

## CREATING CAREER OPPORTUNITIES: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE MARKETING HONORS NETWORKING PROGRAM

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### ABSTRACT

Career networking offers many benefits such as lead generation, the development of interviewing and communication skills, and job attainment (Anonymous 2003). To capitalize on these benefits, the Honors Networking Program was created at California State University, Fullerton. It is a distinctive self-funding program that serves as a catalyst to build long-term relationships between the strongest performing marketing majors and over 24 Corporate Partners.

In this program, the top marketing students (G.P.A. 3.0 and higher) and corporate partners participate in two breakfasts a year. These meetings ensue as follows:

- The representatives from the Corporate Partners and the students register their attendance beginning at 7:00 AM.
- There are table cards for each of the Corporate Partners. Usually there are two companies per large round table where the partners will be joined by some of the students during the welcome, introductions, and opening comments.
- Those partners funding scholarships for the HNP students are given special recognition and thanked for their support.
- Each Corporate Partner is called upon to introduce their company and briefly outline the opportunities they currently have.
- The "networking" portion of the meeting begins where the students actually go to the tables hosted by the companies of most interest to them. Students can talk to as many Corporate Partners as time permits.
- During the "networking" activities, students are encouraged to leave each partner a resume.
- Follow-up interviews are arranged.

This program offers several benefits.

For students

- Opportunity to network with managers from some of the leading organizations in the Southern California market

- Enhance experience (and comfort level) in a professional yet informal social situation with corporate executives
- Opportunity to learn more about the demands and rewards of pursuing a professional career in marketing

For Corporate Partners

- Access to the top performing marketing majors with an opportunity to build relationships prior to graduation
- Enhance visibility on the CSUF campus as a Corporate Partner of the HNP
- Become a sponsor for scholarships
- Network with the other partners

For the Marketing Department

- Build stronger relationships with key employers of marketing graduates
- Acquire an understanding of the distinct requirements of top employers
- Enhance service to the highest performing marketing students

A recent quantitative assessment with students invited to the breakfast revealed that participating students are highly satisfied with the program. At the breakfast, students seek internships (65.3%), full-time employment (59.2%), networking opportunities (42.9%), and interviewing experience (38.8%). Following each event, 62% of students have further contact with the Corporate Partners. Recommendations focus on inviting more diverse Corporate Partners, encouraging more internships and marketing the program to students.

### REFERENCE

Anonymous. 2003b. *Networking: The most effective job search strategy*. Bridgewater, MA: Bridgewater State College Career Services. Retrieved 20 October 2003 from <http://www.bridgew.edu/Depts/Carplan/networking.htm>