

Media Sales Institute Attracts Recent Grads

Contributed by Yewande Addie, Wesley Martin -- Black College Wire
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Program at FAMU offers career opportunities

For Ashley Withers, 22, the intensive schedule was more than she expected, but worth every minute.

Withers joined 20 other students recently as Florida A&M University's School of Journalism and Graphic Communication hosted its 5th annual Media Sales Institute.

Withers, a spring 2009 journalism/mass communication graduate of North Carolina A&T University, said she found out about the program through a friend. "Once I saw the Web site, I knew it would be a great networking opportunity and definitely worth coming to," the San Francisco native said.

Organizers described MSI as a ten-day intensive program that prepares its participants for careers in media sales. The program exposes recent graduates to professionals in the industry, and they are expected to give presentations based on marketing scenarios and specific types of media. They also have the opportunity to meet and interview with several companies.

Jeffrey Myers, owner of Personal Selling Principles, the company that sponsors the institute, says he started the program because he felt there was a need for diversity in media sales.

That was 10 years ago.

Myers' vision now is to have 24 institutes across the country. Currently there are three institutes.

Companies like Morris Visitor Publications interviewed participants.

"They were all incredible," said Dennis Kelly, chief financial officer of the largest visitor publisher in the world, Morris Visitor Publications. "I wish I could hire everyone of them. Not only did the kids who completed the training have the education background, but they also have the practical knowledge through their training with Jeffrey Myers."

Though Kelly says he was pleased with the candidates and the program, he did have words on how the program could be more useful.

"[The candidates] use real-life scenarios from the past when doing their presentations," Kelly said. "It would be cool if they could address a current real-life situation. There are many advertisers out there with a current need and having the students design a solution for the advertisers would be greatly effective."

MSI participants like LaShauna Pellman, 21, were just as pleased with the program and all it had to offer.

Pellman, a recent business graduate of Bethune-Cookman University, said it took her a minute to warm up to the program because of her major. But it didn't take long for her to get in the swing of things.

"I don't have a background in journalism, but each day I would see something that I could relate to from a business perspective," said Pellman, an Atlanta native. "At the end of the day I met a lot of new people, learned about an industry I knew nothing about and had some great interviews—a job definitely looks promising."

Pellman said her only hope is to see more programs like MSI at her alma mater.

"I happened to find out about the program through a friend at FAMU, but it wasn't advertised at my school," Pellman said. "More students at BCU could benefit from programs like this."

Withers said she would suggest the program for any recent graduate, including students like Pellman, with no prior experience in media.

"It would give grads an advantage because they're able to get insight into the industry—and every aspect of marketing all types of media, from television to newspaper," Withers said.

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