

Recruiting Black and Asian Students and Graduates - Some Solutions from the University of Manchester and UMIST Careers Service

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To recruit the best talent it is essential for employers of graduates to value diversity. Where once we had equal opportunities and a 'one size fits all' approach driven by legislation, we now have diversity where differences and values are respected and business need is the major driver. Diversity is as much about dealing effectively with a diverse range of customers as it is about managing a diverse workforce. As the world changes businesses need to respond accordingly. Workforces need to reflect both the communities and customers that the company serves.

Many talented graduates are disadvantaged in the labour market. For example Black African males are up to seven times more likely to be unemployed than their white counterparts.

Many recruiters are striving to improve communication channels and methods of raising their profiles on campus to encourage greater numbers of applications from talented individuals from under-represented groups. However, many continue to stress that on and off campus, non-mainstream opportunities to engage meaningfully with such target groups are limited and that numbers of applications are disappointing.

Higher education careers services have a very real role to play here. Consideration needs to be given by the careers services to how well the needs of black and Asian student groups and recruiters are being met. Many such services are working proactively in this area. The University of Manchester and UMIST Careers Service is at the forefront of developing diversity programmes, products and services that broker relationships and encourage better communication between recruiters and black and Asian talent. These include:

Diversity Mentoring Higher Education (DMHE)

Includes two mentoring programmes. INTERACT for students with disabilities and INTERFACE for black and Asian students. Individual students are paired with a volunteer employee mentor and they agree to a minimum of four one-hour meetings between October and April. The dominant theme is employability and the enhancement of self-esteem, confidence and networks. Full induction training is provided for mentors and mentees where issues such as hopes, fears, managing expectations, agreeing an informal contract, successfully managing meetings and

support structures are considered. Three employer-led workshops covering applications, interviews and assessment centres are provided for the students and on-going support for mentors and mentees is provided by the DMHE Team and via the website.

The programmes are students driven. Students choose the type of occupation and industrial sector from which they would like a mentor. They can also express a preference as to whether their mentor is female/male, is from a particular ethnic group and has a disability or not. It has been shown that because the programme is explicitly concerned with employability and career development the student mentees are primarily concerned with the mentor's occupational and industrial credentials rather than their ethnic group and gender, etc.

In 2002/3 DMHE will include 18 higher education institutions and 200 mentoring partnerships. It will operate in Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Lancashire, Cheshire, West Yorkshire, the South West, London and Limerick. Companies involved include BAE Systems, The Inland Revenue, Land Rover, Accenture, HSBC and Manchester City Art Gallery.

For further details see: www.diversitymentoringuk.ac.uk

The Ethnic Diversity Fair

This event, unique in its type and size outside of London, was organised for the first time in October 2001. It was supported by the National Union of Students Black Students Committee, the Commission for Racial Equality and a large number of higher education careers services. It attracted 1600 students and graduates, 34 major recruiters including Deutsche Bank, Proctor and Gamble, Ford, The BBC and Goldman Sachs and a significant reserve list! As a vehicle for targeting black and Asian student talent the fair has proved very popular. Recruitment and information fairs are a popular and tried and tested communication method for recruiters. Many students who attended this event commented that they liked the fact that the fair 'was for them' and that the recruiters who were present were there to meet potential applicants from ethnically diverse backgrounds. After the success of this event a second fair is planned for 16th October 2002 at the University of Manchester.

Further details are available at:
www.GraduateCareersOnline.ac.uk/ethnicdiversityfair

www.blackandasiangrad.ac.uk

This site was developed in 2001 and was financially supported by The Department for Education and Skills and Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services. This site is supported by hefce and is the official career development site for black and Asian students, graduates and graduate recruiters. As well as providing information and advice to students, graduates and recruiters the site also allows recruiters to publicise their commitment to diversity and raise their profile by having:

- A company profile page with a hot link to a recruitment site;
- Two 'Me and My Job' profiles featuring black and/or Asian employees;
- Graduate job vacancies advertised;
- An employer case study detailing diversity policies and practices.

Regarding this site Gurbux Singh, Chair of The Commission for Racial Equality, has said:

'It is unacceptable that ethnic minority students find it harder to find work after graduation than their white counterparts. It is for this reason that we welcome the introduction of this exciting new website which will provide a platform for job searches and the promotion of best practice.'

Further details concerning the site and how to subscribe can be found at: www.blackandasiangrad.ac.uk

Businesses often strive to be unique and distinctive and to recruit and retain excellent employees. Developing a diverse workforce encourages uniqueness and celebrates difference. Talented students from under-represented groups like ethnic minorities are often first generation higher education students who do not have well developed personal and professional networks. There may be an absence of role models in certain industries for such students to emulate and associate with. Black and Asian students and graduates need real access to graduate recruiters in order to understand, through dialogue, that they too can aspire to work in companies that take seriously the creation of truly diverse workforces.

Black and Asian students and graduates want to know that recruiters are targeting them and want to hear the recruiters' messages. At the University of Manchester and UMIST Careers Service we are aware of the challenge. We are taking seriously the needs of recruiters and students and graduates and are looking forward to working with students, graduates and recruiters on a range of programmes, products and services that provide some solutions.

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