

Tips for a Successful Career Fair Experience

Before you go:

- **Determine your objective** – What is your purpose in attending the career fair? Are you looking to land an interview or an internship? Do you want to become familiar with employers in the field? Would you like an opportunity to practice your introduction and networking skills? Are you looking for advice about how to prepare for your future dream job? Career fairs can be valuable experiences, even if you're not looking for a full-time job.
- **Prepare and practice your elevator pitch** – Write down and practice a 15-30 second introduction. Focus on your impact and accomplishments, rather than responsibilities. One formula to consider is "I have experience + degree + skill, I'm looking for position+ industry + location." Practice, practice, practice! Although you should prepare what to say ahead of time, you don't want to *sound* rehearsed.
- **Update your resume** – Make sure your resume is in top form. Formatting should be consistent and there should be no spelling errors. List experience in terms of skills and accomplishments, rather than responsibilities, and include as much quantitative information as you can.
- **Do your homework** – Research the employers that will be present at the career fair. Jot down questions that you can ask and think of answers to the questions that may be asked of you.

While you are there:

- **Present your best self** – Dress as you would for an interview. Carry copies of your resume in a nice folder or portfolio.
- **Arrive early** – Recruiters may get tired if they are at a career fair for many hours. Arrive early to meet with recruiters and company representatives when they are at their freshest.
- **Make a plan** – If possible, obtain a map of the attendees and make a priority list of those employers that you are most interested in visiting.
- **Be respectful** – Don't monopolize a recruiter's time. Be open-minded; although you will have a plan of employers to visit, be open to talking to other students and employers. You never know who may be an important connection.
- **Ask questions** – Ask open-ended questions and questions that address current topics. Do your homework beforehand, and don't ask questions whose answers can easily be found on the company's website. Examples of good questions include "What type of background and experience do you find to be the most successful at your company?" and "What are a few of the top priorities for the person in this position to accomplish within a year?"
- **Take notes** – Collect business cards and company literature, jot down recruiter names and contact information, and write down things to reflect on or follow up with after the career fair.

After you leave:

- **Reflect** – What did you learn? What did you do well and what can you improve upon?
- **Follow up** – Within a week send thank you notes to the employers with which you had conversations. If applicable, reiterate your qualifications and indicate interest in an interview. Follow up with an email or phone call 1-2 weeks after sending a thank you note.