

# CAREER FAIR PREPARATION

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A career fair provides an excellent opportunity to explore careers, obtain employer information, and directly network with recruiters and company representatives. We have several career and internship fairs on campus throughout the year at which a variety of employers and organizations promote their full-time, part-time, and internship positions. Career fairs can be a great benefit to a job search because you can talk to and learn about numerous organizations all in one place! The following are tips and tools for making your career fair experience a success.

### Before the Career Fair

#### • See the Bigger Picture

\*It is important to establish realistic expectations of a career fair. A job or internship may or may not result from the fair so try to see it as a great networking opportunity and a chance to explore possibilities.

\*Keep an open mind and positive attitude

\*Goal assessment

- What are the overall goals I want to achieve from the fair?
- What do I want to learn or gain from this experience?

Examples:

- Obtain a minimum of 5 business cards from employers
- Pass out my resume to at least 10 employers
- Collect information from every firm in the technology field
- Practice my personal introduction 6 times (see below for personal introduction information)

#### • Research Companies

\*Obtain a list of what organizations will be attending from Career Services or the Albers Placement Center

\*Select which companies you want to target at the fair

\*Go to the company's website:

- What is the company's mission and vision?
- What do they do?
- What makes the company unique?
- What current events have occurred with the company?
- What types of positions are they hiring?

\*Check to see if the company is in Redhawk Network or on LinkedIn

\*Can't find what you're looking for? Make a list of questions to ask the company rep. at the fair

\*Keep an open mind to the companies you want to consider—some might have great opportunities that you didn't even realize

\*Employers will be very impressed if you demonstrate that you've done your homework!

#### • What to Wear and Bring

\*Prepare your resume and plan to bring at least 20 copies to give to interested employers. You can have a career advisor help review your resume at the Career Services office or at the Albers Placement Center (for business majors).

-You can bring 2 types of resumes: a general resume and a targeted resume. A targeted resume is appropriate for a specific position at a specific company.

\*Bring a professional portfolio containing your resume copies, pen and paper, job descriptions (if applicable), list of questions to ask employers, and business cards

\*Get personalized business cards printed. You can order business cards online or purchase Seattle University student business cards through Career Services or the Albers Placement Center.

\*Dress professionally in business attire—similar to how you would dress for an interview. Make sure all clothes are clean and pressed. Remember that first impressions count! It is also recommended to wear comfortable dress shoes.

#### • Personal Introduction

\*Preparing a marketing pitch or personal introduction is crucial so you don't get stuck not knowing what to say to a company representative.

\*A personal introduction can include the following:

- Name
- Class (senior, junior, sophomore, freshman)
- Major
- Highlight skills and strengths
- Identify what kind of opportunity you are seeking
- Relevant experience (work, internship, volunteering)
- Show knowledge of the company
- Ask a question to keep the conversation going

\*Once you have developed your personal introduction, make sure to practice it so it feels natural. Try to convey confidence and enthusiasm when introducing yourself.

\*Be prepared to answer questions from employers regarding your skills and career goals

\*Prepare a list of questions to ask the organization representatives (see reverse side for sample questions)

### Sample Personal Introduction

*"Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I'm a senior at Seattle University graduating in June. I am exploring the fields of marketing and PR, which I believe strongly support my strengths as a creative, talented and innovative designer. I have also been interning at a marketing firm the past 6 months which has given me direct hands-on experience in the field. What qualities/strengths are you looking for in your organization?"*

### At the Career Fair

- Allow yourself adequate time. Come as early as possible. You may have to juggle your normal schedule or return between classes.
- When you arrive and check-in, take some time to review the directory of employers, look at the map to pinpoint your target companies, and get acquainted with the career fair atmosphere. It is suggested that you do a walk through of the fair without talking to anyone just to get adjusted and observe how other students and employers interact. This will help you feel more comfortable.

- Relax, smile and enjoy yourself. You have done your preparation and you're ready to make a great first impression!
- Interact with Employers or Company Representatives:
  - \*As you approach an employer, introduce yourself, make good eye contact, and give a firm handshake.
  - \*Give your personal introduction. Demonstrate confidence and enthusiasm.
  - \*Be prepared to answer questions about your skills, interests, experiences and career goals. Make sure to articulate how you feel you could be a benefit to the organization.
  - \*Ask the employer some questions you've prepared to engage them in conversation.
  - \*Take notes about opportunities and next steps. The representative may not be able to answer all your questions or know specifics about your job interests. Write down instructions on how to apply or names and contact information of other staff in the organization whom you can contact later.
  - \*Inquire if the employer is collecting resumes, and if so provide them with yours. Ask the employer for his/her business card.
  - \*Collect company flyers and informational materials
  - \*Be courteous and know when it is the right time to move on. Try to respect fellow students who also want to talk to the employer. Thank the employer for their time.
  - \*Make notes on the back of the business card or note paper on how/when to follow up while it is fresh in your mind.
- Take short breaks if you need to so you can maintain your energy. Career advisors and SU staff will be on hand to assist you if you feel overwhelmed or uncomfortable.

### Questions to Ask

- What strengths or skills are you looking for in a qualified candidate?
- Can you describe the usual college graduate entry-level position in your company?
- Where are the areas of greatest growth in your organization?
- What challenges does your organization encounter?
- What internship/job opportunities are available right now at your organization? If there are none, when do you anticipate opportunities might become available?
- What kind of experiences does an intern have in your organization?
- What has your experience with the organization been like?
- What do you like most about the organization?
- Can you describe the career path opportunities in your company?
- What type of training is provided?
- What advice would you give someone who wants to break into this industry or your company?

### 5 Things to Take Home from a Career Fair

- Business cards from the recruiters you met
- Notes about connections you made, opportunities you discovered, application instructions, etc.
- Company or organization informational materials
- A better sense of your career options or what internships/jobs are out there
- Self-confidence in interacting with employer representatives and presenting yourself professionally

### After the Career Fair

- Pat yourself on the back for having a successful and productive career fair experience!
- Follow-up with thank you letters or emails to employers who were helpful or with whom you made a connection.
- Follow instructions you were given on applying for specific positions. Make sure to apply as soon as possible as the hiring process can often be expedited after a career fair.
- Set up a system to keep track of company information and follow-up activities (i.e., file cabinet, notebook, spreadsheet, etc.)
- Prioritize your next steps based on what you learned from recruiters at the fair.
- If you need advice or help on follow-up, make an appointment to see a Career Advisor at Career Services or the Albers Placement Center.

### Recruiter Secrets...

The students that most impress recruiters at career fairs:

- Demonstrate a familiarity with the organization
- Have intelligent questions to ask
- Have thought about the way they might fit into the organization