



The Many Ways to Demonstrate Interest in a College

Many colleges, especially those with admit rates in the 40 to 60 percent range, award extra “points” to applicants for a variety of actions deemed indicative of serious interest in their school. All else being equal or close to equal, these schools are more inclined to admit applicants who rack up more of these points. To demonstrate interest in a school, it goes without saying that you must answer the supplementary application essay prompts in a way that shows you’ve done your research and are knowledgeable about specific features of the school, but that’s just one of many ways you can show the school your love.

Making an effort to visit the campus if you live far away can have a significant positive impact. Failure to do so if you live nearby can have a significant negative one. Generally, you will want to take a tour and attend an information session, and you will get points for doing both. However, if you can only visit when the admissions office is closed and so meet instead with a student or faculty member who is unaffiliated with Admissions but with whom you or your parents have a personal relationship, you’ll need to let the admissions office know about your visit.

Find out who your regional admissions officer is, information usually obtainable from the college website. This is the person responsible for recruitment and learning about the high schools in your region, and sometimes he or she will also be the first one to read your application. This regional representative may make decisions alone or may make recommendations to a committee, but either way, he or she is the one you should email to say you regret that you weren’t able to meet when you visited campus. Explain when you were there, with whom, and what especially impressed you.

Returning for an overnight stay in a dorm will give you an extra point. This can be arranged independently or through the admissions office, but once again, if you make the arrangement independently, be sure to let the admissions office know.

You can also email your regional admissions officer with good questions. If the answer to your question can be found through a Google search, it won’t help you, but more personal or original questions might be the beginning of a great online relationship. An admissions officer from Trinity College says she “loved it” when an applicant read an article in Trinity’s newspaper about problems the school was

having with housing and then emailed her to ask what they were doing to address those problems.

When planning campus visits, students may set up a meeting with a professor whose work they are especially interested in. This is most frequently done when their interests are unusual. For instance, if you intend to participate in the college's orchestra and chamber music ensembles, by all means, arrange to meet the individual in charge of these groups. If you have a passion for a particular scientific endeavor, you can ask about a meeting with the faculty member who is working on it.

Students can also email professors with questions about their research and potential opportunities to participate in it, and they can sign up to follow professors on Twitter. Faculty who engage with prospective students and are impressed by them know to inform the admissions office, so in these situations the students should not do so themselves, lest their efforts to become acquainted with faculty appear more strategic than genuine.

At schools that track demonstrated interest, following the school on Twitter and Facebook will earn you points, as will meeting an admissions officer at your school or a local college fair, attending a regional recruiting event, and having an interview. If you are unable to do any of the above, you will still get points for reaching out to the admissions office to tell them you regret you were unable to do so. If you try to set up a meeting with someone from admissions, the effort will count in your favor even if you never succeed in meeting. And it goes without saying, you should open any email the college sends you and click on any links there because the schools collect data on who does and does not do so.