



What is “Demonstrated Interest” And Why Should You Care?

“Demonstrated Interest” (AKA “Showing You Care”) is not exactly a new concept. But thanks to the wonders of technology, colleges and universities now have a way to quantify this soft skill and give it a hard score. The term refers to a series of things students do (or sometimes don’t do) that lets admissions officers know they are interested (or not). To measure a student’s interest, colleges that utilize a holistic admissions system will associate a score representing a student’s level of interest. For example, if you visit campus, you get a point. If you request an on-campus or alumni interview, you get a point. These points are often the difference between admission and rejection.

Establishing Demonstrated Interest

Here are two easy ways to establish Demonstrated Interest with the colleges you like:

1. *Attend a college fair.*

Go to the booths of schools you are particularly interested in. Introduce yourself to the admissions representative. They will take it from there and ask for your email, home address etc. Voilà, you established demonstrated interest.

2. *Register on the school’s admissions website.*

Here you will be directed to request further information (via snail mail, email or both). Interest established? Check!

Increasing Your Demonstrated Interest Score

In this competitive admissions climate, college admissions officers use software to track and score a student’s interest. Here are some specific things you can do that could make a difference in your admissions outcome:

1. *Find and contact your admissions representative.*

Most colleges have a team of admissions representatives, with each one assigned to a particular area of the country. In most cases this is the person who will gather all your data and shepherd your application through the process. Get to know them!

2. *Visit the campus.*

It is particularly important to visit the campus AND to visit while students are on campus – not during spring break, winter break or Thanksgiving. Observe the workings of campus, sit in on a class, and have lunch with a student. These are all ways to show your enthusiasm. You can even request a meeting with a faculty member from your area of interest.

3. *Attend an Admissions Information Session while visiting campus.*

Here you will learn about academic and extracurricular areas of interest. You will learn about their particular application process and about financial aid. For extra points, wait around and introduce yourself to the admissions officer who devoted their time to tell you about their school. Be prepared with a question or two AND request a business card. If you have personal business cards with your contact info, leave one.

4. *Request an on-campus, alumni, or video conference interview.*

There are lots of alternatives to the in-person interview and campus visit. Colleges understand that it’s expensive to fly all over the country visiting campuses. Just be honest! Tell your admissions representative travel is difficult and you’d like to request a Skype or Alumni interview. They are happy to accommodate.

5. *Thank you notes!*

Always send thank you notes addressed to the admissions office. If you had a great student ambassador give you the tour, send a thank you note. If you sat in on a class or got to meet a professor, send a thank you note. Use that Admissions Rep’s business card you snagged during the information session and write a thank you note.

How to Prevent Subtractions From Your Score

Always remember your manners and be polite. Now is when all those years of etiquette instruction will pay off. Common courtesies may seem obvious and trivial, but in this arena, they are vital. Say “please,” “thank you,” and “you’re welcome.” (“No problem” is no bueno.) Silence your cell phone. Look people in the eye and give them a firm handshake. Show up on time, or even a few minutes early. If you can’t make a scheduled visit or info session, call and cancel in advance. Don’t ever be a no-show. Most important tip: SMILE.

If You Really Want It, Make Them Feel It.

This year admissions officers at the schools you are applying to will receive thousands of applications, many from students with credentials just as good as yours. So how will you stand out from stack? Consider this advice from the poet, Maya Angelou:

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

In today’s competitive admissions environment, “Demonstrated Interest” is more than an item to be checked off your to-do list; it just may be your secret weapon.