

CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Student Guide to the Virtual Career Fair

Fall 2026 Virtual Communications, Journalism, and Media Career Fair

Welcome to your guide for making the most out of the virtual career fair! This step-by-step resource will walk you through the key actions to take and the essential information you need to stand out and leave a lasting impression on employers.

Why Participate?

01

Direct Access to Top Employers

Engage with leading companies in the communications industry, eager to connect with Newhouse students and other Syracuse University talent.

02

Career Opportunities

Discover a range of job and internship opportunities tailored to your skills and interests in the communications field.

03

Networking

Build valuable connections with industry professionals and expand your professional network for future career growth.

What are the next steps?

Be sure to read carefully, take notes, and mark important dates on your calendar. At the end, use the printable checklist to ensure you've completed every recommended step and are fully prepared to shine!



Have questions? Reach out to Shawna Lawrence.

Assistant Director, Career Development Center. We are here to support you!

slawrenc@syr.edu

STEP 1

Preparation

☐ Update and get your résumé reviewed by a career counselor.

You can schedule a one-on-one appointment in Handshake, join us on Wednesdays during Drop-in Hours from 11:30 AM until 1:00 PM, or send your résumé in an email as a PDF file to nhcdc@syr.edu.

☐ Complete your Handshake profile.

You can add information about professional experiences, internships, student organizations, skills, and courses. Aim for 100% completion of your profile. The more information you provide the better. This helps employers find you!

☐ Write and practice your pitch.

A pitch is a concise, compelling summary of your background that you can deliver in about 30 to 60 seconds. Who are you? What have you done? How is this relevant to the internship or job you want? You can learn more about crafting a pitch [here](#).

EXAMPLE

Hi, I'm *[Your Name]*, a *[year, e.g. junior]* at the Newhouse School studying *[your major]*. *[Something you've done, like an internship, a student org role, or a project you're proud of]*, and it's shown me *[a skill or interest relevant to the role]*. I've been following *[Company]*'s work in *[specific area]*, and I'd love to learn more about opportunities on your team.

☐ Choose an outfit appropriate for a virtual professional setting.

You don't need to wear a suit. However, you should be professional to make a good impression.



CDC Resources

Scan for the Virtual Career Fair module on the CDC Resources website, including company lists, handouts, and more.

resources.newhouse.syr.edu/cdc/resources/career-fair-prep

STEP 2

Registration

☐ Register for the Virtual Career Fair on Handshake.

Register to receive access to updated information, and favorite the companies you are most interested in.

☐ Sign up for 1:1 and/or group sessions with employers.

Employers can set individual or group sessions. Individual sessions last 15 minutes; group sessions last 30 minutes and include up to 50 attendees.

☐ Check Handshake for weekly updates and new employers.

The CDC sends weekly updates and reminders. However, you should check Handshake for the latest information. Employers register constantly!

☐ Check back on the registered employer list often.

We update it every Monday, and you can filter the employer list by major. The employer list can be found under the Virtual Career Fair Prep page on the CDC Resources website.

☐ Make sure to take breaks between sessions.

You don't need to schedule sessions back-to-back just because they're available. It's important to pace yourself during the virtual career fair. Please note the fair does not have a default break period. Taking breaks also helps make sure you don't run late and accidentally miss a session, which can count against you as a no-show.

You Must Select a Time Slot

You have to plan ahead! Select your time slot(s) with a company beforehand on Handshake. You cannot just show up the day of the virtual career fair.

You can sign up any time up until the day of the fair, as long as slots are still open, but you must sign up for a slot to participate.



Register on Handshake

Scan to register for the Fall 2026 Virtual Communications, Journalism, and Media Career Fair.

syr.joinhandshake.com/career_fairs

STEP 3

Research

☐ Explore participating companies on Handshake.

Browse the full list of registered employers to see who's attending, and start narrowing down which companies you most want to meet. If a company doesn't have any available sessions yet, it may be fully booked or just hasn't set its schedule. Employers have until October 1 to do so.

☐ Research the company.

Learn about their mission, culture, values, products and services, locations, and current projects. Explore their websites, social media accounts, and recent news.

☐ Prepare a few thoughtful questions for each company.

Ideally, you shouldn't ask questions that can easily be found online. The purpose of asking thoughtful questions is to show curiosity, foster engagement, and demonstrate that you have done your research.

☐ Follow the companies you're interested in on LinkedIn.

Recruiters can see when you follow them! Learn about their offerings and new initiatives or projects. Build and nurture relationships. Stay connected!

☐ Research the recruiter, not just the company.

Before your session, look up who you'll be meeting with on LinkedIn or Handshake. Knowing their name, title, and background gives you an easy, genuine way to connect and helps the conversation feel less like a script.

WHERE TO RESEARCH

- The company's official website, including mission, values, and current projects
- LinkedIn, for company updates, employee backgrounds, and recent posts
- Their social media channels, for a feel of their voice, culture, and what they're promoting right now

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK

- “ What does a typical day look like for someone in this role?
- “ What qualities or experiences have helped your strongest interns or new hires succeed here?
- “ What's the timeline for your hiring process this cycle, and when should I expect to hear back?

Technology Testing

☐ Download and use Google Chrome as your browser.

We saw a significant number of students unable to log in last year because they were using Safari. To avoid technical issues, download Google Chrome and use it as your browser for the career fair.

☐ Make sure your laptop is fully charged.

Charge your laptop ahead of time, or make sure you'll be plugged in, so a low battery doesn't interrupt your sessions.

☐ Choose a quiet, well-lit place to connect.

Make sure you have good lighting, a strong internet connection, and a quiet environment. Avoid having a window behind you, as it can make it difficult for others to see you. You can reserve an individual study room at Bird Library during the career fair; rooms are reserved up to 3 hours.

☐ Remember to look at the camera.

Put a sticky note close to the computer camera as a reminder to look at the camera occasionally. Looking at the camera shows that you are paying attention to the employer.

☐ Complete the Handshake Video Test.

Make sure to test your video and computer setup, and ensure that no firewall settings are blocking your connection.

[Click here to test your video.](#)

☐ Test your camera and microphone.

Make sure that you have the right settings.



Handshake Guide

Scan to open Handshake's official walkthrough for attending and getting the most out of a virtual career fair.

support.joinhandshake.com

! Tech Support

If you're having a problem with Handshake, use the platform's virtual chat assistant: click your name icon (the circle with your initials) in the top right corner of the screen, then select Support from the dropdown menu. For connection issues, contact your internet provider. For general questions during the career fair, you can also utilize the CDC Virtual Zoom Help Room from 2–6 PM (ET).

Day of the Career Fair

☐ Review your schedule before the virtual career fair.

The virtual event starts at 2:00 PM (ET). Log in early and show up on time. Sessions will start at the designated time.

☐ Show up on time.

The default time zone of the virtual career fair is Eastern Time (ET). If you are in a state with a different time zone or studying abroad, make sure to track the time. Quick tip: on Outlook (Web), go to Calendar > File > Options > Calendar > Time zones > Show a second time zone to display both zones.

☐ Check the platform selected by the employer.

Most sessions are hosted directly on Handshake, but some employers use an external platform like Zoom or Teams. Employers won't send separate links or reminders. If a session is hosted externally, you'll see a "Join External Video" link appear 5 minutes before the scheduled start time.

☐ Collect the recruiter's name and contact information.

During your session, note the recruiter's name, title, and the best way to reach them. You'll need this to send a personalized thank-you note and to follow up afterward.

☐ Use the CDC Virtual Zoom Help Room.

Contact the CDC team if you have specific questions during the virtual career fair. The CDC Virtual Zoom Help Room will be available from 2:00 PM (ET) until 6:00 PM (ET). The link will appear at 2:00 PM on Handshake.

HOW TO CANCEL A SESSION

If you need to cancel a session, do it as soon as possible. Email the employer directly to let them know you won't be able to attend. Click [here](#) for step-by-step instructions on canceling a session in Handshake.

Be on Time, This Is Important

Handshake automatically marks you as a no-show if you join a group session even one minute late, even if you did attend. Log in a few minutes early for every session. If you do end up joining late, email nhcdc@syr.edu or stop by the CDC Virtual Zoom Help Room (if you have time before your next session) to let us know you were there, so it can be corrected.

If you miss a scheduled session and don't reach out to the employer beforehand to cancel, **YOUR HANDSHAKE ACCOUNT WILL BE BLOCKED**. To get it unblocked, email the employer explaining why you weren't there for your scheduled meeting and CC Shawna Lawrence (slawrenc@syr.edu). **YOUR ACCOUNT WILL REMAIN BLOCKED UNTIL THIS IS DONE.**

Follow Up

☐ Send a personalized thank-you note.

Ideally, you want to send the note within 24–48 business hours. Mention something specific you discussed. This will show that you were paying attention.

EXAMPLE

Subject: Great Connecting at the Fall 2026 Virtual Career Fair

Hi *[Recruiter Name]*,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today at the Fall 2026 Virtual Communications, Journalism, and Media Career Fair. I really enjoyed hearing about *[something specific you discussed, like a project, team, or opportunity]*, and it reinforced my interest in *[role or company]*.

Thank you again for your time and insight. I would love to stay in touch.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Degree, Major]

[Grad Year]

S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications

[LinkedIn and/or Portfolio]

☐ Connect with employers on LinkedIn.

Send a personalized connection request that mentions where you met (the Fall 2026 Virtual Career Fair) and something specific you discussed. This keeps you visible in their network and makes it easy for them to remember you.

EXAMPLE

Hi *[Recruiter Name]*, it was great meeting you at the Fall 2026 Virtual Career Fair! I enjoyed our conversation about *[topic]* and would love to stay connected.

☐ Stay in touch periodically.

How you do this depends on who you're talking to. With a recruiter, that usually means reaching out when there's something concrete. You've applied to a role they mentioned, or a new posting opens up. With someone you built more of a connection with (a hiring manager, a team member, an alum), a relevant article or a quick update on your job search can go further.

Frequently Asked Questions

Are employers able to see my résumé? Or should I send an email before our session?

Yes, employers can see your résumé via Handshake. You don't need to contact the employer in advance to share the document. Make sure that you upload the latest version of your résumé and update your Handshake account as well.

How do I introduce myself to an employer?

You need to craft your pitch. A good pitch should be a clear, succinct, and convincing testament to how your experience, accomplishments, and skills make you an invaluable asset. It should also be creative and reflective of your personality. You don't want to sound like you're reading cue cards or just listing qualities. Keep it brief, genuine, and true to your own voice rather than a memorized script.

What questions should I ask an employer?

Ask questions that show you have done your research and have a genuine interest. The best questions come from your own research after you spend time learning about the company: recent initiatives, current programs, future plans, internships or entry-level training programs, or the interview process. Avoid questions that can be easily answered or found on their website.

I joined a session, but the employer didn't show up. What should I do?

You have a couple of options. If this happens during the career fair and you have enough time before your next scheduled session, stop by the CDC Virtual Zoom Help Room to let us know. We'll do what we can to help get it rescheduled.

Otherwise, email the Career Development Center at nhcdc@syr.edu with your full name, the employer or company name, and the time and type of session (1:1 or group).

I signed up for a meeting with an employer and something came up. What should I do?

If something comes up, don't wait until the last minute. Cancel your session in Handshake as soon as possible, and email the employer letting them know why you can't make it. If you show up on our reports as a no-show and didn't reach out to the employer beforehand, **YOUR HANDSHAKE ACCOUNT WILL BE BLOCKED**. To get it unblocked, email the employer explaining why you weren't there and CC Shawna Lawrence (slawrenc@syr.edu). **YOUR ACCOUNT WILL REMAIN BLOCKED UNTIL THIS IS DONE.**

My Handshake account was blocked after the fair, but I showed up to my session. What happened?

Handshake automatically marks you as a no-show if you join a group session even a minute late, so it's important to log in right on time. If this happens to you, email nhcdc@syr.edu or stop by the CDC Virtual Zoom Help Room (if you have time before your next session) to let us know you did attend, so it can be corrected.

How can I follow up with an employer?

Make an effort to follow up with every employer you meet. Get in the habit of collecting the names of recruiters, their titles, and their contact information during your session so you have what you need to send a follow-up email afterward.

Virtual Career Fair Checklist

Preparation

Aug – End of Sept

- ☐ Update and get your résumé reviewed by a career counselor.
- ☐ Complete your Handshake profile.
- ☐ Write and practice your pitch.
- ☐ Choose an outfit appropriate for a virtual professional setting.

Registration

Aug – Early Oct

- ☐ Register for the Virtual Career Fair on Handshake.
- ☐ Sign up for 1:1 and/or group sessions with employers.
- ☐ Check Handshake for weekly updates and new employers.
- ☐ Check back on the registered employer list often.
- ☐ Make sure to take breaks between sessions.

Research

Aug – Early Oct

- ☐ Explore participating companies on Handshake.
- ☐ Research the company.
- ☐ Prepare a few thoughtful questions for each company.
- ☐ Follow companies you're interested in on LinkedIn.

Technology Testing

Oct 8

- ☐ Download and use Google Chrome as your browser.
- ☐ Make sure your laptop is fully charged.
- ☐ Choose a quiet, well-lit place to connect.
- ☐ Remember to look at the camera.
- ☐ Complete the Handshake Video Test.
- ☐ Test your camera and microphone.

Day of the Career Fair

Oct 9

- ☐ Review your schedule before the virtual career fair.
- ☐ Show up on time.
- ☐ Check the platform selected by the employer.
- ☐ Collect the recruiter's name and contact information.
- ☐ Use the CDC Virtual Zoom Help Room.
- ☐ If you need to cancel a session last minute, immediately email the employer.

Follow Up

Oct 9 & After

- ☐ Send a personalized thank-you note.
- ☐ Connect with employers on LinkedIn.
- ☐ Stay in touch periodically.
- ☐ Read the Student Guide to the Virtual Career Fair.

GET IN TOUCH

Career Development Center



313 Newhouse 3 • Syracuse University

nhcdc@syr.edu

Shawna Lawrence, Assistant Director • slawrenc@syr.edu