

HBCU CAREER GUIDE

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

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Involving the Community and Corporations in your Career Services Department

Preparing students for the global marketplace has gone beyond the typical workshops, resume and interview preparation, career fairs, assessment tests and mock interviews provided by many Career Services departments. This training is essential and excellent for students who are seriously looking for a job or planning on attending graduate school. Those are the two main reasons most students attend college in the first place. They can use these learning tools in their career search or in most life situations.

Now it's time to take your Career Services department to another level. Sometimes when students apply for internships or employment, some companies feel that they do not have enough experience, do not know how to market themselves or to transfer their past skills to fit the position. Each company is different and has different requirements. One company might stress professional dress even on Business Casual Friday, another might require a certain GPA or one might want a couple of years experience. Other areas that companies would like for students to be prepared or to have obtained include dining etiquette, the various interview styles (panel, group, telephone, behavioral, etc.), global culture, negotiation skills, leadership, extra curricular activities, awards, recognitions, certifications, special projects and volunteerism. Students who have acquired internships or study abroad experience grab the attention of most companies and will most likely be hired before a student who does not have similar experience. The majority of students across the country have similar experiences, GPAs, scholarships and extra curricular experience. HBCU's are sent the same national and international scholarships and internships. So a student has to have something unique on their resume that makes them stand out especially if it is a student who does not have the 3.0 GPA or internship experience. Companies still might feel that student is not the right fit.

Companies prefer to hire and train college students fresh out of college because the baby boomers are about to retire in the next couple of years and they need people



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to fill those positions and work there for many years until retirement. This means that the training of students has to go beyond the classroom experience. Companies, community leaders and organizations visit campuses and assist in training students in various areas. This is a plus for students because they are getting first hand experience and advice from executives they may not have met. This is also an advantage for the companies because they can prepare and train the students to fit their organizational needs. Listed are some areas where the community and companies can assist your Career Services department in training students for their requirements and real world:

Classroom Lectures – Representatives can visit classes related to their background or title and either teach the class topic or speak on related topics.

Classroom Exchange – Some companies have this program where a company representative will come and teach in a related class that semester and a faculty member will go work or participate in an internship at that company to keep up with their industry.

Black Executive Exchange Program (BEEP) – This program is sponsored by the National Urban League where black executives across the country visit campuses across the country to mentor students in career related activities.

Mentoring Programs – Representatives choose a group of students to mentor in various areas such as tutoring, sponsorships, donating clothes, attending the field trips as chaperones, taking students to community events, invite the students to visit them at work and learn about their career, etc.

Shadowing – When a student can select a representative or company to volunteer and shadow

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that employee closely once or twice a week. This is an excellent way to earn real world experience and see how an office is run. A doctor or lawyer would be great choices to shadow.

Mock Interviews – Representatives interview students as a practice and feedback tool. It is good if the student is videotaped. This usually works well during BEEP or a Freshman Seminar Experience where the students get class credit.

Forums/Panels – Representatives participate in campus activities and discuss topics either in a classroom or auditorium program setting. Usually the business, entrepreneurship or health departments invite experts to discuss the topics in an open discussion.

Workshop Series – When a college plans a series of workshops across campus in various topics, companies can participate and share their expertise. The companies can rotate in the classrooms or go to different reserved rooms across campus.

Advisory Boards/Committees – Companies who represent various industries and majors can meet monthly or quarterly with the Career Services Director to give advice in related areas, suggest ideas, participate in recruitment activities, sponsor students to conferences, hire students, etc.

On-Campus Recruitment – Invite companies to interview students on campus or conduct informational sessions about their company and position requirements.

Judges – When a college is about to choose some students for a conference, case study competition or pageant, representatives can judge the event either by conference call, e-mail or in person.

Mayor/Public Figures – When a college has an important event, it is good exposure for them to invite the Mayor or a community leader to do the welcome or speak. It shows the students and the visiting companies that they have support from the community.

Community Service Projects – It is good to incorporate community service and team building projects with executives and students. They can rent out a team building facility, speak about career related topics at high schools or invite high school students to participate, spend

time at hospitals or orphanages, etc. Or the community organizations can be invited to some of the campus events for exposure to meeting executives.

Sponsorships – Ask companies or organizations to sponsor career fairs, luncheons, student expenses to conferences, etc.

Clothes Closet – Have representatives and companies donate clothes to the students for interviewing purposes. Partner with companies such as Dress for Success so students can receive free clothing.

Training – Have representatives prepare students for case study competitions, interviews or any activity the students need training.

Male/Female Bonding Events – You can have male executives bond with male students in the student center watching the NFL game and discuss career related topics. The female executives can bond with the female students by having a pampering party with free manicures, makeovers, hair advice, aerobics, and chair massages. These events can be done simultaneously with sponsored food and services.

Include Alumni – Make sure that alumni are invited to all of your events. Most Career Services allow their alumni to participate in their activities and can apply for any of the positions. There will still be some recent graduates looking for employment. This will increase your general placement rate and the alums might work for some corporations that can assist the college in sponsorships, job placement, fundraising, etc.

These are just a few ideas on how to take your Career Services department to another level and create comfortable, educational and fun environments where companies and students can get to know each other better and network. The companies will have a chance to train the students the way they want and the students can get hands on experience and advice. Also, the college's name will be recognized among top companies, the fundraising and sponsorship level will increase, the recruitment efforts will be more visible among the high school students and the retention rate will ascend because the students and alumni will feel that the institution really cares about their future.