Making the Most of the Job Fair

A job fair brings together job seekers and employers with opportunities. The 2-3 minute exchange with an employer is considered a true interview. It starts when you enter the fair, and you should prepare for it as you would any other interview.

- Connect with organizations to collect information, submit resumes or arrange interviews
- Discuss job search strategies, interview and resume tips, or finding a summer internship with recruiters
- Develop a job search network - collect referrals to other departments/divisions within an organization
- Meet with new, less familiar organizations and discover unexpected opportunities

What Do I Bring?

- Multiple copies of your resume copied on good bond paper. Get the number of employers at the fair to determine the best amount. Get your resume reviewed at the Career Development Center ahead of time!
- A portfolio or folder in which to carry your resumes and other materials.
- A notebook or planner to write down upcoming interviews or information sessions or other notes and a good pen.

What Do I Wear?

Conservative, professional attire is best. You need to be neatly groomed. Your chances for an interview or job could be risked if you wear anything that can distract an employer from focusing on your qualifications, like heavy perfumes or facial jewelry.

Tips for MEN:

- Wear a clean pressed suit and tie. If you do not own a suit, you should wear clean pressed dress pants and a long sleeve light colored pressed shirt and tie. A sports jacket is preferred.
- Avoid whimsical ties.
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- Wear comfortable dress shoes.

Tips for WOMEN:

- Wear a clean pressed suit (either pants or skirt are fine). If you do not have a suit, wear a nice blouse and skirt or dress pants. Skirts should be no shorter than 2" above the knee.

- Wear comfortable dress shoes (closed toe pumps or flats).

Don’t forget to take a positive attitude and a smile with you to the fair!

Material adapted from the University of Maryland: http://www.careercenter.umd.edu/student/events/fairs.asp
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BEFORE THE FAIR: Plan Ahead

• Find out what organizations are attending (http://careers.csulb.edu).
• Determine the organizations in which you are most interested.
• **Research these organizations** through their websites.
• Pack the appropriate amount of **resumes**.
• Prepare & practice your **30-second infomercial** to “pitch” to employers.
• Prepare **questions** to ask representatives.

**Questions to Ask:**
What career opportunities are available in your organization?
What is the employment outlook in the field right now?
What opportunities do you have for ________ majors?
What type of training is available?
What types of assignments are given?
What do you look for in candidates?
What key skills/experiences are highly desirable?
Do you have any tips for success in this field?
**Note:** Do not ask about salary or benefits.

DURING THE FAIR: Take Initiative

• **Arrive early.** Be there when recruiters are fresh, alert and attentive. Arrive before the majority of other students get there.

• Take time to **target organizations** that interest you. But, **also keep an open mind** and consider organizations you are not familiar with – there are great opportunities everywhere. If a table is less crowded, you will have the opportunity to converse longer with the representative.

• **Be patient** and anticipate crowds and lines. Try visiting the tables with fewer crowds first.

• **Scan employer handouts.** Instead of just getting in line, approach the table from the side to quietly pick up materials to review. Step back far enough to be able to

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listen to and observe recruiters speaking to other students. **Determine if your 30-second infomercial needs to be adjusted.**

- **Take initiative** and introduce yourself with a smile and a handshake.
- Give your resume to the representative. Launch into your one-minute commercial. Ask questions from the list you prepared.
- Ask about the application procedure.
- Get a **business card** or a contact name from every person you meet. Write interesting facts, notes or additional contact names on the back of the card. Use this information to follow up after the fair.
- Many company tables have “**freebies**”, such as pens, candy, and toys. Be courteous and cautious when taking these items. If you take any candy or gum, save it for after the fair. Don’t play with the stress balls or other toys during the fair. **Avoid taking every free item you see.** It is noticeable by recruiters and staff when a student seems to be attending the fair just for the free items.

AFTER THE FAIR: Continue the Search

- Write a **thank you** note to the representative you met. Include another resume and, if requested, any additional information.
- Continue to **research** the companies or organizations that you met at the fair.
- Use a variety of job search strategies in addition to job fairs to round out your job search.

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Work it!
Using the 30-Second Infomercial to Land the Job of Your Dreams!

1. 5 seconds: Personal information, year, major
2. 5 seconds: Why you are here and the type of opportunities you are seeking
3. 5 seconds: Experience (work, internship, volunteer work)
4. 5 seconds: Accomplishments – work, classroom, activities and organizations
5. 10 seconds: Knowledge of the company

Do your research in advance so that you are more knowledgeable about the company. This will also ensure that after your introduction you can ask the employer a captivating question, i.e. Can you tell me more about the new product you are developing? Or can you give me more detail about your management training program? This will allow you to engage the employer in conversation.

Sample Script
Hello. My name is Kelly Lewis and I am in my fourth year of a political science degree, with a minor in sociology. I noticed on your website that you have openings for XXX and I am interested in a position in this capacity. Last summer I had an internship with XXX where I was able to participate in XXX. The most interesting project that I worked on was about XXX. I have been following your company’s progress in New York and have read various pieces about it in the New York Times. Could you tell me a more about the proposed expansion to Dallas, and the new training program you are offering to new employees?

And don’t forget....

1. Collect the recruiter’s business card.

2. Follow up with a telephone call. (This works well at job fairs since you’ll have a direct contact and person you spoke with at the fair.)

3. Memorize and practice this 30-second narrative until it becomes natural!

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