

# A Practical Guide to Career and Internship Fairs

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Career Fairs are an efficient way for job seekers to gather information about industries, career paths, internships and job opportunities. In addition to gaining knowledge about the world of work, candidates gain valuable perspective of employer expectations and a first hand look at the competition.

If Career Fairs did not meet these objectives, the Career Center would not continue to coordinate them. In truth, students and alumni secure interviews and offers for excellent internship and job opportunities. Sadly, too few students take advantage of Career Fairs. They make the mistake of assuming that contacting an employer online is as beneficial as meeting a company representative.

A Career Fair will be as valuable as you make it. Plan to spend time preparing before the event and when at the fair, be generous in speaking with employers. Even if it is not your natural bent, be an extrovert for the length of the fair.

## ***Fair Preparation***

**Hotel Reservations.** Usually, a hotel offers rooms at a discounted rate for Career Fair attendees. Due to reservation deadlines, make arrangements early.

**Research employers.** The Career Center will have a link on its website to many fairs. The time spent researching employers will be well spent as you are able to prioritize those that you wish to pursue at the fair. Additionally, you will be able to discuss your interest in the employer and how your unique qualifications make you a strong candidate for their opening.

**Prepare and review your resume.** Have your resume reviewed by the Career Center staff. The professional appearance and content of your resume is extremely important. Print a sufficient number of resumes and copy unofficial transcripts (optional) to hand out to prospective employers. It is not unusual for over 100 to attend a Fair.

## **Send a letter and resume to participating employers that you are interested in.**

In this letter, let them know you will be attending the fair and would like to interview with them during the fair. A sample letter is included in this packet. Send letters from two to six weeks before the event. Employer addresses are normally available at the Concordia College Career Center website: [www.concordiacareercenter.com](http://www.concordiacareercenter.com).

## **Notify faculty of your plans to attend the fair.**

You are not automatically excused from class in order to participate in a Fair. Share the employer list with your faculty members and seek their input. Please make arrangements ahead of time.

**Prepare to interview.** Know yourself and what you have to offer. What is unique about your education and/or experience? What makes you a strong candidate? Be prepared to provide interviewers with specific examples of your work and academic qualifications. The Career Center offers videotaped Mock Interviews.

**Attend an information session.** The Career Center staff shares specific information about fairs a number of weeks before the event. Check with the Career Center for the schedule.

**Format for Writing Letters to Employers for Requesting an Interview.**

Return Address

Street or Box Number  
City, State and Zip Code  
Date

Inside Address

Name of Contact Person  
Title  
Employer Name  
Street or Box Number  
City, State, and Zip Code

Salutation: (Dear Mr. or Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,)

First Paragraph: State briefly the purpose of your letter and identify the position for which you wish to be considered. For example, you could mention that you will be attending the specific Career Fair on the given date and that you are interested in meeting with the recruiter to discuss your qualifications for (type of position).

Second Paragraph: Identify that you are graduating from Concordia College in Moorhead, MN along with your academic major(s). Point out briefly why you are interested in the position and/or employer and highlight your specific personal qualifications - express confidence. (You should supplement the factual information on your resume rather than repeating it.)

Third Paragraph: Refer the reader to the enclosed resume for information concerning your background and experience. Indicate your desire for an interview at the Job Fair. State that if you are pre-selected for an interview, **arrangements for an interview time can be made by contacting you directly.**

Closing sentence: Some type of 'thank you' statement.

Sincerely,

*Signature*

Your Name (typed)

***Things to Consider:***

*Letters should be brief. Get to the point but do not be abrupt.*

*Avoid starting sentences with "I".*

*Use high quality paper for your resume and letter. Set margins at 1", use a standard font, and a font size of 11 or 12.*

*This format is a guide. Be creative and make sure the letter reflects you, your personality and your qualifications.*

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## ***The Day of the Career Fair***

**Get excited to be at the Career Fair.** This is a GREAT chance to meet your potential employer! Employers are looking for students with your educational background and they have invested time and money to meet you at the job fair. The contacts you make at the fair could literally influence the rest of your professional career! View the fair as a marathon not as a sprint.

**Dress professionally, as you would for an interview.** Make sure you are wearing clean, well-pressed clothes and polished shoes that are comfortable. A suit is recommended for both men and women.

**Check in at the fair.** At the Fairs that the Career Center co-sponsors, Concordia College will staff a registration table. Here you will pick up your packet of information that includes a map of employer locations, your nametag, schedule for the day, and any last minute instructions.

**Meeting employers at their booth.** When you arrive in the exhibit area, proceed to the booths of the employers in whom you are most interested. If there is a long line, move on to another employer and stop back later. Be assertive (not aggressive) by introducing yourself with confidence and a smile. Share your strengths and your qualifications for their particular opening. Offer your resume, unofficial transcript (optional) and a friendly handshake. If you have a strong interest in an organization, tell them and ask to interview. Ask if the recruiter has open time on his/her interview schedule, and ask to schedule an interview. If the recruiter's schedule is full, ask if you could meet some other time to discuss your qualifications in person.

**Interviewing may take place.** Be prepared to interview at the fair. Some fairs offer interviewing as a part of their services. Often interviewing takes place informally as well. Interviews last 20 to 30 minutes and are screening interviews. It is

rare that job offers are made at a Career Fair.

### **Common questions to expect from employers at a Career Fair**

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Tell me about your experience.
3. Why did you attend this school?
4. Why did you select your major?
5. What interests you about our organization?
6. Why do you want this position?
7. Why do you think you would be successful in this field?
8. What are your short-term and long-term goals?
9. What three things are most important to you in a job?
10. Describe when you solved a problem.

### **Sample questions to ask at a Career Fair.**

1. What types of career tracks does your organization offer?
2. What majors do you typically hire? If I do not have that major, what skills are most important for your openings?
3. What are the job responsibilities for that type of position?
4. What are the most important qualities or characteristics you look for in hiring for that position?
5. What are typical first-year assignments?
6. What recommendations would you make for someone who would like to enter that field? How did you get into the field?
7. Do you have co-op, internship, or summer job opportunities for someone in my major?
8. Can I contact you if I need more information? Could I set up a time to visit you at your workplace to talk more about what you do?
9. What is your company's record of employment stability for new hires?
10. Describe the work environment and/or corporate culture.

11. Who do you consider your major competitors and how do your products/services vary?

show genuine interest. If you interview with representatives, send thank you notes within a week, either through the mail or by email, expressing your interest in their organization. Carefully execute follow-up procedures. Individuals have received positions from career fair contacts well after the event. You will need to practice persistence and patience during your job search.

### ***After the Career Fair***

**Follow up** - Remember to take notes on the conversations you had with recruiters. Collect business cards and literature. Follow up in writing with these contacts and

### **Sample Follow-Up Letter.**

#### Return Address

Street or Box Number

City, State and Zip Code

Date

#### Inside Address

Name of Contact Person

Title

Employer Name

Street or Box Number

City, State, and Zip Code

Salutation: (Dear Mr. or Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,)

It was a pleasure speaking with you at the \_\_\_\_\_ Career Fair last week about (organization name) and the (position title) position. I am very interested in this position and I believe my (experience, scholastic record, or whatever your strength) and my interest in working with (people, or other interest area) can be an asset to your organization. (Reference your conversation and your unique strengths.)

Feel free to contact me at (area code and phone number) or (email address) if I can provide you with any additional information. I look forward to meeting with you again.

Sincerely,

*Signature*

Your Name (typed)

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