

Beyond the Brochure: Uncovering College Secrets

*Get behind-the-scenes information about college life!
Ask the right questions of the right people!*



**Be prepared with this integral component of the
COLLEGE UNCOVERED Toolkit, developed by:**



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INTRODUCTION

Admissions offices and tour guides have marketing scripts to follow as they share the many wonderful things a college has to offer.

BUT there is more to the story! Schools are not going to tell you everything you need to know about the challenges and risks your child will encounter. Know what and whom to ask about what goes on behind the scenes.

Here are some examples of things I learned by asking the right questions of the right people.

- A “tradition” for first-year students at a well-known, small liberal arts college included drinking at a local bar (yes, they served minors), and then returning to campus to drink more at a party at the bottom of a huge hill. Very late at night, students tried to climb the hill back to the dorms, often “passing out on the hill and waking up in the morning.”
- When I asked an indirect question about underage parties, a student told me, “Security is cool. If they see an underage party, they just walk right by. Some of them party with us when they are off shift!”
- I made a comment about impressive dorm security and asked an open-ended question. I learned, “There is a back door in the alleyway that is always propped open, so you don’t need to worry about getting locked out of the dorm.”
- I asked an alumna, “What should parents with daughters know?” She said, “I used to be a part of the committee to address sexual assault in the dorms. The college is not telling the truth about the frequency. It is much higher than what they tell you.”

Use this guide to create a plan for yourself about what to ask, whom to ask, and how to ask it!

UNCOVER THE FACTS so you can best help your child!

Disclaimer and Trigger Warning: Dr. Stephen shares resources. She does not receive compensation from individuals or businesses for sharing their products. Dr. Stephen is not a safety expert and cannot endorse or recommend resources or safety strategies. She is not responsible for any actions taken from use or review of these resources. Some of the topics and resources shared may be unexpected or triggering depending on your personal experience and situation.

WHOM DO YOU ASK?

Be creative. Find the people who have the information you need and who do not serve in some sort of marketing role. They know the scoop about things that happen on campus! Here are some great examples of whom to ask:

- Recent alumni
- Current students
- Dining hall staff
- Parents of students
- Anyone who has been unhappy with the college
 - Students who have transferred
 - Community members who have complained about college activities
- Maintenance staff
- Receptionists
- Staff at campus stores
- Staff at local stores
- Wait staff at local restaurants

WHERE DO YOU FIND THESE PEOPLE?

Again, be creative! During college visits, look out for people who cross your path in locations like:

- Dining halls
- Student union
- Campus stores
- Local stores
- Campus events: athletics and music performances
- Local restaurants

HOW DO YOU PREPARE YOUR LIST OF QUESTIONS?

Answer the following questions and use that information to generate a list:

- What keeps you up at night worrying when you think about your child being away at college?
- When listening to admissions officers and tour guides, what do you really want to know?
- What unique needs and vulnerabilities does your child have? Given those issues, what do you need to know to best help them?

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO ASK QUESTIONS?

Start up a conversation to dig a little deeper!

Here are some tips for how to ask questions:

- Share scenarios you are wondering about rather than asking a direct question.
- Ask open-ended rather than “yes” or “no” questions.
- For your most important concerns, ask various people the same questions.

Notes:

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DON'T ASK	DO ASK
A security or police officer, "Is campus safe?"	A maintenance staff person, "If you had a child attending this college, what safety concerns would you worry about?"
Residence hall administrators, "If my child gets stuck with a bad roommate, what will the school do?"	A senior student, "If someone gets stuck with a scary roommate and they feel unsafe, what does the college do?"
A tour guide, "What is the prevalence of sexual assault on campus?"	A student representative of an activist group, "How big of a problem is sexual assault on campus, and what is the school doing to address it?"
An admissions staff member, "What issues are the administration improving on currently?"	Recent alumni, "What are the biggest problems this school needs to fix?"
A school counselor, "How can I help my child be prepared?"	A parent, "What do you wish you knew before your child stepped foot on campus?"
Dining hall administrators, "For students needing to eat dinner late at night, is ample food available?"	A cafeteria staff member, "When students need to eat ½ hour before the cafeteria closes, what kinds of food choices are available?"
A resident assistant, "Does security/campus police do rounds late at night?"	A student, "If you are walking on campus after midnight, how often do you see security/campus police?"
The director of counseling, "If a student has a mental health crisis, does the counseling center help?"	A student, "Have you ever heard of a student having a major mental health crisis? How did they get help?"

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WANT MORE SUPPORT OR HAVE SOME QUESTIONS?

For over 30 years, I have helped parents and college students navigate the challenges of college life. I have also worked extensively with colleges and universities.

I have been privy to what goes on behind the scenes, and I know the inside secrets. Despite this, it wasn't until my own kids went off to school that I really understood the importance of being prepared for the inevitable risks of college life. This inspired me to help other parents!

Drawing on research, my professional experience, and, most importantly, my experience as a mom, I offer specialized programs for moms of college kids including the [COLLEGE UNCOVERED Toolkit](#) which includes an on-demand webinar, "10 Things Moms Need to Know about College Life." I also offer 1:1 coaching and group coaching.

You can learn more about my services on my [website](#). Please feel free to [reach out](#) to me directly!

I wish you all the best as you prepare for this exciting time,

Lisa

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