

College Fairs

Ask your high school about college fairs. This is an efficient way to get information from lots of colleges at once. College representatives will answer questions and provide specific information about their school. They don't replace visits, but they're a good first step in sifting through the wealth of colleges available. A partial list of large, registered fairs can be found at the end of this manual, and your high school may also be aware of more local opportunities.

Preparing for the Fair

Prior to attending the fair, have some questions in mind that are important to you and that will help you determine which colleges to target. Think about topics such as admissions criteria – are you likely to get in based on GPA and SAT statistics? Ask about location, is it public or private, total enrollment, cost, majors and/or honors programs offered and strength thereof, the makeup and style of the student body, etc.

Answer the following questions to help you determine what kind of school would best suit you:

- Do you want to attend a two- or four-year institution? Co-ed or single sex?
- What size school do you want to attend?
- What programs of study are you considering?
- How far from home do you want to go?
- Do you wish to participate in any specific extra-curricular activities or athletics?
- Do you want to attend a school in an urban, suburban or rural environment?
- Do you require any special services (i.e. tutoring, note takers, readers, TDD or interpreters)?

Before you go, it may also be wise to discuss your college plans with your guidance counselor, family, teachers and friends. Also, research your colleges of interest on the Internet and in your guidance office and/or library. The internet may be all you need for your preliminary research.

Registering for the Fair

You can often pre-register for these and obtain a bar-coded registration sheet that makes requesting more information from particular schools much easier at the fair. There may even be an app and a QR code for some of the larger fairs. If the particular fair does not offer this option, type up stick-on labels with your name, address, email, high school name, and graduation date. Bring a pen or some method for taking notes. You may be given cards to fill out or online forms to complete so that the college can send you additional information. Be sure to have an information and appropriate email address that won't embarrass you! It will be seen by admissions staff.

At the Fair

Before the fair as well as when you get there, large fairs may provide you with a map or directory. If so, take a minute to circle or otherwise identify your top priority schools so you are sure to visit those first. It's wise to allow some time for simply browsing, as you might discover a school you hadn't planned on including on your list. Check the agenda for any special information sessions or presentations that might be of interest. Hopefully you will receive a bag in which to place materials you may gather.

Next, leave your inhibitions behind you and prepare to reach out with your questions. The fairs can be crowded. Be considerate, but you deserve a turn.

On the following pages we have provided a fair checklist that you may find helpful, along with the NACAC's current schedule of upcoming fairs as of this printing. Visit their website to double check the current schedule, as it can change. And remember, there are most likely smaller, local fairs in your area as well. NACAC Fair Schedule: www.nacacnet.org/college-fairs/

Checklist for College Fairs

- For each fair in your area, review the list of college participants. (which schools will be there)
- Determine which ones you want to interview/talk to.
- Check out the fair's other information sessions to see if you should work them in.
- Determine questions you'd like to ask each school and jot them down, such as:
 - What is your profile of admitted students? (GPA, test scores etc.)
 - What percent of applicants do you admit? What is the retention rate?
 - What are your most popular majors?
 - Are individual interviews offered? Group? How do I set up a campus visit?
 - What types of admission are offered? (Early action, early decision etc.)
 - What is the tuition? Room and Board? What financial aid options are offered?
 - What is the average class size? What percent are taught by student TA's?
 - Are professors accessible outside of class?
 - What type of housing is available and for which years?
 - How are roommates selected?
 - Are there sororities and fraternities and how prevalent is Greek life?
 - What is the campus like on weekend? Do most students leave or stay?
 - What sorts of meal plans are offered? How is the food?
 - What are the sports opportunities for _____ (specify which interest you, if any)
 - Do sports play a major role at the school? Which teams are Division I?
 - What is the school known for? What makes it unique?
 - What is the surrounding community like? Is it safe? Friendly?
 - (think of other questions that relate to your particular interests and needs)
- Have a convenient way to take notes about each school efficiently – something to write with and on.
- Have a way (bag, case) to hang on to business cards and information that they will give you. Plastic bags are often provided at the fair, but you might want to bring one too.
- Try to register for the fair ahead of time online. If that is not possible, you might pre-type up cards or labels with your contact information on them. Include name, address, email, phone, high school, graduation year, GPA, test scores, intended major and extracurricular activities. (anything else outstanding about you as well)
- Use the fairs extensively. They are a great time saver because you can often narrow down your list at fairs instead of having to visit every single school you've considered.