

Seven Important Aspects to Researching and Selecting Potential Colleges

Review These Tips Prior to Visiting Campuses In an Effort to Best Inform Yourself

There are many important aspects in considering the right college. Adding the desire to play college golf comes with some additional pieces of the puzzle - getting recruited, finding the right athletic fit, and determining the best location for you. As thoughts turn to the next educational step in life, families should travel to college campuses to help determine the "best fit" learning environment academically, athletically, and personally; I strongly urge my clients to schedule junior golf tournaments near campuses that may be of interest in an effort to complete this objective. Using this time to tour a campus and get a feel for the place - find out where the students study, see where they attend classes, look at a residence hall room - is a great way to supplement a weekend of tournament golf. This helps students develop specific ideas about the college experience and how they may envision their time on campus through academic, athletic, and personal lenses. It also helps students to determine what may or may not be important aspects for their college experience. The main goal of campus visits, then, is for students to think about different aspects of the college experience such as campus space, location, academic resources, and living options. To ensure this is an effective experience, think about the following seven aspects of researching and selecting potential colleges and how these may shape this learning process.

1. Size and Type - Colleges come in a variety of sizes and types. Student populations can range from the hundreds to the tens of thousands. There are small private religious schools. There are liberal arts schools. There are large research schools. Colleges can be urban (New York University) and suburban (Northwestern University) in nature or located in small towns (Clemson University) and very rural settings (Washington State University). Determine what is the best fit for you. Do you want a large institution that is home to a great football team? Do you want a small residential campus where the class sizes are limited in number and more faculty/student interaction is guaranteed? Do you like being in a place where everybody knows you? Or, do you like the anonymity of a crowd?

2. Location - There are colleges in every living environment possible. Determine what you want from your college experience and where you want your college located. If you grew up in a very urban environment, perhaps a rural college which does not offer the excitement of a large city is not the best choice. Conversely, if you grew up in a rural environment, the excitement of a large city may be dampened in a short time when you begin to notice the minimal green spaces, the ongoing noise, and the busy atmosphere that you cannot easily escape.

3. Student Population - Going to college means being introduced to students who may not be like you! Though this is the great thing about the college experience, finding like individuals may be important to your successful transition from high school to college. Remember, urban universities will often draw a more diverse student body whereas rural and smaller size schools may have a much more homogeneous student population. Other things to think about with regards to the student population: Do the majority of the students live on campus or commute? What is the age of the average student? What percentage of the student body is involved in Greek life (if there is a Greek system)? How many student-athletes are on-campus?

4. Campus Events - Being part of the "life of the institution" is critical to your success as a student. However, you also want to ensure that the campus has a "life." While on campus for a visit, look for flyers, posters, and information about upcoming events on campus such as speakers, plays, and athletics. Remember, you will be busy balancing academics and athletics, but having some extra curricular events to attend as a way of escaping the day-to-day grind is as important as studying your class notes and practicing your three footers!

5. Academics - When researching a college do not take it for granted that the institution will have the major you want to study or the academics to fit your learning style. Large universities often have overpopulated first year classes which are normally lecture driven. Some institutions have First Year Experience programs where faculty teach special topic courses with small class enrollments. Schools may require completing General Education Requirements while others allow the student to begin studying the major courses early in their academic career. Learn about the academics of the college by talking with faculty members or purchasing the school's "Course Catalogue," normally available in the bookstore. Review the catalogue to answer your academic questions.

6. Student Resources - Visit some of the more popular student resource offices on campus to get a feel for how the institution supports the students success. Go by the Academic Advising Center, the Career Center, and the Center for Student Learning. You may also want to visit the student center and the library as well. These last two locations are often the main gathering spots for students on campus and it would be worth the time and effort to see how they are utilized by students and what is available to them. This is especially true on weekends.

7. Your Instinct - Trust your instincts. If a place feels right, then it probably is right for you. If it feels wrong, then chances are it won't fit your academic and personal needs regardless of how many ways you spin it. College is a personal choice - your choice as the student - and it has to feel right, fit right, and provide the academic and social environments that you desire. When walking around a campus, imagine yourself going to school there. Can you? If so, what aspects of the college are you enamored with and, conversely, if it doesn't fit you, what aspects of the college make you feel this way? Additionally, as a prospective student-athlete you must add into the mix the coaching style you are most likely to thrive under, the appropriate athletic setting which allows you to meet and exceed your personal goals for the game of golf, and the opportunities for a first year student on the golf team in terms of making the traveling team and competing at events.

Make an effort to see as many college campuses as possible. Look at all types of colleges regardless if they are of interest or not, especially early on in the process. Take aspects from each college visited that you most like and then piece them together to create the college environment that you envision working for you. Once you have done this you will be better organized to approach the research process and on your way to selecting the right college environment for you!

Good luck

Dr. Fleming

Dr. Bruce Fleming is the founder of Play Collegiate Golf, created to mentor young women and men interested in continuing their competitive golf careers at institutions that support their academic, athletic, and personal goals.

For more information please visit playcollegiategolf.com

Complete An Internship

College Survival Tip



Plan your academic career to ensure you complete an internship (in fact, try to do two!). An internship can offer graded academic credit which allows you to take one less class during a semester. Most standard college internships are 120 hours of service equaling three academic credits. You can always complete 40 hours for one credit or 80 hours for two credits (or, 160 hours for four credits). Also, you can complete an internship during the summer months. Internships provide you a real-world work experience, can introduce you to a professional role model, and are a unique learning environment that cannot be duplicated within the classroom!