

NCA Career Center at the Annual Convention
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When NCA made the decision to move to a Job Fair model from the long-established Placement Center model, they did the national association a great service. In 2015, NCA added some new facets to the model, so the new service now will be known as the NCA Career Center. The NCA membership over the years has given input on how the event operates, and we are establishing some new changes. The Career Center model has opened up a much more effective means to the world of position hunting for both potential employees and employers.

When the NCA Career Center opens, the first half day, 9:00 a.m. to noon, is open to all registered attendees and is designed to have potential employees go from booth to booth, introduce themselves to potential employers, share a vita, and arrange for a later screening interview. This allows the employer to already peruse the person's qualifications, and invite them back for an interview in the afternoon, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. In addition, we have added some career-focused short presentations, termed PrepTalks, as part of the event. They will run simultaneously with the first half day of the center's opening. These were added in 2015 and they were very well attended, so we will continue to do that. In addition we will also be allowing other employers from outside of academia to recruit employees.

Even though we believe that we have improved on this model each year, we have been taking your comments about ways to improve the Career Center into account. We would like to point out to those of you who have not used the Career Center recently how it runs.

1. We have taken some steps to increase awareness of the event and hopefully max out our booths once again – so RESERVE YOUR BOOTH EARLY.
2. For position-seekers there will be a Career Center webpage that will list institutions who have signed up to participate in the Career Center, including a map of the Career Center floor plan. Prior to the Convention, NCA will also post job titles that these employers are seeking applications. This is another reason for employers to list their positions as early as possible. The PrepTalk topics, presenter(s), and schedule information will also be posted to the Career Center webpage prior to the Convention. This will hopefully help attendees prepare in advance for what they will do on-site.
3. Employers – be sure to bring things that make you distinctive, and especially bring multiple copies of your job listings. If you have taken a walk through the Career Center, you have seen the schools that get the most attention are the ones that have distinctive displays.
4. We create lists and maps that will list booth numbers and schools assigned to those booths that attendees will receive as they enter. Included in the list will be the area of the discipline where the jobs are being offered.

Probably the largest issue to deal with is the actual process of using the Career Center – both as a potential employee or as an employer. We have discovered a few interesting things about how the center operates. We offer a few tips based on the complaints and compliments we have received:

1. The Career Center was designed to have the first half of the day, 9:00 a.m. to noon be to meet and talk with potential job candidates – NOT FOR DETAILED INTERVIEWS.
 - a. We mention this because many applicants complain that they often cannot talk with people during this time because the potential employers are conducting in depth interviews, not meeting as many candidates as possible.

- b. In addition, this diminishes the number of potential candidates you can talk to; you lessen your chances of having a larger applicant pool. Many employers have complained about not talking with a large enough group of potential employees. We tell you this simply because these have been the two largest complaints from both our potential employers and employees. Clearly, this is a decision that you need to make for yourselves how you operate your booth, but it is something to consider.
2. The afternoon, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., is meant to be the part of the day for interviewing your potential candidates – to invite those you found that you might like to interview more in depth back for a longer interview.
 - a. We suggest perhaps using a “Sign Up” schedule – one that you develop on your own.
 - b. We do not function like we do the first half of the day– where potential candidates wander throughout the fair seeing what is available. Only potential employees with a scheduled interview are allowed into the Career Center during the afternoon. We do this to try and give you the opportunity to interview candidates without the distraction of someone interrupting you.
3. We try to be fair and equal to all of the booths in the Career Center– so please keep that in mind in relation to the other booths. Displays should not spill over into walkways or adjoining booths.

We hope that you will consider using the Career Center this year if you have positions to advertise. The high level of “traffic” that flows through there that day makes it more than worth your while.