Annual Meeting attendees include psychologists, engineers, designers, and scientists employed in industries, universities, government agencies, consulting firms, military research centers, and public utilities. Past attendees have reported visiting the Exhibit Hall multiple times and are purchasers or recommenders for a wide range of products.

Exhibitors receive a 10% discount on sponsorships! To obtain the discount, reserve your exhibit booth or tabletop at the same time you sign up for your sponsorship.

Enhance your exhibit by advertising in the Annual Meeting program, HFES Bulletin, or registration bags. Size and pricing information is available here.

We hope that you will consider joining the list of distinguished organizations that have supported the HFES Annual Meetings. See you in Chicago!

STUDENT VIEWS

Transitioning From Student to Professional
By Elyse Hallett

This is the third of three articles summarizing Student Career and Professional Development Day at the 2013 Annual Meeting. The theme of the day was transitions. Panelists represented both recent graduates and successful professionals from universities, industry, and government agencies.

Have you ever caught yourself staring at the pile of books and papers around you and wondering how your time as a student will help you find that dream job? You may have asked yourself, “What are these classes actually preparing me for? How does my involvement outside of school matter? When I have an interview, what do I do?”

If you have ever expressed these worries, you are not alone. The “Transitioning From Student to Professional” panel at the 2013 Annual Meeting provided students with the opportunity to ask these questions of HF/E experts. Chaired by Anthony D. Andre of Interface Analysis Associates and San Jose State University, the panel also included Valerie Gawron (MITRE Corporation), Cheryl Bolstad (SA Technologies), Mac Smith (Google), and Anna Selmarker (Scania). The panelists provided insight on how a student can prepare for future interviews and life beyond graduation.

Preparing a Résumé: Useful Skills, Classes, and Involvement

Some classes and skills are more useful than others, the panelists noted. They agreed that strong candidates show the capability to apply their knowledge and skills. Furthermore, it was noted that companies are looking for the best product, not the best HF/E characteristics. HF/E ideas that contradict the process of product development will hinder a team’s progress toward meeting an upcoming deadline. Thus, panelists said that basic knowledge in product development and manufacturing is highly desirable, and that companies also look for individuals who are able to provide an analysis of a product and illustrate their recommendations. Candidates who have made something tangible — whether it is a robot with HF/E design or software that is highly accessible — should include this information in ePortfolios and mention it during interviews.

The panelists also stressed the need to volunteer and get involved. HF/E is a small field that relies on relationships. Cheryl Bolstad explained that a résumé with a face promotes relationship building better than a faceless résumé. HF/E professionals rarely acquire positions through traditional job Web sites anymore, and anything students can do to enhance their opportunities to network will help them form the necessary connections leading to employment. Students who
gain experience in a variety of areas also build necessary leadership skills.

**Preparing for the Breadth of Diversity in HF/E**

The panelists noted that students will find that many companies cover a wide variety of areas; for example, aerospace, health care, and defense. If a professional career can cover such a wide array of fields, what should students focus on while in school? Is specialization still an asset? The panelists agreed that a candidate should have three attributes: specialized skills, domain knowledge, and interpersonal skills. These core assets, along with the potential to be trained, are necessary in any candidate.

Skill sets acquired from internship experiences or extracurricular involvement make a candidate stand out. Companies tend to match these skill sets with their needs. However, although these specific strengths will set one candidate apart from the others, panelists noted, they will not be sufficient for one’s entire career, nor will they encompass his or her professional role within a company. Thus, students should gain an understanding of areas outside their specialization so they can transfer their skills across various applications and better understand the bigger picture of what a company offers.

Finally, all of the panelists stressed the need for strong interpersonal skills. HF/E professionals must convince others of the value the science brings to the organization. An ability to communicate the impact of any suggestion, despite the cost, is essential. Furthermore, because HF/E professionals often work within groups, their ability to communicate effectively with a variety of personalities is an important skill.

**Transitioning From Student to Professional**

Panelists noted that job postings often require three to five years of work experience; however, most recent graduates lack this experience. This requirement refers to a basic level of professionalism, which companies assume is learned in the first few years of employment. These skills include e-mail management, accountability, and the ability to work in groups. Students can acquire these skills through student leadership roles and internships. Furthermore, students can demonstrate professionalism through their résumé, their attire, and their manner of communicating.

Many companies hire recent graduates who can demonstrate levels of professionalism with strong skill sets, domain knowledge, and interpersonal skills. Mac Smith assured students that his company often hires students right out of school.

**Preparing for the Interview and Beyond**

After a student has lined up an interview, he or she should prepare by gaining a thorough understanding of the company’s objectives. Some questions for the interviewer might include the following:

- “Will I be working on a team?”
- “What software is used for analysis?”
- “How will my role fit into the company’s larger goals?”

The panelists caution against seeming to know everything the job encompasses—rather, be prepared to learn and ask questions. Furthermore, the candidate should focus his or her questions on the position, not on the interviewer.

The interviewing process itself has become longer and more competitive, the panelists noted. Often companies will ask the candidate to do “homework,” such as creating a sample usability study. The potential employer may require an interview with teams within the company, such
as marketing or design, to discuss how the candidate’s role fits within the work process. Candidates should be prepared for the length and intensity of each company’s interview process.

After acquiring a job, the panelists recommended, the new employee should take a deep breath and remain calm. Ask what needs to be done, and whether one can shadow another person. Be present and involved. Ask questions and keep learning. Be confident that the job was offered on the basis of the candidate’s unique skill sets and strengths.

In summary, the panelists recommended that students transitioning from an educational setting to the professional realm should remember three things:

1. Know why you want the job. This will relate with your knowledge of the field and your areas of specialization gained from your education.
2. Come to the interview prepared. Dress professionally. Ask questions so you can come out of the experience with a good understanding of the company.
3. Know what skill sets you offer. As a student in your chosen specialty, you have gained a unique set of skills.

With this knowledge and plenty of hard work, that pile of books and papers will pay off as you transition into your professional career.

Elyse Hallett is working toward an MS in the human factors program at California State University, Long Beach. In addition to serving as a graduate assistant for a research methods class and studying for classes, she also works within the Center for Human Factors in Advanced Aeronautics Technologies.

PUBLIC POLICY MATTERS

President Obama Releases Budget Request for FY 2015

By Lewis-Burke Associates LLC

On March 4, President Obama released his fiscal year (FY) 2015 budget request, a month after the required February submission to Congress and with many on Capitol Hill already moving into the appropriations process. The release of the FY 2015 budget request came only a month after the final FY 2014 spending decisions in Congress, with the discretionary spending caps for FY 2015 largely the same.

The president’s budget request presents a very mixed picture, reflecting a forecast for nonprofit organizations, which is in part optimistic, while also proposing new programs to appeal to his base supporters in an election year. Based partly on bipartisan-supported initiatives, such as advanced manufacturing and exascale computing, the request continually touts the virtues of research and education to enable the economy of the future. In addition, the request proposes several new initiatives but bases these ideas on difficult offsets at a time when many in Congress are unable or unwilling to accommodate new proposals.

Overall, adhering to the two-year budgetary framework (P.L. 113-67) passed in December 2013, the budget request includes $1.014 trillion in discretionary spending, a level that is largely consistent with FY 2014. The request also continues the partial offset to sequestration in FY 2015. Although there is unlikely to be much debate over the overall spending levels, the total investment proposed for individual agencies, accounts, and programs will be adjusted by Congress in the annual appropriations process, especially in areas where substantial changes have been proposed from FY 2014 funding levels.

Regardless, the annual budget request, reflecting nearly nine months of planning and negoti-