

Career fairs might seem overwhelming, but they can actually be FUN. Employers are truly excited to meet (and hire!) WOU students. Career fairs are a great opportunity for ALL students to meet employers, and learn about potential jobs/internships/careers. Here is a list of things you can do to make the fair a fun and successful event:

## BEFORE THE FAIR

- ✓ **RESEARCH** the companies who will be attending the fair and the majors they're hiring for – visit the Events section of WolfLink/Handshake – [wou.joinhandshake.com](http://wou.joinhandshake.com)
- ✓ Develop **informed questions** to ask specific employers you're interested in. Questions such as "I'm interested in the management training program at Company XYZ; what do you typically look for in ideal candidates for this program?" OR "Could you tell me more about your internship programs?" are much more effective than "So... what does your company do?"
- ✓ Create a **"game plan"**. Decide how much time you have to spend at the fair and prioritize your time accordingly.
- ✓ Create a competitive, **"get-noticed" resume**. Visit the CPP office M-F 9-4pm for a drop-in resume appointment. Don't forget to make copies!
- ✓ Prepare a **30-second "informercial"** or "elevator pitch". You have 30 seconds to make yourself stand out to an employer and make a great first impression. Prepare a 30-second script that introduces yourself, states your knowledge of/interest in the organization, and relates your background to the position(s) in which you are interested. Include your name, class, major, experience, relevant projects, etc.

## AFTER THE FAIR

- ✓ **FOLLOW UP WITH EMPLOYERS**. Write a thank you note/email, emphasizing a key point/takeaway from your conversation at the fair. Reiterate your interest in the company/position and include your resume.
- ✓ **PRACTICE your interviewing skills**. Stop by the CPP office for some useful handouts or schedule a mock interview with one of our career counselors and find out what you can do to prepare for a big interview.

## DURING THE FAIR

- ✓ **DRESS PROFESSIONALLY**. Career fairs require the same attention to attire as an interview; in essence, they are your first interview. If unsure what to wear, it's better to overdress a little than under dress; a dark blue/grey suit is always appropriate. Wear comfortable shoes!
- ✓ **Leave your backpack** and coat at home or hang them up once you get to the fair.
- ✓ **Sign in** at the registration table at the entrance.
- ✓ Have copies of your **resume, a pen and your planner/notepad** easily accessible. Employers may want to set up interviews!
- ✓ Have an **open mind**. Approach lesser-known employers to discover their potential for your professional development or "out of the box" divisions that may help you begin your career.
- ✓ **Be independent**. Approach employers on your own, even if you came to the fair with a friend.
- ✓ **Don't be afraid of the recruiter**. Approach them with confidence, remembering all the prep you've done! Employers come because they WANT to talk to you.
- ✓ Greet each employer with a **firm handshake** and a **positive attitude/smile**. Maintain **eye contact**.
- ✓ **Be patient**. Don't interrupt the employer or jump into a conversation they are having with someone else. Wait your turn; you might even pick up some valuable information as you wait!
- ✓ **Put your resume into a recruiter's hands**; don't just drop it on the table. Take time to market yourself with your informercial/pitch (see back).
- ✓ **Be sincere**. Don't overstate your abilities, but DO let the recruiter know what skills you have to offer.
- ✓ **Don't monopolize** the recruiter's time. Market yourself, make a good impression and let the next person do the same.
- ✓ **Close the deal**. Inquire about obtaining further information, take a business card, find out what the next step is (company visit, setting up an interview, etc.) and thank them for their time!



## CAREER FAIRS: THE 30-SECOND INFOMERCIAL / ELEVATOR PITCH

You have 30 seconds to make yourself stand out to an employer. Connect your background to the organization's needs by preparing a short script that introduces you, states your knowledge of and interest in the organization, and relates your background to the position(s) in which you are interested.

## THE ELEMENTS

Provide the following information during your introduction:

- Name
- Class (junior, senior, graduate, etc.)
- Major
- Opportunities you are seeking
- Relevant experience (work, internship, volunteer)
- Highlights of skills and strengths
- Your knowledge of or connections to the company

Tailor your introduction to each employer based on research and knowledge of the company. Articulate how you'll fit with the company and what you particularly like about them based upon your research. At a minimum, utilize the company website for research. Other resources include annual reports, press releases, news coverage, and the latest news regarding their industry.

## PRACTICE TO PERFECTION

PRACTICE this introduction until you feel comfortable reciting it smoothly, conversationally, and without fillers such as "um", "like", and "you know". Your overall manner is also a critical component of a successful introduction. Incorporate positive nonverbal communications, such as eye contact, smiling, a firm handshake, and good posture. A mirror, a friend, or a career counselor are all good practice partners. Remember, this solid introduction will help you move on to the important next step – the interview!

## SAMPLE CAREER FAIR INFOMERCIALS

Here are some sample introductions from fictional college seniors:

*My name is Kathy Thompson and I am a senior economics major at Western. I noticed on your website that you have openings for financial managers, and I am interested in a position in this capacity. Last summer, I had an internship with Johnson Financial and participated in a variety of company operations. The most interesting project I worked on was redesigning the company's service demonstration events for the Southern California region. This was invaluable training because it afforded me greater insight into the finance industry and allowed me to show my ability as a team player. This experience really confirmed my desire to become a financial manager for a top-10 firm, such as yours. I have been following your company's expansion into the greater Los Angeles area in the L.A. Times. I also read in your annual report that the company is considering establishing operations elsewhere in Southern California. Could you tell me more about this proposed expansion? Could you also tell me about your financial management training program?*

*My name is Bertha Sanchez and I have over 3 years of experience in sales and marketing. For the past 2 ½ years I've been studying accounting at Western Oregon University and I'm interested in working for a company where I can use my business and computer skills.*

*My name is Jake Hewson. I'm a chemistry major and I'm interested in production-related work in the food and brewing industry. I have one summer of directly-related experience in quality control and have completed a major project on yeast culture enhancement. I would like to talk to you about how my background relates to the work you do.*

