

# CAREER FAIR

## STUDENT NETWORKING GUIDE



Career Fairs give you the opportunity to meet employers (some of whom are alumni) who want to talk to you about opportunities with their organizations. Use Career Fairs to gather information on career options, develop a network of contacts, identify job and internship openings, or secure an interview.

### Use these tips to network at a career fair.

- **Research the organization and opportunities** before attending the Career Fair. Mention your research as you ask questions.
- **Dress professionally.** Employers will make decisions based on professional appearance.
- **Make a strong first impression.** When meeting employers, introduce yourself, offer a firm handshake, make eye contact, state your purpose, ask questions, listen and act professionally.
- **Communicate your purpose.** State the type of position that interests you. Doing research in advance, such as job descriptions and open positions, can help develop targeted questions.
- **Expand your focus.** Approach employers that appear unrelated to your major. A technical company may have openings in human resources, marketing, public relations or accounting. Employers do look for candidates with a strong liberal arts background and internship experience.
- **Highlight your strengths.** Be prepared to discuss your qualifications that are most related to the job. Include clear, concise examples to demonstrate your qualifications. Practice your verbal presentation (a 30-60 second "networking pitch" about you) so you can approach employers with confidence. (See next page).

- **Prepare questions.** Build on research you do in advance of the fair to increase your knowledge of industry trends, job options and career paths. **Below are some sample questions to ask:**
  - › What entry-level positions for university graduates are available in your organization?
  - › What kind of background do you look for when filling these positions?
  - › What advice would you give me if I wanted to break into this field?
  - › How did you get involved with this industry/organization? What keeps you involved?

To view a list of participating organizations, visit <http://career.sdsu.edu>

# ENGAGE EMPLOYERS

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## Include Core Topics

College career counselors and recruiters alike suggest including core topics as you talk to employers. Provide the following information during your introduction:

- Name
- Class (senior, junior, sophomore)
- Major
- Relevant experience (work, internship, volunteer work)
- Knowledge of the company
- Opportunities that you are seeking

Adapt your introduction to each employer based on your research and knowledge of each company—this will generally impress recruiters.

## Ask Engaging Questions

Questions career services counselors and employers say you should **avoid**:

- Asking what the company does.
- Asking if the company has any jobs.
- When asked what type of position you are seeking, saying you would be willing to do anything at the company.
- Asking for giveaways at their table if you are not serious about the employer.

## Networking Pitch

3 simple steps to read and practice now:

1: Introduce yourself (name, major, class level).

2: Smile and extend a firm handshake.

3: Focus on:

- What you have done, proven you can do, and are ready to do again
- How these apply to your career goals
- Tailor the pitch to explain your qualifications and interests to the targeted job/industry
- If applicable, highlight a commonality
- Ask for information and/or next step

**Example:** "Hi. My name is Jessica Montez. It's a pleasure to meet you. I am a junior majoring in communications. I currently work on the college newspaper as a reporter. My career goal is to be an editor of the arts section for a major publication. I'm looking for a position that will allow me to utilize and develop my copy editing and writing skills. What advice do you have for young professionals like me?"

**Follow-up.** Request a business card for your records. If you want a job interview, follow up with a thank-you note or e-mail within 24 hours and include your resume.

### Pro-tips:

- Be conversational.
- Make eye contact and smile!
- Ask for a business card at the end of the conversation so you can follow-up.