

10 Ways to Learn About Colleges Online

1. Take a virtual tour

In addition to basic information—like the size of the campus and the student body—many college websites offer virtual campus tours. Get a closer look at different parts of the campus using interactive maps and other tools.

2. Learn about everyday life

A college's website, Facebook page and Twitter feed can tell you all about campus living. Look for information on campus clubs and organizations, cultural events, student government, sports, and more.

3. Browse the course catalog

Basic course information is often available in an online catalog. You can read short descriptions of all the current classes, learn about frequently offered elective classes and find out the requirements for each major.

4. Visit an academic department

Check out a posted syllabus to learn about the subjects a course explores and to estimate a class's workload. Read about professors' interests and expectations to find out what sorts of teachers you'll learn from. If you find a particular professor's research interesting, consider sending him or her an email.

5. Investigate support services

On a college's website, you can learn about the services it provides to help its students succeed. Academic support can include tutoring, writing assistance and study-skills courses. Other support includes things like help with the financial aid process, counseling and career-planning services.

6. Look into housing options

Find out what sorts of housing options are available for both freshmen and upperclassmen. You may be able to see images of dorm rooms, group houses, on-campus apartments and more.

7. Visit the library

Curious about how large a college's book collection is? Browse the online library catalog, find out which databases the college uses and learn how the library informs new students about its services.

8. Explore dining options

College campuses offer all sorts of dining choices, such as restaurants, cafés, dining halls and more. Many college websites feature menus so you can see what sorts of food a college serves.

9. Read the newspaper

A college's newspaper can reveal campus issues and introduce you to a college's activities. What types of stories do current students report on? What local events get coverage? College papers can also give you a feel for the level of student thinking and writing on campus.

10. Contact alumni and current students

If you want to talk to someone who really knows a college, use online resources to look up the contact information for alumni and current students. You can send emails requesting an interview or feedback. Some colleges even have live chat rooms in which prospective students can mingle with current students.