Career fairs are a great way to meet recruiters, look for internships and jobs, and research organizations. The face-to-face interactions at these events are an important part of the job search process. You may also increase your chances of interviewing with an organization – some organizations will only interview students they meet at the career fair. Since you have a very short time to make a good impression, make sure you are prepared.

BEFORE THE CAREER FAIR

DEVELOP A RESUME
Develop a resume that highlights your accomplishments, skills, and experience. Prior to the career fair, have your resume critiqued at Career Services (visit our website for information regarding walk-in hours). Print copies on resume paper to hand out to the organizations you are targeting.

UPDATE YOUR HANDSHAKE ACCOUNT WITH CAREER SERVICES
Login to your Handshake account and upload a resume. You can then apply for interviews and your resume will be in the resumes packets for employers to see.

RESEARCH EMPLOYERS
Review the list of employers participating in the career fair in your Handshake account. Look at the organization’s profile and their targeted majors. Thoroughly research those that interest you and prepare questions to ask them at the career fair.

KNOW YOURSELF
Know yourself before you go. Employers are most interested in candidates who know who they are and what they want. The “whatever-you-have-I’ll-do-anything” approach is not effective.

REHEARSE YOUR “ELEVATOR PITCH”
Prepare a 20 to 30 second commercial (“elevator” or “me” speech) to use with employers. Prepare a list of your skills and talents that set you apart from other candidates and be ready to present them to the employer. You can highlight your internships, work experiences, and characteristics that a candidate would have for the position(s) you are seeking. For example, “Hello. I’m [your name], a junior majoring in Communication. I am looking for an internship related to marketing for next summer. I have been heavily involved on campus and have held several leadership roles and my summer internship in customer service has equipped me with the skills needed to be successful in sales. I read on your website that [name of organization] has an internship program in your marketing department, and would really like to learn more about this program.”

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE PROFESSIONAL ATTIRE
Dress professionally. Career fairs require the same attention to dress as an interview. A dark suit is always appropriate. For more information about what to wear to a career fair check out the Interviewing section in this guide or the Professional Dress page on our website.

ATTEND CAREER FAIR WORKSHOPS
Attend the “Career Fair Prep” sessions held prior to the career fair.

PLAN TO BRING THE FOLLOWING ITEMS TO THE CAREER FAIR
- Portfolio/folder to hold your resume (several copies) and notes.
- Your phone to view the event app.
- Your “Top Ten” list of companies.
- Pen and paper for taking notes.
- Your list of prepared questions for employers.
LEAVE UNNECESSARY ITEMS AT HOME
Do not bring any unnecessary items to the career fair (i.e. backpacks).

AT THE CAREER FAIR

SHOW YOUR ENTHUSIASM
Be confident and show enthusiasm for each organization. If you are excited about an organization or a position, let the employer know!

INTRODUCE YOURSELF CLEARLY
Give a firm handshake to the recruiter and look them in the eye. Say your name loudly enough that they can hear.

GATHER CONTACT INFORMATION
Collect business cards from each person you talk to so you can follow up after the career fair.

DISTRIBUTE YOUR RESUME
Hand out resumes to each employer. Some employers may not be able to accept hard copy resumes and will ask you to apply online. This is to comply with federal regulations about the way employers keep data on applicants. While this can be frustrating, it does NOT mean the employer is not interested or does not have opportunities available.

REVIEW THE MAP
Review the map of employer booths and use your time efficiently. While you may have specific employers you want to speak with, take advantage of the opportunity to talk to others. You might discover an excellent opportunity you otherwise would have missed.

ASK QUESTIONS
Be ready to ask questions. Your questions will depend on whether you are actively looking for a position or exploring careers.

Appropriate questions:
• What are the characteristics of an ideal candidate?
• Can you tell me about your training program?
• What are your expectations for a new hire?
• What is the overall structure of the department where the position is located?

Inappropriate questions:
• What jobs are you offering?
• What is the salary for this position?
• What can I do with a major in...?
• What benefits do you offer?

AFTER THE CAREER FAIR

EXPRESS GRATITUDE
Send a thank you note. If an employer was especially helpful or interesting, write a brief email or written letter to let him/her know you appreciated the opportunity to visit.

CONTINUE NETWORKING
Look for opportunities to contact key organizations again. Find out when they will be back on campus. Check with Career Services to see if the organizations you are interested in have scheduled on-campus interviews.