

Networking: Your Edge in a Tough Job Market!

By: **Jhanique Prince**

Students may be surprised to learn that networking can be just as valuable, and in some cases more so, than what they learn in a classroom. The purpose is to meet people which allows you the opportunity to expand your professional circle. Networking can occur when there is a planned event or activity in which the primary goal is to connect with others, such as a meeting of a professional organization or a career fair. The setting can also be informal, such as talking with someone in the check-out line at the grocery store.

Your network can become one of your most valuable assets when looking for internships or jobs.

Joining on campus organizations that are related to your future goals can be a major starting point in building a network. Most of the time, these organizations have meetings that are free. Regular participation is essential for effective networking; the more you attend meetings the more recognizable you become to the members, which leads to building stronger relationships. For example, an on-campus organization such as the Pre-Law Society would be a beneficial for someone looking to prepare for a career in law, or the American Advertising Federation for students preparing for a career in related fields. Many on campus

organizations are also chapters of regional or national professional organizations. In addition to on-campus chapter meetings, they frequently offer job listings, conferences you can attend, training and journals related to the field.

While some professional organizations have on-campus chapters, others do not. Research organizations related to your career field in order to find those most relevant for you. While on-campus organizations are important, joining professional organizations that aren't college affiliated is helpful as well. Most of the time, you can join these organizations for a reduced membership fee as an undergraduate student. These organizations allow you to attend

conferences and access job listings.

In today's society, internet networking is easy and convenient for most. You can do so by email or social networking sites such as Facebook or MySpace, and professional networking sites such as LinkedIn. Always make sure your page projects a professional image, because you want to-(continued to page 4)

Quick Tip: A great way to start building your network is by conducting informational interviews during all four years of college. You will find out more about the career field(s) you are considering. Send the people you interviewed a thank you card, and occasional updates on your academic progress toward a career in the field. These people will be great resources when looking for co-ops, internships and jobs.



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Career Fair

Center for Career Services

Hours:

Monday-Friday
8:30am-4:30pm

Quick Question Hours:

Monday 1:00-3:00
Tuesday 2:00-4:00
Wednesday 11:00-1:00
Thursday 2:00-4:00

Contact Us:

Schwartz Hall
Rm. 102
Tel: 203.392.6536
Fax: 203.392.6541
Web:
careers.southernct.edu

On-Campus Interviews

Please submit your refined resume to Career Services at least one week prior to the interview date to be considered.

- 4/16-First Investors
- 4/17-Northwestern Mutual
- 4/21-Waterbury Public Schools
- 2/22-Verizon
- 4/24-Enterprise Rent-A-Car
- 4/27-ACES
- 4/28-Marrakech
- 4/29-New York Life
- 4/30- Bridgeport Public Schools
- 5/1-OCE North America
- 5/4-Leap
- 5/5-CT Tech High School System
- 5/6-Institute of Professional Practice
- 5/7-Liberty Mutual
- 5/8-W.B. Mason
- 5/11-Social Security Administration
- 5/12-Aerotek
- 5/13-Sherwin-Williams

Are you Ready?

Outsmart a Tough Economy

by **Richard Eckert**

For Southern's seniors graduation day is rapidly approaching. With the recent media attention given to layoffs and unemployment, many May grads are concerned about finding a job. In February 2009, the national unemployment rate was 8.1 percent. According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate has gone up every month since August 2008. Though Connecticut is also struggling the states unemployment rate remains 1.5 percent below the national average.

Winter 2009 college graduate employment salary statistics, compiled by The National Association of Colleges and Employers, shows that the average starting salary for Bachelors degree graduates has not increased from last year. Some majors, however, did see their income rise for winter 2009. "Logistics/materials management majors, for example, are seeing average offers that are 8.4 percent higher than last year, while students in business administration/management degrees are receiving offers nearly 5 percent higher than last year."

According to Connecticut's NBC30, college graduates still have an edge over those without any high education. They will, "have an easier time finding jobs than those with no higher education. About 60 percent of the available jobs in Connecticut in the next 10 years will require a bachelor's degree.

Companies also are likely to start hiring more employees to replace the retiring baby boomers in the next few years." This is precisely why graduates should not lose hope; Connecticut is home to many businesses that have job opportunities, including employers who will be on-

campus at the Career Fairs in early April, and employers who will be conducting on-campus interviews, also beginning in April.

There are many ways for undergraduates to become strong contenders for entry level jobs and stand out from the competition. A minor in a related field can add a new perspective. Students should also choose electives and general education courses that will be most complimentary and they should try to add a skill that may be in short supply in their career field.

Some college students may be considering certification programs, graduate, or professional schools as a way to delay their entrance into the tough job market. Consider a few things first if you do choose to further your education. Can you afford the additional cost? What are the requirements and/or expectations of your chosen field? For some, post graduate work is a requirement for their chosen career field, but for others field experience may be of more value.

Some new graduates may choose to consider internships that accept those with a completed degree. This can develop your resume, expand your network of contacts and create additional work experience that will increase the odds of finding employment. That internship/co-op can lead to a part or full-time position .

Get creative and consider options other than full-time employment as a way to bolster your resume. A weak economy often forces new grads to explore options they may not have otherwise considered. Multiple part time jobs, and entrepreneurial endeavors are just a few ways you can earn a living and enhance your skills. Finally, consider volunteering either locally, or through an organization such as the Peace Corps.

Many students are realizing that opportunities for jobs are slim right now. With strong career planning and assistance from a professional career counselor, however, there are a myriad of options to explore. The key is starting early. Attend a workshop at Career Services, come to career fair, and gain experience through a co-op before you graduate.



How YOU can benefit from experience...

By Jonetta Badillo



Aimee's Advice:

When it comes to preparing yourself for future success, getting involved on-campus and completing internships is extremely helpful. Joining clubs and organizations that are suitable to your interests, it is a great way to begin networking. Exposure to the professional world helps unveil possible career paths. Similar to my professors in the classroom, I learned a great deal from the professionals I interacted with through interning. I was selected for my current position partially due to the array of opportunities I was exposed to while an intern. Southern has many resources to help prepare students, take advantage of them.

Experience + Networking = Success



Aimee Piccin '06

Getting hands-on experience helps to prepare you for the real world, and can make your transition into the job market a whole lot smoother and less frightening. The Center for Career Services can help students achieve hands on career related experience through the Cooperative Education Program. Co-ops allow juniors and seniors combine academic study with related work experience. Students who chose to do co-ops not only earn elective credit, but they also receive pay while getting career-related experience and learning from professionals in the field. "Based on my experience working with students, there isn't any doubt in my mind that a cooperative education experience is a way to gain valuable on the job experience which gives graduates a real advantage in the job market, especially in these difficult economic times," said Patricia Whelan, the Associate Director of Career Services.

College students who participate in a co-op can expect to reap multiple benefits from the experience, including a shot at a full-time job, according to a study conducted by the National Associations of Colleges (NACE). Employers who responded to NACE's *2007 Recruiting Benchmarks Survey* reported that they offered full-time jobs to almost two-thirds of their interns (and co-ops).

More than ever before, college grads need something that will make them stand out from other applicants, and without a doubt, the experience you show on your resume will help you to stand out. According to NACE, employers reported that nearly 31 percent of their new college graduate hires from the Class of 2006 were previous interns (or co-ops) at their companies. In addition, 62 percent of the same pool of college grads had at least some experience. You should research co-op opportunities and apply with the same careful diligence you would give a full time job search. A career counselor at the university can help you to identify co-op positions that are right for you, ensure you have a first rate application package, and help you practice for interviews.

On the job you need to show you have what it takes to be a professional member of the staff, and can to go the extra mile. Network with co-workers and managers; make a point to ask questions and listen to what experienced professionals have to offer. Coming into work early or staying late to finish up a project is will show your supervisor that you are committed and have a strong work ethic. Once you have completed assigned projects ask your supervisor if you can volunteer to help in other departments, working on projects that interest you that are outside your regular duties.

Gaining hands-on experience through a co-op provides the necessary skills that you will need once you begin your career. If you already have a career related job the Center for Career Services can work with you to get up to 12 credits for the position. Talk with a career counselor to find out more about gaining experience.

After completing her BS in Interpersonal and Relational Communication in 2006 Aimee remained at Southern and pursued a Master's in Sociology and worked as a graduate intern in Career Services. Upon completion of her internship Aimee was hired as the Assistant Director of Career Development at Sacred Heart University.

Tell us how experience contributed to your success.

As an undergraduate I applied for an internship in Career Services at Southern. I didn't know yet that I would go on to have a career in the field. Not only did I gain experience it helped me to really refine my own career goals. My experience as an undergrad led me to apply for a position as a graduate intern.

How has networking helped you in your job search and career?

Networking has played a part in my success in so many ways. As both an undergraduate and graduate student I was involved on campus, joined professional organizations, and attended conferences. My first supervisor in Career Services was also an alumnus of the Communication department and I found the position through a professor's referral. I am certain that my position as an undergraduate intern contributed to securing the graduate intern position in the same office. Finally, when I applied for my current position a colleague was integral in helping me make connection to local career services offices where she had professional affiliations. Sometimes you have to push yourself out of your comfort zone to introduce yourself to people and ask for help.

Oops... you did

What?!?!

Experience

During my job interview, the interviewer asked if I belonged to any professional organizations. I replied back with, "Yes, I've been a member of the on-campus video game society all four years of college." The job I was being interviewed was for a position as a social worker...oops.

Advice:

A professional organization is related to your major and career goal. Something like a video game club would not be considered a professional organization for someone looking to go into the social work field. Something more suitable would be an organization such as the National Association of Social Workers.



Don't Forget Career Fair is coming!!!

Two posters for career fairs at Southern Connecticut State University. The left poster is for 'Education and Nursing Career Fair' on Monday, April 6, 2009, from 1:00 pm to 4:30 pm at Michael J. Adanti Student Center. The right poster is for 'General Career Fair' on Tuesday, April 7, 2009, from 1:00 pm to 4:30 pm at the same location. Both posters mention that S.C.S.U. students, alumni, and students from other colleges are welcome, and that business attire is required. They are presented by the Center for Career Services, with contact number 203-392-6536. For details, they direct visitors to careers.southernct.edu. At the bottom, it says 'SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY COMPLIMENTS OF THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION'.

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manage that image for professional growth. Keep in mind that using these sites can be helpful if you do so correctly, and harmful if you don't.

Once you have begun relationships with others aspiring to enter your career field, as well as established professionals, it is essential to maintain the relationship by following-up those you meet. As part of a follow-up, you should thank them for speaking with you and offer to assist them with any of their future needs. By doing this, it lets them know that you not only care about yourself, but them as well. You don't, however, want to bombard them with emails, messages, and phone calls, so it's important to make sure you follow-up no more than twice every 3-4 months.

Although job searching has never been a piece of cake, it's even more challenging in the current economy. This is why networking proves to be more important now than ever before. The key is to make yourself stand out above the rest; simply sending a resume through online sites won't do the job, and with the economy, employers aren't spending money on print ads to let potential employees know that they are hiring. This is where the "it's about WHO you know" comes into play, and networking begins. Start talking with people and let them know what types of positions you are looking for, and companies you have in mind. Also, ask them to refer you to contacts. You can talk to colleagues, professors, family members, and you can visit the Center for Career Services to speak with a career counselor who can help you refine your networking techniques and get started on a job search.

Center for Career Services ~ Southern Connecticut State University
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