

STUDENT EMPLOYMENT NOT AN AFTERTHOUGHT AT GROOVE U

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By Julie France

From the October 2015 issue of Columbus CEO

As many students start off college this year, their first class is likely not on how to get a job four or two years later. But for Dwight Heckelman, founder and director of Groove U, a music industry program located in Victorian Village, that's his two-year-old school's priority.

To prove it, the first graduating class in 2013 had 100-percent success in finding relevant work.

"We don't call what we do in this field 'job placement' because in the music industry there's no such thing. You know, it's 'job assistance,'" says Heckelman.

A former career development and job recruitment coordinator for Berklee College of Music, Heckelman bookends the two years students spend at Groove U. The students' first class covering career development, which entails personal branding and mock networking, and the final class at the end of their studies focused on the job search and starting one's own business. Students also go twice to South by Southwest, an Austin, Texas, film, interactive and music festival and conference, and complete two full internships by the time they graduate.

"My students all on some level are artists, so they're not necessarily great at speaking and engaging with people," says Heckelman. "They're not comfortable with what that really looks like or feels like, but by starting them in work right away, having them build or craft professional presences, identify their brand pillars and work on who they are as a brand, they're finally comfortable with what that really is."

In its first graduating class, student Derek Rasmussen used those skills and met Myspace owner



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Dwight Heckelman, founder and director of Groove U MBA Focus is used by the Ohio State University Fisher College of Business and will offer services, via a recent merger with CSO Research, which serves as a link between undergraduates and employers, to Otterbein University, OSU, Capital University and Ohio Wesleyan University. The merger with CSO Research—based in Austin—expanded the Dublin company’s reach to four million students.

“Culturally, it fit really well with us because we believe in strong customer service,” says Jack Gainer, CEO of MBA Focus, on the merger.

The two companies combined not only improve job-seeker/employee matches; they also save companies a lot of time. Employers can select from a pool of prospects based on desired traits, and then interview to see if the job is a cultural fit, rather than to see if an applicant is even qualified for the job.

Schools pay \$3,000 to \$50,000 for an annual service fee, depending on enrollment, and employers pay an average of \$25,000 annually.

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