MAKING THE MOST OF A CAREER FAIR

THE PURPOSE OF CAREER FAIRS

For Employers
At a typical Career Fair, you will find employer representatives from large and mid-sized private and government organizations. They are there because they want to meet you and discuss possible career opportunities with their organizations. These might include full-time and part-time positions, as well as potential internship opportunities. Keep in mind the vast majority of these Fairs are funded through employer participation fees or sponsor organizations—meaning they have paid to be there. *

For Students
You may attend Career Fairs for various reasons, depending on your particular situation and the career-related issues you are dealing with at the time. One of the most important goals you can set for yourself is to network and make connections. Career Fairs are an opportunity for you to begin relationships with individuals that work for companies you admire and aspire to. These individuals can provide you with excellent information on their particular companies, including the nature of their business, various career paths available, etc. In addition, these representatives are in a good position to provide career information that can help you make career decisions and select academic majors.

BEFORE THE CAREER FAIR

- Spend some time beforehand thinking about where you are right now and what you want to accomplish at the Career Fair.
- Study the advance list of employers and highlight those you are most interested in.
- Conduct research on the companies that you’ve highlighted (website, social media, news media, people you know who are current/former employees).
- Prepare a brief “one-minute commercial” about yourself, your qualifications and career goals. This is a good way to introduce yourself and get the conversation started. Be sure to practice beforehand.
- Have some questions prepared in advance--about the organization, career options, advice for career preparation, internships, etc.
- Be prepared to answer questions about yourself. Even though it is rare for actual interviews to be conducted during these events, you want to put your best foot forward and make an impression that will be remembered.
- If necessary, purchase business or business casual attire.
DURING THE CAREER FAIR

- Wear professional attire—suit or sportcoat, shirt and tie, conservative dress or skirted suit, etc. or business causal attire—nice slacks, sport shirts, skirts and blouses, etc. No jeans or T-shirts! Even if you are just gathering information, you still want to make a good impression, and employers will pay more attention to you if you are dressed professionally.
- Don’t be shy about approaching company representatives. They want to talk to you. Introduce yourself in a confident, positive manner; smile, project enthusiasm and offer a firm handshake.
- Have copies of your resume handy in case you are asked for it.
- Take a notebook and keep track of information you want to remember. Collect business cards and company literature.
- If you are or will be seeking employment or internship opportunities over the next year, be sure to have high quality copies of your resume ready to give to any representatives who may be interested in you.
- Speak to as many employers as possible. First, try to visit with those you have targeted. Then talk to others as time permits. Remember, you are there to learn.
- Attend any workshops that might be offered during the day. These typically include excellent presentations on various career-related topics, and give you another opportunity to network with employer representatives.
- If there is a resume critique table, be sure to have your resume critiqued by the experts. You can get some valuable tips from those who review resumes on a regular basis.
- Above all, HAVE FUN! Be sure to take advantage of free giveaways and drawings that many employers use to attract potential applicants.

AFTER THE CAREER FAIR

- Call the individuals that you spoke to at the career fair. (Yes . . . dig those business cards out of your swag bag and use them.) Ask if you can set up informational interviews with them. (See Bellevue University blog posts and video on informational interviews for explanations on this process.)
- If you haven’t already, send an invitation to the employer representative to connect via Linkedin.
- Conduct more research. Go back to the details the person provided you during the career fair. Use these details as jumping off points for areas in which to conduct more research about the company.
- If you spent a significant amount of time speaking with a recruiter at the career fair, or if that person provided information that was especially helpful, send him/her a handwritten thank you note.

* There should be no entrance fee to students or other participants.
QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT WANT TO ASK EMPLOYER REPRESENTATIVES

- What does your company look for in new college grads?
- What is the typical entry-level position for new college grads with a major in ...?
- What coursework do I need to better prepare for a position in your organization?
- Does your organization hire college grads with majors in ...? What type of work or positions would they typically be hired into?
- What skills/qualifications are you seeking for entry level professional positions?
- How important is GPA? Extracurricular or volunteer activities? Internships?
- What do you like to see in a resume? a cover letter?
- Do you offer internships, and if so, in what areas or for what majors?
- How beneficial/necessary is graduate education for entry and/or advancement in your organization?
- What do you foresee as significant trends or changes for your organization over the next four to five years?
- What other advice could you give me that would help me prepare for a career in ...?