



The beginning of autumn is more than just a time for pumpkins, apple pie and scary movies. For high school students, it is also the time to narrow down the search for colleges.

As part of this search, many organizations host college fairs throughout the fall and winter semesters. At these fairs, colleges from around the nation, and sometimes the world, come together to offer admission information to students and their families.

The Center for Student Success and Services is working to share college fair opportunities with the Tribal community. A Broward County college fair will be held at Nova Southeastern University on Oct. 9 from 6 to 9 p.m.

Alvaro Perez, higher education program manager at CSSS, said that while it's particularly important for high school junior and seniors to attend college fairs, younger high schoolers and even middle schoolers should attend.

"To get into the school you want to go to, you have to be successful in high school. In order to be successful in high school, you have to be prepared before you get to high school," he said. "The earlier you're prepared, the easier the application process will be and the more likely you'll get into your school of choice."

Generally, each college, university, technical school or other post-graduation opportunity has an individual booth or station at the fair. A representative — usually someone who works in the admissions or human resources department — is available to answer questions and provide information about what their particular organization is like. Perez said these recruiters typically have a mental checklist of what they look for in students and that college fairs are their chance to recruit as many people as possible.

Perez said that learning about the schools from someone who is familiar with the environment is a great way to figure out where one wants to commit to school. Students come to understand more than admission requirements; they get a better feel for if the school fits their personalities.

"We're working with students and families who, by nature, are generally minorities in the college system. For them, maybe a big question about a college is, 'Am I going to be comfortable? How many other Native Americans attend this college?'" he said. "It's not just about the requirements. It's about the fit."

To further this understanding, he recommends that students show up prepared at as many college fairs as possible. They don't necessarily need to have resumes prepared or bring files and documents, but they should be able to tell recruiters what classes they've taken, as well as their GPA, standardized test scores and career and academic goals. He also recommended students wear school-appropriate clothing to give their best first impression.

"If you plan on going to speak to admissions officers, there's a chance that if you speak to 20 of them, at least one of them will definitely remember you. They'll remember you for a really good reason or one that's not so good. If you wear a shirt that has profanity all over it, they may not remember you for a good reason."

To find out about more college fairs, contact CSSS or school counselors and advisors. CSSS also plans to send out information about upcoming fairs through Tribal announcements.

To register, find out what schools will be present and learn more details about the Oct. 9 fair, visit browardschools.com/collegefair.

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