

# The College Visit

## THE COLLEGE VISIT

An excellent way to learn about a college is to visit the school when the school is in session. It is better to see with your own eyes rather than rely on someone else's impression. The college visit is a valuable piece for personally evaluating a college. Parents are encouraged to visit with their child.

Some students visit colleges entirely on their own, especially when a school is easily accessible by public transportation. In case of a "family visit," however, it is recommended that the parents and students separate and explore on their own at least some of the time. Parents could, for example visit the college financial aid office.

Parents should keep in mind that it is the student who must decide whether he or she will be comfortable at a particular school. Students should realize that their parents will have both a financial and emotional investment in the college choice, and should be willing to listen to parent concerns and opinions with an open mind. Honest communication among students, parents, and the guidance counselor is extremely important throughout the process.

### BEFORE YOUR COLLEGE VISIT:

- Advise your teachers in advance that you will be absent because of a college visit, and arrange to keep up with class work. A parent note is recommended.
- Call the college in advance to arrange interviews and other services. If you will be visiting during a peak period, e.g., school holidays, call 4-6 weeks in advance.
- Visit colleges when classes are

in session in order to get the most realistic view of a school. Visits during weekends, holidays, or vacations periods are better than no visit at all.

- Gain as much contact as possible with students presently attending each school. You can usually arrange to sit in on a class, stay overnight in a dormitory, eat in the student dining hall, have a tour of the campus, and speak to a professor in the field of your intended major. Though you may feel a little awkward, ask people there what they like and dislike about the school. Former Harrison students can be particularly helpful, and the Harrison guidance counselors can help you identify students at each school.

### DURING YOUR COLLEGE VISIT:

It is never too early to start thinking about colleges of interest to you.

College visits should be comprised of formal and informal actions.

#### FORMAL

- Take a campus tour
- Schedule an interview with an admissions officer
- Participate in a group information session at the admissions office
- Sit in on a class (or two)
- Talk to a professor (or two) in your chosen major(s)
- Talk to a coach in your chosen sport
- Talk to a student or counselor in the career center
- Spend the night in the dorm with a current student

#### INFORMAL

- Read the student newspaper
- Try to find other student publications
- Eat in the cafeteria/dining hall
- Ask a student why he/she chose this college
- Wander campus by yourself
- Search for your favorite book in the library
- Visit the student union
- Ask a student what he/she dislikes about the college
- Browse in the bookstore
- Read the bulletin boards in the academic department you're interested in studying
- Eavesdrop on students to hear what they're talking—or complaining—about
- Ask a student what he/she loves about the college
- Surf the Net in the student computer center
- Walk or drive around the community surrounding campus
- Ask a student what he/she does on weekends
- Listen to the college's radio station
- Try to see a dorm that you didn't see on the tour
- **See if you can imagine yourself at this college**

### AFTER YOUR COLLEGE VISIT:

- Write a thank you note to the Director of Admissions and to any other staff who interviewed you.
- Discuss and record advantages and disadvantages after considering your values and priorities based upon your visit.