



**Alumni/Student Networking Event
Anderson Conference Center - Goodwill Industries
Macon, Georgia, Friday, March 6, 2009**

Georgia College alumni and business students met over lunch at the Anderson Conference Center in Macon on Friday, March 6. The event was hosted by Goodwill Industries and their Chief Financial Officer, Tim Ligon. Attendees at the meeting included:

- Chip Cherry, President and CEO, Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce
- Four members of the College's Advisory Board: Angie Gheesling, Tim Ligon (incoming member), Rhonda Wood, and Ray Crumbley
- Two members of the Georgia College Foundation Board: Chris Gibson and Jeff Wansley
- Macon-area alumni: Reggie Bell, Devlin Cooper, Tonya McClure, Brigitte Moten, Lee Perkins, Cynthia Smith, Lisa Perry, and Christy West
- 22 business College graduate and undergraduate students
- Interim dean Dale Young, Herby Agnew university director of alumni relations, dean's office staff members Lurline West and Gerri McCord, and Goodwill staffer Amy Chastain.



Chip Cherry opened the meeting with advice to students for their job search in a market that is “tough but not impossible.” He suggested they focus on a specific industry niche rather than use a shot-gun approach (i.e., don't blindly mail out 1,000 resumes). Consider volunteer work at a chamber of commerce or a trade association as a way to begin networking. Make sure your cover letter is specific to the job you are applying for and that your resume is flawless. Find ways to differentiate yourself.

Tim Ligon, CFO of Goodwill Industries, followed with a brief overview of the organization. He noted that community service experience can enhance a resume as you begin a job search.

A panel discussion followed lunch. Panel members were: Jeff Wansley (Assistant VP, Equifax), Tim Ligon (CFO, Goodwill Industries), Rhonda Wood (Program Analyst, U.S. Office of Personnel Management), and Brigitte Moten (Marketing Director, Geotechnical Environmental Consultants). The panelist discussed three questions: “What do employers look for in new hires?”, “How can students differentiate themselves during the interviewing process?”, and “What are the best ways to grow professionally after graduation?”

Regarding “what employers look for,” participants mentioned the following: know yourself, know where you want to go, look professional, ask good questions, ask for additional references or contacts that can be used to extend your job search, know the company you are applying to, be able to show you have done something besides work and go to College, emphasize your real world experiences (e.g., projects and internships), you will be competing with very experienced people in today's market, your resume must be perfect (e.g., no misspelled words!), the resume should talk about your accomplishments – not simply list memberships, be careful about what you place on Facebook – many firms will look, make sure your e-mail address and cell phone ring tone is professional, and a one-page resume is probably best for an entry-level position (longer resumes are OK for more senior jobs).

One executive offered the following three-level review process for resumes:

- Is the resume “clean,” meaning no typos? If no, the assistant who reviews it will throw it away.
- Does the resume show a potential employee who fits the needs of the organization?
- For those that make the first two cuts, who are the best in the group? “Best” means hiring this person would be in the long-term interest of the firm.

An interesting and provocative cover letter will help differentiate candidates who make it into group three. An attorney offered a similar view of the applicant “cuts” used by law firms: first, review the GPA/class rank listed on the resume, second - review the resume, which must be one page or less, then read the cover letter.

Question Two focused on differentiation as a candidate. Panelists offered the following ideas: external activities are good – “What else have you done?,” prepare yourself for the interview by gathering as much information as possible, ask pertinent questions, network – network – network (e.g., at the Chamber of Commerce Young Professionals Organization), look for an inside contact at a firm who can put in a good word for you, be able to sell yourself convincingly, it’s OK to ask for an informational interview simply to gather data about an industry and to ask for contact names, don’t ignore anyone when you are on-site for an interview (e.g., don’t overlook the receptionist), collect business cards – make notes on the back of when/where you met, remember that many job openings never appear as a public ad, it’s OK for graduating students to print business cards with essential contact information (e.g., address, e-mail, phone contacts, but don’t go overboard with colors of cards for business job searches), find a mentor to assist you in your professional growth, and remember – It’s a small world – be careful – you never know which employees are related or if your supervisor at your present place of employment knows someone at the place where you are applying (so watch what you say; don’t burn bridges behind you).



The final question on professional development brought the following responses: seek out training programs on your own – don’t wait to be told or to be offered, consider paying for extra training yourself, volunteer to help in other departments so you are cross-trained, begin to learn about the next position/promotion you want, learn outside your current skill set so you can get noticed, remember that promotions are earned not given (rewards follow high performance, they are not given in anticipation of higher performance), and diversify yourself with extra/cross training. However, don’t overextend yourself to the point that your primary job suffers.

After the interview it is imperative that you follow-up with the interviewer. Handwritten notes are a good way to follow up. Some employers will wait for a follow-up note before proceeding with any candidate. When you follow up make sure to explain your next intended contact (e.g., I’ll call back within...). The follow-up letter is another chance to clarify something from the interview or to add a “I wish I had said” comment.

Following the panel session, Amy Chastain of Goodwill Industries led students on a brief tour of the facility. We appreciate the investment made in our students by Georgia College alumni, Advisory Board members, and community leaders.

Visit the College’s Web site: <http://www.gcsu.edu/business/>
What’s Happening page: <http://www.gcsu.edu/business/overview/happening.htm>

Georgia College & State University
College of Business
Campus Box 10
Milledgeville, GA. 31061
478.445.5497

