

How to Create a College Fair

Extend an invitation to postsecondary education institutions

College fairs provide a great way for students and parents to get information about a lot of different colleges at once. Many high schools arrange and host their own college fairs, sometimes in tandem with other local schools. Other possible sponsors of fairs in your area are local corporations.

How can you organize and conduct a college fair at your Club?

- Scheduling and planning
 - › Choose the date several months in advance. Note that college fairs are often held in the fall for seniors and in the spring for juniors.
 - › Work with your state counseling association and register your fair with NACAC to avoid conflicts with other key events. Let colleges know about your event as soon as possible.
 - › Coordinate scheduling with other school events and activities to ensure adequate space and parking. School fairs may require use of the whole building, so check for conflicts.
- Budgeting finances and space
 - › Set up a budget early in your planning. Typical expenses include table rental, food and bottled water for the representatives. Explore the possibility of community partnerships – local restaurants and party-rental companies may want to support the event.
 - › Determine how much space you have available. Keep in mind that popular colleges might need larger spaces – maybe separate rooms. You can expect that 75 percent of invited colleges will send a representative. If you have space for 75 reps, for example, you can invite 100.
- Coordinating invitations
 - › Invite colleges that:
 - › Are local
 - › Previously sent reps to your school
 - › You have visited
 - › Your students plan to apply to
 - › Make announcements about the college fair at college planning nights and in your school's newsletter. For example, for a September fair you would make announcements in February and send a reminder in June.

- › Send invitations to colleges four months before the fair. Be aware that some colleges send alumni as reps rather than staff members. You must decide in advance whether this policy is acceptable. Some high schools will not allow non-staff alumni of a college to attend as reps.
 - › Communicate directly with the reps. Upon accepting your invitation to participate, colleges will send contact information for the rep who will attend. Get in touch with them and ask them to come an hour early to get a good parking spot and unload their materials. Let them know of any diverse or special populations attending your school so they can bring appropriate materials.
 - › Send formal invitations to students and their families about three weeks before the fair. If you are collaborating with several schools, consider using other community resources to get the word out. For instance, advertise in a local newspaper or on a marquee at the local arena.
- Preparing for the event
 - › A few days before the college fair, print out the College Fair Checklist and distribute it to students.
 - › Provide signage for colleges that don't have their own banners.
 - › Provide a directory for students and families. List each college and its location at the fair. Be sure to note if a particular college has its own room. Provide a detailed description of each college, including size, location, popular majors and the middle 50 percent of SAT® and ACT scores.
 - › Print and distribute the list of 20 Questions to Ask College Representatives for students and their families.
 - › Provide an evaluation form so that college reps, students and families can give you feedback to use to plan the next fair.