

Making the Most of the 15th annual “Partnering for Success” Spring Job Fair

The HACC-Lancaster Campus Career Services office is preparing to host its’ 15th annual spring 2015 Job Fair on Wednesday, March 18th and Thursday, March 19th from 10:00am to 1:00pm both days in East 203. This event is open to the student body, HACC alumni as well as the community.

Often job fairs, including HACC’s can be overly crowded, competitive and intimidating if not sometimes even confusing events, especially for those ill prepared. Often there will be nearly a hundred employers and hundreds of job seekers participating, making it a very difficult task to squeeze through the crowd and visit every employer’s table while leaving a lasting impression.

There are ways however to make the most of your time on the job fair floor and ways to beat your competitors and successfully navigate this year’s event. These tips will improve your odds of not being screened out and instead increase your chances of obtaining an onsite interview.

- **Be Prepared-** Do some research ahead of time. Plan to log onto www.hacc.edu/lancasterjobfair prior to the event to learn what types of fields and organizations will be represented. Make a list of those that interest you and visit the company web sites to gather additional information.
- **Use Your Time Wisely-** The more prepared you are walking into a job fair, the better you will be able to make productive use of this opportunity. Target the companies you want to make sure you talk with before you arrive. Even the brief meeting you will have with recruiters is a chance to make a positive impression on company representatives.
- **Present a Professional Image-** First impressions make an impact. Dress for a job fair as you would for a job interview. Remember, the recruiters are evaluating you and making mental notes about your appearance as well as presentation. You want them to focus on your qualifications not your attire. It is always better to be overdressed than underdressed.
- **Bring Resumes-** Make sure you have plenty of copies of your resume to give out to employers. If you have multiple interests or job objectives, make sure you bring enough of each version of your resume. Your resume is an important marketing tool, so be sure that the one you are using highlights your strengths.
- **Portfolios-** More and more career experts are emphasizing the importance of career portfolios. These portfolios should include copies of your resume, a list of references, letters of recommendations, copies of evaluations, as well as, samples of your best work. While most career fair interviews are fairly short, there may be opportunities for discussing your portfolio with a recruiter depending on the volume of job seekers. It is best to always be prepared no matter what happens.
- **Interviewing-** You may only have two to five minutes to market yourself and protect yourself from being screened out, thus you need to make the most of your time. Many experts suggest that you develop a one-minute “commercial” that highlights the key benefits that you can offer the organization-and then use it at the beginning of the interview. Also, remember the three keys to all interviews: make eye contact, offer a firm handshake, and show enthusiasm. You should also prepare answers to interview questions just as you would any employment interview. The most common question you will face is something along the lines of “What are you here for today?”. Seems like an easy question to answer, especially if you’ve done your homework and can tailor your answer to your interests and the company’s interests, thereby marketing yourself. Make sure you also have some questions ready to ask the interviewer. A great concluding question for you to ask is, “What do I need to do to obtain a second interview?”.
- **Networking-** Career/job fairs are all about networking. Of course, you are building a network with the recruiters. This task is most vital. However, you can also network with your fellow job-seekers in terms of sharing information about job leads, companies, and their recruiting strategies and styles.

- **Follow Up** - After the job fair is over make sure that you take the extra effort to follow up with the employers that interested you. You might be surprised at how few jobseekers actually take the time to follow-up with their career fair interview, thus when you do it, you will get an edge over the many others who do not. Remember, these people may have received well over 100 resumes just from one job fair. In order to stand out from the crowd, send a personal thank you to the recruiters that you spoke with. Use this opportunity to remind them of your skills and the contribution you could make. Let them know that you would appreciate the time to speak with them further (expressing an interest in an onsite interview) and explain that you will call them next week. Make sure that you do call them when you say you will. You probably should also enclose another copy of your resume with the thank you letter. In addition, some experts even suggest actually calling the recruiter the evening of the fair and leaving a voicemail message or sending an email thanking the recruiter again for his/her time that day.

Even if you are not actively seeking employment right now, there are at least two good reasons why you should attend the event. First, job fairs can be utilized to research companies that are hiring in the area and to see which staffing companies are looking for qualified candidates. You can also learn about internship opportunities that may exist within the company. Take notes on the names of companies there and jot down the names of those representing that company. Later on when you are ready to actively begin your search, you can research the company by going directly to the career section of their website and see all of their job openings. If you wrote down the names of those representing that company at the job fair, you can call into the company and ask to talk directly to that person or have a name to which you can address your cover letter when mailing in your resume.

Second, I'm sure you knew that networking would be mentioned. Of course a job fair is an opportunity to network, not only with people from the companies, but with other job seekers as well. You may run into some ex-coworkers that might have a few leads for you or an acquaintance you haven't seen in a while who is recruiting for one of the companies present. Seriously, you just never know what can happen when you network with others at a job fair.

Now is the time to begin preparing for this event. Plan to attend the **Job Fair on Wednesday, March 18th and Thursday, March 19th from 10:00am to 1:00pm**. Please note that different employers will be present each day of the event, so plan accordingly. Prepare now for the event by taking advantage of the numerous offerings Career Services provides including "on the go" workshop series focused on preparing you for the job fair by providing you with tips and reviewing your resume. Check out the entire schedule at: <http://www.hacc.edu/Students/CareerServices/CareerEvents/index.cfm> or call the Career Services Office at 717-358-2290 for more information. We are here to assist you!

Finally, job offers may not be made at the job fair itself but if you perform at your very best and follow through on these simple guidelines, you may be well on your way toward the final interview at the company site and achieving success in this important strategic tool of job-hunting. Good Luck!

