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## One-Stop College Shop

 Posted on [August 1, 2015](#) by [Kristyn Brady](#)


*College fairs can help you find your dream school.*



*Master class at The College Dance Fair. Photo by Don Tolj, courtesy College Dance Fair.*

If you've decided to pursue a degree in dance, you probably already know what you want to get out of a program, whether it's access to guest artists, the option to double-major or choreographic opportunities. But that doesn't mean it will be easy to find the school that's right for you, especially as stacks of college pamphlets are being delivered to your mailbox.



*Table discussions allow students to gain more-intimate info about dance programs. Photo by Don Tolj, courtesy College Dance Fair.*

But a performing-arts college fair may help you narrow down your options. With many schools under one roof, these events offer prospective students a face-to-face opportunity to speak with school representatives. Some even hold workshops or classes with the faculty in attendance. If you know how to navigate the sea of tables and ask the right questions, you may even get noticed by someone with sway in admissions.

### Come Prepared

Do a little research on the schools that will be exhibiting, so that you can spend time asking specific questions when you arrive. (The annual *Dance Magazine College Guide* is a great

place to start.) For instance, "Students should understand the difference between a BA and a BFA program, and which schools offer each," says Susan Van Pelt Petry, chair of the Department of Dance and a professor at Ohio State University.

When you arrive, a good strategy is to skim every table with a dance program, and engage with representatives from schools on your shortlist, plus a few wild cards. Some schools may even bring current students for you to talk to. "You may think you're leaning toward a BFA at Juilliard," says Petry, "but you might discover a smaller BA program at a school like Sarah Lawrence or Oberlin two tables over."

Some fairs offer classes and workshops, usually in ballet, contemporary or jazz, but make sure you also fit in face time with faculty. "I've been to many different fairs of all sizes, and the conversations I have at the table are extremely meaningful," says Petry. "You can learn a lot in a few minutes."

#### Get the Scoop

At college fairs, universities aren't auditioning you as much as you are auditioning them. "Don't be at all intimidated," says Brenda Daniels, associate dean of dance at University of North Carolina School of the Arts. "You have all the power."

You might ask what a typical day's schedule is like and whether there are performance opportunities outside the department. "Do you want to keep playing piano, or do you want to double-major?" says Petry. "Ask. The school should be honest with you about what they offer. If a student says they'd like to continue their musical-theater training, I'd say we're not the school for you." Petry has never heard a student ask if the department allows students to take time off if they are offered a professional contract. And she thinks more dancers should be curious about the percentage of classes that are taught by full-time faculty versus adjunct professors, guest artists and grad students.



*Photo courtesy Dancewave.*



*Photo courtesy Dancewave.*

#### Leave an Impression

Attending college fairs not only gives you a better look at undergrad programs, but also allows you to leave an impression with faculty. Petry says that when she attends fairs, she keeps an eye out for promising talent in the classes. "I can't admit dancers based on their performance at the fair," she says. "But when I see someone with a lot of passion, I make a note of their name and e-mail and encourage them to apply."

After class, Daniels thinks it is appropriate to leave a head shot and resumé, including your GPA and other relevant

academic information, to help faculty remember you. And follow up before you come to campus for the admissions audition. She says, "Send an e-mail a few days before just to remind me that I met you at the fair and to reiterate that you're interested in the school."

#### Upcoming College

Dance Fairs

Performing and Visual Arts College Fairs

Cities across the U.S.

[nacacnet.org](http://nacacnet.org)

September 20–November 3, 2015

Traditional table-style fairs hosted in various cities by the National Association for College Admission Counseling

Só Dança Presents “College Dance Fair”

Boca Raton, FL

[collegedancefair.org](http://collegedancefair.org)

September 4–6, 2015

Take up to six master classes and interact with college faculty from nine college dance programs. Lunch is provided. Requires \$199 attendance fee.

Dancewave’s “Dancing Through College and Beyond”

New York, NY

[dancewave.org](http://dancewave.org)

October 18, 2015

A full day of discussion panels, dance classes, college fair networking, a performance and auditions for some of the 30-plus participating schools. At 92nd Street Y’s Harkness Dance Center.

National High School Dance Festival

Pittsburgh, PA

[nhsdf.org](http://nhsdf.org)

March 3–6, 2016

College fair tables and recruitment and scholarship auditions are part of the festival, which will be hosted by Point Park University.

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