

Student's forum

Current Students Tell You What Their Colleges Won't

By Michelle Lanphere Green

How does a busy high school senior visit college campuses to see if their prospective college choice schools are a good "match"? The old way used to involve trains, planes or automobiles, a substantial amount of time and money, and dragging along mom or dad to visit a campus - or several.

Now, students have a new virtual resource to see prospective college campuses and the students that attend them, without ever leaving home. By visiting a virtual student tour website like www.unigo.com on the web, prospective college students have a travel-free option in seeing what a campus is really like. These written reviews and videos are created and narrated by current students.

Unigo was founded by Jordan Goldman, a recently-graduated Wesleyan University alumni who had been profiled in the book "The Gatekeepers" while he was a prospective college bound student. While in college, he helped co-author and edit the book "The Student Guide to Colleges". This website debuted last fall after being profiled in the New York Times college issue in the article "The Tell-All Campus Tour". Goldman understands the needs and anxiety of prospective (and current) college students, and Unigo offers wisdom about what college is really like.

Unlike traditional college guidebooks published by colleges, Unigo.com is an online collaboration by over 15,000 student contributors who review everything from the

dorms, to campus traditions to the best kept "secrets" on campus such as the Secret Taco Truck at USC, or how the on-campus parking situation rates at UCLA. While this site is designed primarily for prospective students, even those currently already attending college may learn something new about their university. These student perspectives often offer a real-world glimpse at a particular college and may differ from the marketing campaign of the colleges and their brochures and websites.

While online virtual tours can be a great source of information, they still cannot replace in-person visits to college campuses and taking the official tour, meeting students, attending a lecture and even staying in a dorm, eating in the dining hall, or staying overnight for a prospective student visit. Unigo can help students learn more about how they would ultimately fit on a specific campus or even explore colleges they might not have considered, even before beginning the college application process.

With college application deadlines coming up in the next few weeks and months, there is no better time to get the insider's view at Unigo. Why not "travel" to a few schools, right now?

My College Admissions Coach offers personalized help for students and their parents as they navigate the college search and admissions process. Follow my new blog at: <http://collegeoptions.blogspot.com/>

This Week's Question: *What should you do if your friends are doing drugs?*

Answers to Last Week's Question: *Do you take advice from your friends? Or your family?*

I take advice from my friends waaaaaaaaaaaaaay more than from my parents. My friends know about my boyfriend, my teachers, peer pressure, homework, dating pressures. I can talk to my friends about anything.

R.F.

My parents are too busy working or taking care of my younger siblings to have the time to know about my life or to have a clue about what my concerns are.

T.G.

I am far more likely to take advice from my friends rather than my family for one very simple reason: my friends actually know me.

J.S.

Usually I talk to my friends, because I'm afraid my parents will judge me or overreact.

H.M.

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A Dying Custom

By Karen King Russo

We just celebrated my mother-in-law Lucy's full and generous life of 96 years at her funeral in Glendale. A devout Catholic and active member of Incarnation Church, she had spelled out her wishes on a church form maybe several years ago. As has been the custom in her family and among her friends and fellow parishioners, she wanted the works - rosary, funeral mass and interment. She specified the hymns to be played, and the readings from scripture and who should read them. She had surely been to enough funerals herself - paid her dues, she'd tell you with a chuckle. And it was our full intent to follow her wishes, which we did. We adored and respected her.

But it did not take long to recognize why these may be dying customs in favor of cremation (now accepted by the Catholic Church) and memorial church services. The funeral business is just that: a business. Everyone we dealt with from the people at the mortuary to those at the church and the cemetery was pleasant and efficient. They led us along the way, telling us of all options and choices, each of which would come with a bill: Transportation (five trips); embalming; casket; fees for using the church; donations to priest and deacon; payment to canter and pianist; flowers; programs; mass cards; obituary; opening of crypt (she had already purchased space); engraving; and refreshments for guests. The fees were well beyond the capability of many families.

But they have you in that you are at your most vulnerable, wanting to do the best by your loved one and having no time to shop around. God help the families who are overwhelmed with grief at the loss of a younger

person, or a spouse. Our mother, a widow, was 96, so we were celebrating a long life well lived. Even at that, we were sad and shaky. On top of writing obituaries and eulogies, we had to go back to each place to re-clarify and finalize details, before our nerves ever had a chance to calm.

In the end, like a wedding, the funeral was a beautiful event, showcasing our family and paying honest tribute to our mother. Her son - my husband - and her daughter gave eulogies. Her grandson, granddaughter and youngest great-granddaughter (our son, daughter and granddaughter) gave the readings, and her youngest great-grandchildren (our grandchildren) walked to the altar with the offering. The pallbearers, all members of our family, were so young, handsome, and dignified that they brought a lump to my throat. I was so proud of them all.

More to the point, the charming and kind priest, Father Paul, had known and admired Lucy for years. The first thing he had to say was how unusual it was to see so many people, about 100, at the funeral of someone 96. From there he went on to speak of her contributions. He had a lot with which to work. She had led a rosary group at the church every week for years, collected the money and distributed it to needy people through St. Vincent de Paul, and sold doughnuts after mass every Sunday. And this was all after she was 80 and had retired from a lifetime of work in retail sales. As he said, "Lucy always had an eye out for those in need. If someone needed a refrigerator, she found one." And even after breaking her femur at age 91, she walked with her walker a mile

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