



CONQUERING A CAREER FAIR

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CAREER FAIRS

The majority, if not all, career fairs will be held virtually for the 20-21 academic year. Various platforms are used to simulate a career fair in a virtual way with employers staffing “booths” and students can engage with employers of interest. More tips about navigating virtual recruiting can be found in our *Virtual Recruiting* handout.

OVERVIEW

A career fair is an efficient and effective way to learn about organizations, potential employment vacancies and to network with individuals working for many different organizations. Employers utilize career fairs as an opportunity to meet with potential candidates, collect resumes and screen candidates for interviews. Typically interviews are conducted within a few weeks following the career fair. However, some employers may decide to conduct a screening or introductory interview during the career fair itself. Either way, be prepared to make a great first impression, demonstrate what you know about the organization and discuss how your skills relate to the work and mission of the organization.

Career fairs are also excellent networking opportunities, as you can make a connection with potential employers and learn about industry trends. Career fairs provide employers the chance to educate potential candidates about their organization. Some organizations may not have a specific position opening at the time of the career fair, but they will attend to ensure students know their recruiting timeline and when to apply for future openings. Remember that you’ll not only hear about open jobs, but you’ll also use this as a learning opportunity to make connections for your future and gather career information to make informed decisions.

Some career fairs are open to the public while others are limited to certain populations. For example, many career fairs co-sponsored by Career Services are limited to students and alumni of co-sponsoring schools.

Career Services highly recommends that you add a career fair or two to your job or internship search process. We co-sponsor a number of annual career fairs in cities where Swarthmore students and recent graduates typically seek employment, including the Tri-College Recruiting Day and TriCo STEM Recruiting Event - both virtual events for 20-21.

Below are tips on how to make the most of a career fair; we encourage you to schedule a virtual appointment with a career counselor through Handshake to talk through your strategies for the fairs you plan to attend.

Before the Fair

Plan Your Strategy

- Review a list of participating employers (typically available online, for Swarthmore-sponsored fairs visit [Handshake](#) or the [Career Services' website](#))
- Prioritize the list and decide which employers with which you wish to connect, targeting industries and types of jobs/internships
- Research each organization of interest and develop “talking points” about their work

Prepare Materials for the Career Fair

- Prepare a resume and have it reviewed by a Career Peer Advisor at least a few days before the fair
- Target your resume to industries/ jobs/internships of interest
- Have a general resume ready, also, for a variety of opportunities; cover letters aren't needed

Dress for Success

- For virtual career fairs, you should wear business casual clothing since you will be video.

Develop Your One Minute Introduction/"Elevator Pitch"

- Introduce yourself, demonstrating that you know something about the organization
- Express why you are interested in the organization
- Be able to relate your background and skills to what you know about the employer's needs
- Talking points include education, skills, and career aspirations presented clearly and concisely
- Memorize your introduction and practice it aloud

Sample Introduction:

Good afternoon, my name is _____ and I am a _____ major at Swarthmore College. My understanding is that your organization _____.

I am very interested in gaining an entry-level position in the field of _____. As you can see in my resume, I have been involved with _____ at Swarthmore. My most recent experience _____ has

During the Fair

Initiate and Prepare

- Be ready to take notes during your conversations.
- Connect with organizations of lesser interest first to practice delivering your introduction and reduce nervousness
- Be patient and anticipate having to wait your turn; many virtual fairs will have a queue and they will engage with students in the order they got in "line"
- Take breaks if you feel overwhelmed

Observe Career Fair Etiquette

- Keep an open mind and consider organizations with which you are not familiar
- Talk to people not on your list when you have extra time

Network and Make a Great First Impression

- Introduce yourself with a smile
- Launch into your one-minute introduction
- Ask questions and take important notes after your conversations
- Be sure to get a contact information of the people you speak with
- Ask representatives the best way to follow-up with them after the event

After the Fair

Follow-Up

- Send everyone with whom you spoke a formal thank you email mentioning something you learned from them or spoke with them about at the event
- Send letters of introduction to people with whom you did not get to speak
- Attach your resume
- Follow up two weeks later with a phone call, if possible, to reiterate your interest in working for the organization