



Making the Most of Career Fairs

Career Development Center

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Career/job fairs provide a venue at which a large number of employers can “set up shop” and recruit candidates who are interested in full-time career positions, as well as part-time jobs and internships. (Employers may or may not decide to attend fairs, because there are other ways for them to find job candidates). If you are not yet ready to seek employment, a job fair can provide opportunities to gather information about employers for future use.

BEFORE THE FAIR (Prepare, prepare, prepare!)

- Perfect your resume (have it reviewed by a career counselor) and make 10 – 20 copies of it, using 24+ lb. paper. Make sure that your printer is producing clear copies.
- Check ahead of time what companies/agencies will be attending. You can find this out by signing into your Handshake account and clicking on “Career Fairs and Events.” Select those organizations you are most interested in and research them (the web is a good resource).
- Develop a strategy, listing the companies/agencies you will visit in order of priority.
- Rehearse a 45 – 60 second summary (“elevator pitch”) about yourself. (See the reverse side for more information). Also, practice your handshake with a friend.
- Be ready to ask good questions that will show off your research.

AT THE FAIR

- Come earlier rather than later, as some recruiters pack up and leave before the fair is over.
- Make a favorable first impression. Dress professionally. Put your phone away. If at all possible, dump the clumsy backpack and carry a briefcase or portfolio, along with a pen and note pad. (Did you remember to pack those resumes?)
- Visit the companies/agencies in priority order.
- Be patient. If you have to wait in line, study the company brochure to pick up last minute information.
- Have a firm handshake and maintain good eye contact. Deliver your elevator pitch confidently and loudly enough to be heard above all the ambient noise.
- Be friendly, honest and enthusiastic. Don’t forget to smile.
- Take notes of your conversation, if appropriate, and ask recruiters for their business cards.
- Offer your resume and ask if you can call or email later with further questions.
- If you are asked to fill out a job application, clarify whether the recruiter requires it the same day or whether you can mail it. If same day, step aside and find a place at which you can complete it neatly and thoroughly.

AFTER THE FAIR

- Organize the brochures and business cards you have gathered and complete your notes for each organization you remain interested in. Submit online applications, if this was suggested.
- Follow up with a personal thank you letter or email to the recruiters.
- Realize that it may be one to two weeks until the recruiters contact you. If that time period has gone by without word from them, call or email again.
- Keep time open in the following weeks for interviews.

SOME CAREER FAIR “DON’T’S”

DON’T do the following: 1. dress too casually 2. forget good grooming 3. be shy 4. interrupt other students (wait your turn) 5. forget your resume 6. confuse a company with one of its competitors 7. bring your friends 8. bring food or drink 9. grab the free stuff (wait for it to be offered to you) 10. ask “what does your company do?” 11. lie about your grade point average 12. forget to say “THANK YOU.”

The Elevator Pitch

Your elevator pitch is a quick and personal introduction and sales pitch. It can be used when riding in an elevator with the person next to you, when meeting employers at career fairs or networking events, and as a foundation for cover letters and email introductions.

What to Include in your Elevator Pitch

1. **Your name, your major or degree, your year in college.**
 2. **Your specific goal/career interest.** (This will allow your audience to help you or possibly connect you to someone who can).
 3. **How you have demonstrated your interest.** Show your interest and experience in the field with examples of things you have already done. Don’t just say “I have always wanted to be a nurse,” but rather “I have completed the biology prerequisites with A’s and am currently volunteering at _____ Hospital.”
 4. **Why you are qualified.** Illustrate your qualifications by sharing leadership and work experiences, achievements, expertise, skills, related coursework and strengths.
 5. **A question, or request for assistance.** Example: “Do you have any current openings for which I might qualify?” Or, “Since your company offers internships, I would appreciate the name of the person in charge of that program.”
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Sample:

“Hi, my name is Alex Turner. I will be graduating in June with a bachelor’s in Computer Science. I hope to become a computer programmer. I recently completed an internship where I worked on several program applications with a project team. I also work part-time for the campus IT department and have a 3.4 GPA. Can you tell me about the entry level programmer positions with your company?”

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