

Tapping into 'hidden' sector Resources for students seeking nonprofit jobs

On campus and off, help is available for students and young people considering careers in the nonprofit sector.

BY SIDNEY CRUZE

There is good news for college students seeking jobs in nonprofit organizations: A growing number of resources are available to help them with their job search.

Even though the nonprofit sector is a growing industry throughout the U.S., the nonprofit job market can be difficult for students to tap into. Some career counselors even refer to it as the "hidden" job market.

"Nonprofits have fewer resources and that makes it hard for them to spend the money to recruit on campus," says Dian Poe, a career specialist for community service, public service and government positions at Duke University. "Also, they typically have fewer positions available and have a tendency to hire from within or through word of mouth."

The result is that students who are interested in working in the nonprofit sector may have to work harder to find out about job opportunities.

Yet a growing number of them are not intimidated by the extra work. These students want to help solve community problems, and want to do that by working for nonprofit organizations.

"We have seen a definite increase in the number of students who are interested in community service and

nonprofit jobs," says Marcia Harris, director of University Career Services at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

"More and more students are choosing this career path as we move away from the 80s and the 'me' generation."

Two years ago, the University Career Services office at UNC-Chapel Hill responded to students' increased interest in nonprofit jobs by creating a staff position to help them plan for careers in nonprofit organizations. Harris says the position, which was filled by Jacquelyn M. Gist, is designed to assist students and to change the perception that the office was useful only to students looking for jobs in the for-profit sector.

Career development offices on other college campuses in North Carolina also serve as resources for students looking for nonprofit jobs. Libraries in most offices include information about the nonprofit sector, as well as job listings, and counselors are available to help students find out about internships and job opportunities. Counselors also work to let nonprofit organizations know about student interest in nonprofit careers and to encourage them to send job listings.

In addition to campus career offices, students considering nonprofit jobs can turn to publications to find job listings.

Five publications containing nonprofit job listings are produced by "ACCESS: Networking in the Public Interest." The New York based orga-

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nization was founded in 1985 to promote civic involvement and voluntarism by serving as a national clearinghouse of nonprofit job opportunities.

One ACCESS publication, "Community Jobs: The National Employment Newspaper for the Nonprofit Sector," includes listings for 200-300 positions ranging from entry-level to executive director. The organization also offers nonprofit networking programs, such as a resume bank, career counseling and a national career fair. Students can get information about ACCESS at their campus career development office.

Counselors encourage students who are preparing for careers in the nonprofit sector to volunteer, become involved in their community and gain leadership experience. Students can get much of this hands-on experience with local nonprofit organizations through campus community service centers.

"I always mention our community service center to students with an interest in nonprofit careers," says Poe of Duke. "It's a great way for them to get experience and to get involved with the local nonprofit community."

The centers offer opportunities for students to either volunteer, join committees or even participate in starting new programs.

North Carolina Public Allies also offers opportunities for young people

to gain experience in working closely with nonprofit organizations. Public Allies, based in Durham, is part of a national apprenticeship program that pays young people to do public service work in their own communities. The North Carolina program sponsors 24 internships at nonprofit organizations by providing a portion of the interns' salaries.

The interns are young people who want to work to find realistic solutions to community problems. They are assigned jobs ranging from policy analyst to volunteer coordinator, and they receive training in leadership, coalition-building and practical job skills as part of the pro-

gram.

College graduates who want experience managing their own nonprofit initiative can apply to The Southern Community Partners Program. The program provides seven two-year fellowships annually to people with proposed projects designed to inspire other young people to influence communities or regions in the South. The fellowship includes financial support, business equipment and training for partners.

For information, call N.C. Public Allies at (919) 687-0005, The Southern Community Partners Program at (919) 683-1840, and ACCESS at (212) 475-1001.

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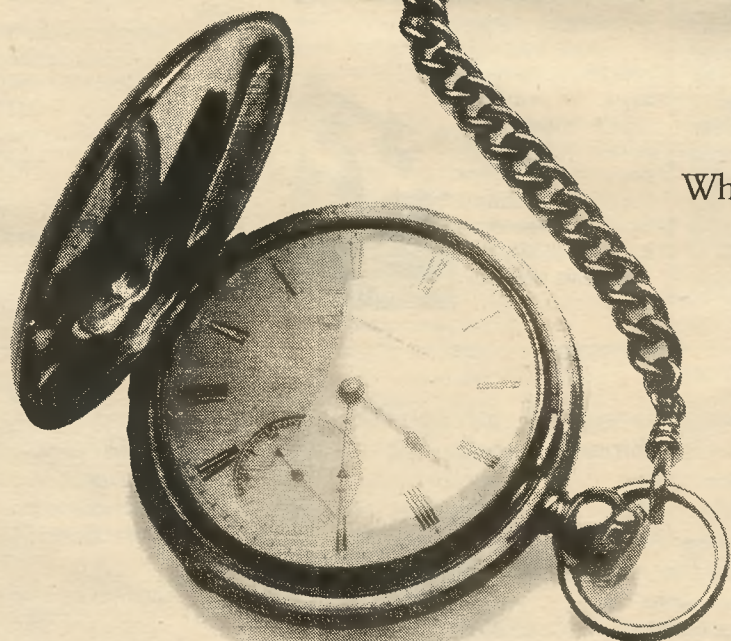
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