

USFSP Partners With Tampa Bay Technology Forum

A partnership between USFSP and the Tampa Bay Technology Forum (TBTF) seeks to address gaps in industry demand and match them with existing talent - including that of USFSP graduates. To that end, TBTF has formed a student chapter at USFSP to help market area business and internship opportunities, and to facilitate communication between students and professionals.

"We can help recent college graduates increase their employability by engaging in a dialogue with TBTF to learn what skills are needed," said Dr. Gary Patterson, interim dean of the Kate Tiedemann College of Business. "We can learn what types of courses may be taken to equip anyone with the necessary skills to succeed."

A 2012 study by the IT Workforce Task Force, which included TBTF members, did not reveal a pretty picture. Instead, it found that many graduates are not receiving the "soft skills" needed to land a job in the field of their degree. Guided by the findings, Patricia Gehant, Director of TBTF's Workforce Initiative, set out to build the relationship between the university and TBTF, and the regional business world at large.

"TBTF is respectful of the educational mission and strives for the goal that students who learn here should be able to earn here, as well," said Gehant. "There are a vast number of local companies interested in hiring students, but students are unaware of the career options that can match their skill set."

Gehant adds that students in disciplines outside of the College of Business may not realize they are needed in the IT field. Psychologists are needed to measure the way humans use and react to technology, for example. Artists are needed to configure the best possible design structure for a program to be most relatable to consumers. And musicians who have the ability to play and choose music, as a programming skill, are also in high demand.

"TBTF is interested in creating the 'middle ground' between business and education to generate conversations about changing the way talent is developed," said Gehant. "We have a membership of over 300 companies representing thousands of members to connect to educators and students. We create the opportunity and the environment to make change happen."



USFSP's Cherie Collins, TBTF chapter advisor

TBTF's student chapter is led by visiting professor Cherie Collins, who teaches Information Systems for Managers in the Kate Tiedemann College of Business. The chapter works directly with Student Life and Engagement to organize events and recruit members.

"Students have a lot of responsibility when it comes to balancing their education, families and work," said Collins. "It is important to remind them keep their eye on their future

aspirations and take part in our regional business environment, which is rich with opportunities."

For more information about TBTF at USFSP, visit <http://usfspstudentlife.orgsync.com/org/tbtf> [<http://usfspstudentlife.orgsync.com/org/tbtf>]