



## Advisor Guide

This guide helps advisors navigate NACA® conferences before, during, and after the event. If you have not yet received approval to attend, visit the ROI (Return on Investment) Tool Kit to set goals and define objectives so you can parallel your institution's investment with all the ways you and your institution will benefit from the conference.

# BEFORE the conference

### Step 1: Set goals for the conference

Work with the entire team prior to the conference (even those not attending) to set goals for attendees that represent the whole team. What needs/wants does the team have? This will help you target what you need and help you get business done. Delegate tasks to attending students and be sure they know you trust and support them. For example, if the team decides to offer a coffeehouse series, assign students to check out particular acts or meet with associate members who offer that type of performance.

Refer to your ROI Toolkit to make sure the goals you set are aligned with the objectives outlined in the toolkit.

Help your students connect their conference experience to career development. Regardless of what careers they pursue, learning how to negotiate, network, work as a team and make decisions are all important business skills.



### Step 2: Educate your delegation (and yourself!) about NACA

NACA is a unique conference. It's important to understand the four major conference components and how to achieve your goals:

- 1. Exhibit Hall** – Visit our entertainers, agencies, and service and product providers in the exhibit hall to discover and book business for your campus. Make sure your students are prepared to enter booths, where other conference attendees may or may not be present, and conduct professional and effective conversations with associate members.
- 2. Showcases** – Performers apply and are selected through an extensive process to showcase their talent to conference attendees. Make sure to review our showcase opportunities (listed below) and preview the showcase list ahead of time. Use the program book to help with notetaking.
  - **DJs** open up the showcase and bring energy to the crowd.
  - **Emcees** and **Spotlight Showcases** incorporate a variety of performance acts (musicians, comedians, spoken word artists, etc.) that lend themselves well to both in-person and virtual programs.
  - **Featured Workshops** are built into the education session blocks and highlight speakers that focus on training undergraduate students on a variety of topics, such as leadership development and team building.
  - **Speakers** can bring attention in unique and powerful ways to the topics that really need to be discussed on campus.
  - **Make and Take** will highlight a variety of acts that offer quick, interactive experiences that may include caricaturists, balloon artists, wire writing, spray paint design, tarot card reading and more.
  - **Trending Programs** feature highly engaging programs that can be facilitated in virtual or in-person formats. These could include game shows, group paint parties/activities, cooking demonstrations, and more.
- 3. Educational Sessions** – Learn the latest trends and tips rooted in NACA competencies from peers, associates and other experts. Topics include programming basics, leadership and professional development, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and more for all levels of conference attendees in 50-minute blocks.

**4. Block Booking** – Block Booking occurs when three or more schools geographically close (typically 300 miles or less or within 4 hours) to one another work together to find days and times when a particular artist can perform. Blocks occur when an act is booked. By working with other schools in your area and the agencies at the conference, you can save your school money! Everyone can participate, and no contracts are signed during the conference. You will have the opportunity to meet virtually with schools and exhibitors throughout the conference to arrange blocks.

Download the NACA® App. Add specific schedule items to your personal schedule, access details on educational sessions, and get updated with any schedule changes or important messages.

Review the conference schedule ahead of time. Know in advance what your days will look like and determine who needs to be where at which time. Are there two concurrent sessions that your delegation doesn't want to miss? Have your delegates split up and cover both. Make sure your delegation has notebooks, planning calendars, pens and contact information ready to use and share during the conference.

Conferences can be overwhelming. Make sure you and your students know your limits, and that your students know your expectations for participation so they can manage their own wellbeing.

Set an Out of Office email response during the conference so that colleagues and students know that you are busy attending a conference. Consider providing documentation for students to share with their professors justifying missed class time (see example below).

*NAME will be out of class DATE in order to attend a conference with the National Association for Campus Activities (NACA). NACA provides students with experiential learning opportunities and helps them gain critical skills such as problem solving and decision-making as well as practical skills like contract negotiation and event planning. The conference involves travel and is a significant investment of time and energy, as well as a financial investment on the part of the institution. NAME will be in contact with you and will be responsible for work they missed while out of class.*

## DURING the conference

### Step 3: Attend the conference

Use the NACA® App or printed program to follow along with the days' events. If you need any assistance on site, head to the registration check-in desk to chat with NACA Office staff during registration hours.

Utilize networking opportunities and the "Connections," "Chat," and "Wall" features in the app to talk to other schools and advisors, ask questions and connect virtually to all conference attendees! You can share ideas, learn about what works on other campuses and form partnerships. One of the greatest benefits of NACA is the relationships you create during events; you'll find that the NACA community is welcoming and encouraging.

Attend everything you can; take every chance to learn about event ideas, marketing strategies, acts that have been successful, agent customer satisfaction, etc. Choosing to skip a showcase, exhibit hall, or educational session may mean that you and your delegation miss a wonderful programming opportunity or idea to bring to your campus. Find ways to keep your students engaged, excited, and on track. Take advantage of schedule breaks to stretch, walk, snack, and disconnect from technology.

Regroup at the beginning or end of each day, and after various schedule items if possible (e.g., educational sessions, exhibit halls, showcases). What were the highlights/lowlights of what you experienced? Discuss what everyone has learned and brainstorm how to do business creatively.

Encourage your students to engage with other conference attendees in sessions, showcases, and between schedule items. While conferences are a great place to strengthen team bonds, they are also an opportunity to connect with peers at other institutions.

Think outside of the box to find ways to use the showcased talent. Maybe you can use a musician or comedian to host musical bingo. What about having a spoken word artist host a poetry writing workshop or an open mic night? Get creative!

### Step 4: Take care of business

Encourage your students to say hello to the associate members you've worked with before, but to also keep an open mind about working with new companies. They have all worked hard to provide creative programs and solutions for your virtual, hybrid, and/or physically-distanced needs. Give everyone a chance to show you what they have to offer.

### SHOWCASE ETIQUETTE

Performers invested time and money for the opportunity to showcase, so return the favor:

- Come with an open mind about how acts could possibly fit on your campus.
- Watch all of the acts.
- Show your appreciation for acts through applause.
- Engage in audience interaction opportunities.
- Remind students to be professional, positive, and polite. Keep phone use and chatter to a minimum during performances. Be a role model for your students.

Be approachable, professional and easy to work with. Have knowledge of the industry. NACA is a great place to listen to new music, watch new acts and learn about what is going on in the entertainment world. Encourage your students to put their best professional foot forward while also understanding that we all may feel awkward from time to time.

Make sure your delegation is prepared to ask questions. You might be interested in a band or novelty program. Ask what their tech and hospitality needs are for a performance. This allows you to know if you need to budget for additional costs, like rented sound equipment, generators or hotels.

### Step 5: Make the most of Exhibit Hall hours

The Exhibit Hall can be overwhelming – not only to new attendees but sometimes even to experienced delegates. It can be manageable, though, if you keep the following in mind:

- Prepare to engage in conversations about your campus needs. For



example, a programming calendar with specific dates you're looking to fill will help steer conversations on availability and routing for an artist. A student chair of a programming area (concerts, comedy, novelties, etc.) should be prepared to talk about specific campus interests.

- Prepare your delegation to enter a booth in a variety of circumstances (e.g., no other attendees are there, the exhibitor is already conversing with one or more attendees, a booth demo is occurring, etc.).
- If an agent does not meet the needs of what you book, let them know and either steer them toward someone on your delegation that may be interested, or take their contact information for future reference. They want to know if you aren't interested so they don't waste your time or theirs.
- Know what your campus can and can't do regarding requesting dates, rider accommodations, sound, travel, contracts, etc. and know your budget and calendar to avoid booking conflicts.
- Share appropriate contact information so agents can follow up with you.
- Network and make relationships; talk about your school's culture and what works or doesn't work on your campus.
- Visit acts in their booths after they've showcased to thank them and/or welcome them to NACA.
- Be on the lookout for booth demos, as they can be very informative.
- Plan times to meet with your delegation daily to discuss booking possibilities.

## BUSINESS TIPS

NACA's live events are where deals are made and where you can save money. Block Booking, a member benefit, is when three or more geographically close schools coordinate to maximize routing for an act or performer. Schools that can't commit during the event should still attend Business Connections meetings to be aware of what blocks are forming so they can take advantage of limited time deals after the conference. Before you attend the conference:

- Teach your delegation about Block Booking and how it can save your school money on programming.
- Show your delegation how Block Booking works with NACA® 24/7. An overview is in the "Help" section of the website.
- Discuss in advance to what extent your delegation can partake in the Block Booking process. There is a place for everyone, from those who cannot commit during the event to those who can lock in a contract. Submitting a SI (Strong Interest) form is simply letting an agency know that you are interested in an act and will follow up later.
- Don't miss the School Member Orientation. It's a great way to educate yourself and your board, learn about updates to the process and explore how it may work for your campus.
- Know that business doesn't end at the conference. Be sure to follow up on your forms in 24/7 and request contracts on those shows you intend to book.

## Step 6: Gain new skills and networks

NACA offers a variety of learning and networking experiences for undergraduate students, graduate students and professional staff at our conferences. We strive to educate students regarding the varied aspects of campus programming and leadership and provide professional development opportunities for all levels of professional staff. Take advantage of the educational offerings the conference has to offer.

- Divide and conquer! Plan who from your delegation will be going to specific educational sessions and roundtables.
- Take notes to share what you've learned.
- Connect with peers to expand your network and share best practices.
- Be courteous to presenters by engaging in their session and remaining quiet when appropriate.



## AFTER the conference

### Step 7: Follow up

Follow up on discussions you have at the conference, whether with associates or other schools. It shows you care, and they will want to continue to collaborate with you.

Know that business doesn't end at the conference. (See Business Tips above.)

