

NAVIGATING A CAREER FAIR

Attending Career Fairs provides you with an opportunity to: network with prospective employers, obtain information about various industries, and generate a list of contacts. Career Fairs also provide you with a personal opportunity to express your interest in a company and to submit your resume.

Below is valuable information that should prove useful if you have never attended a Career Fair. Even if you have attended Career Fairs in the past, these hints, suggestions and instructions can assist you in making the most of your next Career Fair experience.

Good preparation yields good results.

Before the Fair

- **Review the list of employers expected to attend** (on campus events: look for information in the center-spread of *The Poly*, on the Center for Career and Professional Development's (CCPD) website, and on the NSBE/SHPE Career Fair webpage).
- **Research employers** (especially those you don't know). Know their products, services, clients and location(s). When possible, check to see if employers have posted jobs in JobLink for On-Campus Interviews or as Open Jobs. Job descriptions are important to review prior to making contact with an employer.
- **Dress appropriately:** conservative, well pressed, and professional. Make sure your suit is dry cleaned and your shoes are comfortable. (Download a "Dressing for Your Interview" handout from the CCPD's website.)
- **Have your resume critiqued in the CCPD before the Career Fair.** It's your responsibility to make sure it is PERFECT. Have several copies ready to take along. Be able to talk about everything on your resume; know what you have included and why.
- **Practice your introduction and your handshake** (firm, but not bone crunching).
 - "Hello, Ms. or Mr. (use recruiter's name on name tag) _____."
 - "My name is _____."
 - "I am a (your degree & major) _____."
 - "My background is in _____."
 - "I am seeking a (FT, Co-op or Summer Employment position) _____."
- **Determine your expectations for each Career Fair.** (This is not the place to **get** jobs, or even interviews, but rather to obtain job leads, further develop your network and to expand your communication skills.)
- **Create a personal strategy for each Career Fair you attend:**
 - *Who do you really want to talk to? (ie who would you wait in line to speak to)*
 - *Who would you like to talk to if possible? (depending on time, this employer may be a good fit)*
 - *Who would you simply like to obtain information from? (your time is limited or there may not be a good fit)*
- **Adjust your attitude:** Be positive, confident & upbeat. Project yourself in an assertive and enthusiastic manner. Never act desperate.
- **Determine your list of questions (just a few).** Tell me about the position(s) you are looking to fill? Why is there a need in this area? Do you have any written description of the position I could take with me? May I have literature about your company? Can you recommend a contact, for another business unit or division? _____

During the Fair

- **Obtain information about the event upon arrival.** What employers are present? Have there been any cancellations?
- **Survey the set-up of the Career Fair.** Determine where your key employers are located.
- **Approach as many employers as you can** (be professional & courteous). You may need to wait in long lines to talk with representatives, so be patient.
- **Be prepared to sell yourself in 30 SECONDS or LESS.** Hand your resume to the company's representative and ask about potential opportunities. Tell them if you have applied through their website or have submitted a resume through JobLink for an On-Campus Interview.
- **Observe the company representatives:** Are they professional? How are they treating potential candidates? Are they enthusiastic about what they do?
- **After talking with a representative, ask for their business card.** (Jot down anything of significance you'll want to remember on the back of their card – this will help with future correspondence.)
- **Be considerate of others.** Give them space and don't crowd them. Remember that bad behavior on your part may be observed by the vary employer you seek to impress.
- **Never ask a rep:** "What does your company do?" This demonstrates ignorance and a lack of initiative and research on your part. Share why you believe you are a good fit with their organization.

After the Fair

- **Ask yourself:** How did it go? What did I learn? What areas can I improve on? What, if anything would I do differently at the next Career Fair?
- **Review the company literature** you obtained and continue to seek more information if you will be applying for a job.
- **Determine what follow-up is appropriate for you:** sending thank you notes, transcripts, another or an updated resume, a list of publications, writing sample (s), portfolio samples, reference list, or anything else that a company representative may ask for.
- **Prepare for follow-up interviews – by phone and in person.**