

### Things to Consider

Think about who you are and what your interests are. You do not have to go in for heavy-duty analysis, but be honest with yourself. Choose a college that caters to your needs.

Do your homework. Do not base a decision on any one source; especially the materials from a college. Schools spend as much as a half million dollars to produce slick brochures and videos to entice you.

Consider geography and size. Location is something students often forget to think about. A rural setting is very different from an urban one, just as a large college has a different feel from a small one. Have you included the cost of car or plane trips home in your budget?

Visit the campus. Talk to students. Learn about academic programs. Make sure the college offers courses in the area you want to pursue.

### Make College Visits Count

Dress neatly. To really get a feel for the school, you need to walk around the quad, sit in on a class, and visit the dorms. Call ahead and make arrangements with the campus visit coordinator. Avoid campus visits during holidays or breaks and finals week; visit when classes are in session.

Have someone at the college provide you documentation of your visit on college letterhead. If your visit is during a school day, this letter will prevent your absence from counting against your exemptions.

Visit general education type classes while on campus. Most colleges will be happy to arrange the visit in advance. If they offer the very large lecture classes, ask to sit in on one to see how you feel about being one of 300 in a classroom.

If you have a particular area of interest in which you want to pursue your degree, ask to meet with a professor in your field of interest. This gives you a chance to evaluate the quality of education you will be receiving. Don't just walk in cold; ask your admissions representative to set this up in advance of your visit. Have questions written out; be prepared to discuss the curriculum and your possible course options.

Meet with a financial aid counselor. Be sure to get his or her name and send a thank you note.