Be a Great Host to Campus Visitors With These Tips

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Summertime at the UA means time off for many, but it also means an influx of visitors, including prospective students and anyone else brave enough to take on Tucson's heat.

Those who work on campus through the summer have the opportunity to make those visits memorable by being friendly, welcoming and helpful. Experts in the Office of Admissions and Arizona Student Unions offer some tips for helping potential future Wildcats and others who visit campus leave with a great impression.

Keep an eye out for the folders.

Need help spotting prospective students? Look for young people, or parental-looking people, carrying UA folders, the telltale sign of someone who has just gone on a campus tour, says Dan Kellish, coordinator of information and visitor services in the Office of Admissions. The folders contain a campus map, key information about applying and other details prospective students might need. Printed on the front is "WELCOME FUTURE WILDCAT."

When you come across one of these folder-holding folks, a simple "Welcome to campus!" could go a long way, Kellish says.

Help make their visit a personal experience.

The investment that families make to visit campus can be high, Kellish says, especially for out-of-state guests.

"They're flying out, they're paying for a hotel, they're renting a car," he says. "That's a really big investment just to even think about us. And so, when they're here, I want it to be a really personal experience."

If you'd like to help him, Kellish offers the same advice he gives to student ambassadors who lead the tours: Find something in common with these students and their families and make a connection. Even if the interaction is brief, he says, asking prospective students why they're interested in the UA, what they plan to study and what they hope to do with their degree can be a good way to break the ice, so to speak.

Assure them the heat won't last.

Keep in mind that triple-digit temperatures might be a shock to many, and questions about how long that's going to last are likely. Kellish says he's upfront about the heat, but also focuses on the beautiful weather that Tucson enjoys in the fall and winter.
Yup, it's hot today and it will be hot when you return for orientation and, by the way, it will be hot the first week of classes.

"But then it'll be moderate," he assures them. "It'll be beautiful for the rest of the time you're here."

It's also good, Kellish adds, to remind visitors of Tucson's 350 days of sunshine each year. And visitors from snowy regions will appreciate knowing that shoveling snow and scraping ice off windshields doesn't happen in Tucson, says this Ohio native.

**Have suggestions for things to do.**

Summer visitors encounter a campus that's markedly calmer than what they would find during the school year. Given the lack of activity, Kellish says, guests tend to ask a lot of questions about what there is to do on campus.

This is an opportunity to explain that campus comes alive during the academic year. The Mall in particular becomes an epicenter of activity, with Frisbee competitions and even the occasional Quidditch match. Around finals, it also serves as a gathering place where students can destress with therapy dogs and massages, and as a venue for concerts and other events.

In addition to all of this, the Mall also hosts some of the community's flagship events, such as **Spring Fling** [3], the UA's signature springtime carnival, and the **Tucson Festival of Books** [4].

And even during the summer, there’s still plenty to do on campus. Cheryl Plummer, who oversees the student-run Information Desk at the Student Union Memorial Center, says she likes to recommend **Flandrau Science Center and Planetarium** [5] and the **Richard F. Caris Mirror Lab** [6]. Other attractions on campus include the **Center for Creative Photography** [7] and the **UA Museum of Art** [8].

**Offer suggestions beyond the campus proper.**

Kellish also says he fields plenty of questions about what there is to do in Tucson. The answer, he said, often depends on how much time visitors have.

For those who have a day or two to spend in town, he suggests drives to Mount Lemmon and Gates Pass or a trip to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. He also notes Tucson's burgeoning food scene - the city doesn't have a Creative City of Gastronomy designation [9] from UNESCO for nothing - and urges visitors to partake in some Mexican food.

"To me, the food is always something you sell," Kellish says.

For those who are in town only a few hours, a bite to eat on University Boulevard or a streetcar trip to Fourth Avenue and downtown Tucson are good bets, he adds.

**Let them know that campus is safe.**
Another one of the most frequently asked questions is whether campus is safe, Kellish says. He encourages tour ambassadors to be honest about their experiences on campus, but to also emphasize the plethora of resources that enhance safety: the UA Police Department [10], the Dean of Students Office [11], the blue light emergency call stations, the UAlert service [12], the LiveSafe app and SafeRide [13].

Kellish also points out that most crimes that occur on campus are crimes of opportunity, adding that bike theft is the most commonly reported crime on campus. Click here [14] for more information about campus safety and wellness.

Be helpful to everyone.

President Robert C. Robbins made several incognito scouting trips to campus before he was selected to lead the UA. Those interactions, particularly with students, impressed upon him that the UA was a great place with amazing students.

It's more proof that being kind to anyone and everyone can go a long way, and pay off in ways you can't anticipate.

Plummer says her goal for each interaction with a visitor is to make them want to come back.

"We want everyone's experience at the University to be a great one, so that when people talk about universities, the UA is the first one on their mind," she says. "We want them to walk away saying, 'Everybody there was so helpful and so nice.'"

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