

Troy University

HELPING STUDENTS JUMPSTART THEIR CAREERS

When the Federal Government created new educational regulations stating universities must better prepare students for gainful employment, Troy University saw it as a chance to fine-tune its own efforts. With unemployment at record high levels, Troy decided to make internship placement more readily available to all of its students in an effort to help them gain employment after graduation.

Troy already had career centers at each of its four campuses, but an increasing number of students were taking classes online from remote locations without access to the on-campus centers. With roughly half of the student body online, Troy University needed a new solution to help the students find internships prior to graduation. "There was definitely a need for internship placement for the online students," said Ronnie Creel, director of Education Technology at Troy.

Mr. Creel soon found Internships.com, a new Building Block for the Blackboard Learn™ platform. A Blackboard Premier Partner, Internships.com is a free online resource that helps match students with potential companies that have internship opportunities. Students can do keyword searches for specific internships, search listings based on their field of interest or look for internships within a specific geographic location.

Students can login to their Blackboard Learn account, click on the "My Career" tab and sign up for the service. Students are then automatically logged into Internships.com each time they access their Blackboard account. In addition to giving students the ability to search for internships, the Building Block also provides students the opportunity to build resumes and keep track of the internships for which they have



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According to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 16.4 percent of people in the 16 to 24-year age group are unemployed. In addition, the opportunities for internships have increased 8.5 percent in 2012 according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). NACE also states that 79 percent of companies view internships as the best way to find entry-level employees. "There is no doubt that working within their chosen discipline before graduation will help a student's chances of gaining fulltime employment," said Creel.

When it came to installation of the new Building Block, Troy University found the integration with the Blackboard Learn platform to be seamless and the installation fast and easy. "The installation took less than an hour and no support time was needed," said Creel. "Internships.com runs with no real ongoing maintenance, even though the number of students using the service is growing quickly."

More than 2,500 students, 20 percent of the online student body, began using Internships.com within the first three months of deployment. "We just added the resource as a tab within the Blackboard Learn platform and did no marketing - the students found it on their own," said Creel. "Students are already spending a lot of time using the resource."

Internships.com has been successful for students at other universities as well. Sarah Gatewood from Hampton University used Internships.com to find an opportunity in the field of Psychology. "[Internships.com] showed me all the internships in my area...whether or not they were paying and if it required...college credit," said Gatewood. "It was fast and accurate! I found my company in less than 10 minutes and they contacted me soon after I filled out some information..."

Andie Lowenstein from the University of Missouri - Columbia said the most valuable aspect of Internships.com was being able to easily apply to a number of companies at once. "I was successful with finding jobs two summers in a row. The competition is high and many sites don't make it as easy as Internships.com to find the application."



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Director of Education Technology
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Ericka Hankins from Ohio Wesleyan University said, "In today's job market, experience is one of the most important and valuable assets to have, especially when trying to gain experience in an entry-level [position] in your desired field. [Internships.com] offers different types of internships for many types of majors as well as categorizing those internships to make them easily searchable. I was looking for an internship with editing...and I did find one that is focused on editing. I'm very happy with Internships.com [because] it's easy to use and makes searching for specific types of internships simple."

As for Troy University, student use continues to grow. Based on the initial success with online students, the school sent an email to the entire student body, both traditional and online, to build more awareness of the new resource. "The response has been great and many of the campus-based students have started using it as well," said Creel. "It will be interesting to see how the number of students signing up translates into internships in the coming months."

