

CareerFest

— Connecting Students & Employers

For ISCPA Member Schools' Students & Alumni Only

CAREERFEST GUIDE TO SUCCESS

The Basics

- Friday, January 29, 2016
- Res/Rec Center, Naperville, IL
(on the campus of North Central College)
- 10:00 - 3:00 PM to meet with businesses and non-profit employers
- 1:00 – 5:00 PM to meet with school districts

DIRECTIONS TO CAREERFEST

CareerFest will be held at: Residence Hall/Recreation (Res/Rec) Center
North Central College
440 S. Brainard St.
Naperville, IL

<http://northcentralcollege.edu/content/directions-to-campus>

(Also see links to the left on the website above for campus map and public transportation information.)

Parking for this event: <https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=zXL-KyI7fgJ4.k6BCUwx7RI3c>

Parking available throughout the designated **yellow** areas on the above map. Please remember to observe all posted signage in the area .

**Dining in
Downtown Naperville:**

http://downtownnaperville.com/directory/?filter_type=22#results

What and Why

- CareerFest is held annually in the Chicago area for the purpose of bringing together company, non-profit, and school district recruiters with students/job seekers.
- The emphasis is on *networking*: making good impressions and developing contacts that will hopefully lead to formal job interviews.
- Employers may simply collect resumes or they may actually conduct interviews at the fair.
- ***You should be prepared for anything!***

Before the Fair

- Polish your **resume** and have it critiqued.
- Purchase a conservative, professional outfit/suit and shoes to wear. Make sure it is clean and wrinkle free!
- Purchase a nice portfolio or leather folder to hold your resumes and any information you gather.
- **Research** employers attending the fair. Know a little bit about the companies you want to meet. For a current list of employers registered, log in to the ISCPA Online Career Center at <http://www.collegecentral.com/iscpa/> and follow the link to CareerFest under “Events”
- **Be sure to upload your resume to the site as well. Employers will be given the opportunity to pre-screen resumes.**
- Practice your handshake and **30 Second Commercial**. You should have a firm handshake, and maintain eye contact while speaking to the recruiter. Use this formula to create your unique commercial: Name, year in school, major, relevant experience or skills, and desired position.
Here’s an example:
Hello, my name is Jane Doe. I am currently a senior at Benedictine University majoring in accounting. I completed an internship with Kraft Foods last summer and have also volunteered with a tax assistance program for underprivileged families. I am looking for an entry-level position with an accounting firm.
- **Practice! Practice! Practice!** Shake hands and introduce yourself to your friends, to family, to yourself in the mirror. Employers at career fairs look for prospective employees who know what they want in a career and show initiative. Do not act confused about your future! They may have too many candidates to see and can’t afford to waste any time to help you determine your career goals. This is the time to be confident – not shy!!!
- Prepare to answer and ask questions. (see sample questions section)

At the fair

What should I bring?

- Lots of resumes - at least 30 (if you are open to various types of employers).
- Vinyl padfolio or leather folder.
- **A positive attitude and an eagerness to meet new people.** They will serve you well! You should also have a pen and paper; you’ll want to take notes on the companies you meet with.

What should I wear?

- A SUIT. First impressions are important. You want to look professional and polished. That includes hair, jewelry, cologne, socks, shoes, EVERYTHING! (see attached sheet on what to and what not to wear)
- Ladies – if you carry a purse, make sure it matches your suit.

What should I expect?

- You can expect hustle and bustle! CareerFest will host large numbers of employers (at tables) and attract hundreds of students. The atmosphere is “energized” by activities and conversations. You will register upon your arrival (receive a “map” of the room and employers’ information) and then you should hang your coat to the right of the check-in booth. Then you get your pre-printed nametag (if you pre-registered) and you are on your own to make contact with employers of interest to you.

What do I do?

- Target several companies/organizations and present yourself to them. Be flexible when targeting your employers of interest and manage your time effectively. There may be long lines for popular companies, especially at the beginning of the session.
- Manage your time by visiting other employers until lines are shorter. Make a priority list of the employers you want most to meet. Also create a log of “maybes” in case you have some time left over at the end. Don’t pre-qualify too much—you will miss out on many opportunities if you pass up a booth just because you “think” you know whom they are hiring.
- Listen attentively and gather information. Learn as much as you can about the various openings available. Be open-minded. Employers *consider your experience and skills*, not just your major.
- Give yourself some breathing space and take notes. CareerFest interviews last from 5 to 15 minutes. After each interview, take a few minutes to reflect on what you have learned and how you performed. Accurate information will be needed for the follow-up done after the job fair. Make notes on the companies as well as ask for a business card and any available information from the recruiter with whom you are speaking. Collect business cards for future reference. This will also help you with follow-up after the fair.
- Your “mini-interview” should be a dialogue, not a monologue. Because you have limited time to make an impression and gain valuable information about the company, you should have several questions ready. These questions help you figure out if the company and job is a good match for you. THEN use that information to sell yourself! Answer questions directly, politely, and concisely.

How shall I best conduct myself as I speak with recruiters?

- You will approach each employer with confidence! You will initiate contact with the employers present by making eye contact, smiling, offering a firm handshake and introducing yourself. Employers look for firm handshakes (but don’t break anyone’s hand either) and good communication skills from a prospective employee. A friendly manner and ease in conversation will take you a long way. This is your first impression (besides your appearance), even before the resume or interview.
- You can present your resume and inquire about the employment possibilities if this is a company you are interested in or think you might be interested in. Remember, just because they do not have an opening in the exact department you desire, one may open up or you may find something else within the company to start you out. Don't close the door too quickly. Think creatively!
- Network with other job seekers. Talk to other job seekers at the fair. Which employers have they seen? What questions did they ask?

Review of the DO's and DON'Ts

Do:

- Present yourself with professionalism, enthusiasm, and confidence at all times
- Be polite at all times. The person you meet in the parking lot, hallway, or restroom may be a recruiter you see later that day
- Utilize effective non-verbal communication skills including direct eye contact.
- Answer questions clearly and concisely
- Ask questions that demonstrate knowledge of the organization
- Be well organized and have resumes available
- Explore every company that sparks your interest
- Be patient and respect other candidates privacy when approaching the recruiter's table

- Take breaks when you need them
- Make notes about each visit and regroup before approaching the next recruiter
- Focus on what you can do for the employer not what the organization can do for you
- Spend as much time as you can at the career fair to make the most of this networking event

Don't:

- Give your resume immediately to the employer as a means of introduction
- Chew gum, fidget, play with your hair, sway, etc.
- Walk up to an employer and expect them to take control of the conversation
- Congregate with your friends where the employer can watch you
- Ask about salary and benefits initially

After the Fair

- **Organize** all of the brochures and business cards you collected and make notes on the companies you visited.
- **Follow up with those employers you desire an interview with.** It is appropriate to send a follow-up letter to any employers you met at CareerFest within 3 days. Resumes left behind act as a reminder and reinforce the impression you made with the recruiter. However, an additional follow-up note is your chance to thank them for their time, explain why you are a good fit with the company, and express your continued interest in the position.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: The program book says they have openings for full-time positions, but I want an internship. Should I talk to them anyway?

A: YES!! If you are interested in a company, talk to them! The recruiter attending the fair may be able to forward your resume to the appropriate individual or provide you with the contact information to send your resume to that person. Take advantage of the opportunity!

Q: If an employer is not hiring, why do they go to CareerFest?

A: Job opportunities can come and go quickly with employers. Employers need to go to job fairs in order to collect resumes for when the jobs open up. If you are interested in a company, and they tell you "We're not hiring," make sure you follow up with them in a month or two to see if any opportunities have come up.

Q: Why do employers come to CareerFest, but then tell me "go to our website to apply?"

A: There are several reasons why employers do this. One reason is that it is much easier for the recruiter to email an electronic resume than it is to copy a paper resume and mail it around the company. Think about it: don't you prefer to use email than snail mail? Another reason is that it's easier for an employer to keyword search for certain skills they are looking for when your resume is electronic. Just because an employer tells you to apply online doesn't mean your resume is being zapped into a black hole!

Q: How come there weren't any jobs or internships in my major?

A: Are you **SURE??** Sometimes students will pass by an employer because they assume there won't be any opportunities for them. Don't forget, a hospital needs more than just doctors and nurses;

they need human resources managers, IT specialists, etc. Social Service agencies need more than just counselors; they need accountants and public relations managers too. The best way to find opportunities in your field of study is to talk to as many employers as you can. You'll be pleasantly surprised to see how many great opportunities await you!!

COMMON QUESTIONS TO EXPECT FROM EMPLOYERS

- Tell me about yourself. Tell me about your interests.
- Tell me about your work experience.
- Why did you decide to attend this school?
- Why did you select your major?
- What interests you about our organization?
- Why do you want this position? Why our organization?
- Why do you think you would be successful in this field?
- What are your short-term and long-term goals?
- What three things are most important to you in a job?
- What major problems have you encountered and how did you deal with them?

Additional potential questions for teacher candidates:

- Why did you choose this profession as a career?
- During your student teaching experience what did you find most challenging?
- What instructional strategies have you found most effective?
- What new ideas would you bring to our district?
- What makes you the best candidate for the position?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK THE EMPLOYERS

- Please describe the position(s) you have available at _____.
- What is your timeline for filling this position?
- Does your organization offer a training program? What does it include?
- What qualifications are important for this position?
- What career paths are available after starting in this position?
- Is relocation/travel required for this position?
- How can I reach you in order to follow up with this position?
- *A question based on your research of the organization.*

EXCLUSIVE – ISCPA Students and Alumni only!

Please do not invite your non-ISCPA college or alumni friends to attend. They will not be admitted.

SAMPLE FOLLOW-UP LETTER (ENTRY LEVEL JOB)
Remember, this is just a sample. Be creative and personable.

Your address

February 3, 2015

Name of contact person

Title (if known)

Organization name

Organization address

City, State, Zip Code

Dear (Mr., Ms, or Mrs. Last Name):

I enjoyed speaking with you at CareerFest last week about (organization name) and the (position title) position. I am very interested in this position and believe my good (experience, scholastic record, or whatever your strength) and my interest in working with (people, or other interest area) can be an asset to your organization.

Feel free to call me at 012-345-6789 if I can provide you with any additional information. I look forward to meeting with you again.

Sincerely,

(Leave four spaces for your signature.)

Your name

*Excerpt from **When Job-Hunting: Dress for Success**
by Randall S. Hansen, Ph.D.*

It's probably one of the most overused phrases in job-hunting, but also one of the most underutilized by job-seekers: dress for success. In job-hunting, first impressions are critical. Remember, you are marketing a product -- yourself -- to a potential employer, and the first thing the employer sees when greeting you is your attire; thus, you must make every effort to have the proper dress for the type of job you are seeking. Will dressing properly get you the job? Of course not, but it will give you a competitive edge and a positive first impression.

Hints for Dress for Success for Men and Women

Attention to details is crucial, so here are some tips for both men and women. Make sure you have:

- clean and polished conservative dress shoes
- well-groomed hairstyle
- cleaned and trimmed fingernails
- minimal cologne or perfume

- no visible body piercing beyond conservative ear piercings for women
- well-brushed teeth and fresh breath
- no gum, candy, or other objects in your mouth
- minimal jewelry
- no body odor

Finally, check your attire in the rest room just before your interview for a final check of your appearance -- to make sure your tie is straight, your hair is combed, etc.

For specific tips for women: http://www.quintcareers.com/dress_for_women.html

For specific tips for men: http://www.quintcareers.com/dress_for_men.html

Bottom line: You need to look your best at a job fair or interview. That doesn't mean spending a fortune, either. I knew a 2006 grad who spent \$25 on a suit and borrowed the shoes. She looked fantastic.

Women

- Solid color, conservative suit (pantsuit is fine)
- Coordinated blouse
- Moderate shoes – no open toes or spikes
- Limited jewelry – nothing flashy
- Neat, professional hairstyle
- Tan or light hosiery
- Sparse make-up & perfume
- Manicured nails
- Portfolio or briefcase

Men

- Solid color, conservative suit
- White or light colored long sleeve shirt
- Conservative tie
- Dark socks, professional shoes
- Very limited jewelry
- Neat, professional hairstyle
- Go easy on the aftershave
- Neatly trimmed nails
- Portfolio or briefcase

QUESTIONS?

Please contact your college's career center if you have any questions about CareerFest.