

# Navigating a Career Fair

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## Fall Semester

Fall Job & Internship Fair  
Professional & Graduate School Fair  
Commerce Career Day  
Engineering Science and Technology  
Career Fair  
Nursing Career Fair

## Spring Semester

Spring Job & Internship Fair  
Educators Expo  
Government & Non-profit Expo  
Engineering Career Showcase

In addition to these annual U.Va. events, there are other fairs that focus on specific fields or geographic areas. Check the UVA Career Center Web site and weekly update e-mails for other opportunities.

*So you are going to a career fair....  
consider your goals*

- To meet employers as a first step in getting a job
- To begin the process to get interviews.
- To meet employers to obtain an internship.
- To explore career options with a wide variety of employers in order to clarify professional goals.
- To practice networking and self-marketing skills.

## Preparation Before the Event

- Look on [www.career.virginia.edu](http://www.career.virginia.edu) or in [CAVLink](#) and review the list of employers attending the fair (use the filters to search for employers of interest).
- Research the employers that interest you the most by looking at company Web sites/LinkedIn groups and using Web sites including Career Insider by Vault, which can be accessed through [CavLink](#)
- Consider attending a workshop at the Career Center on navigating career fairs. Check the Career Center Calendar and weekly update e-mail in the weeks leading up to career fairs for dates and times of these workshops.

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UVA Career Center

[www.career.virginia.edu](http://www.career.virginia.edu)

Bryant Hall at Scott Stadium

8/12/2015

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- Prepare a list of questions to ask employers (questions that you could not find in your research or that demonstrate you have researched the company). Practice your questions out loud -it helps.
- Know yourself: prepare a 30 second “commercial” for yourself including your strengths- backing them up with examples. Consider introducing yourself by talking about your strongest skills or your leadership experiences rather than just by your major, particularly if your major is not clearly related to your career goals. Try to indicate why you want to work for that specific company.
- Develop a strong resume by having it critiqued by a career counselor before the fair. Bring multiple copies of your resume to the career fair. Some of your resumes may be tailored or have specific objectives for the companies you know you want to speak with but you might have a few “general” copies that do not have objectives in order to have options.
- Identify items that you want to carry to the event (resumes, briefcase or folder, bag for company literature/materials, pen).
- You may want to walk around the career fair first and pick up literature; review it and then go back to speak with employers. Talking with organizations in your “second tier” of interest first in order to practice and build confidence and then approaching your first choice employers is often a helpful strategy.

## Dress

- Consider the fair you are attending and ask a Career Center staff member for advice if you are unclear. It is always best to appear as professional as possible as this is the first impression you are making on an employer. Wearing a suit or business casual attire (nice shirt and tie, or blouse and pants or skirt) is always appropriate.
- Wear a nametag if possible (you can often get these when signing in at the fair registration table). The employers will be meeting many students and this helps them remember who you are.
- Try not to break in new shoes or wear extremely uncomfortable clothing.

## Navigation During the Event

Use a career fair map to find the companies that interest you the most (you usually find these at the registration table). Navigate the fair independently, even if you arrive with or see some of your friends there. You will accomplish more if you focus on the employers and are not distracted by your friends. Plan a time to meet friends after the fair.

## Non-verbal Communication

Make a good first impression by:

- making good eye contact
- introducing yourself while giving a firm handshake
- smiling and being enthusiastic
- paying attention to your posture

## Verbal Communication

- Initiate a conversation with an employer by making eye contact, introducing yourself and shaking hands. Then give your 30-second “commercial” about your strengths and interest in the company. Be articulate and confident.
- Offer your resume when you feel it is appropriate: it can be to start the conversation, as it comes up in the questions that you ask or at the close of the conversation. Be aware that some employers are not permitted by their company to accept resumes at the fair and may direct you to the company website or an e-mail address to send your resume to.
- See the list of potential questions to ask employers and have questions prepared for the employer.
- As you wrap up the conversation, thank the employer for their time and find out the next step in the application process. Make sure that you do not monopolize the employer’s time as other students might be waiting to speak with him/her.
- Ask for a business card so you can follow up after the fair.

## After the Career Fair

Send a thank-you letter (typed, e-mail, or handwritten are all appropriate) within 1-3 days of the fair. You can send an initial or additional resume in your thank-you letter and again remind the employer of your strengths and interest. Remember to include in the email your name, school, date of meeting, and a personal touch (ex: remind them of something specific from your conversation).

## Sample Questions to Ask an Employer

- What kinds of entry-level positions exist within your company?
- Does your company hire on a continual basis or just at certain times of the year?
- How long does the hiring process take?
- What qualities does your company look for in an employee?
- What courses do you suggest in order to be a successful candidate?
- What opportunities are there for advancement in the company?
- How long have you worked for this company and why did you choose this position?
- For how many years does the entry-level employee typically stay with the company?
- How many new employees (or interns) is your company looking to hire?
- What makes your company unique compared to other companies in this field?
- What would you expect your ideal hire to do during the first month with the company?

## Sample Questions to Ask Graduate School Recruiters

- How many students are in the department? How many professors are in the department?
- What courses/prerequisites should I take in order to be better prepared for graduate school?
- What is the GPA cut off for the department?
- What graduate admission’s test is required for the program?
- What is unique about your school and program?
- What types of assistantships and financial aid are available?
- Is there department support for job searching after graduate school?