MAKING THE MOST OF A CAREER FAIR

Career fairs provide students with the opportunity to meet and network with representatives from various organizations as well as gather information to help with the job search process. Students should take full advantage of networking at a career fair, which can provide: (A) connections to a job; (B) contacts that may be useful at a future date; (C) practice in networking skills; or (D) helpful information on the kind of positions for which employers are hiring.

Career Fair Organization
Many career fairs have a similar organization for participants, as outlined below:
1. Some career fairs will require students to pre-register at a particular website. In addition, there is sometimes a deadline for registering. Other fairs may not require pre-registration, but may have information about participating employers on their website before the day of the fair. Make sure you read all information pertaining to the fair ahead of time so that you will be able to prepare!
2. Once at the fair, students will typically be required to sign in at a check-in table.
3. Materials, including participating employer information and a map detailing the career fair layout, will be distributed after signing in.

Preparing for the Career Fair
1. Revise your resume and have it reviewed by Career Development. Print several copies to distribute at the fair.
2. Order or print business cards.
3. Define your career interests and strengths (consider the type of work you want to do and your skills and experiences).
4. Prepare a brief (30 second) introductory “networking” statement based on your interests and strengths.
5. Find out which organizations are going to be at the fair.
6. Research the organizations that interest you by visiting their websites, career-focused Internet sites, as well as utilizing Career Development library resources and online links to career information.
7. Prepare several questions to ask the representatives that you approach at the fair.

Working the Career Fair
1. Allow yourself enough time to meet representatives from different organizations (1.5 – 2 hours). It’s best not to wait to go until the last half hour of the fair, as many employers often leave a bit early.
2. Dress professionally – typically “business casual” is acceptable (NO jeans and sneakers).
3. Take your resume, business cards, a list of questions and a notepad/pen.
4. Sign in, get a map, do an initial walk through to get a feel for the fair and make a mental note of the organizations that you are interested in returning to later.
5. Make a positive first impression: smile, make eye contact and give a firm handshake.
6. Use your networking statement to introduce yourself – be confident and friendly.
7. Ask questions based on your research.
8. Have your resume and business cards ready if you are interested in an organization – offer one to the rep if he/she does not request it.
9. Think about what your next step will be with each given organization. Do you need to follow-up? If so, how and when?
10. Get the representatives’ business cards – if someone is out of cards carefully and correctly write down his/her name, address, phone and email.
11. End the conversation leaving the representative with a good impression: smile, make eye contact give a firm handshake and thank him/her.
12. Immediately, upon leaving the table, take a few notes while they are still fresh in your mind.

After the Fair: follow-up
1. Refer to your notes and jot down the next steps you need to take.
2. Send a brief email to the reps you connected with thanking them for their time and reiterating your interest in their organizations.
3. Follow up on leads for possible job opportunities.