OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

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High standards yield internships, jobs for SBA accounting students

With an increased focus on the field of accounting, an industry that's hot in good and bad economic times, accounting firm recruiters continue to look to Oakland University's School of Business Administration as a key school for potential hires.

The program is focused on a strong knowledge of accounting standards, the ability to analyze business transactions and the ability to identify risks within an organization and recommend controls. With an accounting-specific accreditation from the AACSB, Oakland's SBA graduates are prepared to make meaningful contributions in the workplace upon entering the door.

Pam Strohmeyer, director of campus recruitment for Rehmann, a large Midwest CPA and business-consulting firm, said that in her 15 years as a recruiter, Oakland consistently ranks as a very important school to recruit accounting students.

"When I interview at OU, I know I am speaking to bright students who are focused on starting their careers in public accounting. They know the value of their education, have critical-thinking skills, can adapt to change and know how to build relationships with others, which are some of the necessary skills to being successful," she said.

For Mike Dingwall (SBA '92), senior manager for recruiting at KPMG, Oakland students have the advantage of smaller class sizes and personal contact with instructors.

"When I started here, there was one person from OU, now we have about seven working in the Detroit office," said Dingwall, who represents the global accounting firm at many recruiting events on campus.

In very few other majors are students in the unique position accounting majors are – the majority have jobs waiting for them upon graduation. Internships and open positions in an industry that's still hiring despite tough economic times are a significant reason for this, according to Brenda Paine from OU's Career Services.

When students like senior Maher Faik participate in paid internships, they learn about public accounting and have the opportunity to demonstrate their skills to potential employers. "They say each firm has its own personality," said Faik, the OU accounting club president who completed an internship with Ernst & Young. "For me Ernst & Young is a good fit. I was offered a job the last day of my internship." Faik starts his job in September.

Faik said opportunities such as job fairs, one-on-one interviews, workshops and meetings with OASIS and OU accounting organizations including Beta Alpha Psi and NABA, were key to his educational success.

"I stress to students that they should attend OASIS/NABA/BAP events which are instrumental in getting to know the firms, and show that you are an active participator," says Faik.

Students can access career services information through the Oakland Web site, and all services from job fairs, on-campus interviews, online resume posting and student-alumni workshops are free for students.

"Our role is to help students prepare for a successful career," said Paine, who estimates that nearly 90 percent of accounting undergraduates have jobs upon graduation.

In her 30 years as a public accountant, Strohmeyer has seen the profession change and notes that today's accounting student has a wealth of opportunities. "It is an exciting profession where people continue to learn and grow and can make a difference in our world today," she said.

And despite the sagging economy, Dingwall said last year was one of KPMG's biggest ever. "There are new regulations and rules that companies have to follow and that drives up our auditing hours and services we provide," he says. "In bankruptcy, you need professional service advisers even more."

SUMMARY
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