

To Recruit on Campus, Use E-Mail, Dude

A two-year research project on how to market the government on college campuses indicates that e-mails touting hot jobs and cool internships, along with other low-cost outreach activities, could increase interest among students in working for Uncle Sam.

The project found that the more students know about the government, the more they like it, **Max Stier**, president of the nonprofit Partnership for Public Service, the chief sponsor of the project, said yesterday.

"It is possible in a cost-effective way to recruit the best," Stier said.

The partnership will release a report on the research project this morning at George Washington University as part of the kickoff to a national campaign, called "Making the Difference," aimed at persuading talented young people to join the federal government.

The campaign includes a Web site (www.makingthedifference.org) with a directory of federal internships and information for a network of 600 colleges on how to increase interest among students in government service, Stier said.

"This campaign is one that is desperately needed, given the government's hiring needs," he said.

The government will need to fill about 193,000 jobs over the next two years, the partnership estimates. But Uncle Sam faces strong competition from the private sector, especially for college graduates in the fields of science, engineering, public health and finance. Consulting firms and other high-paying companies often move faster than the government to extend job offers to top students, and many corporations invest in campus recruitment to a far greater extent than federal agencies.

In 2005, a survey sponsored by the partnership found that the government's biggest problem in attracting college graduates was the students' lack of knowledge about federal jobs and how to apply for them.

Five colleges that participated in the survey — Clark Atlanta University, George Washington University, Louisiana State University, Ohio State University and Stanford University — agreed to work with the partnership to test a variety of outreach activities during a two-year period.

The activities included sending mass e-mails to students, holding career fairs, taking students on tours of nearby federal agencies and hiring part-time staffers such as graduate students to promote federal opportunities.

A follow-up survey conducted this spring

found that the outreach activities had mostly paid off. On average, about 60 percent of the students said information about federal jobs made them more interested in pursuing work in the government. The majority said they were attracted by the opportunity to "make a difference" or to work "on issues that interest me."

Five percent of the students said they became less interested when provided information about the government.

Except for Clark Atlanta, "e-mails about federal opportunities were the most remembered outreach activity," the partnership's report on the research said.

While e-mails raised awareness, the report said that in-class presentations from federal recruiters and interactions with alumni and career counselors were important in driving students to act on their interest in government.

But showing an interest in the government is not the same as applying for a federal job or landing one.

According to this year's survey, 21 percent of students across the five colleges applied for either federal jobs or internships.

But only 4 percent of the students at the five colleges said they were entering the government after graduation, the survey found.

Such a wide gap suggests the government has trouble bringing students on board, the report said.

Many students may be accepting job offers from the private sector because they had not heard back from federal agencies, the report suggested. Lengthy and sometimes complex forms and cumbersome hiring procedures also may be turning off students, the report noted.

The report recommended that the government streamline hiring procedures and make them "more user-friendly," pointing out that "the hiring process currently serves to reinforce negative stereotypes about government being overly bureaucratic, one of the biggest deterrents to federal service."

Retirements

John C. Moore, deputy assistant director for protective operations for the U.S. Secret Service in Washington, retires today after 33 years with the agency. Moore also worked in Indianapolis and Detroit.

Joseph Smith, senior budget analyst in the office of the secretary of defense, will retire Nov. 3 after a 36-year career at the Defense Department. He has helped oversee base-closing and realignment activities for the department.

Talk Shows

Jerry W. Jones, chairman of the Interagency Alternative Dispute Resolution Working Group, will be the guest on "FedTalk" at 11 a.m. today on Federalnewsradio.com and WFED radio (1050 AM).

Curtis L. Coy, deputy assistant secretary for administration at the Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families, will be the guest on the IBM "Business of Government Hour" at 9 a.m. Saturday on WJFK radio (106.7 FM).

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BY DOUG DEMARK

Max Stier of the Partnership for Public Service found the cheapest recruiting tool worked best.