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Career Services pairs OU graduates with a Michigan company

By **Dave Groves**, staff writer

While college graduates may have doubts about the career opportunities out there these days, Oakland University is nurturing a relationship with a Michigan company that's offering reassurance.

Lansing-based Auto-Owners Insurance has been working with Career Services staff to recruit well-prepared OU graduates for work in a number of areas, but particularly in information technology.

"In these hard times, we have a Michigan company saying, 'We have a great working relationship with Oakland and we'd like to grow it,'" said Kathy Livelsberger, assistant director of Career Services.

"They really have an interesting story. This is truly, from what we have seen, a really great opportunity for our students."

Mark Hempsted, a personnel recruiter for the company, said he is interested in working with Oakland because of the quality of employee that managers can expect to find in OU graduates.

"Right now we're looking to hire IT folks and OU has a great program," he explained. "The Oakland students we've talked to from the IT program seem to be well prepared for a professional career in the IT field."

Auto-Owners representatives also have worked with OU faculty to help ensure that students are well prepared.

"The faculty in the School of Engineering and Computer Science work very hard to make sure our students have skills sets that will be relevant and beneficial to employers," said Terrie Rowe, OU's chief information officer and a special lecturer in SECS. "It was reaffirming to hear that we are on target there."

Livelsberger said that while some recent graduates have been discouraged by challenges in the current job market, they may be encouraged to learn there are opportunities for those willing to aggressively pursue available positions. In fact, the OUCareerLink.com Web site offers an average of 300 new postings each month.

"I think some students come here thinking, 'This is futile, but I guess I'll do it,'" Livelsberger explained. "But I think this is encouraging. I think it shows that there are opportunities out there."

Career Services can help with creating resumes, preparing for interviews and strategizing a job search. The office also organizes opportunities for employers and prospective employees to meet, such as the Engineering and Computer Science Career Expo set for Tuesday, Sept. 22. Hosted by Oakland University in partnership with Lawrence Technological University, the event will feature a host of companies looking to recruit IT professionals, including Auto-Owners Insurance.

The Fall Career Fair for Business and Liberal Arts will follow the next day – from noon to 3 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 23, in the Oakland Center Banquet Rooms.

Livelsberger said that while some graduates may be hesitant to relocate for the sake of a job opportunity, making that move could prove extremely rewarding.

OU graduate Steven Heinrich relocated from Oakland County to Lansing in 2005 to take a job as a programmer for Auto-Owners. He said he's been pleased with his stable, friendly and professional work environment, which provides him with great training and advancement opportunities.

"I've also met a lot of great people here, so I really like it," he explained. "This is definitely a place where I could stay for my career."

Hempsted confirmed that Auto-Owners is interested in employees willing to relocate, particularly given that the company has offices in 26 states. Such willingness is often rewarded, because employees are strongly incentivized to advance their careers.

"That's a benefit to our employees and it really helps us as well," Hempsted explained. "We're really interested in making sure we get our associates in the right seat on the bus in terms of their career."

To learn more about job opportunities and services OU provides to help identify them, visit the Career Services Web site at oakland.edu/careerservices, call (248) 370-3250 or visit the office at 275 West Vandenberg Hall. For more information about the Engineering and Computer Science Career Expo, visit the [Career Services Upcoming Events Web site](#).

SUMMARY

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