

## Chapter 4

## Some Self-Assessments on Campus Life

When you're thinking about campus communities, it's important to be honest with yourself about who you are and what you want. By using these three self-assessments, you can get an idea of what size college you might like, what kind of campus life interests you, and what setting you'd like to study in.

## Self-Assessment #1: College Size

*Pick A or B*

**I like...**

- (a) my teacher to know my name and understand my problems.
- (b) to be somewhat anonymous in class.

**When I go to a sporting event as a fan, I like to...**

- (a) know people in the crowd and on the team as I cheer them on.
- (b) be part of a huge crowd in a huge stadium.

**If I go to a party where I don't know anybody, I really like it when...**

- (a) someone introduces themselves and goes out of their way to make me feel welcome.
- (b) people leave me alone and let me observe.

**When I go to college, I think I would like to...**

- (a) know everything that's going on, and be able to try many different options.
- (b) stick with one or two favorite activities.

## Assessment #2: My Activity and Living Priorities

**My dream campus would offer...**

*(check all that apply)*

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A particular varsity sport   | <input type="checkbox"/> Women's-interest organizations   | <input type="checkbox"/> The chance to live in an apartment-style situation            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A particular intramural or club sport                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> GLBT organizations   | <input type="checkbox"/> The chance to live in a fraternity or sorority house          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A variety of intramural or club sports                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper, radio, TV, or other media activities  | <input type="checkbox"/> Women's-only or men's-only housing                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cheerleading or other sport-booster activities                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Film or literary clubs   | <input type="checkbox"/> Another residence preference                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Political or issue-oriented organizations                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Specific hobby or interest clubs (gun club, anime club, etc.)  | <input type="checkbox"/> A wide range of weekend trips and off-campus fun for students |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multicultural/ethnic organizations   | <input type="checkbox"/> A wide array of service-oriented groups  | <input type="checkbox"/> A wide range of touring bands and other visiting performers   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camping or outdoors clubs  | <input type="checkbox"/> Theatre opportunities for non-majors, both as performers and technicians   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greek-letter fraternities/sororities                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Music opportunities for non-majors   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ROTC or other military opportunities                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other performance arts, such as dance or mime  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A particular religious affiliation with college-sponsored spiritual life   | <input type="checkbox"/> Clubs for a particular academic subject or career interest   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No particular religious identity, but many spiritual/religious life groups | <input type="checkbox"/> The chance to live in a "theme" house or residence (all French-speaking, for example, or a service-themed house) |  |

## Assessment #3: Campus Identities

### I would be open to exploring campuses that are...

(check all that apply)

- Public (state-supported)
- Private
- Private, where religion plays a strong role (specify religion[s])
- Single-sex (all women or all men)
- Military-style
- Historically Black
- Primarily undergraduate
- Largely graduate/professional
- Engineering-focused
- Arts-focused
- In a very large city or its suburbs
- In a smaller or medium-sized city (such as St. Louis, Cincinnati, Portland) or its suburbs
- In a large “college town”
- In a small “college town”
- In a rural or wilderness setting

## Assessment Outcomes

### Assessment #1: College Size

“A” answers are more typical of students at smaller schools; “B” are more typical of students at large universities. If you find you’re somewhere in between, then “medium” may be just right for you.

### Assessment #2: My Activity and Living Priorities

This exercise should help you sort out what you would like in a campus. You may find it helpful to update this list as you continue your college search and get a better idea about things you’d like.

### Assessment #3: Campus Identities

Don’t worry if some of these are contradictory—the more options you have at first, the better. You can re-visit this list as you learn more about various options.

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## Chapter 4

Words to the Wise:  
About Getting  
Involved

“It was apparent to me early on that even though I was new to the university, I was in a place where I could contribute to my school, and affect my community in a way I thought was reserved for older, more seasoned veterans in the college arena.”

—Byron Sanders, *Alumnus*,  
*Southern Methodist University*

“Some of the greatest lessons come from campus involvement. Currently, I am the president of the campus chapter of a national economics honor society, chair of elections/secretary for the Student Government Association, and a representative of the Office of Admissions on the Tower Council. Through these associations, I have gotten to really know the women I work closely with day in and day out. This does not just include members of the student body, but various deans, school administrators, and professors. They teach us by listening to us—students have a say in almost all decisions made on campus.”

—Mary Frances Callis, *Alumna*,  
*Agnes Scott College*

“We hold our student-athletes in high regard as students and as athletes. We respect their contributions on the playing field because we insist that those contributions remain part of a larger undergraduate experience where the classroom comes first and out-of-class activities second..... Athletic competition can also be extremely fulfilling at our level. When everyone plays by the same rules, not only is competition spirited and intense, but great athletic traditions can develop.”

—Baird Tipson, *President of*  
*Washington College*



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Involvement and  
Community

*Colleges of Distinction* schools offer opportunities inside as well as outside the classroom. Today, campus life is considered to be one of the most important elements in a college education. The Association of College Unions International (ACUI) states that campus life provides a “complement [to] the academic experience through an extensive variety of cultural, educational, social, and recreational programs. These programs provide the opportunity to balance course work and free time as cooperative factors in education.”

They also make you a stronger student. Studies have shown that students who are involved in extracurricular activities graduate after four years or less at higher rates and do better academically.

In other words, a good campus life not only means doing better academically, but getting more out of your education: more exposure to activities, more chances to apply the ideas you learn in class, more personal growth and discovery, more fun and more friends. That “more” also means more opportunities after college, when being well-rounded really helps you stand out from the crowd of job applicants.

Some students persuade themselves that campus life really isn’t all that important. They figure that college will be a lot like high school: go to class, go to a practice or a meeting, go home. But college is a 24-7 environment: It’s your classroom, your social life, and your home wrapped into one package.

Other students assume that they have to attend a huge campus to have lots of opportunities. In fact, many discover that small- or medium-sized schools make it easier to get involved, whereas big schools may be so anonymous that it’s difficult to meet people.

You may also want to think about schools with unique identities—church-affiliated colleges, historically Black colleges, single-gender colleges, and other special places. What activities are you interested in? Are you a big city or a small town person—or somewhere in between? Do you want to be recruited to a professional team—or just compete in the sport you love? The lists in this chapter can give you some places to get started, but don’t be afraid to add your own personalized requirements for a college. The choices depend on you and your personality. Finding the right environment is important as you look ahead to a great college experience and a great future.

## Before You Visit

▶ If you have a particular activity interest, arrange to visit these programs and their facilities. If possible, ask to speak with faculty or staff who work with the program.

▶ If you are interested in a sport, try to arrange to visit with a member of the coaching staff. If it's not possible to meet, try to get a name and an email address for an inquiry.

## When You Are On Campus

▶ Ask students what they do on weekends and for fun. What campus events do they most enjoy?

▶ Drive or walk through the surrounding community/ neighborhood. Is it an area that you like? Ask whether the college has a good relationship with the community or whether there are tensions.

▶ Visit residence options for freshmen. If possible, ask a resident assistant or hall assistant about the programs available to those living in the residence. Are they programs in which you would like to participate?

▶ Look at signs, posters, and announcements around campus. Are there many for activities and events that interest you? Does the political and social atmosphere of the campus seem to fit your personality and values? Reading the student newspaper should give you a sense of what is going on from a student perspective.

▶ Ask a student about his or her favorite campus activities and traditions. Do these sound fun and interesting to you?

## A Checklist for finding... Vibrant Community

### Doing Your Homework

- What activities available on campus match your interests? Are most of the activities you enjoy open to non-majors? For example, if you are interested in theater but majoring in biology, will you still be able to participate in theatrical productions?
- What percentage of students are involved in campus activities?
- Are there campus activities that you have never tried but which sound interesting to you?
- If you are interested in athletics, does the college offer the sport you play? If you are interested in varsity competition, what are its policies regarding walk-ons? Is there an active intramural program for non-varsity athletes?
- What cultural and entertainment opportunities does the campus provide? How does it make use of facilities in the surrounding community?
- What special events or speakers were on campus in the last year?
- Is the college a suitcase campus? That is, what percentage of the students leave campus on the weekends? If there is a vibrant city nearby with a wide range of cultural and social opportunities, students going off campus during the weekend might be a good thing; but it is not a good thing when everyone is going home every weekend!
- What kind of residence options does the college offer? What programs are available to help you make friends, meet people, and settle in? How will your roommate be selected?
- Are there health facilities or programs on campus? What kind of counseling and crisis support does the campus offer? Does the college provide resources for students with physical or learning disabilities?