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## Hey kids: Give the city a look.

Local colleges are partnering with Phila. officials to use the city as a marketing asset that will attract more students.

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Cainna Jirikowic and her parents visited Philadelphia for the first time this summer, to tour University of Pennsylvania. Because the family from Florida had only one day, each interaction, each glimpse of the city would carry significant weight as they decided whether Cainna, 17, should attend college here.

They got a great view of the skyline from the Schuylkill Expressway. That was a positive.

They had an upbeat chat with a Drexel University student who was their waiter at dinner. Another positive.

They scored a sunny day for the campus tour, which enhanced Penn's old buildings. Definitely a positive.

Thanks to those and other random but influential experiences, by day's end Penn had muscled its way up Cainna's list of colleges, poised to challenge her top choice, Duke.

Universities spend millions on new buildings, glossy brochures and ad campaigns to sell themselves to top student prospects. But colleges in the area now realize that random experiences - which they can't control - also play a big role in students' decision-making.

To ensure that those interactions with the city are positive, the colleges have teamed with Philadelphia's marketing arm.

Led by the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corp., 17 schools have introduced Campus Visit / Philadelphia, a magazine and Web site that give students an array of resources for planning their trips.

The initiative was prompted in part by a recent study conducted by the Pennsylvania Economy League. Though the region's colleges draw more than 200,000 students a year, the study found that Philadelphia's "knowledge industry" is not nearly as

strong as that of New York, Boston, San Francisco or Raleigh-Durham.

The study urged the colleges to increase capacity to attract 20,000 more students. Because the new economy relies so heavily on new ideas and a highly educated workforce, regions with a strong higher-education industry enjoy greater economic growth, the report said.

Todd Hoffman, who began a similar venture in Boston, was brought in by Penn and GPTMC to head up the effort. By the time of Campus Visit / Philadelphia's official debut in June, 2000, 15 more colleges had signed on.

The program's web site, [www.onebigcampus.com](http://www.onebigcampus.com), lets Philly-bound students make hotel and plane reservations, provides discounts from US Airways and Amtrak, lists events, touts city attractions, and provides links to the colleges' Web sites. (Philly.com, the Web site of The Inquirer and Daily News, is also a sponsor.)

"The idea is to increase those serendipitous opportunities that students have when they visit," Hoffman said. "If you talk to the waiter in your restaurant and he says great things, that helps sell the city and the schools. We want to make sure people are here long enough to have those experiences."

Now that Philadelphia - and cities in general - are enjoying a revival among students, the schools view the city as a marketing asset.

"The vitality of Philadelphia has been enhanced so much recently that it's a real selling point," said Lee Stetson, Penn's dean of admissions.

"This is not classic tourism, it's economic development," Hoffman said, noting that students bring in more money and stay far longer than tourists do.

The schools also hope that students who study here will want to stay after they graduate.

Hoffman said that only 8 percent of students who attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston come from Massachusetts, but more than 25

percent of MIT graduates stay in the region - a boon to the local economy.

Penn and Haverford and Bryn Mawr Colleges also attract a significant share of students from out of state - 82 percent in each case. But only 15 percent of Penn graduates, 17 percent of Bryn Mawr alumni, and 21 percent of Haverford alumni stay here.

Meryl Levitz, president of the Philadelphia tourism corporation, said the group hopes to win a grant of \$1 million or more from Gov. Ridge's plan to designate \$10 million statewide for stemming the "brain drain."

But to use Philadelphia's attractions as a selling point, the colleges need to overcome the problem of visiting students' budgeting enough time to tour campuses but not the city.

The Jirikowics have become campus-trip veterans. "As a rule, what we experience is what we see just around the university. We don't have the time to check out the larger city," Ray Jirikowic said.

The family's visit to Penn in July was part of a whirlwind tour that included Lehigh University in Bethlehem, William and Mary College in Virginia, Duke in Durham, N.C., and Wake Forest in Winston-Salem.

By the time they left Bethlehem and rolled down the Schuylkill, it was 6:30 p.m. and they were too tired to venture out of their hotel.

The next morning, they walked directly to College Hall for the Penn campus tour.

Cainna Jirikowic and other visiting students filled a large room for a presentation on Penn's academic and social scene. They were surrounded by dark-wood wainscoting, arched doors, brass lights, and a wall of plaques honoring illustrious Penn grads.

Through the leaded-glass windows, the students could see the gargoyle-festooned corner of Penn's library designed by Frank Furness. It was a setting intended to impress. "It's absolutely gorgeous," Cainna Jirikowic said later.

By the time the Jirikowics had finished the tour, eaten lunch, and met with a chemistry professor, it was after 3 p.m. They had to leave if they were to make it to Williamsburg, Va., by nightfall. The Italian Market, Penn's Landing, the Liberty Bell, South Street? No time.

Cainna Jirikowic was taken with the bits of the city she did see. "It reminded me of New York with the huge skyline," she said. "I didn't know Philadelphia was that big.

"I'm thinking back to fourth-grade history - you know, Ben Franklin, the Quakers. I thought it was like Colonial Williamsburg, with guys dressed up in gray wigs and colonial costume," she said.

"I didn't think it was like a city city. I can definitely see myself living here."

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