

National Career Development Week @ The University of Adelaide

National Career Development Week kicked off at the University of Adelaide with a launch B.B.Q attracting over one thousand students and staff. The event was broadcast live by Radio Adelaide with local radio personality Jonathan Brown providing commentary. Jonathan interviewed interesting students who juggle a career whilst studying and talked about the lecture series being held throughout the week.

The lecture series consisted of ten presentations aimed at different subject areas and courses. The aim of the series was to provide students with advice from people working within their field of study. Industry appropriate professionals came to the campus to deliver the talks which attracted almost three hundred students.

The free lecture series included talks from Engineers Australia on how to get ahead, Price Waterhouse Coopers on what employees look for, Kelly Scientific on the current labour market as well as general presentations on topics such as; how to survive the recession, working overseas and understanding the Australian workplace (for international students).

This was the first time the University of Adelaide has held a lecture series of this nature and it was very well received with students being able to talk with the employer after each presentation. This has helped students to meet industry professionals and learn how to network. Many of the employers also talked about what they look for in university graduates and common mistakes made during the application process giving students invaluable information.

The Careers Team also developed a set of articles to coincide with the lecture series outlining the main points of each presentation. These were posted on our careers website, *Career Hub*, for students who were unable to attend.*

Overall, the week was a success, with both the students and our Career Service team walking away with new contacts and invaluable information. It was an impressive week that we have every intention of repeating next year.

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*Articles are attached

Balance vs Brains

According to Antonia Ianunzio from Deloitte, employers feel it's more important to have a balanced lifestyle than an excellent academic record.

“When we look for a candidate we look at a variety of different things from work experience to extra-curricular activities to academic results... we look for a balanced candidate.”

Antonia says students don't seem to realise how important it is to be involved in activities outside of the study area such as working at the local pub, volunteering, playing a sport or doing unpaid work experience.

“It's shows that you can balance your priorities and that you have good organisational skills, are a team player or can interact with people.... academic results can give you a competitive advantage, but they're not everything.”

Antonia says students need to think about what skills they are gaining from working part-time or casually or by playing a sport. She says it's also important to be able to articulate these skills in online applications for graduate positions.

“Never underplay your activities and work experience. Any experience is good,” she says.

Before You Apply - The Hidden Step

Filling out your first job application form and cover letter can panic even the most mild mannered student. But as the HR Manager with PricewaterhouseCoopers points out, a good application form isn't the most important aspect of starting your career. Before you even attempt to fill in the application form, it's important to research your potential employer, says Anne Beaton.

“Preparation is often overlooked by graduates, but it's really important. I encourage you to sit back and reflect on what it is you want to do, what you want out of an employer and how you think you would fit into the company.”

Anne says it's important to look at websites, magazines, and newspapers to get an understanding of the company's passions and visions and then compare them with your own.

“It's important for it to be a match both ways,” she says.

And it's never too early to start, says Anne. There are several internships and summer programs that allow students to get a taste of what it would be like to work in a particular firm. And if you can't get into one of these programs, use all of your resources says Anne.

“Talk to your lecturers, your family, your friends and make contact with potential employers to see what would best suit you.”

The Specifics of Interview Skills

KPMG is one of the top four Accounting firms in the world and has interviewed its fair share of aspiring graduates. Recruitment officers from the firm say there is one main rule of thumb to make your way through that dreaded job interview- be specific.

“Too often students use general and vague answers for questions or give their own philosophy on the question. Interviewers want to know about specific situations you’ve encountered, and they want it to be concise.”

KPMG refer to the S-T-A-R model to safely navigate your way through the questions. All you need to do is asses the;

- Situation –what is the problem?
- Task – what needs to be done?
- Activity- what did you do?
- Result - what was the outcome?

Above all, KPMG recruitment officers advise talking in the first person; ‘I’ not ‘we’. Keeping your scenarios current is also a good idea.

“Thinking through possible scenarios before you get to an interview will put you a step ahead of the crowd and stop you from babbling. Prepare your answers; think about what you did as an individual and how you can articulate this during the interview.”

Who do you know?

In the job of finding a job, who you know can be just as important as what you know according to Nathan Jones from the SA Division of Engineers Australia. With the current global financial crisis eating away at many graduate positions, networking may be the best solution to finding a job.

“Fifty to seventy per cent of positions aren’t being advertised at the moment and are just being filled by people who hear about them from someone else, that’s why it’s so important to network.” says Nathan.

Joining clubs such as Engineering Australia or course specific clubs and societies within the University has always been the easiest way to take that first and terrifying step to meeting people in your chosen field.

“It also looks great on your resume because it shows you are willing to try new ideas and have an interest in your future profession.”

As terrifying as it may be to put yourself out there; join a club, volunteer and go to events where you can meet people who can guide your future career. The initial terror will subside when you make new friends, professional contacts and get insights into upcoming positions.

Volunteering Tops the List

A recent survey of a hundred students from the University of Adelaide reveals that a large majority of students think volunteering is the best way to get ahead in their chosen career.

“Volunteering will help me find out more about the industry and the people in it,” says one student.

Although the students realise the potential of volunteer work for making industry contacts and building up experience; many participants were unsure of how and where to become involved in volunteer work.

Attending career based lectures was also high on the list with most students saying the lectures helped them develop resume skills, successful interview techniques as well as helping to learn about potential employers and what they want from graduates.

“The career lectures provide information about industry and links to employers, they’re a good way to understand the career opportunities out there,” says another student.

Undergoing work experience or an internship, doing course related part-time work and networking also featured in the top five responses for the survey.

Joining a club or sporting organisation, doing unrelated casual work and getting good grades rated poorly in the responses gathered.

The Science of Finding a Job

Now is a good time to be studying at university with many people struggling to find a job, according to the Recruitment Consultant for Kelly Scientific, John Karlis. Kelly Scientific is the world’s largest scientific staffing company and a recent survey of its clients has revealed some bleak trends.

“As everyone is aware, we’re in a recession and science jobs haven’t gone untouched,” Mr. Karlis says.

The survey showed that half of the employers have stopped hiring indefinitely, 20 per cent have made redundancies, and at least 10 per cent plan to make redundancies in the near future.

The news isn’t all bad, however, with 30 per cent of employers still planning to recruit science graduates in the coming year. Mr. Karlis says graduates just need to think about which industries are more likely to hire.

“There are certain industries that have been relatively untouched by the recession, such as the healthcare and food industries.”

If you're not sure what direction you want to head in, Mr. Karlis recommends finding temporary work in different fields to narrow down your career direction.

“Start planning now and helping yourself; the earlier you start the better off you will be. You don't have to know what career you want straight away, but you do need to ask yourself *'how can I start preparing now?'*”