The Placement Exchange Experience

And other job hunting strategies

Student Affairs Professional Development Committee Presents

Mock Interviews and Placement Information

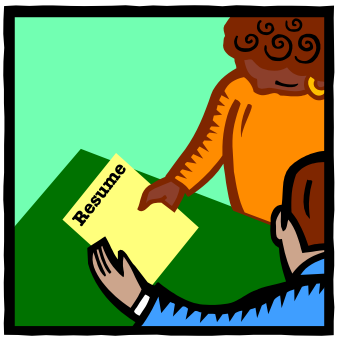
Exchanges and Conferences

For professionals in Student Affairs the primary method of job searching is through conferences and placement exchanges.
For a great summary of the placement exchange process, check out the Southern Placement Exchange site.
For candidates looking for graduate assistantships, placement exchanges are often the best option. Both ACUHO-I/NASPA and ACPA tend to have more full-time positions and fewer assistantships.

Oshkosh Placement Exchange (OPE)
Going on for over 25 years, as many as 200 employers may attend this placement exchange.
Southern Placement Exchange (SPE)
The annual Southern Placement Exchange is held in Memphis, TN in March each year. SPE is a joint effort of several professional organizations in the southeast and southwest to provide a more regionally accessible exchange.
ACUHO-I/NASPA Annual Conference
Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) and ACUHO-I provide career services prior to the annual NASPA conference each spring (March).
ACPA Annual Convention
College Student Educators International (ACPA) provides career services at their annual convention each spring (April).

Ethics of the Job Search

Preparing yourself for the job search involves not only physical preparation, but mental as well. In this vein it is important to look at ethical considerations related to the job search. Being ethical in this process boils down to one thing: honest communication.



Honest Communication as a Candidate

- Provide accurate information about your academic work and employment
- Talk to your references before listing them on your resume - ensure they will provide a positive one!
- Only accept interviews with employers you are sincerely interested in and whose criteria you meet.
- Don't waste your or the employer's time – be there when you say you will!
- Discuss honestly with employers where you are in the job search and where they fit in
- Only accept one job offer, and honor your commitment
- Claim fair reimbursement
- Research your options enough to make informed decisions
- Don't trash talk other candidates or employers
- Be your best self, even when you are not interviewing
- If you are both candidate and employer, be careful how this comes across

Honest Communication as an Employer

- Require the same standards of all applicants
- Evaluate based on the selection criteria and what you know about the applicant
- Run a process that focuses on the job requirements
- Treat the candidate in a businesslike but relaxed way
- Allow the candidate to get to know you and the institution
- Don't call references who aren't listed on the resume
- Don't trash talk other employers or candidates
- Respect the candidate's time – be there when you say you will, and end on time!
- Keep the lines of communication about your process open

Before the Conference

Get Registered

- Many schools recruit and interview at placement exchanges. Find one that suits your needs and register to attend. The more you attend, the more schools you'll encounter which means you'll have lots of options.
- When you register, fill out everything completely and check for mistakes. The last thing you want is a mistake on your posting – that's a real turn-off. Employers look for candidate listings just like you look for job postings.
- Make sure you pay attention to the type of exchange, as well. Some are for more entry level positions while others host predominantly mid-level jobs.

Research Some More

- Once you get registered for a placement exchange, take a look around. Employers have listings on those websites for the jobs they're recruiting for which often include the stipulations they have for hiring, such as master's required, entry level, graduate assistant, etc.
- Look at their website. Most schools list their website within their job postings – search it out and see if it answers the questions you have.
- Don't be afraid to contact a school. It is a very good idea to shoot an email to a school that has peaked your interest and ask them specific questions about the job they're offering. You get a chance to do this at the actual exchange, but getting ahead of the game is never a bad idea.

Start Scheduling Interviews

- The interview schedule process starts as soon as you want it to. You may contact a school and request an interview from them or the school may contact you. Don't be disappointed if you ask a school for an interview and they say no. It could be that you didn't fit what they wanted somehow.
- Remember not to overload yourself. You need at least 15 minutes between interviews for a bathroom break. Remember to confirm with the school how long their interview will last. Some are as quick as 20 minutes while others could be up to an hour long!
- You don't have to fill your schedule before you get there. It is up to you as to whether or not you leave some space in your schedule open to schedule interviews once you actually get to the exchange. Schools will contact you at the exchange if they want to interview you. You will also have an opportunity to ask for an interview from a school once you get there.

Send Out Your Information

- Some schools will want an electronic version of your resume. Make sure your electronic version is in a program that is common and that it will print out correctly. Don't forget to include your box number! (PDF is always a great option to ensure format.)
- Make sure you fill out any applications for graduate school as well. Check the due dates and ask the school if you are unsure of deadlines. Applications for graduate school can get expensive, so get things clear and really think about where you want to apply before-hand.
- Send out any letters of recommendation requested before the conference. If you know they won't get there in time, let the school know and bring them with you to the exchange.

Get Ready For The Exchange

- Make lots of copies of your resume. You never know if a school received your information in time, or if they "misplaced" it, or if they made copies for all their interviewers. Some schools don't want your resume until they get there.
- Participate in mock interviews with people who have been through this kind of process – and make it a dress rehearsal. Make sure they are people you can trust to give you honest feedback about your performance.
- Think about what you're going to promote about yourself. Be able to articulate the skills you can bring to an organization.
- Know what you are looking for in a position.
- Make a plan and organize your correspondence with schools so that you know where you are with regard to their process.
- List questions you want to ask employers about their school as well as their position so that you know if they're a good fit for you.
- Research the schools that you are most interested in and get some details together so that you can show you've invested time.
- Make a "to pack" list and add to it daily before you leave.

At the Exchange

- Be comfortable introducing yourself to people that you do not know – and you should do it a lot while you're there.
- Be professional the entire time you're at the conference. You never know who's looking at what you're doing, or where they're at. You can have a good time without tarnishing your image.
- Don't interview with schools you aren't interested in for practice.
- Dress professionally, but be comfortable. You'll be on your feet a lot, and your interviewer will be able to tell that you're worn down if you're in pain from new shoes.
- Be patient and polite.
- Write individualized thank-you notes *after* each interview. Include some detail from the interview that lets the interviewer know you were paying attention.

In The Interview

- Don't be afraid to pull out a sheet of paper to make notes on. You'll be asking them questions at the end – writing down notes from them shows you're invested and care about the answers you get.
- Write down the names of your interviewers or ask for business cards.
- Be honest and clear. You have already thought about what points you want to get across to the interviewers – make sure you get them out in the open.

After the Conference

- Let the schools that you are interested in know it! Keep in contact with them after you get home.
- Make sure you know where you are in their process. Understanding timelines is important so that you know how to respond to a school when they request an on campus interview or even offer a job.
- If you aren't interested in a school, contact them and tell them as soon as possible. Possible employers don't want to be strung along any more than you do.
- Keep up the cordiality when it comes to on campus interviews or phone interviews – thank you notes and professionalism are still in order at all times.

-*information collected from Oklahoma State University http://www.reslife.okstate.edu/recruitment/placement.html*

Presenter Information

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Placement Dos and Don’ts

- Don’t stuff boxes at random
- Don’t apply for jobs for which you are obviously not qualified or which do not genuinely interest you
- Do schedule breaks between interviews
- Do include your placement mailbox number in ALL correspondence
- Do double check your info carefully before sending letters of interest and resumes (i.e… name, mailbox number, return address)
- Don’t be afraid to share your accomplishments
- Do dress professionally but always keep in mind that comfort is the key
- Don’t forget to send thank you notes to employers
- Do attend one of the candidate briefing sessions
- Do attend socials of the institutions in which you are genuinely interested
- Do ask questions

Types of Interviews

- Conference interviews—
  - ⇒ Usually used to screen candidates
  - ⇒ @ 30 minutes long
  - ⇒ Held in hotel suites, lounge areas, or small tables
  - ⇒ Expect to be interviewed in a room where as many as 100 other candidates are being interviewed
- Telephone Interviews—
  - ⇒ May replace or follow up a conference interview
  - ⇒ Often a conference call with several staff from the institution
  - ⇒ @ 30—45 minutes in length
- Campus Interview
  - ⇒ Your ultimate goal for all interviews—get to campus
  - ⇒ Remember you are evaluated even during meals and trips to and from the airport/bus/train
  - ⇒ Consists of a series of interviews with different groups of staff, faculty and students
  - ⇒ You may be asked to make a presentation
  - ⇒ If the interview is out of town, try to arrive a day early or stay a day later to explore the area and campus

Last Minute Tips

- ⇒ Most employers know that it is illegal to ask about age, ethnic background, national origin, marital status, and sexual, religious or political preference
- ⇒ However, you may still be asked questions pertaining to these taboo topics. You may choose to answer directly if you feel it will help.
- ⇒ Be aware of current events.
- ⇒ Even for entry-level positions interviewers will want to get a sense of how much you know about the profession. Always stay abreast of current Student Affairs concerns, issues, and topics of interest.
- ⇒ Good manners are part of working smart. Sloppy manners are a lack of awareness.
- ⇒ A good handshake is made with a firm and not bone-crushing or fish-limp grip. It is held 3—4 seconds.

- ⇒ The way you dress established an image in the minds of those with whom you come in contact. With that in mind, use your best judgment, think comfort, and ask for the opinions of others.
- ⇒ Don't forget to proofread, proofread, proofread your resume. And when you're finished let others proofread it as well.
- ⇒ Research the institutions with which you will be interviewing. You will want to hold conversations about what they have to offer.
- ⇒ Find out who is paying for the trip to campus. Policies vary from place to place. Make sure and ask questions. Many schools may want you to front expenses. Make sure and ask questions. That can be expensive.
- ⇒ Be honest and most of all BE YOURSELF!

Conference Helpful Hints

Pre-conference To Do List:

1. Register for the conference.
2. Make hotel reservations and travel arrangements.
3. Register for placement.
4. Prepare your resume.
5. Plan a budget.
6. Plan your wardrobe.
7. Check pre-conference job listings an other employment opportunities.

Strategies at Placement:

1. Pick up registration materials.
2. With interviewing, it is difficult to attend program sessions. Try to attend at least one program session a day. Review program guide and make a note of the times you select to attend in your calendar.
3. Be sure to wear your name tag at all times.
4. Attend the placement orientation session.
5. Learn your mailbox number.
6. Put your mailbox number on all correspondence (and make sure it is correct).
7. Notes to employers—keep them concise.
8. Take notes for yourself during interviews.
9. Thank you notes—write immediately after interview.
10. Pick up supplemental listings as they become available. Bring the proper credentials in order to pick up the listings.
11. Keep track of the appointments you schedule. Arrive early. If you have to cancel an appointment, be sure to write a note to explain why.
12. Research the institutions before the interview.
13. Do not spend the entire day in the placement center.
14. Do not compete with your peers—be supportive of one another.
15. Keep good interviewing techniques in mind.
16. Make time to eat.
17. Energize yourself throughout the day.
18. Enjoy the conference and have some fun!
19. Good luck!

THE COMPLETE CONFERENCE BRIEFCASE

Items to include:

Resumes
Thank you notes
Post-it-notes
Business cards
Staples
Pencils
Toothbrush and paste

Blank stationery
Daily calendar
Note paper
Paper clips
Tape
Highlighters
Money
Nail file

Envelopes
Reference page
File folders
Stapler
Pens
White out
Tissues
Brush/comb

Sewing kit
Snack food
Mints
Mirror
Aspirin
Make up
Safety pins
Pantyhose