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Career fair attracts thousands



Northeastern student Yiwen Gao speaks to a representative of iMDsoft, a clinical information systems company, at the career fair. Photo by Lauren McFalls.

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More than 2,500 young job seekers handed out résumés, honed their networking skills, and exchanged business cards with roughly 150 employers at Northeastern's regional career fair on Thursday.

The fair, held at Northeastern's Cabot Cage, is one of two annual events sponsored by the university's career services office. It's popular among students seeking co-ops, internships or that first full-time job after graduation, as well as for employers who view Northeastern students as top-of-the-line job candidates.

Dressed to impress, students packed the Cabot Cage in search of their perfect professional match.

Fresh off a conversation with a representative for the clinical information systems company iMDsoft, civil engineering graduate student Yiwen Gao said she'd like to catch on with a company interested in hiring international students.

Her co-op at the Cambridge-based travel and airline software company ITA Software prepared her well for her first full-time job search, she said, helping her grow and develop stronger communication and interpersonal skills.

Mechanical engineering graduate student Tom Dutremble planned to hand out résumés to representatives of Terradyne and the web support firm DesCorp Solutions. "The career fair introduces you to companies," he said. "I want to talk to people, I want to get my name out there."

No matter the career path, Northeastern's co-op program prepares students for the working world, and gives them an advantage over their peers when it comes to snagging top job choices, said Bob Condon, a quality assurance manager at the software solutions company SeaChange International, based in Acton, Massachusetts.

"Northeastern students are more mature and more driven" as a result of their co-op experiences, he said. Condon, who before the fair said he hoped to talk with up to 100 students interested in filling quality assurance roles, has hired 18 Northeastern co-op students over the past year and a half.

"When Northeastern students graduate," he added, "they're one step ahead of their peers."

Condon's endorsement of Northeastern's experiential approach to learning is backed-up by an Association of American Colleges and Universities' survey of employers on the characteristics they most like to see in the graduates they hire.

Seventy-nine percent of employers surveyed said the ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings through internships or other professional experience should get an increased emphasis from higher education.

Those numbers don't surprise Maria Stein, Northeastern's director of career services. She said that Northeastern students who are hired by a co-op employer generally remain with the company longer than a typical college hire.

"It's a win-win," she said, "because our young professionals know what they're doing and understand the work culture, and their supervisors knows what they're capable of."

Northeastern students are hungry to learn, added Danielle Smith, the Construction Management Skill Training Program manager for Boston-based Shawmut Design and Construction.

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“Northeastern students tend to work well in our fast-paced environment,” she said, noting that several civil engineering students already work as co-ops for Shawmut’s information technology and construction operations divisions.

As an employer-in-residence at Northeastern, Smith helps students perfect résumés and improve interviewing skills and keeps them up-to-date on job opportunities. The career fair afforded her the chance to keep students connected to the company, she said.

To learn more about Northeastern's career services office, please visit <http://careerservices.neu.edu/home.php>

For more information, please contact Jason Kornwitz at 617-373-5729 or at j.kornwitz@neu.edu.

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