

Do You Know Where You're Going? Great Reasons to Attend a Career Event

By: Brandy Kiger

A lot of students are still asking themselves, "What am I going to do?" as they near graduation. Many more begin asking that question when they are first year students. It's not uncommon to be unsure about your career choice. That's why we're here.

Our career events are designed to give you, the student or recent graduate, a leg up on the competition by putting you face-to-face with potential employers. The benefits of having the opportunity to meet with these regional employers are numerous.

Employers want to meet you. They want you to ask questions, and they want to know that you are interested in their field. Career fairs give you the opportunity to give them what they want.

Your professors want you to have contact with people who are active in your chosen field. They really do want you to succeed, regardless of what you think the workload they give you says.

Career fairs give you the opportunity to take a reality check: find out starting salaries, what employers are looking for, and how much your GPA really matters.

You get free stuff, and some of it's really, really cool. Having a chance to interview with employers not only gives you real practice, but sometimes leads to real jobs.

Dr. Ken Burbank, of the Engineering Technology Department at Western, strongly encourages his students to attend career fairs. He feels that the experience of job searching is "more real at a career fair" and that by going, students are exposed to jobs in their field that they might not have considered.

"It gives them the opportunity to experience the whole social side of the network," Dr. Burbank continues, "giving them practice at talking to companies." It's a great chance to network and just see what's out there.

When asked about successes of attending a career fair, he points to Xiaoxi Martin, an Engineering Technology senior who was hired by Eaton's at October's Engineering, Math, and Computer Science Fair.

Mardy Ashe, the director of Career Services, says the most important aspect of career events is simply that they get information out to students. The exposure to real companies that are hiring is excellent, and gives students the chance to ask themselves, "Is this something that I might want to do?"

"The majority of employers come looking for specific majors, but they all come looking for employees." Employers are usually not dead-set on a certain degree program; often, they want employees from any major who have the skills to meet their needs.

Career Services served 771 students through career events this past semester and anticipates doubling that number through the spring semester. It is our goal to host over 300 employers on campus for the year, a 22% increase over last year's numbers.

No matter what year you are in school, career events can be helpful to you. For freshmen and sophomores, career events are a good way to get a handle on who is out there looking, what majors they are recruiting, and simply how to go up and talk to an employer and learn to network. It's also a good way to start looking for internship or co-op possibilities.

Juniors, career events allow you to start stepping up to the plate. You can start networking, find a co-op or internship, discover who is actively recruiting, and start narrowing down the field for career choices.

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http://www.wcu.edu/WebFiles/PDFs/careerservices_cj_dec-07.pdf

Career events are even more beneficial to seniors. This is where you can start setting up interviews, boost the networking aspect of your career and build confidence in who you are and what you have to offer. Employers want you. Take advantage of that.

If you have a less than stellar GPA, don't let that keep you from attending career events. Ms. Ashe says, "In any major, a good GPA is valuable interview material and what many employers are looking for, but if you have less than a 3.0 GPA, work experience and extra-curricular activities can offset that," and make you just as valuable in a future employer's eyes.