How to Make Effective Use of a Career Fair

BEFORE YOU GO: Preparing for the Career Fair

Research the employers

- Review the list of participating employers and "Career Fair Job listings" in advance.
- Identify and prioritize companies and organizations which interest you. Be sure to also consider other companies who might be interested in your qualifications.
- Research companies. Study their web sites and seek out contacts who might be able to tell you more about the organization.

Prepare a resume

- Present your education, experience, skills, activities, and goals clearly and concisely.
- Make certain your resume is professional in appearance and contains no errors.
- Bring 10-15 resumes to the Career Fair.
- Cover letters are not necessary when you are giving your resumes out in person.

Plan your presentation

- Be prepared to make a 2-3 minute presentation of your specific qualifications. Include information about your major, graduation date, academic accomplishments, co-op/internships, leadership experience, and/or related work experience and skills. Relate your background to what you know about the employer's needs.
- Anticipate questions the employer might ask. Think about potential answers that show knowledge of the industry and how your interests and background relate.
- Develop a list of questions to ask each of your targeted employers.

Dress to make a positive first impression

- Dress as if you are going to an interview. Conservative colors such as navy, navy pinstripe, gray and black suits are recommended. If you do not own a suit it is not necessary to purchase one for this day.
- Be neat and well groomed since you may be making a first impression with a potential interviewer.
WHAT TO DO AT THE CAREER FAIR

Plan your strategy

- Turn off all your electronic devices (MP3 player, cell phone, etc.) and put them in your purse, pocket, backpack or briefcase.
- Review the Career Fair directory and target employers who interest you.
- Pick up the Career Fair map at the door to locate your targeted list of employers.
- Allow enough time. If you plan to see numerous companies, one hour may not be sufficient.
- Talk to as many employers as you can. Undoubtedly, you will learn much about the employment market, networking, and job search strategies. Remember to take detailed notes so you can remember everything!

Communicate like a professional

- Appear confident and enthusiastic! Demonstrate good nonverbal skills by maintaining good eye contact and a firm handshake
- Ask questions that show your knowledge of and interest in the industry/organization.
- Show your interest in applying your academic background to opportunities employers may have. Don't apologize for lack of experience.
- Answer questions clearly and concisely.
- Have your resume available.
- Avoid initial questions regarding salary and benefits.
- Ask recruiters for their business cards so you can get the correct spelling and titles of the recruiters you speak with regarding job opportunities. Make notes on the business cards to help you remember the nature of the contact (follow up required, etc.).
- If the representative isn't seeking someone with your skills, ask for a contact name of an individual in the organization who might be looking for someone with your background so you can mail them your resume.
- Before you leave the booth, ask how you can best follow up or how soon you can expect to hear from the company.

FOLLOW-UP

- If a recruiter asks you to follow up by sending a list of references, scheduling an appointment, submitting transcripts, etc., make sure you do so promptly.
- Send a thank you letter to each employer with whom you speak. It is important to contact the employers within 1-2 weeks following the Fair. Your letter should thank the employer for the information received at the Career Fair, review your qualifications, and ask for an interview.