

**When you first arrive**, pick up the map and information about the event. Take a few minutes to become familiar with the layout and note the location of the organizations that most interest you. Well known organizations with high profiles will have the longest lines, so you should visit them first. As time permits, visit organizations you hadn't planned to meet with or have never heard of. You never know what might end up being a good fit for you and you should not pass up the opportunity to practice networking.

**Get yourself ready** by hanging your coat, hat, umbrella and backpack in the designated area and doing a quick check that you have what you need and you look sharp.

**Before you approach a booth**, walk by and take a look to familiarize yourself with the organization. If the representative is talking to someone else, listen in and even take notes about the questions being asked. If you end up in a line, use the time to review your notes and prepare your introduction and questions.

**Introduce yourself**, giving your best handshake, showing enthusiasm and making eye contact with the representative. Be concise, polite and direct, as you only have a brief period of time to make an impression and obtain the information that you need.

**Share your career objectives**, strengths, interests, relevant skills, the kind of job/internship/volunteer opportunity you are looking for, why you want to work for their organization, and why you would be an asset to them.

**Focus on what you can offer**. You'll be a refreshing change to most representatives if you tell them what you can do for them and their organization instead of asking what they can do for you.

**Find out about position needs, the organization's culture and diversity**. These questions will help you figure out if it is a good match for you. Use the information that you obtain from your research and your prepared questions to show that you did your homework. (see sample questions on other side)

**Speak clearly and show confidence in your voice**. If they can't hear you, they won't remember you. **Listen carefully** and take notes.

**Ask for a business card and/or the organization's brochure and offer a copy of your résumé**. Ask how you might go about arranging an informational interview, how to contact the hiring manager, or what steps should be taken next. If a representative is not accepting résumés, find out about their application process.

**After talking to each representative**, use the back of their business card or your notepad to **record notes** about the encounter to help you remember important details and follow-up instructions.

**After the fair concludes**, jot down notes about conversations you had with representatives. If you wait too long, the conversations will start running together in your head and you'll forget what you said to whom.

**Follow up as soon as possible** with a short thank you note to the representatives from the organizations you are most interested in, thanking them for their time and reiterating your interest in their organization. Mention something memorable about your conversation and you as a candidate, and express your desire for an informational meeting or interview. Most job seekers fail to take this simple step, often losing out to those who took time to express their thanks.

## Career fairs are a great way to:

- Apply directly for job or internship openings
- Learn about organizations and opportunities
- Meet and network with professionals (even set up an informational interview!)
- Practice interviewing skills in an informal setting
- Explore career options

## What to expect:

Most career fairs will have 50-200 employers in attendance. When you enter the room, you will see rows of tables with company representatives standing or sitting next to them. There may be several hundred career fair attendees circulating among these employers. Without a plan for navigating the fair, it is easy to become overwhelmed or distracted and leave the fair without taking advantage of the opportunity. To get the most out of a career fair, prepare!

## Update your résumé:

Make sure you have a brief, sharp résumé targeted for the type of job you are interested in. Utilize the CCC online resources for guidelines and samples. Once you have a solid draft, consider coming to a walk-in appointment or have someone you trust proofread for errors. Bring 15-30 copies and carry them in a portfolio or notebook.

## Prepare and practice an introduction or “elevator speech”:

Introduce yourself with a firm handshake and a smile. Give your name and tell what you are studying. Mention the types of opportunities you are interested in and describe the skills and experiences you would bring to the position. This meeting creates a crucial first impression; making a good impression requires preparation and practice! Rehearse with a friend or in front of a mirror until you feel comfortable. It is important to appear confident and enthusiastic.

**Sample Elevator Speech:** *“Hello, I’m Susan Gregory and I’m an English major. I’m interested in an internship in marketing or public relations where I can use my written communication skills, creativity and event planning experience. I spent a summer in Mexico and am proficient in Spanish. I also have experience writing press releases and have been involved in a student club at SPU as the event manager.”*

## Research employers and prepare questions:

Check the list of attendees and do your homework. According to NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers), 38% of employers expect attendees to have knowledge of their organization. Prepare questions that will demonstrate your knowledge of and interest in the organizations.

## Decide what to wear and what to bring:

To make the best impression, dress as you would for an interview in appropriate business attire. NACE reports that as many as 88% of employers expect to see business casual or better from a student at a career fair. Whatever you wear, make sure your clothes are clean and ironed and that you feel comfortable and confident.

### Sample Questions for the Recruiter:

1. What sets your organization apart from others in the industry?
2. What is it like to work for your company?
3. What strengths, education, and experience are needed to qualify for entry level positions?
4. What goals does your organization have for the next few years?
5. What would be the most effective way to follow up with you?

Bring a portfolio or business notebook to hold your résumés and a notepad to jot down information. Have your prepared questions with you and place to put company literature and business cards you will collect.