

# Career Fairs: Preparing For, Navigating and Following Up

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## Why attend a Career Fair?

- Network – meet many employers at once
- Practice presenting yourself professionally
- Increase your chances of getting an interview

## Before the Career Fair

- Register for BuckyNet – so you can see the organizations attending the fair & learn more about them
- Update your resume by utilizing the following:
  - One-on-one advising or handouts on our website (see our website for details)
- Record a professional voicemail message
- Use a professional email address on business cards & resume
- Research the specific organizations you are interested in, including what they do and what positions they are hiring for and write down 2 – 3 questions you would ask a recruiter (see page 2 for example questions)
- Choose appropriate attire – business casual or business professional (see page 3 for details)
  - Jeans, flip-flops, short skirts and low-cut tops are *NOT* appropriate
- Prepare your 30-second introduction including:
  - An introduction of yourself (name, major, year in school & whether you are looking for an internship or job)
  - Why you are interested in the organization *AND* why you would be a good fit

## At the Career Fair

- Bring a well-tailored resume, but be aware that some recruiters will not accept resumes and will refer you to apply online
- Prioritize! Create a list of your top 4-5 organizations, and start talking with one of the organizations you are least interested in. This will allow you to warm-up before going to your top 2-3 organizations
- Present yourself professionally by:
  - Giving a good, firm handshake and introduce yourself
  - Being knowledgeable about the organization and industry
  - Being able to explain why you are interested in working for them- show enthusiasm
  - Asking thoughtful questions based on the research you did prior to the fair (see page 2 for examples)
- Know your availability for the upcoming week in case the employer wants to schedule an interview
- Ask recruiters for a business card or information on who to contact in the future
- After talking to a recruiter, take a moment to write down a few key points to reference in your thank you email
- Be selective with taking employer “free stuff”

## After the Career Fair

- Send thank you e-mails within 24-hours of the career fair (that night or next morning is preferable)
  - In the email reference the UW-Madison career fair
  - Timeliness is important as many recruiters travel to multiple career fairs within the same week
  - Include key points you may have discussed with the employer to remind them of your conversation
- Contact L&S Career Services if you need contact information for an employer representative who you spoke with at the fair

## Career Fair Sample Questions

Career and internship fairs are a great opportunity to talk with employer representatives about their organizations and employment opportunities. Be prepared to ask questions! Don't be uncomfortable approaching the recruiters. They will be eager to talk with you and answer any questions you may have. Here is a list of suggested questions to help you get started:

- What skills or traits do you look for in candidates?
- What is your company's hiring timeline?
- What are some of the key responsibilities of this job/internship?
- What is a typical career path for someone coming in at my level?
- What kind of training program does your firm have? Formal/Informal? Short term/Long term?
- What is a day like in this position?
- What type of formal education is required for entry-level, mid-level, upper-level, positions?
- Do people filling this type of position work in a structured or non-structured environment?
- How is performance evaluated? How often?
- What degree of task variety would a person see in their first year?
- What opportunities did you take advantage of while you were in college to help you prepare for your job?
- How did you begin your career? If you had anything to do differently, what would it be?
- How would you describe your job?
- What do you like/dislike most about your job?
- How much client contact do you have?
- How much contact do you have with others inside your firm?
- How much freedom do you have in terms of deciding what you want to work on and how to plan the project? How much does this change with experience?
- What is your company's policy on continuing education? For example, will they reimburse you for classes taken towards higher education?
- Is relocation/travel typically required in this career field?
- Where does your organization have offices within the U.S.? Worldwide?
- How easy/difficult is it to transfer to another location?
- What professional societies or associations should I join?
- Which professional publications in this field should I read?
- What important changes are occurring in your field now? How will they affect the career of someone like me just starting out in your field?

## Dress for Success

When preparing what to wear for an interview, remember that what is safest is best. You do not want your physical appearance to distract the recruiter from getting to know you as a candidate. Note that while we do recommend a suit, if you do not have a suit and cannot get one for any reason, business casual is the next best option (see below).

Below are some general conventions. Remember that business-style dress is very traditional. If you do not feel comfortable following these conventions, just know that there may be risks associated. You get to make your own choices!

### **General Tips for Masculine and Feminine**

Well-groomed hairstyle

Clean, trimmed fingernails

Feminine: If you wear nail polish, use clear or conservative color

Minimal, if any, cologne or perfume

Empty pockets - no bulges or jingling coins

Minimal jewelry – not too distracting

No gum, candy or cigarettes

Shoulder Bag or portfolio case

No visible body piercing (nose rings, eyebrow rings)

### **Business Professional Dress:**

<b>Masculine</b>	<b>Feminine</b>
Two piece suit (navy blue, black or grey is best)	Knee-length skirt or pant suit with a jacket with a conservative blouse / professional looking dress ok
Necktie should be silk with a conservative pattern	Shoes with conservative heels
Dark polished shoes	Conservative hosiery/tights. Leggings are not pants
Dark socks (black is best)	Minimal use of makeup (it should not be too noticeable)
If you have a beard make sure it is neat and trimmed	One set of earrings only
No earrings (if you normally wear one, take it out)	No low-cut blouses or too-many buttons undone – showing cleavage is not appropriate

### **Business Casual Dress:**

<b>Masculine</b>	<b>Feminine</b>
Unwrinkled cotton trousers with a belt	Ironed dress pants or knee length skirt / simple knee-length or longer dress is also appropriate (in plain colored, not patterned materials, with no velvet or shimmery fabrics)
Ironed long-sleeved shirt or nice polo shirt	Tailored blouse or tailored sweater or sweater set
Leather shoes (no athletic shoes or flip-flops)	Conservative hosiery/tights. Leggings are not pants
No white socks	Dress shoes (2 inch heel or less) – no athletic shoes or sandals that sound like flip-flops when you walk
If you have a beard make sure it is neat and trimmed	Minimal use of makeup (it should not be too noticeable)
	One set of earrings only
	No low-cut blouses or too-many buttons undone – showing cleavage is not appropriate

### **Websites to aid your preparation:**

Examples of professional & business casual: <http://pinterest.com/uwmadisonlscs>

When Job-Hunting Dress for Success: [www.quintcareers.com/dress\\_for\\_success.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/dress_for_success.html)

About.com Dressing for Success: <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewsnetworking/a/dressforsuccess.htm>

### **Remember, you can always get wardrobe advice from a Career Advisor or someone in your field of interest.**

Here are some quick ironing tips. While using an actual iron and ironing board is best (and if you don't have both, now is probably a good time to invest!), in a pinch, you can try putting your clean, dry clothes in a clothes dryer for a few minutes (make sure you use a dryer sheet and have some static guard spray handy), or using steam (hang your clothes in the bathroom while you take a long, steamy shower).

## Career Fair Follow-Up Tips

- 1) **Thank you notes:** Most recruiters do not distribute business cards at career fairs for obvious reasons. They do not want to receive hundreds of notes from candidates that are not really interested or qualified for their positions. What a job seeker can do, however, is write down a recruiter's name from their name tag or your conversation. It is not that difficult to find a company representative's email address. A recruiter not giving out business cards can end up being to your advantage.

### Sample Follow-up Email to an employer:

Dear (fill in name of recruiter here):

It was a pleasure speaking to you at the (fill in name of the career fair) at UW-Madison on (fill in date). I am very interested in your (fill in name of position) and enjoyed hearing from you what it's like to work at (fill in name of company/organization). (Add in anything else related to your conversation as well as what they mentioned you need to do to continue through their process such as apply on-line, etc).

I appreciate your time and look forward to pursuing an opportunity at (fill in name of company/organization).

Sincerely,  
(fill in name)

- 2) **LinkedIn:** Connect with recruiters and employers via LinkedIn. You will find that some recruiters want to connect with potential candidates. Be prepared that some will not though. In addition, be sure to follow a company's LinkedIn page. LinkedIn provides a tremendous platform for connecting and sharing with potential colleagues. If you have not created a LinkedIn account, now is the time to do it. Here are some tips for students: <http://go.wisc.edu/x668w5>
- 3) **Twitter:** Twitter is growing faster and faster every day, and businesses are effectively using this tool. Job seekers are making a huge mistake by not taking advantage of Twitter. Follow a potential employer's Twitter feed. Many companies have a special account just for their career division. A number of recruiters have Twitter accounts themselves.
- 4) **Cover Letters:** Anytime you send a resume to a potential employer, you should include a cover letter. Follow up with recruiters after a career fair by resending your resume and cover letter. While many will tell you they never read cover letters, many do. It's not worth it to try and guess who does and doesn't read cover letters, so just write the letter and tailor it to the specific position you are applying for.
- 5) **Other company representatives:** Believe it or not, your booth visits at career fairs can really pay off when reaching out to other representatives of the company. Use the story as a lead in for cover letters, conversations or interviews to show your effort in connecting with an employer.

However you choose to follow-up with a company after the career fair, be sure to extend your connections beyond the few minute conversation at the fair itself. Use those conversations as a foundation for a future relationship with a potential employer and colleague.

Career fairs aren't just about seeking current jobs but future opportunities as well. Don't let yourself be another face in an enormous crowd that is quickly forgotten. Take notes after each conversation and use that information to leverage your experience and enhance your job search strategy.

*\*\*Career Fair follow-up information above adapted from Texas A&M Mays Business School website.\*\**