

## HOW DO I TALK TO UNIVERSITY REPRESENTATIVES?

*Advice directly from the college representatives themselves...*

### **What are some good ice breaking questions students might ask when meeting a representative for the first time?**

1. Questions that demonstrate they've done some of their own research. Rather than "What's the student-teacher ratio?" (found on our website), how about "What are some things that make your University special? How do you build community?"
2. Tell me what makes your college/university distinctive.
3. Do you have any special traditions at your school? How many international students attend?
4. Where exactly is your university located in a city or town? Can you tell me what it's like?
5. What are some of the strengths of your campus?
6. What is student life like at your university - with regards to balance of academics and extra-curriculars?
7. What is the make-up of the student body? % of international?
8. Students could ask:
  - a. does your school offer the program I am interested in?
  - b. tell me a little bit about your school.
  - c. what are the class sizes like?
  - d. what is the city like (rural vs. urban)?
  - e. what social & recreational opportunities are available?
  - f. what was your (the representative's) college experience like? what was your favorite thing about college?
  - g. are there internship and exchange programs available?
  - h. what is the diversity like on your campus?
9. What do you like most about \_\_\_ College/University?
  - a. In addition to my academic interests, I'd like to pursue \_\_\_ (extracurricular activity like a particular sport, musical activity, or student government) in college. Can you tell me about the opportunities at your institution?
  - b. I've attended an international high school outside the US. Do you think that would impact my adjustment to your college/university?
10. If an admission officer is a graduate of the institution, this is a great time to ask them about their experience at that school, why they chose it, and what they liked/disliked. If an admission officer hasn't gone to the institution, one of the questions that might be helpful to ask is "What is the biggest challenge first year students at your institution face?" This often leads to some pretty interesting conversations.

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### I've already applied to that institution so I don't see a need to meet with the representative or ask more questions.

1. Not so, Not so! Applicants should keep in contact with us, check on the status of their application and continue to "demonstrate their interest".
2. I have already applied to your school. Please tell me how the admission decision-making process works at your school.
3. When will I hear back? Is something missing from my file? When is the best time to visit?
4. About next steps:
  - a. when will I receive a response?
  - b. how can I connect with current students?
  - c. can I get some more detailed information about residence/orientation?
  - d. when can I begin the course registration process, and who will assist me with this process?
5. They need to ask us about:
  - a. health & dental care
  - b. study visa's
  - c. travel arrangements/transportation
  - d. banking
  - e. cell phone plans
  - f. registration
  - g. how to pay deposits and fees
  - h. housing
  - i. campus life, visits
  - j. orientation programs
  - k. cost
  - l. scholarship opportunities, loans, work study, jobs off campus (work permits)
6. I applied to your institution because \_\_\_\_\_ (and be sincere about why), and I wanted to introduce myself because I'm very interested in \_\_\_\_\_ college/university.
7. I'm so glad to meet you because my application is already on file. I've done a lot of research about \_\_\_\_\_ college/university. Is there a little known or obscure fact that I may not know about \_\_\_\_\_ college/university?
8. If I'm offered admission, \_\_\_\_\_
9. There are ALWAYS more questions to ask!! Once you've applied, you can really get into the specific "meat" of the institution - for example, going to classes, meeting students, getting to know a specific community at that school - this is when you actually have the time and the bandwidth to think more meaningfully about how you might want to shape YOUR specific experience at a school, be it through art, or the MUN group or Greek like, athletics, theater, what living in that specific geographic location might be. **A kid who doesn't have questions is a kid who isn't engaging fully with the process.**

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### A 10th grader or first semester 11<sup>th</sup> grader who is just starting to think about searching for colleges and has no idea where to begin...

1. General questions about size, location, program offerings are helpful as they begin to sort through where they could envision themselves studying.
2. What are some of the important differences between large universities and small colleges?
3. What is a research university and what is a liberal arts college?
4. What are some of the important differences between large universities and small colleges? What is a research university and what is a liberal arts college?
5. What should I be doing right now? I don't think it is ever too early to be looking at universities so could you tell me a bit about it and I will do more research on your website?
6. Ask for an introduction to the university/city/programs/ when they should start the application process and what the requirements are (to ensure they enroll in proper classes in gr 11 and gr 12)?
7. Does the university offer a program you might be interested in?
  - a. would you do better at a larger school or smaller school?
  - b. what type of city do you want to live in (size, climate, social & recreational opportunities)?
  - c. does the university offer on-campus housing?
  - d. is the university flexible in what courses you can choose, when you declare your major, combining majors?
8. I'm just beginning the process, and would like to learn more. What questions do you think I should ask about your college/university?
9. What do you think is the most effective way to begin a college search process?
10. Think about "fit" in a larger sense - what are the "fit" characteristics that YOU value, dream about, hope to find? I look at them in a few big buckets - academic/intellectual; co/extra curricular; social environment/campus; broader environment; basics like distance from home, geography, institutional size. This will help you narrow the search criteria somewhat. Also, do a campus visit at a school near your home to get an idea of what a campus visit looks like, what are the questions you'd like to ask etc. You can consider this a "dress rehearsal" - you don't need to want to go to that school, but trying out a campus visit will help you relax AND will help start shaping how YOU want to experience a campus visit.

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### What is the craziest or most inappropriate thing a prospective student has said?

#### (aka: what NOT to say)

1. In my experience it's actually the PARENTS who say things that are inappropriate! Students should be doing the talking - they generally don't say things that are that crazy or inappropriate!
2. For most of us, the BEST part of our job is meeting students face-to-face, so students should realize that we LOVE talking with them and look forward to engaging conversations. I don't like "comparison" questions. e.g. How is YOUR program better than \_\_\_\_ University? I always respond by saying "I can't speak to the program at \_\_\_\_ University, only my own which I know well and can tell you about student experiences and stories, etc."
3. Are the girls at your school pretty? Are the boys hot?
4. Do you guarantee a job when you graduate? Are there gay guys at your university? (negatively posed)
5. What is the male/female ratio? (because I work at a women's college!) The lesson here is unless it is a college fair where it is ok to start with, "I know nothing about \_\_ school, can you provide me with a brief overview?" You don't want to ask completely obvious questions that could be answered by a 2 minute review of the website or basic literature.
6. Here are some of my personal pet peeves: students who do not look at you when they are speaking, students who mumble, students who pick up a cell phone call when you are in mid sentence, and students who use profane language.
7. On the positive side, I really like talking to students who have a sense of humor, students who come back to my table with a second question, and in particular, students who are very open about where they are in the process. **It's OK to say that I'm confused or uncertain or a little lost in the process as long as you also display that you are open to learning more.** What's truly fun about this work is engaging in a real conversation with a young person who is exploring his/her future. The difference between a conversation with a college counselor and a college representative is that the counselor knows the student and his/her context. A college representative doesn't, but does know the institution he/she represents, so whatever context or information the student is able to share really helps the college rep provide context. **If the student isn't open, it's always a frustrating exchange for the college rep.** (That is a very long winded way of saying be yourself, but be on your best behavior.)