

Robert R. McComsey Career Development Center



HOW TO WORK A CAREER FAIR

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Hours: 8:30-4:30 Monday-Friday
Walk-in hours: 1:00-4:30 Tues., Wed., and Thurs.

What can you say in sixty seconds to make a recruiter want to hire you?

Prepare yourself ahead of time

- **Review the list of companies attending** and positions being offered. You can review the list appearing on the website, or pick up a draft copy of the employer listing at the Career Development Center.
- **Research the companies** you're interested in. The company websites are the best resource – just click on the links provided on the main Career Fair page of our website.
- **Modify your resume** for the Career Fair. We suggest the following:
 - Leave out your objective
 - If you have more than a page, condense it to one page for this event
 - Be sure to have it critiqued ahead of time, using our 24-hour resume drop-off or the Writing Center. You can also email it to CDC@alfred.edu.
 - Put it on light colored paper
 - Produce at least 25 copies
 - A cover letter is not necessary for this type of event
- **Dress for Success!** If you are interested in summer camps, just wear whatever you would wear to class. If you are interested in co-ops, internships or permanent positions, the safest look is traditional and conservative. While a suit is not always necessary for a career fair, we encourage ties for men and a skirt suit for women.
- **Get a small portfolio** or binder to carry extra copies of your resume in, as well as any applications or company literature you collect. If you have a briefcase that's great. Skip the backpack.
- **Prepare a one-minute commercial** about yourself and your interests, qualifications, etc. Here's your cheat sheet:

My name is _____ (believe it or not, many people get nervous and forget to introduce themselves by name).

I'm a (freshman/senior/grad student...) in the (fill in major) program here at Alfred.

I am interested in a career that uses my skills in leadership, event planning, and public speaking (fill in your few best skills).

Can you tell me a little about the opportunities at (company name)?

In addition to your one-minute commercial, prepare yourself for additional questions by thinking of at least one specific instance in which you used each of the three skills you came up with as

strengths of yours. For example, you might use your position as captain of a sports team to illustrate leadership qualities.

At the Career Fair – What to Expect

Each company gets their own table, and usually between one and two company representatives will be behind the table. The tables will also have company literature, a place to drop off resumes, and goodies like free pens, giveaways, etc. You are expected to walk around as much as you want to get familiar with the room layout and the companies present – then begin to approach companies and talk to them.

The representatives have been trained to be friendly and approachable, but you need to make the first step. Approach the recruiter with a smile, use your firm handshake, make great eye contact, and begin by using your one-minute commercial above. Not only is it okay, but it's highly encouraged that you to speak to employers who may not have positions directed at your skill set at that particular time. That's called *networking*, and it is a way to build opportunities for yourself.

Most jobs do not fit into one specific major. There will not be employers seeking only history, women's studies, or business **majors**. Instead, they will be looking for specific **skills**, such as leadership, communication, computer, writing, selling, and creative skills that all Alfred majors provide to a degree. Don't limit yourself.

Employers are turning more toward web-based applicant tracking systems, and are less likely to accept paper resumes. At the Rochester Career Expo in Rochester, NY, almost every student we talked to expressed frustration about waiting in line for up to an hour, only to hear some variation of "go to our website." Employers are being held accountable for reporting all kinds of information related to job candidates and the huge influx of emailed and paper resumes have made this difficult for them; thus the switch to more manageable - or more frustrating, depending on your point of view - web-based tracking systems. This is not a reason to skip career fairs, but you should be aware that sometimes your paper resume will not be accepted.

Here are some Do's and Don'ts:

What you should **DO**:

- Plan to arrive as early in the day as you can. Sometimes recruiters will leave early if their student participation is slow. The earlier you can get there, the fresher the recruiters will be.
- When you approach a recruiter, be ready to shake hands and have a resume handy that you can offer him or her.
- Be polite, positive and conversational – let your personality show through.
- Maintain good eye contact.
- Be prepared for distractions. The room will be loud and many conversations will be going on around you, but stay focused.
- Ask for a business card from each person you speak with. If you get one, use it to record a brief note about your conversation with him or her.
- Convince the employer that your skills and qualifications fit their needs. Use specific examples of past excellent performance.
- Ask the recruiter how and when you can expect to hear from the company, or what the next step is.
- Shake hands at the conclusion of your conversation.

What you should **NOT DO**:

- Do Not run out of resumes and promise to send a company one later. You have missed a golden opportunity. It is much better to have too many resumes than not enough.
- Do Not expect every company to take your resume. Many will direct you to their online “applicant tracking system.” That is becoming more and more common.
- Do Not print your resume using a poor quality printer. The print quality is much more important than the paper quality.
- Do Not print your resume on colored paper. It will look awful if faxed or photocopied.
- Do Not vent or complain about previous supervisors, jobs or work conditions – even if asked to do so. Present any situations like this as a learning experience.
- Do Not interrupt or hover if an employer is speaking to another student (although waiting in line is fine).
- Do Not go to the career fair with unrealistic expectations. You will probably not be offered a job on the spot, and there will not be hundreds of employers there seeking your particular major. Look at the Career Fair as the one of several steps in your job/internship search.
- Do Not leave without talking to an employer. Even if you don’t see any that are obvious about wanting your major/skills, talk to a few anyway. You will be surprised at how much you’ll learn about the real job market.

After the Fair: Maximizing Your Participation

- As soon as possible – if you haven’t done this already – write notes to yourself about conversations you had, follow up steps you’re supposed to be taking, etc.
- Review the directory of employers you received at the Fair. If you misplace it, you can always get another copy at the Career Development Center.
- Write or Email thank you notes to the recruiters as soon as possible. Do not underestimate the importance of saying “thank you” – recruiters do notice.
- Critique your performance and comfort level. If it was not what you expected, call us at 871-2164 and schedule an appointment so we can talk about it.
- Follow up within a couple of weeks to keep your contact warm. Do not let any promising leads go at this point – keep at them.