



How to Engineer Annual Recruiting Wins for 400+ Employers and 12,000 Students



Summary

The Purdue Engineering Student Council (PESC) offers Meetings from Career Fair Plus (CF+) because their employers demand it to facilitate discovering their ideal candidates among 12,000 students attending the PESC Industrial Round Table.

With Meetings, pre-qualified candidates have 1:1 time with their highest priority employers maximizing the effectiveness of the career fair for candidates and employers. Employers choose how many meetings and what qualifications they want as filters for candidates booking meetings.

PESC shares three Pro Tips to maximize success when you enable CF+ Meetings:

1

Add Meetings as an a la carte choice during event registration so that they can handle everything in one transaction.

2

Don't give it away. Charging employers for the value add-on increases demand!

3

Build student awareness and demand with a marketing plan that peaks right before the booking window to reserve 1:1 meetings on employers' schedules opens.



Background

According to a 2022 College Gazette ranking, the agriculture and biological engineering program at Purdue University in West Lafayette, IN, is #1 in the nation, and their industrial engineering program is #2. The #5 ranked aeronautical and astronautical engineering course conducts globally recognized rocket propulsion research in the world's most expansive academic propulsion lab¹.

If you're assuming these metrics lead to high post-graduation placement rates, you're right: 97% of 2021 Purdue engineering graduates successfully transitioned into a career or graduate school within six months of commencement with an average starting salary of \$72,382². The Purdue Engineering Student Council (PESC) is a major force behind these numbers.

Founded in 1975, the PESC fulfills its mission statement of "serving students, serving industry, serving community" on campus and around the globe. PESC members represent almost every engineering discipline offered at the school and are some of Purdue's most enthusiastic and motivated leaders.

As President of the Purdue Engineering Student Council (PESC), senior Electrical Engineering student Ben Pekarek oversees Purdue University's two largest career fairs, the Fall Industrial Round Table (IR) and Spring EXPO.

The IR attracts 400+ employers and 9,000-12,000 students focused on internship, co-op, and full-time positions in STEM, engineering, and related disciplines. PESC's two-day spring career fair attracts 200+ employers and 5,000 of Purdue's globally sought-after engineering students³.

And if you're assuming the size and popularity of these events create multiple administrative challenges for organizer PESC, you're right again.

Here's a look at three of the most significant challenges and how innovative features of the Career Fair Plus event hosting & recruiting platform transform problems into enviable results.



Challenges

When the IR returned to an in-person event in 2022, PESCS, employers, and students wanted to continue the well-liked and productive reserved 1:1 meetings facilitated by the virtual format. But, with a potential 12,000 attendees, PESCS also needed to ensure employers met qualified students for each open role and internship.

Similarly, the PESCS leadership wanted to bring back popular pre-2020 IR in-person offerings, including employer informational webinars the day before IR opened.

As full-time engineering students also searching for internships and employment, PESCS planning teams needed robust administrative tools to optimize the hundreds of behind-the-scenes labor hours required to create meaningful connections between 400+ employers and 12,000 students.

Hosting software

As a current customer, Ben Pekarek and the PESCS were familiar with the value, flexibility, and elite customer service CF+ delivers. Their long-time IR employers and recruiters welcomed the software's ease of use, and students quickly mastered their side of the mobile app.

Yes, employers, students, and organizers preferred CF+, but PESCS leadership still had to confirm how, or if, the platform could:

- > Accommodate a two-day in-person, one-day virtual hybrid event the size of IR
- > Reserve group meetings for the pre-IR employer informational webinars
- > Reproduce scheduled 1:1 meetings on-site
- > Deliver student resumes before in-person meetings



Challenges



And even if CF+ software could facilitate these requirements, PESC had another set of questions surrounding the “how” challenges of implementing these tasks.

Maintaining meaningful reserved 1:1 connections

Could PESC use the popular CF+ platform to assure employers that dedicating resources to offering on-site 1:1 meetings was worth it if they couldn’t somehow pre-qualify the 9,000-12,000 students ahead of these meetings?

How would recruiters qualify candidates for open roles and specific internships before students booked 1:1 meetings? Could employers filter booking options against job or organizational hiring requirements such as academic major or graduation dates? How would international students find employers recruiting or hiring non-US citizens?

Identifying employers with federal eligibility restrictions was especially critical for PESC. International students account for a significant percentage of the academic majors attending IR yet have notably fewer internships and employment options. PESC needed a mechanism to prevent international students from reserving 1:1 meetings with organizations where they’re ineligible to intern or work.

According to Purdue’s International Students And Scholars Enrollment & Statistical Report Fall 2022⁴:

- > Total international student enrollment ranks 4th among U.S. public institutions and 2nd in the Big Ten
- > International students equal 11.2% of the undergraduate enrollment and 18.6% of the total number of enrolled students
- > International graduate and professional students represent 42.9% of all students at this level of study
- > The College of Engineering (41.5%) enrolls the highest percentage of students from abroad



Challenges

- > Purdue's International Scholars⁵ are heavily enrolled in IR target STEM and Agricultural Sciences disciplines
 - Engineering (401)
 - Agriculture, Agricultural Operations and Related Sciences (140)
 - Engineering Technologies and Engineering-Related Fields (130)
 - Physical Sciences (125)
 - Biological and Biomedical Sciences (118)

Motivating employers and students to prepare

Employer and student responsiveness to prepare for the IR well in advance proved another ongoing challenge for the IR hosts.

Despite consistent email communication with students and telephone and email outreach to employers, the “last-minute tsunami” constantly brought time-intensive work for already overloaded PESC members.

How would offering 1:1 reserved meetings increase the PESC's workload? How could they incentivize employers and students to set up their CF+ accounts earlier, thus ideally reducing the “last-minute tsunami” to a ripple?

PESC resolved these challenges by enabling a CF+ hosting platform feature called Meetings.





Solution

Meetings, with a capital “M,” minimized the administrative challenges of offering 1:1 reserved meetings (with a lowercase “m”) forward to the post-pandemic Industrial Round Table career fairs.

Hosting Software

PESC enhanced the CF+ software they already used by enabling the value add-on feature, Meetings. This functionality for in-person events allows employers to pre-identify students according to relevant filters attached to published meeting schedules and students to “skip the lines” by booking meetings on applicable published schedules.

IR employers who purchased the \$150 value add-on to their base registration gained the instant ability to attract pre-qualified intern and employee candidates from the 9,000-12,000 student participants. Many who registered for Meetings also selected a second \$150 a la carte option to host an information seminar one day before the IR.

Maintaining meaningful reserved 1:1 connections

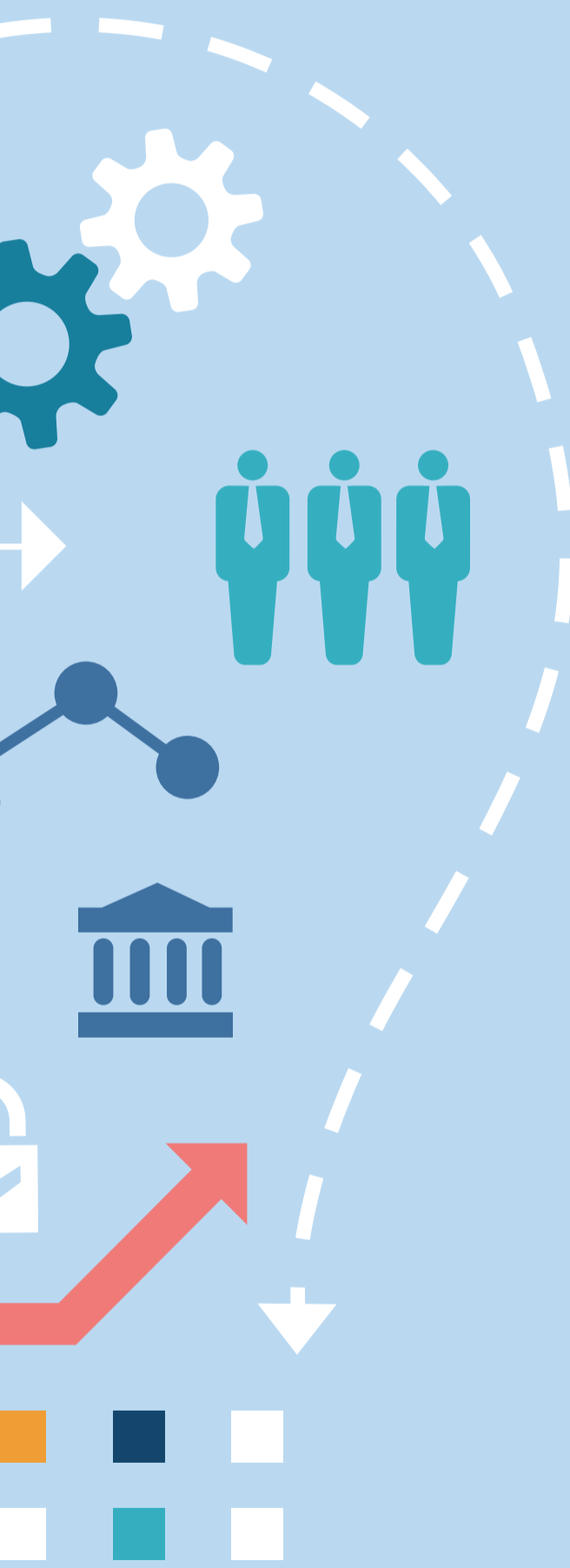
Meetings lets employers publish as many schedules as they choose, each with pre-set timed segments for 1:1 meetings with students who meet optional prerequisites attached to each schedule. The company-selected filters block students who don’t match the criteria from reserving meetings.

Because company representatives get these students’ resumes before the IR, maximizing the value of this initial meeting—and optimizing their recruiting and hiring efforts at an event with 399+ competing employers and more than 9,000 students.

The available schedule slots are typically ten minutes, although employers can increase or decrease the meeting times and the buffer period between students.



Solution



Some employers post general schedules; others offer bookings for open roles or internships. Time slots to meet with in-demand employers like Tesla, John Deere, and Boeing, along with companies promoting opportunities for international students, usually fill quickly.

Proactive students who set up their CF+ accounts early can immediately reserve 1:1 meetings when the booking window opens.

Motivating employers and students to prepare

The aptly named booking window is when students reserve 1:1 meetings during the IR with their preferred employers and seats at pre-event information seminars as they choose.

PESC opens the IR booking window at 7:00 am 12 days before the event. Because students need a CF+ account to log in to the app and book their meetings, PESC starts aggressively encouraging students to download the CF+ app approximately one week before the booking window opens.

On the employer side, PESC only introduces the Meetings add-on option during IR registration and multiple a la carte options, including additional recruiters, tents, and space to host pre-IR company information seminars. They don't expend resources promoting Meetings or any registration options to recruiters.

PESC does, however, create default schedules with 10-minute meetings and buffers in case employers who purchased Meetings don't publish schedules before the booking window opens. They also allocate up to hundreds of hours of support time to reach out and remind recruiters to create their custom schedules, including prerequisite filters if desired.

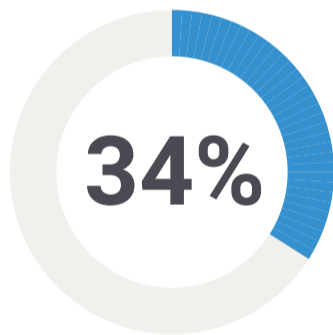
"It's my opinion that securing a reserved 1:1 meeting with in-demand, large employers drive students to sign up for CF+ accounts. The people who don't want to wait two hours to talk to employers like Tesla, John Deere, or Boeing set up CF+ accounts so they can book Meetings."

– Ben Pekarek, President Purdue Engineering Student Council, Electrical Engineering major

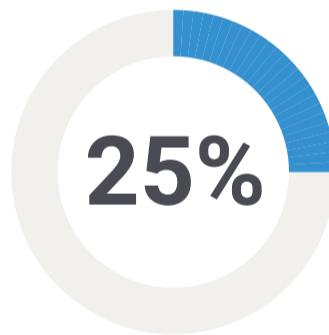


Results

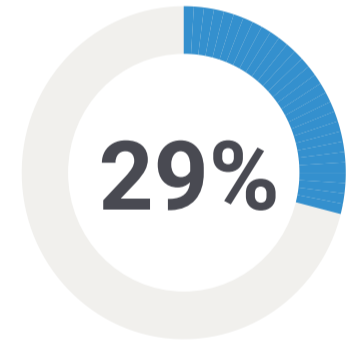
Engineers love numbers, so let's share the results in their language, starting with the \$42,300 in additional revenue to help fund PESC-sponsored scholarships because:



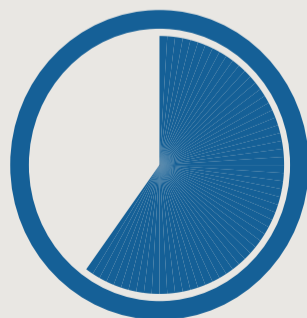
34% (136) of 2022 IR employers purchased Meetings



25% (100) of 2022 IR employers hosted pre-IR Informational Seminars



29% of the 165 Expo: Spring 2022 employers add-one Meetings

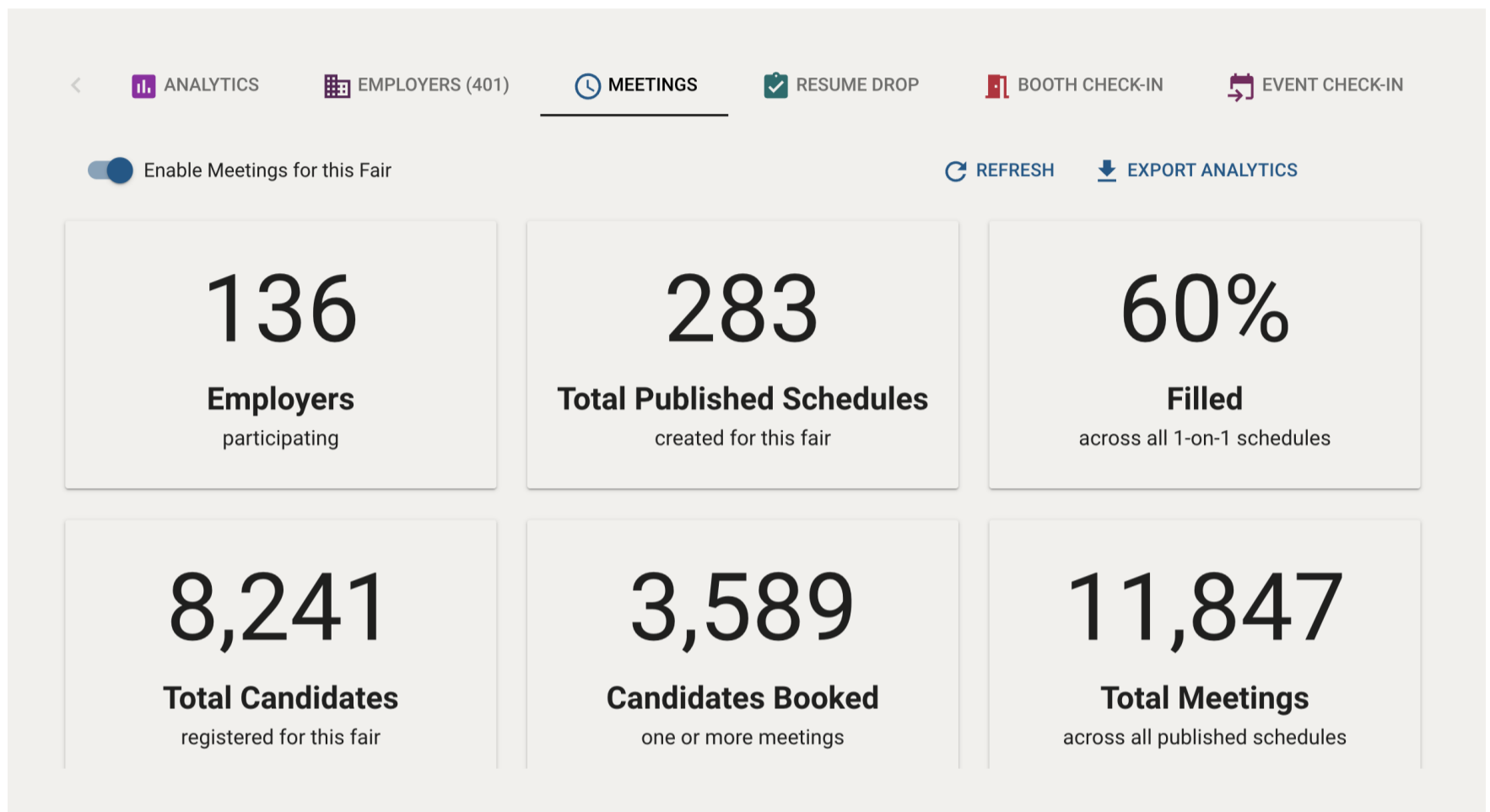


60%

IR 2022 enjoyed a **60% average fill rate** on published meeting schedules across the two-day in-person event



Results



CF+ Dashboard for 2022 PESc Industrial Round Table

By listing Meetings as an additional purchase to base registration, PESc positioned the opportunity to pre-qualify students for 1:1 reserved meetings as a high-value extraordinary approach to their IR recruiting experience.

According to Pekarek, Meetings also drove better employer-student engagements. The students are in CF+ booking meetings. After they reserve time with Google or Amazon, they might notice a company hiring mechanical engineers or software developers. Having committed to a 9:10 morning meeting with Google, they grab a 9:30 slot with this newly discovered company. Now the student has a second 1:1 meeting with a potential employer, and that recruiter gets a resume from a pre-qualified student waiting to meet them at the IR.

PESc also enabled the CF+ Meetings feature to support student registration for pre-IR employer information sessions. Employers select this add-on to present their brand, open roles, and internships to interested students before the intensity of the IR. They also receive the resumes of each student attending the company's information session, allowing recruiters to identify people they might want to connect with before the career fair.

The CF+ reservation system gave PESc the necessary data to assign rooms based on the number of registered attendees. Students can learn more about potential employers, sometimes even speaking 1:1 with recruiters after the presentations. Students closed out of fully booked schedules appreciate this in-between ground of reserved meetings and waiting two or more hours in walk-up lines at IR.



Words to the Wise

You don't need to host a career fair for 400+ employers and 9,000-12,000 students to benefit from Pekarek's insights about using CF+ Meetings and bringing 1:1 reserved conversations to your in-person events.

First, his "Must Do" tips to maximize success using Meetings bear repeating:

- > Add Meetings as an a la carte choice during event registration.
- > Don't give it away: charge employers for value add-on.
- > Implement a student marketing plan that adjusts based on when the booking window opens to reserve 1:1 meetings on employers' schedules.

Continuing, he suggests:

- > Consider offering complimentary appointments to your three largest or most popular employers, especially the first time you introduce Meetings at an in-person event.

- > Set realistic expectations for employers:
 - Offering Meetings creates a few more clicks during registration and additional time to create their Meeting schedules
 - Publishing too many schedules, being too broad—or too specific—can affect bookings.
 - Students aren't always available at the company's offered times.
 - Politely tell (and tell and tell) the primary points of contact listed in your event registration to make sure recruiters attending the event set up their CF+ accounts and publish company schedules before the booking window opens.
 - Make sure employers know their brand's reputation on campus. A lesser-known company creating 12 schedules might be disappointed when only a few students book meetings.



Words to the Wise

The Industrial Round Table is a standout event embodying PESC's mission to serve students, industry, and community.



- > Help students understand that
 - Employers define their Meetings schedules, the number of available slots, and any prerequisite for booking a 1:1 meeting.
 - If schedules fill up, their careers aren't over, and it's not the host's fault. Encourage them to register for information seminars, especially if the companies with full schedules offer these meetings.
 - The best chance of avoiding full schedules is setting up their CF+ account ASAP so they're eligible to reserve meetings immediately when the booking window opens.
- > Staff up to track down the inevitable employers who bought Meetings but haven't published their schedules even with the booking window a day away.
- > Limit your promotional event emails to two paragraphs, don't bold more than 15 words, and remember you have to “wow” the TikTok generation within three-five seconds.
- > Monitor as schedules publish, looking for potential mismatches between supply (available Meeting slots) and demand (student interest in the company and/or roles who also meet any prerequisites).

By enabling CF+ Meetings PESC captured the power and convenience of reserving 1:1 conversation participants enjoyed during virtual IRs when the event returned to an in-person format. Customizable schedules and optional prerequisites improved recruiting efficiency and facilitated meaningful connections, especially for international students and lesser-known employers.

Use Ben's email as a headstart on promoting your Meetings in-person event to your students...



Hi Purdue Students!

The Industrial Roundtable (IR) Career Fair is quickly approaching! Please read the below for information about the event.

What is IR? Should I go?

Industrial Roundtable is Purdue's largest career fair and is geared toward all science, technology, and engineering majors. The fair is the source for the majority of internship, co-op, and full-time opportunities for Purdue students. 430 companies, including Amazon, Tesla, Meta, Virgin Galactic, P&G, Samsung, Bain & Company, and many others, will be attending this year. The fair is a hybrid event, with both in-person and virtual interaction options. Freshman through Graduate students are encouraged to attend. Industrial Roundtable will be held in person at Memorial Mall on Tuesday, September 13th, and Wednesday, September 14th, from 8 am to 4 pm. Industrial Roundtable will be held virtually on Career Fair Plus on Thursday, September 15th, from 10 am to 4 pm. The map for the in-person fair as well as the full list of companies attending, is also available on the Career Fair Plus website and mobile app.

How do I attend?

At the in-person fair, you may walk up to the companies of your choosing and speak with their representatives. Many larger companies have opted to take appointments on Career Fair Plus for students to "Skip the Line" if you meet their requirements. Lines are often hours long for larger companies - I encourage you to use this feature if you qualify to guarantee face time with the company of your choosing. At the virtual fair, you must schedule an appointment on Career Fair Plus to speak with companies. The window to schedule appointments opens September 1st at 7 am. You are initially limited to 4 appointments for the in-person fair and 4 for the virtual fair. This limit is lifted on September 8th at 5 pm.

Please refer to the Career Fair Guidebook and the IR student center for additional information as well as a walk-through on how to schedule an appointment. I look forward to seeing you in September!

Best,

Ben Pekarek



References

¹ <https://collegazette.com/purdue-engineering-acceptance-rate-ranking/>

² <https://www.purdue.edu/futureengineers/info/engineering-finances.php>

³ <https://www.purdueesc.org/career-fairs>

⁴ https://www.purdue.edu/IPPU/ISS/_documents/EnrollmentReport/iss_statisticalreportfall22.pdf

⁵ <https://www.purdue.edu/IPPU/ISS/>