

A GUIDE TO: Career Fairs

What is a Career fair?

A career fair is a professional recruiting event where various organizations and companies seek out potential employees. It's a perfect opportunity for students to gain experience speaking in a professional environment, develop a network of contacts, and learn about different companies.

When are career fair events available

The Division of Career Pathways (DCP) hosts at least one **general** career fair each quarter and a **STEM** career fair during fall quarter. More information about their schedule can be found here: <https://career.uci.edu/recruiters/on-campus-recruiting/career-fairs/>.

Engineering organizations and clubs also host their own **engineering specific** career fairs throughout the year such as EngiTECH hosted by ESC and the Civil and Environmental Career fair hosted by the UCI CEE organizations. Important information including date, time, and location is typically sent out through engineering newsletters, social media, or can be seen on their websites.

Before the fair

- **Prepare a well written one page resume** summarizing your educational background, technical skills, and relevant experiences for the position.
 - You can include any projects you have completed whether it is formal work, academic work, or personal side projects. Feel free to link any e-portfolios or github sites that display your projects.
 - Have physical copies available to hand out to employers or submit online.
 - You can also prepare a cover letter, a personal letter expressing your interest in working for the company.
 - Resume/cover letter examples and more in-depth tips can be found here: <https://career.uci.edu/undergraduate/develop-a-resume-cover-letter/resume-and-cover-letter-examples/>. You can also [set up a meeting](#) with DCP education staff to review your documents.

- **Make a list of companies that are a top priority** and set up a rough schedule to ensure you have enough time to visit them all. Some companies will have large lines so you will have to wait in some cases.
 - Use Handshake to find all employers that will be attending the fair and research open job opportunities. You can tailor your questions based on this information.
 - It might be easier to start speaking with companies that you are less interested in to gain confidence and get some experience.
- After narrowing down the companies you want to visit, **research and prepare thoughtful and engaging questions.**
 - Some topics to research: company values/mission, what they specialize in, what projects they have done in the past, etc.
 - During the fair, avoid asking questions that can be answered with a quick google search such as “What does your company do?” or “Where is your company located?”
- **Prepare Elevator Pitch.**
 - An elevator pitch is a 30 second to 1 minute introduction that communicates your background, professional skills/abilities, and career goals. The goal is to leave the employer wanting to learn more and follow up with you.

What it should include:

- Who you are/current status: name, major, concentration, class standing
- What you're looking for: job, internship, exposure to a field
- What you can offer: relevant experiences, skills, abilities, achievements
- How the company relates to your interests
- Possibly end with a question to make room for more conversation!

Tips for word choice:

Use language that demonstrates a positive and confident attitude.

Avoid:

I **hope** to accomplish

I **think** I can offer

I **might** be a good fit

Use:

I **intend** to accomplish

I **can** offer

I **am** a good fit

Example:

Hi, my name is Peter Anteater and I'm a junior Civil Engineering student seeking an internship in hydrology and water resources. Through my internship last summer at XYZ Company, I worked with the water resources team to design a large-scale Best Management Practice project in the City of Irvine. I have also completed several projects throughout the academic year using hydraulic modeling software such as HEC-RAS and HEC-HMS. I am excited by Michael Baker's range of projects as I would have the opportunity to explore different areas involving water quality. I saw your posting on the company website and feel I would be a good candidate for the internship program. Could you tell me more about the position?

During the fair

- Dress appropriately for the fair. First impressions are important. **Business professional or business casual attire is best.**
 - Check out the DCP interview attire guide for ideas:
https://career.uci.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/QT_DressForAnInterview.pdf
- **Get your bearings.** Try to arrive early so you have time to familiarize yourself with the layout of the event and get used to the environment.
 - If you feel yourself getting nervous, take a deep breath, acknowledge your successes and experience, and remember that the employers were once in your shoes and got through it!
- **Ask appropriate questions that show you researched the company.**
 - When recruiters ask if you have any questions, always ask something and try to continue the conversation.
 - When in doubt, ask the recruiters about themselves and their projects or experiences.
 - Examples:
 - What qualifications do you look for in potential employees?
 - What is your favorite part about working at your company? Are there any challenges?
 - What other experiences do you suggest I gain before I graduate?
 - What type of project do intern/entry level/co-op employees typically work on in your company?

- **End the conversation.**
 - Ask for contact information and the best way to contact them.
 - Make sure to get the name of the company and representative you met with.
 - Make sure to finish up your notes with all important information before leaving to speak to another company.

After the fair

- **Send a thank you email** to the company representatives you spoke to within 24 hours. Generally, you should remind them of the meeting place/date, mention any unique takeaways from the meeting, and express gratitude for their time.
 - If you were seeking a position, reiterate your interest in the company, your skills and qualifications, and include your resume again for their convenience.
 - At the end, mention that you look forward to hearing back from them or learning about other opportunities.
- **Connect with recruiters on LinkedIn.**
- **Follow any directions that you were given from recruiters** and apply for positions.
- **Prepare for any upcoming interviews** from companies you visited.

Thank you note example:

Dear company representative,

It was nice meeting with you at the Civil and Environmental Engineering Career Fair this morning. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me about internship opportunities at your company. It was exciting to learn about the past projects and contributions other employees have made.

I also enjoyed learning that you were involved in the concrete canoe project through American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), which is the same project I am involved with.

As you suggested I have applied for the internship online. Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me. I look forward to hearing from you in the future!

Sincerely,
Peter Anteater

Virtual Career Fairs

Virtual career fairs are an opportunity for students to meet with recruiters via audio, video, and/or chat. Virtual fairs hosted by the Division of Career Pathways are accessed through **Handshake**. You can pre-register for one-on-one or group sessions with employers or join an **open** session the day of. Keep in mind that other events may use different platforms such as Career Fair Plus so make sure to follow the correct steps to register.

Before the fair

- **Complete your Handshake profile** to view one-on-one meetings. Under **my profile**:
 - Fill out education section & GPA
 - Fill out work experience
 - Add extracurricular activities
 - Add skills, interest, courses, and projects
 - Add a profile picture
 - Upload resume
- **Set privacy settings to: community** if you'd like to participate in group sessions.
- **Register for one-on-one meetings with recruiters.** These meetings are first come first serve.
 - It might be a good idea to schedule your first meetings with companies that are lower on your priority list to “warm up.”
- **Ensure your video and audio are working correctly.**
 - You can test your microphone and camera the day before by calling a friend or family member.
- **Test out different browsers** to see which works the best.

During the fair

- **Dress professionally.** Although this is a virtual event and the chat is an option, most conversations will be held through video call.
- **Use a computer** instead of the Handshake app to avoid any technical issues.
- **Set up in a space where there is minimal noise and use an appropriate background.**
 - A UCI provided Zoom background or the Zoom blur background will work well.
 - If you need a quiet space for the event, you can reserve a room on campus using the study space locator: <https://www.lib.uci.edu/study-space-locator>.

- If you are using zoom, you can [adjust settings to suppress background noise](#).
 - End the conversation and follow up after the fair as you would for an in-person event.
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FAQs

Can I still go if I am a freshman or if I'm not actively seeking a job/internship?

- Yes, going to the career fair will allow you to become known to possible employers, find out what they seek in potential employees, and gain contacts.

Which employers come to the career fairs?

- The hosts will typically send out information regarding the companies attending prior to the day of the event. For virtual fairs, you will be able to see which companies are available when you register for sessions.

Can students register for as many sessions as they like for virtual events?

- Yes, you can register for as many as you like as long as the scheduled times don't overlap.

Will transcripts be available after virtual sessions?

- No, they will not be provided afterwards.

Can I attend career fairs as an alumni ?

- Yes, please see the career center [alumni services](#).