

Networks program brings career chances

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By Beth White

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Program is still in early stages of development

One of the more common phrases among ISU's administration lately is "experiential learning." ISU's Networks program is based around just that.

The experiences the 14 Networks scholars attain during their career at ISU will put them ahead of the game by leaps and bounds, Networks Director Liz Georgakopoulos said.

"I sell the Networks scholars all the time," she said. "They're going to have a leg up because they're not only going to be exposed, but will also experience through internship."

Georgakopoulos, having been a corporate executive, said she knows the experience the scholars acquire will help them in an economy where there are many more students graduating than there are jobs.

"It's [Networks] an initiative in financial services specifically focused on creating connections across the industry," Georgakopoulos said.

She said this program is particularly beneficial for ISU business majors and minors because part of the challenge for Indiana's college students is gaining access to the financial industry, which is primarily focused in bigger cities such as Chicago and New York City.

"It will give them more of an opportunity to compete in bigger cities," she said.

Freshman undecided major Brock Dalton agreed with Georgakopoulos.

"I think all the experience and connections I gain from being involved in the Networks program will translate right into better career opportunities right out of college," Dalton said.

Georgakopoulos recently met in Chicago and Washington, D.C. with corporate executives from several major cities to discuss the Networks program and its scholars, she said.

The program is built around three initiatives: raising awareness in education, objective thought leadership and knowledge sharing.

Georgakopoulos said an example of objective thought leadership is the project just finished for Senator Evan Bayh on government sponsored enterprises. The program is still in the early developmental stages, though, Georgakopoulos said.

"We're trying to create a unique business education experience by touching corporate America in the undergraduate years," Georgakopoulos said.

Dalton, who is waiting until the end of his freshman year to declare his major, said he is interested in finance and investment but hasn't had a chance to participate in any of the leadership sessions. However, he said he is confident Networks will enhance his future.

"I hope to meet a lot of people in the field related to my major," Dalton said. "Having connections like that can help you start your career successfully."

Networks scholar Mallory Lopeman, a freshman majoring in insurance and risk management, said although it's still early, she knows she will be ahead of the game as a result of the way the program is laid out.

"I hope to form a bunch of different connections in the entire business world, not just companies related to insurance, so when I graduate I will have different career opportunities," Lopeman said.

Lopeman said the Networks scholars meet from 6 to 7:30 p.m. on Tuesdays for leadership development classes. They are currently reading "Exploring Leadership" by Susan R. Komives, Nance Lucas and Timothy R. McMahon, she said.

"We discuss parts of the book and talk about leadership and what we think it is and how we can

develop leadership skills," Lopeman explained.

Lopeman added that the group will attend a leadership workshop on Oct. 18.

"This is just such a unique program, I don't know what to expect," Lopeman said.

Because the program is still so young, several aspects of it are still in the planning stages, Georgakopoulos said.

"All we're really doing right now is getting on the radar screen," Georgakopoulos said. "We're working from day one to advance the program further."

Indianapolis-based Networks will have an office in Washington and another in a yet-to-be-determined international location. These offices will provide students with internship and research opportunities.

Georgakopoulos said the focus right now is getting the domestic sector up and running, but there has been good discussion about what our role should be internationally.

Next year, the focus will shift more to development of business sector in underdeveloped countries, Georgakopoulos said.

One requirement of the scholars is to study abroad.

Lopeman said she plans to study abroad her junior year when she starts taking her insurance classes. She said she would like to study for a semester in London where her major is popular.

Dalton said he also wants to wait a few years before studying abroad, but is looking at studying in Italy or Australia for a summer session or semester.

Networks is funded by a \$20 million grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc. which will span four years.

Georgakopoulos said they have already begun looking for further funding from outside sources.

"Different parts of the program have natural funding," Georgakopoulos said.

She said the School of Business has dreams of putting in a trade room, and therefore would receive funding from NASDAQ. Also, she said, they are hoping for a federal grant to bring in corporate money for studying financial literacy.

"I'm pretty optimistic that Lilly will continue to fund these programs as well," Georgakopoulos said.