

Friday, September 19, 2008

SBA graduates ACHIEVE in job market

Getting a degree is no longer just about the classroom. Today's graduates need to be ready for the work world -- right away. To help students meet this requirement, the SBA is integrating career readiness into its business curriculum.

The ACHIEVE program, introduced at OU this fall, inspires, guides and prepares students for their ideal business career. This mandatory four-year professional development series helps students learn about business, earn their degree, and then equip them with the skills they need to land a job and succeed in their chosen profession.

"The ultimate goal is for students to walk across the stage at commencement already employed in their field," says Laurie Shano, SBA academic adviser and staff liaison for the ACHIEVE program.

From a business leaders' perspective, ACHIEVE is set to do just that.

"ACHIEVE will give SBA students a differentiator in the job market," says Rande Somma, president, Rande Somma and Associates LLC, a leadership coaching and development company that he formed after retiring from Johnson Controls where he served as president of the Automotive Systems Group Worldwide. "ACHIEVE is the bridge that connects the dots between learning and application. As an employer, I say 'Wow, your experience has primed you to move successfully into the job faster and I don't have to spend as much time getting you ready to contribute.' As companies get leaner and leaner, the impression of readiness makes a difference in the hiring decision."

Starting with freshmen who enter the SBA in fall 2008, ACHIEVE exposes students to industry through networking, job shadowing and internships so students can target their coursework toward their chosen profession. Through the integrated curriculum, they also practice valuable professional skills, such as teamwork, critical thinking and communication. A focus on resume writing and interview skills also gives students a boost up the career ladder.

"We're giving students tools to make better decisions about their careers," says Jim Serocki, assistant professor of accounting and ACHIEVE faculty adviser.

"When students enter the job market, their academic achievement is an enabler," says Somma, who also served as the SBA's first Executive in Residence. "Once in the work world, the contribution is what matters most. I applaud SBA for going beyond the core of learning and really helping students successfully transition to a career."

Through ACHIEVE, SBA students will graduate with a wealth of practical knowledge that increases the value of their OU business bachelor's degree, ultimately giving them even more of the skills employers seek.

ACHIEVE also helps students form a stronger connection to the SBA and to their peers -- bonds that will encourage students to complete their degree program and ultimately lead to greater success.

The SBA is looking for alumni interested in participating in networking sessions or in supporting students in other ways through the ACHIEVE program. For information or to participate, contact Laurie Shano at ltshano@oakland.edu or call (248) 370-3285.

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