

Your Career Fair Guide



Why should I attend a career fair?

A career fair is held to bring potential employers together with Viterbo students for internships and/or full-time employment. Students benefit by getting the chance to make multiple contacts with area professionals to explore opportunities and network. Making that initial contact is crucial in a job search, and the career fair allows students to meet dozens of potential employers, all in one afternoon.

Career fairs are a great way to meet prospective employers and generate leads for possible jobs and internships.

When are career fairs offered?

Career Fairs are offered three times a year at Viterbo University. In the fall, Career Services and Campus Ministry co-sponsor the Volunteer, Internship, and Part-time Job Fair. Students seeking internships can meet with representatives from various agencies and organizations in town to learn more about opportunities and apply if they're interested. Also in the fall, a Nursing Career Fair is scheduled, offering both jobs and internships for nursing majors. In the spring, Career Services, in cooperation with other private colleges in Wisconsin, hosts Workforce, Wisconsin's Premier Internship and Job Fair in Milwaukee, WI. This group brings employers from around the state to meet with students and recent graduates. For more information go to <http://www.wipccc.org>.

Other career fairs in the La Crosse area are offered by the *La Crosse Tribune* at the convention center (see flyers on campus both fall and spring for more details) and at other colleges. If you're planning to relocate, ask Career Services staff how to find out about career fairs in other communities.

**Viterbo University, Career Services, 374 Murphy Center
608-796-3828 ~ careers@viterbo.edu ~ M-F, 8 to 4:30**

How can I prepare for a career fair?

Research. Find out what companies will be represented. Read the career fair handout in advance of attending. Research the companies just as you would for an interview. With this information, when you meet the employer you will be able to communicate why you want to work for them and what you can do for them. Websites offer great company information. Remember, don't just concentrate on "big name" companies attending. There are often great opportunities with smaller or lesser known companies as well.

Resumes. Do you have one? Does it need to be updated? See *Your Resume Guide* handout in Career Services or meet with a career counselor for more assistance. Before printing multiple copies, have others proofread it for you. Recruiters will question your work ethic if you hand in a poorly written resume filled with mistakes. Bring copies of your resume (5 – 30, depending on the size of the event). Be sure your resume represents the best you have to offer in terms of skills, knowledge, accomplishments and abilities. Your resume needs to look professional – with an easy to read format on resume paper.

Sales pitch. Prepare your sales pitch. When you hand the recruiter a copy of your resume, be prepared to give an introduction. Share basic information about yourself and your interests: "Hello, I'm Carrie Jones. I'm a senior at Viterbo University, and I'm majoring in English. I'm very interested in a marketing career. As you can see on my resume, I've just completed a marketing internship with ABC Company. I've also taken some courses in business marketing. I'm very interested in talking with you about marketing opportunities at your organization."

Appearance. A career fair is a professional activity – perhaps your first contact with a future employer. Come dressed as you would for an interview. Refer to *Your Interviewing Guide* available in Career Services for more details on dressing appropriately.

Energy. Career fairs require you to be on your feet moving from table to table. Each time you meet someone, be at your best, as refreshed as possible. Get a good night's rest. Treat these encounters as interviews – smile, and greet them with a firm handshake.

Career Fair Do's & Don'ts

Do interact with recruiters on your own. Make your own positive impression.

Do carry your resume in a professional looking portfolio or small briefcase.

Do ask recruiters for their business card(s). Use the cards to write follow-up notes to those organizations in which you're interested.

Do pick up information about organizations you've contacted, including company brochures, computer diskettes, position descriptions, etc.

Don't come during the last half hour of the event, unless that's the only free time you have. You run the risk of not getting around to all the employers you wanted to meet.



Don't carry your backpack, large purse, or other bulky items with you.



What do I say when I meet an employer?

Bring a smile, a strong handshake, and a positive attitude. First impressions are important. Tell the recruiter your name, your class year, and whether you're interested in a full-time position or internship. Follow with your career interest, your major(s) and finally, why you came to the company's table.

Now is the time to present your short "sales pitch". Keep the conversation professional; but it's okay to engage in some small talk. Keep it to hobbies, weather, non-controversial events of the day, sports, and things like that. Don't ask the recruiter anything too personal.



When you give a recruiter your resume, ask "what is the next step in the process?" Remember to jot this down in your notes after you've talked with them. Make notes about all the contacts you made. Take a paper and pen with you to write down important details, such as who you talked with (especially the ones who didn't have business cards).

How should I follow up with employers I'm interested in?



Write follow up inquiries using the materials, cards and notes from the fair itself. If you're really interested in an opportunity, sending a follow-up note to both thank the recruiter for sharing information with you and express your genuine interest is a good idea. How you follow-up depends on what the recruiter told you during the fair. If they said they would call you within a certain time frame, it's okay to call them back if you don't hear after that time has expired.

Polish up on your interviewing skills (refer to *Your Interview Guide* available in Career Services or ask about a mock interview) for when the employer calls you for follow up!!!

Career fairs are wonderful places for prospective employees and employers to make initial contact, but only if you invest the time to prepare properly. Use these tips to help you get the most out of the career fairs you attend!

ATTN: Students Career Tips

- 1) Smile, shake hands, introduce yourself, and make good eye contact.
- 2) Be polite and show interest in what recruiters/employers share with you about the organization.
- 3) Thank them when you are finished talking with them.
- 4) Ask for their business card if you're very interested in the organization.
- 5) Talk to as many organizations as possible, use the career fair as a networking opportunity!

6) Top Picks: "The Lasting Impression Technique"

Before you leave the career fair, return to the booth of any employer you have interest in. Wait for a break in the action, then step up to the recruiter and thank them again for their time. Let them know that you will be in touch and look forward to speaking with them again.

- 7) After the career fair, follow up with those that interest you via phone, email, and interviews