Strategies for Career Fair Success

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The SWE/TBP Engineering Career Fair takes place over two days: Monday, September 14th and Tuesday, September 15th. The fair will be VIRTUAL and will take place within the Career Fair Plus app. The fair will be open from 9:00AM-5:00PM, but companies will make their own schedules within that timeframe to fit their needs. So one company may have time slots open starting at 9am and another may not have anything open until noon Eastern Time.
Why should you attend the Career Fair? There are benefits for both those conducting a job search, as well as those who are not currently searching. Everyone’s motivations will be different, but here are the primary reasons for attending the fair:

You can search for Full-Time, Internship, and Co-Op positions from over 190 companies

You can gather information on companies of interest. You can learn a lot about a company at the career fair by asking targeted questions, which affords you the opportunity to customize your application materials

One on One Virtual Appointments with recruiters means you have the opportunity to establish a personal connection and put a face/personality to a name/resume is a tremendous advantage in the job search!

Students have cited that this fair is an important component of their job search. Each year we ask graduating students information about their post-graduation plans. One of the questions we ask students is how they obtained their final position. The
sample size consists only of students who informed us how they obtained their opportunity (many students obtained a job but did not respond to that question on the survey)

32.8%: Networking (includes: Networking, Family/Friends, Company Event on Campus, Academic Department Referral, Faculty Referral, Organization/Club)

Practice Networking!
You will have opportunities to meet new people (aka networking) throughout your life, take advantage of the opportunity to develop these skills before you graduate. This is the only time you’ll have 300+ companies seeking (and competing for) your attention and application, take advantage of this opportunity and have fun! It’s also a two-way street! This is your first chance to ‘interview’ the company yourself.

• While the fair isn’t everything, it is an important part of the career search process at Michigan Engineering
• Currently Not Searching: You can start the process of developing relations, gain info for future applications, practice elevator pitch and interacting with employers. (Behind the scenes tip: recruiters will mark resumes of potential candidates for consideration in future years.)
At a Career Fair you can learn information about specific companies and the culture, employer contact information. In a virtual setting when you conclude your meeting you can ask for the recruiters' email address to follow up, just know some may give it to you and some may not and that's ok. You can also learn application instructions, what positions they are currently recruiting for and future job openings as well as the skills needed for particular positions.
Students often express feeling directionless when preparing for the career fair, so we’re going to go over the preparation process.
So how do you prepare for the career fair? Especially in a virtual setting? We will go over 5 steps that will help you prepare for the career fair: how to research companies that will be attending the fair, how to set a schedule for yourself in Career Fair Plus, how to create a 30-second elevator pitch that you can use to introduce yourself to recruiters, how to plan your wardrobe and location that you will be in while having conversation with recruiters, and what materials you will need for a virtual fair.
Your first preparation step is to do research on the companies attending the fair. Go to the company website and look through their mission, locations, current projects, job postings, who works there, history, and mission. An additional step is to search media reports of the company, have they been in the news recently? Good or bad? Take a look through those articles. In additional you can do research through Engineering Careers, by Symplicity and the Career Fair Plus app to see what companies have entered about themselves into those systems. You can also use D&B Hoovers, Glassdoor, LinkedIn, and your peers to do additional research.

You don’t need to know every detail about a company, you want to know just enough to start a conversation, or demonstrate that you’ve looked into the company a bit. You don’t have to be an expert, but you do want to demonstrate interest! Additionally you want to connect your interest to their opportunities so it’s easy for the recruiter to see how you would fit into their organization.
Create a list of varied list of targeted companies that include: companies you may not have heard of before, of various sizes, in a variety of geographic areas. Don’t just go after the big names, there are many companies out there that could be a good fit for you that you may not of heard about just yet.

Next, prioritize this list based on your interest level. This should be a personal process, think about what is important to you and not your friends or family, etc.

What should you do if one of the companies you are interested in doesn’t have any timeslots left? Check back in the app a few times a day, students can cancel appointments that you can take up until the day of the fair, and recruiters may add more appointment times if they see they have filled up.

Setting your schedule goes beyond just the Career Fair- take a look at additional recruitment activities such as Information Sessions and Career Days you may even have to budget time for potential on campus interviews. It’s a constant juggling act of managing time between class, homework/studying, career fair, interviews and extra-curricular activities
Step 2 is to set your schedule in Career Fair Plus but first you will want to pay attention to the timeline heading up to the fair.

Make sure to download the CF+ app before September 4th and set up your profile. Make sure to set up your profile completely, including first and last name and upload a resume. Recruiters can pull this information and they want as much information about who they are speaking to as they can get. This will only help you!

You can enroll in a Piazza Forum run by the SWE/TBP Career Fair directors to ask them questions leading up to the fair

Starting now, begin researching companies that will be attending the fair

From September 4th at noon eastern time until September 15th at the end of the fair you can book appointments with recruiters. Check back on the app multiple times a day as students will drop appointments and recruiters can add appointments if their appointments fill up.

Start thinking about what you will wear for the career fair and the location you will be
in when meeting with employers virtually.

On Sept 14 and 15 you will meet with employers during your scheduled meetings.
Setting your schedule in Career Fair Plus. Download the app to your phone or device. There is a desktop version that you can use for the day of the fair for the video interface, but the app on your phone will be easier to use for scheduling appointments.
DOWNLOAD THE APP

1. Download the Career Fair Plus app to your phone/device.
2. Open the app and:
   1. Select ‘Student/Candidate’ as the role
      1. If you are an existing user of the app, you may need to select ‘Role’ in the bottom navigation menu and select ‘Student/Candidate’
   2. Select the organization ‘University of Michigan’
   3. Select ‘CoE 2020 Fall SWE/TBP Engineering Career Fair’
3. You can start looking through the employers that will be attending the virtual fair without needing to create an account (Note: you will need to create an account to schedule appointments).
TEST YOUR CONNECTION TO THE CF+ VIDEO PLATFORM

You can access your video appointment(s) via your phone/device or a desktop computer.

Full desktop functionality is only available through Chrome and Firefox. Please use this link to test that you can enter the CF+ video platform for appointments.

You can join these links via your phone or desktop so we recommend testing this on multiple devices.
CREATE YOUR ACCOUNT
To create your account from a specific Career Fair event page in the app:

1. Tap ‘Meetings’ on the bottom navigation menu.
2. Tap ‘Create Account’
   
   1. **Note:** You will need to use your umich email to create your account or else you will not be able to schedule appointments.

3. Complete your Profile
   
   1. Ensure that your phone number is accurate in case of technical difficulties during the fair.

4. Upload your Resume/CV
   
   1. If you do not have your resume on your current device, tap ‘Send Resume/CV Upload Magic Link’ to get a link sent to your email so you can upload a file from a different device or your computer.

   2. **Note:** You can only upload one resume. Make sure you upload the latest version of your resume before the fair begins to ensure
recruiters have access to it.
5. Tap ‘Finish’ to complete your account creation.
6. You can update your profile/resume at any time by tapping ‘Meetings’ on the lower right of the screen, and then tapping ‘Profile’ in the upper right corner.
Appointment Scheduling

Select the employer you would like to meet with and then tap ‘Meetings’ to see the schedules they have available. Please note that all appointments must be scheduled via the app. Select the schedule that you’re interested in; employers may have multiple schedules.

Employers may also have prerequisites for certain schedules. Before you can book appointments with prerequisites, you will need to confirm that you qualify.

Select a time that works for you, and tap ‘YES’ to book the appointment slot.

You will receive an email confirmation for each appointment you schedule.

Cancel/Change an Appointment

Tap on ‘Meetings’ and then tap on the appointment you would like to change. You will then have an option to CANCEL the appointment or CHANGE the time (if alternative slots are available).

You will receive an email confirmation for each appointment.
you cancel/change.
Virtual Help Desk via Zoom 8am-5pm ET Sept 14 & 15:  
https://umich.zoom.us/j/91986314713
Log into the app/desktop and make sure you are signed into your account.  
Access your virtual appointment schedule and meet with employers  
Use the app to help you track your appointments.  
If you have available time in your schedule, check to see if other companies have any open appointments.

To join the virtual rooms for your appointments, you can access the links via the app or the desktop by going to your appointment and clicking on “Join Meeting”.

Etiquette for Joining Rooms  
Be punctual, but not more than 2 minutes early. When you knock to enter a meeting room, the employer will be notified that you are there. Given that most appointments are 10 minutes, you don’t want to knock too early and interrupt the middle of the conversation with another student.  
If you or the recruiter have technical difficulties at the time of the appointment, we’ve instructed the recruiters to call the phone number listed in your profile.
Step 3 is to create a 30-second ‘elevator pitch’ or introduction of yourself. You will want to spend sufficient time developing your elevator pitch and it’s a good idea to customize your elevator pitch to each company you are interested in.

So what is an elevator pitch? Imagine that you’re in an elevator, you and one other person get on at the first level. You realize that the other person is the CEO of your dream company, you have the time it takes to reach the 15th floor to share why you’re a great fit for your dream organization...what do you say?
You want to sound confident, sincere, and engaging. It should not sound like you’re reading from a script.

There are a lot of companies at the career fair, why are you interested in this organization over the others? Avoid generic descriptions: “hoping to use my course project experience and skills during an internship at your company” – this does not tell the recruiter anything about you, you will want to share more unique, and descriptive examples.

Highlight skills that are related to that organization's needs. Reference something you find interesting about their work/industry and express your interest in learning more.
Sample Elevator Pitch

Hi, I'm Sally Smith. I'm a junior studying Mechanical Engineering and I'm interested in your automotive internship.

I've spent the last two summers in an automotive powertrain lab researching technologies to increase engine efficiency. I have also served for two years as an officer in the Society of Women Engineers.

I'm hoping to apply my research and leadership skills in your automotive program, specifically on your new model vehicles. Can you tell me more about it?

Draft an elevator pitch script. However, you do not need to recite the script word-for-word at the Career Fair. While it should sound professional, it should not sound rehearsed or flat (without emotion). (Use this as inspiration, don’t copy this sample exactly, if employers hear the same pitch over and over then you’re not going to stand out.)
While we are not taking the time to practice your pitch now, there is an opportunity to practice in person with an employer on Friday, Sept, 11.
Step 4, how do you dress for success in a virtual setting? It actually goes a little beyond a nice shirt.

Find a quiet area to have your virtual conversations. Be aware of your background and harsh lighting. A private room is best if you can find one.

Silence any distractions! Use headphones if you are unable to find a private room.
Gather the materials you will need

- Notepad and pen
- Have your resume up on your computer to reference if needed and a PDF ready to email.
- Copies of your elevator pitch
- Your Schedule

Step 5
This is a two way exchange, be sure to note the recruiter’s name. This will make it easier to write thank you notes after the fair.

– prepare questions ahead of time to display your knowledge and explore fit

Remember, it’s a conversation – you are giving and receiving information – to determine whether there is mutual interest to invest in the next step of the process – THE INTERVIEW!
Questions employers may ask you

Questions will center on:

- Knowledge of company
- Knowledge of industry
- Your interest in working for their company
- Your experience/skills
- Your resume - be prepared to answer questions about your GPA or anything listed on your resume
Questions to ask employers

Questions should center on:

- Skills they are seeking
- Training opportunities
- Career growth and advancement
- Organizational culture & environment
- Company and industry challenges
- Next steps in the application process
Questions NOT to ask

- What does your company do?
- Does your company have any jobs?
- How much does this position pay?
- What are the company benefits?
If you applied to a position(s) at their organization since you last spoke at the career fair, note this in your email.
Sample Follow-up Email:
General Interest in a Company

Dear Ms. Recruiter,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me at the University of Michigan Career Fair on September 15th. I appreciated the opportunity to learn more about your company. I am impressed by the recent quality improvements you described at Company X, the training programs you discussed reaffirm my belief Company X is a challenging yet rewarding place to work. I will follow-up with you at the beginning of my senior year to explore potential employment opportunities available at that time. Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Clearly A. Student
(734) 123-4567

This is meant as a sample, DO NOT COPY it. Think about it from the recruiter perspective. If they receive 20 of the same thank you notes, you have taken away the advantage you created by writing a thank you note. This is a “bonus” opportunity to set yourself apart.

The note should not leave the recruiter with a sense of obligation (to follow up, etc.), it should be sent purely as a thank you for their time.
Sample Follow-up Email: Interest in a Specific Position

Dear Mr. Recruiter,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me at the University of Michigan Career Fair on Sept 15th. I appreciate your time and the information you provided.

After speaking with you about Company X’s Engineering Trainee Program, I am even more confident my background and interests are a great fit for this opportunity. My engineering education and experience as President of the Z Club have enhanced my leadership and analytical skills, two qualities I believe would be an asset to Company X.

As you advised, I have submitted my resume through your website. If you need additional information please contact me at (734)123-4567. Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Clearly A. Student
It’s important to let the recruiters know what specific roles you have applied for. Usually this is the first step in the hiring process. It’s a way for HR to keep track of the applicants.

Many recruiters will instruct you to apply to the open positions at their organization, this is not a blow off tactic, they need your application in order to move forward in the process. Take the time to complete applications while your career fair discussions are fresh in your mind. Set aside time the week of/weekend after career fair to follow up with employers and apply to positions.

Pay attention to deadlines, as many positions close the night of the fair or within a couple days of the career fair.
Final Tips

- Maintain a **Positive Attitude**
- Use **Eye Contact** and a **Professional Background**
- Do not **Monopolize** a specific company’s time by signing up for multiple appointments with them
- Follow through on your commitments and show up for appointments you have scheduled
- Check back in the CF+ app a few times a day to see if new appointments have opened up
Questions?

Engineering Career Resource Center
230 Chrysler Center
Monday through Friday, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm
http://career.engin.umich.edu
ecrc-info@umich.edu
If you get a job offer...

Assess before accepting:
• Does it match your career goals?
• Do you fully understand what your role will be?
• Are you ready to stop interviewing with other companies?
• Do you need more time to fully consider the offer?
• Would you like to review the offer with an ECRC advisor?
• Have you familiarized yourself with the ECRC’s Offers and Acceptance of Employment Policy?