

Event Planning Tips

Whether it's a student seminar, parent night or college fair, when planning an informational event there are a few things you can do to ensure it's a success.

Advertise. Get the word out early and take advantage of every promotional opportunity available to you. Your school website, Facebook, the local newspaper, bulletin boards, Twitter, flyers at ballgame concession stands and announcements over the speaker system are great ways to start. Use colorful flyers and posters to grab attention. Sample tools, including flyers and press releases, can be found on your supplemental CD.

Timing. Be sure to check the school's master calendar to avoid scheduling conflicts with sporting events or other school-related activities. It's best to avoid the day before and after a holiday, as well as Mondays and Fridays. Also, if you want parent participation, opt for evenings or weekends.

Incentivize. Create as many incentives as feasible to get families in the door to hear your message and receive your materials. If possible, offer and advertise a give-away or several small door prizes at your event. Consider asking a local business to offer a \$500 scholarship to be given away after families complete a series of college-planning events. In addition, during college fairs, encourage students to complete the college comparison form on the back of the UCanGo2 College Fair Worksheet and require that it be turned back in to you in order for the student to receive a refreshment at the fair.

Expectations. Set clear expectations for your participants. In your event promotion, clearly state the information that will be discussed and provided during each event. Encourage participants to come prepared with questions to ask. Keep topics brief to hold the attention of the audience. Holding their attention is key in getting them involved in the process. Make things very friendly and casual to encourage questions and feedback.

Take-aways. Provide information for the audience to take home; give them copies of your presentation as well as handouts you're promoting. Freebies, like pens and sticky notes, are usually popular, too.

Planning. Create a natural, comfortable flow for your event. Try to avoid offering too much activity at the same time. If possible, avoid holding informational sessions and a browsing period during the same timeframe. Allow families plenty of time to gather resources, listen to speakers and have some snacks while visiting with other families. Make sure each person involved in hosting the event knows his or her role, and has a back-up plan in place if something goes awry.