

## **The Virginia Tour**

The School & College Relations Committee is made up of college representatives from across the state, who work closely with high school counselors and community colleges to coordinate the Virginia Tour. This schedule of college day and night programs blankets the state of Virginia over eight weeks beginning in September and ending in November. The result is a planned and efficient pattern of college fairs, which provides the opportunity for every student within the state to attend a fair in his or her region without requiring college representatives to visit every high school in the state, an impossible task.

One of the reasons VACRAO organizes the Virginia Tour is to avoid duplicating our efforts as representatives on the road. We are committed to providing an opportunity for students to meet with college representatives in *every region* of the state. If we provide an individual high school program in one area, we would have to accommodate similar requests from individual high schools all over the state. College admission offices simply do not have the staffing or financial resources to accommodate such requests.

We are seeing a number of college fair type programs throughout the state, which are not part of the Virginia Tour. By hosting an additional college fair, high schools are essentially asking college representatives to duplicate visits to an area. As a result, you will not see some institutions because they cannot afford to send a representative twice, or they do not have enough staff to be able to attend. We are fortunate to be in a state that is so organized. Other states with no organized college tour often have as many as three fairs scheduled for one evening. College representatives then must choose between them because they can't be in several places at one time. Somewhere students are going to miss out on an opportunity for a good match.

We understand that high school counselors receive pressure from parents to host their own program on "home turf" because they feel their students are not receiving enough personal attention in larger venues. College fairs are not necessarily the appropriate venue for personal attention. Individual high school visits made by college reps during the school day or visits to the college or university itself provide the opportunity for personal interaction.

### **"Renegade" College Fairs**

VACRAO defines a college fair as a renegade if it meets two criteria:

- 1) The program is not part of the Virginia Tour. It does not appear on the single invitation or in the Roadrunner Gazette. Often, non-sanctioned fairs occur during the Tour and conflict with Tour programs.
- 2) It is a traditional college fair set-up (arena style with tables or booths to distribute literature and meet with students).

### **College Panels & Workshops**

VACRAO does not define College Night Information Panels or Workshop programs as renegades. College panels can be excellent resources for all high school students and their parents. VACRAO values this approach to preparing students for the college search and does not consider this type of program a duplication of services. Panels usually consist of 3-5 representatives from a variety of institutions presenting information on pre-assigned topics related to the college search and selection process for 5-10 minutes. Panel presentations are typically followed by audience participation. Audience members can ask questions of specific institutions represented, but most representatives enjoy stepping out of their institutional role and into a more general college admission-counseling role. Not every panelist has to answer each question, but one can step up where his or her expertise lends itself. We find that parents and students of all ages find this type of presentation very informative and helpful.

### **What to Do When You Suspect You've Been Invited to a Renegade Program**

When you receive an invitation to a program you may suspect is a renegade or non-sanctioned program, please do TWO things:

- 1) If you have not seen an announcement on the VACRAO listserv regarding this particular program, please inform a member of the School & College Relations Committee. You may contact the Chair or the VP for Admissions and Enrollment Practices. Not only will a committee member confirm the program's status, but will also follow up with the local coordinator directly.
- 2) Please send a letter or email to the local coordinator explaining WHY your college will not be represented and provide the information for the VACRAO program where their students may find you in their region. Please see the sample letter that others use to respond to renegade program invitations.

Sample Letter:

Regrettably, Mary Washington College will not be attending your college fair on \_\_\_\_\_. Our policy is to attend VACRAO (Virginia Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers) sanctioned programs on the Virginia Tour, several of which bring us to your region in the fall.

I have contacted Amanda Craddock, chair of VACRAO's School & College Relations Committee, which coordinates the Virginia Tour. The Virginia Tour provides an opportunity for any student in the state to meet with college reps in a common venue by efficiently planning a tour of college fairs that visit every region. If your high school is not being included in tour fairs, please let her know so she may follow up.

I know Amanda would be happy to share ideas about an alternate format to your existing college night program that will have the support of VACRAO. We will be attending the college fair on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_. We hope to see your students at that program.

Sincerely,  
Melissa Yakabouski  
Mary Washington College