



The College at Brockport  
State University of New York

101 Rakov Center  
350 New Campus Drive  
Brockport, NY 14420

(585) 395 2159  
career@brockport.edu  
brockport.edu/career

# Things to Consider When Checking Out a Campus

Your visit to the graduate school you may be attending is a very important part of the decision-making process. There are several factors that you can only accurately assess by visiting each school. The personal interactions that you have with faculty, current, and potential students, and the feeling you get from your visit can help verify your choice. If you are unable to visit all the graduate schools you are considering, prioritize your top 2-3 programs and visit those. Each college's graduate school admissions office or the department in which you are interested will be able to help you in planning a campus visit.

Follow the guideline below to make your campus visit meaningful and productive:

**Prepare.** Bring a list of specific questions to ask the faculty and students of your desired graduate program. Ask pointed questions about the campus environment, the level of congeniality in the department, accessibility of faculty, courses, employment opportunities, graduate internships, etc. Ask current students and faculty how long it typically takes to get a degree. It can be very enlightening to hear what actually goes on, unfiltered through admissions or department administrators.

Checklist of Action Steps:

- Set aside time to visit your target school(s). You may have to schedule time off work or your current studies, and travel long distances. Purchase your plane, train, or bus tickets, or organize a rental car.
- Book your accommodation ahead of time. See if you can stay at a place on or close to campus (if you are on a budget, find out if the campus offers affordable guest lodging). You also may want to consider staying with a local resident or student for free accommodations if possible.
- See if your visit can coincide with open house days. Many colleges/universities have dates dedicated specifically to prospective graduate students. Schools often have special tours, including student and professor panels where you can ask questions in a public setting.
- Make appointments with staff and faculty in the department or specific graduate school that you're applying to.
- Prepare a list of what you believe are essential qualities in a graduate school.
- Read as much as you can about the school before you visit (especially about its culture, programs, and students).

- Prepare to ask questions to gain further insight.

**Observe.** Be sure to make a visit to the admissions office, financial aid office, and most importantly the department office. Don't forget to check out lab facilities, computers, and libraries. Explore the city or town if you plan on living in the area while you attend graduate school.

Things to Consider:

1. Does the campus seem to be in a safe place?
2. Do you think you'll fit into the department's culture? Do you feel comfortable talking to the professors and current graduate students?
3. Do the graduate students (especially in your specialty) appear to be enthusiastic about their work?
4. How do people communicate: faculty to faculty, faculty to student, student to student? Do they interact comfortably, or is the atmosphere tense?
5. Are graduate, research, and teaching assistantships or fellowships available?
6. Where do you plan on living while you complete your graduate degree? How do you want to live? If you prefer campus housing, find out what is available for graduate students. If dorm life isn't for you, check out the local newspaper and the campus housing office. Pay attention to the campus and the town, and ask yourself whether it's a place you'd enjoy spending at least the next few years of your life.

**Follow up.** Following up is beneficial for you, since it keeps channels of communication open in the event that you have further questions about your target program. Immediately after your visit, send thank you notes to the faculty, students, and staff you met with. You may also send an email to thank people you've met, but nothing beats a promptly posted note. The important thing is to make your notes meaningful and to state something specific you learned.

**Evaluate your campus visit.** Compare your expectations with what you observed and learned during the visit. In what ways did this visit meet your expectations? In what ways were you disappointed? How interested are you in exploring this academic program further? What values, skills, and interests of yours fit or don't fit with the degree, department, college, or student culture? What are your next steps? If you are interested in pursuing admission to this school, your next steps may involve letting the admissions office know, and following their steps to apply.

