges.fastweb.com). Other Internet sites also provide a free college search. Look for college blogs online to give you an inside look at campus life and activities.

- **Talk with a college / university admissions representative.** An admissions representative can answer just about all of your questions with a single phone call.

- **Call the college's alumni association.** Schedule an interview with an alumnus of the school who can offer advice and share his/her collegiate experience, including activities in which you may be interested in participating.

Campus Visit Tips

- **Pick a regular day to visit.** Visit the college when classes are in session. Check the college's online calendar when planning a visit. Avoid major events or holidays, such as Spring Break. Ask for a guided tour. Arrange to speak to other students, alumni, faculty members, financial aid, admissions and career offices. Send a thank-you note to all those you meet!

- **Pack smart.** Pack less formal clothing for walking around campus and something more formal for an interview with the admissions office.

- **Stay in a dorm overnight.** Sit in on a class to see how it is conducted. Speak with current students and professors about what life on campus is like.

- **View other campus buildings.** Check out residence hall rooms, cafeterias, computer labs, health and recreational facilities, the library, etc.

- **Take pictures and/or video.** Capture your visit with pictures of the campus, the buildings, the dorms and the town.

- **Eat in the dining hall.** This is a great place to see students and even see what you could eat if you attend.

- **Record your experience.** After your campus visits, make a list of the good and bad points about each school while your memory is still fresh. Use the questions provided here to guide you in your college choice.

- **Meet current students from your school.** Meet with a student from your school or your local area to get a better idea about the transition.

Academics and Career Planning

- **Does the college offer the academic major that interests me?** What’s the reputation of the program? Can you graduate in four years, or does the program take longer?

- **What is the average class size?** What is the student-to-faculty ratio? Are most classes taught by full-time professors or by a teaching assistant or part-time adjunct?

- **What kinds of career-planning services are available?** How many graduates find jobs in their field of study? Does the school offer internships and opportunities in your major?

- **How easy is it to switch academic majors?** Will it mean spending more time in school?

Finances

- **What is the out-of-pocket as a true bottom line cost (difference between the cost of attendance and gift aid, such as grants and scholarships)?**

- **What is my actual cost?** Other expenses beyond just the “sticker price” for tuition can include: Application fees, add/drop a course fees, food and clothing expenses, health insurance, student activity fees, transportation expenses (insurance, gas, parking fees)

- **What is the average yearly increase in tuition and other costs?**

- **If I’m offered financial aid, how might the award or package change with new each year?** What is the average loan indebtedness of those who graduate? 

Student Life

- **Do you feel you fit in and feel comfortable on campus?**

- **Is the campus diverse?**

- **What student organizations are on campus?** Does the school offer a variety of recreational activities, varsity and intramural and club sports? Are they ones you would want to join?

- **What’s the social scene like?** What is the campus like on the weekends? Do many students leave campus? What kinds of student activities are planned?

- **Do you need a car?** Are jobs close to campus? Do you need to drive to any classes? Is public or campus transit accessible?

Housing and Campus Resources

- **What is the status of student housing? What is the cost?** Is off-campus housing available? Is campus housing available for all four years? Are the dorms well-maintained?

- **Is the campus safe?** What services does campus security provide: safe ride program, call boxes, regular patrols

- **What is the surrounding area like?** Have there been any campus or safety issues in the past 2 years?

- **Are campus facilities up-to-date?** Is wireless Internet access available and is there an extra cost for it?

- **What meal plans are available?** What is served in the dining hall? Are special dietary plans available? Are there after-hours options? Does the meal plan extend off campus? What about money/meals that go unused?