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UF CAREER CONNECTIONS CENTER

Navigating Career Fairs and Networking Events Guide



CAREER CONNECTIONS CENTER
STUDENT LIFE | UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

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Navigating Career Fairs & Networking Events Guide

Career fairs and networking events are a great way to meet employers in person or virtually, but give you limited time to sell your skills and experiences. They allow you to explore what experiences are available to you in real time. You can use career fairs and networking events to research companies and organizations that could be interesting to you. Talking to employers can help gather information and insight on your career options. The following information describes what to do during a career fair or networking event to leave a lasting, memorable impression.

BEFORE THE FAIR

Determine Your Goals

- Ask yourself, what do I want to accomplish at the career fair?
- What goals do I have for attending?

Reflect on Your Experiences

- Consider the things that make you who you are:
 - Past experiences
 - Strengths
 - Successes
 - Values
 - Motivations
- Focus on how these things relate to the abilities and skills that employers are seeking.

Prepare and Revise Your Resume

- Be sure your resume is updated and reflects any recent accomplishments.
- Review job descriptions to ensure your resume reflects the skills the organization is seeking.
- Prepare multiple versions of your resume if you are applying to positions in different disciplines or industries.
- Print out several copies of your resume.
- Visit the Career Connections Center for information on creating a resume.
 - Schedule a Career Planning Appointment or drop by Express Drop-In for a resume review.
 - Use Quinncia to receive custom resume feedback and for help on navigating Application Tracking Software (ATS)

Research Organizations

- Find out which organizations will be coming to career fairs, networking events, and employer hosted events by checking the “Events” section of Gator CareerLink and filtering using the “Type” function.
- Research organizations hiring for positions you are interested in to see if it might be a good match for your strengths and interests.
- Use multiple sources for your research including Gator CareerLink, LinkedIn, and organization websites.
- Make a list of 3-5 organizations you want to visit. While you may not be able to see all of them, you should know which ones would be your priority.

Organize Your Schedule

- Download the Symplicity Jobs and Careers App for easy access to employer and event information, available on the App Store and Google Play Store.
- Check the interaction type (in-person vs. virtual) listed under the schedule for each of your meetings.
- If attending a virtual event or career fair, be sure to sign up for appointments as early as possible. Check with the Career Connections Center for the date registrations open for a specific semester.
- Check your email 24 hours prior to your scheduled appointments for times and links.
- Since virtual career fairs require scheduled appointments, no showing can leave a negative first impression on the organization, especially if you hope to work with them in the future. If something comes up or you are no longer interested in pursuing the appointment, cancel or reschedule.



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DURING THE FAIR

Present Your Best Self

- Dress in business professional clothing. Consider more comfortable shoes as you will be mobile most of the day.
- Visit the Molm Family Gator Career Closet if you need to borrow professional clothing items.
- Assess your virtual presence, including ensuring you have a quiet space, appropriate background, and working technology.
- Take breaks and rest when you need to collect your thoughts. It's okay to feel nervous!
- Confidently communicate with employers- give a strong handshake/greeting, use eye contact, and warm body language. Be thankful, friendly, and polite!

Share Your “Elevator Pitch”

- An elevator pitch is typically a one-minute response to the “Tell me about yourself” question during an interview, but it is also a helpful way to introduce yourself when networking and during career fairs. Your elevator pitch will allow you to demonstrate confidence, knowledge, interest, and enthusiasm while outlining:
 - Your degree, why you chose this area of study, and when you are graduating.
 - Highlights of your experiences and how the skills used or gained relate to the position.
 - Your strengths and why you're qualified for the position/industry.
 - Your career path and how this position fits with your career goals.
 - Why you are interested in the company/organization (show that you've done your research).
- Remember, your elevator pitch serves as a guide for your conversation and is not meant to be used as a word for word script. Practice your pitch frequently so you understand your key points and can navigate upcoming conversations with ease.

Demonstrate Enthusiasm

- Demonstrate your genuine enthusiasm for the position and the current conversation
- Typical questions you can expect to receive at career fairs and networking events include:
 - What do you know about our company?
 - Tell me about your experience at [experience listed on resume]?
 - Why are you interested in working here or in this position?

AFTER THE FAIR

- Always send thank you notes or emails to the recruiters that you met.
- Attend employer hosted events or additional on-campus recruitment events to get a better idea of each organization's recruiting plan and have more time to network with employers.
- Be sure to check your email and voicemail regularly after the event for communication from employers.
- Apply for positions in Gator CareerLink.
- Remember, a career fair or networking event is not the only way to find a job or internship! There are many additional strategies to use.
- Check out Quinnia for mock AI interviews to help you prepare for the real thing!

