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Shocker Career Accelerator matches students with work opportunities

By Paul Suellentrop



Wichita State senior Lauryn McIntyre works at HSI Wealth Strategies, an internship aided by the Shocker Career Accelerator. “It has helped me put marketing strategy in a real-world perspective,” she said.

- **Shocker Career Accelerator is in the first year of changing the way it connects students with applied learning opportunities.**
- **The approach is modeled after NIAR's years of work that invests time in students and matches them with industry partners.**

Lauryn McIntyre is learning how to build a brand that helps HSI Wealth Strategies get the word out to people in the aviation industry that HSI understands their financial needs.

“Very pilot-centric, very pilot-focused,” she said. “I’ve learned a lot about the aviation industry in my time there.”

McIntyre, a Wichita State University senior, worked with a designer to create an HSI logo that invokes aviation. She also organizes HSI’s marketing plan, networks with pilots and updates the website to highlight the firm’s expertise.

“It has helped me put marketing strategy in a real-world perspective,” she said. “I really had to, essentially, trust myself and learn through trial and error. Here, you’re going to get from point A to point B on your own.”

While McIntyre, who is majoring in marketing with a minor in personal selling, is reaching beyond her comfort zone in the internship, she isn’t doing it without support. That is the key feature to the applied learning model used by Shocker Career Accelerator to match Wichita State students with industry partners in a way that invests time in building a relationship that helps both parties.

“We are acting as second-level support for the employer and the student,” said Miriam Berrada, who works with McIntyre as partnership manager at Shocker Career Accelerator. “We act as mentors and mediators to help both the student and the employer get the most out of the relationship.”

It’s an approach used successfully by Wichita State’s National Institute for Aviation Research (NIAR) and Ennovar. Over the past year, Shocker Career Accelerator adapted those strategies to fields outside engineering and information technology. More than 50 students, in majors such as accounting, finance, marketing, biological sciences, psychology, medical laboratory sciences and others working with the Shocker Career Accelerator are employed directly through the applied learning model.

“It’s the model that NIAR created to serve industry partners and give students real-world experience,” said Brian Austin, director of applied and experiential learning at Wichita State. “We’re touching base with these students every two to four weeks. We’re checking in with the supervisors. It’s a high-touch model.”

“We want to shift from a traditional model to being a solutions provider to industry in a way that serves our students.”

— Brian Austin, Shocker Career Accelerator

Aaron Stark, founder and owner of HSI Wealth Strategies, has used traditional ways of finding employees, including job sites and headhunters. The experience of working with Shocker Career Accelerator was more efficient, he said. The Shocker Career Accelerator took care of much of the preliminary work of evaluating resumes, experience and education to come up with candidates.

That saved Stark time and money and delivered a relationship with Wichita State and its students. “It’s really a partnership with us,” he said. “As the student progresses, they coach. We coach Lauryn, as well.”

The traditional career services model of jobs postings and career fairs remains valuable, Austin said. The applied learning model, however, can build a partnership with business, local government and non-profits and Wichita State students.

“With this model, we’ll go out and get the students,” Austin said. “We will find them. We will review resumes. We want to shift from a traditional model to being a solutions provider to industry in a way that serves our students.”

Austin said Wichita State’s years of experience with applied learning and industry partners allows it to apply this model in ways that benefit all parties.

The foundation of working with businesses — as well as local government and non-profits — on legal, contract and human resource matters is long established at Wichita State. That helps the process move quickly and efficiently so that Wichita State can help a business find students who suit their needs.

“We have an organizational structure here at Wichita State University that allows us to have the appropriate kinds of conversations with our industry partners in a way that other universities can’t,” he said. “It allows us to create these opportunities for our students.”