

## Preparing for a Nursing Job or Career Fair

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UKHealthcare Career Center

<http://www.ukhealthcare.uky.edu/career-center/>

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You can always tell that the job market is beginning to open when you begin to see Open Houses or Job Fairs at local, or out of state hospitals or academic medical centers. This is a great way to meet face to face with a Human Resource professional, Nurse Recruiter, Nursing Manager, Hiring Manager and Staff Nurses. Similar to preparing for an in person interview, there are easy steps to help you plan and prepare for a Job or Career Fair.

1. **Check the hospital or academic medical center of interest for Career Fair dates. Also check out the UK College of Nursing quarterly newsletter called the DOSE** - If you have a hospital or academic medical center in mind that you would like to work, look on their web site for upcoming Open Houses or Job Fairs. Take the time to review all the information, **register** if that is an option, submit your resume if that is required, and review start/end time, units/floors/satellite hospitals that might be participating, etc. and start getting prepared!! Do your homework...find out about the Hospital or Academic Medical Center.
2. **Some hospitals and academic medical centers are hosting Career Fairs in large public spaces such as a Mall or Hotel** – Understand where the Career Fair will be located. If you know someone from that hospital ask them to meet you there and see if they would be willing to introduce you to some Managers. Public spaces are often used to hold more departments and tables. The environment can seem distracting and overwhelming but you will want to stay focused and calm. Some students have described Career Fairs in large public places more like “speed dating” where they get to ask you questions and vice versa. It is quite common to have “on site” interviews during or right after the Career Fair so be prepared for those as well.
3. **Have a Plan** - It is very easy to feel intimidated at such an event. Wandering around aimlessly will only enhance this feeling. A plan will help you to have some idea as to which units, floors, patient care areas, etc. you want to approach. An example of a plan may be to seek out the top 3 areas that interest you the most such as oncology, pediatrics or ICU. Many Hospitals or Job Fairs will publicize, in advance, the entry level positions or experienced positions they are seeking and provide a map or layout or even provide a Directory of units/floors that are exhibiting at the Fair.
4. **Be open-minded and flexible;** you might be surprised at what you find.
5. **Dress for success and dress to impress!!** Wear an interview suit (see the examples on the UKHealthcare Career Center web page <https://ukhealthcare.uky.edu/career-center>, wear conservative jewelry, conservative shoes and carry a leather portfolio or folder.
6. **Your updated and polished resume** - Bring extra copies of your resume on nice, bonded, conservative colored resume paper (beige, ivory, white or gray). Resume paper can be purchased at Staples, Office Depot or Wal-Mart. Bring a leather portfolio or folder, and a pen to keep everything organized and to take notes. You do NOT need copies of your cover letter. Your introduction to the Patient Care Manager or Nurse Recruiter “is” your cover letter. You should NOT put a Career Objective on your resume...you might find a unit or floor that you are interested in that you didn’t know existed!!
7. If you have developed “targeted” resumes for your “top” areas of interest such as NICU, CVICU, MICU, Pediatrics, Oncology, etc. then bring those as well to give to those **specific** Patient Care Managers.
8. Usually Open Houses or Job Fairs will be held in a large room, with lots of tables and Patient Care Managers/Hiring Managers, RNs, possibly other team members (MD, OT, PT, etc.) sitting at each table that are eager to meet with you. If you’ve already interviewed with the department, make sure you say hello. You shouldn’t feel awkward that you are at a Career Fair...most Managers want you to keep all of your doors open until you accept a Job Offer.

9. Walk up to each table of your interest and shake their hand (firmly and look them in the eye) of each of the Patient Care Managers, or Nurse Recruiters. **Prepare your 1 Minute Introduction.** Tell them a bit about yourself... “Hello, I’m Sue Strup. I am from Elkhart, IN. I’m a UK College of Nursing student and I’m graduating in May, 2019. I am also Nursing Care Technician in the Pool for UKHealthcare, and I am nursing student leader having recently worked on Dance Blue, my sorority fundraiser for St. Jude and I’m also a volunteer at the Refuge Clinic. I’m interested in working in the MICU where I will be doing my Nursing Synthesis this spring.”
10. Answer their questions politely and professionally. When you feel the questions are winding down, begin to ask your questions (e.g., what they’re seeking in a new graduate, how many new grads do they anticipate hiring, BSN Residency program, staff development opportunities for new grads, orientation, etc.). Ask them if they would like a copy of your resume. Thank them and tell them that you hope to hear from them soon.
11. Collect their business cards so you can follow up with a **thank you note**.
12. **Thank you note follow up** - After the Open House or Job Fair, write them a hand –written thank you note expressing your interest in the position that you discussed and that you are looking forward to interviewing with them.
13. **Offers on the spot at Career Fairs** - I have heard several reports from seniors and recent graduates that during a Job or Career Fair, they were offered jobs on the spot. Don’t ever feel pressured to accept a job offer on the spot...thank them for the opportunity and say something like this, “Thank you so much for the job offer. I would like to complete all my interviews before I made a decision. Can I get back to you in a couple of weeks?” **Don’t feel like you need to accept their offer. Do your due diligence. Evaluate every aspect of the job offer including starting salary, cost of living, benefits, educational/tuition repayment, etc.** If you haven’t even been to the floor or unit, request a shadowing opportunity and go back to meet the team, see how the team works together and observe the patient acuity.
14. Go with confidence and show them what you have! Good luck!