COLLEGE CAMPUS VISITS
BACKGROUND
Campus visits are key in a student’s decision to attend a particular university. Since the number of students who visited our campus has declined over the past few years, we want to understand more about the topic. The marketing strategist for the Visitors Center wanted to do research to achieve the following objectives:

- Determine when and why students decide to tour college campuses
- Determine why they did/did not visit WVU’s campus prior to NSO
- Understand student rationale for doing a self-guided vs. student-led tour
- Understand their engagement with other WVU events/activities
- Discover what garnered the most attention during their visit
- Ascertain reactions to possible incentives for touring WVU or extending the length of their visit

METHODOLOGY
First-time freshmen from the U.S. could self-select to complete an online survey that was promoted in “Survey Opportunities.” If they chose to, they were entered into a drawing to win one of ten $20 VISA gift cards.
Getting on a student’s radar for a campus visit appears competitive, with the majority of WVU freshmen reportedly having toured at least three schools during their decision-making process. It’s important to encourage high school students – preferably freshmen, sophomores and juniors – to visit WVU before they apply to any colleges. While seniors should not be discounted, more students who chose to attend WVU toured colleges earlier in their high school years.

Students’ top objective in touring a college is to get a feel for the school and determine if it’s the right fit for them. As several students acknowledged, the vibe on a campus is not something that can be conveyed on a website or on social media. Some of the things they learned about touring WVU’s campus that they acknowledged they could not have learned any other way include a sense of energy, pride and community, that the faculty are friendly and helpful, the campus is laid out differently than most and that the University is in a beautiful setting.

The vast majority toured WVU’s campus before attending New Student Orientation. Most who opted not to do so cited a scheduling conflict, were already familiar with the campus or they deemed it too far to travel. Student-led tours were preferable to self-guided tours; those who chose the latter primarily did so because it offered flexibility. The second-most mentioned reason these chose a self-guided tour was a sibling who is a current student or an alum in their family showed them around WVU.

The most-valued tour incentive is having the $50 application fee waived. Students said they would be most likely to extend their stay to an overnight visit if they had the opportunity to attend a sporting event. However, additional incentives that should be further explored are their ability to experience local food or take part in outdoor activities.
Students’ overall level of engagement with WVU was relatively strong. Nearly half attended Decide WV and about one-third came to campus to attend a WVU athletic event – bolstering the argument that students might be more likely to stay overnight if they could attend a sports event.

The role WVU’s social media played in students getting to know the University better cannot be understated. It likely gives prospective students more of the feeling – the vibe – they’ll find on campus. While the majority of students also tried to find out more about WVU by taking an online virtual tour, that tour does little, if anything, to help them determine if WVU is a good fit.
Nearly half the students (48%) began thinking about visiting colleges before they actually applied to any. This is also true of one-third (33%) of seniors in high school. Just 13% of high school seniors thought about touring college campuses after they had been accepted.
Over half (53%) visited at least three college campuses during their selection process. About a fourth (24%) visited two, and one in five (21%) visited just one. An additional 3% did not tour any college campus before making their decision.

Q. In total, how many college campuses did you tour during your college selection process?
Freshmen, sophomore or juniors who hadn’t yet applied to any colleges visited far more colleges than the other segments of students.

Q. In total, how many college campuses did you tour during your college selection process?
Nearly nine in ten (86%) visited a college campus to get an overall feel for the school and see if they felt comfortable in that setting. Just over half (53%) wanted to explore the area in which the college is located and about as many wanted the opportunity to find out more about the major they were interested in.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To get an overall &quot;feel&quot; for the campus and see if I felt comfortable there</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To explore the city/area in which the college is located</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To further explore the academic program(s) I was interested in</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To learn more about student life opportunities (clubs, study abroad, etc.)</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To view housing options in person</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To learn about specific scholarships and/or financial aid opportunities</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To appease my parent(s), who is an alum of the college</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Q. What were your reasons for touring a college(s)? (Check all that apply)
About nine in ten (89%) toured WVU’s campus prior to attending New Student Orientation. Of those, about one-quarter (24%) opted to tour the campus on their own vs. take a student-led tour (76%).

Q. Now thinking specifically about WVU, did you tour the campus in-person at any point prior to attending WVU’s New Student Orientation? Q. Did you take a student-led tour with the WVU Visitors Center or did you tour the campus on your own?
Most younger students (77%), seniors who hadn’t yet applied to any colleges and those who had been accepted to a college (71%) and those who already paid their deposit (77%), opted to participate in a student-led tour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student-led vs. Self-guided</th>
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<tr>
<td>SR after paying my deposit to a college(s)</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR after being accepted to a college(s)</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR before applying to any colleges</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR, SO, JR before applying to any colleges</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Student-led tour**
- **Self-guided**
Most often, students appreciated the freedom a self-guided tour allows, as well as to see only those parts of campus they find relevant.

- “So I could start to find the way around campus myself. We could also spend as much time in one area as we wanted.”
- “I wanted to walk around and explore campus myself as well as see more than just the academic part of the campus.”
- “More time to explore freely. Get a feel for things on my own instead of being in a group setting of a tour.”

The second-most mentioned reason students did a self-guided tour was because they toured the campus with a family member who attends or was an alumni.

- “My brother was a student here so he was able to give me a one-on-one completely personalized tour, and I was completely comfortable asking him all my questions.”
- “My Aunt and Uncle know the campus well and decided they could show me the main spots on campus and give me a lot of useful information. They have 2 kids go here and my uncle went here as well.”
- “My sister is a senior at WVU, so she showed me around so I could see what Morgantown and WVU is all about.”

Just two students had been to WVU’s campus before.
Most students who chose not to visit WVU before New Student Orientation were unable to because of a scheduling conflict (34%) and/or they were already familiar with the campus and/or they thought it was too far to travel to WVU (29%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Scheduling conflict</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Already familiar with WVU's campus</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too far to travel</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too costly to travel</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not see the benefit of visiting campus</td>
<td>11%</td>
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</table>
Q. What is the most important thing you learned that you couldn’t have learned any other way?

WVU TOUR

The most important things they learned by touring the campus that they could not have learned any other way are…

- The Vibe/the Feel (75)
- How to navigate campus/the transportation (55)
- The size and layout of the campus (50)
- Feel like home (30)
- How friendly the people, student, faculty are, close-knit community (15)
- The terrain (15)
- The beauty of the campus (10)
- Opportunities (10)

- “I had to visit in person to realize this is where I really wanted to be.”
- “The feeling of being in Morgantown. I was on the fence about attending WVU, but once I arrived on campus, the feeling of excitement with just enough nerves convinced me this was the place for me.”
- “The level of welcoming the atmosphere has on campus that you cannot understand until you are here!”
- “Actually getting around WVU and walking up the mountains. But also seeing the beauty in the buildings and the campus life.”
- “I mainly just got an overall feel of the college campus itself. I came from an extremely small school, so I do believe that by touring the college before actually moving here benefitted me greatly by making me more comfortable on campus.”
- “Before I toured here, I didn't think I wanted to go to a big school, but when I got here I changed my mind pretty quick.”
WVU TOUR

Other things they learned through the tour were …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Layout/Size (30)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- learned about transportation options</td>
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<tr>
<td>- learned how to travel efficiently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- learned which classes are on which campus</td>
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<tr>
<td>- learned how far apart buildings, dorms, etc. are</td>
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<td>- the prevalence of hills and stairs</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Beauty (10)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- pretty campus</td>
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<tr>
<td>- pretty landscape</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>The Academics (9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- details about major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- toured facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- learned about dual major program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ability to earn a master’s and doctorate (forensics)</td>
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| The (unspecified) Opportunities (7) |

Q. What is the most important thing you learned that you couldn’t have learned any other way?
When bucketing those comments by emotion, excitement, love and enjoyment were expressed most often.

**Excitement**
- “I was able to tour the Forensic department in Oglebay. It made me really excited for my major.”
- “That it was one big family and I couldn’t wait to be a part of it!”
- “I was most excited about the campus because, I’ve lived here my whole life and know nothing about it.”
- “I saw how pleasant and newly renovated the Evansdale campus was, which made me very excited to live there.”

**Love**
- “I enjoy the school spirit and the scenery of the area. There is a certain sense of belonging all over campus. I thought the PRT was pretty awesome. The Creative Arts Center is pretty unique.”
- “I loved being able to actually see what a college campus looked like in full swing of an academic semester versus visiting a college campus during the summer when the students have returned home.”
- “I loved the way the campus looked. I loved how it was in a city but had lots of green grassy areas. I loved the mix of modern building with older styles.”

**Enjoyment**
- “The athletic facility really impressed me as well as the crime scene houses and the GC/MS. It is so cool to see and hear about all the partnerships that WVU has with other companies to give their Forensic students chances to work with.”
- “Everyone I met (staff, professors, other students/prospective students) was incredibly kind and helped me with anything I needed.”

Q. What is the most important thing you learned that you couldn’t have learned any other way?
Students reported being most excited about their tour because …

- The beautiful campus, impressive buildings, views (60)
- The positive vibe, student activity on campus (55)
- The football stadium, sports (40)
- Touring department, meeting friendly faculty (20)
- Student, school spirit (20)
- Rec Center (17)
- Feel like home, close knit (15)
- Activities, clubs, etc. (12)
- PRT (12)
- Opportunities (6)
Q. What, if anything, did you see or experience that excited you most when you toured WVU?

“All of the people that were also visiting. I knew I had a bright future ahead and that I would make new friends along the way.”

“The whole feeling WVU gives you when you walk onto campus!”

“The thing I experienced that excited me the most was the school spirit and how much the students and faculty love the university.”

“I was most excited about the campus because, I’ve lived here my whole life and know nothing about it.”

“For me, it was the Creative Arts Center, the Coliseum, and Milan Puskar Stadium. The Creative Arts Center excited me because I knew I’d be spending a lot of time there with my major, and the Coliseum and Milan Puskar Stadium because I love watching WVU basketball and football, so seeing them in real life was incredible.”

“How the atmosphere is different from any other college I visited, the overall beauty of WVU made me want to go here.”

“The campus lifestyle. It just felt so much like home not many words to describe it!”

“Seeing the friendly people on such a lively campus made me know I wanted to come here.”

“The thing I experienced that excited me the most was the school spirit and how much the students and faculty love the university.”
In addition to touring WVU’s campus, nearly half (48%) attended Decide WVU. About one-third (34%) also attended a WVU athletic event. Nearly three in ten (28%) did a department visit, and 22% went to a Discover WVU open house.

Q. In addition to touring WVU’s campus, which of the following WVU events did you take part in? (Check all that apply)
## OTHER ENGAGEMENT

Of all the events WVU offers, younger students (29%) and seniors who had not yet applied to any colleges (29%), along with seniors who already had been accepted to a college(s) (42%), attended Decide WVU. Just one senior attended Decide WVU after paying his deposit. Seniors who were already accepted to a college(s) were far less likely to have attended a WVU athletic event.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Freshman, sophomore, or junior year of high school, before applying to any colleges (n=326)</th>
<th>Senior year of high school, before applying to any colleges (n=217)</th>
<th>Senior year of high school, after being accepted to a college (n=87)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decide WVU (spring event)</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a WVU athletic event</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department visit with my major</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discover WVU Open House (fall event)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Preview Day (spring event)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguished Scholars (winter event)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not recall</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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Q. In addition to touring WVU’s campus, which of the following WVU events did you take part in? (Check all that apply)
Aside from touring the campus in person, eight in ten (80%) used WVU’s social media accounts to familiarize themselves with WVU’s campus and nearly six in ten (58%) took a virtual tour via WVU’s website. Just 14% used the WVU Guide smartphone app to do a virtual tour.

Q. Aside from possibly touring the campus in-person, what other resources, if any, did you use to familiarize yourself with WVU’s campus? (Check all that apply)

- Friends (3)
- Current students (3)
- FFA events on campus
- WVU website resources
- Previously here for high school activities
- Campus map
- Forensic teacher
- Google maps
Q. Which social media platform(s) did you use to familiarize yourself with WVU’s campus? (Check all that apply)

All but 7% of students who used social media to familiarize themselves with WVU’s campus chose to do so using Instagram.
When asked which of the five activities below would compel them to extend their day visit into an overnight visit, about six in ten (59%) said experiencing local food would do it, and half (50%) indicated offering outdoor activities would entice them to turn a day trip into an overnight visit.

- **Sporting event (WVU athletic event, minor league baseball)**: 59%
- **Experience local food (On-campus dining options, local Morgantown restaurants)**: 52%
- **Outdoor activities (hiking, ziplining, whitewater rafting, kayaking, paddle boarding)**: 50%
- **Shopping (local small businesses, WVU bookstore)**: 39%
- **Cultural experience (Art Museum of WVU, theatrical production, sightseeing area…)**: 23%
- **Other**: 2%
Seven out of ten (70%) ranked their ability to waive the application fee as the best incentive WVU could provide for touring its campus. A 25% discount at a WVU Bookstore was the next-best incentive, with only 15% selecting it.

Q. How valuable do you think the following incentives would be in persuading high school students to tour WVU? Please rank them using a scale of 1-4, where 1=most valuable and 4=least valuable.
Only about three in ten (29%) students who responded to the survey were first-generation.
Most of the respondents (41%) were from West Virginia. Nearly two in ten (18%) were from Pennsylvania. Far fewer were from 15 other states.

*International students were sent to the end of the survey after answering this question.*