



How to Navigate a College Fair

- **Pre-register.** For fairs offering the opportunity to pre-register online, go ahead and let them know you're coming. Not only will it save time, but for some fairs you'll be rewarded with a handy barcode you can use to leave contact information with college reps.
- **Print labels.** Print out labels with your name, mailing and email addresses, phone number, and year of graduation. Then use the labels to stick onto registration cards and mailing lists. This simple tip will leave you more time to have "meaningful" conversations with college reps. Even if the fair is "automated," bring a few labels as colleges frequently appear at the last minute and don't always have access to the barcode system.
- **Bring a backpack.** Even though many colleges are going increasingly "green" and don't make as much print material available, a fair is still an opportunity to collect glossy brochures and handouts. Be prepared with a backpack or something similar to cart the stuff home.
- **Be organized.** Draw up a list of colleges with which you intend to make contact. If a map is provided in advance, by all means note locations in the conference hall and think about how you'll get from one exhibit to another.
- **Prioritize.** Know which colleges you really want to visit. Lines can be long.
- **Prepare.** Have 3 to 5 questions ready to ask. Don't look foolish by asking for information that's readily available on the college website or in print materials. Probe for insight and ask follow-up questions to deepen your understanding.
- **Explore.** Try to visit with schools you might not have considered or whose names seem less familiar to you. After you hit your top three or four, look for counters with shorter lines. Fairs offer low-risk opportunities for broadening your horizons.
- **Get business cards.** For those schools in which you know you are interested or those schools where you made a great connection with the rep, get a business card. That same person might be visiting your high school next fall.
- **After you get home,** look through all your business cards. Type the representative's name, phone, email and something about them in a note on CPP. Follow-up with a brief email referring to your conversation specifically, so that the rep might remember you. *Thank you notes are always appreciated.*
- **Sort through the material.** Sort through the information you received. Take notes in CPP, including factual information and impressions -- then feel free to toss the material.
- **Start early.** Don't wait until fall of senior year to attend your first college fair. Get familiar with the "fair scene" by visiting local events early in your high school career.