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**How to Prepare for a College Fair**

Attending a College Fair is a great way to do college research. It allows you to meet face-to-face with college representatives. Here are some tips to make the most of your experience:

**Before the Fair:**

* **Ask yourself “Why do Iwant to go to college in the first place?”**  *This may sound basic, but you’ll be surprised how difficult this question might be for you to answer in the beginning.*
* **Consider what you are looking for in a school*—****big/small, major, urban/rural, 2-year/4-year, religiously-affiliated, athletics, Greek life, special programs/opportunities, etc.*
* **Make a list of schools that are a “must” to connect with.** *You may not be able to get to every college, so know ahead of time what type of colleges you would be interested in attending.*
* **Register online ahead of time, if applicable.** *Registering will give you a bar code the college rep will be able to scan to get your contact information.*
* **Type your contact info, high school name, graduation year, major, etc. on sticky labels for contact cards.**
* **Talk to at least one college representative from a school you have never heard of.**
* **Prepare a list of interesting, specific questions for the college reps***—this will generate interesting and specific conversations.*
* **Make a professional email address.**

**During the Fair:**

* **Bring a pen, paper, and tote bag** *for notes and materials.*
* **Grab a map** *(if available) to plan your route.*
* **Be patient***—you may have to wait in line to talk to a college.*
* **Don’t let your parents do all of the talking.**
* **Take notes!** *Write down what you find most interesting about each college.*
* **Ask for business cards.** *Follow up with the rep if you have more questions or just want to thank them for their time.*
* **Be adventurous!** *Chat with colleges you may not have considered or never heard of.*
* **Attend an information session** *to learn more about the college search process, financial aid, and other topics.*
* **Drop by the Counselor table** *to meet one-on-one with a College Counselor.*

**After the Fair:**

* **Organize and sort through all of the material** *you have collected.*
* **Make notes about schools that stood out to you** *while it is fresh in your mind.*
* **Recycle materials** from colleges you have ruled out.
* **Review college websites, catalogs, and view books** *of the schools that interested you most. This will help you narrow your choices.*
* **Write down any additional questions** *you want to follow up about.*
* **Consider sending a thank you email to the college representative.** *This simple gesture can show admission officials you are serious about wanting to attend their college.*
* **Talk to your parents and counselor** *about what schools peaked your interest and why.*
* **Adjust your college list accordingly**, *if necessary.*
* **Start scheduling visits** *to your top schools.*
* **Read e-mails** *to see when colleges will be visiting your school or community.*

**What Can Parents Do:**

* **Encourage your students to research** *the schools ahead of time and truly evaluate what they want out of their college experience.*
* **Attend the information *sessions*** *on the college search process, financial aid, and other topics.*
* **Encourage your student to begin the exploration process EARLY**.  *Be ready to discuss post high school options, including finances.*

College fairs are a great resource when you are doing your college search. Plan ahead and get the most out of your experience. Enjoy!

**QUESTION DO’S & DON’TS**

DON’T ask:

* What is your freshmen acceptance rate?
* What’s the average GPA of students accepted?
* How cold does it get in the winter?
* What’s the student-to-faculty ratio?
* What’s your school like? (Too general)
* “Is your \_\_\_\_\_ program good? (Of course it is!)

These are all things you can research easily online.

Do ask:

* What are the 3 coolest things about your school?
* Where do you like to eat on campus?
* How easy is it to take classes in \_\_\_\_\_\_ if I’m a \_\_\_\_major?
* What are 3 adjectives to describe the type of students at your school?
* What is your favorite tradition at your college?
* Out-of-state colleges: What programs are offered to help out-of-state students adjust living away from home?
* If the rep is an alum: What do you wish you would have taken advantage of at your college?
* What do students like to do on the weekends at your school or in the area?