

- 1) Talk to several students and a few faculty members. This provides you with a better sample to get a more well-rounded impression of the school. Don't spend your time with just one or two people.
- 2) Eat in the cafeteria. This is where you'll get more answers to more questions. Sit at tables with six to eight students, to ensure that you get a variety of responses.
- 3) Visit the bookstore

Are there special opportunities, such as off-campus programs, foreign study, doing research with faculty members or independent study readily available or are they just on paper?

What are the class sizes, really? The institution may advertise low student-faculty ratio, but don't buy that. Ask particularly about the courses that all or most freshman or sophomores have to take.

Do faculty make themselves available after class and keep regular office hours, or do they vanish?

What is the learning atmosphere? Is learning the concern or grades? Is there intense competition for grades?

Is cheating common, or is there an ethos or an honor code that condemns it?

Is this a demanding or an easy place? A college may be easy or difficult to get into, but the central consideration is rigor. Find out by asking a few students how many hours a week they study, how many pages they read a night, and what the level of expectation is.

Is there a variety of campus activities and imported speakers, music and other cultural events?

Do the students take advantage of these activities?

Does the school favor anonymity and conformity, or does it encourage identity and individualism?

What happens to graduates? What percentage goes on to graduate and professional school? Does the college have a good career counseling office and placement director that works closely with students throughout their college days, not just at the end?

What has been the graduates' records in getting jobs, what kinds, where and at what salary levels?

Ask the librarian about the extent of library usage. Are students mainly using it for computer access or are they also reading/checking out books.

Ask faculty members what they think of students. What are the percentages of students that are interested in learning?

Loren Pope (2007) the author of "Looking Beyond the Ivy League" explains that, "Colleges should be a place of diverse people, views and beliefs. It should be a place where faculty takes an interest in campus programs outside of the classroom. It should be a place of debate, questioning and discussion. It should have a feeling of family or community. When you visit, you are the customer. Any question that is important to you deserves a full and candid answer. If, with a reasonable effort, you don't get it, that's a mark against the school, but the chances are, you'll get more than expected". (Pope, 2007, 144-145).