

Making the Matches

Programs Introduce Students to Employment Opportunities

By Tom Schuman

Question: Who's right? Students who say they can't find the kind of jobs they're looking for to keep them in Indiana. Or employers, who contend that colleges and universities are not producing the type of graduates they need to be productive members of the workforce.

Answer: a) neither

b) both

c) it doesn't matter

d) all of the above

In order from least to most correct, let's go b, a, c and d.

Yes, there are always going to be some mismatches between student training and employer needs. No, that gap is probably not as wide as many would contend. It doesn't matter because the problem is more a lack of knowledge and communication than anything else – students don't know about enough of the Indiana-based job possibilities in their fields, and employers are unaware of the talented graduates who could provide immediate help to their companies.

The business community (see the story on Page 28 about the Indiana Chamber role in running the Indiana INTERNnet program) needs to play a more active role. Individual colleges and universities, through internships and other creative programs, are trying to make matches that can help the state maintain more of its talented graduates and benefit Indiana companies.

Below are several of the many efforts going on at Indiana campuses.

Making the grade at Marian

Business Creation and Development is the official moniker for the program at Marian College. Liberal arts students in all majors can earn a minor through a series of courses that focus on entrepreneurship and small businesses.

Top students for the past two academic years have been presented with unique opportunities to take their skills to the business community as consultants. This group is known as the A-Team.

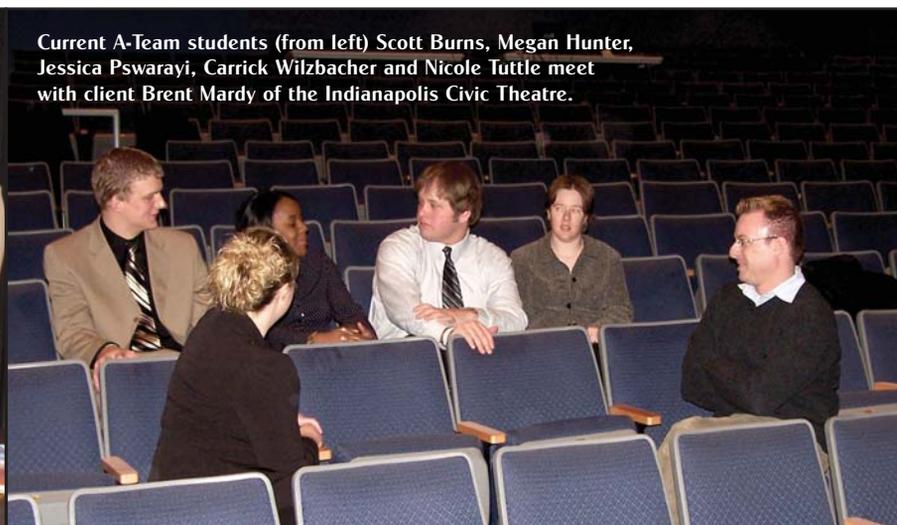
Robert Schuttler, director of the Business Creation and Development program, explains. "I said I have always wanted some type of entrepreneurship angle here, but we wanted to do some things differently. We wanted to take entrepreneurship out of the business department and take it to all parts of the school. We wanted teams of people with different majors, and those teams to use their liberal arts background in critical thinking, communications and organizational skills."

The result is much more than a typical internship program. A series of summer workshops

Kendra Thornton (left) and Jenny Kuhlman were in the initial group of Marian College A-Team consultants.



Current A-Team students (from left) Scott Burns, Megan Hunter, Jessica Pswarayi, Carrick Wilzbacher and Nicole Tuttle meet with client Brent Mardy of the Indianapolis Civic Theatre.





(Left) An internship in public relations and sales promotion at Vera Bradley for Huntington University student Renee Robbins turned into a full-time job. (Right) Huntington's Todd Clark gained insight into what he wanted and didn't want to do for a career during his work experience. At left is supervising professor Pat Zezula, with Cindy Goshert of Parkview Huntington Hospital.

introduces A-Team students to topics ranging from how to dress and the proper way to talk to clients to ethics and confidentiality. In addition to academic credit, A-Team students receive a \$1,500 stipend. With so many students working outside jobs to help pay for school, Schuttler says this is necessary to allow them the chance to participate.

Another key element is students actually making the choices about which companies they are going to work with during the course of the semester. Representatives of company candidates come in for an interview with the student consultants.

"I don't assign any companies," Schuttler comments. "It really works to push that decision-making down to the students. They appreciate it and understand it. The classroom work is done during the summer. The vast majority of their time is spent with the companies.

"I get weekly reports, and they do have to make a consultant's presentation to me and the company. Their grade is dependent on adding value to the client company. It's different than an internship," he continues. "They're not going in to learn; they're going in to contribute."

The model of pairing up students from different majors appears to be working. The drawbacks include having the funding for only 10 A-Team members per year. Schuttler is hoping for an expansion and adds that it may take a few semesters before "we learn what level that (student contribution to companies) can be."

Students speak

What do students, and the companies they are working with, think about the program? The reviews are extremely positive.

Ashley Chandler, a senior marketing and music major from Indianapolis, was a member of the first A-Team. Five students worked together with two companies – Print Resources and Elastic Image. The latter is a Rose-Hulman Ventures start-up that required assistance in a variety of areas. Further pre-consulting assistance came in the form of Marian College alumni knowledgeable in those fields of work.

"With Elastic Image, we knew it was going to really be a large project. It was very helpful (to work as a team) because a project like that would have been way too overwhelming for one person," Chandler recalls. "We had political science, marketing and finance majors on our team. I'm more of a writing person, so I was able to do that part of the work."

Chandler will have a fifth year of school to complete her double major, but hopes to open a music studio shortly after graduation. "The in-the-field experience is so nice," she notes. "In the classroom is great, but theory and practice are always different."

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—Robert Schuttler
Marian College

Benefits for both

Jenny (Kuhlman) Morris has already started her career. The listing of the A-Team experience on her resume drew immediate interest in each of her interviews. She recalls an arduous interview process for a job in Chicago. She was competing against a number of male candidates and received

the job offer before turning it down. She accepted a position as public relations manager for the Girl Scouts of Hoosier Capital Council in Indianapolis.

The consulting experience “has made me a lot more comfortable giving my opinion.” She appreciates the opportunities in the Marian program – applying to become an A-Team member and choosing which companies to work with. “That was really different than anything I had done in the classroom.”

Morris and her A-Team colleagues worked with another

Rose-Hulman Ventures start-up in InfraWare. Offering new technology in the transcription business, particularly for medical organizations, the company needed marketing expertise. The students created databases and delivered various recommendations to “make sure the message was clearly conveyed” that the new technology was going to assist, not replace, transcriptionists.

How well did they do their job?

Nick Mahurin, InfraWare CEO, asserts, “I’m an engineer. We have a lot of technical people in the company and access

to technical expertise here at Rose-Hulman. What we were looking to get was marketing acumen. They helped us to better understand the market we were preparing to enter.

“Oftentimes, I have students approach me, and they have academic projects. Maybe they get a little something done,” Mahurin continues, “but it’s difficult to get back something for your company. I employ Rose-Hulman students as programmers on internships. They do a great job. This group really conducted itself as consultants.”

The student research profiled the typical person in the transcriptionist field and led to the recommendation that the new technology be explained in book form. That has proven successful in helping explain the product and alleviate concerns.

Mahurin describes his company as still in its early stages. “A lot of the work we have done and will continue to do,” he extols, “is attributable to the work those students did back in 2004.”

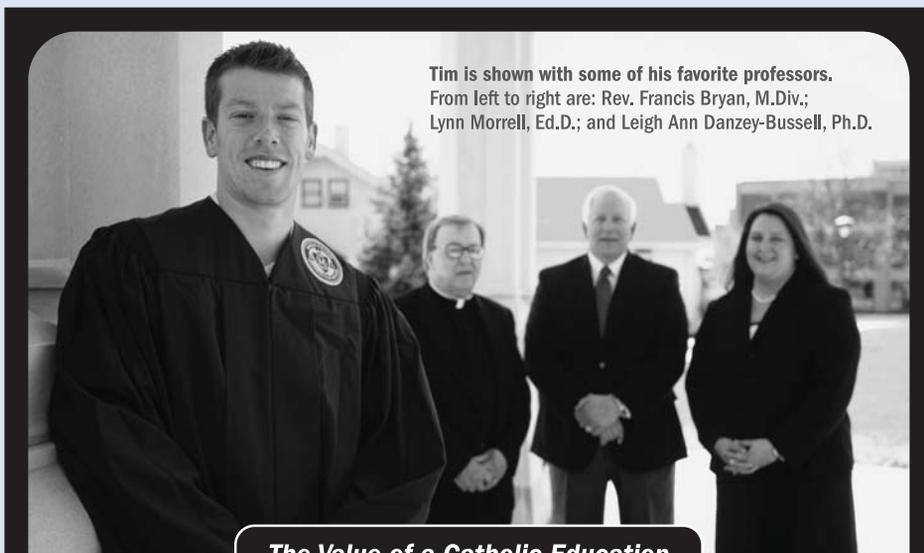
Next step

Schuttler has seen results through the first three semesters of the program.

“With the students, I see a maturity from beginning to end, in how they present themselves, how they conduct themselves in meetings. By the end of the semester, they’re pretty comfortable in sharing their opinions,” he notes.

Schuttler and Marian have another initiative in place called the Allison Fellows. It includes young people recruited to the college and receiving scholarships to study entrepreneurship. Among the options for the group in the fall of 2005 was starting its own company.

It took only about a day for the students to make that selection.



Tim is shown with some of his favorite professors. From left to right are: Rev. Francis Bryan, M.Div.; Lynn Morrell, Ed.D.; and Leigh Ann Danzey-Bussell, Ph.D.

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Journalism and public relations were the focus of DePauw student Matt Kubacki's Winter Term experience with the Indiana Chamber.

They formed their own for-profit company selling Marian College logo athletic wear. Schuttler serves in only an advisory capacity. It is another effort that he hopes to see grow in coming years.

Alphabet success

At Huntington University, ERC and ELO are the key letter combinations. The Enterprise Resource Center is the initiative (that also began in the 2004-05 academic year) and Experiential Learning Opportunities are the objective. Like at Marian, the program spreads across the university with students in all majors able to utilize the ERC services.

Through the end of 2005, director Kay Schwob reports more than 300 students had come through the ERC office seeking internships, practicums or job shadowing experiences. More than 225 had been placed in such opportunities.

The university is active in seeking those possible student destinations. "Some companies come to us, but we go out and find out about opportunities," Schwob points out. "We're a little different in that regard, at least in our area, in that we actively look for experiences. We interview the students and try to make the matches."

Before the ERC came into play, Schwob says it was more of a "did the professor know someone in the industry?" equation. Now, some of the majors are requiring ELOs in their curriculum.

Flexibility is helping produce successful experiences. Huntington has an approximate three-week J-term in January that serves as an excellent time for job shadowing. The period between semesters, however, doesn't serve as an internship barrier. ELOs are set up to meet company needs.

"We're very flexible," Schwob says, adding, "You can put a pen on Huntington and go about 45 minutes out – including Fort Wayne, Columbia City, Wabash, Marion. Most students will do their ELOs in that range." Others have gone to different parts of the state during the summer months.



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Student initiative

Companies have been pleased, with positive evaluations and feedback. Some have specifically requested continuing the program with another student. There have been students who have been hired full-time by the companies.

On the university side, Schwob says, "I've had a lot more students coming in and wanting to start the process earlier. I feel this can help them direct their careers."

Individually, she uses current Miss Indiana Susan Gilkey as an example. Gilkey's internship at Girls Inc. in Indianapolis helped solidify her pageant platform. Another student, convinced that physical therapy was going to be the career after graduation, experienced a change of heart after a practicum experience. Despite a couple of class changes, the student was able to graduate on time and is now a physician's assistant.

Options at DePauw

DePauw's Winter Term program has been in place for more than 30 years. Students are required to complete three experiences –

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examples include internships, campus programs (required during the freshman year), independent study, professor-led studies – during their four years in school.

“The primary goal is experiential education,” explains Kyle Danforth, assistant director. “Even on campus it’s more geared to getting students experience in interest-related activities. It’s not necessarily only associated with their major tracks of study. A lot of students cross over into areas they wouldn’t get exposure to in their normal course of study.”

Students going to New Zealand with a professor to study geology in a unique setting certainly fits that description. The Winter Term office coordinates all such activities, with the academic components necessary to gain approval.

With internships, students have the responsibility of taking the initiative to help create projects. The time period is similar to that at Huntington, with students having most of the month of January to gain on-the-job know-how.

“It’s a motivating, focusing experience,” says Danforth, a recent DePauw graduate. “Students can see how their skills in school can be applied outside the classroom. The university has an emphasis to get Indiana companies involved, to put students in that business environment.”

Of 280 students experiencing internships in January 2006, nearly half were with Indiana companies and organizations. Dentistry, medicine, banking and real estate were some of the areas of work. And communications, as you will find the work of DePauw student Matt Kubacki on Pages 6-9 of this magazine as part of his Winter Term internship with the Indiana Chamber.

Will Kubacki and others gaining a firsthand look at Indiana workplaces eventually apply their skills within the state on a full-time basis? It’s impossible to say. The odds, however, are improved. At least they’re aware of some of the opportunities.

INFORMATION LINK

Resources: Robert Schuttler, Marian College, at (317) 955-6038 or www.marian.edu

Kay Schwob, Huntington University, at (260) 359-4104 or www.huntington.edu

Kyle Danforth, DePauw University, at (765) 658-6004 or www.depauw.edu

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