Career Fair Strategies

Webster University’s Career Fair provides students and alumni with an opportunity to learn about skills and experiences that will increase employment potential, explore career options and learn about various organizations, speak with employers to learn about career paths and job and/or internship opportunities, and build a professional network.

Typically, students do not leave a career and internship fair with a job or internship offer. Rather, the event is an opportunity to initiate contact with an employer, build name recognition, get questions answered, and follow-up on previously submitted applications.

Before the Fair

Research Companies and Organizations Attending
An evolving list of employers and organizations attending the fair is available in Handshake, (webster.joinhandshake.com), Webster University’s online career management system. Based on your occupations of interest, determine which employers you want to target at the event. Conduct research on these employers by reviewing the company’s website, checking Handshake and the company's website for job/internship openings, and doing a Google News search for recent company headlines.

Prepare A Resume: Resume Writing Guidelines
Create or revise your resume. Upload your well-written resume to Handshake and bring copies to the fair. Not all employers will accept paper resumes, but bringing them shows you are prepared and planned ahead. Seek assistance from the Career Planning & Development Center as you create your first resume or hone an existing one.

Prepare Your Introduction
Prepare to initiate conversations with employers at the fair by practicing your personal introduction. Include your name, major, graduation date, and a summary of your skills and qualifications in a brief 30-60 second intro. You should also be prepared to discuss your interest in speaking to the employer.

Check Professional Attire
Check your professional attire. Be sure that your professional outfit fits and is clean and pressed. If you need to purchase professional attire, consider shopping at upscale resale shops or large retail stores with affordable options.
DURING THE FAIR

APPEAR AND ACT PROFESSIONALLY
On the day of the fair, wear professional attire. Bring a portfolio/folder with a pen, copies of your resume, and a list of companies with whom you hope to connect. Present yourself in an approachable and confident manner. Introduce yourself with a firm handshake, maintain eye contact, and be attentive to non-verbal communication from organization representatives. Be polite and avoid cell phone use during the fair.

ASK QUESTIONS
Ask thoughtful and appropriate questions. Sample questions include:
- Describe the type of employees and/or skills you are seeking.
- What are the top three needs at (company name) or in (department name)?
- Describe your experiences at (company name). How did you get into this career field/organization?
- What type of internships, jobs, or volunteer positions does your organization have available?

Ask for the employer’s business card when appropriate and gather any available literature. Note that it is inappropriate to ask about salary in this setting.

TAKE NOTES
Following a conversation with an employer, take a few minutes to step aside to a quiet spot and make notes about your impressions and/or questions for follow-up.

AFTER THE FAIR

SEND FOLLOW UP NOTES
Send a thank you or a follow-up note (email or written) to organizations with whom you spoke at the fair. Use the business cards and notes you took during the fair to make your follow up specific.

APPLY TO OPENINGS
If employers at the fair suggest that you apply via their company website, be sure to follow through and apply. Many employers cannot consider candidates unless they have formally applied through the company’s applicant tracking system. Even if you handed a resume to an employer, check their website for a formal online application system.