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SESSION 3: THE COLLEGE SEARCH

ACTIVITY 1: MAKING A MATCH

Opening Discussion:

This session focuses on how to search for the right “match” in a college. Based on the initial session’s discussion of types of colleges, ask students what kinds of institutions they think they might want to consider. What majors might they want to pursue?

Activity/Handouts:

Résumé from Session I
Selection Criteria Chart

Instructions:

1. Ask students to review their personal resumes from Session I, looking especially at Section V.
2. Ask students to fill in the criteria column of the chart, using the items listed below the chart and referring to their résumé. If they know of particular colleges, they can add them and fill in the blanks if they are able. They will be using this chart for the next exercise.



SELECTION CRITERIA CHART

Primary Selection Criteria	College 1	College 2	College 3	College 4	College 5
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
Other Criteria					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					

LOCATION

Distance from Home
School Setting (Urban, Rural)
Location and Size of Nearest City

SIZE

Enrollment
Physical Size of Campus

ENVIRONMENT

Co-ed, Male, Female

ADMISSION PROFILE

Average Test Scores, GPA, Rank

ACADEMICS

Your Major Offered
Special Requirements
Accreditation
Student-Faculty Ratio
Typical Class Size

COLLEGE EXPENSES

Tuition / Fees
Room and Board
Estimated Total Budget
Percent Received Aid
Scholarships

HOUSING

Residence Hall
Types and Sizes
Food Plan
Fees
On / Off Campus

FACILITIES

Academic
Recreational
Other

JOB PLACEMENT SERVICES

Availability

ACTIVITIES

Clubs
Organizations
Greek Life
Athletics
Intramurals Other

CONTACT WITH PERSON WHO HAS ATTENDED THIS SCHOOL

Their opinion

TYPE OF SCHOOL

State university
Private college
Military Academy
Community College
Trade School

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ACTIVITY #2: RESEARCHING COLLEGES

Opening Discussion:

Students need to examine a variety of sources so they can begin to see the similarities and differences among colleges and universities. They should not think about cost at this point, but rather, qualities and characteristics colleges have to offer.

Activity/Handouts

Viewbooks, catalogues, guidebooks and list of websites (computers if available)

Criteria Chart from Activity #1

List of Resources

Instructions:

1. If there is Internet access in the facility, show the students several websites (see attached suggestions) and guide them through a representative number, pointing out information about majors, residential options, and the admission/application site (which will be covered in a later session), and other aspects as you see fit.
2. Viewbooks and guidebooks should be on hand, too. Ask students to read a description of a college from a guidebook and talk about what they think they would like or not like about that school.
3. Have students look at resources independently and refer to their “Criteria Checklist” to develop a list of four–six schools.
4. Once they have developed a list, they should return to the resource books or go to the college websites to learn more about whether “the match” is right for them.

INTERNET SITES FOCUSED ON COLLEGE EXPLORATION:

COLLEGE INFORMATION

CSO –Center for Student Opportunity College Center: www.imfirst.org

The College Board: www.collegeboard.com

College Prowler: <http://colleges.niche.com>

KnowHow2Go: www.knowhow2go.org

Hobson’s CollegeView: www.collegeview.com

Peterson’s: www.petersons.com

The Common Application Online: www.commonapp.org

Colleges That Change Lives: www.ctcl.org

Universal College Application: www.universalcollegeapp.com

Undocumented Students: www.nacacnet.org/issues-action/legislativenews/pages/undocumented.aspx

FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION

Federal Student Aid: <http://studentaid.ed.gov>

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): www.fafsa.ed.gov

College Goal Sunday FAFSA Completion Assistance: www.collegegoalsundayusa.org

FAFSA4caster: www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov

CSS/PROFILE: <https://profileonline.collegeboard.com>

The Smart Student Guide to Financial Aid: www.finaid.org

FastWeb: www.fastWeb.com

FindTuition: www.findtuition.com

Sallie Mae: www.salliemae.com

College Portraits: www.collegeportraits.org

TESTING

ACT: www.act.org

ACT Fee Waiver Instructions: www.actstudent.org/faq/answers/feewaiver.html

SAT: The College Board: www.collegeboard.com

SAT Fee Waiver Instructions: www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/calenfees/feewaivers.html

Preliminary SAT (PSAT): www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/about.html

Free Test Prep from Number2.com: www.number2.com

The Princeton Review: www.princetonreview.com

Kaplan’s Test Prep: www.kaptest.com

ASSOCIATIONS/ORGANIZATIONS AND RESEARCH/POLICY

National Association for College Admission Counseling: www.nacacnet.org

United Negro College Fund (UNCF): www.uncf.org

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities: www.hacu.net

National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education: www.nafeo.org

First In The Family: www.firstinthefamily.org

ATHLETICS

NCAA Eligibility Center: www.ncaa.org

Campus Champs: www.campuschamps.org

Athletic Aid: www.athleticaid.com

CAREERS

The Occupational Outlook Handbook: www.bls.gov/ooh

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ACTIVITY #3: THE ULTIMATE TEST DRIVE—MAKING THE MOST OF THE CAMPUS VISIT

Opening Discussion:

To introduce this activity, ask students to consider the following: People who want to buy a car often spend a lot of time test-driving cars, but once they buy one and drive it off the lot, the car depreciates in value. The opposite is true of “test driving” a college: the time a student spends visiting a college can help him or her know if the school is a good match. Once the student enrolls in a college, the school never loses value. For students who may not have opportunities to visit college campuses, college fairs and visiting with college representatives who come to their high schools provide a reasonable substitute.

Activity/Handouts

The College Visit Checklist**The Campus Visit****College Comparison Worksheet**

Instructions

Review the College Visit Handout

1. Go over the “The Campus Visit” allowing time for questions and discussion.
2. Give each student the “College Visit Checklist” and talk about how the list can also be useful if a student attends a college fair.
3. Describe what occurs on a tour and in an information session.
4. Talk about how students can possibly use the campus visit as a time to have an interview, if the college requires or allows one.
5. Emphasize the importance of filling in the comparison worksheet as soon after a visit as possible and securing the name and contact information of someone in the admission office.
6. Give students the names of four schools nearby and ask them to find out when the schools schedule tours and information sessions. Students should use the available resources to find this information.
7. Describe the differences among reach, target and likely schools.

COLLEGE VISIT CHECKLIST

To help you find the right college, fill out one of these forms each time you visit a school.

DECIDE

COLLEGE NAME

CITY

STATE

SIZE

TUITION

ROOM & BOARD

FINANCIAL AID OPTIONS

ADMISSIONS CONTACT

NAME

EMAIL

PHONE

TO-DO CHECKLIST

Talk to professors

Visit the library

Tour campus

Sit in on a class

Eat at a cafeteria

Talk to admissions office

Read the college newspaper

Check out computer labs

Talk to students

Visit student housing

Read bulletin boards

Check out recreational facilities

Check out student activities

Tour the city around campus

Eat at an off-campus student hang-out

Picture yourself living here

RATE IT

On a scale of 1-5, five being the best, rate the following:

People _____

Social life _____

Classrooms _____

Dorms _____

Town _____

Campus _____

Food _____

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ASK A STUDENT

What is the best part about this college?

What is the worst part?

What is a typical day like?

What do the students do on the weekends?

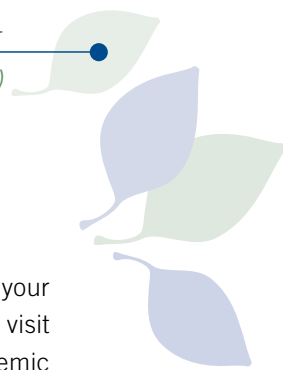
How are classes structured?

Why did you choose this college?

THE BEST PART ABOUT MY VISIT

THE WORST PART ABOUT MY VISIT

CAPTIP! Weather on the day of a college visit can affect your impression of a school. Don't let the rain keep you from a school you like. For more tips, go to www.Cappex.com/tips.



THE CAMPUS VISIT

One of the most important parts of your college research is the campus visit. Visiting the colleges on your list will give you a firsthand impression of the students, faculty, staff, facilities, and programs. On a visit you can learn what the admission office is looking for in its applicants, gain a feeling for the academic and social atmosphere, see the study/living/recreation facilities, talk with students, and get a sense of the surrounding community.

WHEN TO VISIT

- Admission offices are open all year, but visiting when classes are in session is best. If you visit in the summer, you can certainly learn about admission and get a general tour of the campus, but it might be hard to get a good sense of the atmosphere of the college.
- The best time to visit? Spring Break of your junior year can be ideal. Even if you are not certain where you might eventually apply, if you can visit one large, one medium size, and one small school, you will be better prepared to make final decisions about where to apply.
- Once you have narrowed your list in the fall of the senior year, you may want to make return overnight visits to schools to which you will be applying. On these visits, plan to go to classes and interact with students.
- If at all possible, try to visit colleges before you apply. You may discover the school is not at all what you had thought it would be. However, attending accepted students visit programs at the colleges you have visited previously can help you narrow down your choices.
- SPECIAL VISITATION DAYS: Some colleges will offer spring programs for juniors and fall programs for seniors. Check online or contact the admission office since you may need to make a reservation.

HOW TO PLAN A VISIT

- A good campus visit takes two-four hours, including time to get a sense of the surrounding town or area. Don't try to visit more than two schools in one day.
- Figure out an itinerary: where you want to travel, how you will travel, how far one school is from another.
- Call the admission office at least two weeks ahead of time to schedule your visit. Admission offices have set times for tours and information.
- Think of all the things you want to do when you visit and ask what the admission office can help you with: talking with an admission officer, taking a tour, attending a class, meeting with a professor in an area that interests you, eating a meal on campus, talking with a coach or advisor of an extracurricular activity that interests you, etc.
- Research each college before you go visit so you'll have specific questions to ask.
- Contact students you might know at the school before you plan to visit.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU VISIT

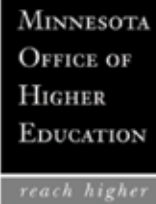
- Focus on people, place and programs in your visit.
- Talk to as many people as you can: students, dining hall workers, tour guides, faculty.
- Look at a campus newspaper and check out campus bulletin boards.
- Wander through snack bars and student centers and observe how students interact with each other.
- Keep track of all names of people you talk with, especially in the admission office.

- Go to the admission session and take the official tour. Listen to the tour guide, but don't jump to a conclusion about a particular school based solely on your experience with a tour guide.
- If you are meeting or interviewing with an admission staff member, be on time, be yourself, ask questions that deal with your particular needs, make sure you mention anything about your background or achievements that you want the admission office to know.

AFTER THE VISIT

- Fill out the college comparison worksheet before you get to another campus.
- Send a thank you note to any admission person you meet.
- Look ahead to fall of the senior year to plan a follow-up, overnight visit.





Campus Visit Checklist

When you visit a campus, it is important that you ask the right types of questions:

Look at Equipment and School Facilities

- Are the facilities and equipment up-to-date and operating?
- Is the equipment similar to what you will be using on the job?
- Is the library good for studying and research?
- Are the dorms quiet enough for studying?
- What is the cafeteria like?
- How large or small are the dorm rooms?
- What types of furniture are provided/allowed?
- Are there plenty of computer labs?
- Do students get free e-mail and Internet access?

Sit In on a Class or Two

- Do the instructors seem knowledgeable?
- Are the students participating in classroom activities?
- What kinds of work are the students doing?
- How large/small are the classes?

Talk with Current Students in the Program

- How long have they been in school?
- Do they like the program?
- Are they learning what they need to know to get a job?
- What is their opinion of the instructors?
- Do the instructors spend time with the students to be sure they understand the material?
- How much time is needed for studying and other work outside class?
- Are instructors available outside of class?
- Have they had any problems with the school, the instructors or the classes?
- What do they like most/least about the school/program?
- How do they spend their free time?

Talk with Instructors in the Program

- What are the academic requirements in the program?
- What kinds of courses are offered?
- How many students are in the program?
- How long does it take most students to complete the program?
- How long have they been teaching at the school?
- Do they teach full time or part time?
- What types of activities are they involved in that relate to the field of study?
- What types of background do they have in the field?

Talk with an Admissions Counselor

- What are the admissions requirements at this college?
- How do I apply and which forms do I fill out?
- When are the important deadlines for admissions?
- What are the housing requirements and parking rules?
- What types of extracurricular activities are available?
- What is the job placement rate of recent graduates?

Talk with a Financial Aid Counselor

- How much does it cost to attend the college (including tuition, room and board, fees, etc.)?
- What financial aid options are available?
- Are there any special financial aid services offered by the college?
- Which forms do I need to fill out and what are the deadlines?
- How is financial aid paid out? When will I receive it?
- Are there school-specific scholarships available? How do I apply?

COLLEGE COMPARISON WORKSHEET

College Names	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice
Location – contact information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> distance from home admission staff contact email/phone number 			
Size <ul style="list-style-type: none"> student enrollment physical size of campus 			
Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> type of school (2 yr., 4 yr.) school setting (urban, rural) location and size of nearest city co-ed, male, female religious affiliation 			
Admission Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> deadline tests required average test scores, GPA, rank would it be “reach”, “likely” or “target”? 			
Academics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> your major offered special requirements accreditation student-faculty ratio typical class size 			
College Expenses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> tuition, room and board estimated total budget application fee, deposits 			
Financial Aid <ul style="list-style-type: none"> deadline required forms % receiving aid scholarships 			
Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> residence hall requirement food plan 			
Facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> academic recreational other 			
Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> clubs, organizations Greek life athletics, intramurals other 			