

Finding Careers, Finding Hope



Almost 800 people attended the 2014 Career Days job fair, which hosted representatives from 50 different employers.

The numbers are in from this year's Career Days, and they show what many at the college and in the community already knew: Clark College's week-long program for job-hunters is growing stronger every year. This year, more than 1000 job-seekers attended one or more Career Days events, which included workshops, clinics, job and transfer fairs, panel discussions, and expert presentations.

As always, events began before the official April 21 – 24 run of Career Days with the opening of the Career Clothing Closet the Thursday and Friday of the week before. This year, more than 200 students received free interview outfits of gently worn professional clothing donated by members of the community.

Officially, however, Career Days kicked off on Monday, April 21, with an employer panel featuring representative from Adidas, The Boeing Company, and Madden Industrial. The Ellis Dunn Community Room in Gaiser Hall was filled with students and guests ready for tips on what these employers were looking for. One key need: skilled technicians in fields like machining, welding, and carpentry. "There's a shortage here in the Portland area," said Randy Shelton of Madden Industrial.



Visitors at the 2014 Career Days job fair had a chance to speak directly with

representatives from
employers in the region.

Michael Lushenko of Boeing agreed. "There's a shortage of people who know how to make parts," he said. "Our engineers tend to have at least a bachelor's degree, but machining is an area where we are happy to look at people with two-year degrees."

Lushenko cautioned that the job market has become more competitive recently, in part because of the increasing popularity of the Pacific Northwest as a place where people from other parts of the country would like to move. "I've been hiring for 15 years," he said. "It used to be a I got a lot of local residents applying. Now I'm getting a lot of applicants from the East Coast and the South."

Fortunately, Career Days offered local job-hunters many opportunities to gain an edge over other competitors. One popular presenter was Bobby Castaneda, director of business development at the Vancouver-based ACS Professional Staffing. "He was a participant on our employer panel last year," said Career Services Program Specialist Sarah Weinberger, who chaired the Career Days committee. "Attendees enjoyed his role on the panel, so we brought him back this year to present his own workshop."

Attendees also flocked to hear Joshua Waldman, author of *Job Searching with Social Media for Dummies*. The biggest draw of the program, however, remained the job fair, held April 23. Nearly 800 job-seekers attended the event, which for the second year in a row was at full capacity with 50 employers represented; employers included Boeing, Columbia Machine, C-Tran, EarthLink, and Evergreen School District 112. The fair also included a photo booth where job-hunters could get a professional photo taken to use on their LinkedIn profiles. This feature was back for the second year in a row, as was the Penguin Passport, an incentive for visitors to attend multiple

events. Passport prizes this year included an iPad Mini, a Fit Bit Flex, free pizza for a year from Papa Murphy's, and gift baskets from local companies.



Vancouver resident Patti James stands in the Career Center after receiving advice on her resume during Career Days 2014.

The program also included a drop-in resume clinic, during which job-seekers could have their resumes reviewed by trained human-resources professionals. Anne-Marie Rupert, a human resources professional who is currently a stay-at-home mother, was one volunteer reviewing resumes at the clinic. She said one of the key mistakes many job-seekers made was not understanding how much experience they actually have.

"What I've realized is that their resumes are brief, but what they've actually accomplished is impressive," she said. "So helping them to get their accomplishments on paper has been the key thing I've been doing."

Patti James, a Certified Nursing Assistant who was looking to change careers, said she came to Career Days specifically for help with her resume. "I haven't done a resume for so long," said the mother of five. "I was in my last job for 19 years."

James said she had a completely new resume after speaking with Rupert. "She actually helped me to create a resume with the right keywords," she said. "I didn't realize you could create a resume that talked exactly about the skills an employer was looking for. And she made me realize I had more experience than I thought."

While the majority of Career Days attendees are Clark College

students, the college hosts the program as a service for anyone in the community who could use help in finding a job. James, who lives in Vancouver, is not a student; she saw an ad for the event on Craigslist and decided to visit.

"I think it's wonderful that they have this event for all of us who are looking for work," she said. "I was scared they'd throw me out when I said I wasn't a student. I said, 'I'm nobody, can I still be here?'"

"Instead they just laughed and said, 'You're somebody! Come on in!'"

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Summer Jobs, Lifelong Success



Clark College hosts numerous job fairs at its main campus each year, all of them open to the public.

Clark College hosts its second annual Summer Job and Internship Fair from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. on Tuesday, March 4, in the Gaiser Student Center. The event is designed to help job-seekers find summer internship and employment opportunities with Portland- and Vancouver-area employers.

New this year, the college is partnering with the Vancouver Housing Authority (VHA) to co-sponsor the fair. According to VHA Community Involvement and Employment Manager Bridgette Farnbulleh, the VHA has organized its own summer job fair for the past two years, but was eager to join forces with the

Clark College.



Clark College's job fairs draw dozens of employers and hundreds of job-seekers.

"We wanted to connect with Clark College because of the educational aspect," Farnbulleh said. "We wanted our youth to be on a college campus, and to understand that the kind of job you get is closely connected to the education you get. We're trying to break the cycle, to make sure that just because they may have grown up in poverty doesn't mean they have to live in second-generation poverty themselves."

"I'm looking forward to this year's job fair," said Sarah Weinberger, Employer Relations and Job Developer at Clark College. "We have already doubled the number of registered employers from last year, and the collaboration with the VHA will make our event even stronger. Previously, the Summer Job and Internship Fair was held in May, but many employers had already hired for a June start date by that point. We are now holding the event in March because it's when students need to start planning for summer employment."

Positions offered at the fair may be full-time, part-time and in the case of internships, they may be paid or unpaid. There will also be a mock interview room set up to help job seekers prepare for real-life interviews.

The Summer Job & Internship Fair is sponsored by Clark College Career Services and the Vancouver Housing Authority. The event's Gold Level sponsor is LaborWorks. Some of the employers who will be at the event are Boys & Girls Club of Southwest Washington, Entercom Portland, Firestone Pacific Foods, LOWE'S, Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, Trackers Earth, and YWCA Clark County. There are over 30 registered

employers currently, with room for more. The event is open to any company or organization offering internships or summer employment, but space is limited so interested employers should act quickly to register.

A list of participating employers is available on the Career Center's Pinterest page.

The event is free and open to the public. Clark College is located at 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver, Wash. Driving directions and parking maps are available at www.clark.edu/maps.

If you need accommodation due to a disability in order to fully participate in this event, you should contact Clark College's Disability Support Services Office at 360-992-2314 or 360-991-0901 (VP), or visit Gaiser Hall room 137, as soon as possible.

Elizabeth Christopher contributed to this article.

Photos: Clark College archives/Jenny Shadley

New agreement's a HIIT



HIIT student Rachel Cribben says the ability to pursue a bachelor's degree without leaving her home in Vancouver is "extremely important" to her success in the program.

In a move that will provide residents of Southwest Washington with the opportunity to train for high-paying jobs in a rapidly expanding field, Clark College and Bellevue College have signed an articulation agreement that allows students at

Clark to earn a bachelor's degree in Health Informatics Information Technology (HIIT) from Bellevue through online and remote classes—without leaving the Clark College campus.

“In our ongoing conversations with regional employers, we realized there was a need for Health Informatics Information Technology professionals and responded quickly to that need, but we also realized that there would be a need for students to take their education to the next level,” said Debra Ortiz, director of allied health programs at Clark College. “This is a great opportunity for students to stay here in the region and get a bachelor's degree in a rapidly growing field.”

Health Informatics is the science of managing electronic health records and coordinating the computer information systems used by hospitals, clinics, insurance companies, and health care professionals. HIIT professionals work in customizing software for large health care institutions, as well as in data analysis, training clinicians on how to use computer systems, database management, and many other related fields. Demand for these skilled professionals is increasing as more and more health care organizations switch to electronic records-keeping, and as the graying Baby Boomers spur an increase in demand for health care. Indeed, the Bureau for Labor Statistics predicts that demand for HIIT specialists will increase by 21 percent between 2010 and 2020—a rate that's 50 percent higher than average job growth in all fields.

Clark introduced its HIIT program in winter 2012 in response to regional workforce needs. From the beginning, the program was designed to allow graduates to transfer to four-year institutions, including the Oregon Institute of Technology. However, this new agreement with Bellevue College allows students to continue paying in-state tuition while pursuing their Bachelor of Science degree; because the classes are offered online or remotely, the agreement also allows students to complete their four-year degree without leaving Vancouver.

"We're thrilled to have this opportunity to collaborate with our colleagues at Clark so that we can offer students convenient access to our online courses," said Dr. Pamela Charney, program chair of Healthcare Information Technology & Management at Bellevue. "This will give students from Clark a clear pathway to professional success in the exciting new arena of healthcare IT."

Rachel Cribben is one of those students. Cribben, 27, earned a certificate for medical billing and coding shortly after graduating from high school. But after she and her husband separated in 2011, she realized that she would need to get a degree to be able to support her two daughters, ages 3 and 5. Her mother, who works at Clark, told her about the HIIT program.

Cribben says HIIT is a good fit for her personality and interests. "I like the healthcare field, but I'm more of a behind-the-scenes kind of person," she says, adding that she hopes to find a job in a hospital's information technology department and eventually manage her own team of specialists there.

Cribben says the material has at times been challenging. "I'm taking Intro to Local Area Networks right now, and I opened up the textbook and saw all these pictures of wires and diagrams and thought, 'How am I going to learn this?'" she says. "But then I saw a picture of a [network interface card] and I recognized it from when my brother built my computer. I realized I actually knew what it was already, and it made me think, 'OK, I can do this.'"

Cribben plans to earn her associate degree from Clark in 2016 and her bachelor's degree through the Bellevue partnership a year after that. For her, the ability to be able to complete her degree without relocating—and primarily through online classes, so that she can continue to care for her children while being a full-time student—is crucial to her success in

the program.

“It’s extremely important,” she says. “I want to do this, and I want to do it well. I want to show my girls that you can do anything that you put your mind to.”

Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley