

CAREER FAIR SUCCESS: Getting started

Career fairs are a great way to learn about specific employers, explore your career options, research the demand for your field and skills, and connect with job and internship openings.

What to expect

Career fairs at the UW vary in size from about 30 employers to over 100. When you enter a fair, you will see company representatives standing or sitting by tables displaying information about their companies.

Employers are there to increase their brand presence at UW, tell students about their organization, and seek both intern and job candidates.

How to prepare

Look over the list of employers attending that is available at careers.uw.edu. Prioritize your top employers and arrive early.

Practice your introduction and be prepared to talk about the type of position you are seeking and how your studies, activities, projects, strengths and interests are a fit.

Prepare a resume targeted to the positions you are interested in. Bring more copies than the number of employers you plan on talking to.

Dress like you would for an interview and present yourself professionally.

What to talk about

You should practice an introduction (about 30 seconds) that tells an employer about you. This can include information about your major, career interests, skills,

activities and experiences, or research that you've done about their company.

A career fair is the perfect place to ask employers questions. These can be about the company, positions that are available, or advice for being a successful job or intern candidate with their organization.

Follow up after the fair

Ask for business cards and write down names so that you can follow up with the recruiter after the fair.

Follow their instructions after the fair. They may tell you to apply online—make sure you do it!

Starting the conversation

EXAMPLE #1: GENERAL CAREER FAIR INTERACTION

Student: Hello, I'm [your name].

Employer/Recruiter introduces themselves and shakes your hand.

Student: I am a [fill in the blank] major with an emphasis on [your

particular area of focus if it is related to the employer]. I'm very interested in [fill in whatever the organization does], and would like to learn more about what internship/job opportunities your company offers.

Employer: [Mentions internship/job opportunities]

Student: That sounds very interesting! What skills, background, and experience are needed to qualify for your entry level positions?

Employer: [Lists some of the skills and experience they look for]

Student: Between my coursework, employment, and volunteer experience I've been able to develop a number of skills including [list some relevant skills and experience relevant to this particular employer].

What are the next steps for applying to your organization?

Employer: [Offers information on next steps.]

Student: Thank you so much! This was very helpful. May I leave a copy of my resume with you? Could I have your business card?

QUESTIONS TO ASK EMPLOYERS

- > What kinds of opportunities does your organization have for someone with my background and skills?
- > What are the major challenges and initiatives that your organization will be focusing on this year?
- > What is the hiring process for your company in my area of interest?
- > What is it like to work for your company?
- > How might I make myself a strong candidate?
- > Is there someone in your company I may contact who can tell me more about this area of work?

EXAMPLE #2: Tailored introduction to top choice employer

Hello, I'm Sam Bailey. I'm a junior at the University of Washington and I'm seeking a [job or internship]. In addition to my major in [major], I have a variety of experiences. For example, I have a lot of experience working with diverse populations, both from my coursework and my volunteer position at the Downtown Emergency Services Center. I also have teamwork skills that I've used to organize several events on campus for my student organization [name of organization]. *What strengths, education, and experience are needed to qualify for entry-level positions in your organization?*

EXAMPLE #3: No Declared Major Yet
Hello, I'm Aamir Bang. I researched your organization and am very interested in [something about what the employer does]. I have an interest in [fill in blank], but am still deciding on a major. I've developed a number of skills including analytical and creative problem-solving skills, prioritizing my work load, communicating information clearly and collaborating with partners. *Could your organization/company use a person with these skills?* [Wait for response] **As an international student I am able to work in an internship that relates to my major during school (CPT) and can work up to 12 months (OPT) after graduation without any extra cost to my employer** [be prepared to explain more only if asked or

needed]. *I am wondering, what types of [job/internship] opportunities might your organization have for someone like me?*

EXAMPLE #4: Specific Major/Specific Type of Job

Hello, I'm Pat Brooke, and I'm a junior in Mechanical Engineering interested in an internship. My background includes designing and testing motion control systems using AutoCad to draft plans for an engineering consulting firm, and effective leadership and communication skills. After researching your company, I am excited about what you are doing relating electro-mechanical controls. *Would you tell me more about opportunities in this area with your company?*

ADDITIONAL TIPS & RESOURCES

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: Keep in mind, while **some employers will be interested in talking with ALL students, other employers are not able to employ international students.** Please respect the employers' position on their hiring practices: The representative's attending the fair do not determine their company's policy regarding the hiring of international students so please DO NOT question them about the policy.

ALL STUDENTS: If you are speaking with an employer and they indicate that they are only seeking students of a certain major, do not be discouraged. Ask if there is another recruiter for your area and follow up with them to get that information. If you are interested in the positions they are hiring for, but your major is not exactly what they are seeking, talk about the skills, strengths and experiences you have that have prepared you for that role.

Be sure you follow up with the employers after the fair. Ask for business cards or write down their contact information. Employers want to connect with you, but not be annoyed by you. Seniors and grad students may want to follow up on a regular basis, while freshmen, sophomores and juniors may consider following up on a more infrequent basis.