



**Doorway
to College™**
Foundation

A young woman with long, wavy brown hair is smiling at the camera. She is wearing a bright pink t-shirt and a black backpack with red accents. She is holding a map in her hands. The background is a solid, vibrant green color.

**MAKING THE MOST OF
YOUR COLLEGE VISIT
AN INTERACTIVE GUIDE**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

You've narrowed down your college choices. Maybe you've even settled on a favorite. Most likely, everything you have learned about the college of your dreams is, well, dreamy!

Each school's website is chock-full of information about the campus and its many amenities. Luscious photographs may display a state-of-the-art tech lab, lavishly appointed study halls, or a newly renovated library. Why, some campuses even boast of a bowling alley or a hair salon! All these perks are touted in addition to an exceptional faculty and ample course offerings.



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There's just one problem. You haven't visited these campuses yet. At least not in person.

Yes, this is just a little bit of a problem. Why? Because your college choice is about much more than whether the school has a cool social scene or is even the perfect match for your career goals.

According to Nolan Ellis, former student tour guide at the University of Puget Sound, while attending a campus tour isn't required, it's one of the most important things you can do to solidify your college decision.

"There is a tangible aspect to touring and learning about a school that you can't understand unless you visit the place," Ellis says. And he should know. Ellis, currently an admissions counselor at Pitzer College in Claremont, California, admits that he did not tour his original college of choice before attending,

and he soon realized he'd made a mistake. "I ended up at a school that was clearly not for me. I eventually transferred to another school that was a better fit."

THINK ABOUT IT

Not only are you going to spend the next four to five years on a college campus, but your choice of college will set you on a path that may alter the course of your life forever. Many students give little thought to the notion that the city or state in which they choose to further their education will actually become their new home for years to come.

Consider this potential scenario: An internship made available to you via a favorite professor leads to a job right after graduation in the same college town. That job then leads to meeting your future spouse. Before you realize it, you're putting down serious roots in a snowy, winter-

When is the best time to visit? Try checking out a few colleges during spring and summer breaks of your junior year. Winter break of senior year presents another opportunity. Your final college visits should happen by the end of April of the senior year. If possible, visit when class is in session to get an authentic feel for campus life.

loving city that you had imagined was only a brief stopover before you returned to your sunny, beachside home.

Or maybe you love your rural hometown but decided to attend school in a major metro area. Before long, you find yourself settling into a life that is hundreds or thousands of miles away from friends and family, without a hint of a move in the near future.

Before you sign on the dotted line, making a personal visit to the college should be one of the most important to-do items on your list. You must be certain that the college, as well as the geographic area, is right for you, both now and potentially far into the future.

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

Many voices out there are offering advice and lengthy lists on how to have a successful campus tour. But this Doorway to College book is a little different. Throughout the chapters presented here, you are encouraged to actively participate in the college exploration process.

Each time we suggest that you make a list or take notes, we hope that you will do so. In fact, we recommend that you follow the interactive guidelines for each of the college campuses that you visit.

Write in your journal, make observations, take photos — whatever it takes to commit to memory the impressions and inspirations that are sparked by a visit to each of your prospective college homes. Gather copies of news articles, blogs, newsletters, and other campus publications to include in a campus tour notebook. Jot some notes in the margins of these documents that you can refer back to at a later date.

A set of folders in a small file box or on your computer also can work well for organizing the information you find on each institution. Or try [Evernote.com](https://evernote.com), a free, easy-to-use, online app that can help you organize and store notes, images, web links, and other information on your college choices.

Are you ready? An active pen means you have an active mind — so grab a pen and some paper (or a laptop or tablet), and let's get started!



CHAPTER 1

BEFORE YOU GO

Distance and time constraints may mean that you will have only one day to tour a campus, absorb its culture, and learn about its many advantages — and some disadvantages. That's not a lot of time, especially when such a crucial decision hangs in the balance. But that single day can mean a lot to your future success, so let's talk about some ways that you can prepare for and make the most of your college visit.



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“As many as 1 in 3 first-year students won't make it back for sophomore year. The reasons run the gamut from family problems and loneliness to academic struggles and a lack of money.”

– U.S. News & World Report

First, think carefully about the colleges on your list. Maybe you are convinced right now that the more miles you can put between you and your parents the better. Perhaps your friends are all planning to attend big-time colleges in big-time cities, and you may feel that you should do the same. But is this really the best way to go for *you*?

Many students have the opposite experience. While all their friends are planning to attend small, local colleges, they have always dreamt of going out into the world to explore new places and have new adventures. While the idea of going off to the big city is scary to others, to them it is exciting. Should they be held back by friends who don't share their mindset?

Many education experts suggest that choosing the right college is vital to a student's success. This means giving careful consideration to each institution and whether or not it will be a good fit for who you are and how you are comfortable living your life. This isn't a decision you'll want to make based solely on what others do or suggest.

College freshmen struggle for all kinds of reasons. Among them is settling on a campus that may have seemed wonderful on the web but

feels too big and unfriendly, or too small and provincial, once they arrive.

It's time to do some serious soul searching about what you are looking for in the ideal college — what you can and can't live without. Here are some questions to consider:

📍 Do you know what you will major in? You don't necessarily have to decide right now, but you should at least have some idea about your top areas of interest. If not, talk with your high school counselor, who has access to interest inventories and other tools that can help you narrow your choices.

One thing you will want to consider is whether the schools on your list have strong academic departments and faculty in your areas of interest.

📍 What size school do you envision attending? Do you want to be a part of a small community, where everyone knows your name? Or do you enjoy being a more anonymous part of a large community, where you have opportunities to meet new people every day?

📍 What kind of academic experience are you looking for? Do you hope to have a close relationship with professors who are doing academic work you are interested in and might even participate in yourself? Or are you okay with many of your classes being taught by graduate assistants, as is the case in undergraduate programs at many large universities? Do you want to attend small classes, or are you okay with large lecture halls filled with hundreds of students?

📍 Do you want to be a part of a student body that is widely diverse, both culturally and philosophically? Or would you prefer a school community made up of mostly like-minded people?

📍 What is important to you in a school's culture and extracurricular activities? Do you want a serious, academically competitive environment? Do you want to attend a school that is socially hopping? Are you interested in Greek life, student government, political involvement, or student journalism?

How important are sports to you? Do you want to attend big-time athletic events and root for your team? Do you hope to be involved in athletics yourself, either varsity or intramural?

📍 What kinds of things do you want to be available to you in the surrounding community? Are you okay with living in a small college town, or would you prefer a large urban area with more to offer? Do you want access to arts events? What about geography? Do you prefer warm, sunny or cold, rainy? Do you enjoy mountains, beaches, forests, or rivers?

These are just a few questions to get your wheels turning. You can probably think of others.



TAKE NOTE

Before the day of your college tour, make a list of the features that will make you feel successful, happy, comfortable, and welcome at your new college. What are your “must haves” and “nice to haves”?

Now, consider at least four things about a college that you simply cannot live with. Too close to or far from family? Dark and gloomy dorm rooms? So remote that there isn't a Taco Bell for miles? List the absolute no-no's in your journal.

Another approach to spark your visioning process is visual journaling, which is really just a fancy term for drawing. Visual journaling can help you to access your underlying hopes, dreams, and desires more expansively than a verbal approach can.

You don't have to be an artist. Just set aside some time to daydream about your ideal college experience, and jot down a few sketches of what you see in your mind's eye.

Once you have finished drawing, look at what you've produced. What do your sketches tell you about your hopes for your college education? Add these ideas to your wish list.

Don't forget: You are the customer. You are the one who must be happy with your purchase. By equipping yourself with a “shopping list” before you step foot on campus, you can ensure that the college you choose will be to your liking. You're also less likely to be swayed by marketing fluff and sales perks that don't really matter to you and your future.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Did we mention that each school's website is chock-full of information? Of course it is! And it's where you'll be able to accomplish some of your best research. But school websites and brochures will give you only part of the picture — the part that shows the institution in the best possible light. Think of these sources as being like a photograph that's been Photoshopped to present an idealized view of the subject. You want to see the real, untouched version!

You can soak up the campus vibe in many ways right from the comfort of your own home. You will be able to best gauge what's happening at the college by checking a variety of sources. Here are a few you can find online with just a little effort.





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- Explore the webpages for the student newspaper, the college radio station, and other campus media outlets, such as academic department newsletters, alternative newspapers, and literary reviews.
- Peruse other local news outlets in the town or nearby that cover campus news and events, including newspapers and television stations.
- Check out the website for the campus career center to see how it serves students in their career planning and job searches both during and after college.
- Use Google, Bing, or another search engine to search for the school name plus a keyword such as *sports*, *guest speakers*, *crime statistics* (yes, sadly, even college campuses have crime), *concerts*, *Greek organizations*, *recreation*, or any other topic you'd like to know more about. Scan the headlines and read the articles. Learn what's important to the students and the community surrounding the campus.
- Search Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and other social media sites using a hashtag followed by the school name.
- Read campus and student blogs, online bulletin boards, and message boards.
- Search for YouTube videos made by students or the college staff.
- If you know what field you'd like to study, search the faculty list, then Google the names of professors engaged in interesting projects.
- Search online to find out if there's an alumni group in your community. If so, reach out to them and ask to speak with a recent graduate. Anyone belonging to an alumni group will likely

be predisposed to say nice things about the school, but a recent graduate may answer your questions and also help you learn things you wouldn't think to ask about on your own.

📍 Check out www.campustours.com for links to virtual college tours, webcams, campus maps, videos, photos, and more. Search by college name to find enrollment statistics, admission requirements, costs, and other facts for more than 1,000 colleges and universities. You will also see a search feature for hotels located near the institution.

By varying the venues for your research, you give yourself a chance to hear and read about the college from a kaleidoscope of voices. This will enrich your understanding of what campus life is like from the vantage points of journalists, bloggers, radio personalities, and the students themselves.

TAKE NOTE

Can you think of other sources of information about a particular college or university? Write them in your journal or notebook.

As you scour the web for information on each of your college choices, keep careful notes on what you find. When you are researching several colleges, it can be difficult to keep details about each one straight in your mind. So jot down the kinds of things you'll want to remember.

Later, after your visits, you'll use your notes to jog your memory about everything you learned. We'll talk more about this in Chapter 3.



JUST A FEW MORE THINGS

We're not finished with our list-making yet. Once you've drawn up your shopping list and scoured the school's website for important facts and information, it's time to formulate some personalized questions to ask the tour director and/or campus representatives on the day of your visit.

These questions should be crafted to give you good insight into how the college operates on a day-to-day basis. But they should be personal, too. Don't be afraid to ask for answers to things you really want to know. This is your chance to get a feel for the "real deal."

David Handy, orientation leader and student tour guide at Northern Arizona University, cautions that one of the biggest mistakes students can make on a tour is to suddenly turn shy.

“Sometimes students are too embarrassed to ask questions. Or they will let their parents ask all of the questions, which is too bad because this is the time for students to step forward and take an active role in their education,” Handy says. No questions are off-limits, he adds.

Ask about the social scene — is it sleepy or rowdy? Ask about internships — are they plentiful or open to just a few? Does the campus have any active political groups? Ask about the career counselors — have they been instrumental in helping students transition to jobs in their chosen fields? What do most students do on the weekends? What should you do when you get sick? Is there an infirmary on campus? What should you do if you get into a serious disagreement with another student? What happens if you and your roommate aren’t a match made in heaven?

THINK SOME OF YOUR QUESTIONS ARE REALLY “OUT THERE”?

According to David Handy, here’s the craziest question asked at his tour:

Parent: “Do the maids come in and clean the students’ rooms?”

Tour guide: “Um, no.”

Here’s one from a parent orientation session at the University of Iowa:

Parent: “How will I know if my child is going to class and not sleeping in or partying all the time?”

Tour guide, with a smile: “There’s a reason this session is called ‘Letting Go.’”

You’ll also want to be prepared with a few questions to ask the students who attend the college or university. Here are some suggestions:

- What do you love about this college? What do you wish you could change?
- Why did you decide to attend here?
- What advice do you have for the transition from high school to college?
- What do you do in your spare time?
- What is it like to live on campus? In this town?
- How many hours each day/week on average do you study outside of class?
- Do most students stay on campus for the weekend or go home?
- Are the professors accessible and supportive?
- Is it easy to register for the classes you need and want to take at the time you want to take them?
- What’s the overall vibe here? Laid back? Serious and studious? Warm and welcoming? Highly competitive?

TAKE NOTE

List 10 questions that you will seek to have answered on tour day. If you have more questions as your tour date approaches, feel free to add them. By equipping yourself with personalized queries ahead of time, you will be able to dig deep into campus life and get some specifics about what to expect when you arrive.



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CAN I AFFORD ALL THIS?

College visits can be very expensive, especially if you are considering schools far from home. Be sure to weigh such expenses against other priorities in your family's budget. For some students, it may be best to visit colleges once all letters of acceptance are in hand.

If you take this approach, discuss with your counselor how to communicate your interest to the colleges to which you are applying, since interest level can be a factor in the college admissions process.

Some colleges may be willing to accommodate families that have to travel far or even pay to bring students in for a tour, at the school's cost, if the student is highly desirable to the school and likely to attend. Discuss this possibility with your college counselor and the admissions office of the colleges you are interested in if money is

barrier. You might also want to coordinate college visits with any business trips and vacations that your family is already planning.

If you are unable to make a college visit, rest assured that many students have been very happy with their college choice even though they applied sight unseen. You will need to do more research online and in conversation with recent alumni and current students to make sure you have as full a picture of campus life as possible.

TAKE NOTE

Have a conversation with your parents about how much you can afford to spend on college visits. Research how much each visit would cost, including transportation, lodging, and food. List your college choices in order of which ones you would most like to visit. If you can visit only one, which would it be?



YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED

Now that you are armed with your inventory of must-haves, don't-wants, and gotta-knows, think about whom you will invite to join you on your college tour. Some students prefer to be accompanied by a group of friends, while others make it a family affair.

Whomever you choose to join you, be sure that at least one person in your group knows you. Really knows you. This person should be so well versed in your interests and preferences that they will be able to advise you on whether or not the university is the right fit for you. Of course, it's still your decision, but it's a good idea to listen to those who know you best.

Keep these things in mind when touring with friends and family:

- 📍 Don't be heavily influenced by any of your guests. But do listen to their feedback; they may notice things you don't.
- 📍 Make sure *you* ask the questions. Mom and Dad may have a few questions of their own, but this is your show and your future. Stay tuned in on your tour.

- 📍 Leave your boyfriend/girlfriend at home. This is about you and what you want for your college life. Your boyfriend or girlfriend may not only inhibit your questions, but he or she may also try to exert an unwelcome influence on your decision. Do you really want that kind of pressure?
- 📍 Don't forget to take notes and photos as you go. You won't remember half of what you see and hear, and that only gets worse if you visit more than one school in close proximity of time.

TAKE NOTE

Consider two to three people in your life whom you know to be honest and wise and who have your best interests at heart. Write their names in your journal. Once you have completed your list, invite these trustworthy advisors to join you on tour day.

Many students will admit that their parents are going to top the list. Their presence is not only important for the love and guidance that they will provide, but their input on tuition and other financial matters will be crucial to your success, as well.

If you have completed the activities in this chapter, you should be fully prepared for your first campus visit. In the next chapter, we'll get into just what you should do once you arrive. Are you ready to hit the road? Let's go!



CHAPTER 2

TOUR TIME!

Nearly all universities offer comprehensive tours to prospective students that include breakout information sessions and visits to places of interest throughout the campus. These tours are not only helpful, but they also offer students the opportunity to see all the best and brightest that the college has to offer.

Arrange your visit in advance through the college admissions office or the school's website. If you



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wish to meet with a certain professor, stay overnight in a dorm, or sit for a formal interview with an admissions officer, consider that such activities may need to be scheduled in advance.

Of course, you will also want to check the calendar of events to see what is happening — or not happening — during the time you plan to visit. It would be best not to show up the week that everyone else is on spring break.

When you visit, you should already have a working knowledge of the school based on your own intensive research. You should also have your support team by your side and your super-smart questions tucked inside your pocket.

If you have time, break away from the group at some point during the day and chat up some of the locals. Doing so will give you an idea of the school's real vibe — the one that the guides may not be so quick to reveal. It's also a good idea to

have a checklist of items to look for to make the most of your campus visit.

According to Ellis, there is no such thing as a “cookie cutter” tour — each will be unique because they are designed to reflect the university and the type of student experience there. In fact, the schools will be so different that Handy recommends asking the same questions on the various school tours for later comparison.

Oh, and Handy offers this last bit of advice for tour day: “Leave the cool card at home. You're not too cool to ask questions and be engaged in the process. We want to help you and make you feel comfortable!”

TAKE NOTE

Write down your observations and the answers you uncover for the points on the following “campus to-do list.”

As you wander around campus, note not only the answers to factual questions, but also your feelings and impressions. Can you imagine spending the next four years — or more — of your life here?

ON-CAMPUS TO-DO LIST

- Chat with students and professors to learn more about the course offerings.
- Ask if you can sit in on a class or slip quietly into a lecture to get an idea of what a real class at the college is like.
- Swing by the financial aid office and pick up any forms you may need.
- Arrange ahead of time to meet with a professor from your planned major.
- Take advantage of any recommended interviews or group sessions.
- Visit with admissions counselors and inquire about how to write an exceptional college entrance essay. (For more on this topic, check out our e-book at www.doorwaytocollege.com/college-prep-essay.)
- Be sure to visit the hot spots — the bookstore, the café or coffee shop, and the dining hall. In fact, grab a bite to eat and make sure the food is satisfactory.
- If you've got dietary restrictions, find out whether the cafeteria will accommodate them. Do you know how much it costs for a meal plan — and how many meals you'll get if you purchase one?
- Ask to see a freshman dorm room. Is it tiny? Comfortable? Does it have its own bathroom, or will you share one down the hall? How much “stuff” do most students bring with them? Are there quiet hours for study, or will you need to find somewhere else to hit the books?
- Find out where upperclassmen (and women) live. Is there on-campus or off-campus housing that's both affordable and safe?
- Ask for the business cards and contact information of the important campus representatives that you meet along the way.
- What is the campus culture like? Do the students dress up for class, or is the attire more relaxed? Do most people dress in a similar style, or do the styles seem very diverse? Are a wide variety of political, cultural, and religious views accepted and celebrated?
- What sorts of messages and flyers are posted around campus?



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Think of the items in this list in terms of the “must haves” and “mustn’t haves” you listed in Chapter 1.

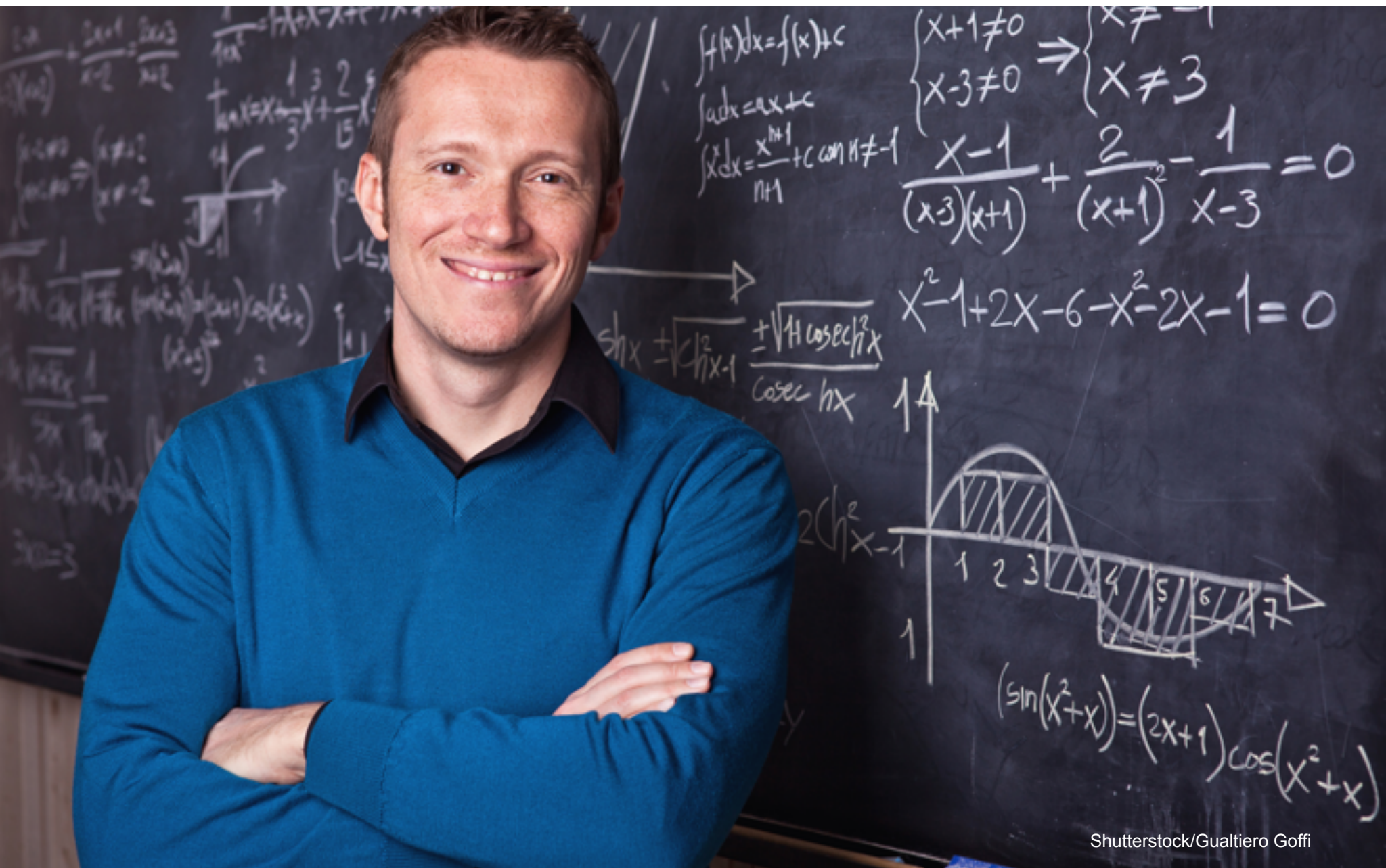
- Are the facilities in good condition? Is learning-related technology up-to-date and accessible?
- What is the library like as a place to study and do research? Is it quiet or loud, crowded or sparsely populated? Are study carrels available?
- Where is the social hub of campus?
- Check out the fitness center, campus bookstore, and other campus amenities.
- Talk to the coaches of any sports that you might want to play. (If playing college sports is one of your goals, see our Student Athlete e-book series at www.doorwaytocollege.com/studentathletes.)
- What campus extracurricular activities are available that you might be interested in? If none exist that are related to your particular interest, how can you start your own?
- Is this a place you feel like you will both fit in and be challenged to grow?
- Take plenty of photos as you tour. This will help you distinguish one college from the next so they don’t all become jumbled in your mind.

If the tour guide has had his fill of questions, reserve a few of them for students you meet as you stroll the campus. Ask questions of the local baristas. Quiz a security guard. Stop in and say hello to the folks in the admissions office and see if they have a moment to fill you in on some tiny details.

Try to get as many perspectives as possible, and test your assumptions. And, remember, take plenty of notes so you can recall what you learned and reassess later in light of your other campus visits.

Be sure to get the names and contact information of anyone who was particularly helpful or who took a considerable amount of time out of their day to talk with you. You'll want to write each of these people a formal thank-you note. You may also want to contact them again later if you have additional questions.

Schedule a little bit of alone time during the day to take notes and process your thoughts about what you are seeing and hearing.



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STEP UP YOUR GAME BY STEPPING OUT

You've come all this way and done all this work. Resist the urge to rush home. Take your time, step off campus, and get a feel for the city that surrounds it.

The fact is, once you make the decision to attend this university, you are actually adopting a new city, too. What entertainment options are there? Is there a hospital nearby? Are people friendly? What do the surrounding neighborhoods look like? Are there many young families with children? Or is it more of a bustling urban scene with a lot of up-and-coming professionals?

If sports are important to you, you may want to search for the local teams and their stadiums and arenas so you can cheer them on. If the performing arts are more your thing, then search for thriving theaters and concert halls within the city

limits. The idea is to make sure that the surrounding city is one in which you'll feel safe, secure, and even inspired to do your best work.

TAKE NOTE

Gather information and jot down your impressions by visiting the following locations before you pack up and move on to the next campus:

- 📍 Restaurants and coffee shops
- 📍 Libraries and book stores
- 📍 Parks
- 📍 Museums
- 📍 Malls and shopping centers
- 📍 Entertainment venues



Wikimedia Commons/JeremyA

- 📍 The local Chamber of Commerce
- 📍 Area neighborhoods
- 📍 Walking and biking trails
- 📍 Places of worship
- 📍 A real estate office
- 📍 The central hub of town, such as a pedestrian mall or town square

Once you have explored the surrounding area, take stock of what you've experienced by journaling about all that you've seen and heard. It's important to capture your immediate reaction to the city on paper or in your virtual journal. It won't be long, and you'll soon be off to the next potential campus. Keeping notes in this way will serve to keep your memory fresh and informed.

RATE YOUR VISIT

While your experiences are fresh in your mind, rate the college according to the criteria that matter most to you. The College Board has a Campus Score Card that you can download, print out, and take along on your trip. Find it at http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/collegesearch/campus_visit_score_card.pdf. Or create your own score card based on the wish list you created in Chapter 1.

TAKE A BREAK

After a long day of exploring the campus and surrounding area with an open mind, absorbing as much of the experience as possible and taking notes, you will likely be very tired. Congratulate yourself on a job well done, then give it a rest. In the next chapter, we will talk more about how to further process your experience once you get home.



CHAPTER 3

AFTER YOUR VISIT

Wow, what a rush! You've had a taste of college life, and now a thousand thoughts and emotions are swirling in your mind. How do you sort through it all and make a decision? In this chapter, we'll talk a little bit about what you should do once all your campus visits are over. There's a lot to think about when deciding on where you will spend the next four years of your life. So consider carefully, and make the decision that is best for *you*.



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TAKE YOUR TIME

Car salespeople know about something called the 48-hour “car-buying mood.” They know that buyers are most likely to make a decision to purchase within 48 hours of driving a new car. Often they will fixate on some minor feature they find charming — seat warmers, a tricked-out stereo, or even a clever cup holder — something that tips the balance and makes them fall in love. But after a couple of days, their rational side returns, and they are more likely to base their choice on the features of the car that really matter.

Shopping for colleges can be a similar experience. Campus visits are designed to make you fall in love with the college or university. The tour guides are charming and make you feel special and wanted. The campus is beautiful, and the students seem to be leading interesting, fun-filled lives. The various perks might be

enough to put stars in your eyes: a meal hall that rivals your favorite restaurants, a plush game room in the freshman dorm, tales of all the great bands that have performed on campus in the past year. Who wouldn’t want to sign on the dotted line?

Give yourself some time to let the excitement wear off. Visit a few more colleges, if you can, and then sit down and compare your notes. Here are a few tips for thinking things through.

- 📍 Return to the wish list you created in Chapter 1. Is there anything about it you would change, now that you’ve had a taste of campus life? Rank the items in your list in order of importance.
- 📍 Look over all the notes and materials you’ve gathered about each college. Then rank the colleges in order, from most to least favorite,

based on the top three to five items on your wish list.

- 👤 Talk with your parents about your assessment, and get their input.
- 👤 Do you have additional questions? Try to resolve them first by doing your own online research. Then, don't hesitate to follow up with admissions counselors, students, or recent graduates about any issues that are lingering in your mind.

BUYER BEWARE

We've talked a lot about what to look for in a college. You'll want to feel safe and comfortable and supported in your educational endeavors.

Yet, there are also some "red flags" that you should watch out for when choosing a university. Taking that campus tour is a great way to zero in on some of the warning signs that a particular college scene may just not be your thing.

It's the final step in this process of making the most of your college visit. Consider a few of the following potential omens offered by the Better Business Bureau:

- 👤 If a college recruiter is pressuring you so hard to sign on the dotted line that you can feel yourself squirming, this may be a warning that something is not right.
- 👤 Be wary if a campus official is impatient or put off by your questions. Most university representatives understand the seriousness of your decision and will be happy to serve up as much information as you need.
- 👤 If it seems strangely easy to earn a degree at this institution, it may be that something is

wrong. Compare the college to others in the state for degree requirements and even tuition and fees to confirm that the college is reputable.

- 👤 If a campus representative appears to dismiss certain parts of your application or encourages you to fib on your paperwork by saying something like, "Oh, yeah, don't worry about that," you might want to reconsider the integrity of the university.

In addition, for-profit colleges are increasingly coming under scrutiny by the Federal government for not providing educational value that is equal to their cost. If attending a certain college will require you to take out massive loans, make sure that the value of the degree will likely lead to a career that will afford you the ability to repay.

TAKE NOTE

Think about the college campus you've just visited, and make notes of any features that give you cause for concern. Perhaps the university has had its share of bad press of late. Or maybe there is poor lighting on the walkways at night. Maybe the staff appeared unfriendly, or the students were standoffish. List those misgivings in your personal journal.

IS THE COLLEGE UP TO SNUFF?

Is the college of your dreams accredited? This is a very important detail to consider. Visit the U.S. Department of Education at www.ed.gov to research whether or not the college meets accreditation standards.

WRITE THANK-YOU NOTES

Be sure to write formal thank-you notes to anyone who was particularly helpful during or after your visit. These might include a tour guide, college admissions counselors, and professors. A well-written, personal thank-you note never goes out of style. Besides just being considerate, a thank-you note shows your continued interest in the school, as well as your maturity and professionalism. All of these things will reflect positively on you during the college application process.

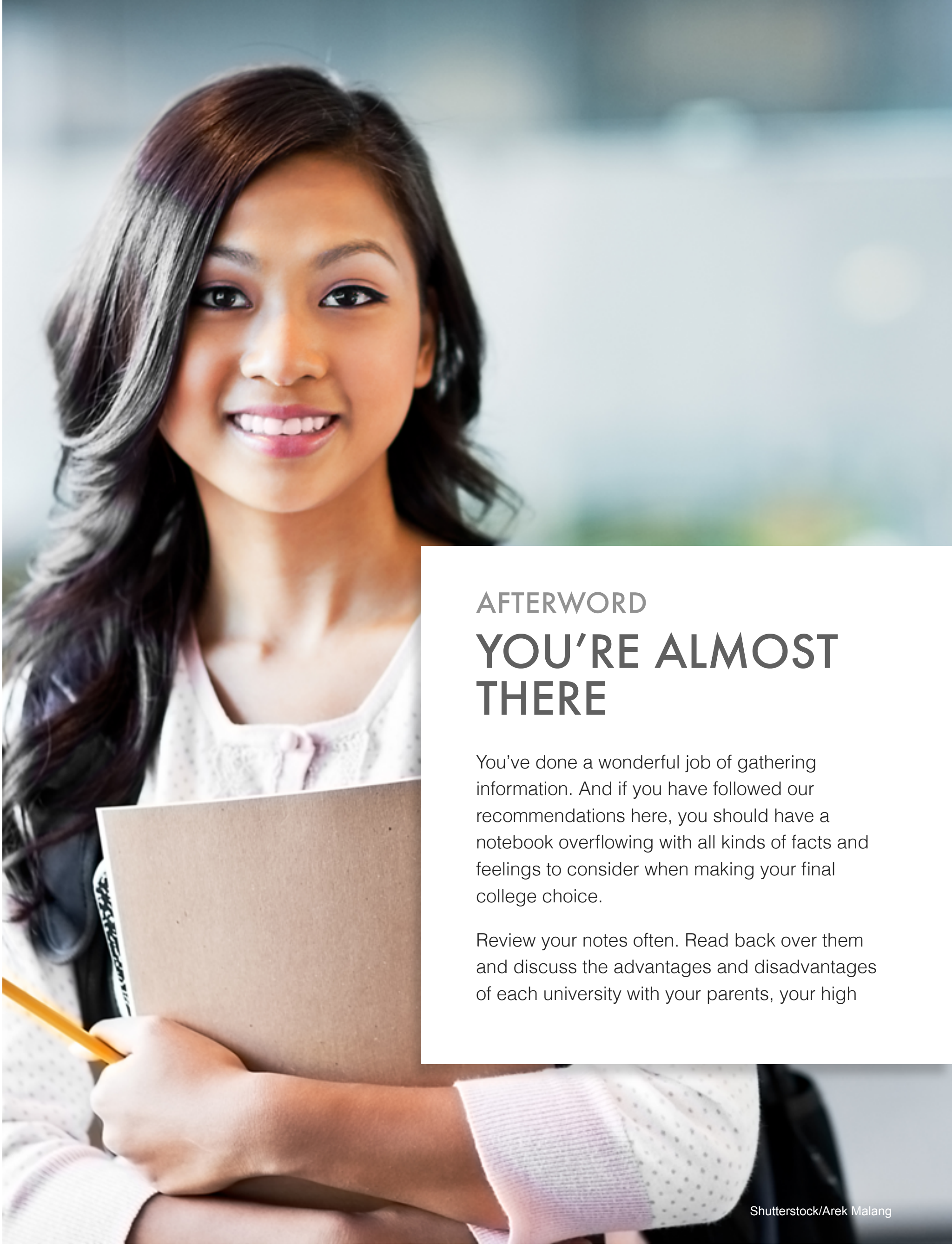
PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR GUT

Listen to your instincts. You'll want to base your college decision mostly on the facts, but emotions aren't inconsequential. If you have a gut feeling, even if you can't exactly pinpoint where that feeling is coming from, don't ignore it. Your college decision should be right for your whole person — body, mind, and spirit.

Your college decision should be right for your whole person — body, mind, and spirit.



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AFTERWORD

YOU'RE ALMOST THERE

You've done a wonderful job of gathering information. And if you have followed our recommendations here, you should have a notebook overflowing with all kinds of facts and feelings to consider when making your final college choice.

Review your notes often. Read back over them and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each university with your parents, your high

school guidance counselor, and others who know you well and whose opinions you trust. Try to base your decisions on facts, and dig deeper to make sure your impressions and assumptions are well-founded.

Most of all, take this decision seriously. Your choice of a college will alter your future in ways you can't yet imagine. Of course, your decision is not irreversible; you can transfer if you're not happy. But why set yourself up for disappointment by not doing your homework ahead of time? Use the information in this e-book to help you get the most out of your college visit.

**“The best thing
about the future is
that it comes one
day at a time.”
—Abraham Lincoln**

We wish you success in college — wherever you land — and a future filled with all things good.





ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Kerri S. Mabee is a veteran teacher of English and creative writing in the San Diego, California area. In 1998, she left teaching to pursue a career as a professional writer. Since

that time, she has written and edited content for news outlets, magazines, educational publications, and online journals and has completed two novels and several children's books. Mabee is the managing editor at EducatedWriter.com and founder and CEO of a public relations firm. She continues to hone her craft as a freelance journalist for magazines nationwide and is the former managing editor at a competitive online news website. Mabee also teaches [ZAPS strategy seminars and webinars](#) for Doorway to College Foundation. Mabee received her Bachelor of Arts in English from San Diego State University in 1990.

ABOUT DOORWAY TO COLLEGE FOUNDATION

At Doorway to College, we support students in the transition to higher education through test preparation, e-books, webinars, and more. We strive to give parents and students the information they need to feel fully informed and prepared for the challenges and changes the lie on the horizon. To access additional resources for college-bound students and their parents, visit www.doorwaytocollege.com.



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