Exploring College Opportunities

Summer and fall can be a productive time for BCEC students to explore colleges. Some students are interested in continuing their education at a four year college or university. Other students want to continue their degree at a two-year community college and some students are considering the military or working full-time. BCEC encourages our students to continue their education. Higher education can significantly improve the quality of your life by exposing you to new people, ideas, interests, skills, activities, and career opportunities. Whether you attend a community college, a public university, or a private college or university, your life will be enriched in many ways.

Becoming Informed

Students interested in attending a four year college/university are encouraged to use the summer to research specific college choices and visit the colleges/universities that they are interested in. One good information source is the College Foundation of North Carolina’s website, CFNC.org. CFNC.org has information and virtual tours of North Carolina colleges in the College Fair section of CFNC website. From this website students can link to individual college websites for information on admissions requirements, costs, financial assistance and visitation programs and dates.

Why Visit Colleges/Universities?

- A college visit is essential in making a decision about where you wish to continue your education. Students can look at college catalogues, brochures and websites, but these resources can only show you so much. Each college has a different environment and feel and a campus visit is a student’s opportunity to get a firsthand view of the resources a college can offer. To really get a feel for a college you need to walk around the quad, sit in on a class, visit a dorm and talk with students and admissions counselors.
- To set up a college visit call the college admission’s office. Colleges/universities want students and parents to come and check them out.
- Colleges are well prepared to show families around their campus and explain what makes their school special.

- Also each fall colleges/universities hold Open Houses which provide a comprehensive look at the campus. Scheduled presentations explain specific majors, housing, meal plans and extracurricular opportunities. Open House dates are provided on each university website throughout the fall. Many colleges are close enough to Buncombe County that you can make a day visit or venture further east and spend a weekend visiting the universities around Greensboro, Chapel Hill, Raleigh and Durham.

College Visit–Asking Questions_Getting Answers

During your college visit make sure to do the following:

- Talk with students about their experiences. Are the students friendly and helpful?
- Tour the dorms, science and computer labs, the library and the student center. Are the buildings in good condition? Is there ample space in the dorms? Is housing guaranteed? How are dorms assigned?
- Sit in on a class. Observe if the students are interested and how the professor is interacting with the students. Ask about the average class size and the student to faculty ratio. Are most classes taught by professors or by teaching assistants?
- Eat in the school cafeteria. What are the campus meal plan options?
- Check out the student bulletin boards and the school newspaper. What is the social scene like? What activities are planned by the college? What bands are coming to the campus? Get a feel for the day-to-day energy of the college.
- What extracurricular activities, athletics and special interest groups are available?
- How many students are commuters/residents?
- Write down what you liked and disliked about the campus. Ask yourself if you would feel comfortable and at home here. Will you fit in?
- Ask about the total costs (tuition, fees, books and supplies, housing, food and transportation).
- Ask questions about financial aid.
- Talk with the admissions counselor about your transfer of college credits.
- Pick up any official school material you see.
Finding the Right College for You
After you have collected information from college websites and visited campuses, you will compare the colleges thinking about your goals, interests and needs. The more research you do the more likely you will find the best match for you. You will want to consider the following priorities:

- Availability of a specific major you are considering
- Cost
- Setting - small town, midsize town, large city
- School size
- Distance from home
- Class size
- Availability of faculty
- Student Organizations
- Athletics – college and intramural teams
- Housing

Financial Aid – Addressing the Costs of College
Financial aid is money that a college has available to give to students to help pay for college. There are three types of financial aid:
1. Gift-Aid - grants and scholarships
2. Work-Study programs
3. Education Loans
A student accesses financial aid by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon as possible after January 1st of the year you plan to enroll in college. The FAFSA is required if students wish to be considered for all federal and most state and institutional financial aid. A financial aid presentation will be offered to Bcec students and parents prior to January 1st to provide detailed information about financial aid and the FAFSA application process. Parents can use www.cfnc.org to find financial aid information.

Additional Scholarship Resources – For students to research: www.fastweb.com and www.bigfuture.org

College Entrance Tests – SAT and ACT
College entrance tests are a way for colleges to predict your ability to perform in college-level classes. Because courses and grading standards differ from high school to high school, entrance tests provide colleges with a standardized method to compare you with other students. Students planning to attend a 4-year college or university should take the SAT or the ACT twice. Year 5 students are encouraged to register for the October 2012 SAT. Year 4 students are encouraged to take the SAT in the spring of Year 4. Students may register online at www.collegeboard.org or www.ACTstudent.org

Comprehensive Articulation Agreement - CAA
The CAA stipulates when you graduate from a community college with an Associate of Arts or Associate in Science degree (or Universal General Education Transfer Core – UGETC – courses) and you have an overall grade point average (GPA) of at least a 2.0 (C average) or better in each course, you are eligible for the transfer of credits into participating institutions.

The following colleges/universities honor the CAA.

The 16 colleges/universities of the UNC system:
Appalachian State University
East Carolina University
Elizabeth City State University
Fayetteville State University
NC AT&T
North Carolina Central University
N.C. School of the Arts
North Carolina State University
University of N.C. at Asheville
University of N.C. at Chapel Hill
University of N.C. at Charlotte
University of N.C. at Greensboro
University of N.C. at Pembroke
University of N.C. at Wilmington
Western Carolina University
Winston-Salem State University

+ 24 private colleges/universities. (Listed below)
Barton College, Belmont Abbey College, Bennett College for Women, Brevard College, Campbell University, Catawba College, Chowan University, Gardner-Webb University, Johnson C. Smith University, Lees-McRae College, Livingstone College, Louisburg College (Two-year), Mars Hill College, Montreat College, Mount Olive College, North Carolina Wesleyan College, Peace College, Pfeiffer University, Queens University of Charlotte, St. Andrews Presbyterian College, Saint Augustine's College, Shaw University, Warren Wilson College, and Wingate University.

The colleges in bold faced type are located near Asheville and are accessible for a day visit.

Contact Mrs. Wicker with any questions related to Researching, visiting, and applying for colleges. I would also love to help you all explore majors and careers and look into financial aid options to help pay for college.

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