

Things to Do Before Attending College Fairs

1. Look over the list of college fair participants. Choose the colleges you most want to find out more about. If you have time, research those colleges by checking out guidebooks or Web sites.
2. Write up a short list of questions to ask admission representatives. To compare several schools plan on asking the same questions at each table. The questions you ask should be unique to your interests and not easily found in standard college materials:
 - a. What are the two or three most popular majors? (This can give you a good idea of the main interests of a majority of the students.)
 - b. Ask about the availability and quality of the program(s) or major(s) you are interested in. What are the opportunities for undergraduates to participate in research with faculty members or to do internships? What courses would you take your first year in a particular major?
 - c. Students who are undecided should ask about what services and support are available to help them explore various majors.
 - d. Ask about: extracurricular activities, what kinds of students the college is looking for, what percentage of students receive financial aid (not including loans), are merit scholarships available, how do they look at AP scores, and other concerns unique to your interests and situation.
3. Make sure you have the following supplies:
 - a. A small notebook and pen with your list of colleges and questions.
 - b. A backpack or tote-bag to hold all of the college information you'll be collecting (even though the college fair may provide these)--and be sure to empty your backpack of textbooks as it will get heavy traveling around the fair.
4. Print up a few sheets of self-stick address labels. Include (in small font, as much as you can of the following): your name, address, phone number, e-mail address, high school, year of graduation, intended major(s), and any extracurricular activities you're interested in. At the fair, slap the

address labels on the college information cards to save you time in filling out the same information over and over at each college's table.

5. After visiting the fair, jot down your impressions of some of the most interesting colleges you saw as well as some of the answers they gave to your questions. Try to do this as soon as possible, while your impressions are still fresh.
6. By the time the fair is over, you will have a bag filled with information about colleges—and a possible case of information overload. Don't succumb to the temptation of just piling all those brochures in some obscure corner of your bedroom. If you're feeling overwhelmed, take a day or two away from the college search. Then get out all of those brochures, along with the notes you took while at the fair (or shortly thereafter), and read through them. You may find that some colleges aren't as interesting as you first thought. Others only look better the more you research them. Eventually divide the materials into: Yes, Maybe, and No (toss/recycle these) piles. For Yes and Maybe colleges, follow up by filling out the information cards (if you haven't already done so) or by doing additional research.
7. Feel free to schedule an appointment with Mrs. Baumbach if you'd like help disseminating some of the information and narrowing down your selection. Don't worry—this is an ongoing process, and you still have plenty of time.

**Modified from an article in *The College Connection Newsletter*, October 2003