

The Career Fair at SIAM Conferences: A Student Guide

Monday, February 19, 2007

7:15 PM - 9:15 PM

Career Fairs are usually one day events set up to facilitate contacts of employers with career fair participants. Employers are there to recruit employees. 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 employers.

What to Expect?

You can expect anywhere from 10 to 20 employers with representatives at different tables. The employer representatives are there to promote interest in their current or future opportunities. Their job is to meet as many attendees as possible and promote their organizations to you.

Benefits of the SIAM Career Fair

A career fair is an opportunity for you to browse, meet several employers, make face to face contacts, and get a feel for the opportunities they can provide. 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 recruiter in a conversation so they will remember you and your skills. Do not be discouraged if this does not happen; there can be numerous people to compete with in this setting. Use your time to collect valuable company information via conversation and company materials so that 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.

Even if you only plan to explore, make a list of organizations that you are interested in by priority. Have a plan.

Prepare your résumé carefully.

Student resumes will be mailed to employers exhibiting at the Career Fair 1 week in advance of the event. Resumes received after the January 26, 2007 pre-registration deadline will not be included in the mailing. Resumes must be formatting 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. Be realistic in your preparation time and remember that it is most important to have a well-polished résumé that shows off your education, skills and experiences. Have your résumé critiqued by more than one person.

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 of your résumé easily accessible (if you chose to distribute your resume).

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 NOT to 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, don't feel that you have to wait before following-up a second time.