

How to Navigate a Career Fair

Adapted from the Isenberg Chase Career Center

A career fair is an excellent place for students to make connections with recruiters and companies (i.e. build your network), to learn more about what companies are looking for in a candidate, and to find out about available internships and full-time positions. For 1st and 2nd year students, this is a great opportunity to practice your elevator pitch, network, and see what opportunities you want to begin working toward.

Before the Career Fair:

- ✓ **Research companies** (Google, company website, [Hoovers.com](https://www.hoovers.com), [IBISWorld](https://www.ibisworld.com)) ahead of time so you know which ones you are most interested in.
- ✓ Create a **game plan** of which companies you want to see. [Handshake](https://www.handshake.com) lists all the companies in advance that are coming to Career Day.
- ✓ Write each company on an **index card** and jot down a few details about the company, as well as how you believe you can contribute to each organization. (This is part of your own research and preparation, and should not be used in front of a recruiter).
- ✓ Make your **priority list** of companies to talk to. (At the fair, do not start with priority company #1. Practice with other companies first).
- ✓ Practice your “**elevator pitch**,” including reasons why you are interested in XX company.
- ✓ Finalize your **resume**, and get it checked out at SBS Resumania!
- ✓ Print out 20 copies of your resume on high quality resume paper and keep them neat in a folder or padfolio. You will most likely not get to 20 companies, but better to be prepared.
- ✓ Plan your **professional business outfit**.
- ✓ Prepare specific, individual **questions** you want to ask each company. Examples include:
 - What positions are you looking for right now?
 - What do you like best about working at XX company?
 - Can you tell me more about YY project you are working on, which I read about in the *Boston Globe*?
- ✓ Prepare comments/**information** that you want to get across to each recruiter. Examples could include:
 - Telling XX company the 2-3 most important things these recruiters should know about you
 - Why you like XX company and why you are interested in working there

At the Career Fair:

- ✓ **Arrive early.** Get the floor plan, and map out a route to where your top companies are located.
- ✓ Make sure your **phone is turned off** and out of sight.
- ✓ **Practice first.** Use your “elevator pitch” and networking skills at a company that is not on your priority list before approaching the ones you are most interested in.
- ✓ Note that the lunch hour is often the busiest with one recruiter (if there are two) breaking for lunch. Also, most students will show up then.
- ✓ Avoid the last hour of the fair, if you can. Recruiters can be burnt out by then.

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- ✓ Use a strong (but not overpowering) **handshake**, make **eye contact**, smile, and try to be relaxed enough to show your personality.
- ✓ Give each recruiter your resume and **discuss your accomplishments**. Do not just leave your resume on the recruiter's table.
- ✓ **Listen** to how other attendees talk to the recruiters. You might learn something.
- ✓ **Don't interrupt** another student talking with a recruiter. Also, **be mindful** that other students want a chance to talk with the recruiters too, so watch your own time. If the conversation is going well, you can tell the recruiter: "I am mindful of other students who want to speak with you and I would like to continue this conversation at another time. May I follow-up with you by email?"
- ✓ Don't leave a recruiter until you have asked for his/her **business card** so you have the correct spelling of the recruiter's name and **contact information**.

After the Career Fair:

- ✓ Jot down **notes** about who you met and any important information you discussed.
- ✓ Send email **thank you notes** within 1-2 days of the career fair to each recruiter you spoke to. Make the notes personal and reference something specific that you talked about. A good trick is to write them on the back of the recruiter's business card, so that you can refer back to them and remember specific details of your conversation when following up. Remember, the recruiters can meet hundreds of students in a day, and you need to **find a way to stand out** with an experience or project that you have done, why you are driven to be studying at Isenberg or pursuing your specific career interest.
- ✓ Do any **online applications**, if companies require them.
- ✓ **Explore the companies** you are most interested in further, and make an action plan to pursue those opportunities.

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