

Road Scholar Tour 2016

The Emphasis: Business & Industry

The Big Question (asked of everyone we met with): Five years from now what would you hope Clarion Business graduates would know or be able to do in order to be successful?

The Tour: 3 days of meetings from Clarion to Pittsburgh including an evening meeting with alumni.

Key Findings: Organized in Groups of Findings

Arts / Culture Organization

- Independent arts organizations are disorganized about internships --- our approach to arts oriented internships/field work would need to be more individual advisor-student driven.
- Pitt Arts -- Pitt buys up arts tickets for their Pitt students to attend Pitt area arts.
- The arts organizations continue to struggle with funding.

Behavioral (soft) Skills

- Writing: in ways that is concise and informative
- Communication: summarizing 6 months of work in 4 minutes; able to speak/talk as an intelligent adult to be taken seriously by peers, superiors and clients
- Social Media
- Creativity
- Innovation
- Leadership
- The Cloud
- Grantsmanship
- Critical Thinking
- Intellectual Curiosity
- Leadership
- Problem Solving
- Manages Change/Complexity
- Reflective
- Capable of taking and giving critical feedback
- An entrepreneurial mindset
- Global acumen
- Cultural competency
- Courage

Data: Analytics/Management/Use

- Need to know how to take large complex data down to a very short to the point 1 page document that analyzes and summarizes the data and brings compelling conclusions.

- Integration with information systems.
- Data analytics is a skill that at various levels of competency is wanted/appreciated.
- Understanding of information technology: mobile solutions, the cloud, social media.
- A common statement heard in several meetings: "The future is not so much about being an accountant but about being an analyst."
- Companies have data - more than they need. Today, they need people to manage, analyze and use the data to solve problems and bring value to their clients and company.
- Understanding data, managing data, and interpreting data.
- Microsoft Excel was frequently mentioned as a required skill that everyone needs to master at the advanced level.

Direct Employment of our Graduates

Internships/Experiential Learning

7 week course format were seen as a valuable way to offer classes and in fact could allow for winter internships

Professional Development, Training & Performance

Companies spend tremendous efforts in developing employees for the long term. They use professional development, training and regularly assessing competencies to ensure employee success.

Skills: The Technical - Behavioral Skills Mix

- Technical skills (such as accounting; finance; etc.) are presumed and thus get you in the door but the behavioral skills help you up the ladder of success in your career.
- Some firms valued the behavioral skills above the technical skills. At minimum the behavioral skills are equal to the technical skills.
- Many items mentioned affirm what we are working on things that matter such as the proposed General Education essentials.
- The Cloud was increasingly mentioned as a skill.
- Students need to have a familiarity with technology and industry relevant software.
- Charisma; passion; are qualities that are valued.
- Introductory understanding of legal issues (contract law, etc. -- at the paralegal level) is valuable.

- Security, cyber security and fraud detection were skills that were mentioned as valuable.

Suggestions for Future Exploration

- Experiential learning; case study approach to learning; The Capstone is huge; There should be an "experiential pyramid" over multiple semesters
- Development of Minors/Concentrations/Certifications that help students build a deep and relevant understanding and expertise of one or more of the "behavioral (soft) skills". These can also become First Year Seminar Topics that then track into a Minor and/or Major.

Ideas Include

- Consider requiring Microsoft Excel as a requirement at the advanced level.
- Since the Cloud was increasingly mentioned as a skill. --- is there a certification our students have to show a competency?
- Is there a course/minor we should offer on writing and securing grants? An outcome of the course is that a student would prepare a real grant proposal for a real organization.