

# College Planning: How to Get Started

## STEP 1: GET STARTED

Assess your strengths, weaknesses, goals, passions, learning style, and social skills. What is most important to you in the college-search process? What do you hope to learn from the process?

## STEP 2: MAKE SOME BASIC DECISIONS

- Where do you want to live?
  - a small liberal arts college, or a historically black or religiously affiliated college?
- Will you go to college full time? Part time?
- Do you want to attend a single-sex school, a technical college, a public or private college, a large university,
  - How important is the cultural/ideological diversity of the student body?

## STEP 3: ENLIST HELP

Who do you want to assist you in this process (parents, teachers, siblings, relatives, friends)?

## STEP 4: CONSULT REFERENCES AND WEBSITES

Look at college directories (College Board's *College Handbook*, Barron's, Peterson's) and use college searches (<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>). Visit the websites of the colleges that interest you.

## STEP 5: TALK

Discuss your goals and plans with your parents, teachers, and school counselor. They can provide helpful advice.

## STEP 6: MEET WITH COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES

Visit with college representatives when they come to your high school. Make a list of your important questions to ask the representatives. Also meet college personnel at area college fairs.

## STEP 7: VISIT CAMPUSES

Try to go to the college campus and take a tour, meet with admission and financial aid representatives, and ask students what they think about the college. Can't make the trip? Many colleges provide virtual tours on their websites.

# 20 Questions to Ask College Representatives

Whether you meet them at a college fair or on a campus visit, college representatives genuinely enjoy talking to high school students and answering questions about their college. The following questions will help start a good dialogue.

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1. What makes your college unique?
  2. For what academic programs is your college known?
  3. How would you describe the students at your college? Where are most of them from?
  4. Where do students hang out on campus?
  5. What happens on weekends — are there things to do on campus or in town, or do most students go home?
  6. Are fraternities and sororities a big part of campus life?
  7. What are the housing options for freshmen?
  8. Do many students live off campus?
  9. Is there a sports complex or fitness center?
  10. What are the most popular clubs and activities?
  11. What's the security like on campus?
  12. What's the surrounding area like? Is it easy to get around?
  13. What are the most popular majors?
  14. How would you describe the academic pressure and workload?
  15. What support services (academic advisers, tutors, etc.) are available?
  16. Do I need to bring my own computer?
  17. What's the faculty like? Are they accessible outside of class?
  18. Are there opportunities for internships?
  19. Is there job placement help for graduates?
  20. Are there any big changes in the works that I should know about?