

Organizing a college fair can be a daunting task but well worth the effort for outreach to the local educational community and establishing a relationship with U.S. colleges and university representatives. There are many points to consider while planning the event, though with time and good organizational skills the event should run smoothly. Follow these basic guidelines to assist you in organizing a successful college fair.

- Time Frame
- Location
- Budget
- Inviting U.S. colleges and universities
- Inviting local educational community
- Promoting the event
- Organizing the fair

Time Frame

It's imperative to start well in advance of the proposed date of the event. Most college fair organizers start one year in advance, though you have an advantage in that you live in the city where the fair will be hosted. Plan on choosing a date at least six months in advance to ensure that you have provided enough time not only to organize the event, but also to allow visiting U.S. college and university representatives sufficient time for planning their travel. It's important that the date you choose does not pose a problem for the institution that is providing the space for your fair; that it is convenient for you and your staff, as well as the other people whom you are inviting to participate, such as local schools and U.S. colleges and universities; and does not conflict with any holidays or school vacations.

Location

While choosing a location, take into consideration cost and access. If you plan on renting a space from a hotel or convention center, be sure to choose a location that is easily accessible to the general public, with ample parking. If you decide to rent at a hotel, you may be able to arrange a deal with the hotel administration for a special rate for the visiting U.S. college and university representatives.

Ideally, a local educational institution, advising center, binational center or library will provide you with space at no expense. These locations are the best options not only because of limited cost, but also because the local educational community has plenty of access and frequently visits these institutions. If you are lucky enough to have a space donated, be sure to find a hotel in close proximity for the university representatives.

Budget

In addition to determining the cost of renting space for the event, you also need to take into consideration the cost of advertising and printed materials for promoting the event.

Take into consideration the following expenses:

- Rent of venue (including tables, chairs, and table cloths)
- Opening reception

- Printing of reception invitations
- Printing of college profile brochure
- Signs with college names for booths
- Newspaper advertisements and/or supplements
- Promotional posters and fliers
- Bottled water for college representatives
- Plastic bags for visitors to hold college brochures

You may generate income from the following:

- Participation fee paid by colleges
- Corporate sponsorship (advertising in newspaper supplements and/or college profile brochure)
- Entrance fee paid by visitors (optional)

Inviting U.S. colleges and universities

Once you have a budget and designated the date and location of the fair, you can invite the U.S. colleges and universities to participate. At this point, you will already know the rate of the hotel room and if you will be requiring an additional fee from the university representatives. It is a good idea to create an invitation to send to the U.S. colleges and universities, in addition to a registration form.

(See page 6 for a sample invitation and page 7 for a sample registration form)

There are a number of ways to promote your college fair and get the message out to U.S. colleges and universities.

- Send an email and make a telephone call to any representatives you've had contact with in the past. These are probably going to be your best bet because they have already demonstrated interest in recruiting in the region. You might also contact other EducationUSA advisers in the region to identify other potential representatives.
- Send a message to the Inter-I listserv.
- Inform your REAC and Program Officer that you will be hosting a fair so that they may post the information on the ECA website.

When accepting the registration forms from the U.S. colleges and universities, be sure to investigate their accreditation status. EducationUSA will only work with institutions accredited by a recognized accrediting body, therefore the institution will not be allowed to participate. Be sure that this is mentioned in the invitation.

Inviting local educational community

As you start compiling a list of the participating U.S. colleges and universities, you may also consider whom from the local educational community you'd like to invite to participate. You may think about offering a booth to local travel agencies, student-oriented magazines, test preparation and language schools for a fee to help cover costs. Or they may help in promoting the event and cover advertising costs in exchange for a table at the fair.

Additionally, be sure to invite any NGOs or government agencies that offer scholarship programs for students to study abroad. Not only should these organizations have a table at the fair, but also be sure to invite them to conduct a presentation to students during the fair.

Promoting the event

At least one month in advance you should start promoting the fair among the local educational community, including high schools, universities and language schools. You should already have posters and other print materials ready to distribute. Make a phone call to all the college counselors at the local high schools, and the academic exchange directors and English language departments at local universities personally inviting them and their students to come to the fair. Advise them that you'll be sending materials to the school so that they may distribute to the students. Also, identify any coffee shops, bookstores, and libraries that are frequented by high school and college students to see if they'll allow you to hang a poster. (If they will only allow this for a fee, then you can offer to list their name in the fair program as an advertising sponsor.)

If you generate enough income from participating universities, you may be able to cover the cost of advertising in local newspapers and radio. A less expensive way to get advertising is to distribute a press release that gives a general overview of U.S. higher education and student mobility, in which you can also mention the event.

Organizing the fair

There are many activities that will improve your fair and make it more fun and interesting for those participating. First take into consideration the purpose and benefits of this event for each of the stakeholders. The U.S. college and university representatives are eager to meet prospective students and contacts at local educational institutions, and better understanding the local educational system. The students are enthusiastic about identifying educational opportunities in the U.S., understanding the admissions process, learning more about financial aid and scholarship programs, and understanding all the steps they need to take to get to the U.S. college campus. The college counselors and academic exchange directors are keen to better understand the U.S. higher education system and make contacts at U.S. institutions. Below is a list of ideas to consider to make your fair more effective and efficient for all the stakeholders:

Register students: Registering visitors to the fair is a good way to know how many people came to your fair and provide the U.S. college and university representatives with contact information and statistics about the fair visitors. Additionally, the registration information you ask for can help you in developing bigger and better college fairs in the future.

Create a registration form to have students fill out at the door, (or possibly even download from the Internet, if you have a website). The registration form should include the following information:

1. Name
2. Email
3. Address

4. Phone
5. Date of graduation
6. High School or University attended
7. When do you anticipate studying in the U.S.
8. Have you taken the TOEFL exam? If so, what was your score?
9. If you're interested in undergraduate studies, have you taken the SAT exam? If so, what was your score?
10. If you're interested in graduate studies, have you taken the GRE exam? If so, what was your score?
11. If you're interested in an MBA program, have you taken the GMAT exam? If so, what was your score?
12. How did you learn about this event?
13. What websites do you frequently visit to investigate U.S. study opportunities?
14. What magazines/newspapers do you frequently read?

Raffle: A raffle drawing at the end of the fair is always popular. It's fun for those participating, and it provides a good incentive for people to stay until the end of the day. If you register people attending your fair, rip off part of their ticket and tell them that at the end of the fair (or at a designated time), there will be a drawing for prizes. This is a great way to end your fair and leave a good impression on those who attended. Prizes can be test preparation material or reference books. Also, ask for local advertisers or institutions to donate a prize, for example a week of free English classes at the binational center, five free coffees from the coffee house that posted your fliers, maybe even a free ticket from a local airline?

Venue Organization: Once you have a list of all visiting U.S. colleges and universities and local businesses that have purchased a booth at your fair, you need to decide how you will have the tables arranged within the fair venue. The most unbiased way to arrange the tables is in alphabetical order by the name of the institution. If you also plan of having local educational institutions, it is advisable to set their tables up separately, if not in a different room, from the U.S. colleges and universities. If any local businesses are also going to be present, they too should be separate from the U.S. colleges and universities. Also, be sure to have a table for the EducationUSA Advising Center. Here you can distribute information bulletins about the TOEFL and other admissions exams, have a demonstration of the books available at the advising center, and encourage students to visit your center to find more information on studying in the U.S. If you don't have any promotional materials, perhaps you'll be able to purchase a banner or poster with the EducationUSA logo from the income generated by the fair.

You must decide how you want the fair venue to appear. Will each table have a chair for the university representative? And a table cloth for the table? Most universities have their own promotional material to have at the table. Therefore it is important to tell them in advance what their space will look like. Will they have a wall behind the table to put up posters? If wall space is not available for each table, then you should not allow any to

put up posters. Are they allowed to have pop-up stands? Or are they only allowed to have a banner to place on the table (this is the most common and professional looking)?

Computer Activity: If you have computers available, it might be useful to set up a technology table at the fair. You can demonstrate college searches on CD-ROM, test preparation programs, and, if you have an Internet connection, display advising-related Internet sites. You'll need enough staff or volunteers to ensure that someone is always available to assist people.

Volunteers: There's probably nothing more important for a fair than having one or more volunteers. There's so much work to be done to prepare for and execute the fair that a little (or lot of) extra help can never hurt! By the time you're ready to plan a fair, you've probably developed some contacts among alumni or local students who might be interested in helping you out. The volunteers can help the university representatives as translators if necessary. They can also help to staff the table if the university representative would like to take a break or is presenting an information session. Volunteers can also help at the registration table and standing at the door to ensure that all visitors have registered. If funds are available, it is a good idea to offer volunteers a small stipend for their work.

Book Sale: A fair is a good time to sell some Peterson's books and make some funds to help cover advising costs. Also, if there are any local English-language bookstores in town, you can invite them to participate and offer English dictionaries, grammar books, or literature at a discount.

Evaluations: Evaluating the event is key to ensure a successful event for the next year. Ask the U.S. college and university representatives to fill out a brief evaluation form of the college fair. This information can be used to determine how to improve your fair for the future.

Opening Reception: The night before the college fair, invite the college counselors from local high schools, academic exchange directors from local universities, and key players in the local educational community, such as from the Ministry of Education, to meet with the visiting U.S. college and university representatives. The reception will provide a great opportunity for all the stakeholders to network and discuss prospects of collaboration, facilitating the process of future relationships. Be sure to include the Public Affairs staff from the Embassy so that they may give an opening presentation at the reception.

Presentations: Conducting informational sessions during the fair can provide students with a complete overview of the information they seek. These presentations should be conducted in a separate room from the fair room. Be sure to invite the U.S. college or university representatives the opportunity to present. Additionally, other stakeholders in the local educational community can provide useful information to the students. Below is a list of suggested topics to cover:

- Overview of Undergraduate Studies

- Overview of Graduate Studies
- Studying English in the U.S.
- What U.S. Admissions officers look for?
- How to prepare for a college fair?
- Scholarships and financial aid
- Understanding the Student Visa
- How to choose the “best” college or university

Perhaps you can think of new ideas for fun and effective ways to improve your fair. The U.S. College and University Fair will only benefit from your creativity and energy. If you start planning early, contact colleges and universities in the U.S. for information, reach out to local organizations, invite speakers and your fair will be a success.

Translations & Document Verification

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The staff member in charge of translation and/or certification will need to have an excellent command of English as well as of your local language. Many advising centers demand that this staff member has a college or university degree in translation. On the other hand other advising centers only trust native English speakers to undertake this task, or always ask a native speaker to review their work.

You should verify if there are laws in your country regulating translation work, to confirm if a non-certified translator would be allowed to do this work for your advising center.

In many cases advising centers have concluded an agreement with translators not employed by the advising center. While the advising center coordinates the activity and accepts the documents, the work is undertaken by a separate person or organization outside of the advising center. The advising center then pays the translator or organization from the profits made through the activity.

The time a staff member would spend on this activity depends greatly on the demand and the length of the documents to be translated.

The adviser meets with the client to discuss his/her needs regarding their documents. The adviser in charge of the activity reviews the documents carefully to see if they are "official" (if it is a transcript for example, see if it has the school or university's seal, or any other signs apposed by the issuing institution to make this document official.) If the adviser decides that this translation or certification work can be carried out, she/he comes to an agreement with the client on a deadline. The adviser should write down the coordinates (phone, e-mail, address) of the client in case he/she needs to be contacted for more information.

The adviser (or translator) then translates the document literally into English, without

adaptations or modifications. Do not try to convert grades into the American system of grading. Instead, join a grade conversion table to your translation. You should also translate the letterhead and stamps of the issuing institution. Keep a copy of your translation, since you might receive more documents from the same institution in the future, and it will then be simpler to simply change some details instead of re-translating the whole document. The content of many degrees and transcripts for example is repetitive with only names and dates changing.

The adviser should then stamp and sign the translation. You should also accompany your signature and stamp with a short statement such as: "I confirm that this English translation of the document (number, title, etc) from (school, college or university), is true to the original document." It is also recommended to accompany your translation with a letter on your advising center's letterhead stating who you are, for example: "The (advising center name) is the main source of information in (country or city) on study opportunities in the United States of America. The (advising center name) belongs to a worldwide network of educational advising centers supported and certified by the US Department of State." This letter should also be signed and stamped.