Helping Students Prepare for WACAC

What to do Before the Fair:

1. Answer the following questions to help you determine what kind of school would best suit you:
   1. Do you want to attend a two- or four-year institution? Co-ed or single sex?
   2. What size school do you want to attend?
   3. What programs of study are you considering?
   4. How far from home do you want to go?
   5. Do you wish to participate in any specific extra-curricular activities or athletics?
   6. Do you want to attend a school in an urban, suburban or rural environment?
   7. Do you require any special services (i.e. tutoring, note takers, readers, TDD or interpreters)?
2. Discuss your college plans with your guidance counselor, family, teachers and friends.
3. Research your colleges of interest on the Internet and in your guidance office/library.
4. Check dates and registration deadlines for college entrance examinations.

TIP: Before you leave for the fair, make sure you have the following supplies: a small notebook with your list of colleges and questions you want to ask; a pen or pencil; and a backpack or tote-bag to hold all of the college information you’ll be collecting. Students with access to computers may wish to print up a few sheets of self-stick address labels. Include 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.

TIP: Check out the schedule of information sessions: many fairs have sessions on the search process, applications, financial aid, and other issues run by experts in the field. These sessions are a great place to ask general questions about the college admission process. Your notebook and pen are great tools for keeping all those conversations straight. After you leave a table, jot down your impressions of the college and the answers the admission representatives gave you. Try to do this before you visit the next table, while your impressions are still fresh.

What to do At the Fair:

1. Pick up a college fair map so you can see where each college is located (the colleges will be placed in alphabetical order.)
2. Walk around the fair and keep an open-mind. Don’t just focus on ‘name’ schools, you may find that a school you’ve never heard of offers the exact major, extracurricular program, etc., that you’re looking for.
3. Visit with colleges and universities that you feel meet your criteria.
4. Talk with a college counselor at the Counseling Center if you have any questions or need help with your college search.
5. Attend an information/workshop session.

Be Prepared: As you walk through the big double doors, the noise is overwhelming. People cluster around what seems like hundreds of tables, filling out cards, leafing through brochures, and competing for the attention of nicely dressed admission representatives. This could be it, you think. You could find your dream college in this very room. College fairs are an exciting chance to talk to the people in the know. Admission representatives from a variety of colleges are all gathered in one place, just waiting to answer your questions.

But it’s easy to get caught up in the crowds and confusion. Soon you’re criss-crossing the room (or many rooms), stopping at any booth that catches your eye or seems popular. When that happens, you end up with lots of pretty brochures, but not a lot of clear impressions about which colleges you may be interested in. Making the most of a college fair means planning your strategy before you enter those double doors.

What to do After the Fair:

1. Organize your college fair information so that you can review brochures and your notes on another day, when you no longer feel overwhelmed by this process.
2. Set aside realistic time to review materials and information.
3. Continue your college research on the more desired schools—schedule college visits to those schools, review the admission criteria, campus facts, majors, etc.

TIP: By the time the fair is over, you’ll 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, 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. For those colleges, follow up by filling out the information cards in the brochures or by starting to schedule college visits.