

UW Oshkosh leads the way with internships, business collaboration programs

by Derek Paulus - Wednesday, January 30, 2013

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/24877/uw-oshkosh-leads-the-way-with-interns/>

Northeast Wisconsin businesses and organizations convened at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Jan. 16 to take the role of students and learn what it takes to create an effective internship program.

The University hosted the first Regional Internship Program Development Day in Sage Hall. The discussion was a collaboration of public institutions in the New North, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit regional marketing and development organization for both the public and private sectors of northeast Wisconsin.

The event was also an initiative of the Northeast Wisconsin Education Resources Alliance (NEW ERA), which encourages collaboration among public colleges and universities in the region. UW Oshkosh Chancellor Richard Wells was NEW ERA chairperson from 2000-2005. UW Oshkosh, among other regional colleges and universities, is a partner institution in the regional higher education collective.

The program, organized by the UW Oshkosh College of Business, educated representatives from attending companies and organizations on how to better provide valuable experience for their interns, work with the interns educational institution and help their own business in the process. Jessie Pondell, the professional development director for the College of Business who organized the event, said internship programs should benefit both businesses and student interns.

“Our goal is to increase connections between students and companies through strong internship opportunities that can be win-win,” she said.

College of Business Dean William Tallon addressed the attendees and said internship development is important in order to keep up with the continued globalization of business.

“We want to make sure our interns and our students are prepared for that,” he said.

Other universities in the University of Wisconsin system were also in attendance, such as UW-Marinette and UW-Fox Valley, as well as Fox Valley Technical College. Representatives from several companies, including Bemis Company Inc., J.J. Keller & Associates Inc. and Humana, were also present at the event.

The discussion featured a question and answer session with a panel of four UW Oshkosh students of varying majors. Pondell said the student feedback on their internship experiences teaches companies how to better attract interested students.

“The organizations are trying to attract the best and brightest students,” Pondell said. “Let’s hear directly from them on what they are looking for in an internship.”

Marian Rothkegel, a finance major on the panel who already earned a bachelor’s in business

administration from UW Oshkosh in 2012, has previously worked as an intern at Oshkosh Corporation and the People's Bank of Germany. He said these internships provided experience with "real people, real projects and real money," and said his education prepared him for work as a professional.

"I definitely say that it was primarily UW Oshkosh that has helped me getting prepared for working in a business environment," Rothkegel said.

Presentations from two professionals of varying areas of expertise were also part of the day's discussion. Julie Leschke from the Oshkosh office of U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson spoke about the work her interns do and said she has contacted the University numerous times seeking interns. Society Insurance representative Ryan Haase, a 2004 UW Oshkosh graduate, spoke on how internships can help build talent in an industry.

Haase said companies need to have changing internship programs in order to compete in changing times.

"What you've done in the past won't work in the future," he said.

Though internships are supposed to be a learning experience for students, Haase said employers should make it fun and enjoyable. He said allowing the students to job shadow a professional throughout their day of work is one way to keep an internship exciting while also providing valuable experience.

"We've had several UWO students intern at Society and they have been very good for us – each in their own way. UWO students are more prepared than students from other universities in terms of soft skills," said Haase. "The professional skills courses provided to UWO students better prepares them for their internship experience and the "real" world and likely make up the difference I see in interviews."

Pondell said one aspect that needs to be improved in many internship programs is the communication between the business and the intern's academic institution. She said businesses need to involve themselves in the student's education, especially since many companies use their internship program as an interview process for a permanent position once students graduate.

Quincy Berg, a UW Oshkosh finance major on the student panel, said he wants a company to invest in his education during an internship just as much as he invests in them.

"Give me something that's going to show me real world results," Berg said. "I want to feel like I'm part of the company."

Though Berg has yet to acquire an internship, [radio-TV-film major Joanna Wavrunek](#) from the panel has had more than one. Her first internship was with WNCY-FM, or Y100, and her current internship is with the Wisconsin Association of FFA, formerly known as Future Farmers of America. Wavrunek travels around Wisconsin working to promote agriculture through public speaking and media creation.

Several resources are provided to both students and businesses to help them connect when seeking an internship or seeking an intern to fill a position. Intern2Work is a northeast Wisconsin exclusive network that allows students to search for potential internships and allows businesses to post their internship positions and find students to hire. Wisconsin TechConnect is another network exclusive to Wisconsin that caters specifically to Wisconsin's 16 technical colleges.

Haase encouraged other business representatives at the discussion to use university resource databases to find student talent. One of these resources is Titan Jobs, which allows UW Oshkosh students to manage their own profile where they can upload their resume and create an electronic portfolio. Employers are able to view these student profiles to find talented candidates for their open positions and make their own posts on the database when they have a new position available.

Titan Jobs is part of the UW Oshkosh Career Services department, which provides career-seeking guidance to students by setting up on-campus interviews, mock interviews, resume critiques and other workshops and events to help make UW Oshkosh students educated professionals fit for work in the real world.

Rothkegel is a marketing research intern with Career Services and said their relationship with the University's educational programs helps prepare students for work in the real world. He specifically praised his own education with the UW Oshkosh College of Business.

"The College of Business has an outstanding relationship with Career Services and the coursework... is tailored towards becoming a business professional," Rothkegel said. "The College of Business has really done a fantastic job in turning students into young professionals."

Students with the University's College of Business are required to complete an internship in order to earn their degree. Pondell said this is just another way to help students acquire full-time positions and gain experience that they can use to become valuable employees in the future.

"They are going out to interview for full-time positions, being able to draw not only on their academic knowledge but also experiential education at their internship sites," she said.

Learn more:

- [UW Oshkosh College of Business](#)
- [UW Oshkosh Career Services](#)