

Participate in Career Fairs

BPA and CECE host career and volunteer fairs that are attended by employers seeking new employees and student volunteers. Students can use career fairs to create that first form of contact with a potential employer. When attending a career or an internship fair, keep in mind the set of suggestions below.

- Before attending a fair or other networking opportunity, prepare an **elevator speech** that briefly highlights skills that will encourage an employer to want to learn more about you. In your elevator speech, find a way to connect your interests to the organization's mission and values. End your elevator speech with a question about the organization so that you can begin the process of engaging in conversation with someone who might be in a position to hire you. Be sure to practice well in advance of the event!
- Bring copies of your **reviewed and revised resume** to leave with company representatives you meet with during the event. Make sure that you have had a brief conversation with the representative and have recited, in a natural tone, your elevator speech to them so that they know a little about you. If they take your resume, they may decide to jot down a few comments about their interaction with you, which is why you want to have thoroughly practiced your elevator speech!
- Ask for the business card of each person you meet in order to continue building your network of resources. Send a **thank you email**, written in a professionally-styled manner, to those you engaged with in conversation, as a way to recognize the time they spent with you.
- If you find yourself interested in a particular company as a result of attending a career fair, be sure to contact the representative of the company you met, thank them for the conversation, and ask if it is possible to schedule an **informational interview** with them. An informational interview is usually about 30 minutes in length and is a way for you to try to learn more about a company to determine if you are interested in it as a potential future employer. You can ask questions about what happens at the company on a typical day, about its culture and working environment, or about what excites them about the company's future. Be sure to listen, to engage with follow-up questions, and to send a thank you email the next day that highlights what you appreciated about the conversation.
- Attend the **Growing Opportunities Career Fair** hosted annually by BPA for students interested in agribusiness.
- Attend the **Local Financial Services Career Fair** coordinated annually by the BPA Department of Accounting and Finance.
- Attend the **Career Expos** and **Volunteer Fairs** that are coordinated by CECE every fall and spring semester.