

## CAREER READINESS

## Internship innovation at Rutgers

They are the two and a half words that so many college seniors want to hear: "You're hired!" And Rutgers is blazing a novel trail to have those words heard by more of its graduates.

BY MATTHEW  
ZINMAN

The New Jersey university's innovation can be found — or should we say 'viewed' — on the web at [careerservices.rutgers.edu/intern.html](http://careerservices.rutgers.edu/intern.html). It's a reality-based series of webcasts called "The Intern," created by the school's career services team to chronicle the experiences of five undergraduate juniors as they searched for summer internships.

The appeal among college viewers of reality programs like "The Apprentice" stimulated the project, which chronicles five candidates with different majors and personal interests as they learned and applied various job-search strategies. "We wanted to get our message across to students in a more interesting and more interactive format," says Eva Kubu, career management specialist and program coordinator. "The Intern' enables viewers to identify with their peers, learn from their experiences and, hopefully, emulate a successful strategy for landing their own internship."

The show combines video interviews produced by the campus station RU-TV as well as online journal entries in which each student details his activities and shares feelings and reactions at every stage of the internship search. The five candidates received the same treatment as any other Rutgers student relying on the career services team. Each candidate set out to emerge a winner, but the true competition is the personal challenge.

Lauren Buckle, a public relations major among the candidates in season two, says, "The heart of the program was really about willpower and motivation. The message was, if you want to learn, then an internship will provide an advantage that will help you end up on top. I did it because I want an employer to say, 'She's ready, we want to hire her.'"

### A real production on the Raritan

Recruiting the right student participants was considered a critical element. Prior to each of the two now-completed seasons, the career services team conducted a campus-wide search for five candidates among the nearly 7,000 Rutgers juniors. The selection committee reviewed

applications and student essays then interviewed finalists.

Development of the web pages, guidelines and marketing materials took several months. Building 'The Set' required extensive web development, what with a program overview, links to profiles of the candidates, their journal entries, tips from employers and career services information and events.

"This Week on The Intern" kept the series promoted on the university's home page. Students in the audience were encouraged to offer suggestions and ask questions.

Each featured candidate relied on a personal career counselor for guidance, and each of them participated in the regularly-scheduled seminars and workshops offered by the career services department.



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### Getting the word out

A buzz resulted from a combination of high-tech and high-touch marketing efforts. Newspaper articles, flyers, posters and personal appearances were utilized. Campus-wide e-mails to faculty, staff and students included invitations to 'Meet the Candidates' events and broadcast interviews on RU-TV.

Kubu notes, "We also relied on 25 students who made up a volunteer marketing task force for additional bench strength. They staffed promotional tables in student centers and dining halls. Over two seasons, the ten featured candidates

themselves became true ambassadors who spread the word to friends about their experiences."

"We think 'The Intern' was very good for career services in two ways," says Richard White, director of career services at Rutgers. "It generated publicity about our office that showed how our intern candidates were modeling the activities that get results. To the extent those who tuned in took notice, they got many of the same benefits."

Participation in career services activities and seminars increased by 4,000 students in the first year alone. More than 2,300 students visited weekly promotional tables and events.

All five candidates from season one secured summer internships at well-known companies, while four of the

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system, and a ten-percent price reduction is common in Charlottesville. Their procurement initiative started, like Clarion's, with larger institutions in the nine-campus Virginia system passing their stronger buying power to smaller institutions. Representatives meet monthly to consider how to squeeze further savings out of their decentralized procurement system.

They implemented statewide procurement also, and they began looking for a user-friendly interface, concluding also that SciQuest provided a great choice. Ms. Sheehy says the way SciQuest presents multiple vendor choices for a single buy produces a more cost-effective buy.

Virginia also likes the fact that worthy priorities like minority-owned and women-owned vendor representation can be sequenced with priority.

As Bill Cooper will tell you, we're just beginning to use e-procurement technology to wring out procurement savings. But the value-added entrepreneurial approach is welcome on Bill's Missouri campuses. Legislators and elsewhere stakeholders will be equally appreciative.

**Errata:** I misspoke/mis-wrote in my article on document imaging, "What's Up Docs?" in the July issue of *The Greentree Gazette*. Donna Harris notes for the record that Miami of Ohio's DARS degree audit system is just as slick as I said it was. But Hershey Systems handles the document imaging tasks within DARS. Thanks for the clarification, Donna. ■

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five did so in season two. The one candidate who didn't have succeeded at landing an internship for this fall.

Now an intern at Johnson & Johnson, Buckle reports, "It's everything I could have hoped for. The company is amazing. I don't make copies or get coffee. I have my own projects that I can see myself doing for the rest of my career. And I have the responsibility to get them done."

## Innovation continues in New Brunswick

Rutgers has other career services irons in the fire, such as speed networking events, a Dress for Success fashion show and a Dining Etiquette event. Meanwhile, career services was recently re-structured under academic affairs from its former alignment under student affairs.

"At most schools career services is under student affairs," White explains. "That suggested that career services is an activity. Instead we need to be forward-looking with close relationships with the faculty. Together with faculty, we'll advance the role of experiential education in the integration of the academic and career development process."

Now, one year since the realignment, career services is working with Rutgers faculty to develop new internships and a co-op program for the university's school of arts and sciences. White says it's a progressive step for a major public university to provide such opportunities for liberal arts students. ■

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