

The Career Fair at SIAM Conferences: A Guide

Career Fairs are events set up to facilitate contacts of employers with prospective employees. Employers attend to talk about careers in their fields and within their organization. They may or may not have current jobs, but if you are interested in looking for a job or finding out more about a career opportunity, don't miss the chance to make contacts and speak with knowledgeable individuals from a range of organizations.

WHEN IS THE CAREER FAIR?

Monday, July 7, 2014
7:15 PM - 9:15 PM

WHERE?

The Palmer House
Chicago, Illinois

WHAT TO EXPECT?

You can expect representatives from anywhere from 8 to 12 employers. These individuals look forward to meeting and speaking with you about current or future opportunities in their organizations and in their industries..

BENEFITS OF THE SIAM CAREER FAIR

A career fair is an opportunity for you to make face to face contacts and get a feel for opportunities in your field. Some of the direct benefits include:

- making personal contacts
- learning more about specific industries and organizations and their career paths
- getting feedback about your résumé and your education and how they fit with the opportunities.

Employers may use career fairs to screen applicants or collect résumés to bring back to their organization. It is ideal to be able to engage the representatives in conversation so they will remember you and your skills. Use your time to collect valuable company information via conversation and company materials so that when you are ready you can write a convincing, well-informed cover letter stating your interest in an organization.

PREPARATION

- **Do your homework.** Check the SIAM website for the day and the time and organizations or companies that will be represented. Do an initial review of the represented organizations' career pages on the web. Most will have them. Make a list of organizations that you are interested in by priority.
- **Prepare your résumé carefully.** Student resumes will be mailed to employers exhibiting at the Career Fair one week in advance of the event. Resumes received after the **June 27, 2014** will not be included in the mailing. Resumes must be formatted according to the **Resume Preparation Guidelines** provide by SIAM.
- **Bring along a more detailed resume in case you are asked for one.** If at this stage you are looking for a job or perhaps an internship, tailor your resume to your needs. It is important to have a well-polished résumé that shows off your education, skills and experiences. Have your résumé critiqued by more than one person.

If you can't get it together, it is better to attend without a résumé than NOT to attend the career fair at all. At least you can pick up pertinent information about an organization to use later.

- **Have a plan.** It is easy to feel intimidated at such an event. Wandering around aimlessly will only enhance this feeling. Bring your questions. Your questions will depend on your goals (career exploration vs. job search). Sample questions include:
 - What qualities and background are you looking for in employees?
 - What is the application process for your organization?
 - Do you have or anticipate opportunities that fit my timeline and background?

DURING THE EVENT

- **Dress appropriately.** SIAM meetings are business/professional casual. However, when in doubt, it is always better to err on the more professional, less casual, side for a career fair.
- **Introduce yourself.** Express enthusiasm and interest. Employers expect attendees to take the first step. If you are unsure how you would fit into the organization ask the employer open-ended yet specific questions.
- **Hand out your resume.** Have plenty of copies in case you choose to distribute it.
- **Thank employers.** Thank employers for their time and for any brochures or promotional materials you were given.
- **Collect business cards.** Jot down a fact on the back to jog your memory when you write a follow-up letter.
- **Don't monopolize a representative.** Remember that other people will be waiting. If there seems to be mutual interest, ask to arrange for a more detailed interview, perhaps at a coffee break at the meeting.

AFTER THE EVENT

- **Do not ignore follow-up.** Keep track of those companies and representatives with whom you spoke.
- **Send a thank you letter.** Send a follow-up letter to the representatives of the organizations you wish to pursue. This will set the stage for future correspondence.

THINGS YOU SHOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT

It is expected that you will visit more than one organization, so don't worry about a representative noticing that you visit with other organizations. This is all about investigating your options.

If you don't get an immediate response to your follow-up with an organization that you are interested in and that seemed interested in you, don't worry. More than one person is involved in hiring decisions and this sometimes takes time. However, following-up a second time, perhaps using different mediums (email and phone) is absolutely acceptable and recommended.