Accounting institute connects students with the profession

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In 2012, ManpowerGroup ranked accounting at No. 5 on its list of the 10 hardest jobs to fill. That talent shortage is expected to continue through 2020 as more and more accounting professionals reach retirement age.



The inaugural Accounting Leadership Institute featured presentations from 27 accounting professionals, representing 14 different organizations.

Those numbers aren’t lost on the staff of the Freeman School’s Career Management Center. To help meet the nation’s growing demand for accounting professionals, the CMC recently organized a two-day program for prospective accountants as part of this year’s Freeman Days Chicago.

The Accounting Leadership Institute was a professional education and networking event designed to introduce students to the variety of career options available in accounting. Held at the Hampton Inn and Suites Chicago Downtown, the institute featured a day of educational sessions on career management and workplace skills led by Chicago-area accounting professionals followed by a day of information sessions with employers.

“Our primary goals were to educate students on accounting career options, to enhance their professionalism and to help them expand their networks in a major market with a large alumni base,” says Margie Cartwright, career consultant at the CMC and organizer of the institute. “Most of the organizations we partnered with for the institute hadn’t previously worked with the Freeman School, and they all expressed enthusiasm for staying connected with us.”

In all, students heard from 27 accounting professionals, representing 14 organizations from the public, private and non-profit sectors.

“We’re a big fan of anything that draws more students to the accounting profession, so I applaud Tulane for doing this,” says Casey Herman (BSM ’86), a partner with PricewaterhouseCoopers in Chicago, who led a session on Big Four career paths. “It was a great way to help students think about the different dimensions of the accounting profession, whether it’s corporate accounting, internal audit or public accounting.”



The Career Management Center hopes to make the Accounting Leadership Institute an annual part of Freeman Days Chicago.

Students gave the info sessions and workshops high marks, but many said the best part of the institute was the chance for one-on-one interaction with professionals in a wide range of accounting positions.

“The opportunity to ask questions was invaluable,” says Jess Dallager (BSM/MACCT ’13). “We got candid responses that I think were eye opening for a lot of us. You can’t get those insights from a textbook.”

While this year’s event was just a pilot program, Cartwright says she’s hopeful the institute will become an annual part of Freeman Days Chicago.

“The evaluations we received were all very positive,” Cartwright says. “Going forward, we think the institute will be a great way to help expand our alumni base in Chicago and introduce students to a wider network of employers.”