

Career Fair Assignment Options

The Center for Career and Professional Development is hosting four virtual career fairs this semester. These fairs provide students with the opportunity to connect with employers, practice networking skills, learn about opportunities, and explore career options. We encourage students to approach fairs and employers with an open mind, recognizing that companies hire a wide variety of positions.

Below are suggested assignments and activities for you to choose from that will help students prepare before the fair, engage during the fair, and connect with employers after the fair. They also foster career exploration and education. These assignments vary in length and complexity and may take students anywhere from five minutes to an hour to complete. *Please select one or multiple assignments to fit your needs.* If you don't see anything that works for your class, contact your liaison, and they would be happy to brainstorm other options.

Learning Goals:

- Connect skills gained through academic majors to the workplace
 - Identify skills and key experiences and determine how to share those with employers through your resume and during your career fair interaction
 - Identify knowledge, experience, and personal qualities related to career interests.
 - Broaden understanding of career possibilities including employers, industries and specific careers
 - Prepare for and engage in professional networking
-

Assignments:

Career Education and Exploration

- Review the list of employers attending the fair in JobCat. Select three employers and review their profile in JobCat, their company website, and (if available) their social media accounts to learn about the organization. If possible, find their mission or vision statement as well as a list of staff.

Create an informative flyer or brochure highlighting what you've learned about the organization, including

- the type of organization (corporation, government agency, not for profit, graduate school),
- key descriptors (large vs small organization, the population they serve or products they specialize in), and
- what appeals to you about this organization.

- You might also share if there are positions in this organization that you would be interested in as an entry-level employee or roles you would aspire to as a more seasoned professional.
- Research a participating employer you feel does not connect well to your major. Use the company website, LinkedIn, annual reports, or other resources to identify specific members of their staff and what they do in their roles. Write a one-page reflection (or lab-style report or bulleted list) on why you originally felt the employer did not connect to your major, how you found your information, in what way(s) did your opinion change after you researched the employer, and how you think you could apply your skillset to one of the roles you researched.
- From the list of participating employers, select two with which you are unfamiliar. Research these employers and present your research to the class in the form of a pitch on why students should connect with them during the fair and the types of positions in their organization.

Preparing to Promote Yourself During the Fair and Connect with Employers

- Select two organizations that you are interested in from the list of registered employers. Research the types of positions available with this organization in JobCat and/or on their website. Identify key skills and experiences necessary for these positions. Compare your skills to those required for the position. List the key qualifications you possess and where you gained or demonstrated those skills. Keep all types of experiences in mind: coursework, research, internships, jobs, volunteering, student organizations, greek life, athletics, theater, band, etc. (Be sure to keep this list handy to reference before or during the fair!)
- Review and complete preparation materials from the CCPD, including watching videos and completing related worksheets (students must RSVP for the career fair in JobCat to receive materials). Submit 3 takeaways from the videos and completed preparation worksheets.
- Complete a drop-in resume review with CCPD Peer Mentor. Submit a copy of your pre-and post-resume. Have students share their main takeaways from the peer mentor review session in class or via online discussion boards.
- Review the career fair preparation checklist developed by the CCPD, highlight the items you still need and create a plan to accomplish those items. Submit a copy of your highlighted checklist and outline of strategies to accomplish any tasks that are still needed.
- Develop a plan for your employer interactions. Craft an opening sentence for your conversations with employers. Create an elevator pitch using the CCPD worksheet to clarify how you will talk about your skills and experiences. Partner with another student in the class to roleplay employer conversations. Take turns being the employer and student. As the employer, provide feedback on the pitch, both content and delivery. As the student, note any adjustments you might make to the pitch and its delivery (think body language, eye contact, pace of speech in addition to what is being said). For remote classes, students can meet via Zoom or exchange video or voice recordings of their pitches.
- Develop a list of 5 questions for employers. These questions can be the same across employers, though you are encouraged to develop custom questions for employers of interest. Post questions on the discussion board or share in class to crowdsource new questions.

Networking During and After the Fair

- Interact with 5 employers during the fair. Practice initiating and leading conversations by utilizing your opening sentence, elevator pitch, and at least two of your prepared questions, as well as asking questions based on your conversation. Make sure to get the name or business card of everyone you speak with during the fair. Submit names of employers you spoke with and three-sentence summary of each interaction. How you tailored your elevator pitch, and why? Would you change your pitch now having used it a few times? If so, what would you edit?
- Select at least one employer to follow up with after the fair. Send a follow-up email or LinkedIn message to further your connection. In this email, be sure to include a short reminder of yourself and where you met them, a call to action (request more information on a specific opportunity, connection to another individual in their organization or in their network, a brief phone/video call to learn more about their organization or industry), and a thank you for their time at the fair and continued assistance. Submit a copy of this email after it has been sent.
- Utilize social networking to maintain and expand your professional network. Add the employers you met on LinkedIn and follow their companies. Before reaching out, develop a template message to paste into each request that mentions where you met the employer and thanking them for their time. LinkedIn provides a pre-written message, and you can easily personalize this when accessing LinkedIn via a browser. To edit these messages in a mobile app, you need to click “more” and then “personalize invite.” You will need to use LinkedIn on a browser rather than in the app to edit the connection invitation. Screenshot three of your connection requests.
 - Note: This approach is not universal. Some industries do not emphasize the use of LinkedIn and social media networking and other organizations, such as the CIA, instruct candidates not to follow them on social media.

Reflection Assignments

- Via class discussion, discussion board, or video:
 - Share list of 5 questions developed, which was most useful and why
 - Share planned elevator pitch and one example of how it was tailored to an employer
 - Share list of employers they spoke with and information about at least one opportunity with one of the employers
- Write a reflection paper on your career fair experience. Sample prompts include:
 - What were your feelings when beginning the career fair? What did you feel confident or nervous about?
 - What surprised you about the event? What concerned you?
 - Which companies did you approach for conversations and why?
 - Describe how your conversations went: what went well, what did not go well and why?
 - What were you feeling when you finished with the career fair?
 - What would you do differently when attending your next career fair?
 - What next steps, if any, will you take to follow through on your contacts?
 - How do you feel attending this career fair will impact how you think about the job search?