



# RANDOLPH COLLEGE

*Founded as Randolph-Macon Woman's College in 1891*

**Career Development ~ West Hall ~ Ext. 8116 ~ [www.randolphcollege.edu/cdc](http://www.randolphcollege.edu/cdc)**

## **Making the Most of a Career Fair**

Career Fairs provide an opportunity to explore careers, obtain employer information and develop contacts to use in applying for full-time, internship, and summer positions. Employers attend career fairs to increase student awareness about their organization and the careers they offer, to identify potential candidates for future hiring needs, and to fill specific positions they may currently have available. Most career fairs do not present formal opportunities for individual interviews; they simply provide a chance for the student and employer to briefly meet to share information and discuss potential opportunities. The following guidelines are designed to help you make the most of your experience; for further questions, please contact the Career Development Center.

### **Before attending the fair:**

- **Clarify your interests and goals; you may want to speak with a career counselor.**
- **Review the list of employers expected to attend the career fair and research those that interest you.** Gather information as you would for a job interview. To maximize the brief time you have with each employer, you need to know how your skills and interests match their needs.
- **Have a strategy...prepare a list of the top 5-10 employers you want to meet, and be sure to see them first.** However, don't just concentrate on the "big names." There are often great opportunities with companies with which you are not familiar.
- **Prepare a resume that will be relevant to the particular employers you plan to see at the fair, and bring 15-20 copies.** You may also want to prepare a "generic" resume that can be used for other employers. Be sure it represents your knowledge, skills, and abilities effectively. It needs to look professional – easy to read format on plain white or cream-colored paper – and be free of typos. If you are looking at several career options, you may want to have two or more targeted resumes with different career objectives.
- **Prepare a 30-second "sales pitch."** First impressions are important. Approach an employer, smile, and offer your hand when you introduce yourself. Hand the recruiter a copy of your resume and be prepared to expand on it quickly. Share basic information about yourself and your career interests. For example: "Hello, I'm Carrie Jones. I'm a senior at RANDOLPH COLLEGE majoring in English. I'm very interested in a marketing career. As you can see on my resume, I completed an internship in the Marketing Division of ABC, Inc. in Lynchburg. I've also taken courses in business marketing. I'm very interested in talking with you about opportunities with your organization."
- **Mentally prepare sample questions:** What opportunities do you have for liberal arts majors? What typical responsibilities are given to entry-level personnel within your marketing division?

### **At the fair:**

- Don't cruise the booths with a group of friends. Interact with the recruiters on your own. Make your own positive first impression.
- Energy! Career fairs require you to be on your feet moving from table to table for an hour or so. Each time you meet someone, be at your best, as refreshed as possible.
- Dress professionally in business or business casual attire. Don't carry your backpack, large purse, or other paraphernalia with you. Carry your resume in a professional-looking portfolio or small briefcase. This will keep your resume neat and handy and gives you a place to file business cards of recruiters that you meet. Usually you can stow your coat, backpack, or other gear in a coatroom.
- Career Fairs are a valuable opportunity to obtain information about employers you aren't familiar with; request information from the employers about positions and obtain any literature they have available.
- If lines are too long for some employers, visit less crowded ones and return later. However, since some employers may leave the fair early, don't wait too late in the day to make contact.

#### **When talking with employers:**

- Greet them with a firm handshake.
- Have your resume readily available; also bring a notepad listing your questions and providing space to take notes.
- Maintain good eye contact.
- Indicate your knowledge of the organization, obtained through research.
- Enthusiastically communicate your related interests, skills, strengths, and experience.
- Ask questions, but not about salary and benefits until you are being considered seriously as a candidate.
- Communicate quickly and concisely; you don't want to monopolize their time.
- Obtain a business card. Also write down important details about particular organizations, including names of people who may not have had business cards. Ask the representative how you should follow up.

#### **After the fair:**

- Write the employers you are interested in, thanking them for their time and information. Include another resume and any other information you have promised to send (e.g. a completed application, writing sample, recommendations, transcript).
- If you have used the event correctly, you will have made contact with several organizations that hire people with your skills and interests. In thinking about their needs and your background, evaluate whether each company might be a match for you.
- You will gain self-confidence in interacting with employer representatives. A career fair gives you the opportunity to practice your interview skills in a less formidable environment than a formal interview. Use this experience to practice talking about what you have done, what you know, and your interest.