

AFFORD COLLEGE

**COLLEGE VISITS  
FROM START TO  
FINISH**



Make the most of your college visits to find  
the great-fit college of your dreams.



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## Why are visits important?

College visits serve an important purpose in your college search process. Each time you set foot on a college campus, you are learning more about what the college feels like, what you are looking for in a college campus, and ultimately what kind of college will be a great-fit for you for the next four years.

To that end, it's critical to visit colleges that might be a good fit for you, especially those with distinctly different feels. Visit suburban colleges and urban colleges. Visit small colleges and large colleges. Each college has a unique footprint and personality, and if you are to be successful there, you need to know that it is a good fit for you. And the best way to do this is by putting "boots on the ground."

It's never too early to begin investing potential great-fit colleges!



## What should I look for?

Every student has different needs when it comes to an ideal college. For example, you might like participating in certain extra-curricular activities or you might want to be able to go see local theatrical productions. Whatever is important to you now will likely be important to you in college, as well. Therefore, it's a good idea to have a sense of these needs in anticipation of a formal college visit.

Take a moment and jot a few of your needs below:

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## Ideal Timeline

### Freshman year going forward

- If your family takes vacations together, try to work in occasional college visits while you're there. We call these "orientation" visits, where you can get a sense of a college without getting into too many specifics of coursework, etc. Take notes on these visits and save them somewhere you can refer to them later. What did you especially like? What did you not like?
- Do well in your classes, even if you don't like them. Participate actively and positively in these classes, and seek help if/when you need it. Keep track of the classes you especially enjoy and what you might consider pursuing in college.
- Participate in activities outside of school that "light you up." What do you love to do? What kinds of things do you look forward to in the course of your day? Whether or not you have a specific career path in mind, spending time in these areas will help you isolate what you want to have access to while in college.
- Select classes that challenge you. Straight As in standard level coursework are regarded differently than Bs in higher difficulty coursework. Taking classes that are too easy is a disservice to you: in order to be a successful college student, constantly challenging yourself in high school is a necessity.



## Ideal Timeline

### Junior year

- Schedule more targeted college visits during your spring and summer breaks. By now, you should have a good idea of what you might want to study or what your GPA and test scores will mean as far as college choice. You'll want to make sure not to schedule more than two visits in a single day.
- If you see holes in your resume based on your future goals, go to work filling them as best you can.
- Keep up your grades and relationships with teachers, as this will benefit your overall application process.



## Ideal Timeline

### Summer after Junior Year

- Use strategic college visits to narrow your potential list to 6-to-10 great-fit colleges. You'll know pretty quickly if a college is not a good fit for you after spending some time on campus.
- Do as much as you can to "demonstrate interest" to your colleges of choice. Email pertinent professors, attend virtual or in-person events the college is hosting, explore their website. Each of these actions is tracked and the more you have, the more obvious your interest level is.

### August - January of Senior year

- Submit your applications to your 6-to-10 great-fit colleges. Make sure that every aspect of your application speaks to what the college is looking for and how you fit those desires.
- Keep up with each of your desired colleges throughout this time and be prepared to compare admissions offers to make sure you got the best one possible.



## Goal of the Process

### What you want your visits to do:

Visits should open your eyes to the reality of living at a potential college. What are the students like? How easy is it to navigate campus?

We recommend planning three visits to each of your final 6-to-10 colleges.

- The first visit is your orientation visit. This visit will help you see the college from a high-level view as far as where it is located, how big it is, and what the weather is like.
- The second visit is your reconnaissance visit. At this point, you are interested enough in a college to dig a little deeper to find out if the programs and extra-curricular activities align with your needs and goals.
- The third visit is your marketing visit. Now, you know this college is likely in your final 6-to-10 great-fit college list, and you are ready to begin meeting with people in the department you are interested in and making sure they are excited enough to have you to go to bat on your behalf for admission and FREE gift aid.

Use the worksheet on the following page to keep track of each college you visit so you can refer to your notes as you are narrowing your college list.



## Goal of the Process

College Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of Visit: (Orientation - Reconnaissance - Marketing)

What are the biggest takeaways from my visit?

\_\_\_\_\_

What did I especially like about this college?

\_\_\_\_\_

What did I especially dislike about this college?

\_\_\_\_\_

What programs or people are interesting or require a follow-up?

\_\_\_\_\_

Other notes:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Visit again?

Y / N



## Helpful Tips and Reminders

- Make sure you give yourself enough time to explore each college you visit. You definitely don't want to rush this process. You can even sit in the student center and get food or coffee where the students are. Keep your ears open for the kinds of conversations you hear. Are these conversations you could see yourself having in the next couple of years?
- If you can't get to a specific college you're interested in because of travel restrictions, consider exploring a nearby college with a similar feel. This will help you narrow down certain features like size or location if you are unable to do an orientation or reconnaissance visit to a particular college.
- Keep all of your notes! Especially if you are visiting colleges in close succession, the specifics to each one are likely to become muddled in your brain. Take pictures if you can to help jog your memory, as well.
- As you are planning your visits, it's a good idea to go at various times of the year if possible when school is in session. The springtime in one location may be beautiful, but if the winter is brutal and you are not prepared for that, you may have a hard time completing a four-year degree.
- Make sure you arrive promptly for any college tours and dress appropriately. You never know who might be seeing you and when!



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