

A Career Fair is an event for employers to meet and recruit students as well as for students to make job and internship connections. You can meet employers face-to-face and make a good impression. This is an excellent opportunity to gain practice selling your skills and speaking to employers. You will also be able to get copies of your résumé out in a quick, efficient manner.

You will not receive a job offer then and there, and you need to be proactive with following up after the career fair. The proactive candidates are the ones who stand out. Some employers will collect résumés, but some may refer you to their website to apply. Some employers are filling specific openings, whereas others may be collecting résumés for the future. Employers will expect you to follow up if you are genuinely interested.

CAREER FAIR PREPARATION

To make the best first impression possible, treat the career fair as if you are going to an interview:

- Have a solid résumé printed on résumé paper, and make enough copies to give to the employers you want to speak with, plus some extra.
- Bring a hardcover portfolio or clean folder to carry documents. Leave the backpack or bulky purse at home. Don't carry anything with you that you may forget.
- Review the list of employers that are attending, and decide which employers you most want to talk to.
- Investigate any possible alumni connections, and do some company research.
- Coordinate a professional outfit. Make sure your shoes are polished and comfortable for walking and standing.
- Prepare a 30-second commercial to introduce yourself.
- Be able to articulate briefly your interests, examples of your accomplishments, and career goals.
- Prepare questions for the employers on topics such as what qualities they look for in candidates, why they chose to work for that organization, what training programs are like, and what positions they offer.

NAVIGATING THE CAREER FAIR

Start by talking to an employer who you are not as interested in to get some practice speaking with employers. Wait your turn if employers are busy. Prepare for introductions with your smile, handshake, 30-second commercial, and questions to start the conversation. **Give-and-take** during the conversation and take notes if need be. Actively listen to the employer and review the materials they give to you. Display appropriate body language and remember names. Collect business cards for follow-up, and if you are really interested in that company, ask what the next step to apply for positions is.

WHAT NOT TO DO

- **Do not** cling to your friends. Show confidence in your own abilities!
- **Do not** go to each and every booth just looking for any job. Have a purpose to your actions.
- **Do not** go "trick or treating" for the free stuff.

CAREER FAIR FOLLOW-UP

Within a few days, write a thank you letter to those you are genuinely interested in working for and refer to meeting them at the career fair. Also include the name of the university you are from and when the career fair was. Employers are often traveling from career fair to career fair and it helps for them to place you with the location. State something specific you discussed with that person and reiterate your interest in working for that company, explaining why you would like to work there. If you are sending an e-mail, attach your résumé.