

Connecticut State University System

Building Careers & Connecticut

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At no time in their lives has the jobless rate been higher – especially among their peers – or the prospects for employment more daunting. For today’s college students, looking beyond education to a career is as challenging as it has ever been.

For businesses across our state, the economic downturn has meant that companies large and small are seeking ways to survive today while laying the groundwork to thrive tomorrow.

With 93 percent of its 36,000 students from Connecticut, the four universities of the Connecticut State University System (CSUS) - Southern in New Haven, Western in Danbury, Central in New Britain, and Eastern in Willimantic – are solid partners, intently focused on our state.

The universities, students and businesses are forging connections that will contribute to reasserting Connecticut’s strength in commerce and community. With nearly nine of ten CSUS graduates remaining here after graduation, the seeds of future growth are being planted now.

Co-ops and internships offer businesses an effective means of recruiting talent at lower costs – in fact, recruiting costs are reduced even further if the company de-

cidest to retain the student as a regular hire. Some companies use internships as working interviews, a means by which they can identify, train, and retain the best new talent.

Other employers and non-profits view interns as short-term staffing solutions who bring innovation, creativity, and advanced technical skills, during a time they need them the most, but can afford them the least. Student interns can be tremendously helpful on special projects that the employer might not have had the manpower to tackle, which could help the organization expand, and perhaps broaden their company’s business.

Businesses have also made clear their interest in students who possess critical thinking skills, advanced writing skills, and creative problem solving, in order to have agility in adapting to new technologies and new challenges in the fast-changing business environment – areas where CSUS students thrive.

The universities are also attuned to the state’s efforts to broaden our economic base in key industries. Academic programs in areas ranging from engineering and health care to sustainability and accounting mirror current business needs and state initiatives. Despite the rough economy, busi-

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nesses continue to participate in Career Fairs, routinely impressed with the caliber of students seeking future employment.

In recent years, for example, Eastern held an annual Accounting Career Fair. The event's popularity grew quickly, from 14 employers in 2005 to over 30 in 2008. This past year, it was expanded to include all majors and all industries.

Central's annual career fairs are coming up on April 7 (Education Fair) and April 8 (Spring Fair). The recently realigned Center for Advising and Career Exploration (CACE) provides a comprehensive program of career services. Experiential education is a major focus for undergraduate students, and CACE coordinates the Cooperative Education program and posts internship opportunities with area employers. Company recruiters are on campus regularly, and one-on-one guidance is provided on resume writing, interview skills, job search strategies, and other elements of the employment process.

At Southern, a Nursing and Education Fair is held separately from a General Fair, to accommodate the escalating number of participating businesses and students (nearly 125 employers and 800 students this year). Some employers lacking immediate job vacancies attended nonetheless, keeping an eye out for future talent.

Alumni have also been invaluable. Many alumni helped by career services offices

when they were students are now giving-back by hiring, or encouraging their employers to consider, current students. With an estimated 180,000 alumni of Central, Eastern, Southern and Western throughout the state, such connections help Connecticut flourish.

Increasingly, students are making career related decisions that allow them to engage in their communities and contribute to civic life. Businesses are looking to hire employees who will represent the business well to the community, with precisely these attributes.

It's no wonder that business leaders, at a meeting of the Connecticut Cooperative Education & Internship Association, recently predicted that 2010 will continue to bring new opportunities to broaden the extensive relationship between local businesses and higher education. Looking to Central, Eastern, Southern and Western for student interns is a great way for businesses to get started.

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