

# COLLEGE PREVIEW DAY FOR HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS & SENIORS

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Planning and hosting special days for high school students to visit your campus is an important step in helping them become familiar with college life and your campus in particular. For many students, college life is both exciting and intimidating. Intimidation can sometimes create barriers for students. For example, some students may avoid enrolling in your school because they don't know where the financial aid office is located or they're too nervous to venture out and find the housing department. Allowing high school students to converge on your school to learn about their surroundings and your campus culture can help eliminate some of their barriers to higher education.

In this guide, we've developed a sample *College Preview Day*. This event, geared toward high school juniors and seniors, aims to answer common questions about college life and help students navigate your campus. The suggested format is customizable to fit your specific needs and goals. Feel free to take the ideas presented and alter them to meet your campus objectives.

Need help getting started? Call your Outreach Services Specialist at 866.443.7420 (toll free) to talk about hosting your own *College Preview Day*.

## GETTING STARTED

Before planning your event, refer to the *Tips for Planning an Event* document in your guide. These event planning tips identify important steps you should take to ensure your event is a success. In addition to these tips, you'll also need to identify which high schools you'll invite and how you'll spread the word about your event. If your office doesn't already have processes in place to notify high school counselors about upcoming events, you may want to send invitations directly to students and their families. Be aware that schools have different policies regarding college campus preview days. You can't accommodate everyone, but by allowing some flexibility in your schedule, you may be able to build an event that fits each high school's specific needs.

## MAXIMIZE WITH MENTORS

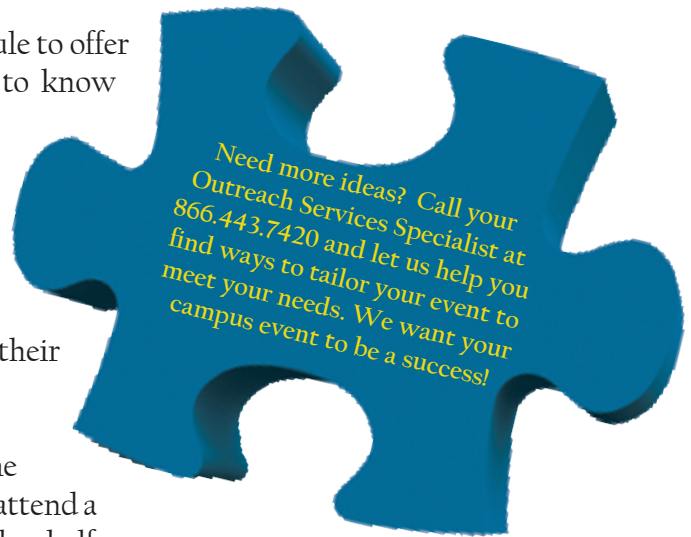
Student mentors should play a large role in your preview day. Students identify with peers, and will feel comfortable asking them questions about college life and what they can expect their college experience to be like. If possible, try to find students who are active on campus and graduated from the high schools you're inviting. Look for campus leaders in various student life organizations, like fraternities, sororities and other clubs. Or, if your campus uses students to lead campus tours, you may consider contacting that office to arrange for a few helpers. In addition, you may find it helpful to ask for recommendations from professors or other campus departments.

## DIVIDE AND CONQUER

Consider using small groups and an alternating schedule to offer prospective students plenty of opportunities to get to know their mentors and ask questions.

At the beginning of the day, identify a fun and easy way to create small groups. Create teams of 5-10 students and pair each team with a mentor. This will keep order during the day and encourage students to form bonds of familiarity and friendship during their stay on campus.

Our sample schedule also suggests that you split up the day with different activities. Assign half the groups to attend a session and visit a class in the morning and send the other half on a campus tour. After lunch, the groups can switch. This will help you manage crowd control and keep sessions small and intimate.



## GROUP 1: SCAVENGE FOR ANSWERS

We know you want to make this day fun and interesting for your group of prospective students. So how can you familiarize them with everything your campus offers without seeing their eyes glaze over in a post-lunch haze?

Try spicing up your campus tour by incorporating a scavenger hunt! Break students up into small groups and pair them with a current student mentor. Give them a list of clues and send them off to find the offices that correspond to the clues. Ask each department to have someone on hand during this time to provide a 5-10 minute talk to each group about the function of that department.

This will allow students to connect real people with campus offices and their function. It will also give each department the chance to explain what they offer in their own words in a way that won't disrupt the workday with large groups of students.

Ask the students to find a puzzle piece at each location. To win the scavenger hunt, groups must gather all puzzle pieces, return to a central location and complete the puzzle.

## GROUP 2: CONNECTING WITH CAMPUS

A campus tour is interactive and fun, but you also want students to walk away with the knowledge they need to overcome barriers and apply to attend your institution. Provide an informational session and other activities that will really give students a leg-up.



*FUN WITH FAFSA*

Want to get students on the fast track to your school? Then show them the money! Built into the event schedule is session time where you have the students' undivided attention. UCanGo2 provides information and resources that help students learn about financial aid and the FAFSA application.



*FAFSA Fundamentals* offers a user-friendly PowerPoint presentation designed to help students learn how to solve the puzzle of applying for financial aid. It comes complete with a presenter's guide and a CD with a dependency status questionnaire and other helpful tools that can be used so any member of your staff will feel comfortable presenting this information to students. Or, if you prefer to have an OCAP representative attend your event, we'd be happy to work with you!

Remember, uncertainty about paying for college is a major barrier to higher education for many families. Use this excellent opportunity to break down those barriers so students can focus on why your campus would be a great place to pursue higher education.

*ATTEND A CLASS*

Allow students to have the chance to get a small taste of what college will be like academically. Giving students the opportunity to attend a class with their mentor for the day will help them develop an overall perspective of the college's atmosphere.

Remember, they aren't your students yet, but the great things you do during their visit could influence their future college choices.

**IF YOU FEED THEM...WILL THEY APPLY?**

Food is comfort and students considering schools can be swayed by simple things, like what they get to eat. No event would be complete without allowing students to sample traditional campus fare. Here are a few tips for providing meals without breaking the budget:

- Start your event by providing breakfast to students and counselors; it's usually less expensive.
- Ask your local eateries for donations and offer them free advertising in return.
- Encourage students/counselors to bring a bag lunch and eat on the university grounds.
- Allow students/counselors to eat in your food court so students can get a feel for college life.
- Ask students/counselors to bring money to eat at restaurants around campus. Offer a map to direct student to local restaurants.

Even if providing a meal isn't in the budget, lunch can still be a great learning and bonding opportunity for students so maximize the time with additional activities and discussions.

**Idea!**  
Use this time to introduce prospective students to major campus officials, offer skits about the college performed by current students or devise a program that puts your campus' best foot forward.