

Making the Most of a Career Day/Fair



BEFORE THE CAREER DAY

✦ Identify Which Organizations to Talk With

Review the online list of organizations attending the career day which can be accessed from the CDC homepage at www.uwm.edu/Dept/CDC

- Identify organizations that state an interest in hiring people with your major or majors similar to yours.
- Identify organizations that have internships, co-ops or position titles that fit your career choices.
- Identify organizations you may be interested in based on what they do or what you may have heard about them.

If you don't see related opportunities, talk with a CDC career counselor during Express Lane* or at the career day for help in uncovering not-so-obvious opportunities.

✦ Research Organizations You Plan to Talk With

The single best resource for company information is the organization's website. You can find direct links to the websites of the organizations attending the career day on the online list of participants which can be accessed from the CDC homepage at www.uwm.edu/Dept/CDC

Areas to research may include:

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| -services or products | -competitors in the industry | -size of the organization |
| -new products or projects | -reputation | -number of employees |
| -growth pattern | -length of time established | -formal or on-the-job training |
| -geographic locations | -sales/earnings | -organizational structure |
| -number of locations | -foreign operations | -career paths in your field |
| -divisions/subsidiaries | -company values | -advances in technology |
| -whatever is important to you based on your knowledge of yourself and your profession | | |

✦ Research Careers and Clarify Your Preferences

1. Acquire factual information about the careers you are planning to talk with representatives about. By investigating possible job titles, responsibilities, required skills and qualifications, salary, and employment outlook you can ask more meaningful and targeted questions.

To research careers, use the CDC website at www.uwm.edu/Dept/CDC/research_read.html and the resources in the career library in Mellencamp 128.

2. Clarify your interests, values, skills and work style preferences so that you can ask representatives more effective questions about how careers in their organizations may fit you.

For self-exploration and identifying careers and environments that best fit you, use the links on the CDC website at www.uwm.edu/Dept/CDC/match_careers.html

✦ Prepare Your Resume

If you plan to speak with employers about internships and jobs that you are interested in obtaining now, it is recommended that you bring multiple copies of your resume. Take the time to produce a quality resume and bring your resume to the CDC's Express Lane* for a critique.



If your resume is not ready to distribute by the day of the event or if you prefer to focus your resume based on what you learn about the organization and the positions, you may send your resume to the employer as part of your follow-up contact.

If you are not looking for internships or jobs and instead you are attending the event to gather information to help you make decisions about your major or career direction, then you will not need a resume to distribute the day of the event. However, what you learn from speaking to representatives will be beneficial when it does come time to develop your resume.

✦ Develop Your Introduction

Practice introducing yourself to representatives both by writing down and rehearsing out loud what you want to say. This will increase your comfort level and help you to make a stronger first impression.



If you are trying to choose a major or career direction, you may say something like:

"Hello, Mr. Jacobs. My name is Linda Montana and I'm a freshman at UWM. I'm currently considering a major in psychology. I noticed that you hire psychology majors and am interested in learning more about the types of jobs they have within your organization.

If you have identified a specific opportunity, you may say something like:

"Hello, Mr. Gilliam. My name is Diane Xiong and I'm a senior majoring in public relations. I've completed two PR internships at local companies and have also volunteered my writing and advertising skills to raise money for the Milwaukee Hunger Task Force. I understand that you have openings in corporate communications and media relations. Can you tell me about the type of qualifications you're seeking for those positions?"

If you suspect but are unsure that an organization may offer experience related to your interests, you may say something like:

"Hello, Ms. Jones. My name is Jackie Jensen and I'll be graduating in May with a degree in English. I know that the YWCA produces a number of excellent publications and educational materials and I'd be very interested in learning about the background of employees who do this work and how I could be considered for these types of positions."

If you don't know if an organization employs people with your major or educational background, you may say something like:

"Hello, Mr. Smith. My name is Carl Dean and I'll be graduating next spring with a degree in sociology. I'm not sure if people with that major work in your company but, if they do, could you tell me what type of work they generally perform?"

✦ Generate a List of Questions to Ask



If you are trying to choose a major or career direction

"I haven't chosen a major yet, but I know I'm interested (or skilled) in x, y, and z.

What types of positions in your organization (or industry) utilize these areas of interest/skill?"

"I'm considering a career in _____ (or a major in _____). Could you give me advice on the types of positions in your organization that are related to this career area?"

"What skills and qualifications do you most look for in recent graduates? What types of coursework would you recommend?"

"What types of work experiences would prepare me for a career in _____?"

"What are the characteristics of your most successful employees?"

"What type of educational background do you look for in qualified candidates?"

"What types of experiences and skills should candidates have for positions in _____?"

"What skills do you find most marketable in your industry today?"

"What skills to you project being necessary in tomorrow's job market?"

"What responsibilities would someone in the career of _____ have within your organization?"

"Do you offer internships or part-time positions to help people gain career-related skills?"

"What are typical entry level positions in your organization?"

"What types of training programs does your organization offer?"

"Are graduate degrees important to advancing within your organization? Which ones?"

"What made you choose this organization and why do you stay?"

"I'm getting a degree in _____ and I know people in that field probably are not hired by your organization, but are you able to suggest contacts or other organizations that might be helpful to someone with my major?"

If you are speaking with graduate/professional schools

"What courses and other requirements would I need to be accepted to your graduate school?"

"What are the advantages of getting my graduate degree from your school?"

"What internships or related experiences would you recommend that would help me get accepted into your school's graduate program?"

"What types of careers do graduates from your program typically go into?"

"What type of professional work would be the best prepare me for your graduate program?"

"I plan to work while I attend graduate school. What flexibility in scheduling is allowed in the program?"

✦ Generate a List of Questions to Ask (continued)

If you are looking for internships, part-time jobs or full-time employment

Application and hiring process questions

- “Could you please describe the hiring process for your organization and how long it takes?”
- “Does your company only hire at certain times of the year or on an ongoing basis?”
- “What is the most effective way to learn about and apply for positions with your organization?”
- “Have you hired past interns for full time, permanent positions?”

Hiring needs

- “What are the particular needs of your company at this point in time?”
- “What entry level positions do you typically have available?”
- “How many positions in your company are currently open in my career field?”
- “Do you offer internships or part-time positions to help people gain career-related skills?”
- “Does your organization have current needs that could be met by an intern?”
- “Although your organization does not currently have an internship program, would you consider developing an internship for someone with my skills and educational background?”
- “I understand that your company does not offer positions in my professional area. Can you refer me to other organizations that may hire people with my skills?”



Requirements

- “What type of educational background do you look for in qualified candidates?”
- “What types of experiences and skills should candidates have for positions in _____?”
- “What are the characteristics of your most successful employees?”
- “What skills do you find most marketable in your industry today?”
- “What skills to you project being necessary in tomorrows job market?”
- “Please describe the qualifications, responsibilities and specific time requirements of an internship with your organization.”

Position and Company Information

- “What are the day-to-day responsibilities of this job?”
- “What can I expect to be doing the first year?”
- “What is the work environment/culture like at _____?”
- “What is a realistic time frame for advancement?”
- “What training programs does your organization offer?”
- “For how many years does the typical employee stay with the company?”
- “Are graduate degrees important to advancing within your organization? Which ones?”
- “What are the company's strengths and weaknesses compared to its competition?”
- “What makes your organization different from your competitors?”
- “What made you choose this organization and why do you stay?”
- “How long have you been with the organization?”
- “What initiatives/steps has your organization adopted towards diversity?”
- “What percentage of your employees are (Latino, African American, people with disabilities, etc) and how many are in upper management?”

★ Choose What to Wear

Your overall appearance will affect the impression you make on representatives at the career day.



If you plan to speak with employers about internships and jobs that you are interested in obtaining now, it is recommended that you dress professionally as appropriate for your field.

If you are not looking for internships or jobs and instead you are attending the event to gather information to help you make decisions about your major or career direction, then it is okay to come to in “school clothes” such as jeans and sneakers. However, torn clothing or bare midriffs are not acceptable.

No matter what you wear, you will want to make sure that you are neat, clean and well-groomed. Remember, you may be meeting your future employer.

For help in “dressing for success” talk to a CDC career counselor during Express Lane* or check out the following websites for guidelines on professional and business casual dress for men and women.

www.career.vt.edu/JOBSEARC/interview/APPEARNC.html

www.career.vt.edu/JOBSEARC/BusCasual.htm

www.fabjob.com/tips131.html



AT THE CAREER DAY

1. Sign in at the registration table. Make yourself a name badge so that representatives can personalize their discussions with you. Place it on your right shoulder where peoples’ eyes tend to focus first.
2. Look at the floor plan in your handout and circle the location of the organizations in which you are interested. Number and visit them in order of priority especially if you have limited time.
3. Spend as much time as possible at the career day to give yourself the opportunity for quality conversations without feeling rushed. Try to come earlier in the day vs. later since some representatives will leave before the official closing.
4. Be ready to wait in line to speak with some representatives. Take this opportunity to read the organization’s handouts to increase the quality of your questions and discussions.
5. Be interested, friendly and sincere when interacting with representatives at the career day. If you are nervous (which is perfectly normal), take a few deep breaths to relax yourself or look for a CDC staff member to provide support and assistance in how to approach representatives.
6. Ask representatives if they would provide future informational interviews and other career-related information. Request a business card and ask how and when to follow up.
7. Carry a pen and notepad to jot notes about helpful information representatives give you and how/when you may have been asked to follow-up.
8. Avoid monopolizing a representative’s time. If the representative is busy, stop back again to ask additional questions when other students are not waiting or ask if you can email or phone with your questions.
9. Before leaving the career event, go back to visit the organizations that best fit your career goals and remind the representatives of your interest. Thank them for their time and be clear that you will be in touch soon.



AFTER THE CAREER DAY

✦ Thank the Professionals You Met

Mail or email a thank you letter within a day or two of the event to any representatives who gave you in-depth information or who offered to be future contacts.



✦ Follow-up on Requests/Suggestions of the Professionals

Follow-up in a timely manner on any actions that may have been recommended or asked of you. These may include forwarding a copy of your resume to another professional in the organization, calling another person or department in the organization, completing an application form, signing up for an on-campus interview on eRecruiting, etc.

✦ Reflect on What You Learned

Trying to Choose a Major or Career Direction?

- How does what you learned affect your selection of a major or career?
- Did you discover new fields to explore?
- Did you identify skills that would be beneficial for you to develop or strengthen?
- Did you find new contacts who will provide you with first-hand information about careers through informational interviews and job shadowing?

Looking for Internships, Part-time Jobs or Full-time Employment?

- How does the information you acquired affect your approach to the job search?
- Did you identify skills that would be beneficial for you to develop or strengthen?
- What specifics about your background seemed most impressive to representatives?
- Will you need to modify your resume based on employer feedback about candidate qualifications?
- Which skills will you want to emphasize in your resume or in correspondence or other follow up contacts with representatives?
- Did you clarify/confirm the criteria you are looking for in an internship/job?
- Did you identify better questions to ask during your interviews?
- Did you find new contacts to continue to network with?"

CDC Express Lane Walk-In Assistance

Speak with CDC staff for 10-15 minutes on a first-come, first-serve basis regarding:

- Resume / cover letter critiques
- Brief job search and interview related questions
- Beginning career planning steps

Hours

Monday 4:00 - 5:45 pm
Tuesday & Thursday 9:30 - 11:30 am
Wednesday 2:00 - 4:00 pm
Friday 10:30 am - 1:00 pm