

## How to Visit a University

Scheduling a series of universities is a bit of a complex issue. It takes some planning and organization in order to have an effective set of visits. Before you start out, just don't plan to stop by a school and expect an open welcome. Plan ahead and follow these simple directions.

**Where to go:** Visiting colleges is an exciting adventure and families try to pack in as many schools as possible. The US and/or Canada are huge. There is no way to see every possible school on your trip. The best idea is to determine a region that you will visit e.g the Northeast, the Midwest, the West Coast. It is certainly possible to visit several regions, but bear in mind that travelling takes time. Give your trip plenty of time.

The trip should include some time to experience not only the school but the surrounding area. Get a sense if this is a place where you, the student want to live and learn for the next four years. Spend a day or two checking out some of the local attractions or places of interest. Get a sense if there is enough for you to do. Not all of your time will be spent studying.

Make sure that your plans are reasonable. It is easy to try to pack in too many things. Make a goal for your trip. Check Good Maps or Mapquest.com to make sure that you have given your trip plenty of time to go from one location to another or one school to another.

Once you make your general airfare schedule, then figure out how you will get to a school, where you will stay and how long you will be in an area. At the same time it is important to check each school's website to see what their policy is on school visits. Some schools only do group tours with an information session to follow. Other schools you may join a tour but may have an opportunity to speak with a representative. If a school is high on your list AND they require an interview, a summer visit would be a good time to get that done. In this case, definitely contact the admission office and schedule your appointment. Make sure you let them know you are traveling from China to make this visit.

**Schools:** It makes no sense whatsoever to only visit elite schools. In fact, leave Ivy League schools to the end of the trip at a certain location. But above all the schools on your list to visit should come from the list you have created with your counselor or advisor. Why? Everyone will fall in love with Harvard or Yale. But you have to remember your chances of getting accepted are slim. So don't skew your perception by thinking visiting an elite school that you most likely will not get into. Furthermore, if you visit a top school first, you will be viewing every other school through that lens.

Make sure that you plan to be at a particular school for at least 3 hours perhaps more. The last thing you want to do is not schedule enough time to fully explore a school.

When you plan your trip, be sure to bring the following items:

1. Digital camera and connector cable
2. Laptop computer
3. Notebook for each person

So here is the plan.

1. Designate one person to be the photographer preferably a parent, not the student
2. Each person should take notes along the tour

At the end of the tour or visit each person should take about 10 -15 minutes writing down their own thoughts. Do this separately. Each person should write down their likes, dislikes, interesting points not only about the school, but the town and surrounding area.

Someone should also download the photos to the computer. Make to label the pictures correctly. Do this immediately after the visit. Don't wait until the end of the day, it will get confusing otherwise. Take the time while to get it done so you have a record of each specific school.

Once you are back in the car, don't talk about the school you just visited. Talk about anything but not that. Let your individual thoughts percolate so you can make a precise judgment. Add some more thoughts to your description of the school.

Follow this plan for each school you visit in one day. Try not to schedule more than 3 total schools. In fact, you would be hard pressed to visit more unless you are at the Claremont Schools in California - five schools on one campus location.

Now, once you get back to the hotel each person should take some time reflecting and reviewing each school you visited that day. Perhaps even make a ranking of the days visits. Again, do this separately. Go to dinner, take the laptop and your notes. Over dinner THEN talk about the day. Each person should be able to talk about each school.

Please, please remember each person will have their point of view determined by expectations etc... Parents are interested in good education, safety, career opportunities after graduation and so on. Students will be looking at education, dorms, food venues, students and so forth. Students sometimes make decisions on what seems to be inconsequential but student priorities typically are not the same as parental priorities.

**Parents:** Remember who is going to be attending school. You have the fortunate luxury of paying the bill, but financial issues should not be coming up at this point. It is important that everyone concerned comes to some agreement before the trip is scheduled about what are important details needed to be considered.

**Things To Do and Not to Do:** I cannot say how many school visits I have been on where either a parent or more specifically a student absolutely does not want to visit a school. It is very embarrassing particularly when the person is vocal about their not wanting to be there. So, when planning a trip, make sure everyone is in agreement on the whole plan.

1. Everyone should keep an open mind
2. Be aware that a rainy day can affect perception.. It is easy not to like a school because the weather
3. Make a list of questions that are pertinent to the school but not easily found on the website. DO YOUR RESEARCH beforehand
4. Make sure the schools you visit cover a range of options – i.e. Reach, Mid-Range and Safety
5. If you are scheduling a visit, call the school (after consulting the website about Visiting the School). Don't send an email. It will get lost in the tons of other email the school receives everyday
6. If the school requires or recommends an interview, make sure you schedule it. Try to see if the Representative for the Asia Region or reads files from China will be in the office. This is who should interview you. But if they are away on vacation, that is ok. Schedule the interview
7. Do have fun. Make the visit an adventure and make sure the visit is not just about visiting schools. The US or Canada has a lot to offer.

This is a general outline of how to put together a set of visits. If you have any questions, let me know. Have a safe and great trip.