

# 125 Questions to Ask When Researching Colleges

In this lesson you'll discover:

- 1. Questions to ask when exploring colleges and universities**
- 2. Questions to include those related to COVID-19**

When researching colleges, you need to make sure that you ask appropriate questions. This list will help you to do that. Too often parents and teenagers don't ask enough questions. And that is one of the reasons why a third of students attending four-year colleges end up transferring somewhere else. Many students failed to do their due diligence which would have increased their chances of making better choices.

Using this list as a guide (feel free to add and subtract questions) will require contacting these campus stakeholders:

- Admission/financial aid staffers
- Professors
- Current students
- Recent alumni
- Career office
- College administration

The college admission office should be able to connect you with recent alumni, as well as current students. I'd also recommend that during college visits, assuming they are feasible during the pandemic, stop students and engage with them.

Some of these questions you can ask during a visit. Others you can pose via email, phone calls, or Skype. Still other questions you can answer yourself through online research on websites like the federal College Navigator, COLLEGEdata, and the College Board.

# 125 College Questions to Ask

## OVERALL CAMPUS

1. What distinguishes this institution from its peers?
2. What is this college most proud of?
3. How many undergraduates attend this college?
4. How many graduate students attend?
5. How diverse is this campus?
6. How fiscally fit is this college?
7. What is its bond rating and, if it's a private institution, what is its grade from Forbes' latest College Financial Grades?

## ACADEMICS

8. What is the average class size of introductory classes?
9. What is the average class size of upper-division courses?
10. How widely are teaching assistants used?
11. How easy or difficult is it to enroll in the courses you need?
12. How much interaction, if any, will the typical undergrad have with tenured professors and will it largely be confined to lecture halls?
13. What are the typical class sizes of my intended major?
14. Is my intended discipline an impacted major?
15. Am I guaranteed the major that I'm interested in?
16. Are the admission standards higher for certain majors?
17. When do you have to declare a major?
18. How much time do students typically spend on homework and in my intended major?
19. How much writing and reading are expected?
20. Is it possible to double major, and if it's possible, would I be able to do so in four years?
21. Is the college on a semester, trimester, or quarter system?

## ACADEMIC BENEFITS

22. Do you have an honors college?
23. What benefits does the honors college offer?
24. What are the academic requirements to qualify for the honors college?
25. Do you have a learning community or other freshman learning experiences?
26. Do seniors complete a capstone experience or project?
27. What is your academic advisory system like?
28. Is it possible to get a professor as my advisor?
29. What percentage of students studies abroad?
30. Do students in my intended major tend to study abroad?

31. What opportunities are there for undergraduate research?
32. How many students participate in undergraduate research?
33. What departments offer undergraduate research?
34. If you are exploring transferring to the college, ask: how do I determine how many academic credits will transfer?

### COLLEGE GRADUATION TRACK RECORD

35. What is your four-year graduation rate?
36. What is your five-year graduation rate?
37. What is the six-year grad rate?
38. What are the main reasons why students don't graduate on time?
39. What does it take to graduate in four years?
40. Will it take longer to graduate if you double major?
41. What percentage of freshmen return for sophomore year (freshmen retention rate)?
42. What are the major reasons why students leave prematurely?

### ACADEMIC SUPPORT

43. How do you provide academic advice to students?
44. Do you have a writing center?
45. What type of tutoring services do you have?
46. Do you have an orientation program for freshmen (transfer students)?
47. What kind of learning disability services do you offer?
48. How recent must a student's LD testing be to qualify for accommodations?

### INTERNSHIPS, JOBS, AND GRADUATE SCHOOL

49. What can I expect from your school's career services office?
50. When can I access the career services office?
51. How active is the alumni network?
52. Is the career service office available for alumni?
53. What percentage of students at the college gets internships?
54. Is there a co-op program?
55. What is the job placement rate?
56. How is that [job placement rate calculated](#)?
57. Are the figures self-reported?
58. What percentage of students goes on to graduate school or professional schools?
59. What are your school's feeder institutions for graduate and professional degrees?

### STUDENT LIFE

60. What kinds of dorm choices are there?
61. What percentage of students lives in campus housing?

- 62. Are dormitories an option after freshmen year?
- 63. What mental health services are available and how accessible are they?
- 64. What are the meal plan options?
- 65. What percentage of the student body belongs to a sorority or fraternity?
- 66. How prevalent are drugs and alcohol on campus?
- 67. Can freshmen bring a car to campus?

## FINANCIAL AID AND MERIT AWARDS

- 68. What percentage of a student's financial need does the college typically meet?
- 69. What percentage of a student's financial need does the college typically meet after freshman year?
- 70. What is your average financial aid package?
- 71. What is the typical breakdown of loans versus grants?
- 72. What is the average merit award?
- 73. What are the requirements to receive a merit scholarship?
- 74. Do the merit scholarships require separate applications?
- 75. What happens to my financial aid package if it takes longer than four years to graduate?
- 76. What percentage of students receives college grants and/or scholarships?
- 77. Do you charge more for certain academic majors?
- 78. What is the average federal PLUS Loan debt that parents assume?
- 79. What are the work-study opportunities?
- 80. At what rate has the annual tuition rate been rising in recent years?
- 81. Do you award extra scholarships for such things as specific majors and talents?
- 82. Where can I learn more about your merit scholarships?
- 83. Does the percentage of aid that you meet typically shrink after freshman year?
- 84. Does your net price calculator provide an accurate estimate of what your school will cost me?
- 85. What is the average [student loan debt](#) that graduates leave with?
- 86. Does your institution give out athletic scholarships?

## QUESTIONS SPECIFICALLY FOR CURRENT STUDENTS

Here are a few more questions to ask:

- 87. Why did you decide to attend this college?
- 88. If you had the power to change anything about the school, what would it be?
- 89. What do you like best about your college?
- 90. What do you like least about your college?
- 91. What kind of students succeed on your campus?
- 92. What students end up not fitting in?
- 93. What kind of teenagers would you recommend your college to?
- 94. How would you describe the culture of this campus?

## QUESTIONS FOR RECENT GRADUATES

- 95. What was your experience like at your college?
- 96. If you could turn back time, would you attend your alma mater again?
- 97. What would you have changed?
- 98. Do you feel your alma mater prepared you well for your future life and was it worth the cost?
- 99. Do you feel your alma mater prepared you for a career?

## COVID-19-RELATED QUESTIONS

- 100. What is the campus policy regarding taking a gap year specifically out of COVID-19 concerns?
- 101. What are your plans to protect students from a COVID-19 outbreak?
- 102. Will students be tested for COVID-19 and how frequently will the tests be taken?
- 103. Will students have their temperatures taken on campus, how frequently, and where?
- 104. Will students be required to wear masks in common areas?
- 105. What are the protocols when a student, faculty, or staff contracts COVID-19?
- 106. Will quarantine for sick students be on or off-campus?
- 107. How will sick students be monitored and how long will they stay in quarantine?
- 108. What are your plans for contact tracing?
- 109. Will immediate viral testing be available for anyone on campus with symptoms?
- 110. How long will it take to get test results?
- 111. Explain how the campus health and mental health services center are equipped to deal with COVID-19?
- 112. How will academic and social life change on campus due to the pandemic?
- 113. How will classroom instruction change?
- 114. How will social distancing be accomplished and enforced on campus?
- 115. If students will be allowed on campus, will faculty have the right to refuse teaching in person?
- 116. What percentage of faculty have indicated that don't want to teach in-person?
- 117. What would need to happen to shut down a campus?
- 118. How much time would students be given to leave?
- 119. Would refunds for room/board and/or tuition be given if the campus is shut down?
- 120. If a campus is closed, would some students be allowed to stay and under what circumstances?
- 121. Will students have the option of a private dorm room?
- 122. If the college must conduct classes online, how would you handle course work that must be done in person, such as in labs, art and dance studios, and theaters?
- 123. How much experience does the school have with online instructions?
- 124. What percentage of classes have traditionally be taught online?
- 125. What are the protocols for athletes to protect themselves, as well as club and intramural participants?