

## **CAREER FAIR STRATEGIES**

Career fairs are scheduled throughout the year on campus, in the business community, and on the internet.

Employers share information about their organizations and their industries, identify potential career paths for your major and experience, discuss specific full-time, co-op, and internship possibilities, and accept resumes.

### **PREPARATION**

Before the event, view a list of employers planning to attend each fair.

First, conduct preliminary research:

- Industry?
- Company size?
- Location?
- Products or services?
- Organization and departments?
- Types and titles of jobs?
- Possible interest in you?
- Possible interest to you?

Then conduct more in-depth research to narrow your targeted companies and to determine your fit with each company. Make sure that you are ready to show the recruiter at the fair why you would like working for that particular company and what value you would add to the organization.

In preparation for these events you should produce an ample amount of copies of your resume on professional paper.

Also, practice, over and over until natural, a brief personal introduction which includes the answer to this common recruiters' question, "tell me about yourself." Your response should be concise, focused, professional, and under 60 seconds. Be assertive, enthusiastic, and agreeable: "Good morning, thank you for coming to this fair. I am a graduating senior in business management, and I would like to use my supply-chain, e-business, and teamwork skills in your warehouse location in Virginia."

In general, graduating students should wear professional interviewing attire while conservative business casual is appropriate for students looking for internships; however, consider the cultural environment of the company and employer you wish to attract, and err on the side of being overdressed.

Make sure you are comfortable in your clothes and your grooming is impeccable.

## **CAREER FAIR STRATEGY AND BEHAVIOR**

Go early, if you can, when recruiters are fresh.

When you arrive at the site, pick up a map of the layout. Survey the entire fair and make your plan. See how the individual companies are using their people, time, space, and technology.

Plan to talk with a wide variety of employers; you may discover opportunities you had not imagined.

Generally, each company has a booth and table with advertisements and displays, company literature, job descriptions, and promotional gadgets.

Company representatives may either be human resources/recruiting generalists or specialists and line managers in their fields. Often the companies bring NC State alumni to the campus as greeters.

Before you speak to the greeters or the representatives, collect company literature and study the material.

The recruiters are generally screeners who not only collect resumes but also weed out candidates as they do so. Their focus and intent are to find suitable interview candidates for the hiring managers. They will make immediate notes on your resume and then put your resume in “yes,” “no,” or “maybe” piles.

At some fairs, recruiters schedule times and places to conduct interviews on that same day. Usually you will know in advance if interviewing is a possibility, but you should be prepared for this contingency.

Watch the recruiters: do they come forward to students and smile or do they sit behind the table and wait for you? How will you behave?

Listen to the conversation between the recruiters and other students. What were the questions and how did the students answer? What were the recruiter’s responses to those answers?

If more than one recruiter is present, observe and choose the recruiter most like you in personality.

Do not stare blankly into space or look annoyed while you stay in a company's line-- the recruiter could be watching you. Use the time to read that company's literature and to network with others about what they have learned at the fair or how their job searches are going. Students can give great tips to each other.

The recruiters want a neat copy of your resume only, not letters or reference lists. Put all your documents in a tidy-looking portfolio or briefcase so that you are organized and smooth as you hand the recruiter your information.

Often employers advertise on their backdrops for the most difficult major to hire when, in fact, they do hire other majors or from other degree programs; if the company does not post a sign saying, "blank majors only," do not be afraid to ask.

In fact, if the kind of job you want is not the one for which the company is recruiting at this fair, ask the recruiter politely to route your resume to the appropriate division or department. At the same time, try to get a name and contact information of that hiring manager, so you can send a new copy of your resume and cover letter when you get home.

As your conversation with the recruiter winds down, say that you are interested in the company and ask what is the key to moving to the next step in the hiring process.

Always thank recruiters and get their business cards. After your brief conversation, jot notes on the cards to remind you of your next action.

## **FOLLOW-UP**

If you can and the lines are not prohibitive, return to the booths of the companies which really interest you and thank them again for coming and speaking with you.

Later that day or the next, leave a simple voice mail to the number on the business card of your preferred companies or send a thank-you note, reminding the recruiter of your conversation and your interest.