

For Some, It Was a Jobless Summer

Contributed by Jenerra Albert and Black College Wire staff
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Others found positions through career centers

Claudia Ukonu searched for three months for a summer job, to no avail. She remained unemployed throughout the summer.

"I sit at home all day," said Ukonu, a sophomore marketing major at Howard University.

As a slumping economy and soaring fuel prices rise to record levels, Ukonu is one of thousands of college students who found it difficult to find summer employment.

Ukonu said she had to supplement her income "by going into my savings and even taking out loans...although I do not do much, it's still not the best resource to take out a loan," said Ukonu, who began looking for a job in June. "I'd much rather have a job."

The nation as a whole has been hit by soaring unemployment rates. In June, 68 metropolitan areas across the country reported unemployment rates of at least 7 percent, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

For those who graduated and are still looking for employment, the stress level is high. Drew Daniels, a May 2008 Dillard University grad, said he is still looking. "I applied for jobs back in March and I'm just now starting to hear some responses back from some companies," the mass communications major said.

"The interview process for some jobs is so long and can take up most of your time ... going on two or three interviews, filling out applications and questionnaires. The process can drain you."

Daniels has a backup plan. If he is not successful in finding a journalism job this summer, he plans to enroll in graduate school to pursue a master's degree.

Rianna Felder, a sophomore broadcast journalism major at Howard University, said unemployment caused her to lose motivation to do anything. "I don't go anywhere. I have to wait until all my friends get off work to do anything. I'm bored during the day, so instead I just sleep until evening," Felder said.

But several programs, Web sites and organizations are available to those looking for summer employment. Monster.com annually holds a Diversity Leadership Program (DLP), in nine different cities at different university campuses across the country. The program is sponsored by various corporations and place college students into groups designed to give resume writing, interviewing and diversity tips as well as information on gaining an internship with a company.

INROADS, a national corporation that recruits talented minority youth who meet credentials and GPA requirements, is another option for summer employment. The organization places students internships with corporate sponsors that can eventually lead to permanent job placement.

Zulema Naegele, a student advisor with INROADS, suggests students apply for the program as early as August. "The interns are expected to go through training and prep sessions, so that by spring all they have to do is interview with a company, which they can begin working with as soon as early May," said Naegele, adding that to secure an internship, applications must be submitted by March.

India Clark, a junior accounting major, said Howard's School of Business career service center helped her in obtaining an internship. "We have an amazing professional development center that helped me transform my résumé to one that was appealing to corporate America," Clark said.

Clark has been exposed to top firms, including investment banks, accounting firms and insurance companies while working with the career service center. "Here I am, a 19-year old getting a small taste of what it is really like to work and have a career," Clark said.

For students who are not sure where to start their job search, Naegele recommends they post their résumés on company Web pages.

While temporary hiring agencies are another option for individuals looking for employment, Vanessa Ferrell, project manager for the Urban Youth Employment Program, also suggests public libraries, children and youth centers and non-

profit organizations, as resources in finding summer employment.

"We deal with a very broad range of job seekers starting with middle-school aged children, those looking for re-entry into the workforce as well as single-parents and those just getting out of prison," said Ferrell, adding the program is available in every city that has an Urban League. "Businesses that are included as sponsoring companies for our program are very interested in students for summer employment."

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Jenerra Albert writes for Howard University's student newspaper, The Hilltop, which originally published a version of this article. Black College Wire staff contributed to this article.