

CAREER FAIR PREPARATION GUIDE

Career fairs are events that bring together employers and students for multiple purposes. They provide companies and organizations with exposure to many students in one place, allow them to discuss their potential internship and professional opportunities, and to convey the culture of their organization. Some employers use career fairs to screen potential employees in a short amount of time. Career fairs are perfect events for students to meet many recruiters and to practice marketing their skills, knowledge, and abilities. The contacts made at a career fair can be a doorway to a future career with a simple handshake and a short conversation.

BEFORE THE CAREER FAIR

General Tips

- Go to the career fair with a clear goal – this may be looking for part-time, full-time, summer or internship opportunities, or going just to get experience networking and having professional conversations.
- Make a list of employers you wish to speak with at the fair. You will find a complete list of employers attending the fair on Handshake in the weeks prior to each career fair.
- Research the companies online that you want to visit at the fair – know their products, services, latest news, mission, and the history of their organization so you can talk intelligently with the recruiters.
- Prepare an elevator pitch for yourself before speaking with employer representatives. Think about what you can say or do to set yourself apart from the competition. The goal is to impress them enough during this short conversation so they will invite you for an actual interview. (Review the Elevator Pitch Section on page 3 of this Handout)
- Make sure to have a few questions prepared to ask the employers following your introduction; show interest in their position and company.
- Bring more résumés than you think you will need. Bring at least two pens with you. Having a nice folder to put your materials in is advised. They can be purchased in the campus bookstore or any office supply store.
- Even if you are required to attend the career fair for a class assignment, the employer should never know that. Revealing that as your reason for being there reflects poorly on you, other Sycamores attempting to network, and the university.

Fine Tune Your Résumé

- List related work or internship experiences directly after your education. This will allow an employer to quickly gain an understanding of your suitability for their positions.
- Include other work experiences that show transferable and leadership skills that make you attractive to an employer.
- Employers like students who are well rounded and involved. Include organizations, sports, and volunteer activities.
- Fine-tune your résumé by visiting the ISU Career Center during Walk-in Hours, Monday-Friday from 8-12 in the Sycamore One Stop and 12-3 in the Career Center for 15-minute meetings; no appointment is necessary. Or use Hiration (on the Career Center website), our AI tool that will help you improve the formatting and bullet points on your resume.

PROFESSIONAL DRESS

It is important that you make a professional first impression on the employers. It is safer to dress more conservatively than you might normally dress in the work environment. Being “over-dressed” is always better than being too casual.

Suggested Dress Tips:

- Wear a two-piece matching suit; black, navy blue, and dark grey suits are preferred. Professional dress suits can include pants and a jacket or a skirt and a jacket.
- Do not wear tight-fitting tops, see-through shirts, or show cleavage.
- Skirts should end at the knee when you are standing and look professional. Longer skirts can be professional if they are narrow enough and not billowing. High slits, tight and short skirts are not appropriate.
- Pants should be creased and tailored, not tight or flowing. The hem length should be altered if the pants are touching the floor. Fitted legging-like pants, cropped pants, and jeans are not appropriate.

Suggested Shoe and Accessory Tips:

- If you choose to wear a tie, it should be silk and without characters or flashy patterns/colors.
- Your belt color should match your shoes.
- Socks should be a dark color, such as black, navy blue, or dark brown.
- Leather or faux leather shoes are best.
- Keep jewelry to a minimum.
- When picking your footwear, choose closed-toe pumps and avoid extremes such as stilettos or platforms. Keep your heel height below 2 ½ inches. Stockings or trouser socks should be worn to cover bare skin below the waist.

Clothing Closet:

- The Clothing Closet in the Career Center contains gently used professional clothing.
- Students can visit once a month when the Career Center is open (8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.), and up to four items may be selected per visit.
- The clothing items are yours to keep!

DURING THE CAREER FAIR

- Pick up a map from the registration table and plot out the companies you have prepared to meet.
- Approach the recruiter at the table, smile, offer a firm handshake, and introduce yourself with your elevator pitch.
- Focus on the conversation, not the freebies on the table.
- You will never have a second chance to make a first impression! Smile; be positive and patient when conversing with employers.
- Do not approach employers while eating, drinking, or chewing gum. Never smoke before entering a career fair.
- Put your cell phones away and on silent.
- Ask for business cards from employers you would like to interact with after the fair. Make sure to write something specific you talked with the employer about on the back of the card. If an employer is unable to address a question, ask them who would be the best person for you to speak with and take down their contact information.
- Some employers will not be accepting paper copies of your résumé at the career fair; instead, they may direct you to apply on the company’s website. This does not mean they are uninterested; they may be trying to be environmentally friendly or may be traveling and do not want to carry a large amount of papers with them.

Appropriate Questions to Ask Employers at the Career Fair

- What are the common career paths within your company?
- What is the application process like? What is the typical timeline from application to hire?
- What qualities and experiences are you looking for in a candidate?
- What types of jobs does your company have for recent university graduates?
- What academic background will be the most helpful in preparing to enter this field?
- What kind of work experience, either part-time, summer or internships, will help me the most?
- Are there specific internship opportunities in this field that will make me more marketable?
- Are there professional associations that I should be getting involved with as a student?
- What advice do you have for a university or college graduate entering this field?

Elevator Pitch/One-Minute Commercial

- State your name, major, year in school, and employment goal. Be as specific as you can.
- Describe what you have to offer the company, such as experience from internships or other related work experiences.
- Talk about advanced coursework taken and professional involvement.
- Demonstrate what you know about the organization and express your interest.
- End with a question, if possible.

Example Elevator Pitch:

“Hello, my name is Thomas Reynolds and I am a junior marketing major looking for an internship during the spring semester of 20xx. I have worked in the Indiana State University Communications and Marketing Office as a student assistant, where I have been exposed to a wide range of marketing initiatives. I have also been involved in the creation of several advertisements, both in print and online. I am interested in your company because of your diversified client list and reputation for delivering innovative marketing strategies that strongly utilize social media. What type of opportunities would I have as an intern within your company?”

After the Career Fair

- Follow-up with all the employers that you spoke with.
- Connect with employers/companies on LinkedIn.
- Email or handwrite a thank-you note and be sure to refer to the job/internship you are interested in.
- Customize the note to each employer; draw on a memorable aspect of your conversation.
- Ask “follow-up” questions to let the employer know how much you are interested in the position.

If an employer asks you to follow up with a phone call or to send additional information, be sure to do so within three days.