

CAREER FAIR PREPARATION GUIDE

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What exactly is the Career Fair?

Career fairs are recruitment events for organizations to engage with students and alumni looking for internships, volunteer opportunities, part-time and full-time employment, including raising awareness about their organization. In public health, the types of organizations that take part in a career fair are quite diverse, ranging from large consulting companies, state health departments to small international non-profits. At a fair, each participating organization will have representatives available to discuss the organization and the types of positions they may have available.

HOW CAN THE ROLLINS CAREER FAIR BENEFIT ME?

A career fair is an excellent opportunity for you to learn about the work of different organizations and to network with a diverse group of employers. Regardless of your career goal, year in school, or the status of your job search, you can benefit from attending the career fair. Students have found that the career fair is helpful to participate in during an active job search, but also essential as they explore the types of positions and organizations that might be a great fit in the future.

Organizations at the Rollins Career Fair will have conversations with you about your background and interests, and provide you with information about their organization and potential opportunities. You can learn more about the specific skills and experiences desired by employers in your field of interest. A career fair – one of the best times to network and gain insights from professionals and organization representatives – is one of the most effective ways to expand your network of contacts.



Prior to the Career Fair

CREATING YOUR ELEVATOR SPEECH

You want to be prepared to speak with employer representatives. Creating an elevator speech is a great way to help you prepare to introduce yourself to employers both virtually and in-person. The more you use it, the more comfortable you will become. Using the speech will ease your fear of speaking with employers and take the guesswork out of how to begin a conversation.

An elevator speech should be no longer than 20 or 30 seconds, should be informative, and describe a few key aspects of yourself and your background.

ELEVATOR SPEECH – SAMPLE

- **Who You Are:**
Hello my name is _____, I'm currently a first year student at Rollins concentrating in Behavioral, Social, and Health Education Sciences.
- **Organizational Knowledge:**
I was excited to learn your organization works in maternal health to promote access to care and improved health outcomes for women and children.
- **Career Interests:**
My career interests are in improving access to healthcare for local communities and program coordination.
- **Background & Skills**
I have prior experience volunteering with community non-profits, which has given me valuable experience working with underserved populations and building my teamwork and collaboration skills.
- **Interest in Organization & Opportunities:**
I'm interested learning more about maternal health and viewed your internship posting for a program coordination intern and I'm excited to learn more about this opportunity.

Prior to the Career Fair

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I DO PRIOR TO THE CAREER FAIR?

By performing research on the career fair organizations prior to the event, a career fair can be a productive and enjoyable experience. Information about these organizations, and often times listings of specific opportunities currently available, can be found on “RSPH Career Connection.” You should review all of the organizations and then create an initial target list of those that most interest you. Research those organizations further to understand the type of work they perform, but remember, there will be many other diverse organizations attending the career fair, so do not limit your exploration to only your target organizations.

Once you do your research on your target organizations, practice answering some common questions that employers may ask you:

- What type of position or career are you looking for?
 - *Remember, you should not be looking for positions based only on your department. Many positions are interdisciplinary, so look for positions based on the types of skills you have, would enjoy using, and that organizations are searching for. You might also consider the work setting (e.g., international or domestic, health department or non-profit) or the focus of the organization (e.g., children’s health, chronic disease, etc.).*
- What skills and strengths do you have that would match this position?
 - *These skills can range from anything as simple as Word or Microsoft Excel proficiency to skills in curriculum development or advanced epidemiological methods. Be able to discuss your skill sets.*
- What experience do you have and how will you contribute to the organization?
 - *Feel comfortable discussing past work experiences, your Applied Practice Experience, your thesis or capstone, projects that you have participated in class, and significant volunteer opportunities where you developed transferrable skill sets.*

Prepare questions you would like to ask specific employers. Questions can include the following topics:

- What types of skills, experiences, abilities, and training do you look for in potential candidates?
- What are some of the key projects the division or organization is currently working on?
- What types of entry-level positions or internships are available?
- Are there in-person and remote opportunities?
- What is the hiring timeline and process like?

On the Day of the Career Fair

WHAT SHOULD I BRING THE DAY OF THE CAREER FAIR?

Be sure to have updated copies of your resume, preferably on paper as some organizations may ask for your resume; however not all organizations will request a resume and may instruct you to apply online. The Office of Career Development offers resume reviews to help make your resume as effective as possible. Make sure you have the following in your professional-looking bag or portfolio on the day of the fair:

- Five to ten printed copies of your resume.
- Paper & pen to take notes if needed.
- Breath mints.
- Business cards (Optional, but a nice touch - business cards can be purchased through the Office of Career Development Business Cards.)

HOW SHOULD I DRESS FOR THE CAREER FAIR?

A career fair is an opportunity for you to create a positive first impression with representatives from many different organizations. One aspect of that first impression is your professional look. It is said that 70% of a first impression is a result of appearance and body language. You want your overall appearance to express professionalism.

Realize that each organization may have different expectations as to how employees are to dress on the job. Since you are unaware of these organizational differences however, it is always wise to choose professional attire.

PROFESSIONAL ATTIRE

Suggested career fair attire is known as professional attire. If you do not have access to professional attire, The main Emory University Career Center also offers a professional clothing closet allowing you to check-out clothing to use for a career fair or other professional attire events. Email or visit the main Emory Career from 8:30 – 4:00pm during the Fall and Spring Semesters and bring your student ID with you. There is no fee to use the clothing, however you are required to dry clean the garments before returning them to the clothing closet. The Emory Career Center is located on main campus in the B. Jones Center, 200 Dowman Drive B. Jones Center on the 2nd Floor and can be contacted at careercenter@emory.edu

GROOMING

Be sure your overall appearance is neat. Avoid wearing excessively strong perfume or aftershave. Make sure your breath is “minty fresh” and do not chew gum. Remember, presenting yourself in a positive manner can demonstrate to a future employer that you are truly invested in your job search. Jewelry is fine, but it is recommended to keep it minimal and less flashy so it doesn’t create a distraction while you are speaking with representatives.

Tips during a Career Fair

If possible, try to arrive at the career fair earlier than later because career fairs tend to become crowded and representatives are “fresher” at the beginning of a career fair. Getting to the fair early may allow representatives from each organization to spend more time talking with you. In addition, there is no guarantee that recruiters will not begin to pack up early at the end of a long day, so if you show up during the final hour, you may miss out. Be careful not to monopolize any one person’s time. When online or in-person, be sensitive to others who are also waiting to speak with representatives.

Do not expect employers to approach you! You must approach employers and introduce yourself. With time, you will feel more comfortable approaching employers and introducing yourself. Remember to express confidence and professionalism when you approach an employer and introduce yourself. Avoid offering a handshake when approaching an employer; instead, a nod and eye contact will convey to an employer that you are confident. Have your brief “elevator speech” prepared ahead of time to get the conversation started (see our Networking Guide for guidance to craft an effective elevator speech). Ask questions that show you have done your research on the organization beforehand.

Make sure to get a business card, or write down the name and email address from the organization representatives in which you have an interest. You want to be able to follow up with a representative to express continued interest in the organization and opportunities. Follow-up emails should be tailored based on the conversation you had with the representatives and sent within 24 hours after a career fair. In the email, make sure to specify you met the representative at the Rollins Career Fair. Sending a follow-up email will distinguish you from other candidates.



Tips for a Virtual Career Fair

When preparing for a virtual career fair, much of the advice for an in-person career fair remains the same, but take note of the following additional tips:

- **Prepare your space and systems:** Make sure you have the software and technology you need to participate, including a microphone and webcam. Ensure that you are in a location with stable internet and have a back-up plan (e.g., phone to call in with, hot spot on phone, etc.) in case you run into problems the day of the event. Make sure your space is clean and well lit.
- **Practice ahead of time:** If you are able, practice logging onto the video conferencing platform ahead of time to make sure you don't need to download anything and can familiarize yourself with the system and process. On your own Zoom account (or similar video conferencing platform), practice your elevator speech and your answers to possible questions with a friend.
- **Make a good impression:** Just like the in-person career fair, it is important to dress in professional attire when on a video conference call. Additionally, ensure that you speak clearly, with confidence, and look directly at the camera. Have a notepad and pen available to take notes.
- **Share your resume:** Make sure your resume is updated because you will want to upload it on the day of the virtual Career Fair. Additionally, be prepared to email your resume to an organizational representative if they request it after having a conversation during the fair.
- **Prepare for chat rooms:** Consider typing out some of your standard questions ahead of time into a Word document, so that you can copy and paste them into the chat box, as you need them. As you would in other professional written communication, use good grammar and avoid using "text speak" (e.g., LOL).
- **Use resources:** Take advantage of the resources available through the Office of Career Development, which include walk-in hours (virtual as well) for you to ask questions, and a recording of a [Career Fair Prep Workshop](#) available in Handshake under "Resource Library."

FINAL WORDS OF WISDOM!

The Rollins School of Public Health Career Fair is a phenomenal opportunity provided twice a year to enhance your knowledge of different organizations and careers, create networking contacts, and potentially gain excellent experience and employment opportunities. Take advantage of this valuable aspect of your professional development available only to Rollins students and alumni.