

CUSTOMIZE CAMPUS V



While online tours and Web sites are a great source of information, when it's time to finalize your top college choices, there's perhaps no better tool than the campus visit.

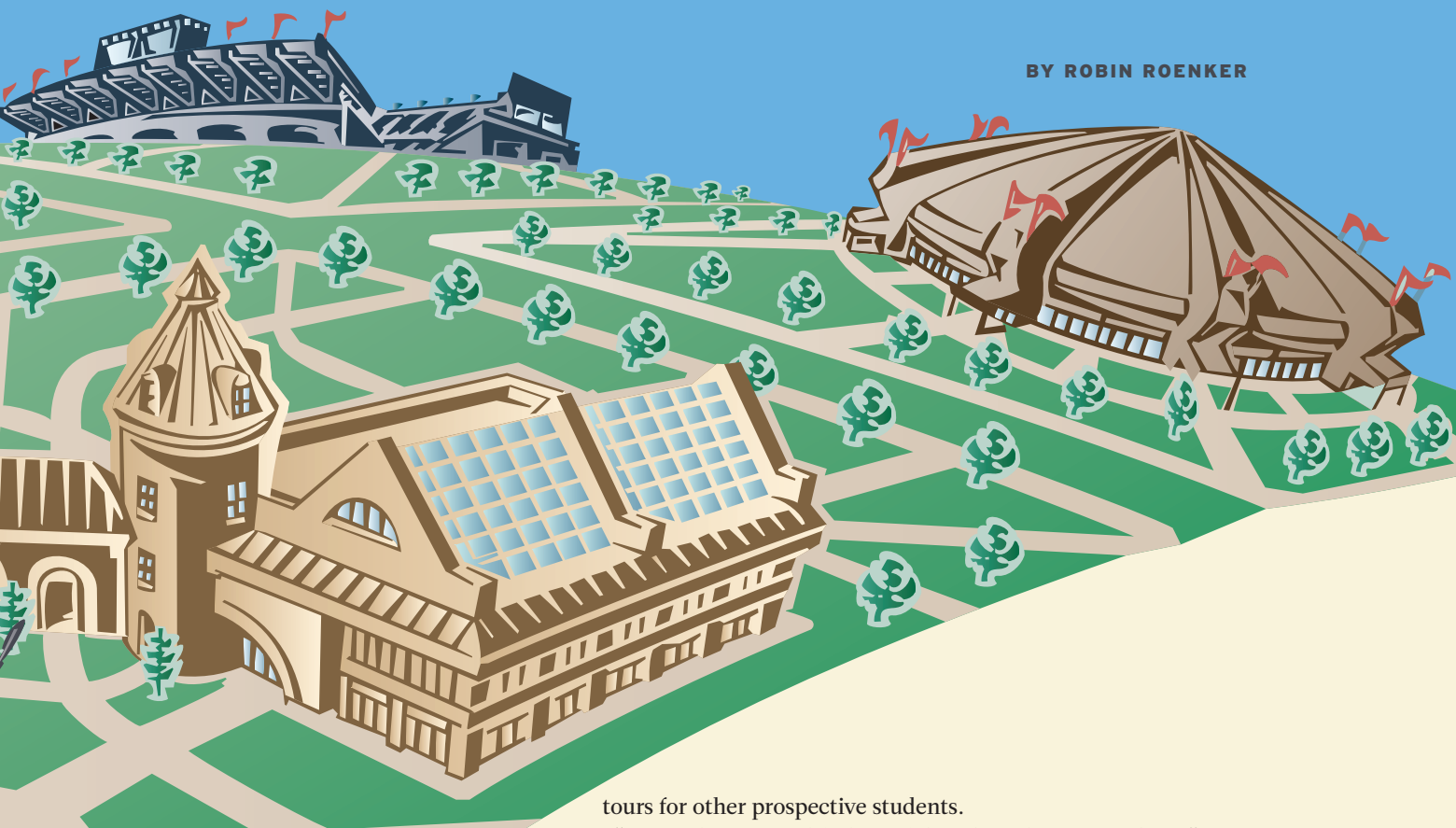
Growing up in Cincinnati, Kevin Wolber always assumed he'd follow most of his friends to a large Ohio university. But when he stepped foot on the campus of Northern Kentucky University, he knew immediately it was the perfect college match.

The friendliness and accessibility of the NKU campus catapulted the university from Wolber's second or third choice to his top pick. Now a senior, Wolber works with the NKU admissions office leading

ENJOY YOUR VISITS

TIPS from admissions experts and students for making the most of your campus visits

BY ROBIN ROENKER



tours for other prospective students.

“It was the personal feeling of this place that got me here,” says Wolber, “so I like to point out how student-involved and accessible this campus is. On my tours, we go into the student support offices, we go into the student government offices. I show them that doors are wide open. If a student is interested in a particular major, I do my best to take them to that department so they can see where their classes will be.”

At college fairs, when high school students ask Wolber for his best advice for a successful college search, it's simple: schedule a campus visit. “Step foot on campus. Get into the atmosphere of the place,” he says. “There's no better way to get a sense of what you'll experience over the next four years that you are there.”

Here, we offer tips from admissions representatives and students for making the most of your time touring a campus.

DYNAMIC GRAPHICS/ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK

ASK LOTS OF QUESTIONS

Traci Pooler, dean of Admissions at Lindsey Wilson College in Columbia, advises that parents and prospective students sit down before their visit to brainstorm any questions they may have—and write them down. “Lots of times, when people go on a campus visit, there is so much information to take in, they can become overwhelmed,” she says. Without notes to jog your memory, it’s easy to forget to ask about housing costs or financial aid deadlines.

WHAT TYPE OF TOUR IS BEST FOR YOU?

Many colleges offer a variety of tour types to meet students’ needs. At NKU, for example, students can come for a weekday tour day; a large, Saturday Open House event, offered just a few times a semester; or major-specific visits, where students can learn more about a particular field of study. The campus also offers visits geared toward transfer students

■ Top, potential Northern Kentucky University students on a guided walking tour in November includes academic facilities, on-campus housing options, and student life resources. Photo: Mary Strubbe

■ A prospective student touring NKU’s College of Informatics’ Innovation Gallery peers through the Oculus Rift, a device that allows people to enjoy 3D virtual reality for games, media, facial recognition, and much more. Photo: Mary Strubbe

and even one modeled for high school sophomores that includes information on in-demand careers and majors, says Melissa Gorbandt, NKU’s director of Admissions.

Many schools also offer the chance to shadow current students and follow them to their classes for a day. Eastern Kentucky University calls this option their Colonel for a Day Program.

“We try to pair prospective students with a current student who shares a common interest, whether that’s the same major, or the honors program, or interest in the same sorority or fraternity,” says Brett Morris, ECU’s director of Admissions.

At many schools, it’s even possible to schedule an overnight visit in a residence hall. And, with enough notice, most can accommodate requests to meet with a faculty member and sit in on a class in your field of interest.





■ At left, high school senior Chris Ballard, Lexington, speaks with Jerry Gonnella, College of Informatics faculty member at NKU. During Norse Days prospective students connect with faculty and students in the academic area of their choice. Photo: Mary Strubbe

■ At bottom, Campbellsville University students Alexa Moore of Clarksville, Tennessee, left, and Tiffani Ellington, Mayfield, field questions from prospective students and their families at the school's Preview Day event, which includes tours, lunch, chapel, and information sessions. Photo: Joshua Williams/Campbellsville University

EXPAND YOUR LIST OF "MUST-SEE"

Most prospective students and parents anticipate seeing a residence hall room, a classroom, the library, the dining facility, and student commons area on the tour, but it's a good idea to check out a few other places on campus while you're there.

Find out where student support offices are located, including counseling services, tutoring, career advising, financial aid, housing, and others. "It's important for students to know, as part of their tour, that there are going to be times when they may need some additional assistance, and that the campus has these offices to provide that help," Gorbandt says.

If possible, also stop by student organization offices to find out where to go if you're interested in joining an intramural sports group, campus club, or student government, Wolber advises. Be sure to check out campus exercise facilities and recreation areas as well.

While it may take a bit of extra work—and walking—scoping out these aspects of campus will help you get a better sense of how accessible and friendly (or not) the college really is.

TALK TO CURRENT STUDENTS

Pepper your student tour guide with questions about campus life, class loads, the best residence halls, favorite places to eat on campus, and more. And, when the opportunity arises, start up a conversation with other students not involved on the tour.

During her Campbellsville University visit, Mayfield native Tiffani Ellington and her mom were able to chat with current students while eating lunch in the dining hall.

"The students sitting at the table with us went out of their way to be so welcoming. Pretty much everyone made me feel like I was part of the CU family, before I was even a student," Ellington says. That welcoming vibe was what convinced Ellington to go to Campbellsville instead of another school she'd been leaning toward in Tennessee.

"Campbellsville is four hours from home for me, and originally I hadn't planned to go that far away," Ellington explains. "But as soon as I got here, it felt like such a family that it became a home away from home, and distance wasn't really a factor anymore."



DON'T DISMISS A NEARBY SCHOOL

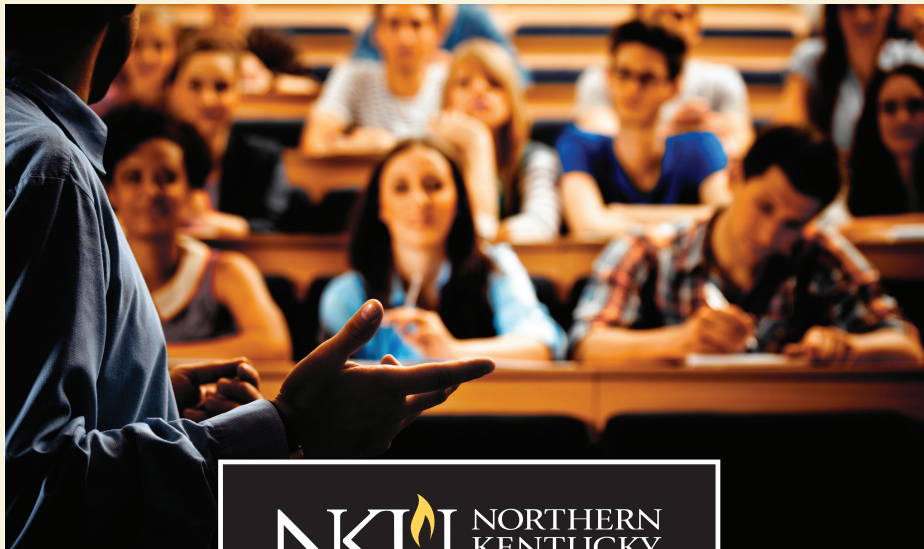
While you may have driven by a nearby college campus hundreds of times, there's no way to truly know a campus without scheduling a visit and exploring it through the eyes of a prospective college student.

"I think students who live within 20 or 30 miles of Barbourville and our campus know about us, and they think they know what we have to offer," says Sam Lee, Union College's interim director of Undergraduate Enrollment.



■ Chris Rider of Northern Kentucky University's Center for Applied Informatics shows touring students the 3D printer in the College of Informatics' Innovations Gallery in Griffin Hall. Photo: Mary Stubbe

■ High school student Rebecca Hepner, Elizabethtown, listens to tour guide Korinne Rolf during a campus visit at NKU's Norse Visitation Program, an in-depth, interactive tour offered multiple times throughout the year. Photo: Mary Stubbe



Just eight minutes south of downtown Cincinnati, NKU emphasizes undergraduate research opportunities in disciplines ranging from biology to dance, and undergraduates have access to some of the nation's most advanced technology. NKU's graduate programs are among the most respected in the region, and the Salmon P. Chase College of Law ranks among the Midwest's top law schools.

nku.edu



ONLINE

Campus visits online resources

Spend time checking out colleges online—read their Web and social media pages, and visit their YouTube virtual tours—to narrow the list of ones you want to visit in person. If you know what you're looking for in a school, Google those criteria to see what pops up. Brescia University junior Katie Jones of Missouri initially discovered Brescia by searching for "Catholic Colleges in the Midwest."

Viewing virtual, online campus tours is a great way to identify which colleges you want to see in person. Search for "**Campus visits online**" at KentuckyLiving.com.



“But they really have no idea about all the things they can get involved in here, once they are students. More times than not, students are shocked to visit and learn about our academic programs and other opportunities we provide, such as caving, hiking, snow skiing, and much more.”

FACTOR IN FINANCIAL AID WITH TUITION

When comparing costs, don't just look at the listed tuition fees. Be sure to factor in financial aid and other scholarships to get a true sense of what your out-of-pocket costs will be at each school. Campbellsville native Marcus Rodgers, a Campbellsville University junior whose family are Taylor County Rural Electric Cooperative members, initially assumed during his college search that a state school would be his cheapest option. But when he factored in financial aid available to him at Campbellsville University, enrolling there was actually less expensive than attending a public school, he says.

At Brescia University in Owensboro,

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■ Dennis Paiva, Campbellsville University's director for International Education, speaks with prospective students and families at the academic fair during the school's Preview Day. Photo: Joshua Williams/Campbellsville University

prospective students can get a customized award letter of anticipated financial aid on the spot, during their campus visit. "We have a quick estimator that the family can fill out for us, and then we scan that and send it to our financial aid office while they are on the campus tour. At the end of the tour, we go to financial aid and see what the family can expect to receive in assistance," explains Christy Rohner, Brescia's director of Admissions. "It's been very successful for us. Many times families are pleasantly surprised at what they're eligible to receive."

INVESTIGATE THE VALUE OF DINING FACILITIES

Don't overlook the importance of quality dining halls serving quality food—at hours that are easily accessible to students. If dining facilities have limited hours or limited offerings, students end up roaming off campus, spending money out of pocket to eat. Instead, look for schools that offer 24/7 dining in clean, inviting dining facilities that encourage students to hang out, study, and engage in face-to-face networking, says David Porter, campus dining consultant and author of *The Porter Principles*. **KL**



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