College Awareness: Campus Visits and College Tours

Why does it matter?

- Campus Visits (also known as College Tours) expose students to college early and can be a powerful influence on student motivation
- College Tours allow the student to learn a lot about that college, including the look and feel of campus, accessibility of professors, clubs, etc.
- 18.4% of seniors who listed “visited on college tour and liked it” as one of their top two reasons for deciding to enroll in a specific college
- Yet, more than 21% of Class of 2011 seniors whose primary plan is to continue their education and they had applied to at least one college did not visit any campuses of the colleges to which they applied

Suggested Roles within your School

- **Counselors/Coaches**: Identify, publicize, and plan college tours. Attend tours with students, when possible. Partner with CBOs to offer college tours when school is not in session (e.g., weekends, summer). Help students become prepared for the college tour. Invite college reps to visit if many students are unable to attend college tours
- **Teachers**: Encourage students to attend college tours. Assist counseling team with arranging a college tour to your university. Help counseling team identify the schools that students are most interested in
- **Principals and APs**: Provide funding for transportation to/from college tours. Encourage students and staff to attend college tours
- **Parent Liaisons or CBOs**: Provide funding for transportation to/from college tours. Encourage students and staff to attend college tours. Serve as chaperones on college tours
- **Student Groups**: Organize tours, particularly based on a special interest (e.g., Arts Club might attend a tour at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago or Columbia College)

Ready-to-Use Materials


- **College Tour Tips.doc** (After School Matters, Mark Pristop) - Advice for students on how to make the most out of a college tour
- **Von Steuben College Handbook – Campus Visits, Preparing for your Campus Visit, What to Look for During Your Visit (pages 21-26)** (Von Steuben Counseling Team) - See [www.chooseyourfuture.org/staff/toolkit/college-planning-handbook](http://www.chooseyourfuture.org/staff/toolkit/college-planning-handbook)
- **CVCA Questions to Ask Recruiters.ppt** (CVCA, Carole Jacobs) - Questions for students to ask college recruiters at a fair, the college or their HS
- **Campus Visit Shadow Day Request Form.doc** (Jones College Prep) - Form a student submits when missing school due to a campus visit on her own
- **College Planning.ppt** (After School Matters; original owner unknown, but likely within CPS, submitted by Mark Pristop) - This presentation for students covers everything from attending college fairs to exploring colleges to financial aid
- **How to Prepare for a College Visit.doc** (Pathways to College and Career, Marcia Boyd) - Worksheet to help students prepare for a college visit

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Key Issues and Resolutions

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Resolution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students can be intimidated by the thought of college and have difficulty imagining themselves as college students</td>
<td>Effective Practice 1-3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students sometimes select to go to a university that is not a good fit and/or is not one that is committed to the student graduating successfully from college; both can be figured out by visiting the campus prior to application or enrollment</td>
<td>Effective Practice 1-3, 5, 6</td>
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Effective Practices – The Fundamentals

1. **Encourage students to take advantage of opportunities to attend campus visits and assist in planning college tours**
   - The school, CPS Central Office, or local CBOs might arrange campus visits and college tours. Other times, students will have to plan their own college tour and campus visit, usually independently or with family
   - Students, particularly those in a leadership club or Student Ambassadors, can assist with planning college tours and visits (Kelvyn Park)
   - Grade-level kick-off events and college promotion weeks are good opportunities to promote campus visits organized by the school
   - Many tours take place through the following: senior seminar classes, AVID, local CBOs (especially those that are college access related and/or funded by WIA)

2. **If your high school is organizing the College Tour, work with the College to provide a structured series of activities, which should include a campus tour with a student guide and information session with a university representative**
   - BONUS: The university arranges an alumni panel with students from your high school who are currently enrolled at the college and performing well

3. **Organize tours to many different types of colleges and universities and/or encourage students to see many types of colleges**
   - Organize tours for easy-to-reach and popular schools, like DePaul and Harold Washington, after school
   - Organize tours for harder-to-reach schools for whom CPS is not a CPS feeder school (e.g., University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Notre Dame) during spring break, when students have more time but can still make it back in a day (Jones College Prep)

4. **Encourage the students to research and review information about the college prior to their tour**
   - This can help students narrow their choices on which campuses to visit and will allow students to ask informed questions at their visit

5. **Encourage students to make the most of their visit**
   - The most informative college tours or campus visits will include: information session with admission representative, a tour of the campus, financial aid session, student panel, an opportunity to sit in on a class, and potentially an overnight visit
   - Encourage students to contact the university well in advance of their visit to ensure a spot

6. **Inform students, staff and administration about which schools are proprietary schools and provide advice**
   - Proprietary schools are for-profit businesses which provide education and training

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Issue

Resolution

• Students can be intimidated by the thought of college and have difficulty imagining themselves as college students
  Effective Practice 1-3

• Students sometimes select to go to a university that is not a good fit and/or is not one that is committed to the student graduating successfully from college; both can be figured out by visiting the campus prior to application or enrollment
  Effective Practice 1-3, 5, 6
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Effective Practices – As your program grows

7. Utilize personal relationships to develop relationships between college and your high school
   a. Example: A science teacher who is well connected with his undergraduate institution (UW-Madison) arranged for a STEM tour during the summer (Amundsen)
8. Encourage students to seek summer enrichment opportunities on college campuses and/or attend other college events throughout the year (e.g., sporting events)
9. Encourage students to talk to professors while on campus
10. Ask a university partner to host classes for the senior class for a day
    a. Example: Noble’s Rauner College Prep seniors is having their typical Friday schedule at DePaul’s campus. They will have the same instruction as they would on a typical Friday, with their same teachers, but will have the experience of being in a lecture hall or discussion setting, as well as having to navigate around campus to find their classes
11. When students cannot attend a campus visit or college tour, encourage students to talk to campus representatives who visit your school

Common Mistakes to Avoid

• Feeling as if a funding cut prevents students from attending campus visits. Be creative. Perhaps students can pitch in for the bus or a CBO can pick up the tab. Also, students can often attend a visit on their own time and dime
• Taking students to programs that don’t meet their needs or interests
# College Awareness: Campus Visits and College Tours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Where to Find</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coaches and Counselors</td>
<td>Resource to support students on their journey to college and career</td>
<td>In your school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network Specialists</td>
<td>Resource to support schools and students in their journey to college and career</td>
<td>In your Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>May be able to help organize campus visits and college tours</td>
<td>In your school</td>
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<tr>
<td>What’s Next Illinois</td>
<td>Timelines will suggest when students should go on campus visits</td>
<td><a href="http://www.whatsnextillinois.org">www.whatsnextillinois.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Community-based organizations</td>
<td>Often plan campus visits and college tours for the students they serve</td>
<td>In your community</td>
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<tr>
<td>College and University Reps</td>
<td>Reps can represent their university and provide information to students</td>
<td>College/university websites, Referrals from teachers and others in your school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campus Tours</td>
<td>Virtual campus tours to more than 1,000 schools</td>
<td><a href="http://www.campustours.com">www.campustours.com</a></td>
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## Note of Appreciation

- Thanks to the following people for helping develop this toolkit: Counselors and Coaches from the North/Northwest Side High School Network who preferred to remain anonymous, Coaches who preferred to remain anonymous, Eric Rapp (Noble Street Charter School’s Rauner College Prep, Director of College Counseling), Frank Rios (Kelvyn Park, Coach), LaToya Hudson-Spells (Jones College Prep, Counselor), Erica White (Jones College Prep, Counselor), Tamara Driver (Jones College Prep, Counselor), Sam Pearson (Amundsen, Coach)
## College Awareness: Campus Visits and College Tours

### What does it mean at every grade level?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 9</th>
<th>Grade 10</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Spring:</strong> Students should visit at least one college open house/information session</td>
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<th>Grade 11</th>
<th>Grade 12</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fall:</strong> Counselors and coaches should publish and promote student participation in college tours</td>
<td>Students should attend an open house/information session for every college he/she is applying to. If the student cannot get there in person, the student should look for information online (e.g., virtual tours, webinars) to broaden his/her knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students should request information on college tours from several schools, and attend at least 3 college open house/information session</td>
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**Note:** Many grade level activities are cumulative.