

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF A CAREER FAIR

Attending a career fair is one great way to make contact with employers, learn about organizations and opportunities in your field, and hopefully be invited for an in-person interview. Think of the 2-3 minute exchange with an employer at a career fair as a mini-interview, and prepare for it accordingly.

Note: Engineering Co-op & Career Services offers Career Fair Preparation Workshops before the major Career Fairs on campus; check <http://ter.ps/engrworkshop> for upcoming dates and times.

WRITE A RESUME

- Prepare a well-written, one-page resume and make multiple copies (avoid the heavy weight paper). See our resume handout at <http://ter.ps/engrresume> for more specific guidelines.
- Have your resume reviewed at Engineering Co-op & Career Services ahead of time.
- Be prepared to expand on your resume when speaking to recruiters at the fair.

WHAT SHOULD YOU BRING?

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Your student ID card | <input type="checkbox"/> Resume – many copies | <input type="checkbox"/> Mints |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A bag to collect company information | <input type="checkbox"/> Portfolio | <input type="checkbox"/> A handkerchief (for sweaty palms) |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Pen/Paper | |

HOW SHOULD YOU DRESS?

- Conservative, professional business attire is best. Avoid anything that will distract an employer from focusing on your qualifications, such as bright ties, strong cologne/perfume, or excessive jewelry.
- You can't go wrong with a suit with comfortable dress shoes. If you don't own a suit, consider wearing dress pants or skirt and a long sleeve shirt or blouse. Men should wear a tie.
- Make sure that the suit fits properly, is clean and pressed. Skirts should be no shorter than 2" above the knee (check it when you're sitting down!)
- Check [our website](#) and our [UMDCareerENGR Pinterest](#) boards on Professional Dress for ideas.

WHO WILL BE AT THE FAIR?

- Go to the Career Center's web page at www.careercenter.umd.edu to view a list of employers who are expected to attend the fair.
- Have a "game plan" - make a list of employers to visit in order of importance to you. Know specific information about those organizations. Check out their web pages and the employer files at Engineering Co-op & Career Services or Career Center. Research information such as the organization's mission, products/services, and recent headlines.
- Check for open positions in [Careers4Engineers](#) so you can apply ahead of time if necessary. Some companies use the time at the career fair as a chance to conduct screening interviews.

PRACTICE YOUR APPROACH

- Prepare a "30-second commercial" to use when you approach recruiters. This should include:
 - Your name, major and expected date of graduation
 - Career interests
 - Brief description of your work experience and/or activities
 - An expression of interest in the organization and their opportunities
- Be prepared to continue your commercial by answering the recruiter's questions. Example: "What type of job are you seeking?" The answer should NOT be "Anything" or "It doesn't matter; I'm flexible." Also, tailor your commercial to each employer you approach. Before the fair, identify how your background and future goals fit each employer that interests you.
- Smile and offer a firm handshake as you introduce yourself.
- Offer your resume to the recruiter rather than waiting to be asked for it. (If you are given a name tag to wear, place this strategically on your RIGHT side so as to be in line with your RIGHT hand.)
- Demonstrate confidence and interest.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

- Listen carefully to their questions before responding.
- Practice responses to frequently asked questions such as the examples listed below.

Questions Career Fair Recruiters May Ask You

- In what type of position are you most interested?
- Tell me about yourself.
- What interests you about this field? Why did you choose your major?
- Why do you think you might like to work for our organization? What do you know about our organization?
- What are your career goals?
- What courses did you like best? Least? Why?
- What is your overall GPA? Do your grades accurately reflect your ability?
- Describe your computer skills/experience.
- What background and experience will you bring to our organization?

ASKING QUESTIONS

- At career fairs, focus more on “big picture” questions. Recruiters are often representing the company as a whole and may not know specifics. Avoid questions like, “To whom would I report?” or “Describe a typical day on the job.” Save questions like this for when you are interviewing for a specific job.
- Ask questions which demonstrate you have thought about your career goals and researched the organization. Examples: "I am interested in the area of telecommunications and noticed on your web page that you have co-op opportunities in your telecommunications department. Can you tell me more about the job duties of a co-op?" or "What skills are most important for your design position?" (See below for more examples.)
- Ask for a business card or contact information. Inquire about the best method for following up with an organization. Thank the recruiter for their time and indicate an interest in communicating again.

Suggested Questions to Ask Recruiters

- What qualifications do you look for in people you hire for these positions/your organization?
- What skills are most important for the engineering co-op position available in your department?
- What type of projects do interns typically work on in your organization?
- What particular computer equipment and software do you use?
- What kind of supervising and training do interns receive?
- What percentage of interns you hire are offered full-time positions with your organization upon their graduation?
- Can you describe the hiring process at your company?
- What are your hiring plans for the coming year?
- What additional experiences would you suggest I get between now and the time I graduate?
- What do you like most about working at _____?
- How should I follow up if I'm interested in pursuing employment with _____?

ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR CAREER FAIR SUCCESS

- Arrive early in the day. Be there when recruiters are fresh, alert and attentive.
- Be patient and anticipate crowds and lines. Try visiting the tables with fewer crowds first.
- Build relationships with recruiters at local career fairs... the same ones tend to come back year after year. Don't wait till your senior year to show up!
- Act and speak professionally. Be sure to speak loudly enough to be easily heard.

- Keep notes on your conversations with recruiters while attending the career fair.
- Get business cards of everyone you talk with. If no business card is available, ask if the recruiter can be reached at the telephone number or address on the literature.

AFTER THE FAIR

- Make notes as you leave about the information you gathered, especially the follow-up plans.
- TAKE INITIATIVE and follow up with company representatives through a phone call or e-mail. (See below for information on steps to take after the Fair.)

CAREER FAIR FOLLOW-UP

It is important to understand that your work is not done once you've finished speaking with a recruiter – it has just begun! Rather than waiting to be contacted by the recruiter, make yourself stand out by being proactive. An effective way to do this is to write a thank-you letter. The letter should be written and sent within 24 hours of your meeting the recruiter.

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE, RESPECTFUL FOLLOW UP:

- When writing the letter (email), refer to the date and location of the fair, and mention any unique or highly specific points discussed so the employer will remember you.
- Any important information discussed should be restated and emphasized in your letter.
- Reiterate your qualifications and include any information you neglected to mention.
- Proofread your letter carefully. There should be no errors (misspellings or typos). Consider having it reviewed by a staff member at Engineering Co-op and Career Services Office.
- Include a copy of your resume.

Career Fair Follow-Up E-mail Template

Subject: University of Maryland Career Fair, September 17, 2015

Dear Mr./Ms. _____:

Thank the employer for taking the time to meet with you at the Career Fair. Mention the name and location of the Career Fair and the date.

Mention something specific you discussed at the Career Fair (for example, an internship program you discussed or a new company project the recruiter mentioned that interested you).

Confirm your interest in the company and reiterate how your skills and qualifications match what the company is seeking.

State that you've enclosed your resume. Give your phone number and mention that you look forward to hearing from the employer and learning more about possible opportunities (or a specific opportunity you discussed) with the company. Thank the recruiter for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your name