

Ten Tips for Student Success

Learn who will be attending ahead of time.

Several days before the Career Fair, check out the participating employers list on the website to see what companies and organizations are attending. Research the companies and organizations that appeal to you. Most of the companies have websites. Narrow the list down to those of most interest and begin to research their products/services and employment needs.

Career Fair Ready

Have all of your information ready to go well in advance of the event. Take the time to have an instructor, career professional, or friend proofread your materials before distribution. Career Services in the Advising Center offers resume-critiquing services by appointment prior to the Career Fair.

Develop a Contact Strategy

Select 3-5 companies as your target priorities. Obtain a location map of employer tables and highlight those you most want to visit. Warm up by talking first with companies lower on your target list to practice your interview techniques. Once you feel more comfortable, move onto your favorite companies. Use the balance of your time to contact organizations that are less familiar but look interesting.

Break the Ice

Meetings at the Career Fair are often quick, averaging 3 to 5 minutes. Make a strong first impression by preparing a brief 45-second "ad" about yourself. Your ad should introduce yourself, tell your strengths and, if possible, give some reasons why you are interested in the company. Prepare your own business card to hand out with your resume summarizing your marketable skills. Work up an interesting verbal summary of your background, achievements, and career interests so you won't be fumbling for words at the wrong time. Be direct and smile.

Dress the Part

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. How you look will play a big part in determining employer interest. Dress conservatively. Wear clean and well-fitting clothing with appropriate shoes and limited accessories. If you need to be in school clothes, mention to employers that you are coming directly from class. Leave your coat or briefcase at home so you may move freely around the room.

Take the Right Things with You

Your preparation will speak loudly of your organizational skills. Use a portfolio or business case to hold a supply of resumes, transcripts, references, and other documents to help present your qualifications. They are important even with companies whom you have contacted ahead of time. If you give out names of references, remember to contact those people immediately afterward to notify them of a potential reference call. Carry an attractive pen and notepad.

Know What You are Going to Ask

Try to have several questions in mind for each employer. The questions should reflect the research you have done on the employer and your interest. An employer likes nothing more than to talk about the company they represent. Allow them to do so and glean the information. Be sensitive to the employer's time and do not dwell too long in any one location. Transitions should feel comfortable and not forced.

Make Notes as You Go Along

It is very easy, when talking with dozens of companies, to get them mixed up. As soon as you leave a booth, jot down notes about the representative and the company. Be sure to collect direct contact information for your follow-up. You may want to dedicate a different page to each employer so that you keep your comments straight. List questions you want clarified and add notes on things you might send them to help advance your candidacy. Ask for business cards and keep them together in a safe place.

Expect to be Evaluated

Job fairs are not just extended information interviews. Prospective employers may appear informative and conversational, but they are taking your measure. Remain engaged and interested in the conversation and continue to exude confidence while marketing your skills. Hopefully the employer will want to take your name and follow through at another time.

Follow Up

Whose court is the ball in? Learn what happens next in the process before you leave each employer. Find out if there is anything you can do to advance your candidacy. Some employers may have a very defined process. After the Career Fair, write notes to each employer with whom you spoke indicating your interest in employment opportunities. Send another resume with your note. The best thing about job fairs is that you make contact with dozens of employers in a few hours and obtain enough information about most of them to know if further follow-up is worthwhile. Pick up literature on organizations of interest to study at your leisure.