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Questions to ask at Info Sessions

Asking good questions is the first step towards getting good answers. When you're trying to find the right school or program, info sessions are a great way to narrow down your choices.

Question Types: Open vs. Closed

Ask "open" questions whenever possible. Try to use the following words:

- How
- Who
- What
- When
- Why
- Where

"Closed" questions are of the "yes or no" variety and don't usually demand further explanation the way open questions do. For example, compare the following:

Open: "How much financial aid do you offer to incoming students?"

Closed: "Do you offer financial aid to incoming students?"

Which do you think will get you better answers?

School Info and Student Life

Unique selling points; what national or international awards has the school won? For which programs is the school highly ranked? What professors or instructors really stand out, in publishing or industry experience?

Unique opportunities; what relationships does the school have with others globally? What transfer agreements are in place, and with which schools? What internship or co-op opportunities are available to students?

Student life and vibe; what is the "feel" of the campus like? What's the overall reputation amongst students? How do students spend their free time? How many students attend on-campus vs. studying online?

Housing options; what's the surrounding city or town like? How many students live in residence? What's the cost of living on- or off-campus? How easy is finding student accommodations for those coming from afar?

Student supports and services; What social and academic support services does the school offer students? Can they be accessed remotely? Who should you contact when you need help with schoolwork? What if you need mental health support, or career advice? How much of the school's library is accessible remotely?

Application process; What is the application pipeline like? What programs are highly competitive? Are you likely to end up on a wait list, given your current grades and extracurriculars? How many seats are set aside for equity-seeking groups? What can you do to increase your chances of acceptance before you apply?

Graduate employment; What percentage of grads are employed in their field within a year? What are some interesting positions alumni have secured? What's the typical grad-to-career pipeline like for your program?

Faculty and Teaching Staff

Contact hours; How much time will be spent with instructors or profs in lectures and practical labs? How much of your courses will be taught by TAs instead? Are staff responsive to student requests for extra help?

Star power; Who are some of the most impressive figures on staff? What classes do these big names teach? What projects or research are they working on right now? Are there opportunities to contribute to research?

Fees, Scholarships and Financial Aid

Tuition and fees; How much in tuition will you have to pay across your two-to-four years of education? What's the difference in fees between studying full- or part-time? How much will you spend on ancillary fees? Are there material or tool fees for your program? How much will you need to spend on textbooks each year?

Scholarships and financial aid; What sort of scholarships would a student like you qualify for? What's the deadline for financial aid applications? What percentage of new students receive an entrance award? Does each department have its own set of awards for students?

Working while you study; What positions are open to students to earn money while studying? Are there opportunities to work on-campus, or take part in a paid research project? Could you get a spot as a TA in the future? Does the school hire student tutors to help others?

Remember, knowledge is power! The more you know, the better equipped you'll be. Good luck!

