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Survival Guide for Participating Organizations



UTM

CAREER CENTRE



Dear Get Experience Fair Participant,

Thank you so much for registering for our Get Experience Fair at the University of Toronto Mississauga! It is our pleasure to host you on our campus, and we trust that you will have an enjoyable and fulfilling day.

We at the UTM Career Centre feel strongly that our role is to help connect our students with our community, and we thank you for helping us make that happen. Student education about careers, the value of giving back to the community, gaining skills and defining experience is critical, and the Get Experience Fair is designed to do just that.

This Guide was created to help you make the most of your day on campus, and to provide some ideas for you on how to connect with our students. This year, we are encouraging you to be our partners in career education for our students, and help them to learn how they can both gain new skills and use the experience they have to contribute to our community and your organizations. The Guide provides some tips and tools to help you make the Fair a wonderful experience for everyone.

Please note that you will be provided with a "Unique Skills" display for your table. Before the fair, take a few moments to consider what truly unique, unusual or special skills and experience you offer to students. At the fair, you'll be able to fill in the display for students.

In addition to the Fair, we offer a variety of other ways for you to get involved on our campus. Hold an Information Session at any time during the year to let students know about your organization and the kinds of opportunities available. You may also wish to participate in a networking event or a career panel, in order to share your own story with our students and help them to learn how to build a career in your field. Check out our other fairs, including our Summer & Full-Time Job Fair in January. Last but not least, you are welcome to post any and all opportunities, volunteer or paid, on our website, at www.utm.utoronto.ca/employers.

On behalf of our students, we thank you for participating in our Get Experience Fair!

Sincerely,

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1. What to Expect

The Get Experience Fair at UTM is a popular event on the campus each year. Many students already know what career area they may be interested in, but haven't yet learned how to gain experience in that area. Other students may have lots of experience, but are looking for a new opportunity. Still others are interested in getting involved on campus, or giving back to the community.

When you arrive, we will have staff on hand to greet you and guide you to your table, where you will be stationed for the day. We will have **coffee & tea on hand** for you to start your day! Students will start arriving around 10:30. By 11:30 – noon, the Fair will have ramped up and be in full swing! We will start to see a wind-down by about 1:00, and the Fair will officially finish at 1:30. The lunch hour will be quite busy! If you find yourself with only one or two students at your table in any slow periods, take the time to really converse with the students – this is a great time for some one-on-one attention.

You will see students from all kinds of degrees and years at the Fair. We typically see a very strong representation of Science and Arts students, as well as some Business, Computer Science and Marketing students. The Get Experience Fair also draws a large number of 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students.

2. What to Bring

While students like to have "swag", they really prefer face time with you. You may bring handouts, posters, flyers or giveaways if you wish, but be aware that the best giveaway for a student is ten minutes of your time.

You may also bring any banners or posters that you wish to put up at the fair. Staff will be on hand to help you to set up! You'll be provided with a 10-foot table, draped in a white linen, to display your materials. You'll also have lots of space to set up displays & banners if you want.



Attracting Students

Students love **highly engaged** and **talkative** representatives. They also love food, candy, chocolate and snacks, so you may wish to bring some of these along with your materials.

Students also will be attracted to organizations that **clearly state** what they have to offer. Make it clear in your materials the kinds of experience you can offer the students, and they will come flocking to your table.

Students will be attracted by organizations and representatives that take an interest in them and their field. You may want to take a few moments to familiarize yourself with the programs at UTM, so that when a student tells you that he or she is studying “Environmental Management Systems”, you’ll understand! A link to a list of programs is available at: www.utm.utoronto.ca/regcal/WEBGEN1.html.

On your tables, you will find a “**Unique skills we offer...**” sign. Please take the time to consider what special skills you offer to students, and fill in the blanks! Students will see this sign on your table and that will help them to approach you.

Engaging Students

Many students will be nervous, so the best way to engage them is to be **open** and **friendly!** Don’t be afraid to stand outside your booth to chat with them.

Explain the exciting and interesting facts about your organization, and how the student can add value by getting involved. Students will be drawn to opportunities where they can really see themselves making a difference and getting involved – and gaining experience. Simply asking them to visit the website will not pique their interest; rather, spend a few minutes explaining the interesting things you do, and then they will be far more willing to read up about your organization online after the fair.



Helping Students: Being a role model, teacher, and community partner

If you find yourself talking with a student who seems sure about what he or she wants to do – great! You will, however, encounter students that haven't yet decided on a career path, or may seem a bit **confused** about what skills they need. Please help the student to learn by sharing your wealth of information with them on your industry! If the student seems lost, please help them by directing them to the Career Centre's **Start Here** booth at the fair, where we can assist them in skill assessment.

Thank you advance - we truly consider you our **partners** in **Career Education**.

Top Questions from Students

Many students will be well prepared for this event, and will already be familiar with your organization. **Questions** from these students may be more detailed and in-depth. Be aware, however, that many students will stumble upon the Fair, and may not be completely prepared, and may not know the details of your organization. Given these two kinds of students you can expect to see, you may hear questions such as:

- a. What does your organization do?
- b. How can I get involved at your organization?
- c. Do you take first year students?
- d. Do you ever hire students after they graduate or in the summer?
- e. What kinds of skills can I gain at your organization?

You'll likely see plenty of first-years at the fair. While they may not have a lot of experience yet, consider that once they've started volunteering with you, you may be able to keep them for their entire 4 years at University, resulting in a well-trained and dedicated volunteer or employee!



Answering Student Questions

Try to **avoid** answering some of these questions with “check out our website”. Better to give the students a few things to think about before directing them to somewhere specific on your site!

Students like to know that **they will be valued** and **challenged** at your organization. So, when a student asks “What kinds of skills can I gain?” you may want to respond by asking them what they are interested in and what they need, as well as what special skills they feel they may already have that they can bring to your organization. You may also want to highlight any **special** things that your organization prides itself on: teamwork, helping students feel welcome, student staff and what kinds of training you offer.

Students at large universities in particular relish the chance to have a **face-to-face** conversation with employers, organizations and professors. We think that you will find that by taking an extra few minutes with each student that you speak with, you will have a much more enriching experience!

Also, if a student has a positive experience with you, know that they will go home and tell all their friends about you – thereby enhancing the visibility of your organization!



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Feedback from Students

"I appreciate this fair that gives me a chance to let me know more about my abilities and skills."

"Great information; really helps first year students!"

Feedback from Employers

"This was an awesome way to let students know what [our organization] does and how they as volunteers can help."

"Awesome! We learned a lot about the student perspective on our program and how to improve our own services and marketing"

Thanks again for participating!