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Internship Experience Key to Employment for New College Grads (12-11-09)

CONTACT Andrea Koncz, ext.121, or Mimi Collins, ext. 119, 800/544-5272
E-MAIL akoncz@naceweb.org
E-MAIL mcollins@naceweb.org
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SUBJECT Internship Experience Key to Employment for New College Grads

BETHLEHEM, PA—What gives a new college graduate an edge in the job market? Internship experience, say employers responding to a recent survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE).

Employers taking part in NACE's Job Outlook 2010 survey expressed a strong preference for candidates who had taken part in an internship.

More than three-quarters of responding employers said they prefer candidates with the kind of relevant work experience gained through an internship.

In comparison, 16 percent said they were interested in candidates with any type of work experience, and 2.5 percent said work experience didn't factor into their hiring decisions.

Interestingly, employers' preference for internship experience is independent of the current state of the job market.

"Regardless of the state of the job market, employers consistently report a preference for candidates who have relevant work experience," says Marilyn Mackes, NACE executive director. "Over the years, our surveys have shown a trend toward hiring new college graduates with internship experience."

In the current job market, with employers having fewer opportunities and a larger pool of candidates to consider, that internship experience is crucial.

"Taking part in an internship will not guarantee a new graduate a job, but it certainly boosts the candidate's marketability," says Mackes.

In fact, in addition to relevant work experience, employers have a fairly extensive list of skills, qualities, and attributes they seek in job candidates.

“Communication skills, a strong work ethic, a high GPA, teamwork and interpersonal skills, and proven leadership abilities are among the skills and qualities that employers want their new hires to bring to the table,” says Mackes. “An internship can help a student develop many of these skills; in addition, the internship gives the student a track record that he or she can present to a potential employer as evidence of these abilities.”

About Job Outlook 2010: The Job Outlook 2010 survey was conducted from mid-August through October 9, 2009. The survey was sent to employer organizations holding NACE membership; 201 organizations, or 21.4 percent, responded.

By geographic location, 29.4 percent of those responding are from the West; 26.9 percent are from the Midwest; 26.4 percent are from Northeast; and 17.4 percent are from the Southeast.

About NACE: Since 1956, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) has been the leading source of information about the employment of college graduates.