Your goal this evening is to learn more about a range of colleges. By this time in the junior year, you should be working toward formulating a list of twenty or so colleges that you are considering seriously and that is updated in your Naviance account. For every school on that list, you should be able to articulate why that school is a good fit for you and your interests. Perhaps it meets certain objective criteria you have formulated such as location, size, or a special program. Whatever the reasons, they should be clear to you and something more substantive than “because I heard it was a good school.”

The spring fair is a perfect opportunity for you to learn more about schools to round out that list. It is NOT the time to try to “wow” an admissions officer from a school you have already visited, researched, and know you love. (The College Evening held at Loomis in the fall is a better opportunity to connect further with college representatives.) Rather, this is a night to broaden your list, especially to try to find out more about schools to see whether you want to spend time visiting them in the summer. Do not waste your time waiting in an extremely long line at an institution’s table. This night is more about quantity of information you can gather than the quality of each interaction.

Here are some possible questions to ask to help you with your research:

1. What kinds of students would be most at home at your college? Who would be least?
2. What is the surrounding community like?
3. What is the average class size? The maximum class size?
4. If it is a university: what percentage of classes is taught by professors?
5. Do you have a major in ___________? Is it easy to transfer from one major to another if I change my mind?
6. How would you describe the political leanings of the student body? The campus culture?
7. What percent of the students study abroad?
8. What are some of the most popular majors?
9. What is the social scene like? Do most students stay on campus during the weekends? Are there fraternities and sororities? What percentage of students join?
10. What types of financial aid and merit scholarship are available?
11. Does your college meet full demonstrated need? Is it need-blind?
12. When is a good time to visit your campus? Do you offer on-campus interviews?
13. Do you have a core curriculum or distribution requirements?
14. What types of internship or co-op opportunities are available?
15. What percentage of students graduates in four years?
16. Are there research opportunities for undergraduates?

These questions are suggestions only. Feel free to branch off into whatever areas of inquiry are relevant to you. The important thing is to try to get a sense of several different schools while at the same time becoming more sophisticated about asking good questions and listening critically to the answers.