



# Career Fairs

Don't just show up for career fairs! Prepare before you go and get the most out of the opportunities they provide to connect with employers, learn about job and internship opportunities, and practice your interviewing and networking skills. There are three stages to your career fair participation: The Before, During and After stages.

## BEFORE THE CAREER FAIR

- Practice your “elevator speech” out loud. An “elevator speech” is the quick summation of who you are and what you can offer. It is a good idea to prepare what you would like to share about yourself in a short amount of time, and it is challenging to coherently share your ideas without practicing first. Prepare and practice a 60-second response to “So, tell me about yourself.”
- Plan your attire. As a rule of thumb, business attire (i.e. a suit) is appropriate if you are looking for a job. If you are looking for an internship, business casual (i.e. a blouse or dress shirt, slacks, a skirt) may be appropriate. If you are unsure, it is best to err on the side of professional. If you would like to ask about specifics, ask your career advisor for guidance.
- Research, research, research. Beyond knowing which companies will attend the event, you should be familiar with what the companies do, their cultures, if they are currently hiring, etc. This will help you be more prepared for potential on-the-spot interviews from recruiters at the event. It will also give you background information so you can ask relevant, well thought questions about specific organizations.
- Keep it manageable. You do not need to know the “ins and outs” of every organization at the fair. Spend your time getting to know the organizations that interest you most. Take note of those organizations so that you will be ready to seek them out on the day of the fair. You should be knowledgeable about those organizations that matter to you.
- Decide what to bring. Although some companies will only accept online applications, bringing multiple paper copies of your resume is still standard procedure at career fairs. In order to keep your paper resumes manageable, carry them in a portfolio, or professional looking folder. If you have business cards, bring them as well. It is also important to think about what you do not want to carry – backpacks and gym bags make your overall appearance less professional, so leave them at home.

## DURING THE CAREER FAIR

- Survey the room and make a game plan. Use your time wisely so you can visit your priority organizations first. Once you've visited each of your priority organizations, spend the rest of your time meeting with other recruiters at the event. You may surprise yourself with interest in organizations you had not considered earlier.
- Anticipate speaking with each recruiter for about five minutes. You want to be respectful of the recruiters' time, as well as of the other students waiting to speak to the recruiters. Approach each recruiter



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confidently, shake his or her hand, introduce yourself with your first and last name, give your elevator speech, ask your prepared questions, answer any questions posed by the recruiter, ask for a business card, say thank you for your time, and then move along to the next booth. Your interaction should be professional, focused, and brief.

- Do a little eavesdropping. Listen to the questions from students in front of you when waiting to speak with a recruiter. This way you can avoid asking recruiters to repeat themselves. It may also trigger another question you did not know you had; for example, 'Could you tell me more about the training program you offer for new hires?'
- Write down notes after each visit with a recruiter. This will help you organize your thoughts, remember any specific application instructions, and add personalization to your thank-you notes.

## AFTER THE CAREER FAIR

- Follow up within two days to stand out after the fair. Mention your visit at the event, thank him or her again for her time, and use your notes to include specifics from your conversation at the fair. If you are following up via email, attach an electronic version of your resume. Do not be shy about staying in touch with recruiters, as they can become valuable members of your career network.
- Apply online. If a recruiter indicates the organization accepts applications online, submit your application materials online, even if you provided a paper copy to the recruiter at the fair.