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CASE STUDY

Career Search Seminar Prepares Students for Interviews

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Introduction

Agricultural students from Southeast Missouri State University traditionally pursued careers with family farms or local agri-businesses. Currently, many agricultural students are considering careers that require relocation or employment not affiliated with production agriculture.

In the spring of 1984, the agricultural faculty at Southeast Missouri State University initiated an informal discussion with a wide range of agri-businesses. These agri-businesses were generally impressed with student academic achievements, but expressed concerns about their "professional orientation." Criticisms ranged from the lack of research about potential employers prior to the interview to inexperience in self-presentation.

Discussion

The faculty decided to improve this situation by creating a seminar dedicated to the career search process, cover-letters, and interview preparation. To gain sufficient expertise the faculty engaged the experience of community leaders and professional interviewers to advise and to give an initial orientation for the seminar's structure. The result of this advice created a unique approach towards teaching professional orientation.

The seminar stresses the importance of student self-evaluation and research of agri-businesses. Student self-evaluation centers on identifying which personality characteristics may be held in high esteem by potential employers, then privately assessing personal attributes and professional motivations. Self-evaluation allows the student to provide potential employers specific, well articulated answers to questions that are likely to arise during the interview process. Questions to be considered range from personal goals, work experiences, leadership and responsibility acceptance to willingness to relocate, communication skills, and technical competencies.

To further demonstrate the need for a complete self-evaluation prior to the employment interview, each student arranges with the instructor for an interview appointment. This appointment is accomplished by mailing a complete well formulated resume and cover-letter. The cover-letter states that the student will telephone on a specific date to arrange

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