“For high school seniors, and an increasing number of eager juniors, choosing the right college becomes the most important, time-consuming decision in their lives. Parents share their children’s anxiety, apprehension and ambivalence throughout the roller coaster ritual of college fairs, campus visits and applications with their dreaded essay questions. Unfortunately, far too often the college search produces a match that is unsuccessful, as attested to the fact that 45% of students who begin at a college or university graduate from the institution in four years.” It is important to look beyond the glitz and glamour and ask the important questions that will differentiate one institution from another. This can only be done through effective research, which can take place by attending College Fairs and meeting with College Representatives.

Before the Fair…
1. Answer the following questions to help you determine what kind of school would best suit you.
   • Do you want to attend a two or four year institution? Co-ed or single sex?
   • What size school do you want to attend?
   • What programs of study are you considering?
   • How far from home do you want to go?
   • Do you wish to participate in any specific extra-curricular activities or athletics?
   • Do you want to attend a school in an urban, suburban or rural environment?
2. Discuss your college plans with your guidance counselor, family, teachers and friend.
3. RESEARCH your colleges of interest on the Internet and in the career room or library.
4. Check dates and registration deadlines for college entrance examinations.

At the Fair…
1. Pick up a bag and a fair directory.
2. Visit with colleges and universities that you feel meet your criteria.
3. Talk with a college counselor at the Counseling Center if you have any questions or need help with your college research.
4. Attend an information session.
5. Ask about visitations to the campus. Actually SEEING the school, sitting in on classes, experiencing the academic environment will assist in decision-making process.

Questions to Ask College Representatives
1. How can I arrange a campus visit? Are there any special visitation days on your campus?
2. What are the application deadlines for admission and financial aid?
3. How do you assign faculty advisors to students, especially those who are certain about their major?
4. When must I choose a major?
5. What percentage of the students are commuter students?
6. What types of extra-curricular activities are there on campus?
7. How accessible are the professors outside of class?
8. How are roommates selected?
9. What additional academic services do you offer to students (tutoring, career counseling, study skills workshops)?
10. What types of internships/co-op experiences are available?
11. How safe is your school? Where can I obtain statistics about crimes on your campus?

The college search process is a marvelous time for self-discovery for students and their parents. May you enjoy the journey, but also find the answers to the questions that should lead to the right match between student & institution.

Peter T. Mitchell, President of Albion College.

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