Tricky Questions…
..for which you should have a response!

1. How is your X major?
You can’t always know details about every major. And, with the exception of certain professional programs, not all majors are necessarily ranked. You can assure them that it’s a good program and recommend that they visit the major’s website to learn more about classes and faculty members.

2. How prevalent are drugs and alcohol on campus?
There generally isn’t a worse problem with drugs and alcohol on one campus than another campus, and all institutions follow state and federal laws. If a parent asks you this question, you can always remind them that college will be an opportunity for their students to put into action all the good things they were taught.

3. Why should I go to your school rather than X?
It is never appropriate to comment negatively on another institution. Politely explain that you cannot make a comparison and tell them about what makes your institution special or unique. It is also appropriate to remind them that choosing a college is about fit.

4. If my GPA is X and my test scores are X, what are my chances of getting in?
Unless your institution has a formulaic admission process, you probably can’t predict how a student will do in your institution’s process based on stats alone. After explaining this, feel free to give them the admission statistics and, more importantly, to talk to them about your process as a whole.

5. Is it better to get a B in an AP/IB class or an A in a regular class?
Don’t tell them that they should “get an A in the AP/IB class!” It can be unfair and unhelpful. Explain that you’re looking at both their grades and the rigor of their curriculum when reviewing their transcript. Encourage them to consider taking AP/IB classes in subjects in which they are most interested.

6. Does your school practice affirmative action?
If your institution practices affirmative action, say so. Explain that there is an educational value to having a diverse campus and that your institution looks for all kinds of diversity.

7. Do you have an emergency plan in place if there is a major incident on campus?
In light of high profile incidents on college campuses in recent years, you might get this question. It’s good to find out if your school has an emergency plan in place and, if so, what that plan entails.

8. My school is way more difficult than the school down the street. Do you consider this in the admission process?
Remind them that their application will be reviewed in the context of their school.

Send other tricky questions you receive on the road to aubertsa@usc.edu
9. How exactly do you calculate my GPA?
Many institutions recalculate a student’s GPA according to their internal formula. And, most institutions don’t necessarily make this formula public. It is okay to say just that.

10. Will it hurt me if my parents didn’t attend your school?
Students who are legacies sometimes think they’re all but guaranteed to get into the school. Students who aren’t legacies sometimes think they have no chance at getting in without a family history. Both assumptions are incorrect. You can remind the non-legacy student that legacy status is just one of the many factors considered in the admission process.