

Get Hired! Academic Library Outreach for Student Job Seekers

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Abstract

This article briefly outlines academic library outreach initiatives that engage student job seekers and reports on the Business/SPEA Information Commons' (Indiana University-Bloomington) HIRE ED research consultation service, developed in February 2012, for undergraduate, business students pursuing internships or full-time employment. Service parameters were informed by faculty and corporate recruiter feedback and student need. Consultations are personalized interactions that provide company and industry information desirable for interview preparation. Marketing and promotion is done in partnership with the Kelley School of Business' Undergraduate Career Services Office and other entities. HIRE ED has garnered approximately 200 appointments to date, and preliminary assessment indicates that users are extremely satisfied with the overall experience and results.

Keywords: career, career guidance, vocational guidance, library services, academic libraries, library outreach, career collaborations, career placement, career services, business students, research consultations

Academic libraries engage student job seekers through career-focused collections, services, and instruction. These efforts are often performed in collaboration with career services or placement offices (DeHart, 1996; Joranson and Wider, 2009; Rose, 1988) and reportedly produce greater awareness, enhanced community connections, and expanded roles.

Purdue University's Management and Economics Library's (Dugan, Bergstrom, & Doan, 2009) initiative to coordinate campus-wide career resource purchasing and create a centralized, resource wiki brought about "positive changes such as an increase in the awareness of the library resources, greater communication among units, and library faculty being seen as innovators" (p. 134). Stronger student connections, as well as proactive marketing of library services and collaboration with additional units, resulted when Song (2007) provided a career research workshop and individual consultations to graduate students. Hollister (2005) leveraged a relationship with career services to create new opportunities for the library (i.e., instruction, reference service, collection management, and web development), which increased visibility and "reached a population of students who might not normally view libraries as relevant to their needs outside of academic coursework" (p. 110).

The opportunity to achieve similar outcomes and assist student job seekers spurred the Business/SPEA Information Commons to create the HIRE ED research consultation service for undergraduate, business students pursuing internships or full-time employment.

Background

The Business/SPEA Information Commons' mission is to support the teaching, research, and learning needs of Kelley School of Business and School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA) stakeholders. Career education and services figure prominently in the Kelley School curriculum and experience. Students initiate an active relationship with the Kelley School of Business' Undergraduate Career Services Office (UCSO) early in their tenure. In addition, they are required to complete three, credit-bearing courses focused on career exploration, resume writing and interviewing, and leadership and teamwork.

The Business/SPEA Information Commons often supports these career classes and activities by teaching one-shot instruction sessions focused on finding company and industry information. A number of factors, however, indicated additional outreach to student job seekers might be well received. First, business faculty and corporate recruiter feedback showed that, even with library instruction, student job seekers were not finding and synthesizing appropriate and/or adequate company and industry information; this was evident in their inability to generate insightful and informed queries during the "do you have any questions" interview phase. Next, reference desk interactions signaled student job seekers wanted "on demand" assistance in locating interview preparation materials. Finally, a conversation with a UCSO employee exposed a willingness to direct student job seekers to the library when a career information need arose.

Consultation Parameters & Process

A HIRE ED research consultation is a personalized interaction that assists student job seekers in locating company and industry information—most often a company profile or report, an industry report, and company news—to prepare for an interview. The company profile and news help student job seekers answer both factual questions about the company and more complex queries related to growth and performance.

In addition, news can reveal a great deal about organizational culture and why one may want to work for a particular firm. The industry report assists in providing analysis and context and insight into macro-level conditions influencing a company (Joranson and Wider, 2009). Staff demonstrate how to locate each source in a library database and provide instruction about content and use. A summary e-mail, including copies of found items, is sent to the student job seeker at the consultation's conclusion.

Student job seekers make a HIRE ED consultation request, at least 48 hours in advance, using a web-based form (<http://libraries.iub.edu/schedule-hire-ed-meeting>) or by e-mail (hireed@indiana.edu). All HIRE ED requests are forwarded to a staff member who then corresponds with the requestor to schedule an appointment. Workflow is tracked via an Excel spreadsheet. Once details are finalized, a reference staff person is assigned the consultation. Preparation for a consultation occurs prior to the appointment; the amount of staff time dedicated to preparation varies, and often depends upon the complexity of the request. For example, longer preparation times are typically required for consultations focused on small, private companies—where readily available information is limited.

Marketing & Promotion

Being able to proactively promote HIRE ED, and talk about the service with business stakeholders, career services staff, and colleagues, required the creation of a unique name and logo. Flyers were made and placed in the UCSO and other campus libraries. The HIRE ED logo, along with marketing copy, resides on the Business/SPEA Information Commons' website. A PowerPoint slide, with consultation parameters and details, is used when speaking about the service during applicable instruction sessions or library orientations.

Assessment

HIRE ED has garnered approximately 200 appointments to date. In fall 2013, we created a five question survey to gauge participants overall satisfaction with the consultation and experience. A survey link was sent to 50 student job seekers via the consultations' concluding e-mail. Of the 12 respondents, all indicated a rating of "extremely satisfied" (the highest possible) when asked if HIRE ED proved helpful in preparing for an interview. In addition, survey respondents were "extremely satisfied" with the experience and felt the Business/SPEA Information Commons' staff member conducting the consultation was courteous and knowledgeable. All specified they would recommend HIRE ED to a friend.

Conclusion

The HIRE ED research consultation service is highly used and student job seekers indicate satisfaction with the experience. More broadly, greater awareness of library resources and better alignment with business career education and services has come about because of this outreach. In addition, knowledge gained from working with student job seekers has helped inform students of other library activities and services. Moving forward we hope to modify the existing HIRE ED consultation to appeal to MBA students preparing for internships and to develop supplemental reference and instructional material.

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