

REAL ESTATE CLUB

Career Fair Planning Guide

PHASE 1: Initial Preparation

- As soon as possible, make a waiting list using an online service like Typeform.com and have the web coordinator post it to the recruiter page on our website. This will save you many, many email exchanges with employers throughout the year. Ask for the company name, the recruiter's name, and the recruiter's email (this isn't the actual signup).
- Review any available exit polling data from the previous fair. (Ideally, the previous coordinator will have polled companies that attended, students that attended, *and* students that didn't attend to get their feedback. Typeform is a great tool for this.)
- After consulting as many people as you can (faculty, students, employers, the Executive Board, and the career services staff): set a date for the fair for which there's an opening at the venue you want to use. Common conflicts are the University's own major career fair, holidays, sporting events, exams, and the venue's own schedule. Our current venue books out 1.5 years in advance and it can be difficult to find a date that works, so plan to go meet with the event coordinator right away to get a sense of your options.
- There's currently a push to move the fair from the Fall to the Spring. Whichever you pick, make sure to weigh that decision carefully.
- *The current deposit for the venue we use, often non-refundable, is around \$2000, so that's another reason to choose carefully! Once the board approves the date, have the Treasurer pay this deposit.*
- If there will be a meal at the event, go ahead and set a menu for it. Setting the menu when you book means there's one less thing to worry about later. They'll ask for a final headcount for both attendees in general, and the dinner in particular, a week in advance.
- Ask if you can have 4-5 water bottles placed on each of the booths as a part of setup. Employers have complained in the past (understandably) that they can't talk for hours on end without something to drink. If you can have the venue provide those waters (without having to buy them separately and cart them in) and put them there for you as a part of setup, that'll also be one less thing you have to worry about that day.
- Ensure that there will be placard / signage holder placed at each employer booth. You'll make 8.5x11 signs with the different companies' names on them and want to hang them from these holders so that a) the companies can find their booth when they arrive and b) students have an easy visual cue at each booth as to who the company is, in case the company's branding is light.
- Request that there be a microphone (for making announcements during the event), a projector, and a hookup for a laptop's audio in case you want to have music playing in the background. See "Day Of" section for details.
- Ask the event planner for details about what address companies may send their materials to, to whom those packages should be addressed, and beginning at what date they may

arrive without the company being charged extra holding fees. *You will need this information for the sign-up form and logistical emails you send to companies.*

- Reserve a (non-binding) block of rooms at a reasonably priced hotel close to the venue in case employers want rooms. Only do so if it's possible without risking a lot of money.
- If you're planning an after party, which we often do at a bar in the same complex as the event, check with them about reserving an area and about what other programming they might have scheduled that night. We had to contend with an obnoxious trivia group the night I did it, which was an unwelcome surprise.
- Once you have all the above information set, produce a flyer for the event to have on hand (maybe someone in the department can give you tips on this). Companies often ask for one. Post it to the website's recruiter page so that employers can get all the info on one sheet. They'll ask you for it either way.
- Set up your employee sign-up form (either with the University's system called Buckynet or, preferably, make your own via a service like Typeform and handle the sign-ups and payments in-house). Include a policy for refunds, the date at which they're no longer refundable, etc. Consider asking these and other questions in the sign-in form:
 - What is your company's name?
 - Who is the primary recruiting contact?
 - What is the primary recruiting contact's email?
 - What mailing address should we use for any materials we need to send you?
 - How many reps (including the contact) will attend?
 - What are the names of the reps who will attend (This is for nametags.)
 - Would you like to upload a hi-res logo for our use in student guides? (Typeform allows for this kind of functionality.)
 - What website or webpage is the best place to point students for info on you?
 - What information about the company should we share with students?
 - Who are you looking to hire? Choose all that apply. (multiple choice: undergrad interns, undergrad full-time, MBA interns, MBA full-time)
 - Can you describe, in as much detail as possible, what positions are being recruited for and what they entail?
 - Are you interested in reserving a room in our hotel block?
 - Will you need a parking pass?
 - Do you plan to attend the speed networking? (if there is one)
 - Do you plan to attend the meal (if there's a meal)? If so, how many of the reps who are coming in your group will attend the meal?
 - Will you need a power outlet at your table?
 - Do you plan to attend the after party (if there's going to be an after-party)?
 - Are you or any members of your team alumni of the program?
 - Are there any questions we can answer for you?
- Make sure your payment gateway is set up correctly so that people who sign up can pay their fees, ideally at the end of the same form. Services like Typeform allow for this.
- Also, if possible, include the mailing information from the event planner in the sign-up.

A well-executed sign-up form — that asks all the questions you need to know up front, that gives shipping info up front, etc. — is the easiest way to save yourself many, many hours of extra work. Spend a long time making sure it's perfect and that you're not going to want to go back and ask additional information of all these companies later. And the earlier you can get this sign-up form live, the earlier you can begin collecting revenue for the event that goes into the Club's account.

PHASE 2: Recruiting

- This is in theory the simplest but in reality the most time-demanding step.
- First, contact any people on the waiting list to let them know about the event details and sign-up link. They went to the trouble of signing up before you even contacted them, so they must be interested.
- Second, contact all companies that have attended in the last year or two to give them the information as well. It's likely many of those companies are regulars, so you'll want to ensure those people attend and know the dates well in advance. *But be advised: recruiters seem to shift companies often and fully 1/3 of the people I emailed no longer worked at that company, meaning I had to figure out who the new contact was.*
- Meet with the department and with as many students as possible to brainstorm a wish list of companies beyond those who have signed up or recently attended (in categories like development, lending, services, and private equity, for example) that we would like to see attend.
- Determine which of these companies we already have a relationship and which ones have never been to campus, seeking help from faculty in reaching out to the latter.
- Begin the process of reaching out to both those “wish list companies” we have a relationship with and (hopefully, with the help of faculty) to those we don't have a relationship with.
- Then, *only* once you have contacted people from the waiting list, from recent years' fairs, and from the wish list you have created, begin expanding outwards in any directions possible. You can use a geographical rubric (employers who can drive are often more likely to come), the alumni base (alumni are often more interested in recruiting from us than non-alums), or whatever comes to mind.
- Decide if you're going to offer any swag for employers and order it now (since there may be significant lead times).

PHASE 3: Logistics

- The companies need several different pieces of logistical information:
 - To what address do they ship their material if they intend to ship them?
 - What's the earliest date the venue will be willing to *accept those materials without additional charges*? Usually it's only 2 or 3 days beforehand.
 - What's the exact agenda for the day? You'll want to mention this in almost every communication.
 - How do I get my materials picked up and returned to me after the event?
- **Ideally** you will have gotten this information from the event planner AND included it all in the notes at the beginning or end of the sign-up form you created. That will save you a great deal of time and effort.
- If you didn't do it that way, get all the information from the event planner ASAP and send it to the companies. Importantly, if you take this route, new companies will sign-up for the fair after you send that first logistics email, so you'll need to track who has received the logistics email and who hasn't.
- Use the sign-up data to see who requested parking passes. Request this number of parking passes from the event planner at the venue. Note: there can be lead times of up to 10 days to get parking passes (don't ask me why). And if a company requested that you send their pass, allow for another 4-5 days for any delays in mailing.
- People will change the names of the reps that are coming (for name tags), so be prepared to update those records as well.
- Finally, people will drop out and request refunds, so make sure you have set and also your policy very clearly, and outline it in your sign-up form.
- Then, once everything is ready for the employers, a few weeks before the fair, create a form for students to sign up (using a service like Typeform.com). The more questions you can ask the students, the better, because you can send that data on to employers, who will appreciate having a better idea of who it is they'll be talking to. I'd probably leave the student data anonymous. Class, industry interest, "are you targeting specific companies or just making the rounds?", etc.
- Once you have invited the Real Estate Club members, ask the Center Director to email the sign-up link and event details to all real estate *majors*, as there are people majoring in Real Estate who aren't in the club (what's with that?)
- Then, make a separate sign-up and invite the finance, investment banking, construction management, civil engineering, and urban planning groups (student groups or departments or both). A brief, professional email, sent to those groups individually, is usually enough. We had at least 30 people from those other groups attend the fair the year I led it, so it's not an unsubstantial number.
- If you're planning an after party, make sure there's no other event planned at the after-party venue, at the same time, which might be a nuisance to your event. We had to contend with an obnoxious trivia game night.

PHASE 4: Lead-Up Preparation

- A week or two out, the venue will request a hard number headcount, booth count, and number for dinner. You should have those ready based on your sign-up data.
- **Very important: if companies are shipping their materials, tell them they also need to schedule a pickup for the day after their event.** We don't take those materials for them to FedEx, UPS, etc., and several companies which didn't schedule pickups (even though I mentioned it) were surprised that they didn't get their materials back. We as a club don't have the capacity to handle all these packages, and the venue won't want to do anything more than take them to their dock either, so it's important that companies do this. You might consider bringing a few rolls of packing tape, as companies didn't have that for sealing their boxes up.
- Decide where all the companies will be seated. Scatter the most sought after companies around so as not to create traffic jams. The Faculty liaison can help you with the politics of these decisions, and the event planner at the venue can help you understand the best options for laying out the room.
- If possible, make a *map* of the layout you create which has the companies listed and what each is recruiting for (see my example below). I would NOT send this map to companies in advance, though, lest you get an avalanche of requests to change. Knowing which booth they will be seated at in advance doesn't change anything about their preparation. I printed this on cardstock with a table on the back that students could use to keep track of companies they wanted to follow-up with, who the recruiter was, notes, etc.
- Create the name tags for students (real estate + other departments) and employers using mail merge. I used Avery Loading Clip Style Name Badges (74541). Word has a default setting for these. YouTube has great videos on Mail Merges. That's the only way to do these. Even though Mail Merge simplifies the process of generating the tags to print, *do not underestimate the time involved in tearing the perforated edges on 300 name tags and stuffing them in name tag holders.* Get people to help you on this last part.
- Make the signs (8.5x11 landscape) for the different companies' booths to identify them. I made a single design and used mail merge to have it produce them all for me. These signs will help employers find their booth when they arrive and make it easy for students to identify what company is at the booth, in case the company's branding is light. I printed them on semi-gloss cardstock.
- Make general "REC Career fair on Floor X, Room X" style signage (maybe 6-7 sheets on 8.5x11 landscape) that you can put on stands throughout the building, so people entering from each door see quickly where they should go. Also, try to demarcate any rooms where you'll have breakout events like speed networking.
- On the day before the event, once the overwhelming majority of students have signed up: export, organize, and print that list to give to employers (include the student's name, year, and email). This way employers have a single guide sheet and can just circle the students they want to follow-up with rather than writing down each student's name, year, and email.
- Get 3-4 student volunteers to man the two signup tables, or for whatever other

needs you have. Students who already have jobs work well for this for obvious reasons. You will need to be able to float around some to make sure things are running smoothly, and will probably also want to chat with some of the employers (!) Unless you recruit help, you'll be stuck there.

- **Also, ensure that you have a student wait at the entrance to the parking garage to distribute the parking passes to employers.** You'll probably have to use some of your pre-approved budget to incentivize this a bit as it's anything but glamorous. Maybe a small gift card. Even if many companies requested that you mail them parking passes (and most don't), the others will still need a pass to get into the garage, which is often marked "full" because of the spots we have reserved. It's a necessary evil. Don't forget it till the day of the event or you'll have problems.
- If you didn't have the venue itself take care of water bottles: Buy a bunch of water bottles for the employers' booths.
- Optional: Make slides for the projector. I made an auto-scrolling slide deck of 4 of 5 slides with the schedule, our logo, some stats about how many companies and students were attending, etc.
- Optional: Make a music playlist to be used in the background. I feel like it really helped pep everyone up, but you'll want to make sure it's not something that calls a lot of attention to itself.

PHASE 5: The Day of the Fair

- Bring packing tape (for employers to use in resealing their packages at the end of the night) and extra name tags (since there will have been mistakes, students who show up without having signed up, etc.).
- Once you arrive, check in with the event planner and the people who will be helping you. In my experience, they stayed mostly out of the picture unless I called them as they had other events to take care of as well, so don't be surprised by that.
- Hang the company signs on the booth sign holders.
- Make sure packages that were sent have arrived and place them on the right booths.
- Take the general signs you've made, put them in placard holders, and place them throughout the building as much as you're allowed. This will deal with the "I arrived and wasn't sure where to go" complaints you would get otherwise.
- If possible, put a large club sign on an easel close to the entrance.
- Make sure they have set up a microphone in the corner for you so that you can make announcements, as needed. For example "dinner will start in 5 minutes." Without a microphone, there's really no way to speak to such a big room of people to inform them about what's going on and move the event in the right direction.
- Set out the name tags, maps, swag, and student lists on the sign-up tables. Use whatever rubric you think best for laying out those materials.
- Send a student down with the parking passes to stand at the mouth of the garage (again, unless you come up with a better system).
- Make sure water bottles are on the employer tables (ideally you arranged for the venue to take care of this).

- Optional: Set up the projector with the slides you made.
- I recommend using a playlist of music in the background. It kept the energy level high. Just make sure it doesn't draw too much attention to itself.
- Try to announce the different segments using the microphone as you transition from one part of the fair to another.
- Keep moving and make sure people have what they need.
- Take some time for yourself to chat with employers.
- Before employers leave for the after party, make sure employers who have requested a pickup (*they must request a pickup from their shipper!*) have repackaged their materials and taped them up so that nothing will fall out / the packages won't be denied for pickup. That's your worst nightmare since it you'll have to help resolve shipping problems that aren't your job to sort out.

PHASE 6: The Day After the Fair

- Create a new waiting list on the website. Some companies who had just attended our fair found that new list within days and had already signed up for the next one.
- Send out a poll to the students who attended and the students who didn't attend. Ask as many questions as you can think of, especially of the students who didn't attend (i.e. what kept you from coming? How could we have helped you prepare?)
- Send out a poll to the companies that attended. Ask as many questions as you can. This will be a great help to the coordinator who comes after you.
- Write thank you notes that get mailed to all the companies. I used Mail Merge to insert their company name, the place where they're located, etc. throughout the letter. Given the number of notes you need to send, that's more than enough.
- Meet with the next fair coordinator to go over these details.
- After you've done these last steps, take the following day off. You survived it!