

Getting the Most out of Your Career Fair Experience Tips for Before, During, and After

Before the career fair . . .

Research the organizations.

- Read through the list of organizations that will be present. Look at their Web sites and pay special attention to mission statements and currently open positions. Which ones do you want to target?
- Think about what kinds of problems you might solve for each organization. What challenges do you think they're facing? What would you bring that is unique?

Get your materials ready.

- Have some business cards printed. "PhD Candidate" or "Graduate Researcher" is a more professional title than "Graduate Student." Include a professional e-mail address, an active phone number, and your *LinkedIn* URL.
- Update your résumé and swap with a friend for feedback and proofreading. Bring printed copies to hand to recruiters. (Do not bring your CV.)
- If you have time, spend a couple hours sprucing up your *LinkedIn* account. Is your headline accurate but also eye-catching? Is your photo professional? How's your summary? Be friendly and conversational in tone, and beware of spending too much time and space on your dissertation.
- Craft a 30–45-second introductory statement about yourself. Again, avoid talking too much about your dissertation. Focus on your strengths (what you'll bring) and your values (why you care).

During the career fair . . .

Prioritize and strategize.

- Prioritize the organizations you want to speak with most and meet them first.
- If you find yourself waiting in line behind others, eavesdrop shamelessly and use the information you hear to give yourself a boost.
- Make sure you give the recruiters your résumé and business card *and* get their information in return.

Present yourself well.

- Career fairs are business casual events. Dress as you would to deliver a talk.
- Greet all organizational representatives with a firm handshake and a smile. Introduce yourself by name and tell them what you found interesting about their organization.

After the career fair . . .

Don't delay!

- If you speak to recruiters about a position that's open, apply right away. Make sure you name drop them in the cover letter. For example: "I was excited to speak with Susan Sunshine and Tom Moonstone today at the MLA Annual Convention career fair about the project coordinator position."

Follow up!

- If you don't speak to them about a specific position, that's okay. Drop the recruiters a note anyway. Say that you were glad to meet them and are excited about their organization and that you hope they will keep you in mind for future positions. Then connect with them on *LinkedIn*.