



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAYBOOK: Student Engagement Beyond Career Fairs

While college career fairs offer a straightforward approach to connect with interested students, building lasting engagement requires a more frequent and strategic effort.

Capstone projects and industry-centered curriculum are pivotal in preparing college students for the workforce. Serving as a semester-long mentor or providing content/case studies for these programs, tailored to address firm-specific challenges or community issues, provides students with valuable problem-solving experience. It also provides a direct recruitment opportunity in a comfortable, supportive environment.

Participating as a guest speaker helps students understand the practical applications of their academic studies while providing your firm an opportunity to promote your work and your brand. Many times, however, these opportunities are limited to upper-level classes, after students have already chosen their engineering discipline.

Many colleges offer industry-specific networking events to provide companies an opportunity to connect with students in an informal setting. These can range from “employer days” in the building lobby, networking dinners to virtual roundtables. Connect with the civil engineering department directly to discuss how to build or participate in industry-focused events.

Establish connections with relevant clubs and organizations on campus. ASCE student chapters are active on nearly every campus; get involved by volunteering as an advisor or hosting a competition with a prize. Considering using this opportunity to host the students at your office or job site, as an informal job shadowing.

Consider creating an ambassador role within your firm to manage internships and entry-level positions. Empower this person to build connections with colleges and universities, understand college and university policies, spend time on campus building relationships and source potential candidates and help interns and college students navigate the hiring process.



Collegiate Partnerships: Institution & Academic Support

Building strong and enduring connections with colleges (including community colleges) and universities is essential for establishing a steady flow of recent graduates into your firm. By engaging in regular communication and collaboration with academic institutions, you can tap into a pool of talented and motivated students. This not only ensures a consistent influx of new talent but also allows your firm to influence the training and education of future professionals to better align with industry needs.

- ▶ Creating partnerships with academic institutions involves more than occasional interactions; it requires a strategic and sustained effort. These partnerships can take various forms, such as sponsoring research, offering technical assistance in the classroom and supporting curriculum development.
 - ▶ Campuses often rely on industry partners to supply expertise and up-to-date content that students can use for their capstone projects. Collaborating on industry projects gives students the opportunity to tackle actual engineering challenges, enhancing their practical skills and making them more attractive to potential firms, or yours!
 - ▶ Many institutions have established co-developing courses, or internships and co-op programs, with certain firms. Such collaborations not only benefit students by offering them real-world experience but also allow firms to shape the skills and knowledge of future employees while being a great source of recruitment.
 - ▶ Encouraging alumni to join advisory boards is a strategic way to strengthen ties between your firm and academic institutions. Alumni can provide valuable insights and feedback based on their experiences and bridge the gap between academia and industry. Their involvement ensures that educational programs remain relevant and aligned with the evolving needs of the industry, while also fostering a sense of community and continuity.
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