

Media Enhanced Feature

BSSW Senior Students Participate in Career Services Program



Shawna Hembree from UT Career Services (l.) meets with BSSW student Shireena Weston to work on her resume.

Seniors in the BSSW program are getting a head start on searching for jobs before graduation through a partnership between the college and UT's Career Services department.

Matthew Theriot, assistant professor and interim director of the BSSW program at the college, and Shawna Hembree, career consultant with the Career Services department, started developing the program a year and a half ago. The goal is two-fold: first, to enhance undergraduate and graduate student and alumni awareness of career development and job seeking strategies and, second, to encourage employers to utilize services offered by Career Services. Hembree serves as a resource for students interested in nonprofit/social service and government careers and social service agency and government employers. "We hope students and employers will come to view Career Services as a close partner in their career and recruiting efforts," she stated.

Students are introduced to the Career Services program through a seminar that is required for graduation. The seminar integrates what the students have learned in the program and helps prepare them for life after graduation. "In the seminar, students learn concrete strategies for maximizing their potential," stated Theriot.

Hembree visits the class twice to dis-

cuss resume writing, interviewing, job seeking, and graduate school. Students are also required to participate in a mock interview with Hembree. The interview is taped, which allows students to review their performance and improve their technique. In ad-

dition to the seminar, Hembree holds satellite office hours for students as well as regular appointment hours in the Career Services department. Students can schedule an appointment by calling (865) 974-5435. These meetings provide students the opportunity to meet one-on-one with her to receive more in-depth help with preparing resumes and polishing interviewing skills. Master's students are invited to take advantage of the satellite and regular office hours as well. Students can also access other resources available in the Career Services' Career Resource Library, which has an extensive collection of print resources such as career development guides.

Since the program's inception a year and a half ago, student participation in all areas including individual appointments, registration on the job and resume database—Hire-A-Vol—and attendance at various job fairs has steadily increased. "I believe this is directly correlated with the regular incorporation of Career Services in courses, programming, satellite office hours, and list-serv messages offered by the College of Social Work. Registration in the Hire-A-Vol database has grown from 15 to 50 students and alumni and is expected to continue to grow as we continue the new partnership," Hembree stated.

Andrea Prince, a graduating senior in the BSSW program, has been pleased with the help she has received so far.

"When I met with Shawna, she gave great advice and critique on the elements that need to be added or taken away from my resume. She helped me organize it into a more cohesive and tailored document...I have learned the value of a good cover letter and the importance on having a flawless resume that may need to be tailored specifically to my area of interest."

Currently, 60 nonprofits and social service agencies are registered in the Hire-A-Vol database, but only a handful are actively utilizing the job posting capabilities, on-campus interviewing opportunities, and/or the job fairs. "I would certainly like to see more agencies taking advantage of our services," stated Hembree. "An immediate priority is to establish contact with agencies currently not participating to discuss how our services can be tailored to their specific recruiting needs. I am particularly open to and welcome the opportunity to visit agency sites to increase my own knowledge of the agencies while also informing them about Career Services. Agencies are also encouraged to contact me directly with any questions or requests for services," stated Hembree.

Theriot and Hembree are excited about what the program has to offer students and employers. Noted Theriot, "Shawna has been wonderfully receptive to my efforts to get Career Services more involved with the BSSW program. I am optimistic that the services of the program will really help our graduates be more prepared for life after graduation."

Hembree can be reached by phone at (865) 974-5435 or email: sbhembree@utk.edu.

To access the Hire-a-Vol database, visit http://career.utk.edu/employers/services_recruit.asp.

—Kirche Rogers

The Tennessee
Juvenile Court
Services Association
(TJCSA) will hold
its 25th annual
Joint Conference on
Juvenile Justice on
August 10-13, 2008,
at the Knoxville
Marriott Downtown,
500 Hill Avenue,
in Knoxville. For
more information
or to register to
attend, contact
Elvira Newcomb
at (615) 741-2687
or email: Elvira.
Newcomb@tscmail.
state.tn.us or Mary
Lindsey, TJCSA
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