Career Fair Tips

Career fairs are networking events that feature key employers and company representatives gathered together in a single location. Career fairs are not about interviewing and hiring, nor are they about hitting up employers for jobs. They effectively introduce job-seekers to select segments of the hidden job market and provide the chance to utilize progressive job search methods. Like any progressive approach, the candidate is encouraged to seek companies, not jobs.

Before you arrive

- **Prepare a resume** and have a Career & Professional Development Services consultant critique it. Recruiters will question your work ethic if you hand in a poorly written resume filled with mistakes and useless information.
- **Research the employers.** Find out which companies will be present and learn something about the companies. Nothing is more off-putting than a student who hasn't researched the company.
- **Prepare your elevator pitch**
  This should include your name, classification and major and should demonstrate knowledge of the organization, expressing why you are interested in them. Practice before the fair so you can repeat this naturally and confidently.
- **Prepare questions you want to ask employers.** Your questions should indicate your interest in the company and the job and demonstrate your advance research. Do not ask the recruiter personal questions or salary and benefits questions.

As You Arrive

- **Dress and act professionally.** Consider the fair your first interview. "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." Remember, employers are observing at all times, so maintain a professional demeanor as you mill through the career fair area.
- **Meet the employers you have selected.** Offer a firm handshake to each individual you meet as you give your elevator pitch. Answer and ask questions. Leave a copy of your resume. Get business cards. You may need to write a few notes on the back of the card to remember key topics of conversation.

Your Goals at the Career Fair

- Introduce yourself to the recruiter (Establish rapport)
- Learn about the company/grad school (Ask questions)
- Submit your resume (Discuss your career goals)
- Get business cards (To be used later for follow up)

Follow Up After the Fair

- **Create a prospect list** using the business cards you collected.
- **Send each employer a follow-up letter or e-mail** and another copy of your resume. State that you would like to meet with the employer at his/her convenience to discuss possible career opportunities. If possible, send the letter (printed on resume paper) within 24 hours of the career fair.
- **Organize your notes and materials** and mark your calendar for any future follow-up contacts.

To view a CareerSpots video on "Career Fair Success", go to: www.uab.edu/careerservices

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