

PROPOSAL TO ENHANCE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AND WORKING PROFESSIONALS

Presented By:

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To:

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Introduction

At the Lundquist College of Business, the Educational Enrichment Task Force (EETF) is committed to finding new ways to continuously improve the educational experience beyond the classroom for LCB undergraduate students. As current undergraduate business students, we know the importance of learning how to network with professionals while we are still in school. We propose a networking business dinner for LCB undergraduates where they will be given the chance to make connections with working professionals. Building relationships with working professionals before graduation will help LCB students secure a job after graduation.

Situation Analysis

With the increasing intensity of job competition, college students are concerned about the practicability of their educational investment. In order to provide our students with a competitive advantage when searching for a job after graduation, we need to have more opportunities to help students build relationships with working professionals before they graduate

Building relationships with working professionals

The assistant director of LCB Career Services, Jessica Best, says that building relationships with working professionals will provide students with the latest and most accurate information about their desired job position. It also allows students to practice their communication skills with professionals. Students who graduate with an established network of professionals are at an immediate advantage in today's hypercompetitive job market.

Importance of professional networking skills

We have stressed the importance of building relationships with working professionals while students are in school, but without proper networking skills this is not possible. Here at LCB students have limited opportunities to practice these skills. A Forbes survey from 2010 analyzed data from 59,133 clients over three years at Right Management, a company that offers outplacement services and career coaching. According to this survey, 41% of their clients had received a job through networking.

Lack of effective interaction with working professionals

We surveyed more than 50 junior and senior students with a variety of business concentrations at LCB. 90% of them have joined at least one major-related business club or university alumni association. Of that 90%, only half of them actually talked with alumni, recruiters, and other working professionals. Further, less than 10 of these students knew how to extract information from these professionals.

Imbalance of student-to-professionals ratio

While LCB provides many workshops and business clubs for students to network with professionals, lack of opportunity for individual interaction is an issue. For example, Beta Alpha Psi is a reputable accounting fraternity that provides interaction between students, faculty, and real world business professionals via weekly meetings. With more than 100 accounting students matched with only four or five firms' representatives, students feel they do not have enough time to have a meaningful conversation with working professionals.

Underuse of LCB Career Services Center

Jessica Best points out that one of the most valuable benefits students can get from career services is connections to alumni in their desired line of work. Jessica was quoted saying, "We help students understand the day-to-day realities of a job, how to craft a résumé how to interview and how to land a position." According to our research:

- 40% of LCB students did not know the location of the Career Services Center
- Of the 60% that do, 62.5% had never gone before
- A good attendance for an LCB event is about 25/2500 students--about 1%

Efforts provided by Foster School of Business at the University of Washington

The University of Washington Foster School of Business has made an effort to mitigate the problems detailed above. At FSB, they provide a combination of traditional and online programs called, "Foster Alumni Relations" and "Foster Intern Blog," which give students the opportunities to interact directly with working professionals. We interviewed Jennifer Wu, the Foster First Step Career Counselor at the FSB Undergraduate Career Services, and she said that one of the primary reasons they have these two programs is to increase students' networking abilities. She also mentioned that the programs make students aware of the differences and improvements that the school has made for students.

Foster Alumni Relations

At the Foster Alumni Relations, the staff hosts a weekly networking night with 25 alumni and 100 students in attendance. This event allows younger alumni to connect with current students and build their professional network with other Foster alumni. Zak Sheerazi, Assistant Director of Career Development at the Foster School of Business, said, "This event gives students better insights into different career paths as they move forward from Foster."

Foster Intern Blog

Noticing the popularity of social media among students, Foster Career Services created the Foster Intern Blog. This blog provides an online user community to help undergraduate students interact with each other and share their professional experiences. Students can check posts each

week to hear about first-hand experiences and to learn about various opportunities available in different industries.

LinkedIn

Importance

LinkedIn is a social networking website for those in professional occupations. Currently, the website operates the world's largest professional network on the Internet. As of 2013, LinkedIn has more than 277 million members and operates in over 200 countries and territories. More than 3 million companies have a company page. LinkedIn is vital to current college students and recent graduates because it is a valuable resource they can use to help them network with professionals and search for a job.

Underuse

According to a recent social media recruiting survey conducted by Jobvite, 96% of companies' recruiters use LinkedIn to search for potential job candidates. In addition, 94% of company recruiters used it to evaluate candidates as opposed to Twitter (55%) and Facebook (65%). A Forbes published survey conducted by the AfterCollege Career website, revealed that while 90% of students use Facebook on a regular basis, only 54% of students use LinkedIn. Here at the LCB, our survey of 100(+) undergraduates revealed that only half of these students knew LinkedIn existed. The underuse of this website at the LCB is a serious missed opportunity for students to network with professionals and increase their chances of getting a job after graduation.

Current Resources Available to Students

Professional Etiquette Dinner

The Professional Etiquette Dinner has approximately 100 student seats available and is open to all students at the University of Oregon. It is conducted by the University of Oregon Alumni Association, Career Services, and the Lundquist College of Business. Approximately ten students are matched with one recruiter at each table. Two guest speakers give tips on a series of business situations, such as dining, electronic communication, social media, and professional dress code.

Women In Business Annual Business Gala

This event has gained popularity over the past nine years and has seen a significant growth in participation. This year there were about 160 professionals and students in attendance at the gala. Each student that signs up is matched to a professional in his or her field. At check in each attendee is given a table number where they are seated with their match and six other guests. As the three-course meal is served, you are given the opportunity to network with the group at your table. While successful, there is room for improvement. Because of the small location and loud volume in the venue, students find it difficult to communicate with anyone outside of their table. Only getting to speak with the professionals near you leaves potential connections untapped.

Objectives

The LCB has the ability to provide students with a head start on networking with working professionals before graduation. The relationships built with these businessmen and women can lead to future jobs and other opportunities to further students' careers. Through these contacts students will gain both concrete and intangible benefits. We distributed a survey to students to gain statistical information. While our sample is a relatively small representative of the LCB as a whole, we have based our objectives off of our findings from 70+ student responses.

1. Increase the number of relationships between students and professionals
2. Increase use of the LCB Career Services Center by 30%
3. Increase the number of LCB students who have and maintain a LinkedIn by 50%

Solution

LCB students need to be able to connect better with working professionals within their chosen career fields before they leave school. Students are missing out on networking that would greatly benefit them in expanding their career options. They must be able to build the skills necessary to establish many connections with these working professionals, which in turn may lead to deeper relationships forming more fully on their own outside of the provided event.

Business Networking Dinners

The main focus of our solution will be providing LCB students with a free business networking dinner once per term. Students will be invited to a networking event where they can interact with alumni and working professionals. To ensure that each student will be able to communicate with the professionals on a more personal level, we will require a sign up at least three weeks in advance and cap the student attendance at 30. Detailed information about each of the 10 professionals in attendance will be provided to students prior to signing up and once again after they have confirmed their attendance for the event. These dinners will be held in various locations around campus according to availability within the buildings.

Some may find that this event appears similar to other offerings provided through the LCB Career Services Center as well as various clubs. To ensure that this business networking dinner will provide unique and beneficial offerings to students, we have incorporated a smaller ratio of students to professionals, made this a once per term event instead of once per year, and tailored the night directly toward increasing the number of connections made with the professionals in attendance. Instead of matching individuals with one professional, activities during the night will encourage students to initiate conversation with several or all of the attendees. If this event proves successful and there are more students that want to attend than we can accommodate, we could add concentration-specific dinners to involve more of the interested students.

LinkedIn

As part of the business networking dinner, students will be required to create a personalized professional business media account on a website called LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com). We will confirm that they have created an account upon signing up for the event and they will receive a confirmation email only after this requirement is met. At the dinner, students will have the opportunity to get help building their online presence in a virtual business community. There will be a 30 minute tutorial about the benefits and features of this website. LinkedIn can give students

the chance to network with potential future employers and will provide connections with well-established businessmen and women in their fields that may not be accessible to them otherwise.

Guest Speakers

Prominent business professionals will be invited to speak at the dinner and give insights into how students can make themselves stand out from the crowd of job seekers and catch the eye of those currently in the workforce. These guest speakers will be diverse, meaning that they will vary in degrees, locations, job positions, age and years within their profession. Successfully hired recent graduates, in particular, are scarce on campus and can provide excellent insights into the immediate question of how to secure a job upon graduation. Following the presentations, students will be able to interact with the lecturers, creating potential for continued relationships.

Keynote Speaker: KL Wells

KL Wells is a networking and social media expert who has connections to various staff members on the University of Oregon campus. She has performed numerous guest lectures in classes and clubs and can help LCB students become better prepared for the business world. Her speeches center around the importance of networking in today's world. We will be asking her to be the keynote speaker at the first business networking dinner. KL will have 40 minutes to conduct a condensed version of her workshop for the students and working professionals. This will stand as a roadmap for conversations to take place during the evening.

New LCB Admittance Policies

Upon acceptance into the Lundquist College of Business, students will be administered a pamphlet containing information about the Career Services Center and the services that they offer. Newly admitted LCB students will be required to pick up the career center pamphlet in person at the office, where they will be checked off a list. The rate of students who claim to have never been to career services, or not know where it is, will go from roughly half to zero immediately. This simple familiarization with the office will allow interested and motivated students to see the services they should be taking advantage of.

Although these new policies may seem to add burdens to students' already busy schedules, they will get students thinking about their career path early in their LCB experience. By providing students with a hard copy of initial offerings and events, instead of easily skipped over e-mails, students will be inclined to take advantage of what they are presented with. This task will only take five minutes out of a student's day.

Summary

The objectives we have set can be accomplished by introducing this event to the students as well as the additional admittance policy. Interacting with business professionals will help students build professional relationships early in their business education. Having established and maintained LinkedIn websites will allow students to stay in touch with those they have met and continuously expand their networks. Adding these components to the LCB experience will provide students with the skills they need to succeed in today's competitive job market.

Tactical Plan

In order to accomplish our objectives we will need to follow this timeline of specific tasks:

Stage 1: Spring Term 2014

- Present our idea to professors/instructors
- Gauge interest from LCB undergraduates
- Gather likes/dislikes from LCB undergraduates
- Get in contact with the LCB to schedule our event

Stage 2: Summer 2014

- Organize and restructure (if needed) our event based off student feedback
- Contact professionals about participating in our event
- Get working professionals and KL Wells (our keynote speaker) to commit to our event

Stage 3: Fall 2014

- Begin promoting and advertising our event
- Have professors/instructors advocate for our cause during classes
- Hand out brochures in classes that explain the importance and the benefits of our event
- Send out initial announcements and early RSVP availabilities

Stage 4: Winter 2015

- Send out final announcements and RSVP
- Host first event Week 4 of Winter term

Stage 5: Spring 2015

- Receive and evaluate feedback from event
- Send out second dinner event announcements and RSVP
- Host second event Week 6 of Spring term

Costs:

The following costs are based on our projected number of 40 attendees per dinner--ten professionals and thirty students. We based the size of the venue, number of staff needed, and the amount of food on the assumption of 40 people attending.

On Going Costs

<u>DINNER EVENT</u>	
Venue	\$800.00
Guest Speakers	\$1,500.00
Beverage Service	\$500.00
Hors D'Oeuvres	\$300.00
Buffet Dinner	\$1,000.00
Catering Staff	\$500.00
Miscellaneous	\$1,500.00
Pamphlet (career services)	\$1,000.00
TOTAL	\$7,100.00

Conclusion:

LCB students currently lack professional connections that would be an enormous help in pursuit of a career in their desired field upon graduation. Our objectives address this with hands on professional networking experience, mainly via the business networking dinner. LCB graduates are our schools' ambassadors, and it is our responsibility to have them leave school prepared for the competitive job market facing all college graduates. We are asking for the EETF's support in taking the next steps towards implementing these proposed solutions.

Appendix A

Respondent	Have you ever attend to or be associated with any business oriented club or university based alumni	Have you ever talked to any of the alumni member, recruiter, or other working	If you did talk to at least one working professionals at the event, did you find the conversation
1	1	0	0
2	1	0	0
3	1	0	0
4	1	0	0
5	1	0	0
6	1	0	0
7	1	0	0
8	1	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	1	0	0
11	1	0	0
12	1	0	0
13	1	0	0
14	1	0	0
15	1	0	0
16	1	0	0
17	1	0	0
18	1	0	0
19	1	0	0
20	1	0	0
21	1	0	1
22	1	0	0
23	1	1	0
24	1	1	0
25	1	1	0
26	1	1	0
27	1	1	0
28	1	1	0
29	1	1	0
30	1	1	1
31	1	1	0
32	0	1	0
33	1	1	0
34	1	1	0
35	1	1	0
36	1	1	0
37	1	1	0
38	1	1	0
39	1	1	0
40	1	1	0
41	0	1	0
42	1	1	0
43	1	1	0
44	1	1	0
45	1	1	0
46	1	0	0
47	1	0	0
48	1	0	0
49	1	0	0
50	1	0	0
51	1	0	0
52	1	0	0
53	1	0	0
Total	50	23	2
Percentage	90%	50%	10%

Appendix B

 Figure 15: Hiring expectations, by degree level

Degree Level	Average Percent of New College Hires in 2013-14	Number of Respondents Hiring 2013-14	Percent of Total Respondents Hiring in 2013-14	Average Percent of New College Hires in 2012-13	Number of Respondents Who Hired in 2012-13	Percent of Total Respondents Who Hired in 2012-13
Associate	2.9%	33	20.5%	3.4%	35	21.7%
Bachelor's	78.4%	159	98.8%	78.3%	159	98.8%
Master's	15.7%	129	80.1%	15.4%	128	79.5%
Doctorate	2.5%	43	26.7%	2.4%	42	26.1%
Professional (J.D., M.D., etc)	0.5%	11	6.8%	0.5%	12	7.5%

Appendix C

Sources Cited

1. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2011/06/07/networking-is-still-the-best-way-to-find-a-job-survey-says/>
2. <http://www.ere.net/2013/09/05/linkedin-dominates-social-media-sourcing-and-recruiting/>
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