ASPIRE Job Fair an Inspiring Success

Nearly 200 international students introduced to prospective employers operating in Southeast Asia

The October 1995 Midwest ASEAN Job Fair at IUPUI targeted students from ASEAN member countries (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) majoring in business, computer science, and engineering. Among the student participants were undergraduate and graduate students and recent degree recipients from 43 different institutions throughout Indiana and 11 other states.

Held in conjunction with the 1995 Region VI Conference of NAFSA: Association of International Educators, the job fair was organized by the IU Office of International Services on behalf of Project ASPIRE. Co-sponsors of the fair were the IU School of Business and IUPUI's new Center on Southeast Asia.

The Association of International Educators initiated Project ASPIRE five years ago to serve as an innovative national outreach program that would assist U.S. companies interested in hiring U.S. graduates from Asian-Pacific countries either as short-term interns/trainees or as career professional employees.

The interest generated by the fair boosted membership in the Project ASPIRE student recruitment database and e-mail network from 1,200 to nearly 3,000.

For their part, recruiters for companies such as Exxon, Intel, and Motorola were not only pleased with the number and caliber of students participating in the fair, but were also impressed with the organization and flow of the fair program. Especially gratifying were the comments made by two follow-up letters sent to Susan Snider Salmon, assistant director of the International Center and coordinator of the fair.

A senior personnel manager for Hitachi-Malaysia wrote, "I have gained valuable input and exposure from the fair. I had the opportunity to observe a similar fair held by the University of Southern California. I believe the one in Indianapolis was better!"

A financial specialist for the Chrysler Corporation also gave the fair high marks. "I think the job fair was a top-notch success resulting, no doubt, from your hard work and the efforts of your staff over the months leading up to the fair. No only did it give Chrysler a chance to get our name out to these students, it also served as a forum for networking with and learning from people in the international student recruitment business."

Most of the company representatives who were at the fair have asked about when next year's Indianapolis Midwest Project ASPIRE job fair will be taking place.

In light of this year's success, another career/job fair in Indianapolis under Project ASPIRE's auspices is being planned for sometime in the fall of 1996. It has been suggested that the fair be expanded to include additional Asian-Pacific countries, so as to attract more students as well as a greater number of U.S., multinational, and home-country employers. It would also be desirable to have a larger representation of Indiana-based companies, both large and small.

Career/job fairs for students coming from particular countries or regions of the world who attend colleges and universities in the Midwest and other parts of the United States are a cost-effective means of recruiting U.S.-trained and U.S.-oriented young professionals in a variety of fields. For students (foreign nationals and U.S. citizens alike), such events offer valuable learning and career exploration experiences as well as the possibility of landing an internship or long-term employment after graduation. These mutual benefits make career fairs "win-win" opportunities for all involved.

Kenneth A. Rogers
Associate Dean and Director
International Services

International Programs, January/February 1996