

## FIND YOUR FIRST PROFESSIONAL JOB AT YOUR SCHOOL'S CAREER FAIR

Most college students, especially those who haven't attended many career fairs or any at all, view the prospect of attending a job fair as a waste of time. They're wrong. Those career fairs organized by the career services center, set up opportunities for you to have on-the-spot interviews with employers actively looking for entry-level candidates ready to start an internship or start a job right after graduation.

Still not a believer. The University of Wisconsin will have 250 companies attending just one of its career fairs. A small northeast liberal arts college will have 89 companies. The Ohio State University, in this academic year alone, will have 29 career fairs matching students from construction to engineering to psychology to teaching with companies in each of these areas. What a great way to meet professionals and get your resumé into the hands of a real person, instead of sending it into cyberspace and the unbeatable applicant tracking software used by companies today. With so much at stake, here's how you effectively navigate the career fair scene.

### PREPARATION

- ❶ **Late August is the time to check-in with career services.**
  - Get the exact dates of the career fair(s) you are interested in attending.
  - Obtain the list of companies attending. Identify by company what majors and positions it is recruiting for, and if the positions are internships or full-time.
  - Select the employers you want to visit with making sure you see enough but not so many that you are overwhelmed and won't be able to see them in the 1 or 2 days of the career fair.
  - Sign up for career fair. If it is an option, sign up for a time slot for those companies you want to see.
  - Set up an auto search. When you do this, you will receive emails notifying you of each new posting you are interested in pursuing.
- ❷ **Craft your targeted resumé and develop marketing materials.**
- ❸ **Upload your resumé to the career fair database.**

### CAREER FAIR

- ❹ **List the employers, in priority order, and plan your day accordingly. Leave time on your schedule to visit with 1-2 employers not on your list.**
  - ❺ **You will have between 10-15 minutes with each recruiter; how will you answer their likely questions, and what questions will you ask. Engage in conversation.**
    - Tell me about yourself....
    - Why did you major in....
    - How has your education prepared you for a job/career at (field and/or name of company)....
    - Why do you want to work at here....
    - What questions do you have for me....
    - Tell me about your work at....
- When recruiters like what they hear, they will spend more time with you and ask for more details.
- ❻ **Make sure each recruiter has:**
    - Your resumé and marketing material when you are talking with him/her.
  - ❼ **Be sure to get the recruiter's business card.**
  - ❽ **Ask about next steps.**

### FOLLOW-UP

- ❾ **When you turn the interview into a conversation, you'll learn a lot about an employer and the opportunity.**
  - Campus recruiters meet thousands of students. Follow up "thank you" emails should include something specific you discussed with the recruiter to remind him/her of who you are and your value.
  - Thank you emails start with: *Thank you for not I want to thank you.* The latter is not grammatical correct.
  - Thank you emails go out within 24 hours of meeting with the recruiter.
  - Attach your resumé and marketing material.
- ❿ **Talk with the career services professional responsible for the career fair. Let them know what you thought about it. Hear what employers had to say.**

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