College Visit Toolkit



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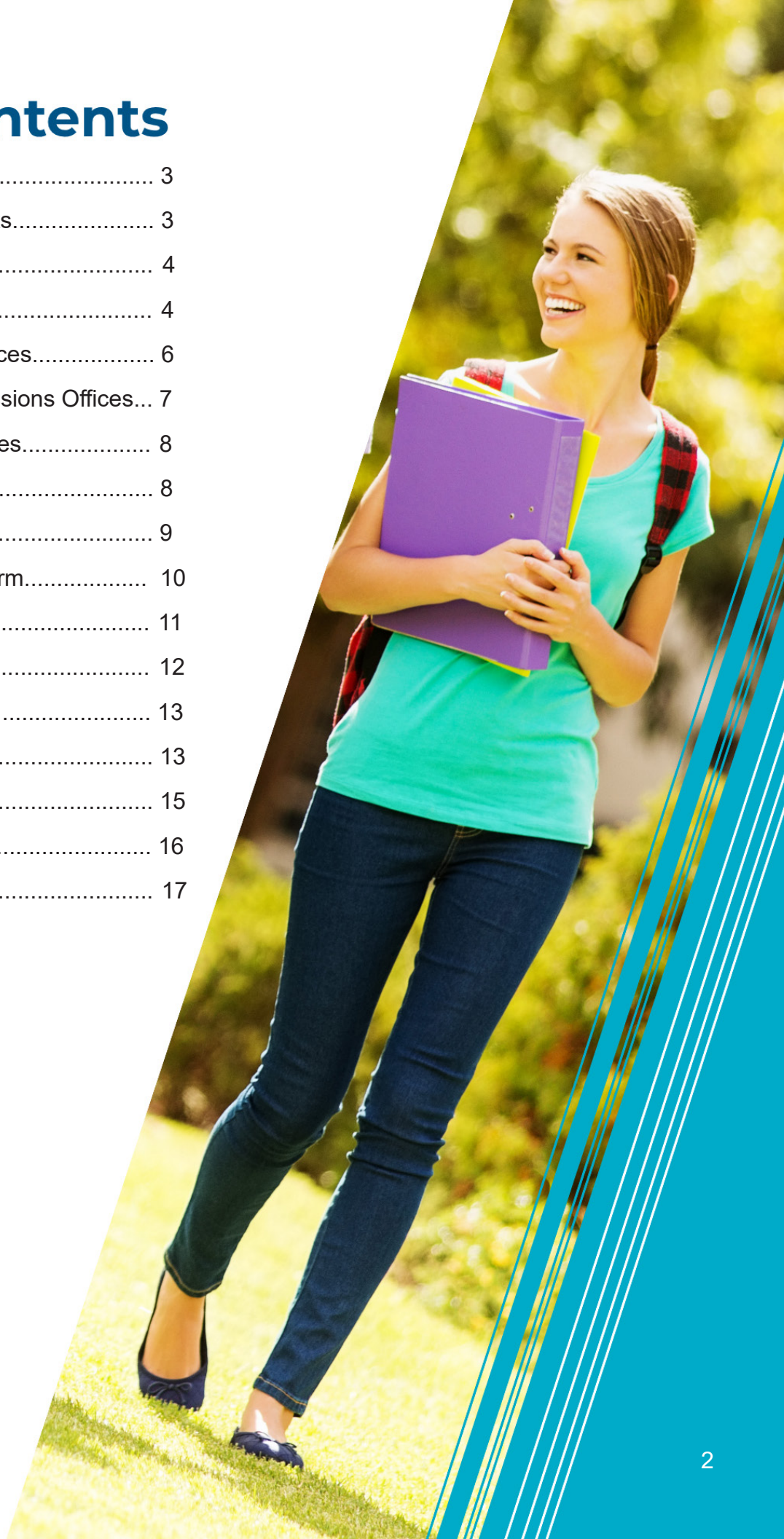
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About College for West Virginia

College for West Virginia (CFWV) offers FREE resources to help students and families plan, apply, and pay for education and training beyond high school.

Through the College for West Virginia initiative, the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission and the West Virginia Community and Technical College System make it easier for students and families to explore the state's wide range of financial aid and college planning programs.

The Importance of College Visits

College is important — there's no doubt about it. At least 60 percent of all new jobs require a college education,[1] and West Virginia needs tens of thousands more college graduates to build our economy.[2]On average, four-year college graduates earn more than double the salary of individuals who stopped their education after high school. Students who complete some form of postsecondary education are far less likely to be unemployed than those with just a high school diploma. Some form of education or training beyond high school should be the ultimate path for all West Virginia students.

Although low-income students, minority students, and students who are the first in their family to attend college often face greater barriers to pursuing postsecondary education, research has shown that these obstacles can be overcome with early college planning activities and other college readiness interventions. In fact, underserved and underrepresented students have been shown to succeed at the same levels as their more advantaged peers when provided with information and assistance in exploring and preparing for college and applying for financial aid.

That's why early and frequent campus visits — accompanied by meaningful and strategic planning activities — are so important!

1 National Organization of State Higher Education Executive Officers
2 Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce



Enroll. Enlist. Employ.

We use the word “college” to include any type of postsecondary education or education and training beyond high school. That means students have many options when it comes to attending college, including:

- ❍ Technical and professional certifications
- ❍ Career and technical school programs
- ❍ Apprenticeships
- ❍ Two-year degrees
- ❍ Four-year degrees
- ❍ Military service

Planning Checklist

Eight weeks before your visit...

- ❍ Decide on the institution you’d like to visit. Identify a “back up” in case something doesn’t work out with your first choice college
- ❍ Narrow down available dates for scheduling your college visit
- ❍ Obtain initial approval for your trip from school and county administrators
- ❍ Email the college admissions/recruiting office at your first choice to set up the campus visit (see the email template included in this kit)

Seven weeks before your visit...

- ❍ Recruit chaperones
- ❍ Work with your campus contact to confirm a date for your visit

Six weeks before your visit...

- ❍ Complete any necessary forms, such as a trip/travel request form, orders for food and transportation, and requests for substitutes for staff members who will serve as chaperones

Four weeks before your visit...

- ❍ Send home permission forms for parent signatures (see the template included in this kit)



Two weeks before your visit...

- ❍ Collect permission forms for participating students
- ❍ Create a roster of all students who will be participating

One week before your visit...

- ❍ Contact the institution to discuss details of the visit, including:
  - ☐ A final student participation count
  - ☐ Any special accommodations required by students or educators participating
  - ☐ The number of buses you are bringing and where they should unload and park
  - ☐ Plans for any meals you'll be having onsite

A few days before your visit...

- ❍ Prepare students for the visit:
  - ☐ Send home a list of what to expect and bring (see the handout included in this kit)
  - ☐ Conduct the pre-visit activity (see the "Activities and Resources" section in this kit)
- ❍ Prepare staff members for the visit:
  - ☐ Provide chaperones and administrators with an agenda for the entire day of your visit
  - ☐ Provide chaperones and administrators with a roster of students participating
- ❍ Make note of any students who do not have a media release form on file
- ❍ Reach out to your campus contact to confirm final details
- ❍ Exchange cell phone numbers with your campus contacts and your chaperones

The day before your visit...

- ❍ Go over expectations for behavior and the purpose of the trip with students
- ❍ Print copies of any applicable handouts

The day of your visit...

- ❍ Give studens copies of the handouts and encourage them to take detailed notes
- ❍ Take photos and post them on your school's social media pages. Encourage students to share photos from the trip. Tag or mention CFWV and we will share your activities with our statewide network! (Make sure you have reviewed your students' media release forms. Do not share images of any students not allowed to be pictured in photos or on video).

The day after your event...

- ❍ Complete the follow-up activities (see the "Activities and Resources" section in this kit)
- ❍ Send "thank you" notes to your campus contacts, chaperones and administrators (see the template included in this kit)

Considerations and Best Practices

In scheduling your visit, consider the following details:

Arrival and departure times: Consider your timeline for that day and make sure you will have adequate time on campus. Can you depart and return outside of the normal school day schedule? Or do you need to be back in time for students to meet their buses? If you are hiring bus drivers from the county, do they have time limitations for their availability? In order for the visit to be worthwhile, you'll want to allow for students to have **at least** 90 minutes on any campus you are considering visiting.

Academic schedules: Be mindful that colleges and universities operate on different academic calendars than PK-12 schools. You'll want to try to visit while classes are in session so your students will get an accurate feel for the college environment.

Date availability: When first approaching staff at the campus you want to visit, it helps to have several dates that will work for you and your students. Institutions are often juggling many events on campus on any given day, and their campus visit schedules can fill up quickly. Be flexible in scheduling your visit to ensure the best experience for your students.

Meals: Consider meals that will need to be provided and your school's policy on meals. Will students be missing breakfast or lunch while on the trip? Will you be returning well after the usual dinner hour? Can the cafeteria at your school prepare boxed lunches for your students? Will the institution provide meals on campus?

Accommodations: Plan for any accommodations participants may require. Does anyone have food allergies or need to take medicines at certain times? Does anyone require handicap accessibility? Make sure that relevant special needs are communicated to your campus contacts.

Chaperones: Ensure that you have an adequate number of chaperones. Colleges often do not have the staff to monitor your group's behavior and ensure appropriate accommodations. It is a good idea to have at least one chaperone from your school for every 15 students participating.



Sample Email to College Admission Offices

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Dear (insert name of admissions officer or other campus contact):

I am a (teacher, counselor, or administrator) at (name of school) in (city and state). Our students are interested in learning more about (name of college or postsecondary program). Would it be possible for us to schedule a campus visit?

We are available the following dates and times:
(insert a bulleted list of available dates and times)

We anticipate bringing (number) students and (number) chaperones. We would love (insert any specific requests... see the example list on the next page).

On behalf of (name of school) and our students, I thank you for your consideration and look forward to planning an educational and fun event with you!

Sincerely,

(Your name), (your title)
(Your school)
(Your phone number(s))

--

Requesting Campus Experiences

You may want to make specific requests regarding activities to occur during the visit. The following is a list of examples you may want to include.

“We would love...”

- for an admissions counselor to lead an information session on college-planning topics, including the admissions process, financial aid availability, academic programs offered, and student life.
- for students to participate in a walking tour of campus led by a trained admissions representative. Would it be possible for them to view the dorms as well?
- for our students to experience a meal in the dining hall.
- for our students to participate in some hands-on learning activities or interactive displays the campus may feature.
- for our students to meet with a faculty member or tour one or more academic departments. (Insert any specific department you’re interested in).
- for our students to participate in a panel discussion with college professors and/or students representing different academic disciplines available at your institution.
- for our students to sit in on a class lecture or observe students working in a lab environment, like a science lab or a media lab.
- for our students to meet with student leaders or student organization representatives to learn more about life on campus and extracurricular activities.

What to Bring and What to Expect on Your Upcoming Visit

What to Bring:

Appropriate clothes: You will be spending time outside, walking, and participating in activities on campus. Wear comfortable clothing and make sure it adheres to the school’s dress code.

Appropriate shoes: You will be walking a great deal. Wear comfortable shoes!

Gear for the weather: Check the weather and plan to bring a coat, rain jacket, umbrella, or sunscreen if the weather calls for it.

A camera: Feel free to bring your cell phone or another hand held camera.

Writing utensils: Bring a pen or pencil and a notebook for taking notes.

Questions: Make a list of questions you have about college in general and this campus specifically. Bring them tomorrow so that you can make sure all of your questions are answered.

What to Expect:

You are expected to:
- stay with the group at all times
- be respectful of campus staff and listen carefully to our campus guides
- follow school conduct policies at all times
- be aware of your surroundings and respect the campus learning environment
- ask questions of the college representatives and take notes
- be open-minded and engaged in the experience

College Visit Notecard

College Name:

Checklist:
Here are some things to look for or do on a college visit. Check off the activities you completed on this visit.

❍ Take a campus tour
❍ Talk to a professor
❍ Visit the campus bookstore
❍ Go to a campus event
❍ Talk to a campus staff member about financial aid
❍ Talk to a current student
❍ Sit in on a class
❍ Read the flyers around campus
❍ Talk to an admissions counselor
❍ Take a selfie with a campus landmark
❍ Take a few photos
❍ Eat in the dining hall
❍ See residence halls
❍ Visit the library

Rate your visit:
Rate the following areas of your college visit. Alongside your ratings, jot down your thoughts about each aspect of campus. What did you like? What did you dislike? Include anything you want to remember about this college. If you did not visit an area of campus or participate in an activity, leave it blank or write "n/a."

Rating scale: 1 - hated it 2 - disliked it 3 - it was ok 4 - liked it 5 - loved it

Campus (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5
Notes:

Residence Halls (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5
Notes:

Food/Dining Hall (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5
Notes:

Fitness Center (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5
Notes:

Interactions with Current College Students (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5
Notes:

Sample Student Permission Form

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(School Name) Permission Form

Who: (Class or grade level)
What: (Event description, example “Visit to BridgeValley Community and Technical College”)
When: (Date and time)
Where: (Location)
Contact: (Trip coordinator name, title, phone number, email address)

Details: (Provide a more detailed description of the event. Also include any pertinent logistical information such as meals provided, transportation arrangements, etc.)

An agenda for this activity is attached.

Want to go? Here’s how:
You must reserve your space no later than (date) by contacting (coordinator name). Students must also turn in this form, signed by a parent or guardian, by the (date) deadline.

Consent form:
I understand that participation in this activity is strictly voluntary. This form allows my child to attend and participate in (title of event) on (date of event). Although school staff will be present as supervisors, I recognize that my child will be responsible for his or her conduct and well-being.

I also agree to notify the activity coordinator of any special accommodations required by my child due to a medical condition. I understand that disclosing such information will NOT affect my child’s ability to participate, and will only be used to ensure that my student is fully accommodated. I further understand that this information will not be disclosed except as necessary to ensure my child’s safety and well-being.

I recognize that this is a school field trip and that my student must continue to follow rules and procedures set forth by his or her school. I have read and understand the description of the field trip and authorize my child to participate in the planned components.

Student Name: _____

Date: _____ **Emergency Contact:** _____

Guardian Name (Please Print): _____

Guardian Signature: _____

Sample “Thank You” Note

A handwritten “thank you” note can go a long way toward maintaining positive relationships with your campus contacts and chaperones. Below is an example of a thank you note you may want to use in thanking those who helped make your visit a success:

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Dear (name),

Thank you so much for helping to make our recent college visit a success. Our students really enjoyed learning about (name of college or program) and I appreciate the work you put into ensuring the visit was memorable and meaningful. I was very (impressed by/thankful for) (mention 1-2 highlights of the tour or something this person did that was particularly helpful). I am certain this experience has shaped our students’ decisions about continuing their education beyond high school.

Sincerely,

(your name)

--

Social Media Guide

Social media is an excellent way to recognize your students and share your school's work with the community. You can also use social media to engage students and families and build excitement for your campus visits.

Tag It:
Just like an in-person conversation, it's hard to participate if you can't follow what's happening. Hashtags and mentions make it possible to find and follow posts from a wide variety of sources and link together the conversation. For college access and success efforts, the following hashtags can be used:

- #CollegeBound: Students across the country are using this hashtag to share their college-going plans.
- @CFWV: Students can mention CFWV on Instagram, X, and Facebook to share their stories with us. We'll repost the best ones!

Encourage Students, Parents, and Teachers to Share:

- Ask students to post their postsecondary plans
- Ask students to post pictures of their college visit
- Ask students to share their favorite thing about the campus you're visiting
- During the visit, remind students to share their photos and status updates

CFWV Social Media Channels:

- **Facebook:** www.facebook.com/collegeforwv
- **X:** www.x.com/cfwv
- **Instagram:** www.instagram.com/collegeforwv



Activities and Resources

The following guides are intended to help you make the most out of your school's college visit by ensuring that students are adequately prepared for the trip and are primed for meaningful reflection about their experience.

Contents

- 9th grade visits
- 10th grade visits
- 11th grade visits
- 12th grade visits

The 9th Grade Visit

The ninth grade college visit should focus on expanding students' understanding of the college culture and previewing the numberous clubs, organizations, and leadership possibilities on a college campus.

Pre-Visit Activity

- Discuss with students the types of clubs and organizations they are currently involved in both at school and within their community. Ask the students if they find themselves in leadership roles within their extracurricular work or during school.
- Ask students if they could see themselves being involved in extracurricular activities at the college level.
- Have students complete the first column of the 9th grade college visit activity sheet.
- As a class, write down ten questions you would like to ask student leaders from the college you are visiting. Make sure the questions relate to learning experiences, scholarship dollars, leadership growth, and the college culture.

Campus Visit

- When setting up your visit, ask the campus how you can set up a panel of student leaders from the Student Government Association, fraternity or sorority executive boards, athletic teams or clubs, religious clubs, and other social groups. The college students can present to the group, and your students can ask questions about leadership in college.



Student Leadership Opportunities

Activities and organizations I currently am or wish to become involved with in the future:	Is there a similar opportunity at the college level?	Is it possible to receive scholarships for participating in this opportunity?

The 10th Grade Visit

The tenth grade college visit should focus on expanding students' understanding of college as a path towards their future career. Students need to understand the relationship between college majors and careers.

Pre-Visit Activity

- Students should complete the Interest Profiler on CFWV.com to determine their interests and match them to potential careers.
- Students should write down five possible careers they would like to consider pursuing.

Campus Visit

- Organize a presentation from the recruitment office staff about connecting majors to jobs. Students should listen to discover if the college has the major needed for each of the five careers they previously selected. If the college doesn't cover a career on a student's list, encourage him or her to ask the recruitment officer about available majors for that career path.
- Arrange for college alumni to speak on their current jobs and what it took to get there.

Reflection Activity

- Have each student complete the campus note card (within this toolkit).
- Have students complete the College Matching Assistant activity on CFWV.com.
- Ask students to write and send thank you notes to your campus contacts and chaperones. Encourage them to include information about what they liked about campus, what they learned, or what made the visit memorable for them.



The 11th Grade Visit

The 11th grade college visit should focus on the entrance requirements for enrollment, including exam score and GPA requirements for scholarships and grants.

Pre-Visit Activity

- Work with each student to determine the day and time he or she can take the ACT or SAT. Help the student schedule is or her exam date.
- If a student cannot pay for the exam, work with him or her to secure a fee waiver.

Campus Visit

- Ask for the admissions office to provide a complete walk-through tour of campus, an information session about the college or program, and an overview of entrance requirements and academic requirements for securing scholarships offered by the campus.
- Ask the admissions office to explain the concept of remedial education and provide strategies for students to avoid taking remedial classes.

Reflection Activity

- Have each student complete the campus note card (within this toolkit).
- Remind students of the importance of taking the ACT/SAT early. Remind them that they can take the tests more than once to improve their scores.
- Go over the requirements for obtaining the WV PROMISE Scholarship and WV Higher Education Grant.
- Ask students to write and send thank you notes to your campus contacts and chaperones. Encourage them to include information about what they liked about campus, what they learned, or what made the visit memorable for them.



The 12th Grade Visit

A college visit for seniors should focus on the application process, including the necessary steps students should take after applying. The visit should help students narrow down the list of institutions they are considering in order to find options that best suit their interests and needs.

Pre-Visit Activity

- Ask students to review their college visit note cards from previous visits. Discuss how their views have changed over time and identify their major postsecondary wants and needs.
- Review the CFWV Admissions 101 guide in detail with students.

Campus Visit

- Ask for the admissions office to provide a complete walk-through tour of campus, an information session about the college or program, and an overview of financial aid.
- Ask the college (in advance) if they offer an “apply on the spot” workshop, allowing students to submit applications to the college while on site.
- Ask the admissions office to provide a step-by-step overview of the steps to complete after applying to college.
- Ask for a tour of the residence halls, if the institution offers them.

Reflection Activity

- Have each student complete the campus note card (within this toolkit) for the college you visited.
- Ask each student to provide you with a list of schools or programs they are planning on applying to. Follow up throughout the next few weeks or months to ensure that students are on track. Students should aim to have their applications in by Halloween.
- Make sure that students who are planning on attending a four-year college have taken the ACT or SAT. Discuss scores required for admission. If students need to take or retake the tests, encourage them to use the free test prep resources available on CFWV.com.
- Ask students to write and send thank you notes to your campus contacts and chaperones.

