

UC SANTA BARBARA

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UCSB Career Fair Draws 91 Recruiters and a Throng of Job-Seeking Students

Signaling a positive post-graduation outlook and proving their drive for a fruitful future, scores of UC Santa Barbara students descended on the Fall Career Fair held on campus Tuesday. Scores more will get their chance today. For the first time in several years, the annual effort of UCSB Career Services is a two-day affair -- a byproduct of the growing number of employers asking to participate.

Some 1,000 students were expected at the newly expanded fair, which by its conclusion will see recruiters from 91 companies review resumes, offer career advice, and initiate connections that may lead to job offers down the line. From Facebook and Pepsico to Yardi Systems and Citrix Online, global and locally born businesses alike attended the event with an eye toward finding future employees.

"Facebook was started in a dorm room, so for us, universities, new graduates, and interns are in our DNA," said Adam Ward, manager of the social network's university recruiting program, which annually visits some 100 campuses worldwide. "They bring the new ideas, the 'what if?' attitude and the passion that we need. At Facebook we believe in risk-taking and being bold, and these students -- they don't know what they can't do. It's that kind of energy and creativity that will be key to us as we develop our next wave of products."

Energy pulsed through Corwin Pavilion during Tuesday's session, which was aimed at students in science, technology, and engineering. By 2 p.m., more than 400 had been inside, with as many as 700 expected by the end of the day. Today's event, which runs from 1 to 4 p.m. at Corwin, is meant for all majors, featuring employers from industry sectors including retail, entertainment, marketing, and finance.

"I'm graduating in June but I'm already looking for jobs, seeing what's out there, getting a feel for what companies are looking for," said Sandra Szendzic, a senior majoring in electrical engineering, who spoke with an array of tech recruiters on Tuesday. "Also, I've been getting a feel for them and what the company environments may be like. It's good practice just speaking to the recruiters, to people in the industry, for building interview skills and meeting people. This is a great thing that UCSB is putting on."

The attending recruiters concur with Szendzic's assessment, characterizing the event as a win-win for employers and respective employees. Emma Merrick, a recruiting assistant for local software provider Yardi Systems, said the career fair is "very valuable to us as a company, as much as to the students."

"We hire so many UCSB graduates, because UCSB really prepares students well for careers at Yardi Systems," Merrick said. And she should know. The UCSB alumna, who graduated earlier this year, attended career fairs past as a job seeker. Offering up insights and advice based her own experience as a recent grad and new addition to the workforce, Merrick returned to the fair this year on the employer side of the table.

Yardi is just one of nearly 100 participating companies at the fair, most of which are recruiting for full-time positions, for students graduating in June 2013. Some are offering part-time or internship opportunities, according to Ignacio Gallardo, acting director of UCSB Career Services. "We know from doing our senior surveys that these connections often do result in job offers down the line," he said, "and we do have statistics to show that these initial interactions are really valuable."

"I don't think it's a secret that it's a tough job market out there, so it's all about exposing yourself to opportunities," Gallardo continued. "We're bringing 91 employers here who all love UCSB, and they love UCSB students. They know what they get from UCSB students. They get really bright, sharp, academic students. They get students who bring a variety of skill sets to the table, including problem-solving

abilities and communication abilities, which are things that most of these employers value highly. This opportunity is really important for students to start making those valuable networking connections that lead to jobs."

That opportunity was not lost on the crush of eager students at Tuesday's science and technology-focused recruitment, where networking with employers was foremost on the mind of Victoria Melero. The senior student majoring in electrical engineering hopes to lay the groundwork now for potential jobs starting after she completes her degree in 2013.

"For me it's all about making contacts," Melero said. "If you make contact now, and stay in contact, maybe they'll remember you and you'll have a chance with their company in the future. UCSB offers a lot of career and professional development. I never paid attention much before, but with the economy now, you have to be on top of it."

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