

Focus Topic

Workforce Experience and Opportunities for Students

COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

In the Fall Semester 1997, the College of Veterinary Medicine instituted the Multicultural Fellowships Program. This Program provides full tuition and fees for two underrepresented students in each class in the veterinary program. To date, six Multicultural Fellows have graduated and are employed in the veterinary profession. One graduate is in a residency program and is considering a career in academia. Currently, there are eight Multicultural Fellows in the veterinary curriculum.

The College is in the early stages of developing a summer research intern partnership for underrepresented students with two large pharmaceutical companies. These companies are seriously interested in increasing underrepresented workers in their industry.

INSTITUTE OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

The Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations (ILIR) is a graduate level academic program that offers a professional master's degree in human resources and industrial relations. The Institute's master's student demographic composition during the past year was 65% female and 21% minority. Fortune 500 corporations with progressive human resource policies heavily recruit its graduates. These organizations recruit for summer internships as well as full-time hires. The Institute places 90-100% of students each year, so the placement and career service function is quite successful.

ILIR is a founder of the Industrial Relations Council on Graduate Opportunities for Advanced Level Studies (GOALS). GOALS is a consortium of 15 graduate level human resource academic programs that partner with corporations that have diversity initiatives. Corporate partner support provides minority student fellowship support at the 15 participating universities. In addition to fellowship support, GOALS corporate partners heavily recruit minority students at participating schools. Career counseling, national networking meetings, and resume referrals are GOALS activities that contribute to minority student success at ILIR.

Several corporations also sponsor fellowships at ILIR that are given to outstanding minority students to attract them to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

All students participate in career service workshops that hone their career skills. Additionally, an ILIR student group, the Minority Student Association provides programming and support for minority students at ILIR to encourage development and retention of students during their one and a half years at the Institute. The Institute has a high level of success in retaining and placing our minority students – there is *no* difference in placement rates and salary levels between underrepresented student groups and other students. Additionally through the GOALS program, ILIR participates in a survey of human resources – industrial relations course at Clark/Atlanta University, and will be implementing a similar program at Hispanic institutions in San Antonio, Texas.

Networking with successful alumni and participating in networking and career development opportunities are the most valuable developmental tools for students.

To better provide workforce experiences and opportunities for students from under-represented groups, alumni participation and mentoring of current students could be formalized.

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

The Minority Engineering Effort (MEP) operates within the Academic Programs Office of the College of Engineering. While the MEP does not serve as an academic unit, it does focus special efforts on graduating underrepresented students in engineering.

During the past academic year, the MEP staff focused their efforts to reach potential students by: participating in the Student Interview Sessions sponsored by NSSFNS (National Scholarship Service and Fund for Negro Students), joining the Office of Admissions and Records (OAR) for counselor orientation, helping OAR present the campus to 9th and 10th graders, meeting with seniors from in-state high schools, and hosting a session for admitted students and their parents in Chicago.

The effect of the session with admitted students will not be known until fall 2000 registration but initial feedback indicates that it was desirable and timely. Thus, plans may be made to consider adding additional sessions in 2000 – 2001. The other activities tend to have long-range impact and, in some cases, help to increase the campus yield more than for engineering.

Once students have been admitted to engineering, they are invited to participate in the IMPRINT (Illinois Minority Pre-college Internship) program. These students can be selected to intern with an employer or work in a campus research laboratory during the summer prior to matriculation. In 1999, ten students were interning – eight on campus and two in industry.

In addition to the IMPRINT program, the Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP) through the Graduate College, is a program to recruit potential graduate students. Students from other campuses spend the summer in research laboratories on the Urbana-Champaign campus. This effort yielded seventeen students in either on-campus laboratories or at the USA CERL.

The results of the above efforts are measured over time because MEP staff interact with high school sophomores and all levels in between as they seek to increase the number of undergraduates and graduate students.

Other factors influence enrollment, and recently the major item has been the lack of scholarships. The College is competing for a select group of students, who look average when compared to the pool of admits, while competing universities consider them to be at the top of the potential pool. For example, the average high school rank for entering students was 93.2 and the average ACT-C was 29.8. These numbers are about a standard deviation above the average for under-represented students and about three standard deviations above the State average. Hence, finding students with these credentials and recruiting them to the UIUC involves a blend of activities and often a scholarship offer.

Therefore, support activities become essential for the retention efforts of the College. The MEP promotes academic improvement by providing an Enrichment Center, which utilizes Engineering Honor Societies and graduate students to cover chemistry, engineering, math, and physics courses. The Center is open Monday thru Thursday from 12:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. In addition to this site, students are notified of other locations on campus where help is available.

The quality of the students and their motivation to be successful resulted in over 100 being recognized for their academic achievements at the year-ending Awards Banquet. The Banquet has become one of the major events where the University staff, alumni, industry, and student interact and promote academic excellence.

The College of Engineering has over 200 employers who participate in the internship or cooperative education program. Students from all engineering majors can be involved and can select which program they desire. Many under-represented students select internships in an effort not to extend their education period. Cooperative Education is a five-year program and less than ten percent of the students participate. There is a subset of seventy-five employers that interact with the student organizations. In all cases, the objective is to convince students that they should consider the firm when making their decision on employment.

Although the College does not sponsor a tech-prep program specifically for under-represented students, there is a summer program under the Worldwide Youth in Science and Engineering (WYSE) for students to come to campus for two weeks to learn about the fields of engineering.

The "Engineering Career Service Center" provides interactive services for placement and serves all students.

The most effective practice for developing workforce experiences for students of underrepresented groups is to have employers involved with the academic programs and student activities. Through scholarships and internships, the students learn about the career opportunities and are motivated to excel.

The following practices and activities should be undertaken or further developed to better provide workforce experiences and opportunities for students from under-represented groups:

- Work with employers to expand the number of positions available for internships, especially during the first two years.
- Provide research opportunities for sophomores and juniors.
- Develop an outreach program, which would provide more experiences for students admitted to college, but are unsure of their career direction.

WOMEN IN ENGINEERING – COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Women In Engineering (WIE) has established partnerships with several firms such as, Intel, Hewlett Packard, Alcoa, Ford, and General Motors to offer internships. The students served are females in various engineering curricula. Often, internships are offered in association with academic scholarships provided by these firms. The students who have taken advantage of internships usually express great satisfaction at getting the opportunity to see the practical end of their chosen disciplines. A few students have accepted employment with these same firms following graduation.

To facilitate the placement of female students, WIE maintains a library of current resumes for any female student in engineering interested in providing the information. WIE makes potential employers aware of the availability of these documents for their review in seeking new employees. Participating female students are contacted, interviewed, and sometimes hired by these firms as a result of this activity.

WIE has found the following programs and activities particularly effective in developing workforce experiences and opportunities for female engineering students:

- Developing internship and co-op opportunities.
- Providing corporate-sponsored scholarships to students while establishing on-going communications between students and their sponsors.
- Providing mentoring programs to students that (1) establish direct contact between students and corporate speakers and (2) teaches better resume writing and interviewing skills to prepare them for job fairs.
- Arranging for corporate luncheons and seminars.

The following practices and activities should be undertaken or further developed by WIE to better provide workforce experiences and opportunities for female students:

- Increase availability of corporate-sponsored scholarships.
- Increase the number of internship and co-op opportunities.
- Increase the direct participation by corporations in mentoring programs, luncheons and seminars.

Meeting the Needs of Students from Underrepresented Groups

DIVISION OF REHABILITATION AND EDUCATION SERVICES (DRES)

Social, Cultural and Recreational Opportunities

The vast majority of students with disabilities do not require supplemental initiatives to accommodate their access to UIUC social, cultural and recreational opportunities. However, the Office of Campus Life within DRES does provide a myriad of supplemental social, cultural, and recreational opportunities for its students with disabilities when appropriate to afford egalitarian access. The most successful program, Delta Sigma Omicron (DSO), a disabled student organization, offers student members opportunities for leadership and self-advocacy skill development, community volunteer work, and fellowship. Through its activities, programs and fund-raiser, DSO promotes the full inclusion of students with disabilities in all academic and non-academic programs, facilities, events and services as well as educates others regarding the capabilities of persons with disabilities.

In collaboration with the Division of Campus Recreation, the Office of Campus Life offers adapted recreational sports as programs for participation by students with and without disabilities. Wheelchair football, power soccer, sled hockey, and swimming are the four most popular sports. Adapted leisure and recreational programs, which have been successfully introduced, include cooking and camping.

The DRES Adapted Varsity Athletics program allows for the students with disabilities an equivalent opportunity to participate in collegiate athletics comparable to that offered student athletes without disabilities. For over 50 years, students-athletes with disabilities have been competing regionally, nationally, and internationally in men's and women's wheelchair basketball, track, field, and long distance racing. Swimming and tennis, though new to the program, have already produced successful outcomes for student-athletes with disabilities.

Curricular Modifications

The UIUC provides students with disability-related consultation, and a variety of other services including: exam accommodations, priority registration, assistive computer or communication technology services, accessible campus transportation, transitional residential support services for students needing assistance with activities of daily living, physical therapy and functional training services, wheelchair and equipment repair, campus housing, parking and access to adapted competitive athletics and fitness programming.

Students with specific learning disabilities may also be granted course substitutions for the mathematics and/or foreign language requirements of specific degree programs when their respective documented learning disabilities have been shown to substantially impair learning in those domains. Most commonly, this academic adjustment is made for students with learning disabilities who have gone through a committee process to show that they are unable with accommodation to master the principles of mathematics or foreign language due to the effects of such disabilities. Course substitution has also been used for students with disabilities that impair speech to such a degree that language production is laborious and difficult (e.g., head injuries; certain types of degenerative neuromuscular disorders). It should be noted that waivers for courses are not made. The substitutions often consist of courses that will give students similar exposure to a foreign culture without having to incorporate the technical principles of the foreign language.

