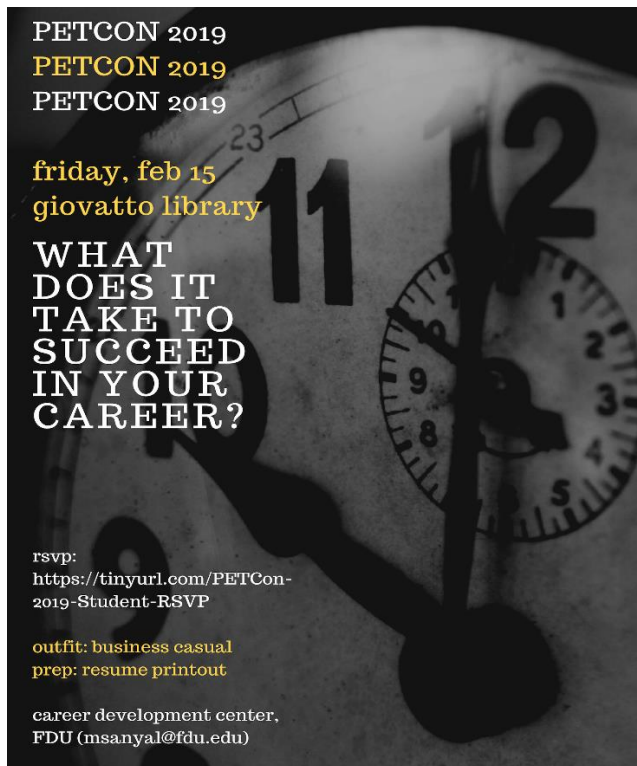


Internship, New Hire, and Career Success Strategies

Lessons from the 2nd Annual
PETCon (Professional Engineering and Technology Conference)
Fairleigh Dickinson University, Teaneck NJ



tl; dr:

Feedback from professionals: do's and don'ts as YOU (young professional in the making; new Intern/new Hire) strategize your career success. Tips on self-awareness, resume prep, interview prep, getting hired, and growing into leadership positions as you keep honing your soft skills and technical skills.

On February 15, 2019, the FDU Metropolitan Career Development Center staff had the privilege of having **48 FDU students** interact with **10 industry professional presenters** for the better part of the day, networking, engaging in thoughtful and well-prepared Q&A, and learning from the presenters and each other **how to be effective interns, new hires, and managers and leaders.**

To help reiterate our communal learning and make it accessible to students who were unable to attend, we asked **student attendees to respond** to the question: **'What have I learned?'** and **presenters to respond** to the question, **'What advice would you give to students to help them focus on continued professional development?'** Debrief/feedback highlights are below.

Collaboration & Community Building: Starting with Thank You!

The 2nd Annual PETCon was exciting, fun, and educational to put together. Event planning and management takes time, patience, problem solving, and lots and lots and lots of teamwork. A long list of people has my deepest gratitude for making this event a success:

- CDC graduate and undergraduate Student Assistants and volunteers who helped with logistics, registration, and general conference mayhem management;
- Giovatto Library staff for the use of the beautiful spaces of the Periodicals Room and the Sammartino Room, and for so graciously managing furniture arrangement and student flow;
- FDU food services staff for setting up, and providing a wonderful breakfast and lunch; many wonderful conversations were had that day over food!
- FDU student attendees, who prepped for the event, attended on a rainy Friday, and showcased their professional readiness and talent, impressing presenters with the depth and maturity of their questions;
- professional presenters from tech, financial, and educational companies who gave so generously of their time and expertise to mentor FDU students and provide hands on professional development and networking opportunities;

- CDC staff moderators who made a smooth event out of rather complex plans and got people to the right panel and kept the Q&A sessions focused and fluid;
- and the entire CDC team, whose hands on support, collaboration, and cheerleading makes working here fun and meaningful every day!



Photo credits: Rachit Verma, Phoenix Medical, discusses interview and networking strategies w/students.

What Students Learned (In Their Own Words)

LIFE-LONG SELF-ASSESSMENT

Skills/Values Growth

- Reflect on your passion, and be open to change and opportunities;
- Find your USP (unique selling point) in every situation & market that;
- Reflect on, and be introspective about your values; they will change with time;
- Practice being confident about your decisions.

RESUME & COVER LETTER

- Personalize resumes and cover letters to each position;
- Research how companies look for interns and new hires;
- Use key job description words to customize resume;
- Apply for positions you may not be quite qualified for – but customize the resume;
- List outside activities;
- Spell check & typo check (machine and human review).



Photo credits, right to left: Ingrid Parker (Cognizant); Matt Diamond (Mathnasium, Teaneck); Caroline Henderson (Barclays); Rachit Verma (Phoenix Medical); Jennifer Strasse (FDU Career Development, Florham).

INTERVIEW PREP

- Everything shapes your experience; be open;
- Relate your experience creatively to each position;
- Go on interviews even if you are not sure about wanting the position-networking is useful;
- Practice how to stand out amongst the competition; practice telling your story;
- Focus on what sets you apart; interviewers will remember your story, not your GPA (unless there is a specific history, e.g. a revoked license, in which case it is best to own it upfront);
- Be human & authentic. Interviewers are humans, not computers;
- Think of an interview as a conversation with an old friend;
- Research company mission, projects, and position before applying/interview;
- Research which of your skills might be discussed, and practice talking about them;
- Show enthusiasm;
- Ask position-specific and future-specific, well-researched questions; not having questions will be a red flag for the interviewer;
- Leave the interview gracefully, no matter how it goes;
- Thank You notes (personalized) – within 24 hours to each interviewer separately, highlighting your positive experience and what you are going to bring to the table, specifically.



Photo credits, left to right: Andy Reslewick, Teledyne Lecroy; Ross Crum De Groot, Teledyne LeCroy; Rachel Barese, CivilTek; Alex Kenny, Del-Sano Contracting Corp.

NETWORKING & SOFT SKILLS

- Make in-person connections constantly;
- Network with *everyone* regardless of their field of study; every person you meet can change & mold your future;
- Don't be afraid to reach out to strangers on LinkedIn, as long as there is a good reason in connection to their field;
- Don't be shy when talking to employers and asking about their experiences;
- Soft skills are extremely important in the work-world today: practice; practice; practice
- Soft skills sparks conversations between candidate and interviewer;
- It is ok to not have all the qualifications for a job, as long as you show you are willing to learn;
- Learn to be comfortable being uncomfortable.
- New line



Photo credits: Ingrid Parker, Cognizant discussing networking strategies with FDU students.

AFTER BEING HIRED

- Stay confident, take initiative, and be open to trying new responsibilities & learning;
- Someone is always watching, so always do work with integrity;
- Keep an open dialogue; practice trust & transparency in your actions and words;
- Take lessons from every challenge;
- Don't be afraid to introduce yourself to new people; chat with new colleagues over coffee;
- Use all resources presented to you;
- Be social, and interact with people;
- Problem solving: have a possible solution even if you don't know the exact answer;
- If you don't know something, prove that you are willing to learn, and have the skills;
- Write clear, cogent professional e-mails.



Photo credit: Donna Jackson-Robertson, University Director
FDU Career Development Center

WHAT INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS WANT STUDENTS TO KEEP WORKING ON

- Communication skills: written (practice good handwriting); verbal; e-mail;
- Elevator pitch;
- Networking;
- Self-confidence and taking initiative;
- Prioritizing wants and needs;
- Personality development;
- Interviewing techniques;
- Professionalism;
- Continuous independent learning;
- Becoming professionally competent AND technically competent;
- Experience, experience, experience;
- Soft skills.



Photo credits: Kennedy Sani and Jennifer Strasle, FDU Career Professionals, discuss networking with students.