

FREE SHARABLE BONUS ONLINE CONTENT FROM THE AUTHOR OF

LAUNCH

How to Get Your Kids Through COLLEGE DEBT-FREE
and Into Jobs They Love Afterward

The
Ultimate Guide to
Planning College
and Career at the
Same Time

THE EFFECTIVE COLLEGE VISIT

Questions to Get Answered Before the Day is Over

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****Bonus article created to accompany Jeannie Burlowski's book *LAUNCH: How to Get Your Kids Through College Debt-Free and Into Jobs They Love Afterward* (available at JeannieBurlowski.com/LAUNCH)**

In chapter 15 of *LAUNCH*, I strongly recommend that parents and students plan in-person college visits that take place during the sophomore and junior years of high school.

In that chapter I explain exactly how to choose colleges to visit (random visits are not a good idea), which college to be sure to visit first, *when* to visit, how to slash the costs of college visits, the importance of taking 8 -10 photos during each visit, and the three most important tasks to accomplish on each campus visit.

HERE ARE THE QUESTIONS TO ASK ON EACH VISIT.

For each campus visit, bring a stack of blank 4" x 5" notecards along with you, and record the answers to the following questions on those notecards. Chapter 15 of *LAUNCH* explains what very important thing to do with the photos and notecards when you get home.

(My goal is to help as many students as I can; please feel free to share this bonus article with any families you know who'll be visiting colleges during their kids'

sophomore and junior years of high school.)

QUESTIONS TO ASK IN THE ADMISSIONS OFFICE

On most visits, parents and students visit the admissions office together.

Student, greet the admissions office staff person, introduce yourself, and then introduce your parents. Here are some great questions for students to ask the admissions office staff:

1. Here's the college major I'm considering. Could you open up the college catalog and show me all the different courses available in that department? How often are they offered? How easy or difficult are they to get into?

2. Do you have an accelerated-degree program where I can graduate in fewer than four years?

3. How many CLEP® and DSST® credits will you allow me to use toward my degree here? I already have __ of them. What are the rules for getting my AP classes to count for actual college credit here? Will all the college courses I've already taken transfer here with no problem?

4. Here's what I've been doing as far as serving others. Here are the main extracurricular activities I've been involved in in high school. These are the kinds of grades I tend to get. If I stay on this trajectory, am I likely to be a candidate for merit aid (extra free money to help pay for college) here? What could I do in high school to enhance my chances of receiving merit aid here? I ask this because I've set a firm goal of getting myself through college completely debt-free in under four years. What do you have here that will help me accomplish that?

5. Do you have clubs and groups in my area of interest?

6. I saw on collegedata.com that this college's four-year graduation rate is on the low side. What are the main reasons for that, do you think? Is the problem something that can be overcome with a student's self-discipline, or is there a bigger problem in play—like classes are filled and students can't get the courses they need to graduate?

7. Does this campus have a writing center where students can have papers reviewed before handing them in? A math center for getting extra help?

8. If the student has a physical, mental, or learning disability, ask: "Can we visit your Disability Services Center and talk to the staff there today?"

9. Tell me about on-campus housing. Are your dorms co-ed by floor, or by door (where every other room on a hall has students of a different sex)? Do male and female students share bathrooms in these dorms? What percent of freshman live on campus? What percent of upperclassmen? Do you have situations where students want on-campus housing and can't get it? Is there an early deadline to secure freshman housing on this campus? Is it easy to live on campus here without a car?

10. Can we have lunch in a freshman dorm cafeteria? I'd like to see what the food's like. Where would we buy a ticket for that?

11. I'm a musician/athlete. What are the practice spaces, sports fields, and performance areas like?

12. Does this college have any "cooperative education programs" where the student attends college for six months, then works for pay at a job in her field for six months, then returns to college for six months - repeating the cycle until college graduation? How big, how emphasized, is that program here? What help does this college give students in finding co-op employment positions?

13. If it's a religious institution, ask: "Can we attend chapel today? Is chapel attendance required at this college?" (If chapel attendance is required, consider that to be a good thing. Colleges where chapel isn't just a casual option tend to attract students who are very serious about their faith, and this can enrich the college experience in immeasurable ways.)

14. What's required to become an "honors" student here? Are there special benefits for honors students, like certain quiet dorm floors, the privilege of being first to sign up for classes, or extra seminar classes?

QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS TO ASK IN THE FINANCIAL AID OFFICE

I suggest that parents go alone to visit the financial aid office while their children are off doing some more interesting campus activity. Here are some great questions for parents to ask in the financial aid office:

1. If my child receives an outside scholarship (from our local Kiwanis Club, for example), will that reduce the amount of free grant money she receives in her financial aid package? Or will it be used to reduce the amount of loan money she'll be expected to pay back after college? This is important to us. What is your policy on this? Could I get that in writing?

2. If we end up with a bill from you that our family needs to pay in the fall before my child starts college, can we pay that amount to you in installments over nine months? What interest rate is charged on that installment plan?

3. Is this college less expensive for in-state residents? If so, what would my child have to do to become a legal resident of this state?

4. Does this financial aid office look only at the FAFSA form, or do you require additional financial aid forms that ask extra questions as well? Can I get copies of those extra financial aid forms now, so I can know ahead of time what kinds of financial questions I'm going to be asked?

5. Does this campus have students studying under ROTC scholarships? Does this college provide free room and board or any other special benefits to ROTC students?

QUESTIONS TO ASK IN THE CAREER CENTER

I suggest that parents and students make a brief visit to the college career center together.

Why? If your child doesn't become acquainted with the valuable services offered in the career center before he enrolls, he may never visit it until he's a senior, trying to pull together a resume with nothing to put on it. This would be a great loss.

The career center is one of the most important offices on campus for students in every year of college. Here are some great questions to ask the career center staff:

1. We know that you provide help to college seniors who are putting together resumes. But tell me about the kinds of practical help you provide to freshmen, sophomores, and juniors.

2. Can you show us the resources you use to help sophomores, juniors, and seniors find paid internships in their major fields? My daughter is thinking of eventually being a ___ major. If she came in here looking for internships, what would you do to help her find them?

3. What help do you provide to students looking for co-op positions? (For an explanation of why co-op college programs are so tremendously valuable for students, see Chapter 14 of my book *LAUNCH: How to Get Your Kids Through College Debt-Free and Into Jobs They Love Afterward*, available at JeannieBurlowski.com/LAUNCH.)

4. What help do you provide to freshmen, sophomores, and juniors who are deciding their career goals? Do you have a CPP certified person here who administers the Strong Interest Inventory and the Myers Briggs Type Indicator and provides the results in a combined report? Do you ever provide that service for students who are just *considering* attending your school, but aren't yet enrolled?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR STUDENT TOUR GUIDE

I strongly recommend that parents and students take the campus tour together. Here are some great questions for students and parents to ask the tour guide.

1. Who are the greatest professors here that everyone's excited to take classes from?

2. How easy or difficult is it to get into the classes you want to take here?

3. Tell me about the sizes of the classes you took as a freshman and as a sophomore. How did you feel about those class sizes?

4. What would you say was the worst class you ever had here? What was the problem with it?

5. How were the freshman classes you took? When you were a freshman, was it easy to get to talk to a professor if you wanted him to give you feedback on a

potential paper topic, or if you needed clarification on something? Do you feel like the professors here make teaching their priority, or are most of the courses taught by teaching assistants?

6. How secure is this campus? Do you feel safe walking back to the dorms at 10:00 p.m. after a night class? Is a campus security escort provided for students who'd like one? How long do you usually have to wait for a campus security escort when you need one?

7. Show me the freshman dorms, and then let's walk from there down to the main academic area of campus. I want to see what that walk feels like.

8. What do you like and dislike about the food here?

9. What happens on weekends here on campus? Does campus social life tend to revolve around fraternities and sororities? Around alcohol? On a scale of 1–10, what is the party culture on this campus?

10. Do most of the students here have cars? Is it easy to get by without a car here? What is the public transportation like if I need to get somewhere? Do people here think of the public transportation as being convenient and safe?

11. Tell me about the neighborhoods that surround us on all four sides of campus. What's up there to the north? What's over there to the east?

When you return home from each campus visit, print out the best 8-10 photos you took of the campus, and then follow *LAUNCH*'s chapter 15 instructions on exactly what to do with the photos and notecards you've collected.

You'll need to have this done when I coach you on how to make your biggest financial decisions about colleges, in chapter 26 of *LAUNCH*.

For clear, step-by-step help getting your kids through college debt-free, get your 344-page copy of *LAUNCH: How to Get Your Kids Through College Debt-Free and Into Jobs They Love Afterward*.

You can use the "Look Inside" feature on Amazon.com to read the first few chapters of [*LAUNCH*](#) for free by going to:

bit.ly/burlowski

You can see the "Top 9 Questions Parents Are Asking Me About *LAUNCH*," [here](#).

Read just one chapter of *LAUNCH* every 1-3 months while your child's in middle school and high school, and you'll know every viable strategy for debt-free college *at exactly the right time to implement it*.

And if your child's already well past middle school? That's OK; you can run to catch up. But the process of getting your kids through college debt-free goes more smoothly the earlier you start it – *especially* if you're not planning to save up any money to pay for college.

Do you have friends who are parenting kids ages 12 – 22? SHARE the link to this free "buying a house" resource on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn right now.

Who is Jeannie Burlowski?

Jeannie is a full time author, academic strategist, and speaker. Her writing helps parents set their kids up to graduate college debt-free and move *directly* into careers they excel at and love. She also helps students apply to law, medical, business, and grad school at her website GetIntoMedSchool.com. You can follow her on Twitter [@JBurlowski](https://twitter.com/JBurlowski).