Maximizing Your Career Fair Experience

BEFORE THE FAIR
- Research the organizations attending (typically listed on the fair’s website).
- Know yourself and know why you want to work for a particular company.
- Look critically at your accomplishments and highlight what makes you UNIQUE.
- Identify specific experiences that demonstrate your strengths and skills.
- Develop a strong résumé and make several copies for distribution.
- Make a list of questions to ask recruiters and practice asking those questions out loud.
- Get to the fair as early as possible, when recruiters are fresh!

DURING THE FAIR
- Make eye contact immediately when introducing yourself.
- Give a firm handshake to get yourself off to a good start.
- Remember the representative’s name from the introduction.
- Smile. Your enthusiasm will show in your attentive body language.
- Dress nicely; wear a suit. Dark colors are always the safest choice.
- Do not fidget, rock from side to side, or look around when talking or listening.
- Listen carefully. Try to relate something in your experience to what you have learned from the representative.
- Practice avoiding filler words such as, “um,” “like,” “ya know.”
- Show confidence in your voice. The room will be noisy, and if they can’t hear you they won’t remember you.
- Ask for a business card or write down the representative’s name. It’s also okay to ask about the hiring process: “I hope we will have a chance to speak further. How should I continue to pursue employment opportunities with XYZ?”
- Explore all of your options! If you are finished speaking with all of the employers you came to meet, take time to walk around the room, notice friendly faces, and initiate conversations with other employers. You never know what you will discover!

QUESTIONS FOR RECRUITERS
Think of questions that demonstrate you’ve really thought about what it would be like to work for this organization. Be yourself. Don’t rifle through your questions; maintain a natural flow. Be sure to introduce yourself and establish rapport with the representatives. Listen carefully to their answers. Before leaving, be sure to close the conversation by re-iterating your interest in the firm and don’t forget to thank the recruiter for their time and attention and ask for a business card.
Here are some examples of good questions:
- What goals does your company have for the new decade and beyond?
- How many employees are in my area of interest (which is...)?
- Does your company hire on a continual basis or just at certain times of the year?
- What character attributes are rewarded at your company?
- What is the best way to prepare for entry-level opportunities in your company?
- What personality traits are important for success in your company?
- As an entry-level employee, what can I expect to be doing 2, 5, 10 years from now?
- What made you choose to work for this company?
- What projects or initiatives are currently underway at your company of which you are especially proud?
- What is the retention rate in the company?

AFTER THE FAIR
- Mail (and/or at the very least email) a thank you note.
- You may call (wait a few days) to make sure that your application is complete and to inquire about next steps.
- When calling, be prepared and know/practice what you are going to say beforehand.

THE BIGGEST COMPLAINTS WE HEAR FROM RECRUITERS ARE...
- Students were too quiet.
- Students didn’t have questions.
- Students didn’t make eye contact.
- Students knew nothing about our company/industry.
- Students asked about salary and/or tuition reimbursement programs—we’ve just met!
- Students dismissed opportunities for entry-level positions, though they had little professional experience.
- Students we met with did not follow up with us after the fair.

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