

CAREER FAIRS

Also known as job fairs or recruitment fairs, career fairs are for more than finding jobs and internships. **They are your opportunity to connect with and learn about potential employers and careers.** The information gathered at career fairs not only helps your job and internship search, but also can be used to inform your academic and career decisions. Therefore, we encourage all students, whether you are seeking your next opportunity or wanting to learn more about careers, industries, and organizations to attend career fairs.

This guide provides you with information and resources to help you prepare for and successfully navigate both traditional and virtual career fairs. **For more information or assistance, visit the Office of Career Services website (careers.cua.edu) or schedule an appointment with a career counselor (see FAQs on the back of this page).**

CAREER FAIR SUCCESS STRATEGIES

DO YOUR RESEARCH

By demonstrating a working knowledge of the organization you are more likely to impress the recruiter representing the organization at the fair. Prior to the event, use the list of employers who will be at the fair to **identify a group of organizations you are interested in potentially speaking with and research those organizations.**

Begin your research by visiting the website of each organization you are interested in. **Review the organization's history, mission, values statements, job/career pages, and social media pages.** In addition to organization's websites, search for their profile on the following websites to view employee reviews, salary expectations, interview tips, and more:

- **Handshake** – cua.joinhandshake.com
- **LinkedIn** – LinkedIn.com
- **Vault Career Insider** – for access visit Career Services' website (careers.cua.edu)
- **Glassdoor** – glassdoor.com/reviews

Use your research to decide if the organization is a good fit for your values and abilities and **to prepare informed talking points and questions for the recruiter.** Stand out to recruiters and make the most of your conversation by asking knowledgeable questions and avoiding those you can find the answers to online.

PREPARE A 30 SECOND "COMMERCIAL"

Most recruiter's will begin a conversation by saying "Tell me about yourself." Be ready to respond with what is known as an "elevator pitch" or "elevator speech". **That is, in about 30 seconds you should be able to introduce yourself and speak about your relevant academic and professional achievements and goals.** End your pitch with why you are interested in the organization the recruiter is representing and one of the questions you have prepared for the recruiter. **This is your opportunity to let your qualifications and knowledge of the organization shine.**

POLISH YOUR RESUME

Update, tailor, and polish your resume prior to the day of the fair and print off several copies. Print at least one for each organization you plan on speaking with, plus a few extra and use resume paper for a professional look. For resume writing assistance, view our online Resume Guide (bit.ly/CatholicUResumeGuide), schedule an appointment with a career counselor, or use our walk-in hours (see FAQs on the back of this sheet).

HAVE A GAME PLAN

It is important to have a "game plan" for your time spent at the fair. **Start by ranking the organizations you have researched and then make an itinerary for the day of the fair.** Perhaps you do not want to approach your top choice first. Warm-up by starting with an organizations further down your list and once you are comfortable move to your number one. Make sure to leave some free time to talk to organizations not on your list.

When you arrive at the event, it is helpful to walk through once to find the locations of your selected organizations. Some fairs will also have a map and/or list of employers by table numbers. You can also use this time to identify interesting organizations you may not have initially planned on visiting.

DRESS THE PART

Career fairs are large events with a lot of people. When you are well groomed and in a well-chosen outfit you are more likely to stand out. **Dress like you are going on an interview in the industry you are interested in** and wear comfortable shoes you can stand in for several hours. **Carry with you only what you need** – a small bag, dark folder or portfolio, copies of your resume, and something to write with. Do not bring large bags (e.g. backpacks), coats, or other bulky items into the fair.

ASK FOR BUSINESS CARDS & TAKE NOTES

When a natural break appears in your conversation with the recruiter, thank them for their time and ask if they have a business card so you can follow-up. **Make notes about key points in your conversation on the back of their card.** Be sure to include anything you said you would do (e.g. send them a resume). This will help you remember details for when you follow-up.

FOLLOW-UP

After the fair follow-up with the recruiter via email. In your email re-introduce yourself, express your gratitude for their time at the fair, and reiterate your interest in the organization. Also, be sure to include anything you told the recruiter you would do (e.g. sending them a copy of your resume). Finally, **connect with the recruiter on LinkedIn.** Use LinkedIn to nurture the relationship and notify them of any updates in your search (e.g. when you apply for a job with their organization). For help writing thank you notes and follow-ups, review our online Cover Letter and Professional Correspondence Guide (bit.ly/CatholicUCLGuide).

VIRTUAL CAREER FAIRS

WHAT IS A VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR?

Also called an online job fair, a **virtual career fair is an online event in which employers and job seekers meet in a virtual environment.** The Office of Career Services posts virtual career fairs shared with us on Handshake (cua.joinhandshake.com). You can also find virtual fair opportunities through other universities, professional associations, state agencies, veterans organizations, and other professional groups.

HOW DO VIRTUAL FAIRS WORK?

Virtual fairs can take many forms, however, will almost always provide you with instructions on how to use their platform. Some may be as simple as a website with links to participating organizations' websites. Some may use elaborate technology to create a virtual environment mimicking a traditional career fair, complete with a map and organization graphics.

Like non-virtual fairs you will likely register either prior to the event or upon entering, upload a resume and fill out a questionnaire, and then be able to browse a list of participating organizations. **At each organization's "booth" there will be an opportunity to learn more about the organization and connect with a recruiter either via a chat room or video chat.**

CAREER FAIR FAQs

WHAT SHOULD I BRING WITH ME?

Carry with you only what you need – a small bag, dark folder or portfolio, copies of your resume (one for each organization you plan on talking to plus a few extra), and something to write with. **Do not bring bulky items** (e.g. large bags, backpacks, coats, etc.). Some fairs may have a coat room where you can store these items.

HOW SHOULD I INTRODUCE MYSELF?

Career fairs can be overwhelming and stressful. Naturally, you will be anxious. Preparation is key to managing emotions and standing out to recruiters. The "Career Fair Success Strategies" section of this document highlights the importance of preparing an elevator pitch. **Prior to the fair, practice introducing yourself with your elevator pitch** in front of a mirror and with friends. Pay attention to your body language. *Are you standing straight? Are you making eye contact?* By practicing you are more likely to confidently, concisely, and clearly introduce yourself to recruiters when at the fair.

During the fair, enthusiastically approach recruiters by yourself, not with a group of friends. **With a smile and firm handshake, make eye contact and introduce yourself using your elevator pitch.**

SHOULD I WAIT IN LINES TO SPEAK WITH RECRUITERS?

Yes! Even if you arrive early, you will find yourself waiting in lines to speak with recruiters. This is an ideal time to review your research and notes about the organization. In addition, listen to the recruiter's conversations with others. Pay attention to what the recruiter is asking the person ahead of you and prepare your own responses.

HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR A VIRTUAL FAIR?

Prepare for a virtual fair like you would a traditional fair – research the organizations, have a "game plan", and prepare talking points and questions for recruiters. There are, however, some additional considerations for virtual fairs.

- **Register and upload your resume for virtual fairs early.** Doing this will often give you access to the list of participating organizations early and employers can review your resume and qualifications prior to the fair.
- **Review the instructions provided by the host.** Be sure you know how to use the platform and completed your profile and other tasks before the fair.
- **Check your device to ensure it is compatible with the fair platform,** has a strong internet connection, and is fully charged.
- **Dress appropriately** and ensure the space around you is clean and distraction free in case a recruiter offers to video chat.

HOW MUCH DO VIRTUAL FAIRS COST?

Virtual fairs should be free to job seekers. **If they charge a fee or are promoting a job-seeking service, they are likely scams.** If you are unsure of a fair, speak to a career counselor (see FAQs).

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT NEXT? AN INTERVIEW? A JOB OFFER?

It is rare that a recruiter will offer an interview, let alone a job, at a fair. If they believe your background suits one or more of their open opportunities, they are more likely to ask for a resume and encourage you to submit an application online.

Career fairs are research and networking opportunities. They are one step in your career exploration and search process. Be sure to follow-up with the recruiters you speak with. Send them a thank you, connect with them on LinkedIn, notify them if you apply to an opportunity with their organization, and update them on your search process. See the "Career Fair Success Strategies" section on the front of this document for more on following-up after the fair.

HOW CAN I GET MORE HELP PREPARING FOR A CAREER FAIR?

- For more information see the Office of Career Services website (careers.cua.edu).
- **Schedule an appointment** by visiting 102 McMahan or calling 202-319-5623 between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM.
- For a quick question, **visit us during walk-in hours** Monday-Thursday 3:30-4:15 PM.
- **Check out the resources and tips featured on our blog** (catholicucareers.wordpress.com).
- **In need of professional attire?** Complete the Cardinals Soar online form: <http://bit.ly/CardinalsSoar>