

# CAREER FAIR PREPARATION

There are many benefits to attending a career fair:

- Provides an opportunity to investigate positions, organizations, and career fields of interest
- Can increase your chances of getting an interview with an employer and learn more about potential opportunities
- Allows you the opportunity to expand your professional network through meeting recruiters and organization representatives

## BEFORE THE FAIR

If you are planning to attend a career fair with the purpose of finding a job or internship, you need to spend some time preparing for the fair just like you would spend time preparing for an interview or meeting with an employer. The following steps should be taken to be well prepared for any career fair:

1. Determine who you want to speak with at the fair. Review the list of organizations that will be attending and select your top five organizations of interest. Prioritize your list and set some goals for yourself. What do you want to get out of the fair?
2. Do your research on the top organizations of interest to you. Spend some time on each of the organizations' websites getting to know the history, mission, and culture of each of the organizations. Ideally, you also want to have a good understanding of the positions that the organizations have available (if that information is provided).
3. Prepare tailored resumes for each of the organizations you plan to speak with. Use the objective to specifically target each organization by stating the organization name and position title you are seeking. If you are not sure what the specific position title would be, mention the top skills you hope to utilize in your objective. Print your tailored resumes on quality resume paper and also bring a few general resumes that could be given to other organizations you have not specifically targeted.
4. Prepare your 30 second introduction, or pitch, to be used when first meeting representatives. (See box for directions.)
5. Prepare some questions to ask the employers and practice answering common interview questions. (See back for sample questions.)
6. Choose a business professional outfit to wear to the fair. If you are seeking a job or internship, you should wear a suit.

## DURING THE FAIR

When you arrive at the fair, collect a map and note where each of your top organizations are located. Do a lap around the room to get comfortable with the environment. Take the opportunity to listen in on some conversations that representatives are having with other fair attendees. When you are feeling more comfortable, approach an organization that you are interested in and have done some research on, but make sure it is not one of the organizations in your top five. You want to use this interaction as a warm up. When you approach the table, introduce yourself with your pitch and have a brief discussion with the representative about the opportunities they have available. At the end of the conversation, if they have not asked for your resume, offer to leave one with them and ask for a business card. Once you have made it through your first career fair interaction, begin working your way through your list of organizations of interest to you. Work from the bottom to the top so when you reach your top organization's table you will have had plenty of practice.

### OTHER TIPS

- Avoid asking the representatives what the organization does or what positions they have available. Instead, make sure you have done your research, and when it comes to positions; tell them what you are looking for.
- Keep your conversations brief and on topic.
- Be sure to prioritize your time so that you are able to speak with all of the organizations you are interested in. There may be long lines for many of the organizations. You will need to strategize a way to speak with them all within the timeframe of the fair.
- Always offer your resume to and get a business card from the organization representative.

### Your Pitch...

A pitch is your 30 second commercial that should be used as an introduction when you meet employers, organization representatives, or when networking. Your pitch should include:

**Who you are**

**What you offer** (e.g. major, experience, skills, etc.)

**What you are looking for** (e.g. career goals, specific position, type of position etc.)

**Focus on what you feel you can contribute**

CONTINUED ON BACK →

## AFTER THE FAIR

Follow up with the representatives within one week of the fair. Typically, this follow up is in the form of an e-mail. Thank them for their time, re-express your interest, and provide them with a link to your online portfolio if you have one available.

Simply following up can put you at a huge advantage over other fair attendees. Often representatives leave fairs having spoken with hundreds of attendees and carrying stacks of resumes, but less than five percent of attendees actually follow up. Be part of that small percentage!

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES

The following are very basic questions that you can ask representatives at a career fair. Ideally, you should do some research on each of the organizations you are interested in and come up with more tailored and detailed questions to ask the representatives. If you ask informed questions, the representative is more likely to view you as a serious and professional candidate for the positions they have available.

### JOBS

What type of previous work experience and skills do you look for in candidates?

What are typical entry-level positions for someone with my particular major, experience, and skills?

What does the application process look like for your organization? How long does the process usually take?

Will you be conducting on campus interviews?

### INTERNSHIPS

Do you offer a formal internship program?

What type of experiences and skills do interns gain while working at your organization?

Does the organization offer both paid and for-academic-credit internships?

What do you look for in potential interns?

When is the best time to apply for one of your organization's internships?

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS REPRESENTATIVES MAY ASK YOU

Are you interested in a full-time or internship position?

Are you looking in any specific geographic area? Are you willing to relocate?

Why are you interested in this organization?

What are your career plans?

When would you be available to start?

What type of position are you looking for?

Could you tell me about any relevant experience you have?

