

College Visit Guide

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**COLLEGE
WISE**



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It may seem odd to (re)share a College Visit Guide in the age of distance learning and six feet bubbles. But, despite its name, this guide was actually never really about building an itinerary or sitting in a dining hall. It was about asking smart questions, learning how to make the most of your time with a college, and getting the answers you needed. And even if you can't do that in person, there are still ways to do that from a distance.

It's also important to remember that many students were never able to visit campuses before attending a school, so the ability to assess a college from a distance isn't something that's new. What is new is that no one can really visit a campus right now. And because of that, colleges have adapted. There are more online student panels, information sessions, and virtual tours than ever before (truly, it's a virtual visit jamboree these days).

So, in the age of social distancing, here's a few sections I'd recommend reading, as you navigate the world of online visits:

- 1) To visit or not to visit? This section is an overview of reasons to visit, but also goes into alternate ways to get a sense of a school (virtual, and pre-work to consider for those who can hopefully visit in the spring).
- 2) During your visit. If you sign up for a virtual tour, information session, or student panel, read through this section to think about what to ask, or what to look for. Curious about opinions (especially around current college policies)? Check out the online version of the newspaper. Wondering what typically happens on weekends or a Tuesday night? Look back to pre-COVID event calendars. And read through the "best questions to ask" to find a good one to ask for your online information session.
- 3) What do I do after my visits? For those of you applying to college this fall, jump to this section to think about how to use these virtual visits in your applications. What did you learn, what excited you, and how can you share that with colleges? And remember, they don't need to know they have a marine biology major (they know that!). They want to know why you're excited by that. Try to layer in why certain details stuck with you from these virtual visits, not just facts that you learned.

For more details on how to explore from a distance, check out "College Research Resources" and "How to Research Colleges During COVID-19" in the resource library.

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I. Introduction

What's the purpose of this guide?

College visits can be a crucial and eye-opening time in a student's life. It's a time when the idea of college starts to become real for most visitors – when they can see other students reading on the lawn or playing ultimate Frisbee and think, “Wow, that could be me.”

But, college visits can also be an exhausting, frustrating, and potentially expensive waste of time for a family. And, perhaps worst of all, students can walk away with no better sense of the school than when they arrived. Here at Collegewise, we tend to hear the same things from families when they reflect on past visits. They'll say things like “We loved our tour guide,” “The campus was lovely,” or (our perennial favorite) “There was a waffle machine!” There's nothing wrong with any of those – and, heck, who doesn't love custom waffles? But, the problem is that most students would finish by saying, “I still don't know if the school's a good fit.”

The good news is that there's a lot a family can do to influence the outcome of a visit. Most of that comes from going into a visit prepared – knowing what to expect, how to get the most out of it, and how to have fun along the way. So, I wrote this guide to show you how to do just that.

How to use this guide

At Collegewise, we've been on plenty of college visits and tours, and we agree that most colleges need to rethink their visit experience. But, we also believe in counseling families to focus on what they can

control. In that vein, this guide will focus on the latter – what families can truly control in the visit process. While I do so enjoy waxing philosophical about the college visit (which you can read in the “for colleges” section at the end), I wanted this guide to serve students, families, and counselors.

For that reason, this guide is structured to focus on the steps you *can* control in having successful, fun, and engaging college visits. It will help you think about the purpose of the visit, if it will be valuable for your family, and how to make the most of your time when you’re there. It will offer suggestions for planning trips locally, tips on how to make the most of a short amount of time or a small or non-existent travel budget, and ideas to help you make the best use of your time on campus, both during the visit and long after (e.g., when submitting your applications).

And, because I do believe this is part of a broader conversation about colleges more honestly presenting themselves to the public, I’ll also offer takeaways for colleges about how to best manage this process.

Where this information came from

I am a graduate of Scripps College, where I worked as an overnight visit coordinator and tour guide and majored in the art of walking backwards (as well as American Studies). From there, I worked as an admissions counselor at Mills College in Oakland, California. In addition to convincing young people that women’s colleges do still exist, I also oversaw the tour program and helped to rewrite the tour script and train incoming guides.

On the college side, I saw what an impression a college visit could make on students – that moment when they stepped onto campus and had an “aha” moment. I also realized how little time colleges are

given to make an impression – positive *or* negative. Now, on the counseling side, I find that in the hurry to *impress*, colleges often lose the chance to just be *honest*. And because of that, students and parents can miss a chance to really understand a school and its potential fit. It can be stressful when you plan (and go on) endless visits but end up without any real clarity at the end.

So, as you've likely already seen, the information in this guide comes from my personal experiences, as a tour guide, an admissions counselor, and now, as a college counselor at Collegewise.

A college visit disclaimer

I'm not suggesting that every student and family travel thousands of miles in pursuit of the perfect college. Or that a visit is the *only* way to learn about a college. In fact, there are countless ways to learn about and experience a college all from the comfort of your own living room – through a virtual tour, a guidebook, or an email to a current student. But, a visit is *one* way to learn about a college, and one employed by thousands of families each year. So, we want to make sure the process is enjoyable and actually helpful.

II. To visit or not to visit?

It may seem odd to start a guide about college visits with a section on possibly *not* visiting colleges. But, given how expensive and time-consuming visits can be, I thought it would be helpful to question the premise of “needing” to visit colleges at all. Occasionally, we see families rush into visits because it’s what so many others do during spring break. Those are usually the same students who talk about the visits all blurring together and struggle to distinguish between colleges after seeing so many. While we love the enthusiasm of families jumping headfirst into the visit process, we also want our families’ time spent wisely and helpfully. And, given the financial strain of visits, we certainly want it to be worth your while. So, the list below will offer alternatives for those families who are wary of a whirlwind college tour or who are hoping to ease into the process.

Alternatives to the college visit

No matter what, being a *thoughtful* college shopper is much more important than visiting every single school on a college list. And, there are ways to learn more about your schools without planning formal visits throughout high school. So, I’ve put together a list of options for those students who may not have the desire or means to visit all the schools on their list – or for those just starting out in the process.

1. Browsing vs. Test-Driving

At Collegewise, we like to draw a distinction between “browsing” and “test-driving.” Browsing is the easy, convenient, stress-free (and relatively planning-free) way to visit a college. These could be visits within driving distance of your home, visits when your friend or older sibling is touring campuses and you can tag along, or visits when you’re en route to Disneyland and a college is on the way. For parents

of younger students, this is a great option to ease students into colleges if the more thorough visits seem daunting. Test-driving, on the other hand, is reserved for when a student has already done the prep work and is visiting to see if they could really see themselves at the school (and I'll go into that preparation later on).

2. Waiting

For some students, it makes more sense to wait to visit colleges until after the admissions decisions have arrived. That way, you can save time and money, as well as the disappointment of visiting a school that later denies you. And, depending on when you apply, you may hear back by the winter holiday of your senior year, which gives you nearly five more months to make a final decision. Plus, visiting once you're admitted can be an exciting time and invites you to be more critical when you step onto campus.

3. Other resources

Before you start to plan a road trip college visit extravaganza, it's important to ask yourself if you even need to visit. With everything virtual these days – from tours, to classes, to interviews – you can learn *almost* everything about a college before ever stepping foot on campus. And, depending on your budget and schedule, packing up and trekking to your list of colleges may not be feasible. As simple as it sounds, I like students to start by going to Google Maps and putting the little yellow man down right outside campus. What do you see? Cow pastures or downtown Manhattan? Getting a sense of the area around the campus, just from your computer, is a great way to start envisioning what it would be like to live there. I also recommend YOUiversityTV, a website that has virtual tours for hundreds of college campuses.

Good reasons to visit a school

All that said, there are some things you can learn about a college that you really can't find anywhere else – the feel on campus on a Tuesday night, the conversations happening in the dining hall, or how many people show up to the football games. And, many students talk about having a “gut” feeling the moment they walked onto the campus of their future alma mater. There are certain aspects of the campus – the buildings, the people, the climate, and the mood – that are hard to capture virtually or through your favorite guidebook. If you sense you may need that extra boost, and you have the time and resources to do so, it might be time to plan a college visit.

III. Before your visit

While the building blocks of a college visit are often similar (an information session, a tour, a stop by the frozen yogurt machine), individual students – and their wants and needs – are not. So, it can be helpful to sit down before you schedule the visit and ask what it is *you* really want out of the visit and your college experience overall. To get started, the information below will outline what to expect in a traditional college visit, as well as ways to begin to customize the experience.

Understanding the anatomy of a college visit

The majority of the time, families will head to the admissions office on campus, go on a tour, and attend an information session. Before you leave for the tour or sit down for the information session, the admissions office will collect your information so they can make note that you were on campus and store that away in your file.

The most common admissions experience—the campus tour—is typically run by a current student, someone usually outgoing and happy to chat your ear off about her school. Tours will run anywhere from an hour to 90 minutes, on average, and will give you a sense of the campus overall. Depending on the time of year, you may be able to enter into the dining hall, a dorm room, or a class in session. The information session, on the other hand, will usually be run by an admissions officer who will go through the application process and some facts and figures about the school. Sometimes, colleges will also give visitors the option to sit in on a class, have lunch with a student, or even stay overnight. While these can be useful, they may not be for everyone. And, depending on your schedule, you may only have an hour to get a sense of the school.

First steps

If you decide you'd like to do a more formal visit, the first step is to go to the website of each school you plan to visit. They will have a section of the site devoted to "prospective students," and you'll want to look for the information about planning an on-campus visit. The visit section can also offer some helpful tips about hotels in the area and restaurants close to campus.

Now, many schools will allow you to reserve tour times, information sessions, or overnight visits on the website itself. Others still want you to call or email a request. Be sure to follow the directions carefully, as slots can fill up quickly (depending on the time of year), and you want to make sure you reserve a spot.

Questions to consider as you plan

Unlike the "browsing" college visit we talked about earlier, the "test-drive" visit is one where you are really asking yourself if this is a school you could see yourself attending. And, in order to get the most out of the visit, it's important to first think about what you're most looking forward to in college. Is it that you can finally join a Quidditch club, that you can't wait to debate philosophy in class, or that you'll be surrounded by people committed to social justice?

If you're having a hard time thinking about what you want out of college, think about what you've enjoyed so far in high school. What's made you successful, or what's made things difficult? What times have you felt most valued, most supported, or most yourself? The answers to those questions can help you get closer to the type of environment you'd want to create in your college experience.

Then, when you step onto a campus, you can test your ideas of what you want with the reality of that experience. Maybe you thought you wanted an urban school, but when you get to New York, you realize the constant buzz of people through Manhattan might be a bit much. Or, you worry about large lecture halls, but you join the front row of a class on campus and find students just as curious and engaged as you are.

Again, you can also learn those things whether you visit a school down the street or a school across the country. If you live in California and are convinced you want to go to University of Michigan, try visiting University of Southern California or UC Berkeley. If you're sure you want to read literature in the woods but can't make the trek to, say, Maine, try St. Mary's or the Claremont Colleges. Even if a

**FOR PARENTS AND COUNSELORS:
WHEN YOUR STUDENT ISN'T VISIT-ENTHUSIASTIC**

If you're a parent or a counselor of a student who isn't keen on college visits (or protests each time you try to "just stop for a second" at a college campus), know that it's entirely normal. Many 17-year-olds may be excited about college, but spending spring break going on 20 college visits can sound like a long homework assignment. In those cases, a local visit is a great way to ease them into the process.

student wants to be much farther away from mom and dad, there's a lot to be learned just by spending some time on a campus near home.

Frequent planning mistakes and how to avoid them

In the weeks leading up to spring break, families often come to us with grand travel plans to tackle 20 college visits in a matter of 3 days. While we always appreciate the enthusiasm, we rarely see those trips end well. If you're considering taking the time to do visits, here are some tips on what to steer clear of in the planning stages:

1. **Avoid the marathon tour.** With only a few days and ample colleges to visit, it can seem tempting to do a 30-minute spin on every college campus in New England. But, most students tend to burn out and the visits blur together. We recommend no more than two visits a day to really maximize the time on campus.
2. **Don't visit *only* reach schools.** Boston is a popular college campus destination. But, if your only stops are Harvard and MIT, you're not giving yourself or your student the chance to get to know a campus she likely doesn't know much about (and one that is more likely to admit her).
3. **Leave some room for fun.** Some college visitors will be happy with whatever happens on their trip, and others want to plan ahead as much as possible. Both types of college visits can work just fine, so go with what's comfortable for you. But, our overarching rule is that college visits should be an enjoyable, even fun part of this process. Don't over-plan to the point that this starts to feel like a chore.

IV. During your visit

So, you've decided to do a visit – either locally or in the cornfields of Iowa. Now what? A lot of your visit should be informed by the answer to your first question: *Why am I here in the first place?* What is it that I'm most looking forward to when away at college, and what can I get out of a campus visit that I can't get from sitting at home researching?

As I noted above, there are ways to customize any campus visit to align with what you're looking for in a college experience. Even if you're still figuring out your priorities in a college, the more thoughtful you are in your campus visit, the more enlightening (and fun!) the experience will be. The suggestions below will give a sense of the range of opportunities that await you as a savvy college shopper.

Which visit is right for you?

If you're an avid hand-raising, question-asking student and you need to be surrounded by other voraciously curious learners, you may want to spend your hour sitting in on an English class rather than going to the info session. Or, if you want to spend your weekends going to sports games, head to campus on a weekend and see how many people show up to the big game (and maybe snag one of those foam fingers to blend in).

I had one student who was a diehard sports fan and pep rally king at his high school. When his family started planning college visits, we decided they would plan them around the upcoming college basketball schedules of the colleges he was interested in. His parents even dropped him and his sister off

for one game on campus so they could mix into the student section. They both walked away with a clear sense of the camaraderie of the student body in ways they never could have gleaned from a guidebook.

Even if sports chants aren't your thing, there are still plenty of ways to get a sense of the campus feel. Some find it helpful to hear the perspective of an admissions counselor, in which case the information session may be useful. And, if the campus feels overwhelming, you're an architecture buff, or you like a brisk walk, the tour may be enlightening.

No matter where you go, it's still important to check in with the admissions office, as they oftentimes have helpful self-guided walking tour booklets, lists of classes open to prospective students, or an eager current student who might want to chat about social life on campus. And, all colleges will take note that you visited, so it's important to let them know you were there.

A few words about tour guides

As someone who has worked both as a tour guide and an admissions counselor, I thought I'd share some insight into the role of the tour guide and what to consider when on a tour.

Each school differs in its approach, but most have a set script that guides follow (though they can inject their own experiences when relevant). Tour guides *do not* act as admissions officers, nor do they relay your questions on the tour to the admissions director. Feel free to be yourself. This is a chance to hear the student perspective, so don't worry about impressing anyone.

Some tour guides are paid, while others have volunteer or work-study positions on campus. But, more than anything, the admissions office chooses them as *representatives* of the school they attend. These are people the college is proud to show off to prospective students.

That said, it is important to not be swayed *too* much by the guide. Colleges purposefully pick guides who represent a wide range of personalities, backgrounds, and interests; it's mostly by chance that you may end up with a guide who is your doppelganger, or one who is your complete opposite. Just because you love (or are skeptical about) your tour guide doesn't mean that all students will be like him or her. Know that while the guide may represent qualities the school celebrates, you may not have similar personalities. Recognize that a college contains multitudes. When you're on the tour, take a moment in

Pro Tip: If you end up chatting with someone in the admissions office (student, staff, or counselor), make sure to grab their business card or email address. A post-visit thank you note is an incredibly kind (and frequently overlooked) gesture.

the dining hall to people watch. Look at the decorations when you walk through the residence hall.

Notice the range of personalities and opinions on campus before you jump to any conclusions.

Non-traditional campus visit suggestions

If you're pressed for time or are tired of the information session and tour combo, consider some of these options. And, each campus will differ on what they allow prospective families to do, so make sure to check in with the admissions office before crashing a classroom or the dining hall.

1. Sit in on a **lecture hall style class** to see what a big class really feels like

2. Grab lunch in the **dining hall** and (ever so tactfully) people watch
3. **Have a picnic on the campus lawn** – most schools have a center thoroughfare that's excellent for watching students go by or catching a Frisbee
4. **Attend a concert or presentation** – many schools host events that are free and open to the public; check the calendar in advance to see if anyone interesting is coming to town
5. **Stroll the local neighborhood** – whether you're surrounded mostly by trees or a quaint downtown scene, it's helpful to get a feel for what your college neighborhood would be
6. Pick up a **school newspaper** to see what students are talking about
7. Start a **conversation** with a staff member or student – you'd be surprised how many members of the community are eager to talk about their own experiences on campus
8. Go to a **sporting event** – if you're in town during a big rivalry game, get some tickets and scope out what it would be like to be a student there – and remember to wear the right team colors!

The best questions to ask on your college visit

Whether you decide to go to an information session or chat with a student on campus, chances are you'll want to ask some questions. Throughout this guide, I've talked about thinking through *why* you're visiting a campus and what you hope to get out of the visit that you can't get from at-home research. You want to think of your questions the same way. **What questions do you have that can't be answered with a Google search? What would be the benefit of a real person answering them?**

Perhaps the most asked question at any college fair table and information session is, "How good is your ___ department?" And, you'd be hard-pressed to find a college rep who doesn't say, "Great!" Now, there's nothing wrong with wondering about a certain department, especially if you are particularly keen on a specific major, but the answer to the question will likely not help you. Because, well, the responder doesn't really know what "good" looks like to you. Do you want lots of hands-on projects? Do you want to study lots of different things in your first few years? Do you want to write a yearlong thesis (a really long paper)? **The more you dig into what you want or need from your college, the more direct your questions can be – and the more helpful the responses.**

To get you started, I thought I'd share some of my favorite questions to ask, whether on a tour, in an information session, or while grabbing coffee with a current student. Plus, these are questions you can't really find answers to online.

To ask admissions counselors:

1. What **type of applicant** do you get most **excited** about? Why?

This question is a new and improved version of “What are you looking for?” It forces the admissions officers to make their responses personal, which this process most certainly is. And, the answers they give – trailblazers, nerds, readers – will help you see if you might be in the right environment.

2. What **words of advice** would you give someone starting this application process?

Counselors read hundreds of applications each year, and they likely have a lot of sage thoughts on what they wish they could tell their applicants. Give them the chance to share what they’ve learned.

Pro Tip: No matter what you do on campus, always remember to bring a notebook and write down 1-3 things after each visit. These should be things that really stood out to you – maybe a dining hall straight out of Hogwarts, the ability to take engineering *and* English classes, or a competitive 24-hour dance-battle every year. Many of these schools will ask questions on their applications about why you’re a good fit, and those notes can help you articulate what would make that community the right one for you.

To ask current students:

1. What **surprised** you most about coming here?
2. What do students **typically do** on Tuesday nights? What about Saturday nights?
3. When students struggle – academically, emotionally – where do they go? What **resources** have you found most helpful?
4. What **clubs/activities** are most popular on campus?
5. How often do you (or your classmates) **participate** in class?

V. What do I do after my visits?

So, you've just finished a day, weekend, or whirlwind week of college visits. What's next? If you did end up chatting with an admissions counselor, current student, or staff member, make sure to send a handwritten thank you note, addressed to the admissions office and their name. You don't have to wax poetic about the visit, but maybe share a favorite piece of the experience, along with your heartfelt thanks. No need to send 100 roses to accompany it (and know that this gesture isn't about impacting your admissions decision). It's simply the right thing – and the kind thing – to do.

You'll also want to gather together all the notes you took on your visits, especially for the schools to which you'll likely apply. If they're scattered on college brochures or popsicle wrappers, transfer them all to a central place where you can find them easily in the future. These will be incredibly handy as you work on your future supplemental essays about "why this college?"

Some sample supplement questions:

Boston University (250 words): Please tell us why BU is a good fit for you and what specifically has led you to apply for admission.

Santa Clara University (150 words): If you visited campus, describe what aspect of your visit experience most influenced your impression of SCU.

Northwestern (300 words): What are the unique qualities of Northwestern - and of the specific undergraduate school(s) to which you are applying - that make you want to attend the University? In what ways do you hope to take advantage of the qualities you have identified?

In addition to your main college essay, most schools now ask supplemental questions to see if you would be a good fit in their community. As you'll see below from the examples, your answers may be greatly enhanced by what

you learn, see, and hear on your campus visits, so the more you can recall, the better.

If you're a rising senior or in the fall of your senior year, chances are the college's supplemental essays are already available, so take a look at the prompts while the visits are fresh in your mind. You won't want to answer by giving a play by play of your recent visit, but there will be details you likely discovered that really gave you a fresh sense of why you feel you'd thrive there.

One of our Collegewise students wrote about a school's famous "graffiti wall" and how she saw herself leaving her mark on campus in future years; another mentioned stumbling on a heated political debate in the dining hall and envisioning a future of intellectual discussions (over a good meal, of course). Instead of writing about the facts and figures of what made that school great, these students reflected on what made those places exciting *for them*. So, the more you can tailor your visit to what thrills you – be it debates about the electoral college or a leisurely game of Frisbee – the more you'll know when you've found the place for you. And, the better you can then convey that to the college when they ask "why us?"

Lastly, if you have the time or access, make sure to talk to your college counselor about these visits. He or she may be able to recommend further schools based on your experiences, or help you whittle down your list of colleges based on your impressions.

VI. What if I can only visit during the summer?

With school schedules oftentimes so jam-packed, the summer is the only time for some families to even consider a college visit. And, we find that a summer visit is absolutely better than no visit at all. For those families who have limited time, remember that a visit to a local college during the school year can help provide those insights listed above – even if it's a school that's not of interest.

But, if you're visiting some far-flung schools during summer, a holiday, or a time when there is less activity on campus, there is still plenty to do and gain from the experience.

Here's some advice if you're visiting during those slower times on campus:

1. Many schools still offer their traditional information session and tour, but they can get booked far in advance. If you decide those are helpful for you, make sure to **call ahead** to reserve a spot. And, remember, the student (not parent) should *always* call to schedule these visits.
2. When you call to reserve a tour or information session, see if a **current student is available** for lunch or a chat after the tour. Some students will work as summer interns, and that one-on-one time can really help a prospective student who has some burning questions.
3. Try to **grab a meal** at the dining hall. While we don't usually encourage eavesdropping, just wandering around and people watching can tell you a lot about a community. Note: depending on

the time of year, remember that some of the students on campus may not be current students (many schools host high school programs and exchange college programs), so the feel on campus may be slightly different.

4. If it's a holiday break, try to wander through campus with a **self-guided tour booklet**. Most campuses have them, either at the security office or the admissions office.
5. **Walk into the local town** or the surrounding areas. How easy is it to get to a drugstore, a coffee shop, or a restaurant? Would that matter to you?

And finally, especially if this is a family vacation, do remember that these visits should hopefully be fun, too. Maybe your family has a thing for donuts, so you add on the best local donut shop in each college town. Or, you forgo the dining hall food and just have a family picnic on the college lawn. Whatever it is, know that the college process is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and you're absolutely encouraged to kick back and savor it.

Further resources

As you navigate your college visits, these additional guides and blog posts may be handy to read—or even print out and bring with you.

- National Survey of Student Engagement, Pocket guide with questions to ask:
http://nsse.iub.edu/html/pocket_guide_intro.cfm

- Questions to ask yourself as you start the search (and that can help you figure out what you really want to learn on a visit): <http://wiselikeus.com/collegewise/2010/04/ten-notsoeasy-college-search-questions-for-juniors.html>
- How to match colleges to you: <http://wiselikeus.com/collegewise/2014/10/match-colleges-to-you.html>

For colleges

As an admissions officer, I was frequently overcome by the excitement and responsibility of having a precious hour of a teenager's time on a tour or during an information session. In the age of SnapChat, an hour (or even a full day!) is an extraordinary opportunity and a rare moment in the life of a teenager. So, why waste it?

Yet, 99% of the time, college tours are *orientation* tours, not *admissions* tour. They talk about where the tutoring center is, where to swipe your meal plan card, and when the newest building became LEED certified. A true *admissions* tour should tell you how accessible tutoring is on campus, how science factors into the academic structure (if at all), and how often students hang out or eat on campus.

If a student walks away from a visit charmed by the tour guide but without any real sense if this place is somewhere they'd thrive, that's a waste. Sure, there are some students who don't come into a visit prepared, and I hope this guide helps them get there. But, colleges have to meet these students halfway. Many colleges spend countless resources to find, craft, and tell their story to their Board of Trustees, alumni, and staff. Why not tell that same story to prospective students and families?

If a tour guide is doing a good job, students should walk away saying, "Wow, I get this school. It's not for me, but I get this school." Too often, everyone walks away generally charmed by the tour guide, impressed by an amenity, and utterly flummoxed when it comes to knowing if the school's a fit. Colleges need to be more honest, yes, but they also need to distill their tour into a few priorities.

Part of this shift is fundamental – a shift from *impressing* students to just being honest. And frankly, when you're upfront about who succeeds on your campus (and who doesn't), the right students will hear you.

I'm not asking colleges to completely overhaul their visit program (though, I'll be OK if I never hear about LEED certification dates again). And, many colleges have implemented some exciting changes already. So, I thought I'd share some questions that might help enact small changes now, and others that may require some marinating. No matter what, these will hopefully start to move our college visit culture in the direction of honesty, confidence, and joy.

1. Given all the ways you present yourself online, what are the things students can glean on a visit that they can't truly gain anywhere else?
2. What is your college's *story*? Why did you start? *Why* are you still here (aside from those ever so kind donations)?
3. How do you hope your students are changed by their experience at your school?
4. Who would struggle in this environment? Why?
5. Who absolutely thrives in this environment? Why?

6. What is the lifelong legacy of belonging to this institution as an alumna/us? What do students leave with?

Want more?

Collegewise is a private college-counseling company that holds two beliefs: (1) The college admissions process should be an exciting, adventurous time for every family, and (2) accurate, helpful college information should be made available to everyone. So, even though we are private counselors who work with families who can afford to hire us, we also enjoy working with anyone who is interested and willing to listen, whether we're writing, speaking, or teaching as much as we can.

If you'd like to learn more about how we can help your family or your students enjoy a more successful, less stressful college admissions process, just reach out and ask.

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