

Although college fairs can be overwhelming due to the number of colleges represented and the number of people that attend the fairs, attending college fairs is an excellent way for students and parents to interact with a large number of college representatives and receive information regarding course offerings, admission and financial aid requirements, college housing, and college life in general. Although college fairs should not take the place of an actual campus visit, entrance to college fairs is free and is an excellent way to introduce the student to the world of higher education.

College fairs have been likened to an elaborate buffet meal; there are so many choices that it is best to scope out the choices before filling one's plate. As a result, a minimal amount of preparation prior to attending the fair can go a long way to making the experience productive.

Before the Fair:

- Answer some basic questions such as what size of a school you want to attend, what programs of study are you considering, what geographical areas would you consider in selecting a school, do you want to attend a school in an urban, suburban, or rural area, do you require any special services, etc. The answers to these questions will help you make effective use of your time at the fair.
- Discuss your college plans with your family and counselor in order to insure that you connect with the representatives from institutions that interest you.
- Research those colleges that you are particularly interested in. College fairs generally publish a list of the colleges represented at the fair.
- Write a short list of questions for each college you plan to visit or one essential question you want to ask each college representative. Questions should focus on information that is important to you, but not easily obtained on the college's website or catalog.
- Plan to bring a pen, notebook, and backpack or tote bag to hold written information you will collect.

At the Fair:

- Visit the colleges that you are particularly interested in first before the sheer number of colleges you will be exposed to start blurring together in your mind.
- After you have visited with a college representative, and your impressions are still fresh, take a moment to write a brief note to yourself regarding the school.

- Check the schedule on informational sessions that are being offered. These sessions can provide excellent information on specific topics such as financial aid, search processes, applications, etc.

For a schedule of college fairs offered by the Western Association of College Admission Counseling go to www.wacac.org. or refer to the college events calendar at www.mid-pen.com.