

The Gamecock's Guide to NETWORKING & FAIRS



Approximately 80% of job vacancies are never advertised.

HOW TO NETWORK

WHAT IS NETWORKING?

Interacting with individuals who have interests similar to yours, who are willing to share information about those commonalities, or provide the names of others with similar interests.

- This can take place in person, over the phone, via email, or messaging through professional websites such as [LinkedIn](#) or the [USC Mentorship Hub](#).

These people have positions or work for organizations like those that interest you and are willing to share information about their job. One of the most popular and structured ways this interaction can take place is through an informational interview, where you are the one asking questions!

Networking is a good practice for all facets of life. The more people you know, the more resources you have for information or opportunities that interest you.

- Most employers would prefer to hire a person referred by a colleague, peer, or friend.
- The overall amount of time it takes for you to find a job can be drastically reduced (estimated to be 4-6 months if you network as opposed to 6-9 months using other job search methods).
- The referral process can put you in contact with key people you might otherwise never meet.
- You learn more about your field of interest and various occupations within it, as well as specific organizations, which may help you in choosing a major or career path.
- Doing informational interviews early in your career exploration means you will have a collection of resources to call on when you are ready to start your job search!
- Your network can be maintained for years to come and be used repeatedly as you go through job changes later in life.

WHEN SHOULD I START?

The earlier you begin, the more resources you will have to call on when you need a job. The benefit of starting the process early in your college career is that informational interviews can help you in choosing a major or career path.

- A great way to do this is at a professional conference! Does your industry offer large scale events that you could attend?
- The USC Career Center puts on [Career and Internship Fairs](#) every semester where you can interact with employers and discuss what path you could take in order to eventually land your dream job.

HOW CAN I PREPARE MYSELF?

Clarify your goals.

- Write a summary of your abilities, interests, and values.
- Be able to talk intelligently about yourself.
- Know why you are networking and be prepared to be honest about that with the people with whom you talk to.
- Are you just exploring majors and careers, or are you interested in their company specifically for possible future employment?
- Research the contact's organization as much as you can prior to meeting them.

Career Related Purposes of Networking

1. To learn more about careers in general.
2. Establish professional relationships that could indirectly result in a job lead.



Career Center

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

ATTENDING A JOB FAIR

BEFORE THE FAIR

1. Know what your goal is and design your effort around that aim. For example, are you:

- Looking for a full-time job, part-time job, or internship?
– Know your availability. Are you looking for a summer opportunity only? Or are you open to working year-round?
- Exploring various career opportunities and typical steps to succeed in those fields?
- Investigating specific companies so you can learn more about what they do?
- Practicing networking skills for future career fairs?
- Required to attend for class credit?

2. Determine which career fields are right for you:

- Meet with a Career Center staff member in an appointment to discuss choosing a major/career.
- Take [Career Assessments](#) to help you determine potential jobs.

3. Research career fields and job titles of interest:

- Establish a realistic expectation of the careers you are considering by looking up job titles, descriptions of day-to-day duties, required qualifications, future job outlook, salary ranges, and benefits.

4. Research companies, agencies, or organizations that will be attending the career fair:

- Know in advance which organizations will attend and the positions that are open.
– Check Handshake for a list of event attendees.
- Review employer websites/[LinkedIn](#) profiles.

5. Take steps toward making a good impression:

- Prepare a resume in advance of the job fair and have it critiqued by Career Center staff.
– Plan to bring 20+ paper copies of your resume to the job fair.
- Develop a list of questions to ask employers based on your research of their organization.
- Know what skills are needed for specific careers.
- Study the “corporate culture” of the organization/field and know how to use industry-related terminology.
- Relate your past work, academic, and out-of-class experiences to the career field.
- Express what you are looking for and what you want.
- Prepare a career log in advance to document job fair information (i.e., to whom you have given a resume? Are they scheduled to return to USC? etc.)

6. Anticipate problems before the event and be prepared for anything:

- Have an umbrella or raincoat ready in case of bad weather.
- Consider the time you'll need to travel to the fair, plan for heavy traffic, and consider the availability and distance of parking to the facility.
- Bring a phone/laptop charger in case you want to email documentation to employers on the spot.
- If attending a virtual fair, verify stable internet connection. Have a phone number (if available) from the employer's [Handshake](#) profile in case you get disconnected.



AT THE FAIR

1. Make a good impression:

- Dress professionally in appropriate attire.
- Smile, make eye contact, and shake hands firmly and confidently, while introducing yourself with your full name, major, and graduation date.
- Remember your body language...try not to fidget or look around. Act interested, focused, and enthusiastic.
- Avoid chewing gum while having conversations.
- Carefully listen to what the recruiter has to say.
- Don't ramble. Provide a concise, well-prepared overall view of what you have to offer.
- Ask at least 2 intelligent questions of each organization, about such topics as: organizational statistics, company mission, client base, internship or co-op opportunities, summer or part-time employment, full-time career paths, trainee programs, benefits, hiring procedures, etc.
 - Keep in mind that employers will expect that you have researched and will not want to answer questions that are easily available on their website.

2. Make things easier on yourself:

- Network...while in line, talk to other students about recruiters they have spoken to already.
- Wear comfortable shoes.
- Speak clearly and loudly enough to be heard through the noise.
- Keep an open mind when speaking with recruiters.
- Be prepared to sell your skills and characteristics. Recruiters remember their first impression more than your resume.
 - Note: Many employers will direct you to apply online. In this case, know that the individual interactions you have with the employer can be valuable as you will stand a better chance of being recognized when the recruiter reviews the online resume later.
- Bring a bag to carry company literature, business cards and giveaways.
- Have a pen and notepad readily available to take notes that can help you recall conversations with recruiters.
- Ask for the recruiter's business card to follow up with them at a later date.



What's Next?

AFTER THE FAIR

1. Be patient: Some organizations may be “long-term” leads. Don’t expect an immediate response.
 - If they’ve already filled their open position, ask to be kept in mind for future opportunities.
2. Follow up with company representatives:
 - Check [Handshake](#) to see which organizations from the fair are returning to interview on campus.
 - Organize the materials and brochures you received to gather contact information for each company.
 - Write a thank-you follow-up note/email to the recruiter you spoke with.
 - Email is a preferred method of communication because there is a date/time stamp that you can refer back to.
 - If you haven’t heard back approximately 2 weeks later, feel free to call the recruiter to express your continued interest in the company and desire for an interview.



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